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

2026–2027 Application Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

QUICK REFERENCE: KEY REQUIREMENTS

- This is a reimbursement grant. Do not incur grant-funded expenses before receiving official award notification.
- Grant-funded professional development must focus on behavior management and/or inclusive opportunities and improve outcomes for children with disabilities ages 3–5 who are not yet in kindergarten.
- Every individual whose participation in professional development is funded through the grant must serve the grant's target population.
- Supplies and materials are allowable only under specific conditions and must be directly tied to approved professional development.
- Certification reimbursement is limited to eligible educators who will support the grant's target population and meet all certification and assignment requirements by August 31, 2027.
- Awards may be less than the amount requested.
- All grant-funded activities and expenditures must be completed by August 31, 2027.
- Reimbursement requests are due by September 17, 2027.

2026–2027 Grant Application Preview

Applicants may review a PDF preview of the grant application to see the questions and information required before beginning the application. **The PDF is for reference purposes only.** All applications must be completed and submitted through the official online application on the Texas SPED Support website.

1. Grant Overview and Eligibility

1.1 What is the 2026–2027 Empowering ECSE Educators 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). Region 10 Education Service Center (ESC), as the subgrantee, collaborates with TEA to implement the grant's purpose, goals, and objectives. The grant provides one-time reimbursement funding to eligible Texas LEAs and ESCs for approved professional development and, for eligible LEAs, certification expenses designed to improve outcomes for children

with disabilities ages 3–5 who are not yet in kindergarten. Professional development must focus on behavior management and/or inclusive opportunities.

1.2 Who is eligible to apply?

Texas LEAs and ESCs may apply for funding for eligible professional development. Certification reimbursement is available only to eligible LEAs and is subject to the certification requirements described in Section 3. An LEA that participates in a special education Shared Service Arrangement (SSA) must submit its own application. An SSA or fiscal agent may assist member LEAs but may not submit an application on an LEA's behalf.

1.3 If we received funding in a previous cycle, may we apply again?

Yes. LEAs and ESCs that received funding in a previous cycle may apply again, provided the proposed activities meet the requirements of the 2026–2027 grant.

1.4 Is there a required local match?

No local matching contribution is required. Because this is a reimbursement grant, however, recipients must first incur and pay approved expenses before requesting reimbursement.

1.5 Could we receive less funding than we request?

Yes. Award amounts depend on available grant funding, the number of eligible applications received, and the approved activities requested. An LEA or ESC may receive a partial award. Recipients will have the opportunity to accept the full award amount, accept a partial amount, or decline the award.

2. Professional Development

2.1 What types of professional development are allowable?

Grant funds may support evidence- or research-based professional development that targets ECSE outcomes in behavior management and/or inclusive opportunities. Examples may include, but are not limited to, professional development such as the Pyramid Model or Conscious Discipline when the proposed training meets the grant requirements.

2.2 Who may participate in grant-funded professional development?

Grant-funded professional development is limited to staff members who serve children with disabilities ages 3–5 who are not yet in kindergarten. Eligible participants may include special education teachers, general education/prekindergarten teachers, paraprofessionals, qualifying Head Start teachers, and other staff who directly support this population. Every individual whose participation is funded through the grant must serve the grant's target population. Job title alone does not determine eligibility.

2.3 Can Head Start staff participate?

Yes, when the Head Start staff member serves children receiving special education services ages 3–5 who are not yet in kindergarten, and the professional development otherwise meets grant requirements. The district and Head Start program should provide collaborative services as documented through the appropriate local agreement or memorandum of understanding.

2.4 Are assessment trainings allowable?

No. The grant is focused on improving ECSE programming through behavior management and inclusive opportunities. Assessment training is not an allowable use of these grant funds.

2.5 Is ongoing coaching allowable?

Yes, ongoing coaching may be reimbursable **when it is included as part of and directly tied to approved professional development**. Coaching may not be submitted as a standalone expense. The coaching must be included in the approved grant application and professional development quote, support the same professional development goals, and be completed by August 31, 2027.

Standalone coaching services that are not part of an approved professional development activity are not eligible for reimbursement.

2.6 Are consultation services allowable?

Consultation may be allowable only when it is clearly part of, and directly tied to, approved professional development that meets the grant's purpose. A standalone consultation that does not constitute or support approved professional development is not allowable.

3. Certification

3.1 Who is eligible for certification reimbursement?

Eligibility is based on the population the educator will serve. Certification reimbursement is limited to educators who will support children with disabilities ages 3–5 who are not yet in kindergarten. The educator must complete the required certification and be assigned to serve this population no later than August 31, 2027. Certification costs for educators who will not support this population are not eligible for reimbursement.

3.2 What certification expenses may be reimbursed?

With the passage of House Bill 2 (HB2), educators pursuing certification in Special Education or Bilingual Education are eligible for financial support. Please see the June 26, 2025 To the Administrator Addressed (TAA) for more information.

Due to this change, for educators pursuing the Core Subjects EC–6 certificate through the certification-by-examination pathway communicated during Cycle 2, allowable reimbursement may include the required certification examinations and the certification application fee:

- TExES 391 – Core Subjects EC–6
- TExES 293 – Science of Teaching Reading (STR)
- TEAL/ECOS Additional Certification by Examination application fee

3.3 Does the grant reimburse degree programs, educator preparation program tuition, or coursework?

No. Degree programs, tuition, coursework, and educator preparation program costs are not reimbursable under this grant. Certification reimbursement is limited to the approved certification expenses identified for the grant cycle.

3.4 Are certification test-preparation courses or study sessions reimbursable?

No. Test-preparation courses, study sessions, and similar preparation expenses are not reimbursable.

3.5 What must be completed by the end of the grant period?

The educator must complete all required certification components, apply for and obtain the additional certification, and be assigned to serve children with disabilities ages 3–5 who are not yet in kindergarten by August 31, 2027. Applicants should consider testing and score-reporting timelines when determining whether an educator can meet the deadline.

4. Allowable and Unallowable Costs

4.1 Will the grant reimburse supplies or materials?

Yes, but only under specific conditions. Supplies or materials may be reimbursed when they were included in the approved grant application, are directly tied to professional development activities, and were included as part of the professional development quote submitted with the application. Standalone materials purchases are not eligible for reimbursement.

4.2 What if our award is less than the amount requested and we need to reduce the training or materials?

A recipient may reduce the amount or duration of an approved training and proportionately reduce associated training materials to remain within a partial award. The remaining materials must have been included in the original approved professional development quote and must remain directly tied to the approved training.

4.3 What if the vendor invoices training materials separately from the professional development?

Separate vendor invoices may be accepted when the materials were included in the original approved professional development quote, are directly tied to the same approved training, and the documentation clearly demonstrates that relationship. Both invoices and all required supporting documentation should be submitted with the reimbursement request.

4.4 What expenses are not allowable under this grant?

Examples of expenses that are not allowable include:

- Substitute pay or extra-duty pay
- Participant or staff travel to attend professional development
- Indirect costs
- Facility rental
- Prepayments or reimbursement for services that have not yet been completed
- Standalone supplies or materials
- Software licenses, or subscriptions
- Degree programs, tuition, coursework, or educator preparation program costs
- Certification test-preparation courses or study sessions
- Assessment training
- Standalone consultation that is not directly tied to approved professional development

4.5 Are software licenses or subscriptions allowable?

Software licenses and subscriptions are not allowable under this grant. Online training modules may be reimbursable when included as part of an approved professional development quote and when they meet the grant requirements. Grant-funded modules must begin and end within the grant period and may not extend beyond August 31, 2027.

5. Application and Award Process

5.1 When will the 2026–2027 application open?

Region 10 anticipates opening the application no later than October 15, 2026. The final application window and deadlines will be posted on the Empowering ECSE Grant website after required approvals are complete.

5.2 What must be submitted with the application?

Applicants must complete the grant application and provide the required supporting documentation, including quote(s) for the requested professional development. Professional development quotes should clearly identify the training/services being provided and any supplies or materials included as part of the professional development.

5.3 Does Region 10 or TEA maintain an approved vendor list for this grant?

No. LEAs and ESCs must follow their own local procurement policies and applicable state and federal requirements when selecting vendors. Approval of a grant application or professional development activity does not replace the recipient's local procurement requirements.

5.4 When may we begin incurring grant-funded expenses?

Expenses may be incurred only after the LEA or ESC receives official notification of its grant award. Expenses incurred before official award notification are not eligible for reimbursement.

5.5 Will recipients receive a separate Notice of Grant Award (NOGA)?

The grant award communication issued through Region 10 serves as the official grant award notification. A separate NOGA is not issued to individual LEAs or ESCs under this grant.

5.6 Can we make changes to our approved professional development plan after receiving an award?

Yes. Adjustments may be made as long as the revised activities remain within the grant guidelines and awarded amount and do not substantially alter the nature of the proposal included in the approved application. For example, a recipient that receives a partial award may reduce the amount or duration of an approved training or proportionately reduce associated training materials. If a proposed change substantially alters the professional development activity, introduces a new type of service or expenditure, or you are unsure whether the change remains allowable, contact the Empowering ECSE Grant Team for review before incurring the expense.

6. Reimbursement and Fiscal Requirements

6.1 How does the reimbursement process work?

This is a reimbursement grant. Recipients must first incur and pay approved expenses after official award notification. After all approved activities and services are completed, recipients must submit a single reimbursement request with the required documentation by the final reimbursement deadline of September 17, 2027.

If an LEA or ESC has circumstances that prevent submitting a single reimbursement request, they must contact the Empowering ECSE Grant Team to discuss the need for an exception before submitting multiple requests. Exceptions require prior approval.

6.2 What documentation is required for reimbursement?

Reimbursement requests must include:

- A detailed general ledger showing the vendor/provider, payment date, amount, description of the service or activity, and applicable account/object code
- Vendor invoice(s)
- Proof of payment, such as a copy of the check or other payment documentation

For certification reimbursement, LEAs must maintain documentation demonstrating that each educator met the grant's certification and assignment requirements by August 31, 2027. This documentation does not need to be submitted with the reimbursement request, but must be available upon request.

6.3 What expenditure/object codes should be used?

The selection of expenditure/object codes is a local decision. LEAs and ESCs should determine the appropriate codes based on the nature of the expenditure and their established accounting policies and procedures, in accordance with applicable financial accounting requirements.

For example, contracted professional development services may be coded within the 6200 Professional and Contracted Services object code series, while registration fees for employee professional development may be coded to object code 6411, as appropriate under the Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG).

Regardless of the object code used, expenditures must meet the grant's eligibility requirements and be directly related to approved grant activities. Supplies and materials are reimbursable only when included as part of an approved professional development quote and may not be submitted as standalone expenses.

6.4 What revenue code should be used when the reimbursement is received?

Revenue Code 5919 applies to the recording of reimbursement revenue and should not be confused with the expenditure object code used to document the original expense. Recipients should coordinate with their business office and follow applicable local accounting and TSDS PEIMS reporting requirements.

6.5 Will accepting these funds affect IDEA-B LEA Maintenance of Effort (MOE)?

The potential impact depends on the source and coding of the reimbursed expenditures. LEAs are responsible for identifying and evaluating any potential impact on IDEA-B LEA MOE requirements. LEAs should use TEA's IDEA-B LEA MOE resources and calculation tools and consult their business office when determining how reimbursement may affect MOE compliance.

6.6 Are indirect costs reimbursable?

No. Indirect costs are not allowable for LEAs or ESCs receiving reimbursement through this grant.

7. SSAs and Collaborative Training

7.1 Can an SSA submit an application on behalf of its member LEAs?

No. Each LEA participating in an SSA must submit its own application. SSA staff or the fiscal agent may collaborate with and assist member LEAs in completing applications, but reimbursement is made to the individual LEA.

7.2 Can multiple LEAs or an LEA and ESC submit a joint application?

No. Each LEA or ESC must submit its own application. However, multiple LEAs may coordinate participation in the same professional development. An ESC may also apply for professional development services it intends to provide across its region, with multiple LEAs attending. When LEAs individually apply for coordinated training, each LEA should include only its own portion of the eligible cost in its application.

8. Deadlines and Grant Closeout

8.1 By what date must grant-funded activities and expenditures be completed?

All grant-funded activities, services, certification requirements, and eligible expenditures must be completed by August 31, 2027. Activities occurring after August 31, 2027, are not eligible for reimbursement.

8.2 When are reimbursement requests due?

All reimbursement requests must be submitted no later than September 17, 2027. Recipients will receive instructions and a link for submitting reimbursement requests during the grant period.

8.3 Can we submit more than one reimbursement request?

Generally, no. Recipients may submit only one reimbursement request by the final reimbursement deadline. Additional reimbursement requests require prior approval from Region 10 and will be considered only in limited circumstances.