

# PROGRAM GUIDELINES:

## 2021-2023 TEXAS SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS (T- STEM) PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION GRANT

### **APPLICATION DUE DATE**

11:59 p.m. Central Time, November 10, 2020

### **PROGRAM AUTHORITY**

Authorized by General Appropriations Act, Article III, Rider 49, 86th Texas Legislature, and Texas Education Code (TEC), §§ 39.235

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## Introduction to the Program Guidelines

The Texas Education Agency (TEA), as the pass-through entity<sup>1</sup>, is the grantee<sup>2</sup> from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and TEA awards subgrants to non-federal entities<sup>3</sup> such as local educational agencies (LEAs), including school districts, open-enrollment charter schools, and education service centers, and to a lesser degree institutions of higher education (IHEs), and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) who are the agency’s subgrantees<sup>4</sup>. These guidelines apply to all subgrantees of TEA, regardless of whether referenced herein as subgrantee or grantee. For purposes of this document, TEA may use the terms grantee and subgrantee synonymously for its subrecipients.

This part of the request for application (RFA). Program Guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) and the specific program instructions. The Adobe Acrobat Standard Application System (SAS) consists of all forms to be completed in order for the applicant to be eligible for funding.

For applicants selected for funding, all guidelines and instructions will be incorporated by reference into the Notice of Grant Award (NOGA).

## Reference to the General and Fiscal Guidelines

The Program Guidelines provide information specifically relevant to this grant program. The [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) provide information relevant to all TEA grant programs.. Throughout the Program Guidelines, cross-references are given to applicable sections of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#). **It is critical that you review all referenced sections of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) when preparing your application.**

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<sup>1</sup> Pass-through entity is defined as a non-Federal entity that provides a subaward to a subrecipient to carry out part of a federal program. (2 CFR 200.74)

<sup>2</sup> Grantee is defined as the legal entity to which a grant is awarded and that is accountable to the federal government for the use of the funds provided. The term “grantee” does not include any secondary recipients, such as subgrantees and contractors that may receive funds from a grantee. (34 CFR 77)

<sup>3</sup> Non-federal entity is defined as a state, local government, Indian tribe, institution of higher education, or nonprofit organization that carries out a federal award as a recipient or subrecipient. (2 CFR 200.69)

<sup>4</sup> Subgrantee is defined by TEA to be the same as a subrecipient which is defined as a non-federal entity that receives a subaward from a pass-through entity to carry out part of a federal program; but does not include an individual that is a beneficiary of such program. (2 CFR 200.93) Subgrantee is defined in 34 CFR 77 as the legal entity to which a subgrant is awarded and that is accountable to the grantee for the use of the funds provided.

**US Department of Education and/or State Appropriations**

The following is provided in compliance with the US Department of Education Appropriations Act:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Total funds available for this project	\$1,171,000
Percentage to be financed with federal funds	0%
Amount of federal funds	\$0
Percentage to be financed from nonfederal sources	100%
Amount of nonfederal funds	\$1,171,000

**Due to current conditions, the amount available to award may change in response to budget reductions that the State is experiencing.**

**The Notice of Grant Awards may need to be adjusted to reflect this reduction.**

## Grant Timeline

All of these dates except the grant ending date may vary slightly and are subject to change. **Due to COVID-19 TEA may require adjustments to the calendar and the timelines.**

Date	Event
September 11, 2020	RFA available; notice of the RFA published in the <i>Texas Register</i>
September 17, 2020	Last date to submit questions to be addressed in the applicant's Conference/Webinar See <a href="#">General and Fiscal Guidelines</a> , Applicants' Conference/Webinar
September 24, 2020	Applicants' Conference/Webinar; registration at <a href="https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2449353875409143311">https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2449353875409143311</a>
October 1, 2020	Last date to submit FAQs to TEA contact person See <a href="#">General and Fiscal Guidelines</a> , Frequently Asked Questions
October 9, 2020	Due date for the Notice of Intent to Apply; <a href="#">Notice of Intent to Apply</a>
October 9, 2020	Due date for Reviewer Information Form; <a href="#">Reviewer Information Form</a>
October 9, 2020	FAQs posted to <a href="#">TEA Grant Opportunities</a> page
November 10, 2020	Due date for the application in the TEA Document Control Center, 5:00 p.m., Central Time See <a href="#">General and Fiscal Guidelines</a> , Competitive Application Due Date and Time
November 20, 2020 – December 15, 2020	Competitive review period See <a href="#">General and Fiscal Guidelines</a> , Competitive Review Process
November 2021	Grantees are required to apply for designation to begin serving students in 2022-23.
February 15, 2021	Beginning date of grant See <a href="#">General and Fiscal Guidelines</a> , Grant Period
March 17, 2023	Final date to submit an amendment
June 15, 2023	Ending date of grant See <a href="#">General and Fiscal Guidelines</a> , Grant Period

For all dates related to the grant, including reporting dates, see the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) page. If a report due date falls on a weekend or holiday, the report will be due the following business day. All dates except the grant ending date may vary slightly as conditions require.

## Grant at a Glance

This section provides fundamental information pertinent to the grant program.

### Authorizing Legislation

This grant program is authorized by the Authorized by General Appropriations Act, Article III, Rider 66, 86th Texas Legislature, Texas Education Code §39.235

## Where to Submit the Application

See the Where to Submit the Competitive Application section of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#).

## Submission Requirements

See the Submission Requirements for Competitive Grants section of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#).

Note: TEA requires applications to be emailed. Multiple applications per applicant must be submitted in separate emails.

## Purpose of Program

The purpose of the Texas Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (T-STEM) Planning Grant is to develop new T-STEM Academies in the College Career Readiness School Model (CCRSM) Network aligned to the T-STEM Blueprint. The T-STEM Academy will provide students with technical, academic, and STEM fluency skills needed for a smooth transitional experience to postsecondary and the workforce. T-STEM Academies allow students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma with a STEM Endorsement while simultaneously earning industry certifications, level 1 or level 2 certificates, and/or an associate degree on or before graduation at no cost to the student.

T-STEM Academies will establish strong partnership agreements with local business and industry as well as institutions of higher education (IHE). The partners serve on the leadership and advisory team to provide support and guidance to the T-STEM Academy in resource acquisition, curriculum development, work-based learning, and leverage the STEM EcosySTEM to provide in and out of school experiences to ensure students develop critical academic, technical, and STEM fluency skills needed for the STEM career pipeline. In partnership with an IHE as well as the community and employers, a T-STEM Academy provides rigorous academic and authentic work-based learning experiences at each grade level providing students with clear pathways to regional employment opportunities in response to local workforce needs.

T-STEM Academies are public schools established under the Texas Education Code (TEC) §39.235.

## Eligible Applicants

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Eligibility To Apply for Competitive Grants.

LEAs that:

- Serve students in grades 9-12 with an active relationship with the feeder middle school(s) or serve students in grades 6-12. If proposing a 6-12 model, the T-STEM Academy **must serve** a middle grade (6, 7, or 8) and grade 9 during the Implementation Year (2022-2023) and will progressively scale up by adding at least one grade level per year in the high school. Priority points will be given to campuses with a 6-12 model.

Recipients of the 2018–2019 P-TECH and ICIA Planning Grant, 2019-2020 P-TECH and ICIA Planning Grant, 2018–2020 P-TECH and ICIA Success Grant, the 2019-2021 P-TECH and ICIA Success Grant, the 2020-2022 P-TECH and ICIA Planning and

Implementation Grant, or the 2020-2022 P-TECH Success Grant are not eligible for the 2021–2023 T-STEM Planning and Implementation Grant.

Recipients of the Lone Star STEM Grant are not eligible for the 2021-2023 P-TECH, T-STEM or ECHS Planning and Implementation Grant.

2020-2021 Planning, Provisional and Designated ECHS, P-TECH, and T-STEM campuses are not eligible for 2021–2023 T-STEM Planning and Implementation Grant.

More information about each program can be found at the [T-STEM Website](#).

### **Eligibility List**

An eligibility list is **not** posted on the [TEA Grant Opportunities page](#).

### **Shared Services Arrangement**

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Shared Services Arrangements.

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) **are not** allowed for this grant program.

### **More Than One Application**

Eligible applicants may not apply for the grant on behalf of more than one school.

### **Application Funding**

See the following sections of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#):

- Grant Funding
- Continuation Funding
- Fund Management
- Use of Funds

It is anticipated that approximately 7 grants will be awarded up to a maximum amount of \$150,000.

### **Cost Share or Matching Requirement**

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Cost Share/Match Requirement.

TEA requires a 20% match for this grant program.

### **Limitation of Administrative Funds**

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Administrative Costs.

#### ***Direct Administrative Costs***

TEA limits the amount of direct administrative costs for this grant program to no more than 10% of the total grant award.

#### ***Indirect Administrative Costs***

The grantee may claim a maximum for indirect costs equal to the lesser of their current, approved restricted indirect cost rate or 15% for this grant program.

To calculate the maximum indirect costs that can be claimed for a grant, complete the [Maximum Indirect Costs Worksheet](#), posted on the Administering a Grant page, under the Handbooks and Other Guidance section.

### Pre-Award Costs

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Pre-Award Costs.

Pre-award costs **are not** permitted for this grant.

### Applicant Assistance

The following types of assistance are available to applicants for this grant program.

### Contact for Clarifying Information

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), TEA Contacts.

The following TEA staff member should be contacted with questions about the RFA, the grant program, or for assistance with the applicants' webinar:

Michelle Sedberry  
STEM Coordinator  
College, Career and Military Preparation  
michelle.sedberry@tea.texas.gov  
Phone: (512) 936-6202

### Frequently Asked Questions

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Frequently Asked Questions.

The FAQs for this grant program will be posted to the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) site no later than the date listed on the Grant Timeline. Applicants may email their questions to the TEA staff member listed in the Contact for Clarifying Information section.

### Applicants' Conference/Webinar

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) Applicants' Conference/Webinar.

Questions that applicants wish to have addressed during the applicants' webinar must be submitted no later than the date given in the grant timeline.

Date of Webinar	Time	Pre-Recorded Webinar Link	Type
Posted by Sept. 18, 2020	Available anytime from September 18 to November 10.	<a href="https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2449353875409143311">https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2449353875409143311</a>	Pre-recorded for viewing at anytime during the application process

### Errata Notices

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Errata Notices.

### GovDelivery Email Bulletins

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), GovDelivery Email Bulletins.

## Program Elements

This section provides detailed information about the grant program.

### Program Description

The purpose of the 2021–2023 T-STEM Academy Planning and Implementation Grant is to solicit grant applications from eligible applicants who, upon receipt of the grant, will engage in 29 months (February 15, 2021 to June 15, 2022) of T-STEM Academy planning and implementation with support from the TEA selected technical assistance provider, to establish the foundational components of the T-STEM Academy.

Grantees who receive the 2021-2023 T-STEM Academy Planning and Implementation Grant will use the first 18 months (February 15, 2021-August 2022) planning to implement the design elements and requirements aligned to the [T-STEM Blueprint](#) and the [K-12 STEM Framework](#).

The T-STEM Blueprint is the foundation of the model. Each grantee, with the support of the TEA technical assistance provider, will align with the T-STEM Blueprint, and will be required to describe plans for T-STEM components such as

- school design,
  - student recruitment,
  - establishment of partnership agreements with businesses,
  - creation of an articulation agreement with a 4-year institution detailing how the associate degree and accrued credits could lead to a baccalaureate degree,
  - creation of pathways to industry-based certifications, and
  - appropriate work-based learning for 100% of participating students at all grade levels and how the campus will be measured for accountability.
- The STEM Framework is the measure of the high-quality STEM components for the model.

The K-12 STEM Framework outlines the 6 Domains of a high-quality K-12 STEM program. This framework is being used by campuses throughout Texas. T-STEM campuses should be aware of the framework and strive to have the high-quality indicators incorporated into their programming.

The [STEM Planning Guide](#) completed for this T-STEM Planning and Implementation grant is aligned to the high-quality indicators outlined in the STEM Framework.

During the Planning Year grantees are required to apply for T-STEM designation in November 2021 when the designation application window opens to begin serving students in the 2022–2023 school year, as required by this grant. TEA will fund a limited number of each model for this grant (see the “Eligible Applicants” section).

The T-STEM Academy may be established as a whole-campus model, a small standalone campus, a school-within-a-school model, or other models as chosen by the campus and approved by TEA.

Planning grant funds will be utilized to support campus needs for establishing the foundational implementation elements of the T-STEM Academy. Each grantee, with the support of the TEA technical assistance provider, will align with the [T-STEM Academy Blueprint](#), and will require the grantee to describe plans for the T-STEM Academy in the STEM Planning Guide.

Activities or initiatives in the remaining 10 months of the grant may include, but are not limited to: continuation of aligning practices to the [T-STEM Blueprint](#), continuation of collaborative leadership and decision making committees, establishment of systems for formal data review as well as the creation of data response plans, strengthening of student recruiting systems, increased opportunities for students to master basic skills and prepare for more rigorous academic classes, review of scope and sequence documents, building of the program's capacity to offer courses, support for students in enrollment and success in college classes that result in the students' earning associate degrees, an articulated agreement with a 4-year institution detailing how the associate degree and accrued credits could lead to a baccalaureate degree, and further development of work-based education partnerships and opportunities for students. In addition, grantees will review current agreements with employer partners to ensure that the agreements emphasize the priority status of students who complete the program in interviewing for jobs with the employer.

More information on the T-STEM model can be found at the TEA website for [T-STEM](#).

### **Supplement, Not Supplant**

For supplement, not supplant guidance, see the Supplement, Not Supplant Handbook on the Grants Administration Division's [Administering a Grant](#) page.

The supplement, not supplant provision **does apply** to this grant program.

### **SMART Goal**

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), SMART Goals, Additional SMART Goal Guidance from TEA, and Measurable Goals and Progress.

### **Measurable Progress**

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), SMART Goals, Additional SMART Goal Guidance from TEA, and Measurable Goals and Progress.

### **Application Requirements and Assurances**

This section describes the two types of requirements that applicants must address in the application (such as with a narrative description, an activity timeline, or a checklist) to be eligible to be considered for funding:

- Statutory requirements (requirements defined in the authorizing statute)
- TEA program requirements (requirements defined by TEA program staff)

### **Program-Specific Assurances**

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Provisions and Assurances.

1. T-STEM Academies will implement the design elements included within the 6 benchmarks of the model's T-STEM Blueprint and strive to fulfill the state standard for student success as measured by the outcomes-based measures.
2. T-STEM Academies will provide participating students with flexibility in class scheduling and academic mentoring.

3. T-STEM Academies will be open enrollment. Enrollment decisions will not be based on state assessment scores, discipline, history, teacher recommendations, minimum grade point average (GPA) or any other criteria that create barriers for student enrollment.
4. T-STEM Academies will allow participating students to complete a STEM Endorsement and post-secondary credentials (an associate degree, a two-year postsecondary certificate, or industry based certification), and complete work-based learning experiences for all grades in the T-STEM Academy.
5. T-STEM Academies will be provided all services and courses at no cost to participating students.
6. T-STEM Academies will pilot the STEM Framework and use the STEM Planning Guide and the [STEM Sustainability Tool](#) as part of the grant reporting.

### Statutory Requirements

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Statutory Requirements.

Per Section 22.0834 of the Texas Education Code (TEC), any person offered employment by any entity that contracts with TEA or receives grant funds administered by TEA (i.e., a grantee or subgrantee) is subject to the fingerprinting requirement. TEA is prohibited from awarding grant funds to any entity, including nonprofit organizations, that fails to comply with this requirement. For details, refer to the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Fingerprinting Requirement.

The following requirements are defined in the statute that authorizes this program. The applicant must address each of these requirements in the application to be considered for funding:

1. T-STEM campuses must establish recruitment and enrollment processes and requirements that will not exclude or discourage the enrollment of any of the subpopulations of at-risk students, including, but not limited to, students who are of limited English proficiency or who have failed a state administered assessment. Describe the recruitment and enrollment plan. Include a general timeline and describe the specific activities planned to serve the target population.
2. T-STEM schools must provide for a learning pathway that leads to a STEM Endorsement through a TEA STEM CTE Programs of Study or science/ math courses that enables a participating student in grade levels 9–12 to combine high school courses and postsecondary courses. Describe the learning pathway that the school is planning to offer and how it expands upon current offerings. Include how the learning pathway will enable a student to have an aligned STEM pathway from middle school to high school courses where they will have postsecondary opportunities and identify crosswalks, sequence of courses, degrees/certificate/certifications earned, and STEM work-based learning that will be available in each grade level served in the T-STEM Academy to students at every grade level. Describe how the selected learning pathway will address regional workforce needs.
3. T-STEM Academies must enter into an articulation agreement with IHEs that are accredited by a national or regional accrediting agency recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in accordance with 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §74.25. The articulation agreement must provide a participating student access to postsecondary educational and training opportunities at an IHE and must address all the items below:
  - Curriculum alignment

- Instructional materials
- Instructional calendar
- Programs/courses of study
- Student enrollment and attendance
- Grading periods and policies
- Administration of statewide assessments

Name the IHE and describe how the proposed program will meet the requirements for the partnership with the IHE.

4. T-STEM schools must enter into a MOU with regional industry or business partners in Texas and must meet the following guidelines:
  - Provide 100% of participating students access to appropriate work-based education at every grade level
  - Address regional workforce needs
  - Review the MOU at least every two years and update as necessary

Name the regional industry or business partner and describe how the proposed program will meet the requirements for the partnership with the industry/business partner.

### **TEA Program Requirements**

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Program Requirements.

In addition to the statutory requirements, TEA has established the following program requirements. Applicants must address within the application how they will achieve the following:

1. T-STEM Academies must establish a Leadership Design Team to complete the STEM Planning Guide, prepare the campus to begin serving students in the T-STEM program, and provide leadership for the campus regarding T-STEM. Leadership Design Team members are outlined in the T-STEM Blueprint.

Describe the current leadership team. Include a list of the individuals, their title, and their stakeholder group. Also include how often the leadership team will meet, the dates of meetings that have already been held, any upcoming meetings, and agenda topics.

2. T-STEM Academies must develop wrap-around strategies and services involving multiple stakeholders (parents, teachers, counselors, community members, etc.) to strengthen both the academic and social/emotional skills necessary for high school and college readiness and to be successful in rigorous academic and work-based educational experiences.

Describe the current wrap-around strategies and services the campus is offering, as well as the additional strategies and services that are planned to support the T-STEM Academies.

## Activities and Use of Funds

See the [Administering a Grant](#) page for general guidance on allowable activities and use of funds.

Allowable activities and use of funds for this grant may include but are not limited to the following:

### Field Trips

Field trips **may be** funded under the grant program during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Field Trips will require a written justification form to be maintained locally and made available to TEA upon request. To access the Field Trips Justification form, refer to the [Administering a Grant page](#).

### Advisory Council

An advisory council **may be** funded under the grant program.

### Cost of Membership in Any Civic or Community Organization

The cost of membership in any civic or community organization **may not** be funded under the grant program.

### Hosting or Sponsoring of Conferences

Hosting or sponsoring conferences **may not** be funded under this grant program.

### Out-of-State Travel

Out-of-state travel costs **may not** be funded under this grant program.

### Travel Costs for Officials such as Executive Director, Superintendent, or Board Members

Travel costs for officials such as the executive director, superintendent, or board members **may not** be funded under the grant program.

### General Allowable Activities and Use of Funds

- Reasonable and necessary items for accomplishing the objectives of the T-STEM Planning Grant
- Curriculum for selected STEM pathways
- Materials and supplies for T-STEM Academy
- Convening of advisory council/leadership team including travel
- Travel for leadership team and STEM instructors to visit exemplary and best practice schools
- Teacher professional development
- Stipends for duties beyond the school day
- Stipends for duties outside of the academic school year
- Teacher credentialing specifically related to identified programs of study

- Equipment necessary for implementation of identified programs of study
- Equipment or materials needed to create a makerspace
- Day trips for T-STEM students to partner with IHEs or partner with industry sites
- Day trips to expand STEM learning beyond the traditional classroom
- Supplies and materials for advisory council (excluding food, beverage, snacks)
- Substitute costs for teachers attending professional development
- Activities related to providing relevant STEM Work-Based Learning opportunities, including internships, capstone projects, virtual experiences, job shadowing, mentoring, speakers, etc...
- Activities related to increasing participation in advanced dual credit courses in the STEM pathways outlined in the grant
- Activities related to teacher externships and real-world research experiences

### **General Unallowable Activities and Use of Funds**

In general, refer to the Budgeting Cost Guidance Handbook on the [Administering a Grant](#) page for unallowable costs.

In addition, unallowable activities and use of funds for this grant may include but are not limited to the following:

- Debt service (lease-purchase)
- Audit services for state-funded grants
- Travel costs for officials
- Hosting/sponsoring conferences
- Cost of membership in civic/community organization
- Tuition and course fees for students
- Instructional materials for students
- Food, beverage, snacks
- Audit services for state-funded grants Project Evaluation and Modification

By submitting this application, the applicant agrees to comply with any evaluation requirements that may be established by TEA and agrees to submit the required evaluation reports in the format and time requested by TEA. TEA will collect and analyze relevant data from PEIMS if it is available.

Specific critical success factors and milestones will be developed in a manner determined appropriate by TEA.

## Performance Measures

The applicant agrees to collect data and report on the following mandatory performance measures:

1. Data report of projected student enrollment into the T-STEM Academy with percentage of demographics: students who are at- risk as defined by PEIMS, ethnicity, first-generation college students, English Language Learners, students who are economically disadvantaged, and students who receive Special Education Services. (Collected during implementation year through PEIMS)
2. Leadership Design Team Members, Meeting Dates, Agendas and Meeting Minutes (including attendance) posted on the school's website. (Posted on the website before Implementation year)
3. Enrollment guidelines that follow the enrollment requirements outlined in the statutory requirements of this grant and the T-STEM Blueprint.
4. Recruitment Plan that includes: Marketing materials and timelines (in English/Spanish if so required).
5. The methods used to obtain input about the implementation of STEM programming from the stakeholder groups in the STEM ecosySTEM (families, community, STEM business/industry and postsecondary partners, STEM formal educators, informal STEM educators, STEM non-profits, workforce, school board members). (Adhering to the T-STEM Blueprint and the high-quality indicators on the STEM Framework, these methods should be used internally for continuous improvement throughout the life of the grant and can be demonstrated through Leadership Meetings and Advisory Council Meetings.)
6. Current signed and dated list of high-demand occupations and programs/courses of study that lead to these occupations that was developed in partnership with the local workforce development board. (T-STEM Blueprint Requirement)
7. Academic year signed and dated MOU with business partner that fulfills the requirements of this grant, and also outlines roles and responsibilities, in-kind match, and formal and informal work-based learning experiences for students in every grade of the T-STEM Academy. (T-STEM Blueprint Requirement)
8. Academic year signed and dated MOU and Articulation agreement with an IHE that fulfills the statutory requirements of this grant.(T-STEM Blueprint Requirement)
9. Plan of wrap-around strategies and services to provide academic and social/emotional support for student success to include:
  - a. Academic mentoring and support for intervention and acceleration.
  - b. Counseling, guidance, and student advisory services for academic and social/emotional support.
  - c. Social/emotional supports such as parent outreach, connections to social services when needed and peer mentoring. (T-STEM Blueprint Requirement)

## Limits on Contracted Evaluators

When a grantee chooses, or is required under a grant, to hire a contracted evaluator, TEA believes that the evaluator must have the capability to remain independent and objective in carrying out the evaluation. “Independent and objective” implies that there is no influence or control, real or perceived, exerted on the evaluator by any person who is involved in the provision of program services. Therefore, the only way in which a contracted evaluator can be truly independent and objective is not to be involved in any manner with the provision of program services or activities. Otherwise, the evaluator is, at least in part, evaluating its own services.

In addition, TEA is aware that some grant writers develop and design the grant program, write the entire grant application, and then wish to evaluate the grant program. TEA also believes that this scenario poses a conflict of interest for the evaluator, in that the evaluator is evaluating the grant program that he or she designed, developed, and wrote. Again, it is not possible for the evaluator to function independently and objectively if the evaluator performed in this capacity. It is certainly acceptable for the grant writer to receive some information from a potential evaluator to include in the evaluation section of the grant application with regard to an appropriate evaluation plan or design, but communication between the grant writer and evaluator should be limited to that specific topic.

Applicants should make every effort to ensure that contracted evaluators be independent and objective.

## Federal Grant Requirements

### Equitable Access and Participation

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Equitable Access and Participation.

This requirement **does not** apply to this federally funded grant program.

### Private Nonprofit School Participation

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Private Nonprofit School Participation.

This requirement **does not** apply to this federally funded grant program.

### Maintenance of Effort

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Maintenance of Effort.

This requirement **does not** apply to this federally funded grant program.

## Application Elements

This section describes the requirements and attachments that must be addressed in and included with the application.

### Notice of Intent to Apply

For competitive grants, prospective applicants are requested to submit the Notice of Intent to Apply (NOI) by the date specified in the Grant Timeline. The NOI provides helpful information

that allows TEA staff to plan for the management of the applications and review processes. Failure to notify TEA of the intent to apply will **not** disqualify the applicant from applying for grant funds.

The NOI is published along with the RFA on the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) page.

### Reviewer Information Form

For every application submitted for a competitive grant, the applicant is required to submit the names of three individuals to serve as reviewers in the competitive review process for the grant program. For LEAs submitting multiple campus grant applications, the LEA must submit a minimum of three reviewers per campus application or a total of 10 reviewers, whichever is less.

Individuals who are hired to prepare grant applications may not serve as reviewers, and their names should not be submitted. Applicants must notify the people whose names they submit that they may be asked by TEA to serve as reviewers.

Once reviewers are selected, they will receive detailed information about the review process. The competitive review for the grant program will take place during the time period given in the Grant Timeline.

The Reviewer Information Form is published along with the RFA on the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) page. All applicants are required to complete the form and to submit it online on or before the date given in the Grant Timeline.

### Required Attachments

See the following section of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#):

- Required Program-Related Attachments

#### Required Program-Related Attachments

- **Attachment 1:** Document of Collaboration with Local Regional Workforce Board that includes a regional STEM labor market snapshot aligned with the STEM learning pathway from Statutory/Program Requirement #2. The regional/local workforce board and/or the chamber of commerce should be specifically identified and names of the individuals who collaborated with the grant application. **Document limited to one page. Do not add additional pages.**
- **Attachment 2:** STEM Work-based Learning template, which outlines experiences for students at each grade level being served by the T-STEM Academy.
- **Attachment 3:** “Program of Study” Crosswalk template, which outlines intended STEM pathway(s) from the middle school through post secondary credentials. Include the intended program's student outcomes. This template can be found on the [TEA Grant Opportunities Page](#), posted with the other RFA documents for this grant. The “Program of Study” template is one page. Do not add additional pages.
- **Attachment 4:** A letter of support from the Institute of Higher Education stating they will provide training to the campus in the STEM Career Technical Education (CTE) Programs of Study selected by the campus or in the academic content if the T-STEM will not be offering a STEM CTE Program of Study.

## Scoring and Review

This section provides information on the scoring and review of applications for competitive grants.

### Standard Review Criteria

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Standard Review Criteria.

### Specific Review Criteria

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Specific Review Criteria.

Statutory or TEA Priority	Maximum Points
STEM pathway alignment to STEM regional workforce needs	5
Quality of proposed IHE partnership and evidence of postsecondary opportunities are aligned to the STEM pathway	10
Quality of proposed STEM regional industry or business partnership	10
Strength of collaboration with regional/local workforce board and/or chamber of commerce as evidenced in Attachment #1	5
<b>Total maximum number of grant-specific criteria points</b>	<b>30</b>

### Priorities for Funding

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Priorities for Funding.

Statutory or TEA Priority	Maximum Points
Attach a letter(s) of support from potential business partner(s) aligned to STEM Programs of Study – maximum of one letters no longer than one page	5
Attach a letter of support from an IHE – maximum of one letter no longer than one page	5
Applicant demonstrates plan to implement STEM work based learning experiences for students at each grade level on the attachment #3-Work-based learning document	5
Applicant demonstrates they have collaborated with the local workforce development board in attachment #2. Letter should include high-demand occupations <a href="http://www.twc.state.tx.us/partners/workforcedevelopment-boardswebsites#texasWorkforceDevelopmentBoardWebsites">http://www.twc.state.tx.us/partners/workforcedevelopment-boardswebsites#texasWorkforceDevelopmentBoardWebsites</a> , including an attached current and dated list of identified high-demand occupations	5

<p>LEAs that are classified by TEA district type as rural.  According to the TEA definition, a rural district has either:  a. An enrollment of between 300 and the median district enrollment for the state and an enrollment growth rate over the past five years of less than 20 percent; or  b. An enrollment of less than 300 students.  A list of schools by district type can be found at:  <a href="https://tea.texas.gov/acctres/analyze/1617/district1617.html">https://tea.texas.gov/acctres/analyze/1617/district1617.html</a></p>	<p>5</p>
<p>T-STEM Academy will <b>serve</b> a middle grade (6, 7, or 8) and grade 9 during the Implementation Year (2022-2023) and will progressively scale up by adding at least one grade level per year in the high school.</p>	<p>5</p>
<p><b>Total maximum number of priority points available.</b></p>	<p><b>30</b></p>

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