SIP Academy Grant
Application for Funding
(funding under NCLB, Section 1003(g); CFDA # 84.377A)

PURPOSE

The School Improvement Fund, appropriated by Congress for the first time for 2007-08, is authorized in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) statute under Title I, Part A, Section 1003(g). This grant has been named the "SIP Academy" grant in Texas by the state Title I Committee of Practitioners.

Improving campuses is a joint responsibility for campuses, local educational agencies (LEAs), and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Section 1003(g) of Title I of the NCLB Act, authorizes funds to help TEA and LEAs address the needs of campuses in improvement, corrective action, and restructuring in order to improve student achievement. In conjunction with the Title I School Improvement Program funds under section 1003(a), SIP Academy grants are to be used to leverage change and improve technical assistance under sections 1116 and 1117 of Title I, Part A through TEA's and LEAs' targeting activities towards measurable outcomes as required by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE). Expected results from the use of these grants include improving student proficiency, increasing the number of campuses that make adequate yearly progress, and using data to inform decisions and create a system of continuous feedback and improvement.

Section 1003(g) of the ESEA authorizes a formula grant to TEA to assist schools identified for improvement, corrective action, and restructuring. TEA is required to subgrant at least 95 percent of the allocations to LEAs on behalf of campuses in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring to support technical assistance to such campuses and to make available additional resources to implement school improvement activities.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY

For School Year 2008-09, USDE has approved an amendment to the states application for Section 1003(g) funds to allow campuses in Stages 1 and 2 of School Improvement, after the final AYP release, will be eligible to apply for the SIP Academy grant. Grantees meeting the grant requirements and objectives may apply for two additional years of continuation funding, as long as the campus remains in school improvement status and is served with Title I, Part A funds.

In the event that not enough funding is available to fund all the Stage 1 and 2 campuses that apply, then a priority to small and rural campuses will be implemented. NOTE: For school year 2008-09 adequate funding is available to fund all Stage 1 and 2 campuses and this priority will not be implemented.

Grants will be awarded equally among the Stages 1 and 2 campuses choosing to apply, ensuring the statutory minimum of $50,000 per grant. Each LEA authorized official, by signing the grant application, agrees for the campus to participate in the administrative coaching and additional external technical assistance beginning in the second year of the grant. Coaching and external technical assistance services

will be pre-paid by the TEA through the School Improvement Resource Center (SIRC), as existing technical assistance provider (TAP) services are paid under SIP funding.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

It is logical to begin any discussion on school improvement with research based data. A program or practice being considered for implementation by a campus should be substantiated with both sound theory and successful results derived from a similar school situation. In this age of education reform and accountability, districts and campuses need to be confident that their instructional models, methods, and materials have been proven effective.

A customized program of technical assistance and professional development that is directly relevant to district and school goals, needs, skill levels, and learning preferences is essential to continuous school improvement. This system, focused on capacity-building, should be long-term, integrated into daily practice, and accompanied by the expectation that what is learned is implemented through follow-up and feedback.

Year 1 Grant Required Activities

Campuses must conduct the following specific activities with grant funds:

a) data disaggregation,
b) comprehensive needs assessment,
c) campus planning activities, and
d) campus team building activities.

If the campus enters the grant program in 2008-2009 by submitting the required amendment by June 1, 2009, the data disaggregation, comprehensive needs assessment, campus planning, and team building activities are specific activities that must be implemented and completed by the end of the fall semester, preferably by the end of the summer, so that the Year 2 activities may begin as early in the following school year as possible. These activities must be conducted as specific grant activities and implemented with integrity to the grant program; not simply addressed briefly at existing faculty meetings or SBDM meetings.

Years 2 and 3 Grant Required Activities

Based on the activities required and conducted in Year 1, the SIP Academy grant in Years 2 and 3 (both with any carryover funds and with Years 2 and 3 Continuation funding) must include customized professional development that is designed to build the capacity of LEA and campus staff to improve schools and is informed by student achievement and other outcome-related measures. These systemic activities must begin as early in the school year as possible.

The grants must focus on on-going, systemic professional development in the following areas:

a) continued team building for the staff on the campus;
b) leadership, including but not limited to coaching and mentoring; and
c) instructional strategies identified by the data disaggregation, needs assessment, and campus planning processes and aligned to improve student achievement and other outcomes identified.

SIP Academy funds used for professional development are required to align to the uses of other NCLB funds on the campus. At a minimum, the SIP Academy funds must be coordinated with Title I, Part A and

SIP funding. The professional development to be implemented by the SIP Academy funds must be integrated with existing Title I, Part A and SIP funding professional development. Since all eligible campuses operate Schoolwide programs, the campus will have the flexibility to consolidate the SIP Academy funds on the schoolwide campus--as long as the specific SIP Academy grant activities are implemented to upgrade the entire educational instructional program of the campus.

Grant Requirements

1) A majority of the campus staff (defined as at minimum, the administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals on the campus) and appropriate district-level staff must participate in all required grant activities.

2.) The grant may pay for the reasonable and necessary costs related to:
   a) facilities rental, if space is not available at the LEA,
   b) contracted services for a facilitator not to exceed local district policy,
   c) extra-duty pay for staff not to exceed $100 per day; and
   d) costs for child care not to exceed $25 per child per day.

3) The campus will receive ten days of service from an external administrative coach (provided by SIRC) focusing on coaching the principal and instructional leaders. The coaching services are pre-paid by TEA through the SIRC.

4) In years 2 and 3 of the grant, the campus has the choice and may receive 10 additional days from the campus' external technical assistance provider (TAP). If chosen, the TAP services will be pre-paid by TEA through the SIRC.

5) The campus and LEA staff must participate in the TEA's web-based discussion groups which will be developed with assistance from the Texas Comprehensive Center. This will serve as a follow-up tool for monitoring implementation of the grant activities.

6) The LEA must ensure that campuses receive the benefit of the pre-award and carryover provisions for both the Section 1003(a) and Section 1003(g) funds ensuring the campus has access to the funds to implement the required activities in a timely manner.

7) The LEA and campus principal must assure that the grant program will be implemented with their full support.

8) The SIP Academy grant may include other strategies/activities in addition to the required activities described above, as determined by the LEA and approved by the TEA, for which data indicate the strategy/activity is likely to result in improved teaching and learning in schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

9) The campus must submit requested evaluation data and activity reports to the TEA or SIRC upon request. This will include such things as activity agendas, sign-in sheets, minutes, and other data from the required activities as well as evaluation data to be determined during the development of the grant program evaluation.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Eligible Stage 1 SIP campuses will apply for the SIP Academy through the existing SIP grant application in eGrants. A separate budget column for the SIP Academy grant has been added to the existing SIP application for all budgetary information. Additional programmatic information will be completed (Schedule PS3010) and attached to the application.

SIP Stage 1 campuses in your LEA may take advantage of this grant opportunity now by the LEA applying for the funds on behalf of the campus by amending the campus' existing SIP application in the state's automated eGrants system no later than June 1, 2009. If the LEA or campus decides not to take advantage of this opportunity now, the campus will have another opportunity to apply for the funds when the 2009-2010 SIP application becomes available in September 2009.

Each campus will describe the following in the application for funding process.

a. A description of the data disaggregation, comprehensive needs assessment, and campus planning process to be used to identify the instructional needs of the campus and the professional development to be implemented to address those needs and align to the School Improvement Strategies supported by the TEA.
b. Measurable objectives for the individual campus toward the goal of exiting school improvement after two years.
c. The commitment of the campus principal and the LEA to implement the grant with integrity.

Coaching and external technical assistance services will be pre-paid by the TEA through the School Improvement Resource Center (SIRC), as existing technical assistance provider (TAP) services are paid under SIP funding.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO GRANT RECIPIENTS

The SIP Academy funds received by the state also provide for technical assistance to grantee campuses from the TEA. The School Improvement Resource Center (SIRC) will provide technical assistance to the grantee campuses on behalf of TEA by providing the following assistance:

a) Assistance to the grantee campuses to develop the data disaggregation, comprehensive needs assessment, campus planning, and team building activities;
b) Provide training for staff in the design of academy activities;
c) Provide administrative coaching services;
d) Provide guidance in design of the agendas for grant activities and follow-up activities
e) Provide formative evaluation of the revised campus plan; and

SIRC will also conduct the following grant activities.

a) Collect and review agendas from grant activities;
b) Coordinate for sharing of successful academy strategies at the Texas School Improvement Conference; and
c) Training and oversight of administrative coaches in the coaching process.

CONTINUATION GRANTS

Campuses awarded SIP Academy grants that make sufficient progress in implementing the goals and objectives of the grant will be eligible for continuation grants for up to two additional years as long as:

a. The LEA ensures that campuses receive the benefit of the pre-award and carryover provisions for both the Title I SIP grant and SIP Academy grant funds ensuring the campus has access to the funds to implement the required activities in a timely manner.
b. The campus is not carrying over a large percentage of either the Title I SIP or SIP Academy (after the first year) funds.

If a large percentage of either the Title I SIP or SIP Academy grant (after the first year) funds are not expended and are carried over, then the campus may not be awarded a second or third year continuation grant.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

TEA will monitor the performance of campus grantees on AYP and the measurable objectives set by the campus in the application for funding. In addition, the TEA is currently developing, with the assistance from the TXCC, an evaluation to determine the effectiveness of this grant program. The effectiveness will be measured by a review of all grantees and with a more targeted evaluation of a pilot group of campuses.

In the event that the campus is not making progress toward meeting the goals and objectives of the grant, the TEA will require the campus to contract for additional assistance through the regional ESC and review the implementation of the grant program. In the event that the campus does not make progress in meeting the goals and objectives of the grant after the maximum three years, the campus will be ineligible for any new SIP Academy funding in the future.