

March 15, 2017

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED

Re: Competitive Letter of Interest (LOI) for Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN) Grants to Rural Schools

Grant Overview

TEA is preparing to award Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN) grants to Texas public rural schools and open-enrollment charters. These grants are scheduled to be awarded in summer 2017 and will provide schools with funding needed to accomplish the following:

1. Pay enrollment costs for students who are able to access the internet at home, school, or both and are selected to complete courses available through the [TXVSN Course Catalog](#) (60% of grant funds)
2. Provide supplemental pay for selected teacher(s), counselor(s), etc. who will provide additional student support beyond their current assignments and serve as mentors for students participating in TXVSN (20% of grant funds)
3. Pay costs (or a portion of costs) for technology needed (e.g., laptop, hot spot, internet access card) by students for participation in TXVSN (20% of grant funds)

Schools may use funds to pay TXVSN catalog course costs for fall and spring courses for the 2017–2018 school year and for summer 2018.

Schools most likely to benefit from a TXVSN grant have some or all of the following characteristics:

1. They are experiencing a staffing shortage and are unable to assign a teacher to a course or courses needed for students to meet graduation requirements.
2. They are experiencing scheduling difficulties and are unable to meet the individual needs of students by scheduling them into a course or courses needed to meet graduation requirements.
3. They do not have resources to offer courses locally and wish to
 - expand course offerings and endorsement options;
 - provide additional Advanced Placement® (AP®) and dual credit options;
 - provide additional accelerated instruction options; and/or
 - provide additional credit recovery options.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are rural schools that agree to complete the following requirements:

1. Complete the Statewide Course Catalog Public School District and Open-Enrollment Charter School Agreement
2. Designate staff for key student-support roles
3. Set student expectations and readiness

For further explanation of the requirements and to view the “receiving district” agreement, please view the [Get Started](#) page of the [TXVSN website](#).

When awarding the TXVSN grants, TEA will observe the following priorities:

1. First priority will be given to rural schools that have not previously participated in TXVSN.
2. Second priority will be given to rural schools that have previously participated in TXVSN, no longer participate, and wish to renew participation.
3. Final priority will be given to rural schools that are currently participating in TXVSN and wish to expand participation.

For the purposes of this grant, TEA will observe the following definitions of “rural” (i.e., fringe, distant and remote) as assigned by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

- Fringe = ≤ 5 miles from *urbanized area and ≤ 2.5 miles from *urban cluster
- Distant = > 5 miles & ≤ 25 miles from urbanized area and > 2.5 miles and ≤ 10 miles from urban cluster
- Remote = > 25 miles from urbanized area and > 10 miles from urban cluster

*Urbanized areas and clusters are densely settled cores of census blocks with adjacent densely settled surrounding areas. When the core contains a population $\geq 50,000$ it is designated as an urbanized area; core areas with populations of 25,000–50,000 are classified as urban clusters.

Application, Review, and Award Process

Interested districts/schools are asked to complete the attached task and budget templates and return to kerry.ballast@tea.texas.gov by 5:00 p.m., CST, April 24, 2017. Please include the following in your response:

1. Name and contact information for the primary contact throughout the application, review, and award process
2. A proposed timeline for meeting grant requirements (template attached)
3. A proposed budget (template attached)

TEA staff will review, score, and notify awardees by May 5, 2017. (A copy of the scoring rubric is also attached.) Awardees will then be required to complete a brief online application. TEA, [TXVSN Central Operations](#), and [education service center \(ESC\) TXVSN Liaison](#) staff are available to provide assistance and information throughout the application process.

For planning purposes, schools will receive confirmation of award of grant funds in May 2017. The online application, negotiation, and award processes will take place throughout summer 2017, with all awards completed by mid-August 2017.

We look forward to expanding TXVSN access to students and welcome the opportunity to work with each grant applicant. For information or assistance, please contact Kerry Ballast, Director of Digital Learning, at kerry.ballast@tea.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

Monica Martinez
Associate Commissioner
Standards and Support Services

Attachments:
Template A: TXVSN Grants to Schools Task Activity Plan
Template B: TXVSN Grants to Schools Budget Template
Scoring Rubric