



2024-2025 Stronger Connections Grant

Competitive Grant Application: Due 11:59 p.m. CT, July 18, 2023

NOGA ID

Application stamp-in date and time

TEA will only accept grant application documents by email, including competitive grant applications and amendments. Submit grant applications and amendments as follows:

Competitive grant applications and amendments to competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov.

The application MUST bear the signature of a person authorized to bind the applicant to a contractual agreement

Authorizing legislation:

Grant period: Pre-award costs:

Required attachments:

Amendment Number

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

1. Applicant Information

Name of organization

Campus name CDN Vendor ID ESC UEI

Address City ZIP Phone

Primary Contact Email Phone

Secondary Contact Email Phone

2. 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 grant application, as applicable, and that these documents are incorporated by reference as part of the grant application and Notice of Grant Award (NOGA):

- Grant application, guidelines, and instructions
- Debarment and Suspension Certification
- General Provisions and Assurances
- Lobbying Certification
- Application-Specific Provisions and Assurances
- ESSA Provisions and Assurances requirements

Authorized Official Name Title Email

Phone Signature Date

Grant Writer Name Signature Date

Grant writer is an employee of the applicant organization. Grant writer is not an employee of the applicant organization.

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Adjustments on this page have been confirmed with _____ by _____ of TEA by phone / fax / email on _____.

3. Shared Services Arrangements

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are not permitted for this grant.

4. Identify/Address Needs

List up to three quantifiable needs, as identified in your needs assessment, that these program funds will address. Describe your plan for addressing each need.

Quantifiable Need	Plan for Addressing Need
Varnett does not currently have a PBIS system in place. Varnett needs to fully implement MTSS, including PBIS.	Provide at least 3 PBIS training sessions for district and campus staff to implement the program
Partner with external vendor to build a SSSP program across all three campuses	Partner with the Texas Center for Student Support (TCSS) to receive training and to collaborate in efficient and effective implementation of the SSP program on all 3 campuses, and to engage families in this work.
Increase parent engagement in school community events, with a focus on academics	Collaborate with the TCSS to develop an Advisory Committee, composed of campus and district leaders, teachers, parents and families, and students to provide input and feedback on the services, supports, resources, and programs that will be made available to implement the student support program.

5. SMART Goal

Describe the summative SMART goal you have identified for this program (a goal that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely), either related to student outcome or consistent with the purpose of the grant.

By September 30, 2025 each of Varnett's 3 campuses, will establish a Student Support Program, focused on implementation of at least 4 of the 8 components of a Comprehensive School Mental Health System as outlined by TEA, including but not limited to Positive Behavior Interventions and Support. These components are: Building Skills Related to Managing Emotions, Establishing and Maintaining Positive Relationships and Responsible Decision-Making; Early Mental Health Prevention and Intervention; Grief-Informed and Trauma-Informed Practices; Positive Youth Development; Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports; Safe, Supportive and Positive School Climates; Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention; Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention.

6. Measurable Progress

Identify the benchmarks that you will use at the end of the first three grant quarters to measure progress toward meeting the process and implementation goals defined for the grant.

First-Quarter Benchmark

By April 30, 2024, each of Varnett's 3 campuses will hold at least 3 Parent, Student, Staff advisory committee meetings to garner input from parents, students and staff, on the establishment of the Student Support Program.

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6. Measurable Progress (Cont.)

Second-Quarter Benchmark

By October 31, 2024, each of Varnett's 3 campus SSP teams, will collaborate with the Behavioral Threat Assessment Teams (BTA) team, Counseling department, and Social Worker, to develop a comprehensive case management system, assigning 100% of referred students to a designated individual or team, in order to ensure student receive intended supports, and to monitor outcomes at least once per month.

Third-Quarter Benchmark

By April 30, 2025, each of Varnett's 3 campuses will implement universal screening (academic support, behavioral health and mental health services and support, and integrated student supports) for 100% of students.

7. Project Evaluation and Modification

Describe how you will use project evaluation data to determine when and how to modify your program. If your benchmarks or summative SMART goals do not show progress, describe how you will use evaluation data to modify your program for sustainability.

VPS will use a variety of data to continuously track the effectiveness of our SSP program. This data will include the following:

- Student /Parent/Teacher surveys
- Case management logs
- Training sign in sheets and materials
- Committee sign in sheets and materials
- Behavioral threat assessment documentation
- Student Support Program Plan
- Data on interventions offered (lists, participants, outcomes)
- Data on outcomes of support provided
- screening questionnaires

At minimum, data will be gathered every three months on each of the benchmarks outlined above. Stakeholder surveys, questionnaires and screeners will be used to drive decisions on program components and to revise these components as needed. Documentation of BTAs, aligned services and support, and case-management logs with outcomes will help to drive decision around prevention strategies which may need to be included in our SSP, and on how the effective our implementation of the program is. Discipline and intervention data, and campus climate surveys will determine the effectiveness the overall SSP program on each campus. Data from the student self reporting system and the universal screener will be used to determine trends on individual campuses, and to create and implement an action plan for campus SSPs to address these issues.

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8. Statutory/Program Assurances

The following assurances apply to this grant program. In order to meet the requirements of the grant, the grantee 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 grant 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 Statutory Requirements, TEA Program Requirements, and Performance Measures, as noted in the 2024–2025 Stronger Connections Grant Program Guidelines, and shall provide the Texas Education Agency, upon request, any performance data necessary to assess the success of the grant program.
4. The applicant will formally establish a Student Support Program at three district campuses (one elementary, one intermediate/middle school, one high school) to address school climate and establish a student support team structure aligned to the training and support provided by the Texas Center for Student Supports and the regional ESC. If the applicant has few than three campuses or does not have three of the listed types of campuses, the applicant will establish the Student Support Program and the student support team structure at all campuses, up to three, served in the district.
5. The applicant will allocate 6% of awarded funds for contracted services for technical assistance provided by the regional ESC. Complete the transaction with the regional ESC in a timely manner. Time is of the essence in completing the transaction to ensure that the program is implemented efficiently and effectively to successfully achieve the goals of the program.
6. The applicant will allocate 10% of awarded funds for professional and contracted services with a partner approved by the Texas Center for Student Support and TEA. Complete the transaction with the regional ESC in a timely manner. Time is of the essence in completing the transaction to ensure that the program is implemented efficiently and effectively to successfully achieve the goals of the program.
7. The applicant will use the family engagement playbook developed by the Texas Center for Student Supports to partner and build support with parents and families prior to a student support team assessment, and during the student support implementation process to facilitate a student support partnership with families.
8. The applicant will establish a parent, student, and staff advisory committee to provide input on the establishment of the Student Support Program.
9. The applicant will engage in Student Support Program planning activities from the beginning of the grant program through implementation at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year.
10. The applicant will establish and implement at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year, the Student Support Program aligned to the content and training provided by the Texas Center for Student Supports.
11. The applicant will incorporate a case management system into the student support team structure aligned to the training and support provided by the Texas Center for Student Supports.
12. The applicant will align the student support team structure with behavioral threat assessment team operation and outcomes to ensure that students are well supported and that the effectiveness of interventions are monitored.
13. The applicant will implement the data collection and reporting system developed by the Texas Center for Student Supports to gather and analyze data to monitor efficacy of the implementation of the Student Support Program, including student support team structure, quality of support leading to positive outcomes, and data related to increases in desired outcomes (e.g. increase in student support team referrals for nonacademic needs, increase in effective supports received by students, reduction in disciplinary incidents, reduction in bullying and harassment, increase in referrals for mental health services, reduction in removals from class, etc.).
14. The applicant will provide timely response to requests from TEA for information and data regarding program development, implementation, and performance and evaluation measures.

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9. Statutory/ TEA Program Requirements

1. Describe how the LEA will identify the campuses that will participate in the establishment of the Student Support Program described in the program description? Include the criteria or considerations that will influence the determination by the LEA.

The Varnett Public School consists of three campuses: one campus serves grades PreK through 6th; 2 campuses serve grades PreK through 8th. Because our district only has three campuses, and is at a 98.25% Eco-dis overall, all 3 campuses will participate in the establishment of the Student Support Program.

2. Describe how the LEA will ensure that campus leaders and staff are committed to the success of the Student Support Program.

Varnett is already investing in supporting some of the components of the SSSP program, such as newly implementing PBIS for the 23-24 SY, and using Behavioral Threat Assessment teams as a part of campus and district prevention planning in the 22-23 SY. Additionally, we currently employ a district social worker who works with families in need of non-academic support such as food, clothing, and healthcare, and 2 counselors who serve our students with social emotional support. It is paramount that leaders and staff understand the why behind this program in order to achieve buy-in and/or consensus from all. To do that, we will collaborate with Region IV to meet with district leadership in July 2023, to collaborate on what best practices look like, and how to transfer those practices to the campus level. During back-to-school professional development, campus leaders will collaborate with campus staff with the same goal in mind. Creating the parent/student/staff Advisory Committees will allow for ongoing collaboration between all campus stakeholders, and both the campus and district will use this feedback to monitor and adjust implementation practices.

Engaging parents and staff in student support roles on the campus will also work to ensure continuous voice and engagement as the process moves from planning to implementation. The district and campus will include parents in at least the following committees:

- Behavioral Threat Assessment Teams
- Safety and Security Committees
- Campus Advisory Committees
- SSP Team

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9. Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)

3. Describe how the LEA will engage parents and families to solicit support for the program.

Varnett will partner with the Texas Center for Student Supports, to implement best practices as outlined in the TCSS Family Engagement Playbook.

This work will include:

- aligning around a shared vision of the purpose of school
- implementing strategies that can be used for families and schools to work together
- providing information to parents and building relationships
- providing parents and families with opportunities to participate in training on student supports at home
- serving as a resource to parents and families in need of mental, behavioral, emotional and/or physical health resources
- identifying gaps and opportunities in parent engagement and creating action plans to address them

4. Describe how the LEA will ensure that there is adequate staff to support the establishment and implementation of the Student Support Program.

Varnett currently provides social services through 2 district counselors and 1 district social worker. Varnett is currently interviewing candidates for a new position, Executive Director of Student Services and Diverse Populations, which will work with the counselors, social worker and campus leaders to coordinate Varnett's Multi-tiered System of Support, and align the work of the SSP, Behavioral Threat Assessment, and School Safety teams. After the SSP plan is developed, this person will coordinate with the Executive Director of HR to determine additional staffing needs required to implement the SSP program with fidelity.

Varnett will hire a Project Manager (PM) who will work under the direction of the Executive Director of Student Services and Diverse Populations to work directly with campuses on effective implementation and ongoing progress monitoring of our SSP and associated grant program goals. Two campuses will share one FTE for a campus SSP Coordinator who will be the primary case management coordinator for the campus and liaise with the PM to coordinate activities at the campus level. The other campus will be given one FTE for this position. Additionally, campuses will be provided a Behavioral Interventionist who will work collaboratively with teachers, the school SSP team, and parents to develop and implement positive behavior supports for the classroom and within the school environment.

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9. Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)

5. Describe how each of the campuses will be supported by the grant program, if awarded, currently conduct behavioral threat assessments and how the campus will incorporate current systems into the student support team structure.

Each of Varnett's three campuses has a Behavioral Threat Assessment Team (BTA). Each member of the team receives annual threat assessment training provided by the Texas School Safety Center (TXSSC). Student referrals are made to the Campus Director. Once received, the Campus Director calls a BTA meeting in which the team assesses the case and determines action steps and providers. The Campus Director follows-up with the family and communicates how services will be provided.

As a part of the Student Support Team structure, each campus BTA team, led by the Campus SSP Coordinator, will meet to review and assess referrals, and to assign referrals to Case-Managers (CM). The CM will typically be someone who is a part of the campus MTSS, such as a Counselor, Instructional Facilitator, Behavior Interventionist, etc. The CM will work with the student, family, school, and external community to ensure the child receives the appropriate services. The BTA and CM work collaboratively to progress monitor and adapt services, until the case is closed.

This grant will also allow us to adopt new social-emotional curriculum to address the needs of our primary, elementary, and middle school students. This curriculum will be supported by our universal screening of all students, at the beginning of each school year. We will create and implement an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Prevention Plan, in order to prevent ACEs before they happen, identify those who have experienced ACEs, and respond using trauma-informed approaches. Additionally, wrap-around services for our staff, including after-school counseling, and after school wellness activities such as in-house yoga classes, walking groups, etc.

6. Describe how the LEA currently identifies student support needs and how it identifies and establishes partnerships with external mental health and behavioral health providers to meet student needs.

There are a number of ways Varnett identifies students in need of support. Internally, we have a Counselor referral form which is available on our website. Once received, referrals are either handled by our in-house counseling team (tiers 1-2), or through TCHATT tele-counseling or in-home counseling through external service providers (tier 3).

The district also provides a Social Worker to support staff and students. The Social Worker connects families to external service providers, to help meet their immediate needs. Stakeholders complete a Health and Wellness Request form via the website, indicating the type of services needed (food, healthcare, social-emotional, housing, transportation). Once received, the referral is processed by the Counseling dept. in collaboration with the district Social Worker, and parties are assigned to follow-up/ implement action items. These referrals are progress monitored through a tracker maintained by the Social Worker, indicating the level of priority, the referral date, services provided, and outcomes.

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9. Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)

7. Describe how the LEA currently partners with the regional ESC to support improvement in student mental health, behavioral and emotional health, physical health and wellbeing, and improving academic outcomes for students.

Varnett is currently in the planning stages for implementation of PBIS on all of it's campuses. We have partnered with Region IV to contract for on-site professional development. District and campus leaders will be trained in July 2023. Campus staff will be trained in August of 2023 with on-site followup on implementation throughout the 2023-2024 school year.

8. Describe how the LEA will use this grant program to supplement current work to improve services and supports for the mental health, behavioral and emotional health, and physical health and wellness of students.

Varnett will use a majority of this grant to supplement current district and campus staffing in respect to mental and behavioral health. Currently, Varnett employs 2 district counselors and one district social worker. These three positions serve all 3 campuses. We plan to supplement their work, by providing campuses with Campus SSP Coordinators to oversee implementation and continuous improvement of the SSP program on each campus. This position will liaise with the SSP project Manager, who will be responsible for spearheading the program from the district level, liaising with external partners, and collaborating with campus SSP Coordinators to ensure implementation with fidelity.

Additionally, campuses will be provided a Behavior Interventionist who will work directly with students, parents and teachers, on tier II and III behavior interventions, behavior remediation, and ongoing support.

Other elements of our work will include vetting and obtaining case management software and student reporting software. Use of these two platforms will allow for consistent implementation across campuses and ongoing monitoring of outcomes using this data.

We will also provide professional development for district and campus leaders and staff on social emotional learning and mental health and behavioral supports.

9. Enter the LEA Total Enrollment: 1,167

10. Enter the Regional Educational Service Center that serves the LEA: 4

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10. Equitable Access and Participation

Check the appropriate box below to indicate whether any barriers exist to equitable access and participation for any groups that receive services funded by this grant.

- The applicant assures that no barriers exist to equitable access and participation for any groups receiving services funded by this grant.
- Barriers exist to equitable access and participation for the following groups receiving services funded by this grant, as described below.

Group		Barrier	
Group		Barrier	
Group		Barrier	
Group		Barrier	

11. PNP Equitable Services

Are any private nonprofit schools located within the applicant's boundaries?

- Yes
- No

If you answered "No" to the preceding question, stop here. You have completed the section. Proceed to the next page.

Are any private nonprofit schools participating in the grant?

- Yes
- No

If you answered "No" to the preceding question, stop here. You have completed the section. Proceed to the next page.

Assurances

- The LEA assures that it discussed all consultation requirements as listed in Section 1117(b)(1) and/or Section 8501(c)(1), as applicable, with all eligible private nonprofit schools located within the LEA's boundaries.
- The LEA assures the appropriate Affirmations of Consultation will be provided to TEA's PNP Ombudsman in the manner and time requested.

Equitable Services Calculation

1. LEA's student enrollment	
2. Enrollment of all participating private schools	
3. Total enrollment of LEA and all participating PNPs (line 1 plus line 2)	
4. Total current-year grant allocation	
5. LEA reservation for direct administrative costs, not to exceed the grant's defined limit	
6. Total LEA amount for provision of ESSA PNP equitable services (line 4 minus line 5)	
7. Per-pupil LEA amount for provision of ESSA PNP equitable services (line 6 divided by line 3)	
LEA's total required ESSA PNP equitable services reservation (line 7 times line 2)	

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12. Request for Grant Funds

List all of the allowable grant-related activities for which you are requesting grant funds. Include the amounts budgeted for each activity. Group similar activities and costs together under the appropriate heading. During negotiation, you will be required to budget your planned expenditures on a separate attachment provided by TEA.

Payroll Costs

1.	SSP Project Manager (1 FTE across 2 years)	\$200,000
2.	Campus SSP Coordinator (2 FTEs across 2 years)	\$150,000
3.	Stipends for advisory committee members (10 ppl on each campus across 2 years)	\$60,000
4.	Behavior Interventionist (2 FTEs across 2 years)	\$160,000
5.	Stipends for SSP committee members (5 ppl on each campus across 2 years)	\$15,000

Professional and Contracted Services

6.	Required 6% of funds for technical assistance provided by the regional ESC	\$60,000
7.	Required 10% of funds to the Texas Center for Student Supports	\$100,000
8.	Partnership with Region IV ESC (behavior support)	\$30,000
9.	Mental health and wellness training and/or contracted services	\$30,000
10.	Case Management Software	\$20,000

Supplies and Materials

11.	Digital program that allows for student reporting of bullying or other issues	\$15,000
12.	SEL curriculum and supplies for each campus	\$15,000
13.	Potential PNP Equitable Services	\$10,000

Other Operating Costs

15.	Other training costs (youth mental & behavioral health, school safety, etc.)	\$8,700
16.		
17.		

Debt Services

18.		
19.		

Capital Outlay

20.		
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Direct administrative costs:

Indirect administrative costs: \$126,300

TOTAL GRANT AWARD REQUESTED: \$1,000,000

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Appendix I: Negotiation and Amendments

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 of the TEA website and may be mailed OR faxed (not both). **To fax:** one copy of all sections pertinent to the amendment (including budget attachments), along with a completed and signed page 1, to either (512) 463-9811 or (512) 463-9564. **To mail:** three copies of all sections pertinent to the amendment (including budget attachments), along with a completed and signed page 1, to the address on page 1. More detailed amendment instructions can be found on the last page of the budget template.

You may duplicate this page.

For amendments, choose the section you wish to amend from the drop down menu on the left. In the text box on the right, describe the changes you are making and the reason for them.

Always work with the most recent negotiated or amended application. If you are requesting a revised budget, please include the budget attachments with your amendment.

Section Being Negotiated or Amended	Negotiated Change or Amendment

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