



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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RFA/SAS #

2024-2025 Stronger Connections Grant

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
85% Economically Disadvantaged	Food pantry, personal hygiene, clothing closet, and other items not covered by food stamps, playground equipment, picnic tables, benches, StopIt App for connecting with the school, CrisisTextLine, or therapy, and Snack Packs to go home each Friday to provide snacks for students throughout the weekend.
Low Attendance Rate for the 2022-2023 school year for a school of this size.	Utilize Apptegy Rooms app to communicate with parents, Attendance incentives, Attendance and Community Closet paraprofessional assigned to track attendance, contact parents, and even provide transportation when needed. Making the school a community hub of resources including a safe playground.
High percentage of office referrals that required ISS or OSS in the 2022-2023 school year (46 ISS/OSS) for just 115 students (roughly 25% of the children at the school involved in discipline).	Inner Explorer daily mindfulness program, Full-time Counselor, StopIt for virtual counseling, Presentations brought to the school to address Vaping and drug use, and focus on underlying unmet needs (and meeting them) when inappropriate behaviors surface.

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.

As a small rural school serving exceptionally impoverished families, we need to provide students and caregivers with the resources they need in order to show that we are striving to meet their everyday needs. We want to establish resources for students and families to allow them to see long-term success. Our plan will in turn allow these students to see that we can address their needs which will in turn increase attendance, parent participation, lessen the number of office referrals, and increase overall academic achievement for students. By the end of the project, ALL of our families will know how to access information and resources through the Apptegy Rooms app, the STOPIt app, our Community Closet, our School Counselor, and our Attendance Support staff. Also by the end of the project, we will realize at least a 10% reduction in discipline/office referrals, and a 10% increase in attendance.

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 the first quarter, teachers and administrators will have developed a plan (with student and parent input) for items to purchase for the district's Community Closet. There will also be a plan for how to notify parents and students of the upcoming program changes and new resource opportunities. All new families transferring in will be made aware of all opportunities and the district's commitment to supporting each family's unique needs. Outputs: Plan for Community Closet, Communication Plan for current and new students and families.

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6. Measurable Progress (Cont.)

Second-Quarter Benchmark

By the second-quarter, parents and students will have been notified and trained how to access the programs and resources that are available. We will have hired a paraprofessional to run the Community Closet and to help support attendance/reduce truancy for the district. The district administration will have a more positive way to address discipline issues that start by focusing on underlying causes for behavior. The Inner Explorer program will be in place for a daily start to help both teachers and students start with a calm and safe mind, heart, and spirit, to ensure the best learning environment for all students.

Third-Quarter Benchmark

By the end of the quarter, the district--after implementing the new programs--will see a 5% decline in office referrals, along with a 5% increase in overall student attendance. The parent and school relationship will be stronger (as measured by parent surveys and feedback) because parents will see that the school has become more of a community to them that offers resources that assist both them and their child in achieving an overall sense of well-being, and increased attachment to school.

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.

Parent, student, and teacher surveys will be utilized starting quarterly to help not only drive our program development and implementation, but to also ensure that the overall mental, physical, behavioral, and emotional needs are being met by the established program. As a district, if there are areas that we are weak in addressing, it is our responsibility to make the necessary adjustments to our program to make sure it is meeting the original goals set by the administration and teachers. Parent and student voice will be highlighted for our Board along with data provided by our two apps (Apptegy Rooms and STOPit) as well as our full-time counselor and our Community Closet/Attendance Support paraprofessional. That information and data will help the Board to know which programs are working as designed and should be sustained to increase attendance, wellness, community reputation, and student achievement.

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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.

We are a one campus district that houses grades PreK-12, and the program will be open to all grade levels. The Student Support Program will serve all of our students (~115). Since we are literally the only thing in our area (no surrounding community or resources) our project will focus on providing all aspects of both schools and community safety and wellness. The school will be the hub of our rural area and we will encourage parent and student engagement at our school in many ways outlined throughout this application including providing a safe, accessible community playground at the school. A study in collaboration with George Mason University analyzing a National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) community rejuvenation project in Washington D.C. demonstrated a significant increase in visitation once there was a safe place for children and youth to play. It also shows that visitors placed greater emphasis on their health and well-being after spending time in the park. Community parks and playgrounds also enable social well-being among visitors, beginning with children's first social interactions on the playground. All-inclusive playgrounds give children with disabilities the opportunity to play shoulder to shoulder with their peers. Children with access to parks and community playgrounds have been shown to more effectively achieve social developmental milestones, including team work and problem solving skills. Playgrounds also bring together caregivers and parents, promoting social interaction among adults and further strengthening the community. Play should not be seen as tangential to learning, experts say, but should be viewed instead as the natural way young children learn. "The parts of the brain that are most developed in the early years are the ones that respond to active experiences," said Dee Ray, a professor of early childhood education and director of the Center for Play Therapy at the University of North Texas College of Education. In contrast, the parts of the brain that allow children to learn by listening to a lecture or watching a video are developed later, she added. "The brain is structured to learn from experience first, and then learn through all the other means that we usually use [to teach]," she said. "Play is essential to education. Play is education for children." Play is so powerful that it is often used as a form of therapy for children who deal with anxiety or trauma.

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

The commitment from campus leaders and staff will come by collaborating together to directly discuss students and their families. Teachers know these children and their families the best--due to small class sizes, and it will be their input that will help drive the success of the program. Due to the fact that many students are transfers from neighboring districts, this will be a fluid plan because needs change as students and families enter and leave the district. Having the outline of the Student Support Program for the many students who transfer into our district from neighboring districts each year will be help get those students to understand our school culture and expectations. Each year, a large percentage of our students transfer in from larger surrounding schools often due to bullying and/or discipline issues. Both of these can lead to school avoidance and build family distrust of the school. Sharing available resources with families at their first "touch" with the district will encourage a fresh and positive start to the relationship. Resources included with our proposed student support project include the following:

- *Attendance incentives and support (including transportation from the Attendance paraprofessional)
- *Food pantry and weekend snack packs
- *Hygiene and essential items closet
- *Safe and accessible community playground
- *Inner Explorer--evidence-based daily mindfulness program for teachers and students
- *Apptegy "Rooms" addition to our current Apptegy App for better parent communication
- *Student safety, wellness supports, and mental health therapy through the STOPit App--including anonymous two-way chat with school responders, 24/7/365 support from STOPit's Incident Response Center, and in-app access to CrisisTextLine, for all community members, staff, students and families; and, access to in-app therapy to support those students in grades 6-12 who have ongoing mental health therapy needs. As a school with extremely limited

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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.

By using the school app (Apptegy and Rooms), parents and families will be kept up to date on the program implementation at every point. The district will host family nights to kick-off the Community Closet implementation as well as a community ribbon cutting ceremony for the school/community playground. Parent and family surveys starting after the second quarter will be instrumental in continuing with the program and it's goals. The district will share these results with stakeholders, community, staff, and parents in hopes of continuing to build strong community and family relationships which is one of our goals for this program. Again, since so many of our students are transfers in, sharing available resources with families at their first "touch" with the district--whether in Pre-k, kindergarten, or upon transfer in will encourage a fresh and positive start to the school/family relationship.

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

Our small rural district has no social worker, no school psychologist, no school nurse and just a part-time counselor. To ensure the success of the program, we are requesting to move to a full-time counselor to assist in meeting the emotional and mental health needs of our students and their families. The counselor will also assist in bringing in special programs for students, staff, and families about the dangers of drugs and vaping to hopefully bring some awareness to the dangers of these products, as well as the new laws around these products and school discipline. We recognize that drugs are often used as coping mechanisms in both families and students. Our multi-faceted student support program is aimed at meeting the underlying needs of our families and students to reduce family stress, build engagement, and make sure students show up for school and are ready to learn when they get there. Secondly, we propose to hire a paraprofessional to help run the Community Closet as well as be a leader for our attendance incentives and truancy deterrent program. They will be in charge of tracking student absences, contacting parents immediately when a student is absent, and even providing transportation for those that might need it in order to get to school. Incentives include Community Closet "bucks" that students and families can use in our community closet to get items that are critically important to wellness but that cannot be purchased with food stamps. Our system will be based on a proven program being used in a small outlying school in Nashville, TN. The whole idea will be using our teachers extensive knowledge of our students (created due to our smaller class sizes) to ensure students and their families can get their basic needs met without shame or blame. Similarly, when a student is disciplined, the program staff (led by the current Principal/Superintendent) will look for the underlying reasons for the behavior, and try to meet the unmet needs of the child first and foremost. Meeting the needs of our students, and providing opportunities for crisis support and therapy will help to free up staff time currently being spent on student discipline and other behaviors that are a result of unmet needs as opposed to a desire to be "bad."

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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.

We are a single Pre-K-12 campus, and the only thing in our area. Per state law, we have a threat assessment team, as multi-disciplinary as practicable. Our "local" police are 15 miles away and are part of our threat assessment team along with the school counselor (when available), any involved teacher, the Principal/Supt and the Guardian team in our school (as needed), to review threats that come in in person or via the anonymous reporting system the district already maintains from STOPit Solutions. We believe that adding resources and therapy options to our known ARS app (which includes CrisisTextline, and 24/7/365 incident monitoring for the app) will increase engagement and hopefully lead to students sharing information before there is a serious threat. Members of our support team will also participate in training and resources provided by the Texas Center for Student Supports and our Regional ESC.

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.

Due to being in a rural area with no surrounding community, and only having a part-time counselor, our teachers are a critical front line for student supports. "Inner Explorer" will help our stressed and isolated teachers be more regulated, along with helping them regulate their students each and every day. Making the counselor full-time will also double the amount of support for our students and families. The addition of student-directed teletherapy for our students in grades 6-12 will provide a true therapy option for those students who have no other way to access these services due to barriers including transportation, cost, lack of out-of-school-time therapists, and others. Therapists will be available for our students from 7am-10pm seven days a week through the STOPit app, The app has been supported in the district for years already, and we are just expanding the app with this grant to include student-directed therapy. As we plan for our Community Closet, teachers and families will be surveyed to find out which items are most needed by the families and students we serve.

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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.

We attend training provided, and know we can reach out to them for help, but we recognize the importance of having more supports on-site so that families can be best served and more closely engaged with the school. The ESC does provide services when the district reaches out for assistance. The can offer specialist to come to the school, the can provide resources available to the districts, as well as contacts outside of the ESC to assist with the needs of students and families. The biggest drawback for the district is the fact that the ESC is logistically not within range to provide immediate or localized assistance when it becomes necessary.

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.

Our district has a new Principal/Superintendent and frankly, we have very few in-school resources, and no community resources. Our board has spoken in the past about a full-time counselor, and already supports both the STOPit app and the Apptegy App. Building on what we have and what our families already know makes the most sense. Since the Board is already aware of the current supports, our needs, and is discussing the need for more school counselor time, we believe that our plan will have the highest likelihood of sustainability as well. This grant opportunity will give us a huge kickstart to changing our district's reputation, climate, and culture from being under-resourced, dilapidated, and discipline-heavy, to one that engages and supports families, is aware and supportive of the importance of student play and wellness, and is a welcoming community hub that provides safe, accessible outdoor space and critical resources that our families need for their children to succeed academically.

9. Enter the LEA Total Enrollment: 115

10. Enter the Regional Educational Service Center that serves the LEA: 16

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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	115
2. Enrollment of all participating private schools	0
3. Total enrollment of LEA and all participating PNPs (line 1 plus line 2)	115
4. Total current-year grant allocation	0
5. LEA reservation for direct administrative costs, not to exceed the grant's defined limit	20,000.00
6. Total LEA amount for provision of ESSA PNP equitable services (line 4 minus line 5)	20,000.00
7. Per-pupil LEA amount for provision of ESSA PNP equitable services (line 6 divided by line 3)	174.00
LEA's total required ESSA PNP equitable services reservation (line 7 times line 2)	174.00

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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.	School Counselor	60,000.00
2.	Paraprofessional	20,000.00
3.		
4.		
5.		

Professional and Contracted Services

6.	Required 6% of funds for technical assistance provided by the regional ESC	22,000.00
7.	Required 10% of funds to the Texas Center for Student Supports	35,000.00
8.	Appetegy Rooms App	11,000.00
9.	StopIt App	4,000.00
10.	School presentations	6,000.00

Supplies and Materials

11.	Playground Equipment	200,000.00
12.	Community Closet Items	40,000.00
13.	Inner Explorer and Attendance Incentives	8,000.00

Other Operating Costs

15.	Disposal of old equipment	2,000.00
16.		
17.		

Debt Services

18.		
19.		

Capital Outlay

20.	Site Preparation	2,000.00
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Direct administrative costs: 353,000.00

Indirect administrative costs: 57,000.00

TOTAL GRANT AWARD REQUESTED: 410,000.00

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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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