

**Competitive
Grant
Funding
Available**

TO THE ELIGIBLE APPLICANT ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Request for Application # 701-09-123: Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Academies—Start-up Grant Cycle 5

Eligible Applicants:

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is requesting applications under Request for Application (RFA) # 701-09-123 from Texas independent school districts (ISDs) and open-enrollment charter schools. An ISD or open-enrollment charter school is eligible to apply for the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) Academies—Start-up Grant Cycle 5 if the ISD or open-enrollment charter school meets **all** T-STEM Academy eligibility requirements, as follows:

- Target and enroll a majority (at least 50%) of students who are at risk of dropping out of school (at risk, economically disadvantaged, English language-learners, and/or first-generation college-goers). Special consideration and priority will be given to districts that serve a population of greater than 40% students identified as being economically disadvantaged, calculated as an average over each of the preceding three school years (2006–2007, 2007–2008, 2008–2009).
- Demonstrate a commitment to design a program that meets all T-STEM requirements. A T-STEM Academy must:
 - Be an autonomous school that is either:
 - A stand-alone campus with a unique CDC number
 - A small learning community within a larger school (where the T-STEM Academy is physically separated from the larger school and the T-STEM students are a separate cohort with their own teacher(s), leader, schedule and curriculum)
 - Serve grades 6–12 or grades 9–12 with an active relationship with the feeder middle school(s). If the applicant selects a 9–12 model, the academy must serve grade 9 during the first year of operation. If the applicant selects a 6–12 model, the academy must serve a middle grade (6, 7, or 8) and grade 9 during the first year of operation.
 - Be small, serving approximately 100 students per grade
 - Be open enrollment, hosting lotteries for admission
 - Follow all requirements and indicators outlined in the T-STEM Academies—Start-up Grant Cycle 5 RFA and in the T-STEM Academy Design Blueprint (provided in the RFA, Part 2: Program Guidelines, Appendix 1)

Eligible applicants shall demonstrate how they will meet all requirements defined in the RFA for opening a T-STEM Academy no later than the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year.

Description of Program:

The purpose of the T-STEM Academies—Start-up Grant Cycle 5 is to increase student achievement by engaging and exposing students to innovative science and math instruction. T-

STEM Academies serve as demonstration sites to inform math and science teaching and learning statewide. To that end, every T-STEM Academy will provide a rigorous, well-rounded education; establish a personalized culture with the expectation that all students will achieve postsecondary success; and provide teacher and leadership development.

The program goals of the T-STEM Academies—Start-up Grant Cycle 5, are to do the following:

1. Align high school, postsecondary education, and economic development activities across the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math and the broader high school curriculum.
2. Establish T-STEM Academies in areas of high need across the state that will produce Texas high school graduates from diverse backgrounds with the preparation to pursue careers in fields related to science, technology, engineering, and math.
3. Establish a statewide best-practices network for science, technology, engineering, and math education to promote broad dissemination and adoption of promising practices from the initiative and to improve math and science performance for students across Texas.

Project Funding:

The T-STEM Academies—Start-up Grant Cycle 5 will be implemented during the 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 school years. Applicants should plan for a starting date of no earlier than March 1, 2010, and an ending date of no later than May 31, 2012. Funding will be provided for approximately three to six projects. Applicants proposing to serve grades 6–12 are eligible for a maximum amount of \$840,000, and applicants proposing to serve grades 9–12 are eligible for a maximum amount of \$480,000. This project is funded with 100 percent state 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 website at <http://burleson.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' Conference:

An applicants' conference will be held on Thursday, October 22, 2009, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on the Texas Educational Telecommunication Network (TETN) available at each regional education service center (ESC) (TETN Event # 5761). To locate the nearest TETN facility, please contact the TETN site manager at your regional ESC. (The following webpage includes links and contact information for each ESC in Texas: [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ESC/.](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ESC/))

Questions relevant to the RFA may be sent to Donnell Bilsky at Donnell.Bilsky@tea.state.tx.us or faxed to 512-463-9811 no later than Monday, October 12, 2009. These questions along with other information will be addressed in the presentation. The conference will be open to all potential applicants and will provide prospective applicants an opportunity to receive general and clarifying information about the program and RFA.

The entire applicants' conference will be digitally recorded. Prospective applicants who are not able to attend the applicants' conference may request a password to download a video stream that is viewable on their computer desktop. Applicants should contact the TETN site manager at their local ESC to request the procedures to download the video stream.

For Further Information:

For clarifying information about the RFA, contact Donnell Bilsky, Division of Discretionary Grants, TEA (512) 463-9269.

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 website in the format of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at <http://burleson.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, November 5, 2009, to be eligible to be considered for funding.

Sincerely,

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