TEA
Texas Education Agency

2021-2023 Title I, 1003 ESF-Focused Support Grant
Letter of Interest (LOI) Application Due 11:59 p.m. CT, April 21, 2021

NOGA ID [ ]

Authorizing legislation | Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), P.L. 114-95, Section 1003, School Improvement

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 21, 2021.**

Grant period from | **June 3, 2021-August 31, 2023**

Pre-award costs permitted from | **Award Date**

Required Attachments

1. Excel workbook with the grant's budget schedules (linked along with this form on the TEA Grants Opportunities page)
2. Pathway 1: Pathway 1 Supplemental Pathway Attachment
3. Pathway 2: Pathway 2 Supplemental Pathway Attachment

NOTE: All applicants MUST submit an appropriate Supplemental Pathway Attachment for EACH CAMPUS on behalf of which the applicant is applying.

Amendment Number

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

Applicant Information

Organization | Waco ISD | CDN | 161914 | Campus | | ESC | 12 | DUNS | 075123661

Address | 501 Franklin Ave | City | Waco | ZIP | 76701 | Vendor ID | 1-746002532

Primary Contact | Deena Cornblum | Email | deena.cornblum@wacoisd.org | Phone | 254-261-5628

Secondary Contact | Sharla Garcia | Email | sharla.garcia@wacoisd.org | Phone | 254-754-9448

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 | Dr. Susan Kincannon | Title | Superintendent of Schools

Email | susan.kincannon@wacoisd.org | Phone | 254-755-9473

Signature | *Susan Kincannon* | Date | 04/21/2021

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Shared Services Arrangements

☐ Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are NOT permitted for this grant.

Number of Campuses Included in this Application

Pathway 1   0

Pathway 2   10

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 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.

☒ 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 the Statutory and TEA Program requirements as noted in the 2021-2023 Title I, ESF-Focused Support Grant Program Guidelines.

☒ 4. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Performance Measures, as noted in the 2021-2023 Title I, ESF-Focused Support Grant Program Guidelines, and shall provide to TEA, upon request, any performance data necessary to assess the success of the program.

☒ 5. The applicant provides assurance that they accept and will comply with the requirements of Every Student Succeeds Act Provisions and Assurances.

☒ 6. The applicant assures that any Electronic Information Resources (EIR) produced as part of this agreement will comply with the State of Texas Accessibility requirements as specified in 1 TAC 206, 1 TAC Chapter 213, Federal Section 508 standards, and the WCAG 2.0 AA Accessibility Guidelines.

☒ 7. Title I served Federally Identified campuses awarded this grant will engage in the Effective Schools Framework (ESF) continuous improvement process and create a plan to be submitted to TEA that addresses the selected pathway aligned to the Essential Actions (EA) from the ESF.

☒ 8. The applicant ensures it will notify the Vetted Improvement Program provider of intent to apply and, if awarded, will work in good faith with the Vetted Improvement Program.

☒ 9. For all pathways, the applicant will budget at least the minimum amount indicated in the Budget Object Code 6200 - Profession and Contracted Services.

Statutory/Program Assurances, cont'd.

☒ 10. The applicant will identify a campus leader, on each awarded campus, who will be responsible for managing the grant project.

☒ 11. The applicant will provide access to TEA and its Vetted Improvement Partners for on-site visits to the district and campus(es) as appropriate.

☒ 12. The applicant will attend and participate in grant orientation meetings, technical assistance meetings, other periodic meetings of grantees, and sharing of best practices through the TEA program office.

☒ 13. The applicant provides assurance it will participate in all grant requirements including but not limited to an ESF Self-Assessment, and ESF Diagnostic, developing a web-based improvement plan, submission of funding and pathway progress reports.

Summary of Program

1. Describe how the LEA will support campus(es) in carrying out school support and improvement activities, including how the LEA will develop a web-based improvement plan for the eligible campuses selected for this grant.

Waco Independent School District's (WISD) goals are to support all campuses carrying out campus improvement activities, and to provide a web-based improvement plan for campuses to use. Each campus will be encouraged to align their campus improvement plan to strategies included in the web-based plan.

In 2018, Waco ISD established a Senate Bill 1882 in-district partnership, Transformation Waco (TW). Two key focus areas of this partnership have been strengthening school leadership and increasing staff capacity. TW will support the five campuses they contract with WISD to operate, and WISD will support the remaining five campuses. TW will continue to address strengthening school leaders through providing access to experts in the areas of urban school leadership, establishing a clear, student-focused vision for equitable instruction, furnishing school leaders with an experienced mentor, and offering ongoing individualized professional development to meet specific needs.

To accomplish increasing staff capacity, TW will provide teachers with a differentiated job-embedded professional development to expand instructional expertise, utilize a teacher development road map with an observation and coaching tool, offer individualized feedback addressing instructional needs, and supply access to experts who serve as mentors.

WISD's support for school leaders includes continuing one-on-one coaching, offering face-to-face meetings with an appointed Principal Supervisor (PS), conducting ongoing reviews with the PS to monitor implementation, and gathering/reviewing student data to determine the next steps for improvement.

As a district, Waco ISD is focusing on increasing staff capacity by offering professional development (PD) that reinforces objective-driven lesson planning and focuses on and the alignment of lesson plans with curriculum. Additionally, the ESF grant will be used with the five WISD to provide job-embedded professional development focused on building the leadership capacity of campus leadership teams. This training will support campus leaders as they strive to incorporate data driven instruction and effective observation and feedback into their campus systems. These campuses structures implemented on these five campuses will also help campus leadership teams respond to teacher needs by providing just-in-time practice-based professional development. Teachers will receive coaching by campus leadership, and the leadership teams will receive coaching to build their capacity. All WISD and TW-operated campuses currently use Plan4Learning, a web-based software solution used to create campus improvement plans. Therefore, school leaders are familiar with a web-based format, required data analysis, prioritized focus areas, and periodic reviews. WISD/TW staff will conduct regular on-site meetings with campus leaders, focusing on areas of needed improvement and providing guidance through the formative assessment strategies listed in the web-based improvement plan. Reviews will be conducted quarterly to ensure each campus is on track to fulfill mastering the strategies included in the web-based plan.

2. Describe how the LEA will monitor schools receiving the ESF-Focused Support Grant, including how the LEA will: (a) Monitor a web-based improvement plans upon submission and during implementation, and (b) Implement additional action following unsuccessful implementation of such plan after the first year of the grant cycle.

Waco ISD and TW leadership will provide comprehensive monitoring throughout the entire grant cycle. Each organization will designate a staff to serve as a supervisor/mentor to their respective campuses' leadership beginning with the creation of the improvement plan. The principal and the supervisor will review multiple measures of data, complete the needs assessment, and work together to develop, implement, and monitor the ESF web-based improvement plan.

Campus and district leadership will partner with the Vetted Improvement Programs (VIP) and ESC Region 12 to monitor and increase effectiveness through the observation and feedback systems, conducting quarterly reviews of walkthrough and evaluation data, conducting inter-district walks to calibrate around observation/feedback data, implementing just-in-time, practice-based professional development, and performing mid-year reviews to check for congruence of data from walkthroughs, evaluations, student progress data, and teacher action step data.

Campuses with unsuccessful implementation after the first year of the grant cycle will be supported through additional actions aimed at ensuring successful completion during year two. Those actions will include completing a thorough internal program evaluation to ensure fidelity to the VIP plan, analyzing the usefulness and effectiveness of data from year one, evaluating VIP services to determine if implementation aligns with the original contract, and reviewing VIP goals to ensure they are SMART goals.

Additionally, campus and district leaders will collaborate with the VIP to identify barriers related to the unsuccessful plan and determine if and how the barriers can be overcome. Campuses that reached successful implementation of the VIP will be provided as examples.

Finally, district leadership will analyze all artifacts and evidence to determine if leadership at the campus level has the necessary resources to implement new systems, structures, and leadership practices. After analyzing all data, district leadership will make decisions on how to effectively support the campus and its progress moving forward.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies, Performance and Evaluation

1. Describe how the LEA will modify, as appropriate, practices and policies to provide operational flexibility to the awarded campus, that enables full and effective implementation of the Effective Schools Framework Essential Actions aligned web-based Improvement Plan.

Waco ISD and Transformation Waco firmly believe that operational flexibility is a critical component of and significantly contributes to the success of a campus' Improvement Plan. Several key areas have been identified within the standard practices and policies, expanding flexibility to campus leaders.

One avenue for operational flexibility is through the use of the ESF Self-Assessment and the ESF Diagnostic tool as key resources for the campus needs assessment (CNA), campus improvement plan (CIP), and the ESF web-based Improvement Plan. Utilizing the self-assessment and the diagnostic tool will be a modification from current practice for the CNA and CIP. The participating campuses will not be expected to complete each section of the CNA as outlined by district expectations, but instead will be able to utilize the self-assessment and ESF diagnostic tool to determine the needs for their CNA and ESF web-based improvement plan.

Another measure of flexibility will be providing participating campuses with the opportunity to determine their own goals and initiatives. Principals will be given the chance to review their own data, with the support of the district leadership supervisor and the VIP. Principals will be able to focus on the levers prioritized from the ESF diagnostic or ESF self-assessment. Campuses will choose the action steps and strategies to meet the goal of the lever. Other campuses in the district will not receive the one-on-one hours of support from district leadership or the VIP to review artifacts of data or have the assistance in determining action steps and strategies. Instead other campuses in the district will be expected to follow the best-practice initiatives and goals set by the district. The campuses participating in this grant will be allowed the autonomy to pursue specific goals and strategies to create a plan that supports clear steps for improvement and implementation of specific levers in the ESF web-based Improvement Plan.

Waco ISD and TW executive leadership are committed to frequent and intentional conversations in order to retain an awareness of how they can continue supporting operational flexibility and empowering each campus with the authority to identify specific needs and determine how to best address those needs. Providing the awarded campuses this direct dialogue with executive leadership will create new flexibility for principals to move forward with full and effective implementation of the web-based Improvement Plan.

Funding from this grant would also allow the campuses to continue initiatives focusing on developing instructional leaders, highly qualified educators, lesson planning, and data-driven instruction. Campuses would be provided flexibility in utilizing their state and federal budgets, to the degree possible, to address the areas in the web-based Improvement Plans. Transformation Waco campuses have exercised an autonomous budgeting process since 2018, allowing increased flexibility to address areas of weakness by establishing priorities tailored to each individual campus' needs.

Budget Narrative

1. Describe how the proposed budget will meet the needs and goals of the program, including for staffing, supplies and materials, contracts, travel, etc. If applicable, include a high-level snapshot of funds currently allocated to similar programs. Include a short narrative describing how adjustments will be made in the future to meet needs.

In FY2020, prior to COVID-19, Waco ISD intensified efforts to build instructional leadership capacity for campus administrators. WISD utilized federal, state, and local funds to support building capacity for campus instructional leaders (ESF lever 1.1) and providing all educators with training on objective-driven lesson plans (ESF lever 5.1) and data-driven instruction (ESF lever 5.3). The District utilized services through the Regional Service Center and the training and implementation of Design Thinking framework to address these issues. The proposed budget allocated for TNTP will provide additional support for campus leaders through coaching and a continued focus on data-driven instruction. TNTP will work with Waco ISD to support the plans and actions for improvement for the five WISD campuses. TNTP will provide the following support and resources for each campus:

● PLUS Instructional Leadership Development
● Support for long-term school transformation and sustainability by building skill and capacity within the district.
● Assistance setting clear ambitious goals aligned to the Effective Schools Framework using school-level data and root-cause analysis.
● Professional development, implementation support, and coaching to enhance leadership capacity by supporting a diverse pool of school leaders and leadership teams to drive rigorous curriculum, team collaboration, student culture, and data-driven instruction through practice-based professional development and coaching.
● Leadership development to improve teacher effectiveness through ongoing observation and feedback cycles across participating campuses.

The proposed budget for the Regional Service Center would also provide support in teacher planning and alignment. The ESF grant would allow campuses to continue this work for two additional years.

In FY2019, the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) worked with Transformation Waco leadership to launch and support the following set of strategic initiatives aligned with TW's needs:

● Co-created a network-wide theory of change, instructional vision, and priorities to guide the next two years of the work (ESF Lever 3.1).
● Implemented the Transformation Waco Urban Educator Residency Program (ESF Lever 2.1).
● Designed and normed around a Transformation Waco specific Teacher Development Road map (ESF Lever 2.1 and 5.3).
● Established a Development Road map for principals, including network-specific leadership competencies and a differentiated professional learning and coaching approach.

AUSL provided teachers with professional learning and customized coaching support to help first year teachers efficiently build the foundational sets of skills needed to deliver equitable instruction in an urban school setting. AUSL provided campus leaders with a growth-focused coaching road map that serves as a playbook of strategies and resources for supporting teachers at varying stages of development. Additionally, AUSL worked with TW to create a data-driven system along with supporting structures to inform and catalyze effective professional learning and coaching.

The initiatives set in place in FY2019 initially funded by the Zone Implementation Grant were funded in 2020, and will continue to be funded by Transformation Waco local funds. The ESF-Focused Support Grant will supplement TW's current efforts and allow the AUSL program at the five identified campuses to expand for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. Transformation Waco will also continue to support AUSL with local funds through the spring of 2023.

Budget Narrative, cont'd.

2. Describe how the LEA will align other Federal, State, and local resources to carry out the activities supported with funds received under this grant.

Waco ISD has a long history of coordinating grant awards with existing resources to supplement activities. This experience serves Waco ISD and Transformation Waco well. As the LEA, Waco ISD will support TW's efforts through systems and staff. Additionally, both entities gain from dialogue around what the possible avenues are for aligning other Federal, State, and local resources to fully execute activities.

Waco ISD will continue to focus on building staff capacity for developing effective lesson plans and formative assessments, and implementation of data-driven instruction. The implementation of TNTP, funded by grant and federal funds, will provide coaching and professional learning to build instructional leadership capacity for school-based teams.

Waco ISD will also utilize local, grant, and state funding sources to provide campus leaders training over the summer of 2021, covering topics such as how to interpret and use data, A-F State Accountability, and Post-COVID Reframing for Resilience based on Design Thinking concept. Furthermore, several book studies will be conducted focusing on topics such as increasing cultural awareness, identifying and addressing racism in systems and practices, and building staff morale through motivation.

Waco ISD will utilize state, local, and federal funds to support additional training and professional learning for teachers during the summer of 2021 to review curriculum and assessment alignment, providing teachers who are new to Waco ISD extended professional learning opportunities and support during their first two years. Federal funds will also be used to create professional learning modules that will be offered during the summer and fall to support teachers with on-demand learning in the areas of effective instructional strategies, the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support framework and interventions, and objective training for writing effective lesson plans.

In addition to many of the alignment strategies provided by WISD, Transformation Waco will continue to utilize both local, grant, and state funds to support the AUSL program. Grant, state, and federal funds will provide funding for continued principal coaching and mentorships through individual conferences, monthly meetings, and a summer 2021 leadership retreat. Grant and Title I federal funds will support teacher professional development in building extensive strategies and instructional tools to deliver effective instruction during the spring and summer of 2021. TW will also utilize state, federal, and local funds to provide teachers a week-long summer induction for 1st year residents. The 1st year residents program is instrumental in the recruitment, selection, and hiring of highly-qualified educators.

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 program.

○ The applicant assures that no barriers exist to equitable access and participation for any groups receiving services funded by this program.

◉ Barriers exist to equitable access and participation for the following groups receiving services funded by this grant, as described below.

Group	Barrier
Students	At Brazos students' attendance and drop out rate are critically low

CDN 161914 | Vendor ID 1-746002532 | Amendment #

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**