



Texas Education Agency

READ Grant LOI FAQ

Commissioner Mike Morath

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Reading Excellence and Academies Development grant received questions submitted to readinginitiative@tea.texas.gov between January 10th and January 18th.

The questions and responses are below, under the following categories:

Application
Content
Eligibility
Funding
Literacy Coach

Application Questions

Question	Response
Pages 1-10 of the LOI are requirements - should these pages be turned in as part of the application?	Pages 1-10 of the LOI do not need to be submitted with the application.
What type of pre-proposal form/letter do we need to show that these other ISD's are determining that they want to be a part of this consortium?	Please refer to the attachment section of the LOI for school and district commitment form
What specifically must be submitted by March 1? Where can I find the necessary forms?	Please refer to the LOI, especially the Attachments regarding all necessary information to be included in the application.
What information do we need to provide with the Competitive Letter of Interest re the Literacy Coach? Do we need to post the position and hold interviews prior to submitting the LOI? It appears so, but this may be prohibitive considering our district's hiring process. Is there an extension or another way to fulfill this component of the LOI?	Please see attachment 6 regarding the literacy coach hiring tool. It states that applicants need to provide resumes, interview notes, and completed rubrics to TEA. At this time, extensions will not be granted. TEA requires time to review literacy coach nominees and approve selections.
There may be a discrepancy on page 17 of LOI, Attachment 5B Scoring Rubric Section 1 points: NI=0 points, ME=15 pts., EE=12 pts., CO=15 pts.	Please see the LOI posted to the TEA Mathematics and Reading Academies website for updated values.
Answers to Attachment 4 - Application questions.... do we answer the questions in the same page or do we save in an additional document?	While it is up to the applicant to decide how to attach and include all necessary information, it is likely more efficient if all necessary components and attachments are included in the same document.
I don't see a form for the letter of interest or a format in the LOI document. Where can I find that form or the format for the letter?	Please refer to the LOI, especially the Attachments regarding all necessary information to be included in the application. It is up to the applicant to submit all necessary information. It is preferred that all necessary material is contained within one attachment or document.
Is there a page limit on the application questions?	There is no page limit, though concise responses are appreciated. Please provide enough information to be thorough yet efficient.

Content Questions

Can the classroom observations and coaching be virtual?	It is preferred that training be conducted in person and that most observation and coaching sessions be in person as well; we understand that geography might prohibit face-to-face interactions. To support building communities of literacy teachers with a more centralized geographic area, it would be ideal if at least half of the observation and coaching sessions were conducted in person.
After a cohort receives content and curriculum in their 1st year will they have new curriculum the next year or is their cohort work over?	Cohort participation lasts 1 year. Cohorts will have the opportunity to apply for additional years.
Can we preview the curriculum and resources for the academy prior to applying for the grant?	Content may not yet be shared. Most content specific sessions will follow this standard outline: a. unpacking and understanding the new TEKS b. observing best practice in instructing and incorporating across various TEKS c. practicing or applying empirically validated instructional methods to individual and classroom context. The underlying understanding and skill developed will be how to maximize the interconnectedness of the new standards in the classroom while also practicing
Do you have any information published on the content/strategies that will be shared through the professional development series as part of the READ grant opportunity? We are interested in better understanding the content of the training series that cohort members will experience.	
Is there a particular curriculum or best practices that grantees will need to use for the professional development?	Reading academies will train on the new standards as the curricular foundation which includes explicit phonics instruction. Content will be researched-based utilizing best evidence. No specific curricular resource will be utilized for these academies.
Will Balanced Literacy be a component of the content work, or just new ELAR TEKS?	The new ELAR TEKS will be the primary focus of this year's reading academies. In addition, depending on grade level, statute requires the inclusion of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, inference and critical thinking.
Did you say that TEA/ESC will provide the training content?	TEA will be responsible for providing training content through the summer and much of the academic year. It is intended that the literacy coach is able to generate differentiated sessions based on cohort need for a couple of sessions during the academic year. TEA and the literacy coach are the only entities responsible for generating content.
Does TEA provide the three, two-day professional learning content, or is this developed by the organization based on teacher need?	

On slide 9, "logistically plan summer planning" - is this one ESC or multiple EOC's?	One ESC which has already been identified will be logically coordinating and communicating summer training plans.
Can we link to the Scottish Rite Learning Center of Lubbock (https://scottishrite.org/ritecare-center/the-scottish-rite-learning-center-of-west-texas-inc/) to provide additional coaching based on the Take Flight program for dyslexic students (https://www.thewrittenwordtw.com/dyslexia-faq/what-is-take-flight/). ESEI chart had a focus on dyslexic and we believe that since many school in ESC17 use this program for this sub-population of student we can provide a valued added system to aid this population of student.	Since it is unclear the nature of the content or degree of involvement this additional source will provide, we cannot provide a response at this time. Please include additional information regarding the scope of this partnership in your application. Feedback regarding this opportunity will be provided after evaluation.
Does TEA have a recommended technology grantees and teachers should use for virtual assignment review and virtual coaching sessions?	TEA will provide the necessary technology for engaging in academies.
How is the content focus - for the coaching -- disseminated to the grantees?	TEA will train and work with literacy coaches who will in turn train participants.
What are the 2019 summer training dates and locations?	There will be roughly 5 summer training locations geographically distributed across Texas. Depending on location, they will take place for 1 week, Monday afternoon through Friday morning, either July 8-12, July 15-19, or 22-26. These will be finalized once we have identified where all of the cohorts are located.
Where will the 5 day summer trainings for the 60 teachers be held?	There will be roughly 5 summer training locations geographically distributed across Texas. Depending on location, they will take place for 1 week, Monday afternoon through Friday morning, either July 8-12, July 15-19, or 22-26. These will be finalized once we have identified where all of the cohorts are located.

Eligibility Questions

I am in a specific school district in Houston area. Can the district apply alone or need to collaborate with surrounding districts to apply for the grant?	A district (or LEA) may apply alone.
For smaller districts, that do not have 60 teachers will they have to partner with bigger district or is there an exception to the number of teachers?	As of right now, there is no exception to the number of teachers. It is recommended to either partner with at least one other district or LEA (there is no limit in number of districts or LEAs) or communicate with a local ESC or non-profit who could assist in identifying 60 teachers.
On slide 10 - "participating ESC representation" - Does this mean that the EOC will participate if a district within the region receives the grant although the EOC did not apply for/receive grant?	ESCs are welcome to participate in reading academies, especially if there is a/are district(s) in their region participating. That said, if an LEA (district) or non-profit is the READ grantee, it is not a responsibility to include the ESC as part of the cohort.
What if our LEA is interested in having five (5) teachers participate in a cohort, but is not interested in applying to start a cohort? Instead, is there a way that we can include our teachers on a waiting list, so they might be chosen by a to-be-established cohort?	It is advised to discuss participation with regions, LEA (districts) or non-profits within your geographic area to see if there is an opportunity to collaborate in the development of a cohort. Once we have evaluated applications, and should there be openings available, we will communicate those additional spots.

What percentage of the schools need to be rural to qualify for bonus points?	No priority points will be awarded for schools in rural communities. Please refer to the scoring metrics in the attachment section of the LOI.
Can a district level Instructional Coach also serve as the District Leadership person? Example: a small district whose instructional coach is a district level position.	No, the literacy coach must be an entire FTE dedicated to serving the requirements of the READ grant. The READ literacy coach would be in addition to the already existing district instructional coach.
The READ LOI information states that 501c3 status is required if a non-profit is applying for this opportunity. Is any other non-profit status accepted? Specifically, would the non-profit status of a higher education institution qualify?	Only 501c3 status is accepted. If your institute of higher education is 501c3, then you may apply.
Can universities apply for this grant?	So long as the university qualifies as a 501c3 and submits supporting documentation.
Are campus reading coaches, interventionists, and/or special education teachers eligible to participate as a teacher in the cohort? With academies in the past, a teacher was eligible for a student if they were able to sign that they work with students 50% or more of their time.	Per statute, "'classroom teacher' means an educator who is employed by a school district and who, not less than an average of four hours each day, teaches in an academic instructional setting or a career and technology instructional setting. The term does not include teachers aid or a full time administrator". We would like to encourage including special education teachers or those teachers supporting diverse sub-populations of learners.
How does TEA define educational disadvantage for the purpose of this grant?	Per statute, "'educationally disadvantaged' means eligible to participate in the national free or reduced price lunch program established under 42 U.S.C. Section 1751 sec."
What exactly is the district and campus leadership commitment? Number of days? Is it the same as the commitment for teacher participants?	Please refer to LOI for leadership requirements. It is roughly expected that leadership attend 50% of the summer training as well as 50% of the training throughout the academic year.
Is this grant focused for ESC's to apply as lead agents or can School Districts apply on their own?	School districts (LEAs) may apply on their own.
Can you define the types of roles that qualify for "school leader" and "district leader"?	The roles are intentionally vague as we know that in various locations across the state, school leader and district leader serve in a variety of functions. A school leader is someone who serves as an instructional leader on the campus as evident in his/her roles and responsibilities. Same thing for district leader, someone who serves as an instructional leader at the district level.
Is there any eligibility criteria for campus participation?	The statute states, "granting a priority to teachers employed by a school district at a campus at which 50 percent or more students enrolled are educationally disadvantaged". Teachers serving at schools with greater than 50% economically disadvantaged students is the priority and is taken into consideration during application evaluation. The total will not be averaged. Priority is based on the percent of campuses serving 50% or more

<p>"ensure at least 50% of participating campuses and districts serve economically disadvantaged students." Does this mean that EACH campus listed in our LOI must be comprised of 50% or more economically disadvantaged students? Or does it mean that of all the districts listed, 50% of them need to serve economically disadvantaged students?</p>	<p>economically disadvantaged students. A cohort comprised of 100% of campuses serving economically disadvantaged students will receive the top priority.</p>
<p>Is the requirement that 50% of the campuses within the cohort serve ED students or that all campuses have a 50% or greater ED population? I know that (50% or greater for all campuses) was the requirement for academies before.</p>	
<p>Will all participating campuses' percentages of economically disadvantaged students be averaged for the cohort as a whole to determine appropriate scoring rubric points? For example: campus A has 50% ED and campus B has 60% ED-cohort has 55% ED.</p>	
<p>Are READ opportunities open to districts as well as to ESCs?</p>	<p>Yes. READ grantees may be ESCs, LEAs including districts, or non-profit organizations.</p>
<p>Can an LEA apply for this grant without partnership with an ESC or non-profit organization?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>Can ESEI apply being a new charter school that will have first students in the 2019/20 with students? We are projecting that our free/reduce lunch percentage will be near 50% and we are developing a consortium of other ISD in Region 17.</p>	<p>Yes. Please provide projections in the application.</p>
<p>Will ESC Reps (i.e. Elementary ELAR Specialists) who are not serving as literacy coach be allowed to attend summer and mid-year trainings with the coach and cohort?</p>	<p>Yes. Though the ESC will incur all costs for participating.</p>
<p>As a school district interested in applying, how do we know if our local ESC is also applying?</p>	<p>You are encouraged to communicate with your local ESC.</p>
<p>I work in a small district and do not have the recommended number of teachers that teach reading. Is it possible to apply for the grant? Or will we have to partner with our ESC?</p>	<p>You may collaborate with surrounding LEAs (districts), work with a non-profit or partner with an ESC.</p>

Funding Questions

<p>How often will the stipend be paid to teachers?</p>	<p>3 times throughout the year.</p>
<p>What will happen to our funding if we have less than 60 teacher participants in the cohort?</p>	<p>Funds will need to be returned to the agency. Teachers will be compensated for the portion of the Reading Academies they adequately complete.</p>

Is an applicant expected to budget for a FT Support Specialist who works solely on this grant (mentioned on p. 5)? Is this the same as the grant manager or administrative personnel mentioned on p. 7 under Allowable Use of Funds?	It is not required to have a grant manager and is up to the grantee to determine how the requirements of the grant are managed. Of course, there will need to be a point of contact or a person who is responsible for operating the requirements of this grant. As stated on page 7, it is an allowable use of funds to compensate for grant management.
Can grant funds be used to supplement a current position to provide support to literacy coach?	No, the literacy coach must be an entire FTE dedicated to serving the requirements of the READ grant. The READ literacy coach would be in addition to the already existing district instructional coach.
Does the grantee put the \$1500 per teacher participant in the grant budget?	No. Teacher stipends are not part of the award amount. Teacher stipends are being funded separately and do not impact the READ award amount.
Can you clarify whether we will need to pay for any travel - for either the Literacy Coach or the 60 cohort participants - to any convenings?	Please review the LOI. READ grantees are responsible for all Literacy Coach travel and teacher travel during the academic year. READ grantees are not responsible for teacher stipends or for teacher travel during the summer.
Do you have a list of the items that will be funded outside of this specific grant program?	Please refer to page 3 of the LOI regarding what items are funded outside the READ grant: teacher stipends, teacher summer travel, or logistics associated with summer training.
Will grant funds be able to cover sub pay when teachers attend the 3 2-day sessions?	Please see page 8 of the LOI. Substitute teacher pay is not an allowable use of funds. Additionally, the 3 2-day training sessions should not take place during days or times when teachers are already being compensated.
So, the READ grant funds will not be used for summer travel or training locations? Will that be covered by other funds?	READ grant funds will not be used to cover summer travel costs or summer training locations for participants. READ grant funds will be used to cover travel costs for the literacy coach. It is up to the READ grantee and participating school and district leaders to determine how school and district leaders will pay to participate.
How will the stipends and travel costs be paid to teachers? Will they come direct from TEA or will an LEA need to request funds to be included with a teachers pay?	A region will be managing teacher stipends and will communicate the process.
Are stipends allowed for an individual to manage the grant activities? Example.... An ELA coordinator runs the grant activities	Stipends are for teacher participants only. Indirect costs such as a coordinator to run grant activities would come from READ grant funds.
Is summer travel for cohort members part of the grant award amount?	Summer travel for teacher participants is not part of the grant award amount. Summer travel as well as stipends for teachers are being funded separately and do not impact the READ award amount.
Grantees are not responsible for paying or processing teacher stipends, but those stipends are part of the award amount. Is that correct?	Teacher stipends are not part of the award amount. Teacher stipends are being funded separately and do not impact the READ award amount.

Is this grant for 2019-2020 school year only? Does a district need to sustain the Coaching position in following years?	This is for the 2019-2020 academic year only. It is up to the grantee if they would like to fund the position beyond the academic year. It is also possible to apply to participate in reading academies for the 2020-2021 academic year.
Can funding be used to pay for housing instructional coach at the service center? such as office use fees, technology fees, and admirable costs	Yes. Though the term administrative costs is vague. Without knowing the details of the administrative costs, it is hard to evaluate if they are allowable.
Are the stipends and travel costs paid to teachers subject to TRS for the purpose of salary reduction and/or benefits?	Stipends are considered income and treated as such while travel costs are reimbursements.

Literacy Coach Questions

If names for possible coaches are submitted by March 1 and if selected to receive grant, will we be notified of coach approval prior or at the same time as receiving NOGA?	Approval of coach will be provided prior to NOGA.
Does TEA have a job description for the Literacy Coach that an LEA should use?	It is permissible to use the description provided in the LOI.
If we have 5 campuses would we need one Literacy Coach from each campus?	No, 1 literacy coach serves all 60 teachers across the campuses participating in the cohort. If there are 5 campuses, then 1 literacy coach would serve all 5 campuses.
Is the instructional coach allowed to retain their normal duties and hold this READ position?	No, the literacy coach must be an entire FTE dedicated to serving the requirements of the READ grant. The READ literacy coach would be in addition to the already existing district instructional coach.
How will coaching effectiveness be evaluated?	Participant surveys and classroom artifacts as well as meeting stated expectations for observations and trainings.
Can the required hiring of a full time literacy coach be contracted or do they have to be hired by the District as an employee?	The literacy coach must be full-time and receive benefits. The grantee may determine if the coach is hired directly or contracted.
IF an LEA moves a current employee into the new position of Literacy Coach, does TEA expect the LEA to then place that person back in their previous role when the grant ends?	This is a local decision.
can retired educators be hired as literacy coach?	Yes.
We intend to submit three separate cohort applications. We also have three instructional coaches, however, we are not certain which coach we would prefer to serve each particular cohort. Is it possible for us to submit all three coaches' information with all three applications?	Yes. Please do.
Will Instructional Coached be needing to attend any additional training before June 1st?	Yes. Training for literacy coaches will take place prior to Academies beginning in July.
Does the Literacy Coach have to be identified by March 1st?	Yes; at time of application.