

**Competitive
Grant
Funding
Available**

TO THE ELIGIBLE APPLICANT ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Request for Application # 701-10-112
Texas Title I Priority Schools Grant Program

Legislative Authority:

The availability of grant funds under Request for Applications (RFA) #701-10-112 is authorized by Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended (Public Law 107-110) and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), Public Law 111-5.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA, or the Recovery Act); enacted February 17, 2009 (P.L. 111-5):

President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA or the Recovery Act) on February 17, 2009, providing a historic opportunity to save hundreds of thousands of jobs, support states and school districts, and advance reforms and improvements that will create long-lasting results for our students and our nation including early learning, K-12, and post-secondary education. Eligible applicants should view ARRA funding as a unique opportunity to improve teaching and learning and should focus these funds on short-term investments with the potential for long-term benefits rather than make ongoing commitments that they might not be able to sustain once ARRA funds are expended.

Congress and the U.S. Secretary of Education have directed that ARRA funds be distributed “swiftly and impeccably.” Funds will only be available through September 30, 2013, so expenditure will require swift action on the part of each school district and open-enrollment charter school if funded. Numerous significant transparency and accountability provisions with regard to the expenditure of funds and other reporting requirements pertaining to the number of teachers retained or hired as a result of the funding accompany ARRA grant awards.

The federal Offices of Inspector General (OIGs) have significant authority to review, audit, and investigate the use of funds to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse. ARRA establishes the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board to coordinate and conduct oversight of funds and to develop and maintain a public Web site that will house detailed information about the use of funds. These additional funds provided in ARRA must be accounted for separately from the regular federal funds and other funds provided to LEAs. LEAs will be required to report the use of funds to TEA, and TEA, in turn, must report to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE).

Eligible Applicants:

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is requesting applications under Request for Application (RFA) # 701-10-112 from local educational agencies (LEAs) on behalf of eligible campuses that qualify as either Tier I, Tier II, or Tier III schools. An LEA with multiple eligible campuses must submit an application for each eligible campus. Eligible campuses in each tier are divided into two categories: persistently lowest achieving (PLA) and newly eligible.

A Tier I PLA school is any school that receives funds under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), Title I, Part A; that is either among the lowest-achieving 5% of such schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, or, if the school is a high school, that has had a

graduation rate below 60% for the two consecutive school years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 or an average graduation rate of less than 60% over the same period. A Tier II PLA school is any school that is eligible for but that does not receive Title I, Part A, funds, and that meets the other two criteria defined for Tier I PLA schools. A Tier III PLA school is any school that receives funds under NCLB, Title I, Part A, but that is not a Tier I PLA school.

All schools newly eligible for Texas Title I Priority Schools funding must meet the following general requirements. The school must be eligible for NCLB Title I, Part A, funding (regardless of whether the school received such funding) and must also meet either of the following requirements: must be in the bottom 20% of all schools in the state based on proficiency rates; or must not have made adequate yearly progress (AYP) for the two consecutive school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.

In addition, each tier of newly eligible schools must meet the following specific requirements: 1) A newly eligible Tier I school is an elementary school that is no higher achieving than the highest-achieving Tier I PLA school; 2) A newly eligible Tier II school is a secondary school that is no higher achieving than the highest-achieving Tier II PLA school or, if the school is a high school, that has had a graduation rate below 60% for the two consecutive school years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 or an average graduation rate of less than 60% over the same period; 3) A newly approved Tier III school is any school that meets the general requirements for all newly eligible schools but that does not meet the requirements defined for Tier I and Tier II newly approved schools.

Description of Program:

The purpose of the Texas Title I Priority Schools grant program is to provide funding to LEAs for use in Title I schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, and other eligible schools that demonstrate the greatest need for the funds and the strongest commitment to use the funds to provide adequate resources in order to raise substantially the achievement of their students so as to enable the schools to make adequate yearly progress and exit improvement status. School improvement funds are to be focused on Tier I and Tier II schools. An LEA may also use school improvement funds in Tier III schools.

Project Funding:

The Texas Title I Priority Schools grant program will be implemented during the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 school years. Tier I and Tier II applicants should plan for a starting date of no earlier than August 1, 2010, and an ending date of no later than June 30, 2013. Tier III applicants should plan for a starting date of October 1, 2010, and an ending date of no later than June 30, 2013. For all tiers, preaward costs are allowable back to the date that grant awards are announced.

The number of projects funded will depend on the number of eligible applicants that apply in each tier. Each project will receive a maximum of \$6 million for the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 project period. This project is 84.6% funded by federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) 2009 funds, and 15.4% from "regular" 2009 Title I School Improvement Grant funds. Applicants will be funded either exclusively from ARRA funds, or from "regular" 2009 Title I School Improvement Grant funds. Applicants funded by ARRA should note that these funds must be tracked and reported separately from all other funds.

Selection Criteria:

Applications will be selected based on the independent reviewers' assessment of each applicant's ability to carry out all requirements contained in the RFA. Reviewers will evaluate applications based on the overall quality and validity of the proposed grant programs and the extent to which the applications address the primary objectives and intent of the project.

Applications must address each requirement as specified in the RFA to be considered for funding. TEA reserves the right to select from the highest-ranking applications those that address all requirements in the RFA and that are most advantageous to the project.

TEA is not obligated to approve an application, provide funds, or endorse any application submitted in response to this RFA. This RFA does not commit TEA to pay any costs before an application is approved. The issuance of this RFA does not obligate TEA to award a grant or pay any costs incurred in preparing a response.

Requesting the Application:

RFAs are no longer available in print. The announcement letter and complete RFA will be posted on the TEA Web site at <http://burlson.tea.state.tx.us/GrantOpportunities/forms> for viewing and downloading. In the "Select Search Options" box, select the name of the RFA from the drop-down list. Scroll down to the "Application and Support Information" to view all documents that pertain to this RFA.

Applicants' Technical Assistance:

Five overview sessions concerning the Texas Title I Priority Schools grant program will be held, one each in Midland, Dallas, Houston, Edinburg and Austin. The overview sessions will cover the topics such as grant program requirements, the four school intervention models, technical assistance available to applicants and grantees, and application submission procedures. The five overview sessions will be digitally recorded. In addition, a pre-recorded webinar covering the same topics as the overview sessions will be available for applicants. The recordings of the overview sessions and the webinar will be available on the TEA Web site at <http://burlson.tea.state.tx.us/GrantOpportunities/forms> for viewing and downloading.

For Further Information:

For clarifying information about the RFA, contact Dorothy White or Erica Coppic, Division of NCLB Policy Coordination, TEA, (512) 463-9374.

In order to assure that no prospective applicant may obtain a competitive advantage because of acquisition of information unknown to other prospective applicants, any and all questions pertaining to the RFA must be submitted in writing to the TEA contact person.

Copies of the questions and the written answers thereto will be posted on the TEA Web site in the format of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at <http://burlson.tea.state.tx.us/GrantOpportunities/forms>. In the "Select Search Options" box, select the name of the program/RFA from the drop-down list. Scroll down to the "Application and Support Information" to view all documents that pertain to this RFA.

Deadline for Receipt of Applications:

Applications must be received in the Document Control Center of TEA by 5:00 PM (Central Time), Thursday, June 3, 2010, to be eligible to be considered for funding.

Sincerely,

Nora Ibáñez Hancock, Ed.D.
Associate Commissioner
Office for Planning, Grants and Evaluation