



**2023-2025 Grow Your Own Grant Program, Cycle 6**  
**Letter of Interest (LOI) Application Due 11:59 p.m. CT, October 13, 2022**

NOGA ID

Authorizing legislation **General Appropriations Act, Article III, Rider 40, 87th Texas Legislature**

This LOI application must be submitted via email to [competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov](mailto:competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov).

The LOI application may be signed with a digital ID or it may be signed by hand. Both forms of signature are acceptable.

TEA must receive the application by **11:59 p.m. CT, October 13, 2022**.

Application stamp-in date and time

Grant period from **February 9, 2023 to April 30, 2025**

Pre-award costs are **not** permitted for this grant.

**Required Attachments**

1. Excel workbook with the grant's budget schedules (linked along with this form on the TEA Grants Opportunities page)
2. Attachment 1: Pathway Selection and Participation

**Amendment Number**

Amendment number (For amendments only; enter N/A when completing this form to apply for grant funds):

**Applicant Information**

Organization  CDN  Campus  ESC  DUNS

Address  City  ZIP  Vendor ID

Primary Contact  Email  Phone

Secondary Contact  Email  Phone

**Certification and Incorporation**

I understand that this application constitutes an offer and, if accepted by TEA or renegotiated to acceptance, will form a binding agreement. I hereby certify that the information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and that the organization named above has authorized me as its representative to obligate this organization in a legally binding contractual agreement. I certify that any ensuing program and activity will be conducted in accordance and compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

I further certify my acceptance of the requirements conveyed in the following portions of the LOI application, as applicable, and that these documents are incorporated by reference as part of the LOI application and Notice of Grant Award (NOGA):

- LOI application, guidelines, and instructions
- Debarment and Suspension Certification
- General and application-specific Provisions and Assurances
- Lobbying Certification

Authorized Official Name  Title

Email  Phone

Signature  Date

## Shared Services Arrangements

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are permitted for this grant. Check the box below if applying as a fiscal agent.

- The LEA or ESC submitting this application is the fiscal agent of a planned SSA. All participating agencies will enter into a written SSA agreement describing the fiscal agent and SSA member responsibilities. All participants understand that the "Shared Services Arrangement Attachment" must be completed and signed by all SSA members and submitted to TEA upon request.

## Statutory/Program Assurances

The following assurances apply to this program. In order to meet the requirements of the program, the applicant must comply with these assurances.

Check each of the following boxes to indicate your compliance.

- 1. The applicant provides assurance that program funds will supplement (increase the level of service), and not supplant (replace) state mandates, State Board of Education rules, and activities previously conducted with state or local funds. The applicant provides assurance that state or local funds may not be decreased or diverted for other purposes merely because of the availability of these funds. The applicant provides assurance that program services and activities to be funded from this LOI will be supplementary to existing services and activities and will not be used for any services or activities required by state law, State Board of Education rules, or local policy.
- 2. The applicant provides assurance that the application does not contain any information that would be protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) from general release to the public.
- 3. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Statutory and TEA Program requirements as noted in the 2023-2025 Grow Your Own Grant Program, Cycle 6 Program Guidelines.
- 4. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Performance Measures, as noted in the 2023-2025 Grow Your Own, Cycle 6 Program Guidelines, and shall provide to TEA, upon request, any performance data necessary to assess the success of the program.

### PATHWAY 1:

- 5. LEAs must have a signed letter of commitment or MOU for Education & Training teachers that receive a stipend through the Grow Your Own Grant by May 31, 2023. These participating teachers must commit with the MOU to, at minimum, teach the Education and Training courses and, if applicable, establish and/or grow a chapter of a Career Technical Student Organization (CTSO) as a condition of receiving the stipend.
- 6. The MOUs for Education and Training teachers must include, at minimum, content outlined on page 11 of the Program Guidelines.
- 7. If implementing dual credit Education and Training courses, the LEA must have a signed letter of commitment or MOU for the partnering IHE by May 31, 2023. This MOU should include, at minimum, content outlined on page 11 of the Program Guidelines.
- 8. The LEA will retain documentation locally of each letter of commitment or MOU and submit to TEA upon request.
- 9. The LEA assures that each high school campus within the participating LEA will implement at least the Instructional Practices and/or Practicum courses in the Education and Training course sequence in 2023-2024, and at least both stated courses in 2024-2025, with the teachers receiving the stipend as teachers of record for both courses or either course. \*Please see example on page 9 of the Program Guidelines.
- 10. To receive a stipend for teaching dual credit, the LEA assures the Education and Training teacher holds a master's degree in an education-related field and be the teacher of record for at least one dual credit course section in 2023-2024 and two dual credit course sections in 2024-2025 within the Education and Training course sequence.
- 11. All LEA high schools must establish and/or grow a chapter of a CTSO that supports the Education and Training career cluster through either the Texas Association of Future Educators (TAFE) or Family, Career and Community Leads of America (FCCLA) and participate in at least one competitive event per year.
- 12. The LEA assures that all LEA high schools will participate in an initial TEA-led Teacher Institute in Summer 2023. Education and Training teacher stipend recipients are required to attend the entirety of the Institute. Principals, counselors, and LEA grant managers are only required to attend the first day. Participants who attended any previous Grow Your Own Summer Institute must still attend. IHE/EPP partners and student ambassador attendance is optional but recommended.
- 13. The LEA assures that each Education and Training teacher stipend recipient will pilot the TEA Education and Training curriculum if they are not currently using a high-quality Education and Training curriculum.
- 14. The LEA assures that each Education and Training teacher stipend recipient will receive TEA implementation supports and coaching by participating in online collaborative communities to be scheduled by TEA, not to exceed 6 hours per semester.
- 15. The LEA assures that Education and Training teacher stipend recipients will participate in surveys and, if requested, focus groups not to exceed 1 hour per semester and administered by TEA to receive input on the Education and Training programming.

**Statutory/Program Assurances Cont'd**

- 16. LEA grant managers shall support Practicum in Education and Training implementation, including but not limited to student scheduling, identifying field sites and field site teachers, and coordinating student transportation to field sites.
- 17. LEAs shall develop a marketing and recruitment plan to grow enrollment in high school Education and Training courses. Upon request by TEA, all LEA high schools will submit their plan for marketing and student recruitment.
- 18. LEAs must, upon request, submit reports on progress towards performance measures to TEA. If requested, LEAs must participate in focus groups and surveys to give input on the Education and Training programming.
- 19. All grant-funded teachers must be identified and submitted to TEA by May 31, 2023.

**PATHWAY 2:**

- 20. LEAs must have a signed letter of commitment or MOU for each candidate that receives a stipend through the Grow Your Own Grant by May 31, 2023. All candidate stipend recipients must commit with a MOU, at minimum, to remain at the LEA for an agreed upon length of time in a full-time teaching role as a condition of receiving the stipend.
- 21. The MOUs for candidates must include, at minimum, content outlined on page 13 of the Program Guidelines.
- 22. LEAs must have a signed letter of commitment or MOU from each accredited EPP (see Eligible Applicants section of the Program Guidelines) that will partner with the LEA to award teacher certifications to all candidates (those earning a bachelor's degree and teacher certification and certification-only candidates) by May 31, 2023.
- 23. The MOUs for EPPs must include, at minimum, content outlined on page 13 of the Program Guidelines.
- 24. The LEA will retain all MOU documentation locally and submit to TEA upon request.
- 25. LEAs must allow reasonable paid release time and schedule flexibility, as determined by the LEA, for candidates to complete their degree and certification course requirements while engaged in the grant program.
- 26. All certification-only candidates within a LEA will be certified by the same partner EPP as a cohort managed collaboratively by the LEA and EPP.
- 27. The LEA assures that candidate stipend recipients participate in surveys and, if requested, focus groups not to exceed 1 hour per semester and administered by TEA to receive input on the grant programming.
- 28. If positions are available that can be appropriately filled in alignment with candidates' certification area(s), LEAs must commit to hiring/retaining candidates upon successful completion of their teacher certification to serve as a teacher of record in the LEA by the start of the 2025-2026 school year.
- 29. LEAs must, upon request, submit reports on progress towards performance measures to TEA.
- 30. The names of all grant-funded teachers and/or candidates must be identified and submitted to TEA by May 31, 2023.

**ALL PATHWAYS:**

- 31. If a teacher or candidate is unable to continue with the grant program, the LEA must file an application amendment and provide TEA with an update of the new amount and type of stipend recipient(s) within 30 days of notification.
- 32. LEAs must file application amendments within seven days of a request from TEA.



**Program Description**

Describe how the Grow Your Own program will be implemented with grant funds and how the grant will address the LEA's teacher pipeline needs.

Rio Grande City Grulla ISD, like many LEAs across the state, has experienced a teacher shortage in high need areas. Because Rio Grande City Grulla ISD is located in a rural low-income community, attracting teachers from neighboring school districts is difficult. Grow Your Own funding allows the district to facilitate pathways for paraprofessionals by helping to create teacher pipelines that will increase the pool of educators within the district. Grow Your Own allows the district to effectively recruit and attract its own employees by providing them the financial, academic and emotional support that impedes these candidates from attaining their teaching certificate. Additionally, the district is confident that providing financial support can assist in addressing teacher shortages in high-need content areas. An effectively managed Grow Your Own Program that offers financial aid/stipends to candidates allows the district to establish candidate cohorts and expand coaching and mentoring systems. Grow Your Own teachers are already familiar with the district's classroom management, subject mastery, school culture, and academic expectations. Many of the district's Para educators are district graduates who have completed their associates or bachelor's degree at the local college, but obstacles, such as full time employment, financial hardships, and cultural barriers have derailed their career goals. The district, if afforded the opportunity to engage in Grow Your Own (Cohort 6), could recruit excellent teacher candidates for hard-to-staff schools in hard-to-fill positions, improve student achievement in high need campuses, and ultimately increase teacher cultural competence and community connections.

**Qualifications and Experience for Key Personnel**

Outline the required qualifications and experience for key personnel to be involved in the implementation and delivery of the program. Include each of the following individuals (when applicable) and a description of each role: 1. The LEA's grant manager; 2. LEA leaders involved in program implementation; 3. The campus principals for participating Education and Training high schools; 4. the college/career counselors for participating Education and Training high schools; 5. Education and Training teachers; 6. Education and Training field site teachers for Instructional Practices and/or Practicum courses; 7. Any other personnel responsible for implementing the grant.

Title and Responsibilities of Position

Grant Manager: Dr. Arcadio Salinas, III (Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources) will serve as grant manager to plan and execute the grant process by working closely with the district administrative team to implement annual budget, support GYO candidates in meeting program goals, and manage documents and deadlines to track grantee progress.

District Curriculum Lead: Elsa V. Morris (Assistant Superintendent) will serve as the curriculum lead to ensure candidates have access to engage, observe, and interact with HQIM within the time frame of the GYO by ensuring that candidates have the opportunity to actively participate in district and campus professional development.

Human Resource Liaison: Leonel T. Guzman (HR Administrator) will serve as the liaison/GYO candidate advocate to ensure that there is an extensive candidate pool for GYO candidates. Additionally, he will serve as the point of contact between campuses and district, and he will also communicate/facilitate all MOU commitments outline in the grant.

Teacher Candidate Education & Training Lead: Nydia Benitez (T-TESS District Facilitator/TIA Coordinator): will serve to guide the GYO Cycle 6 candidate cohort by supporting their teacher certification process, professional development, classroom observations protocols, and establishment of best practices. Mentors will also be assigned to support GYO candidates through the process.

Progress Monitoring and Data Analysis: Patricia Soto (Data Fellow & District Data Lead) will serve to set progress check points for candidates by working closely with district administration, GYO steering committee, and campus principals to ensure that GYO outcomes are aligned with the district/campus academic goals.

**Goals and Objectives**

Describe the major goals/objectives of the proposed Grow Your Own program. Describe the talent management strategy, (including the LEA's approach to recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified teachers) related to those goals/objectives.

The Grow Your Own Grant Program (GYO) major goals/objectives is to provide state funds to help address the challenges districts are faced with in terms of recruiting and retaining teachers. Rio Grande City Grulla ISD first experienced GYO grant opportunities under TCLAS Decision 4. Due to this grant award, RGCGISD selected six candidates being awarded with stipends essential in removing barriers experienced by district employees seeking to obtain a degree and certification in a timely manner. With the Grow Your Own Cycle 6, the district's future educators would be provided an opportunity to tap into state funds to secure degrees and certification and therefore provide the district with a pool of highly qualified educators. The Grow Your Own program goals are to provide six Rio Grande City CISD paraprofessionals, instructional aides, and/or long-term substitutes certification routes with the stipends and test preparation and certification exam fees. In addition, these funds will provide the hiring of substitutes for the candidates in order to meet grant requirements. The candidate's success will further support the district's objective to recruit, hire, and retain qualified teachers in highly needed vacancies.

**Progress Monitoring and Evaluation Measures**

Describe how the performance measures identified for this program are consistent with the purpose of the program and related to teacher pipeline needs. Include the tools and processes used to measure performance and the extent to which the major goals and objectives of the grant are met.

The GYO steering committee consisting of campus and district leadership will gather and analyze data bi-annually in order to make continuous program improvements. The data collected will be evaluated to ensure that it aligns with district goals, and the GYO committee will respond to this data by taking action steps to improve the GYO program. If data does not yield the desired outcomes, the committee will work with candidates to ensure that they have all the necessary level and type of support required to stay on track and adhere to the timeline of events set-out in the MOU.

In addition, candidate recruitment will be evaluated based on the number and quality of applicants interested. If an adequate pool of applicants is not achieved, the district will extend recruitment efforts to expand the number of potential candidates.

To monitor candidate's progress, the district will establish candidate benchmarks for completing their post-secondary work and teacher certification process. The district will ensure that stipends are closely aligned with stipend distribution. Candidates will receive stipends under the following conditions: Grant money will be paid upon attaining an Intern Certificate from their certification program/SBEC and upon completing their Texas Teaching Certificate. Candidates fill and submit an Authorization to Pay form with the date, the description of the requirement met, and the amount being awarded by the district.

An additional, evaluation measure is to submit an updated transcript as per the MOU and participate in the four quarterly meetings with the assigned district mentor. Feedback from program participants will be solicited through surveys and formal/informal discussions to provide for adjustments in the program's rigor and level of support being offered. It is district's hope that by the Fall 2025, candidates will be ready to enter the classroom in the district's areas of need.

**Budget Narrative**

Referencing the applicant's budget workbook and the Application Funding section of the Program Guidelines, outline the proposed budget and amounts for allowable uses of grant program funding. This should also match the Pathway Selection and Participation section of this application.

Rio Grande City Grulla ISD is seeking funding for Pathway 2. The district is seeking funding to have two (2) paraprofessionals who will be seeking teacher certification and four (4) candidates who will be seeking to complete a bachelor's degree and earn a teacher certificate. Candidate stipends will be paid out according to MOU which will outline the payment stipend amount and payment schedule. The district realizes that purpose of the grant to provide these candidates with the financial relief that is often a barrier to teacher certification and degree completion. Candidates will be able to utilize these stipends to cover tuition, fees, and living expenses during the two year grant period. The district has already witnessed how the first cohort of candidates has been able to utilize these funds to complete their certification requirements.

Pathway 2 Funding:  
 Transition of Candidates (Paraprofessionals, Instructional Aides and Long-Term Substitutes) to Full-Time Teaching Roles

Grant generated Funding:

*2- Teacher Certification Only Candidates	2 x \$8000= \$16,000
*4 -Teacher Candidates for completing a bachelor's degree and earning a teacher certification	4 x \$19,000= \$76,000
	Total Budget=\$92,000

The proposed budget will help meet the needs and goals of the GYO program by providing stipends for candidates, staff development trainings and substitute cost for candidate release time.

Candidate (Cohort 6) stipends: \$80,000

2 (Bachelor Degree/Certificate Candidates)	\$7000 each/	2x\$7000=	\$14,000
4 (Bachelor and Certificate Completion)	\$18,000 each/	4x\$18,000=	\$72,000
Substitute Costs/Release Time:			\$4000
Certification Exam Costs:			\$2000

## Sustainability Plan

Describe the sustainability plan for the Grow Your Own Program beyond the timeline of grant funding. The plan should address how a high-quality program will be maintained, including clear action steps beginning in the first year of grant funding and a demonstrated ability to leverage and coordinate resources to increase the LEA's capacity to strengthen the local educator pipeline and make progress on sustainability. This may include the use of other local, state, and/or federal resources. Consider also how the Grow Your Own program may be integrated into, be supported by, and provide support for existing LEA or EPP initiatives and/or priorities.

Rio Grande City Grulla ISD desires to extend the existing Grow Your Own award under TCLAS Decision 4. Grow Your Own Cycle 6 will further strengthen and help maintain a high-quality Grow Your Own Program for teachers with the purpose of generating an effective and diverse teaching workforce pipeline in the Rio Grande City community. Rio Grande City Grulla ISD is confident that through a strong network with South Texas Community College and the University of Texas at RGV candidates can and will successfully complete the set requirements. The financial resources will help eliminate barriers experienced by college students employed in the Rio Grande City Grulla ISD graduating with a post secondary education degree.

To support this workforce pipeline the Office of Human Resources and the Grow Your Own steering committee will recruit highly qualified individuals to be lead teachers in the education and training of candidates by partnering with the district's Mentor Program. These teachers will support candidates as they go through the process of completing their post secondary education degree. Starting in the Fall 2023, the program will include four Quarterly Meetings to monitor Cycle 6 candidate's progress in their college course load and/or setbacks.

To sustain the program, the Office of Human Resources and the Grow Your Own steering committee will seek the approval of the Rio Grande City Grulla ISD School Board of Trustees to support program funding for the Grow Your Own program beyond the timeline of the grant funding. Past participants' success stories and their ability to get employed within the district will serve as proof of evidence for others to follow in their footsteps

## Stipend Recipient Recruitment

Describe the plan to recruit Education and Training teachers within Pathway 1 and/or candidates within Pathway 2 who are interested and eligible in participating in the program and receiving stipends. The plan must include strategies to equitably recruit diverse individuals and identify individuals with potential criteria including: **A. Pathway 1:** For Education and Training teachers, a demonstrated track record of success and/or achievement, involvement in student organizations and/or school activities, strong evaluation ratings (if applicable), and strong relationships with students (if applicable). **B. Pathway 2:** For candidates, a desire and commitment to teach long term in the LEA and/or region, strong evaluation ratings (if applicable), and strong relationships with students (if applicable).

Rio Grande City Grulla ISD will continue to use the current system of recruitment and long-term retention by growing community and higher-education partnerships that allow the district to invest in the GYO candidates. The district will continue identifying district paraprofessionals, instructional aides, and/or long term substitutes who are degreed in critical areas. These candidates who are working with RGCGISD students while pursuing their Texas Teaching Certificate have a clear understanding of the district's students' demographics and needs. The recruiting of GYO Cycle 6 candidates will be organized in a two-prong approach: (1) The district will provide announcements via social media, mass emails, and informational meetings articulating the Grow Your Own grant opportunities that will allow the district to concentrate on the potential candidate's major and minor areas. (2) RGCGISD recruitment will include marketing materials that encourage all-grade levels of educators to participate in an effort to generate more visibility for what the GYO program intends to offer. The testimonials and presentations by the Grow Your Own TCLAS Decision 4, Cycle 5 participants about the support and sustenance provided to them will serve as evidence that when afforded the opportunity, a career in education can have lasting effects.

RGCGISD will continue to provide targeted recruitment activities, including community information sessions and college/career counseling to build candidate interest that reflect the demographics and expectations of the district. Prospective candidates employed in the district will be informed of their option to take part in the program.



**Stipend Recipient Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)**

Referencing the Program-Specific Assurances in the Program Guidelines, describe the MOUs in which: **A. Pathway 1:** Education and Training teacher stipend recipients agree to meet grant requirements and any other terms set by the LEA; **B. Pathway 1:** IHE that will partner with the LEA(s) to implement dual credit Education and Training courses and commit to supporting the Education and Training teachers and course implementation (if applicable); **C. Pathway 2:** Candidate stipend recipients commit to remain in the LEA for an agreed upon length of time as a condition of receiving the stipend and if a position is available, the LEA commits to hiring/retaining candidates with satisfactory program completion/job performance; **D. Pathway 2:** Accredited EPPs that will partner with the LEA(s) to award teacher certifications to candidates and commit to supporting candidates with completion of their teacher certification and supporting LEA(s) with implementation of the grant program.

To aid in developing a reliable and robust pipeline of educators, all candidates that are selected to participate in the program will be required to sign an MOU which commits them to remain as a teacher in Rio Grande City Grulla ISD for a minimum of two years beyond the completion of the program and their successful completion of the teaching certificate as a condition of receiving the remaining GYO Program stipend. This MOU will also state that the district will commit to hiring and retaining each candidate who successfully completes the program in the allotted time frame and demonstrates continual effective job performance.

RGCGISD will partner with South Texas Community College and the University of Texas at RGV to ensure the candidates completion of the post secondary education degree and the Texas Teacher Certification. The district will recruit highly qualified individuals to be lead teachers in the education and training of candidates by partnering with the RGCGISD Mentor Program. These teachers will support candidates as they go through the process of completing their post secondary education degree. The program will include four Quarterly Meetings to monitor Cycle 6 candidate's progress in their college course load and/or setbacks. In addition, GYO candidates must participate in a required summer staff development to meet with the mentors and develop a plan of action to address the degree completion and certification route.



**Appendix I: Amendment Description and Purpose** (leave this section blank when completing the initial application for funding)

An amendment must be submitted when the program plan or budget is altered for the reasons described in the "When to Amend the Application" document posted on the [Administering a Grant](#) page. The following are required to be submitted for an amendment: (1) Page 1 of the application with updated contact information and current authorized official's signature and date, (2) Appendix I with changes identified and described, (3) all updated sections of the application or budget affected by the changes identified below, and, if applicable, (4) Amended Budget Request. Amendment Instructions with more details can be found on the last tab of the budget template.

*You may duplicate this page*

<b>Amended Section</b>	<b>Reason for Amendment</b>
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