

Special Education Stakeholder Engagement Grant for 2018-2019

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is actively seeking Letters of Interest (LoI) from potential grantees to provide opportunities for specific work toward statewide ***Stakeholder Engagement in the area of Special Education***. Interested regional Education Service Centers (ESC), Institutes of Higher Education (IHE), and/or nonprofit organizations should submit a LoI in the template included in Attachment A to TEA **by September 14, 2018 at 5 pm CST**. Potential grantees are encouraged to seek cooperative partnerships or collaborative agreements to successfully meet all goals and objectives of the grant. Funding is allocated from IDEA B Discretionary funds and scheduled for implementation in the 2018-2019 school year.

As a result of this request for LoI, Texas will have a cohesive and aligned way to solicit, incorporate, and report on the feedback from our diverse stakeholder groups. This will allow our official bodies to have regular meetings to provide feedback on important topics; our advocacy and representative stakeholder groups (SPED directors, parents, advocacy organizations) to have a formalized space to provide feedback and guidance on the design and implementation of those policies; and direct feedback from our end-users to report on how the efforts are actually working in the field. For the latter, there are two ways the work of this grant will accomplish this. The first is with the focus groups which will occur annually in each region of the state. These focus groups will provide an opportunity for all stakeholder groups (students, parents, teachers, administrators) to provide structured feedback in a formal setting. This feedback will focus on specific topics that TEA needs to better understand or measure so there will be a tight protocol and set of questions to drive towards that input. The second way is a much more informal, iterative process that is intended to cover significantly more of the state through public engagement volunteers. This is where the Agency may ask for feedback on a variety of topics and the volunteers are tasked with having conversations with people, representative of their communities, and reporting back on what they find. This information will be consolidated and reflected back to those same community members to help drive continued change. A summit held twice a year will be related to training/re-training, direction-setting, and feedback summaries. Together, this stakeholder engagement specifically targets and engages representative communities and groups on each stage of the process: policy-setting, implementation guidance, and reporting on effectiveness.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants for this funding opportunity are limited to the 20 regional education service centers and all institutions of higher education located in Texas and all nonprofits – geographic limits do not apply. Other for-profit organizations, foreign institutions, and individuals are not eligible to apply; however, they may participate with an eligible applicant as a project partner.

1.1 Program Description

The TEA continues to recognize the need for input and feedback through stakeholder activities to inform decisions which impact the education and services for students with disabilities in Texas. To facilitate activities that promote communication, increase opportunities for, and the quality of, stakeholder input into state-level supports for students served by special education, the agency is offering a grant designed to provide facilitation services to significantly increase meaningful interaction between TEA and a wide range of stakeholders that represent the state demographically and geographically.

Additional considerations and clarifications:

- TEA will be responsible for the content of meeting materials such as agendas, presentations, etc. however, the grant awardee will produce materials in hard copy format as required and will prepare all electronic materials for web posting in compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- All materials, including meeting minutes, are the property of TEA and subject to TEA approval.
- TEA staff are responsible for their own travel arrangements in accordance with TEA procedures.

1.2 Program Goal

The goal of this grant is to significantly improve stakeholder engagement practices and facilitate opportunities that will optimize agency resources toward achieving meaningful interaction and the collection of critical feedback from stakeholders.

1.3 Program Activities

Strong applications will demonstrate the ability and structure for foundational and logistical support to achieve the program goal. Additionally, strong applications will include robust plans for thoughtful planning toward increasing diverse stakeholder interest and involvement, ability to plan for meetings at locations statewide, and the creation of products or processes that can be replicated in support of local district and regional stakeholder activities.

It is required that the proposed programs contain, at a minimum, the following:

- Facilitation of logistics for all agency required or requested stakeholder meetings specific to special education as described in the Special Education Stakeholder Engagement Plan which can be accessed at www.tea.texas.gov/TexasSPED/. A reference chart has been included as Attachment C to this Request for Lol.
- Production of meeting minutes and preparing them for web publication in compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- Coordination of activities regarding membership recruitment, agendas, meeting spaces, meals, logistics, and associated materials;
- Creation, maintenance, and marketing of a database of stakeholders' representative of the state who are interested in various methods of engagement with TEA;
- Creation of suggested rosters of committee participants based on agency requirements for various stakeholder group meetings.
- Facilitation of pre and post surveys intended to measure the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement regarding special education in Texas
- Facilitation of public engagement volunteer summits

1.4 Program Budget

\$500,000 has been budgeted for this grant program.

1.5 Timeline

Lols must be submitted electronically to sped@tea.texas.gov by 5pm (CDT) on September 14, 2018, in order to be considered. Hard copy mailed or delivered Lols will not be accepted. Applicants should combine all attachments and documents into one PDF to include a cover sheet and table of contents. Grant awardees will be notified by October 1, 2018, with the grant period to begin October 15, 2018. This is a one-year grant that may be extended for additional years at TEA discretion.

1.6 Closing and Next Steps

Questions regarding this request for Lol should be sent to sped@tea.texas.gov prior to August 31, 2018, and will be answered through an FAQ that will be posted to www.tea.texas.gov/TexasSPED/ and updated regularly as questions come in. When submitting questions, applicants should include the name of this grant in the subject line. Applicants should refer to www.tea.texas.gov/TexasSPED for details and updates regarding this request for Lol.