



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
Historically, the identified campuses have experienced lower attendance rates due to high mobility and economically disadvantaged barriers; therefore, students and families need additional support and interventions.	Provide personalized attention by using a multi-tiered approach that includes services such as: awareness sessions, community outreach, mentoring, self-monitored student portfolios, community agency referrals, intervention strategies, Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, and additional services provided by district personnel and student support team
Students attending schools in the proposed program sites historically have higher rates in disciplinary placements and referrals and need additional support through individualized intervention plans.	Provide constant and consistent support through program curriculum, counseling, mentoring, referrals to community agencies as needed, and ongoing communication with the program student support team, parents or guardians.
Students attending schools in the proposed program sites have historically higher rates in suicide ideations and bullying and need additional support, staff and programs promoting prevention awareness.	Provide intervention services and activities through an aligned evidence-based curriculum, student/family wellness sessions, counseling, community outreach programs, mentoring, district licensed professionals, student support team and other mental and physical health professionals.

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.

The objective of this program is to target the Whole Child by addressing the CASEL 5 Core Competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making). The United Stronger Connections Support Team (USCST) will develop an individualized plan, use an evidence-based curriculum, and utilize district and community resources to address individual student and family needs. By September 2025, students identified as part of the U-Strong Connections cohort will meet an attendance rate of a minimum of 90%. There will also be a reduction of disciplinary placements, referrals, mental health outcries and bullying reports.

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

The first quarter benchmark will be measured in November, 2024. Data collection will include: student attendance, disciplinary placements/referrals, mental health outcries and bullying reports. Quarterly behavioral threat assessments reports will be compared to the beginning of the year baselines set for student progress. Results will be shared and discussed with program staff, faculty, students and parent advisory council. Any noted areas of improvement will be identified and addressed in order to better meet students' needs. Program modifications, action plans and student interventions will take place as deemed necessary.

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6. Measurable Progress (Cont.)**Second-Quarter Benchmark**

The second quarter benchmark will be measured in February, 2024. Data collection will include student attendance, disciplinary referrals/placements, counselor referrals and classroom observations. A middle of the year stakeholder survey will also be conducted. Students and parents will be surveyed on their overall satisfaction of the program and whether the support received is adequate and beneficial. Data will be compared to the first quarter progress set for individual students. Results will be shared and discussed with program staff, campus faculty, students and parent advisory council. Any noted areas of possible improvement will be identified and addressed in order to improve program functioning to better meet student needs. Program modifications, action plans and student interventions will take place as deemed necessary.

Third-Quarter Benchmark

The third quarter benchmark will be measured in May, 2025. Data collection will include student attendance, disciplinary referrals/placements, school counselor referrals, classroom observations and parent engagement attendance. Data will be compared to the first and second quarter progress set for individual students. Results will be shared and discussed with program staff, faculty, students and parent advisory council. Any noted areas of needed improvement will be identified and addressed in order to improve program functioning to better meet students needs. Program modifications, action plans and student interventions will take place as deemed necessary.

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.

United ISD will utilize a collection of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis. Data collection and analysis of program services will be ongoing by the program coordinator, student support team, campus administration and other program facilitators. The student support team will collaborate with four District Data Evaluators that will assist in the program data disaggregation and evaluation. Monthly meetings will be held in order to gather feedback and evaluate program effectiveness through data analysis, observations, TEA Program Specific Assurances, stakeholder surveys, and student portfolios. Tracking student progress and achievement will take place using our locally developed student database. Individual student achievement will be monitored using progress reports, report cards, attendance, behavior referrals and overall social emotional wellbeing.

These processes will evaluate the program's progress to include planning, implementation, service delivery, student outcomes, overall project effectiveness and attainment of SMART goals. Areas in need of reinforcement and refinement will include collaboration with program coordinator, student support team, regular school staff, campus administrators, families and community organizations to modify the program curriculum, activities, tiered grouping, professional development needs, interventions and schedules. Our data analysis and evaluation will help guide the program coordinator and district leaders in making critical decisions throughout each quarter to make modifications that will support and ensure student academic progress and 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.

The three recommended sites will be identified using campus attendance reports, Level 2, 3, and 4 disciplinary placements/mandatory placements, TCHATT referrals, SOS referrals, campus bullying reports entered into the student management system(Tyler), the student data portal, feedback from the campus counselor and administrators reporting summary, and reports from the assigned Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) facilitator and Gang facilitator.

After reviewing campus data, the team identified two middle schools and their feeder high school campus. The identified feeder pattern schools service approximately 4,500 of our 41,000 students with 86% Economically Disadvantaged and with 68% At-Risk students. This will allow the team to track the cohort's progress, collect data and measure the effectiveness to determine improved academic achievement and the overall well-being of students throughout the grant period.

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

The program coordinator, along with the Federal & State Programs Department, will use a Continuous Evaluation Model to ensure that feedback is used to identify areas of improvement. To gain campus support from administrators, faculty and staff, the initiative will be prioritized by first identifying the purpose and goals of the program. Staff development training will be held on each campus to fully explain the plan initiative. The Stronger Connections team will be introduced and roles will be specified for clarity. The team will seek full collaboration with all stakeholders. As the grant moves forward, the team will continue to communicate with all staff to garner student data and progress on an ongoing basis. Campus administrators, counselors, and teachers will be invited to the Stronger Connections meetings to provide input on individual students whom they are servicing. Information will be shared throughout the year during faculty meetings to provide monthly summative data to communicate program progress.

The goal for this grant will be for the U-Strong cohort of students to become active and engaged in campus leadership activities through a more inclusive, positive campus culture and learning environment. Evidence of student progress will lead to increased and continuous support from all stakeholders.

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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.

The LEA will engage parents and families to solicit support for the program by providing various informational workshop opportunities to explain the program, their role and the anticipated results for their child(ren). The informational workshops will take place at different times and dates to ensure parental and community participation.

The community will be informed of the program by the United Independent School District (UISD) using the following strategies in both English and Spanish: -

- Automated telephone and email messages will be sent to the targeted students' homes using our district notification system (Parent Square). Currently, over 95% of our parents use a district issued email assigned at the time of registration.
- Produce a Public Service Announcement (PSA) through our district Instructional Television Department that will air in the local news and radio stations.
- Collaborate with our district Communications Department to organize a promotional campaign to inform our community about the program services and benefits.
- Informational posters will be displayed in local businesses and community centers.
- Information will be posted on district and campus websites.
- Information will be posted on the district's social media pages (i.e Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
- Information will be handed out during school registration at each campus.
- Information will be posted on school marquees.
- Flyers and brochures will be distributed by mail and included in the End of the Year Report Card.

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

A highly qualified Program Coordinator, a Campus Intervention Coach(CIC) per campus, and two Community Resource Specialists will be responsible for overseeing the daily activities, procedures, and implementation of the program. The team will work collaboratively with school administrators, counselors, nurses and faculty. Collaboration will also include other district members that will contribute information and resources for further interventions. District members will include the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) Facilitator, Gang Facilitator, District Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC), Licensed Specialists in School Psychology (LSSP), Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselors (LCDC), medical personnel from the Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHAT-UTRGV) and community outreach agencies. The team will also seek support and input from parents, the Texas Center for Student Support and TEA. The Stronger Connections Team, along with campus and community partnerships, will ensure the development of the Whole Child by addressing social-emotional, academic, cognitive, and behavioral needs. Establishing an advisory council will help support the committee through the process ensuring student growth and success.

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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.

Currently, each campus has a Behavior Threat Assessment Team which is composed of an administrator, counselor, police officer, nurse and teacher. A threat may be reported anonymously, through social media, through the district online reporting system, or by a student, teacher or counselor.

The behavior threat assessment team meets to evaluate the incident and uses the Navigate 360 program, which implements the National Threat Assessment Center Tool (NTAC). The team discusses each incident to determine the threat level (minimal, moderate, high, and imminent). If it is determined to be a threat, it will be entered into Navigate 360. All referrals are analyzed and appropriate interventions are assigned.

If awarded, the Campus Behavior Threat Assessment Team will refer students, using the program matrix or rubric, to the United Stronger Connections Team in order to provide additional services and interventions. Individualized plans will be developed to meet the specific needs of the whole child.

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.

The mental health of students can affect their education, social life, and emotional well-being. The United Independent School District (UISD) identifies student support needs using a Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS). During these meetings, it is important to gather information from teachers, counselors, parents, and administrators to assess the student needs. The interventions will be based on the intensity of support the student may need. For students who are at-risk for suicide, a Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale is completed by a trained professional and the level of need will determine the intervention the student will be provided. Another avenue to identify a student in need of support is through a Counseling Referral Form indicating the student area of concern. One of the Comprehensive School Counseling Program service delivery components is Responsive Services. The purpose of Responsive Services is to intervene on behalf of students whose immediate personal concerns or circumstances put their continued education, career, personal, and social development at-risk. Based on the level of need, responsive service may be preventive, remedial, or crisis oriented.

A referral to an external mental health and behavioral health provider is necessary when circumstances exceed the school counselor's role, professional knowledge, or skills. Partnerships are established with these providers through Cooperative Working Agreements or Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs). UISD and the agencies work together to provide evidenced-based and informed services through its prevention, intervention, treatment, and/or recovery support service programs. Several of our external providers are the following: Serving Children and Adults in Need (SCAN), Pillar, Border MHMR, Gateway Community Health Center, Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHAT), Area Health Education Centers, and Texas A&M International University.

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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.

United ISD partners with the Region I Education Service Center and other ESCs throughout the state of Texas that allow the district personnel to join listserv groups that provide information and training which includes mental health sessions, resources, PEIMS coding, Counselor Director meetings and any TEA updates which encompass an array of topics. These trainings allow participants to gain knowledge and improve current practices in the district. We also contact the Region One Education Service Center to provide training in our district.

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.

United ISD currently has Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC), Licensed Specialists in School Psychology (LSSP), Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselors (LCDC), and a Police Officer at each campus. However, with the increase in enrollment and the number of mental and behavioral issues and concerns our resources are limited. Currently, our families have to travel over 150 miles to receive adequate mental health services. This creates a financial burden on families who have limited resources and limits medical intervention. Through the Stronger Connections grant, students and parents will have better opportunities to receive services. Alignment and monitoring of interventions will ensure quality services for students in need, resulting in positive outcomes. The program will include a Program Coordinator that will monitor initiatives, review data, and program progress. A Campus Intervention Coach will be assigned to each site to serve the identified students and a Community Resource Specialist will assist in connecting additional community resources to better assist the students.

The dedicated attention of the United Stronger Connections Team will strengthen community collaboration, enhance services and reinforce continuous and connected services for students. This grant will expand access to proven treatments, intervention and other recovery supports while developing new and innovative solutions to strengthen mental and physical health services.

9. Enter the LEA Total Enrollment:

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

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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.	Project Coordinator	\$ 91,470
2.	Campus Intervention Coaches	\$ 212,377
3.	Community Resource Specialist	\$ 203,139
4.	Program Assistant	\$ 34,905
5.	Extra Duty Pay (Instructional Staff & On Site Program Site Program Support Staff)	\$ 339,389

Professional and Contracted Services

6.	Required 6% of funds for technical assistance provided by the regional ESC	\$72,581
7.	Required 10% of funds to the Texas Center for Student Supports	\$120,969
8.	Leadership Coaching	\$15,000
9.	Professional Development	\$20,000
10.		

Supplies and Materials

11.	Supplies & Materials (Consumables, Curriculum, Family Engagement, etc.)	\$200,000
12.		
13.		

Other Operating Costs

15.	Employee Travel (Required Conference, Trainings, Meetings, etc.)	\$35,000
16.	Transportation	\$5,000
17.		

Debt Services

18.		
19.		

Capital Outlay

20.	Laptops, Computers, Printers	\$15,000
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Direct administrative costs:

Indirect administrative costs: \$44,753

TOTAL GRANT AWARD REQUESTED: \$1,409,583

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

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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
<input type="text"/>	
<input type="text"/>	
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