



# Empowering Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Educators Cycle 2 to Improve Student Outcomes Grant

## APPLICATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

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**LAST UPDATED DECEMBER 17, 2025**

### **1. What is the 2025-2026 Empowering ECSE Educators Cycle 2 to Improve Student Outcomes Grant?**

The Texas Education Agency (TEA), as the pass-through entity, is the grantee from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and TEA awards subgrants to various organizations acting as the agency's subgrantees. Region 10 Educational Service Center (ESC), the subgrantee for the Empowering ECSE Educators to Improve Student Outcomes Grant, is working in collaboration with the TEA to implement the purpose, goals, and objectives of the grant as outlined in the grant's Program Guidelines.

The Empowering ECSE Educators to Improve Student Outcomes Grant allows for local educational agencies (LEAs) and ESCs to apply for one-time funding in accordance with allowable expenditures associated with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for improving ECSE program outcomes.

The Empowering ECSE Educators to Improve Student Outcomes Grant will enable ESC 10 to administer a program providing funding support for LEAs and ESCs seeking training and certification for ECSE professionals during the 2025-2026 school year. The grantee will create a plan for prioritization of funds and determine the award process for program participants. Trainings will focus on behavior management and inclusive opportunities and will increase ECSE educators' ability to improve student outcomes for children with disabilities, ages 3 through 5 and not in kindergarten. LEAs also can apply for funding through the program to support prekindergarten teachers with dual certification in special education and general education.



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## 2. Is my LEA eligible to apply for the funding?

The application is open to all Texas ESCs and LEAs seeking funding support for training and certification for ECSE professionals during the 2025-2026 school year.

## 3. How do I receive reimbursement for activities?

\*Updated 09/18/2025

Prepayments are unallowable for any services. To receive reimbursement,

1. Submit Quote(s): As part of your funding application, include each quote(s) for certifications and/or professional development or service(s) that you listed with your application and **receive approval from ESC 10 prior to spending funds.**
2. Provide an Invoice and Proof of Payment: After the activity is completed, submit an invoice that includes a receipt and a detailed general ledger. The ledger should clearly show the exact service provided and the payment amount. **All requests for reimbursements must be received by no later than September 16, 2026.**
3. Use the Correct Revenue and Object Codes: If the service was paid using local funds, use Revenue Code 5919 for reimbursement purposes, as it applies to federal grants. Any district-specific codes must be converted to object code 5919 for reporting in the TSDS PEIMS system.

## 4. Will these funds count against Maintenance of Effort (MOE)?

If an LEA uses 2025–2026 Empowering ECSE Educators to Improve Student Outcomes Grant to reimburse itself for federal expenditures, there will not be an impact to IDEA-B LEA MOE. However, if an LEA uses this funding to reimburse itself for expenditures that were originally coded to Fund 199/420/437 and PICs 22/33/43, there may be impact to the LEA's. The potential impact would be a result of a reduction in state and local special education expenditures, i.e., expenditures coded to Fund Codes 199/420/437 and PICs 23/33/43. If an LEA intends to use these funds to reimburse itself for costs that were originally coded to Fund 199/420/437 and PICs 23/33/43, LEAs are strongly encouraged to use the IDEA-B LEA MOE calculation tool on TEA's IDEA-B LEA MOE webpage to ensure that it would not impact IDEA-B LEA MOE compliance.

It is the LEA's responsibility to ensure they identify and are aware of any impact to MOE requirements with the acceptance of these funds and decisions around its use. LEAs who are awarded funds will first receive notification which will include an opportunity to accept the total amount of funds, request to accept a partial amount of the funds, or decline the funds based on the potential impact to MOE.



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## 5. How should we use funds received from this grant?

Any funding received by the participating LEA or ESC may be used at the entity's discretion in accordance with EDGAR and with allowable uses of funds and other regulations associated with IDEA-B, Section 619. Local documentation must be retained to demonstrate how the funds were used. The LEA may choose to use a local option code to further track the funds to support documentation of expenditures.

## 6. What are some examples of professional development for which these grant funds can be used?

Grant funds may be used to provide professional development targeting ECSE outcomes in the areas of behavior management and/or inclusive opportunities. Refer to the TEA Prekindergarten Best Practices website which has resources for developmentally appropriate and research based best practices. Some examples may include but are not limited to the following:

- Social and emotional development training such as the Pyramid Model which is an evidence-based framework designed to support the social-emotional development of young children, particularly in ECSE settings.
- Trauma-informed programs such as Conscious Discipline, which is an evidence-based, trauma-informed approach to social-emotional learning and classroom management.

## 7. Will the grant reimburse for professional development for other staff members?

Yes, the grant can reimburse for professional development, provided it specifically supports staff members currently serving students receiving special education services, ages 3 through 5, who are not yet in kindergarten.

If the above requirements are met, eligible staff may include:

- Prekindergarten Teachers
- Special Education Teachers
- Paraprofessionals
- Head Start Teachers\*

All training funded by this grant must align with the grant's objectives and focus on behavior management strategies and/or inclusive opportunities to improve outcomes for children with disabilities.

\*Your district and a Head Start program should provide collaborative services as documented in a memorandum of understanding between the two entities.



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## **8. What are funding implications for LEAs when serving students eligible for special education in a pre-K classroom, and how does dual certification impact this?**

In addition to improving student outcomes and creating more inclusive opportunities, dual certification offers a financial benefit to LEAs. When a student is eligible for special education but not eligible for pre-K, a special education teacher must be present in the pre-K classroom for the student's entire instructional day to generate ADA and weighted funding. A teacher with dual certification fulfills this requirement.

To ensure proper coding, the student's instructional setting code and ADA eligibility should align with the guidance in Coding Chart 1: ECSE Services and Pre-K in Section 4.9.3 (ECSE Services and Pre-K Programs) of the Student Attendance Accounting Handbook. For reference, please see the handbook here: [Student Attendance Accounting Handbook](#).

For students with disabilities served in a district-operated or community-based Head Start program, refer to the chart in 4.9.8 Coding Chart: ECSE Services Provided to a Student in a Head Start Program, Preschool, or Child Care Facility to make coding determinations for grade level, instructional setting code, and PPCD indicator.

ADA eligibility and weighted funding for these arrangements depend on the amount of time served directly by special education staff members, since Head Start attendance does not generate ADA or weighted funding.

## **9. If our LEA is part of an Shared Service Agreement (SSA) for special education services, can the SSA complete the application and request funding on our behalf?**

If an LEA is a part of an SSA, the LEA staff should work in collaboration with the SSA in completing the application. SSAs may NOT submit an application on an LEAs behalf. Reimbursement will be made to the LEA.

## **10. Will the grant reimburse for a degree program?**

No, the grant will only support reimbursement of a certification program.

## **11. Will the grant reimburse for a complete certification program?**

The grant can only reimburse for services taking place within the grant year. Therefore, any service that is multi-year will receive a prorated reimbursement amount (i.e. refunds for teacher certification programs can only receive a prorated amount for the portion of the certification program being completed within the grant year).



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## 12. What is the process for teachers to become dual certified? Can they complete the process by the close of the grant? \*Updated 12/17/2025

Teachers who hold a valid Texas classroom teaching certificate and a bachelor's degree may add certain certification areas by passing the appropriate examination. However, the Early Childhood: Prekindergarten–Grade 3 (EC–PK3) certificate cannot be obtained through a simple certification-by-exam process.

To earn the EC–PK3 certificate, teachers must:

1. Take both required content-pedagogy exams:
  - a. TExES 292 Early Childhood: PK–3
  - b. TExES 293 Science of Teaching Reading (STR)
2. Submit the “Additional Certification by Examination” application in TEAL and pay the associated certification fee.

For teachers approved under this grant, the grant will reimburse the exam fees and the certification application fee (for the general education portion only, per HB 2 guidance).

Teachers may also obtain the EC–PK3 certificate by completing an approved Texas Educator Preparation Program (EPP) in Early Childhood; however, the grant does not cover coursework, tuition, or fees associated with EPP programs.

**Important:** Applying for the certificate is a critical step often overlooked. If the application is not completed, the additional certification will not be added to the teacher's standard certificate. Further details are available on the TEA Additional Certification by Exam Information webpage.

Candidates must meet all certification requirements by August 31, 2026, aligning with the grant's closing date.

### **Feasibility of Completing Over the Summer:**

It is feasible to complete this process during the summer if teachers adhere to the testing and application deadlines. According to the Texas Educator Certification Examination Program's [score reporting policies](#):

- Exam scores are posted in the Educator Certification Online System (ECOS) within 7–10 business days after the score reporting date.
- Teachers must then apply for certification through their ECOS account. This process does not occur automatically and requires timely action by the candidate.

For detailed timelines and requirements, refer to the [Required Texas Certification Tests](#) chart.



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### **13. If we are awarded the grant, when must we spend funds by to get reimbursed?**

After notification of award, LEAs or ESCs must expend their IDEA-B funds for the purpose of the Empowering ECSE Educators to Improve Student Outcomes Grant by no later than the grant closing date of 08/31/2026 to receive reimbursement.

### **14. Can an ESC and an LEA apply in a joint application?**

No. An ESC or an LEA would have to apply individually.

### **15. Are assessment trainings allowable?**

No. The focus of the grant is ECSE program development in the area of inclusion and behavior.

### **16. What fund code should I use for this grant?**

Please use 289 federal grant and then object code for the reimbursement would be 5919.

### **17. Can multiple LEAs submit an application together?**

No, however an Education Service Center (ESC) may apply for professional development services it intends to provide across its region, with multiple LEAs attending the training. Conversely, multiple LEAs may individually apply for grant funds for professional development offered by the ESC.

### **18. If we were awarded funding for Cycle 1, are we eligible to apply for Cycle 2?**

Yes! LEAs and ESCs awarded funding in Cycle 1 are eligible to apply again for Cycle 2. We encourage you to apply and appreciate your continued commitment to serving young children with disabilities through high-quality professional development and dual certification opportunities.

The application window for Cycle 2 will be open from September 15, 2025 – October 31, 2025.

### **19. Will the grant reimburse indirect costs?**

No. Indirect costs are not allowable under the Empowering ECSE Educators to Improve Student Outcomes Grant. All requested funds must be used for approved professional development, certification exams, or other eligible expenditures as outlined in your grant application and must comply with EDGAR, state, and federal spending guidelines.



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## **20. Will the grant reimburse for supplies or materials?**

Yes, but only under specific conditions. The grant will reimburse for supplies or materials if they were included in your approved grant application and are directly tied to professional development activities. All supplies or materials must also be included as part of the professional development quote submitted with your application. Reimbursement requests for standalone materials, separate from the original PD quote, will not be accepted.

## **21. Will the grant reimburse travel costs to receive professional development?**

No. Travel costs for participants or staff attending professional development are not allowable under the Empowering ECSE Educators to Improve Student Outcomes Grant. Only approved professional development fees, certification exams, and other eligible expenditures listed in your grant application may be reimbursed.

## **22. Will ongoing coaching after professional development be reimbursable?**

Yes, ongoing coaching can be reimbursable as long as it is directly tied to professional development and was included in your approved grant application and budget. All coaching activities must be completed no later than August 31, 2026 to qualify for reimbursement.

## **23. When will applicants be notified if they are awarded?**

We anticipate all applications will be reviewed shortly after the application window closes on October 31, 2025, with award notifications sent no later than the end of November 2025.

## **24. By what date must all funds be spent?**

All funds must be expended by August 31, 2026, and reimbursement requests submitted no later than September 16, 2026. Those awarded the grant will receive a link to submit reimbursement requests prior to the grant closing date.



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