



2021-2023 Expansion of Dual Credit Faculty for CCRSM LOI
Letter of Interest (LOI) Application Due 11:59 p.m. CT, April 12, 2021

NOGA ID

Authorizing legislation **General Appropriations Act, Article III, Rider 49, 86 TX Legislature; TEC §29.908(b) & 102.1091**

This LOI application must be submitted via email to loiapplications@tea.texas.gov.

The LOI application may be signed with a digital ID or it may be signed by hand. Both forms of signature are acceptable.

TEA must receive the application by **11:59 p.m. CT, April 12, 2021**.

Application stamp-in date and time

Grant period from

Pre-award costs are not permitted for this LOI.

Required Attachments

1. Excel workbook with the grant's budget schedules (linked along with this form on the TEA Grants Opportunities page)
2. Attachment 1: CCRSM Crosswalk
3. Attachment 2: Letter of Instructional Assurances
4. Attachment 3: Letter of Hiring Assurances from Higher Education Partner(s)
5. Attachment 4: Participant Roster
6. Attachment 5: Letter of Educators' Commitment

Amendment Number

Amendment number (For amendments only; enter N/A when completing this form to apply for grant funds):

Applicant Information

Organization CDN Campus ESC DUNS

Address City ZIP Vendor ID

Primary Contact Email Phone

Secondary Contact Email Phone

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 LOI application, as applicable, and that these documents are incorporated by reference as part of the LOI application and Notice of Grant Award (NOGA):

- LOI application, guidelines, and instructions
- Debarment and Suspension Certification
- General and application-specific Provisions and Assurances
- Lobbying Certification

Authorized Official Name Title

Email Phone

Signature Date

Shared Services Arrangements

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are permitted for this grant. **Check the box below if applying as fiscal agent.**

- The LEA or ESC submitting this application is the fiscal agent of a planned SSA. All participating agencies will enter into a written SSA agreement describing the fiscal agent and SSA member responsibilities. All participants understand that the "Shared Services Arrangement Attachment" must be completed and signed by all SSA members and submitted to TEA before the NOGA is issued.

Statutory/Program Assurances

The following assurances apply to this program. In order to meet the requirements of the program, the applicant must comply with these assurances.

Check each of the following boxes to indicate your compliance.

1. The applicant provides assurances that a maximum of \$25,000 will be requested for reimbursement per educator for expenses related to tuition, fees, and travel during the life of the grant. Additional costs will be the responsibility of the LEA or participant upon a local agreement.
2. The applicant provides assurances that all participants serve within the eligible CCRSM in the 2021-2022 school year. Participating educators must each sign a Letter of Educator's Commitment which will be collectively submitted as Attachment #5.
3. The applicant provides assurances that successful completion is defined as an average of 75% or higher in each course completed. All expenses related to participation in the accelerated credentialing program (e.g., tuition and fees, textbooks, travel expenses) are eligible for reimbursement by TEA upon successful completion of courses per term.
4. 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 LOI 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.
5. 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.
6. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Statutory and TEA Program requirements as noted in the 2021-2023 CCRSM Expansion of Educators Eligible to Teach College Courses LOI Program Guidelines.
7. The CCRSM program leader(s) will submit a CCRSM designation (renewal) application for designation in 2022-2023 and for designation in 2023-2024.
8. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Performance Measures, as noted in the 2021-2023 CCRSM Expansion of Educators Eligible to Teach College Courses Program Guidelines, and shall provide to TEA, upon request, any performance data necessary to assess the success of the program.
9. The applicant provides assurances that an academic year signed and dated memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the dual credit provider will be publicly posted by August 15, 2021. The MOU must address the following elements: Eligible courses; Student eligibility; Location of the class; Composition of students in the class; Faculty selection, supervision, and evaluation; Course Curriculum, Instructional Materials and calendar; Academic policies and student support services; Data-sharing policies and procedures; Courses of study that lead to an associate degree or up to 60 hours of college credit toward a 4-year degree; Administration of statewide assessments; Transcription of credit and Funding.

TEA Program Requirements

1. Identification of Needs: Describe your plan for identifying dual credit faculty needs for this grant, as well as in the future. What systems will you put in place to ensure each CCRSM cohort is offered a sequence of coursework which will lead to a postsecondary credential?

Vanguard Charter Academy is located in Pharr, a city with a 38.1% poverty rate (compared to Texas' 13.6%) and 79,115 residents (US Census 2019). In 2019, Pharr's unemployment rate was 6.6% compared to Texas' 3.5% (Texas Labor Market 2020), and its median household income is \$39,884 compared to the state's \$61,874 (US Census 2019). Vanguard's three Early College high schools are all designated as College and Career Readiness School Models (CCRSM) campuses (10 Priority Points). However, the charter is in need of qualified faculty to meet the demand for high school dual courses. Thus, Vanguard Academy is looking within its staff to meet this need. The charter identified dual credit faculty needs by measuring how many teachers currently teach dual courses, how many of those have master's degrees, and how many are willing to return to school to get certified to teach dual credit courses.

As aforementioned, Vanguard Charter Academy has three Early College high schools. Of the teachers at Vanguard Mozart Early College High School, 77% of them have bachelor's degrees, but only 23% have master's degrees; 83% of their students are economically disadvantaged. In Vanguard Rembrandt Early College High School, 67% of teachers hold bachelor's degrees, but only 33% hold master's degrees; 74% of their students are economically disadvantaged. In Vanguard Beethoven Early College High, 90% of teachers hold Bachelor's, but only 10% hold master's; 66% of the students are economically disadvantaged. The state average for teachers with bachelor's degrees is 73.4% while the average for instructors with master's degrees is 24.5%. Two of Vanguard Academy's high schools have rates of teachers with master's degrees lower than the state average. All three high schools' students are considered Title I (2019-20 TAPR Report), and 99% are Hispanic.

Vanguard's high schools are seeking to expand their dual credit courses in the core areas that will allow students to graduate with an associate's in Interdisciplinary Studies, and specifically History, Math, Government, English, Computer Science, Engineering, and Biology. The proposed courses will enable students to earn both high school and college credit, allowing them to graduate with an associate's degree, or sixty college hours, or core complete.

2. Program Design: Name the university partner(s) which will provide graduate level instruction to participating educators. Describe in detail how the LEA will coordinate with the university partner(s) to design an accelerated credentialing program. What are the university's roles and responsibilities in building a program to expand the number of educators credentialed to teacher college courses?

Vanguard Charter Academy has partnered with the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), a 4-year Institution of Higher Education, to provide graduate-level instruction to participating educators and develop an accelerated credentialing program. UTRGV was created by the Texas Legislature in 2013 as the first major public university of the 21st century in the state. The university has campuses and off-campus research and teaching sites throughout the Rio Grande Valley, including in Boca Chica Beach, Brownsville (formerly The University of Texas at Brownsville campus), Edinburg (formerly The University of Texas-Pan American campus), Harlingen, McAllen, Port Isabel, Rio Grande City, and South Padre Island.

Vanguard's chosen program teachers will not have to drive far to attend UTRGV, as the university has a McAllen campus that is 10 minutes driving from Rembrandt ECHS (located in Pharr), 20 minutes from Mozart ECHS (located in Alamo), and 15 minutes from Beethoven ECHS (located in Edinburg). UTRGV's main campus in Edinburg is approximately 10 minutes from Beethoven, 20 minutes driving distance from Mozart's campus, and 20 minutes from Rembrandt. The close distance of the University will make the instructor's commute to receive their dual accreditation a safe and convenient one if instructors choose to attend in person. However, if they decide to attend online courses, UTRGV does offer new accelerated programs for educators that are 100% online and can be completed in as little as 12 months, further facilitating the teachers' attendance in their graduate courses.

Vanguard Academy will coordinate with UTRGV to design a credentialing program that includes specifically History, Math, Government, English, and Biology. The university will offer Vanguard's eight (8) teachers their required courses. UTRGV offers a wide variety of graduate degrees sought by Vanguard's teachers, including over 50 degrees in science and liberal arts.

Vanguard Academy partnered with UTRGV in several academic initiatives, such as College and Career Fairs, and with their Department of Educational Leadership and Bilingual Education. The university is a trusted source of quality education in its area, proving it can partner with neighboring school districts and charter schools for students' benefit and for the future of the community and workforce.

TEA Program Requirements (Cont'd)

3. Hiring: Name the dual credit provider(s) who will hire educators. How will the applicant collaborate with the dual credit provider? What steps will take place to ensure that the courses taken by the educator will meet the accrediting standards of the hiring dual credit provider? What are the roles and responsibilities of the hiring dual credit provider?

Vanguard Charter Academy has partnered with South Texas College (STC) as their dual credit provider. The college will collaborate with the charter by hiring Vanguard’s educators as dual credit faculty members once they become accredited in their area of study, which will include: History, Math, Government, English, and Biology.

Once the grant has been awarded, STC’s Dual Credit Department staff will meet with Vanguard’s eight instructors and the charter’s Project Director when designing the program and its use of grant funds. Their meeting will discuss the instructors’ areas of study, the charter’s established specific programmatic needs for specific college-level courses, the charter’s need for their identified dual credit courses and instructors, and the credentials the instructors must meet. STC staff and charter staff will hold a follow-up meeting to determine critical areas needed for Vanguard’s Dual Credit Program’s success, such as the targeted number of students for dual credit courses.

STC has met both the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) requirements necessary to be considered a dual credit provider. The college aided in the charter’s completion of the required Course Crosswalk (10 points) detailing the dual courses offered to Vanguard students. Currently Vanguard Academy and STC have monthly meetings between their superintendent and College President. Vanguard’s Leadership team and STC’s Leadership team also met frequently on a weekly basis but have established meetings between the institutions.

4. Sustainability Plan: Describe the sustainability plan to be implemented which can support the ongoing efforts of the CCRSM campus(es) to address capacity challenges for offering college-level courses beyond the life of the grant. How will the applicant build upon the success of this program to expand college course offerings for high school students in the future.

Vanguard Academy Charter’s sustainability plan will rely on its partnerships with STC and UTRGV in order to sustain its Dual Credit Enrollment Program beyond the life of the grant. Depending on changes to the list of high-demand and high-wage occupations in the area, Vanguard will assess which dual courses it can implement to reflect the area’s workforce needs. Vanguard Academy is currently a member of the Rio Grande Valley Linking Economic & Academic Development (RGVLEAD). Vanguard’s superintendent is also a board member of the organization. Vanguard Academy uses RGVLEAD’s yearly Labor Marker Report to plan and strategize which pathways the report lists as high-demand and high-wage, and those are the courses Vanguard offers their students. Through evaluations of local workforce data and student/parent surveys measuring the community’s needs, Vanguard will collaborate with its IHE’s to provide quality education that will benefit its students’ post-grad life.

To build upon success, Vanguard will expand college-level course offerings for its future high school students, the charter will take advantage of its systems already in place, such as its partnerships with IHE’s. The charter will evaluate available local, state, and federal funds, including TEA’s Title II, Part A-Supporting Effective Instruction, to recruit and retain teachers with appropriate credentials to expand dual credit course offerings. Vanguard Academy will also assess funds from Career and Technology Education (CTE) for its CTE teachers.

TEA Program Requirements (Cont'd)

5. Recruitment and Retention: How were teachers identified and recruited? What new practices will be put into place to support their completion of the accelerated credentialing program? What commitment has the applicant made to educators to ensure that they will be able to teach college courses upon satisfaction of meeting credentialing requirements? What commitment has the applicant asked of educators to ensure that they will continue to serve the CCRSM beyond the grant period to teach college-level courses?

Vanguard Academy conducted an online staff survey to identify teachers and explain the grant program to identify interested educators. Eight (8) teachers responded positively, showing a willingness to pursue their master’s degrees through the grant program with the intent of teaching dual credit courses at their respective high schools.

Since selected educators will be teaching and studying full-time, they may experience burnout and mental fatigue. To avoid this crisis, Vanguard Academy and UTRGV will implement new practices, such as a “Support Guidance” program for selected teachers. Trained staff from the university’s Student Services and Career Center will conduct meetings with said teachers monthly to discuss time and stress management while guiding them towards university resources like counseling and career advisors. Institutionalized support will help Vanguard’s teachers maintain the drive and enthusiasm needed to complete their graduate studies. Vanguard Academy also provides their teachers and staff free access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Through the EAP, all staff is entitled to receive free counseling and mental health services for them and their families. The Charter School also has a full-time “Licensed Therapist” that provides counseling and mental health session to all faculty and staff. These two initiatives have proven effective and instrumental during the current pandemic. These services will continue and will definitely help teachers and staff who are experiencing burnout or need social and emotional services.

To guarantee that selected teachers will teach their intended dual courses upon completing their credentialing requirements, Vanguard Academy Charter will enter into contract partnerships with its two higher education institutions and with the educators themselves, ensuring that the eight teachers honor their commitment to teaching dual credit courses after the grant period ends. This act assures the charter’s commitment to the program’s success.

In order to ensure the educators’ commitment, selected educators are required to sign the grant application’s Letter of Educator’s Commitment. This form will also serve as the charter’s local obligation. Individuals who complete the Dual Expansion program will be required to sign an agreement to stay at least two years beyond their accelerated program’s completion date.

A hiring addendum outlining the roles and responsibilities of both the charter and its selected teachers was created by the charter, emphasizing a commitment to retain the educators through the summer of 2025. Once funding has been awarded, the charter will conduct a Grant Orientation while collecting sign-in sheets of expectations for the Dual Faculty Expansion program.

Budget Narrative

Include a narrative describing how the proposed budget will support the needs and goals of the program, including for staffing, instructional expenses, supplies, materials, contracts, travel, etc. Describe any matches that are anticipated to support this program, either by the LEA, college partner, or educator. Describe the disbursement plan for the expenses incurred by educators participating in the program. Describe anticipated risks for this project and the adjustments which may be made over the course of the grant period.

The charter will utilize grant funds to pay for the following:

Personnel: The charter allocated \$20,080 of the awarded grant funds for direct payment to the Project Manager overseeing the program.

Professional Contract Services

The charter will be paying UTRGV up front for its teachers' tuition and fees and will be reimbursed through the grant funds. Also, the charter will be paying to cover costs for grant implementation. The charter is eligible for a maximum amount of \$25,000 per teacher in grant reimbursements. The total amount allocated for teachers is \$166,500.

Supplies and Materials

Eligible expenses for grant reimbursement include books, supplies, and materials related to the educator's studying needs. The total amount allocated for supplies and materials is \$23,900.

Other Operating costs

UTRGV is located less than 25 minutes away from Vanguard's multiple high school campuses; therefore, Vanguard has allocated limited travel funds for their eight (8) teachers. Enrollment expenses were also taken into account when calculating other operating costs, such as GRE's required to enter a university graduate program. The total amount allocated for other operating costs is \$10,400.

The charter anticipates possible risks relating to their selected teachers' conclusion of their degrees. For example, teachers run the risk of falling below the required grade average of 75 due to their long work and study hours. To combat this possible crisis, as mentioned, UTRGV's "Support Guidance" program will allow teachers to utilize the university's online tutoring, time management, and counseling resources. Teachers also run the risk of dropping their graduate studies. However, their contractual obligation at the beginning of the grant period will ensure they commit to teaching with Vanguard for at least two years following the grant period's end.

Appendix I: Amendment Description and Purpose (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. The following are required to be submitted for an amendment: (1) Page 1 of the application with updated contact information and current authorized official's signature and date, (2) Appendix I with changes identified and described, (3) all updated sections of the application or budget affected by the changes identified below, and, if applicable, (4) Amended Budget Request. Amendment Instructions with more details can be found on the last tab of the budget template.

You may duplicate this page

Amended Section

Reason for Amendment