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

Texas Education Agency

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	**May 27, 2021 to June 15, 2023**

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	Spring Independent School District	CDN	101919	Campus	003, 021	ESC	4	DUNS	060716685

Address	16717 Ella Boulevard	City	Houston	ZIP	77090	Vendor ID	174002339

Primary Contact	Lupita Hinojosa	Email	lhinoj1@springisd.org	Phone	281-891-6180

Secondary Contact	Jennifer Cobb	Email	jcobb@springisd.org	Phone	281-891-6387

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):

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

Authorized Official Name	Rodney Watson	Title	Superintendent of Schools

Email	rwatson@springisd.org	Phone	281-891-6025

Signature _[signed]_ Date 4/12/21

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?

Over the last 10 years, Spring ISD has dramatically expanded its dual-credit course offerings, from 4 courses in 2011-2012 to 51 courses in 2020-2021. As the district's program offerings continue to grow and more students opt to participate, the demand for qualified teachers has also increased. The Spring Early College Academy (SECA) is an established Spring ISD school that is housed at a Lone Star College (LSC) campus. Since the school's inception, the need for additional faculty, who are qualified to teach upper-level, dual-credit courses has existed. The opportunity for existing faculty to continue their educational goals, while also becoming qualified to teach upper-level courses will help alleviate the staffing strain that occurs annually as the district tries to recruit qualified staff to this relatively small school, which serves about 400 students. Additionally, the P-TECH program at Dekaney High School (DHS) will begin in the 2021-22 school year. Currently, DHS is equipped to serve the needs of incoming 9th graders with appropriate staffing; however, as those 9th graders matriculate, the campus will see an increased demand for dual-credit teachers and they do not currently have enough qualified staff members on campus. The Expansion of Dual Credit Faculty for CCRSM Campuses Grant and its timing will serve these campuses well as teachers complete their coursework right as the demand for dual-credit teachers reaches an overwhelming state on these campuses.

Both SECA and DHS have established crosswalks which students employ to earn their associate degrees. In recent years, SECA has seen three years of cohorts graduate with associate degrees, with the last class graduating 68 students. As a result, the program has been utilized and adjusted to maximize the number of students graduating with and associate degree. The P-TECH program at DHS was funded by a TEA P-TECH and ICIA grant. Part of the grant application required Spring ISD to establish a P-TECH partnership with a local university and providing a course-sequence, whereby students can feasibly graduate within six years with an associate degree and industry certification. To that end, Spring ISD partnered with LSC and immediately benefited from LSC's many partnerships with other local districts. The course sequence, created by Spring ISD and LSC, was submitted and approved by TEA and ensures that all students in this sequence will earn a postsecondary credential.

Spring ISD annually reviews the completion of Associate Degrees through LSC. In general, any barriers in course offerings are mitigated as students move through the selection process. This same process occurs for CTE pathways at participating high schools and will also occur for the P-TECH program. Finally, pathways for which students express little to no interest are considered for consolidation to ensure students are able to complete their pathways, associate degrees, and diploma selections.

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?

The University of Houston - Central Campus (UH) has committed to providing the graduate-level instruction necessitated by the grant. UH and Spring ISD have entered into several partnerships, including some grants, that have been mutually beneficial for students and staff of both parties. In fact, Spring ISD has three employees who are currently benefiting from a UH grant. Through this grant, the three employees are able to pursue their doctorate degrees in special population, at no cost to the employees. That grant requires the employees to continue to serve in their current roles and serve special populations once they earn their degrees. Furthermore, Spring ISD currently employs staff members who are adjunct faculty and/or guest speakers for the UH College of Education.

The University of Houston has committed to provide an accelerated credentialing program for those staff members who wish to pursue an advanced degree or 18 hours of specialization. In fact, many of the district's identified needs will easily be met through the partnership with UH, given the university's robust programming and accelerated course offerings. Furthermore, UH has agreed to provide a cohort-like setting for Spring ISD staff members, regardless of their chosen area of study, in order to better support their matriculation in the program. The cohort setting would include support structures, such as monthly cohort meetings and a dedicated advisor to assist students in this program. In addition, participating staff members will engage in yearly kickoff meetings with their cohort to discuss progression toward meeting program requirements and upcoming expectations for the year. Spring ISD employees who currently serve as adjunct faculty and/or guest lecturers at UH, have committed to facilitating this cohort at the district level. Through these commitments from UH and Spring ISD employees, the district believes its participating staff members will be fully supported, both at the district and university levels. Spring ISD and UH have developed a preliminary strategy, mapping out how identified teachers will have their needs met through a combination of adding teachers to preexisting programs and through the provision of special course offerings, when appropriate.

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?

The dual-credit provider for this grant, if awarded, will be LSC. The qualifying staff members who participate in this grant are already employees in Spring ISD and will remain so once they complete their coursework. The role of LSC will be to ensure that the participating staff members meet the criteria required to teach dual-credit courses and that the participating staff members' course offerings will fit into the course sequences established at SECA and DHS (P-TECH). Prior to the onset of the program at UH, each teacher will have a collective meeting with UH, LSC, and Spring ISD to ensure that the selected degree or concentration plan is is understood and teachers are aware of necessary courses each semester. Prior to beginning the program, this plan will be verified and approved by LSC for each proposed dual-credit course to be taught. Participating Spring ISD employees will remain employees upon completion of the program and will receive stipends to teach dual-credit courses. This process is already well-established with the district's existing dual-credit teachers at SECA and DHS, as well as at its other high schools. More specifically, LSC will take part in the cohort meetings held in Spring ISD to make the applicants aware of the process required to teach dual credit courses, in addition to notifying participants about the training opportunities and benefits they can receive as dual-credit teachers. LSC currently provides annual training opportunities for dual-credit teachers. These trainings will be extended to the cohort, when appropriate, prior to the completion of their coursework. Further, LSC will enlist guest speakers to help teachers understand the broader system of dual-credit and how it benefits Spring ISD students, in the long term. UH will be responsible for ensuring that the necessary coursework and accelerated credentialing opportunities are available to participating teachers.

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.

To ensure success for both the district and its staff members, a solid, well thought-out sustainability plan is essential. Embedded in this grant is the district requirement for all interested staff members to continue to serve the district, teaching at the respective high schools, for two years after completion of their course work. At a program level, the P-TECH program in particular, will need to continue to recruit qualified staff to teach the expanding dual-credit courses as students matriculate. The lessons learned from this grant will serve the campuses well, as they recruit and hire additional staff for these courses. The grant also gives Spring ISD the opportunity to create a pipeline of teachers who are either pursuing advanced degrees and/or required specialization hours to teach dual-credit courses. Spring ISD intends to continue and support this pipeline, as well as its wraparound services, long after the grant period has ended. This includes creatingand maintaining Spring ISD cohort support at UH and maintaining periodic check-ins with participating staff. Check-ins will be performed by adjunct UH faculty who are also Spring ISD employees, as well as applicable Human Resources staff, who will focus on teacher development.

Spring ISD is committed to expanding its course offerings for students. In fact, the district's strategic plan explicitly addresses this commitment through its strategy to provide opportunities and choice for every family, with the additional imperative of strong college readiness and support structure. Spring ISD's long-term commitment is evidenced through its creation of the Division of Innovation and Equity, which this grant and its related work will be housed under. This grant, if funded, will allow Spring ISD the opportunity to dovetail the efforts of the Early College Academy and P-TECH program by preparing staff to better support the efforts being implemented at the district level.

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?

Teachers at both SECA and DHS were provided with the opportunity to attend an informational session, hosted by the Assistant Superintendent of Research, Accountability, and Assessment, who oversees most aspects of CCMR, including the College Readiness Department and the Career and Technical Education Department. This informational session included details about the parameters specified by the grant, the school work and time commitment involved, and the support structures they can expect. Interested teachers were asked to complete an interest form and were contacted to schedule interviews. During the interviews, discussion centered around the interested teacher's current needs and the area(s) s/he was interested in teaching. This information was subsequently shared with campus principals at SECA and DHS to ensure the campus' needs would also be met. When the interested teacher's interest aligned with campus needs, the contact information for the interested teachers were shared with UH and LSC to ensure that each teacher's specific needs could met.

Interested teachers were then asked to sign a district-created commitment form, stating that the interested teachers would pursue their coursework in earnest, maintain acceptable grade-point averages, and would commit to teaching at their designated high schools for two additional years after completion of the program. The commitment form also outlined how Spring ISD will pay for coursework on a semester-by-semester basis, as long as the employee stays at the designated campus. If the teacher chooses to leave prior to completing the program, additional funding for coursework and support will no longer be provided.

New practices include the creation of a degree or concentration plan to ensure that the courses offered will lead to the desired degree or concentration completion, enabling teachers to eventually qualify to teach their desired dual-credit courses. In addition, a cohort-support system will be created and supported by UH and Spring ISD, where teachers will meet as a cohort periodically, regardless of their chosen area of study.

During the spring 2021 interest meetings and interviews, Spring ISD teachers expressed concern regarding several issues. First, they expressed a desire for strong support from both principals and district leaders. Principals have already committed to flexibility in scheduling. Further, the cohort-support system was developed based on discussions with potential participants in Spring ISD. Finally, assistance with the UH admission process will be given to participants, along with degree-plan meetings, to ensure that participants are meeting goals and expectations.

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 cost of each teacher's tuition and fees will be paid in full by Spring ISD and disbursed to UH at the beginning of each semester (including the summer semester). Additionally any costs associated with books will be reimbursed by the district, using grant funds through the established Reimbursement of Expense process, outlined by Spring ISD's Procurement Department. When possible, cohort meetings will be held on district property to minimize travel expenses. The district is committed to continue providing teachers with a dual-credit stipend once they receive accreditation; however, this will occur after the grant as a continued support measure.

UH is committed to supporting the teachers funded by this grant with the required coursework at an accelerated pace, with cohort support. A dedicated cohort contact will receive a grant-funded stipend to organize the cohort, meet with them regularly, provide direct support, and provide opportunities for growth through guest speakers. Spring ISD will also participate in cohort activities without grant funding, as a form of matched support. UH is also committed to establishing a pipeline, intended to assist teachers while they pursue advanced degrees, beyond the life of the grant. Part of the work of this grant will be to lay the foundation for the aforementioned LSC and UH commitments, while providing adequate support for Spring ISD's teachers to succeed. Finally, funds have been allotted to pay for the miscellaneous supplies required for cohort meetings and in the general functions of the grant.

The anticipated risk associated with this grant is that participating teachers may choose to leave the district prior to completing the program. This situation would result in lost expenses and effort for Spring ISD. Additionally, participating teachers may have mitigating reasons, once coursework is complete, resulting in the district losing a dual-credit teacher. Despite the associated risks, an internal evaluation of teacher retention rates within Spring ISD revealed that the longer teachers stay in the district, the more likely they are to maintain a long-term commitment to the district. This trend in the data provides a hopeful outlook, suggesting that through the provision of resources and steady employment during the grant period Spring ISD teachers will be motivated to fulfill their commitments to stay in the district once the grant period has ended.

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.

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Amended Section   **Reason for Amendment**