

Science Laboratory Grant Program

Texas Education Code (TEC) and Texas Administrative Code (TAC) References

TEC, §7.062; 19 TAC §61.1037 (adopted to be effective June 29, 2008; amended to be effective September 1, 2010)

History/Relevant Background Information

The Science Laboratory Grant Program was created by the 80th Texas Legislature in 2007, and the commissioner of education initially adopted rules establishing application procedures and other guidelines for the program in 2008.

In 2008 and 2009, per the program's authorizing statute, funding for the program came from any difference between the amount appropriated for the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) and Existing Debt Allotment (EDA) programs, and the amount necessary to fund those programs (up to \$20 million per year). In 2009, the 81st Texas Legislature made a direct appropriation for the Science Laboratory Grant Program for the 2010–2011 biennium. For 2010, funding for the program came directly from that appropriation, as it will for 2011.

The initial grant application cycle opened in March 2008 and closed May 15, 2008, with awards to eligible districts made in June. All subsequent application cycles have opened in February and closed in April, with awards to eligible districts made in May or June. Twenty million dollars in grants was awarded each year from 2008 through 2010. Fifteen million dollars has been budgeted for grant awards in 2011.

Until 2010, program grants were available to only school districts, as the program was funded with excess IFA and EDA program funds, and those programs are available to only school districts. In 2010, with the direct appropriation for the Science Laboratory Grant Program, the program was opened to open-enrollment charter schools as well. Revised rules reflecting this program change were adopted in September 2010.

Description of Program/Funding Element

The program provides competitive grants to school districts and open-enrollment charter schools for the purpose of constructing or renovating high school science laboratories. To be eligible for a grant, a school district or charter school must demonstrate that its existing science laboratories are insufficient in number to comply with the curriculum requirements imposed for the recommended and advanced high school programs. The program's authorizing statute requires the commissioner to provide for ranking school districts and charter schools that apply for grants on the basis of property wealth per student and giving priority in the award of grants to applicants with low wealth per student. For purposes of ranking within the grant program, a charter school's property wealth is defined as being equal to the property wealth of the school district from which the highest percentage of the charter school's students are drawn.

Contact for More Information

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