Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) v.2

2023-2025 Title I, 1003 ESF Focused Support Grant

RFA# 701-23-112

Posted April 7, 2023

Section A: Eligibility Questions

Question A-1

The district is applying for this grant?

Answer

The district applies for the grant on behalf of its eligible and interested campuses.

Question A-2

Is there a limit on the number of campuses a district can propose for support?

Answer

The district may apply for all eligible campuses.

Question A-3

Can a district make several applications? I have 67 eligible campuses.

Answer

The district may apply on behalf of each eligible campus. In this example, the district would complete a single Application Part 1 (PDF), a single Application Part 2 Budget Workbook (Excel), and a required supplemental attachment for each eligible applicant campus, a total of 67 in this case.

Question A-4

If one of my campuses was awarded a SAF grant would the same campus and/or the district still be eligible for the ESF focused grant?

Answer

Campuses that are Title I-served and have a 2022 Federal Identification of Comprehensive School Support and Improvement, Targeted Support and Improvement, and/or Additional Support and Improvement are eligible for the ESF-Focused Support Grant. Campuses may not concurrently

receive any School Action Fund grant with the 2023-2025 ESF Focused Support Grant. The LEA may apply for other eligible campuses that are not receiving a School Action Fund Grant.

Question A-5

The campus must be a TI served, and not just TI eligible, is this correct?

Answer

Eligible campus(es) must be Title I served and have a 2022 identification of Comprehensive Support and Improvement, Targeted Support and Improvement, or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement and remain Title I served throughout the grant program.

Question A-6

If a campus has a D rating but is not comprehensive or targeted support, would they be able to apply?

Answer

No.

Question A-7

Is it correct to assume that campuses rated D/F and/or Comprehensive will have priority for this grant?

Answer

Priorities for funding are named on pages 19 and 20 in the Program Guidelines.

Question A-8

Can you please clarify the difference between TI served and eligible?

Answer

Some campuses are eligible to be Title I-Served, but the district has decided, through the SC500 – Title I, Part A campus selection form in the ESSA Consolidated Federal Grant Application, to either Not Serve (NS) or Skip (Sk) the campus.

Question A-9

How will I know which of my campuses have the eligible designations?

Answer

An eligibility list is posted with the application to the Grant Opportunities Page.

Question A-10

Is a feeder campus one level above and on level below the identified campus?

Answer

Yes. For the purposes of this grant, a feeder campus is a campus that is one-level directly above or below the awarded campus.

Question A-11

Does the one level up or down campus have to be a Title I campus?

Answer

Yes, the feeder campus must also be a Title I-served campus.

Question A-12

How many campuses are eligible? How many will be awarded the ESF grant?

Answer

There are approximately 1,700 campuses in the state that are eligible for this grant. About 300 campus awards will be made.

Question A-13

Can a campus apply under both pathway 1 and 2?

Answer

Yes. The LEA will submit both pathway 1 and pathway 2 supplemental attachments for those campuses. Each pathway document will be scored and ranked individually, and a campus may be awarded one and not the other. They will receive a single $100,000 award.

Question A-14

Does the initial TIP have to be submitted as part of the application?

Answer

No. Awarded campuses will receive training on the TIP during the grant cycle and submissions will not begin until the 23/24 SY.

Section B: Application-Related Questions

Question B-1

When are the Letters of Intent due?

Answer

For the purpose of this grant, the Letter of Interest is the grant application. The grant application is due April 21, 2023.

Question B-2

Just to clarify -- each campus writes their own grant? or can a district apply with multiple campuses involved?

Answer

The LEA is applying on behalf of eligible campuses. The LEA will submit one Application Part 1, one Application Part 2 Budget Workbook for the LEA as well as one required supplemental attachment for each eligible campus the district is applying on behalf of. It is suggested that the

campus leadership team be actively involved in writing the supplemental pathway attachment portion of the application.

Question B-3

Is this a paper grant or in TEAL?

Answer

This grant application is a paper grant that will be filed electronically via email. This grant is not found in the TEAL eGrants system. Please download all application materials from the Grant Opportunities Page

Question B-4

If a campus chooses to engage in both TIL and Texas Lesson Study using the ESF-Focused Support Grant, and we can support both programs, does the campus need to fill out two Pathway 1 Supplemental attachments?

Answer

The LEA needs only to partner with one VIP to meet the grant requirements. The LEA may choose to complete two supplemental attachments and the pathway attachments will be scored and ranked separately. If the campus is awarded both pathway options, the campus will only receive a single $100,000 award amount. The LEA may leverage funds for both VIP services ensuring to maintain partnership with one to meet grant requirements.

Question B-5

In addition to the previous question, will the campus need to also fill out two Memo of Discussion attachments?

Answer

The ESC can support the LEA in approving the memo of discussion for two ESC VIPs on a single Memo of Discussion. One singular memo of discussion can also cover multiple campuses working with that VIP.

Question B-6

An LEA has reached out to the ESC about the application. If they have two campuses applying, should they fill out two applications or put both on one?

Answer

The district may apply on behalf of each eligible campus. In this example, the district would complete a single Application Part 1 (PDF), a single Application Part 2 Budget Workbook (Excel), and a required supplemental attachment for each eligible applicant campus, a total of two in this case.

Question B-5

Last grant cycle, we incorporated the feeder pattern into the application due to the need for vertical alignment. Is this still the case?

Answer

The LEA can reserve some funds as named in the ESF Focused Support Grant Program Guidelines for use at feeder pattern campuses that are title I served within one level of the awarded campus. This information is not a required part of the application.

Question B-6

Can campuses apply to continue working with the same VIPs they are currently working with under the current grant?

Answer

Yes. An LEA may choose to apply for a VIP with which a campus is currently engaged.

Question B-7 NEW

When is the deadline for districts to sign grant assurances or decline the award, if awarded this grant?

Answer

Submission of the application includes acceptance of grant assurances and acceptance of the award, should the applicant be awarded.

Section C: Program-Related Questions

Question C-1

Please explain how this grant works with the regular Title I SIG 1003 grant- if a District gets both will improvement plans be aligned?

Answer

If a district has a Title I, 1003 School Improvement Grant campuses and is also awarded the 2023-2025 ESF-Focused Support Grant, the LEA will be responsible for the measures and requirements in both sets of Program Guidelines and will submit a single Targeted Improvement Plan (TIP) for each engaged campuses to meet both requirements.

Question C-2

Since it is a two-year award, what happens if a campus exits school improvement before or after the first year because they had already made progress?

Answer

When the LEA submits the application and agrees to assurances, it is confirming that the LEA and campus will engage in the grant program and all requirements for the entirety of the grant program regardless of campus exiting federal accountability status.

Question C-3

What is the process of conducting an ESF Self-Assessment?

Answer

The self-assessment process involves gathering and analyzing available campus data, collecting and analyzing artifacts and other evidence aligned to each of the Essential Actions in the Effective Schools Framework, and synthesizing the evidence gathered to reflect on the school's current practices in relation to the Effective Schools Framework. Using this information, the campus will be able to identify which 2-3 Essential Actions are the highest leverage areas for campus

improvement. Findings identified through the self-assessment process will be used to determine the focus of the VIP support pursued in the ESF-Focused Support Grant.

Question C-4

What is the timeline for completing the ESF Diagnostic?

Answer

For the purposes of this grant, if the campus received an ESF diagnostic in Spring 2021 or earlier, the campus will be required to participate in another ESF diagnostic in Spring of 2024. ESF-Diagnostics are typically conducted during the spring months (January-April). If a campus has never received an ESF Diagnostic the campus will be required to participate in an ESF diagnostic in the 2023-2024 school year.

Question C-5

So, if you have completed the self-assessment but not the diagnostic, we still will need to complete the diagnostic?

Answer

Correct. If the campus has not received an ESF-Diagnostic within the past three years, they will be required to complete one during the spring of 2024.

Question C-6

Is this grant appropriate for schools not requiring an ESF diagnostic?

Answer

The campus will not need to be required to conduct an ESF-Diagnostic prior to completing the grant application. Instead, they will complete a self-assessment to help identify the areas of focus for their school improvement efforts, and for the purpose of the grant application. The campus will engage in the ESF-Diagnostic process and receive an ESF-Diagnostic during the spring of 2024.

Question C-7

If we have not done an ESF self-assessment, or been trained in ESF, is the one-month application window enough time to do this?

Answer

If a campus has not completed the ESF-self-assessment before, nor been trained in the ESF, we anticipate that the self-assessment process will provide clear guidance to engage in the self-assessment prior to the grant application. If an LEA needs support or guidance in completing the self-assessment, their regional ESC can support them in the self-assessment process.

Question C-8

Do feeder-pattern schools require the ESF diagnostic?

Answer

No. Feeder-pattern schools served via the LEA reserve do not require the ESF diagnostic, but they may opt-in to the ESF Diagnostic.

Question C-9

Are the ESC Vetted Improvement Programs the same as the External Vetted Improvement Programs?

Answer

No. ESC Vetted Improvement Programs are operated by the Regional Education Service Centers. The External Vetted Improvement Programs are operated by private outside companies.

Question C-10

Will RSSP be considered as one of the external VIP?

Answer

The approved External VIPs are listed on the ESF website, https://texasesf.org/vetted-programs/. These are the only approved External VIPS that will be allowable to meet the Program Requirements for this grant.

Question C-11

On your link, only the student culture area shows supported by ESC. Is this correct, or can the ESC support all identified areas?

Answer

When you visit https://texasesf.org/vetted-programs/, if you choose TIL as the filter, you will see that ESCs can support a variety of Essential Actions, not limited to 3.1 (Student Culture).

Question C-12

If a vetted vendor is not on the district bid list, do we need to get board approval to contract with these vendors?

Answer

The LEA may use a Non-Competitive Procurement form to meet EDGAR procurement requirements, but the district will need to follow its local policy when contracting with VIPs.

Question C-13

If we are currently participating in TIL, do we have to participate in it again if we get awarded the grant?

Answer

Partnership with an ESF approved VIP is a requirement of this grand program. If the District applies for pathway 1 on behalf of a campus that has already participated in a TIL content area, the district may choose to participate in a different content area of TIL than previously engaged or expand

engagement in the previously engaged TIL content area. The LEA may also apply for External VIPs through Pathway 2 Supplemental Attachment or other approved ESC VIPs.

Question C-14

Are you anticipating required submissions quarterly as with the current TIPs-inclusive of progress monitoring and ongoing conversations TEA staff?

Answer

Implementation progress submissions will be required. Frequency and cadence of progress updates as well as conversations with TEA Staff will align to the 90-day cycle structure of the TIP.

Question C-15

When will LEAs who receive the grant be able to work with the vetted improvement program? After July notification or after September?

Answer

The July anticipated award announcement date will be the 'pre-award' date of the grant. The LEA may begin work on the date the awards are announced.

Question C-16

If you are implementing the regular School Improvement Grant and completing the TIP requirements and awarded this one will the 90-day plans, be similar in order to not duplicate efforts?

Answer

Yes. There is alignment in the requirements for the 2023-2024 Title I, 1003 School Improvement Grant and the 2023-2025 ESF-Focused Support Grant and the TIP submissions

Question C-17

Is the ESF-aligned web-based improvement plan the same as a TIP?

Answer

The web-based platform used for both the Title I, 1003 School Improvement Grant and the ESF Focused Support Grant is the same.

Question C-18

Are the funding report submission and progress updates more like TIP Cycle 1-2-3 submissions, or more like a comprehensive funding report?

Answer

Funding report submissions and progress updates will be directly aligned to the web-based Targeted Improvement Plan. The grant will require funding report submissions updated at the time of TIP submissions.

Question C-19

Will the improvement efforts such as the 90-day reflections be kept locally?

Answer

Campuses awarded the ESF-Focused Support Grant will be required to submit a Targeted Improvement Plan and progress updates throughout the year (such as the 90-day reflections) to the Division of School Improvement via the web-based platform

Question C-20

Our district is located in two different Region centers. May we choose which one we want to join?

Answer

Please reach out to the Division of School Improvement Directly to discuss this question.

Question C-21

Do TIPs need to be board approved regardless of designation?

Answer

Campus will follow the campus intervention matrix that is updated each school year. The current matrix is located here: https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/acct-campusinterventionsmatrix-23.pdf

Question C-22

Will the grant recipient be required to conduct surveys that require community/parents/etc.?

Answer

The ESF Diagnostic is being revamped for the 2023-2024 school year. There is a possibility that participation from a variety of stakeholders will be a part of the ESF Diagnostic process. More information will be shared when the ESF Diagnostic updates are complete.

Question C-23

What is the purpose of the Use of Funds Form? Is it to be included in the applications? What funds/expenditures will we need to complete the form for?

Answer

The Use of Funds form is not a part of the application packet but a tool to help LEAs determine if costs are reasonable and necessary to the grant program. This form may be maintained locally to justify expenditures towards the grant program.

Question C-24

Why are there more Essential Actions listed than found in the ESF documents and listed for the VIPs? (Note: I know they will match up with the ESF 3.0 but that has not been released yet creating a mismatch with the grant expectations and the self-assessments or ESF diagnostic EAs campuses are using to apply for the grant.

Answer

ESF 3.0 will officially launch and be rolled out to LEAs in 2023. As a result, the grant program guidelines must reflect the updated language in alignment with ESF 3.0. LEAs can find the ESF crosswalk on the School Improvement website here: https://tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/monitoring-and-interventions/school-improvement.

Question C-25

How should applicants match up the VIPs with the listed Essential Actions if they select one that does not match up? For example: a campus wants support for 5.2 but no VIP shows available for 5.2. Do the VIPs all know about the new Essential Actions?

Answer

All VIPs know about the new EAs and have been given an opportunity to apply for alignment. Our team is in the process of finalizing 3.1 and 5.2 alignment decisions. Our goal is to send these decisions to VIPs by April 1st and have the website updated shortly after. LEAs will be able to match up with an approved VIP for new EAs as early as the first week in April 2023.

Question C-26 NEW

What happens next if an LEA uses ESF 2.0 language in the initial application and is awarded the grant?

Answer

For LEAs that have used previous versions of the ESF Self-Assessment or ESF Diagnostic, the LEA will discuss and adjust the levers during the grant negotiation window if awarded. The LEA will adjust the levers identified to align with the new ESF 3.0 language as work begins in the 2023-2024 school year.

Section D: Allowable Use of Funds Questions

Question D-1

Can grant funds be utilized for a grant shepherd position?

Answer

It is allowable to use a portion of this grant for payroll. The district will need to ensure that they have allocated enough funding for costs associated with the VIP partnership and then can use the remaining amount for other budget object codes.

Question D-2

Can the grant be used to pay a salary for a teacher?

Answer

It is allowable to use a portion of this grant for payroll. The district will need to ensure that they have allocated enough for the VIP costs and then can use the remaining amount for other budget object codes.

Question D-3

Does the cost of VIP come from the $100,000 allotted to a campus?

Answer

Yes, VIP costs incurred will be paid for by the grant allocation for that campus.

Question D-4

Can funds be used for travel and training for district staff that directly support the campuses from different program areas using current grant funds?

Answer

Travel and training costs are allowable for TEA required events, VIP required events and district-directed Trips to support the Effective Schools Framework and awarded campuses.

Question D-5 NEW

What positions are allowable under this grant?

Answer

Campus-level positions are allowable payroll expenses so long as they align to the TIP. Some district-level positions are also allowable, those that are not will be greyed out on Application Part 2: Budget.

Section E: Funding Questions

Question E-1

Is there a district-match requirement for this grant?

Answer

No, there is not a funding match requirement for this grant program.

Question E-2

Would the grant award of $100,000 be distributed each school year or would the total amount need to cover both school years?

Answer

The awarded LEA will receive a single Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) with the total award amount to be budgeted over the length of the grant term of two years.

Question E-3

Will a campus that received the 2021-2023 ESF Focused Support Grant have access to unexpended funds as carryover if they receive the 2023-2025 ESF Focused Support Grant?

Answer

No. Competitive grants do not have the opportunity for carryover.

Question E-4

Will this grant be separate from the other 211 funds?

Answer

The purpose of the ESF FSG is to directly serve the campuses who applied and were awarded the grant. The fund code for the 2023-2025 ESF Focused Support grant will be 211. The LEA should create a local sub budget code to keep these grant funds separate from other 211 funds in order to

allocate directly to the awarded campus(es) and eligible feeder pattern campus(es) as decided locally.

Question E-5

What is the average cost for TIL per campus?

Answer

TIL costs vary between regions. Please reach out to your Education Service Center TIL Leads for specific costs.

Question E-6

If a district has multiple Title 1 campuses and is awarded the grant for each campus, is the funded amount "per campus" or "by district to be split among the campuses"?

Answer

The 2023-2025 ESF FSG grant will provide approximately $100,000 per awarded campus. For example, if an LEA has 3 eligible campuses that are awarded the grant award will be $300,000 awarded on a single NOGA to the LEA to be allocated to the awarded campuses and budgeted over the two years of the grant program.

Question E-7

In the 23-25 ESF Guidance Handbook where it states, "Up to 30% of grant funds can be directed toward costs associated with the External-VIP..." is a recommendation or an actual max. Can the campus choose to use more than 30% for the External-VIP costs?

Answer

The LEA reserve is limited to 30% of the total award for costs associated with the Title I served feeder pattern campus(es)'participation in the VIP work.

Question E-8

Looking at this grant information, there is a 30% cap on funds to VIP. Are there any other caps? LEA Reserve? Payroll?

Answer

The 30% reserve limit for VIP services for feeder pattern campuses is the only limitation on funding. For example, if a district has 1 campus awarded the ESF FSG at $100,000 and would like to support two Title I-served feeder campuses through a VIP, they may only use a maximum of $30,000 (LEA reserve) to support the costs associated with those two feeder campuses engaging with the VIP.

Question E-9

How does SNS work for this grant? Will an LEA be unable to use the funds for a selected VIP if it is already partially funded with local this year, or will it have an SNS provision closer to Title I and require that they have a Methodology or Statement of Exemption?

Answer

Please find in the SNS Handbook on page 10 the SNS requirement for Title I, School Improvement Programs which is applicable to the ESF Focused Support Grant.

"If the LEA allocates State and local funds to its campuses without regard to their Title I status either through a Title I-neutral SNS Methodology or by through a Statement of Exemption, the supplemental requirement for Title I, Part A funds at the campus level has been met."

Question E-10

Is 30% of grant funds the maximum that can be spent per campus or per entire grant for the VIP contracts on this grant? If we include feeder pattern campuses this could be a different cap on expenditures?

Answer

The LEA reserve is limited to 30% of the total award for costs associated with the Title I served feeder pattern campus(es)'participation in the VIP work.

Section F: Competitive Review Questions

Question F-1 NEW

How are priority points awarded for eco-dis populations?

Answer

Priority points are only added in this section if the campus has an eco-dis population greater than 71%.

Question F-2 NEW

Do the priority points awarded for 3+ years of academically unacceptable ratings only apply if it's the same level of unacceptable ratings?

Answer

Districts are rated either acceptable or unacceptable. If a district has been rated unacceptable 3+ years, these particular priority points will be added. Districts can view multi-year unacceptable ratings here.

Question F-3 NEW

Are all points for standard and specific review criteria an all or nothing? For example, under Standard Review Criteria, Summary of Program, do LEAs either get 20 points or zero points?

Answer

Each area scored could receive any number of points between zero and the total points possible. A rubric will be used to score narrative responses.