Learning Acceleration Support Funding Opportunities (Texas) — Write to Win: Grant Writing Strategies for LASO

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Presented by Elizabeth Evans and Christina Fernandez, Grants Office, LLC

Welcome and Introductions

Elizabeth Evans:

Hello everyone, and welcome to our event. My name is Elizabeth Evans, Manager of Research and Consultation here at Grants Office. Today, we're going to be discussing the Learning Acceleration Support funding program, or LASO, as it's known, from the Texas Education Agency, or TEA. The folks here at Grants Office are really excited about today's session. At this point, we've done a few events in this series of webinars, each focusing on a specific grant opportunity. And as you may or may not know, we've done dozens of events throughout the year on grantseeking advice in general — how to position your organization broadly for transportation funding, or cybersecurity funding, or school safety funding. The purpose of our 2026 webinar series is to get far more granular in our information and our grantseeking advice, focusing a full 30 to 45 minutes on just one grant that is relevant for this time of year.

So we very much hope you enjoy today's event, and I encourage those of you in the audience who are representing school districts today to consider who else among your peers may benefit from today's session, and pass along this recording to them, because, as Christina will detail in a few moments, this is a competitive grant program as well as an entitlement, and the more folks who can learn about LASO and secure grant funding for their schools, the better.

Housekeeping

Now, before we get started, I've got two housekeeping items for you. You can ask questions at any time during today's event using the chat interface on the right-hand side of your screen. Feel free to submit as many questions as you'd like, and we'll get to as many as possible towards the end of today's presentation. Also, know that this session is being recorded. The recording will be available by close of business at the link our webcast producer, Kate, is going to be sharing in the chat. Right now that link is pointing to this event's registration page at the moment, but it is going to transition to become a resources page for the event once we begin the Q&A portion. The PowerPoint slides that we are

presenting today are going to be available there, along with a step-by-step application preparation workbook for the LASO grant. So I definitely encourage you to take a look at that URL, and we're going to talk more about that workbook in a little bit.

Today's Speaker and Agenda

Now, again, today we're talking about the LASO grant, or the Learning Acceleration Support Funding Opportunities, from TEA. And I'm joined by Christina Fernandez, our in-house expert on this program. Christina has helped dozens of organizations within the K-12 space, just like yours, navigate the ins and outs of the LASO grant and other K-12 grant opportunities. I personally have had the joy of joining her on some of those consultative sessions over the many years we've known each other, and I can attest she is just absolutely fabulous and so knowledgeable. Christina brings a lot of creative ideas and insightful feedback to the table, and she really is committed to helping you get across that finish line with this opportunity. So, in short, Christina's got a wealth of grants experience, and I think you guys are going to learn a lot from her today.

So with that, here's a quick run-through of the agenda over the next 35 minutes or so. Once I pass things over to Christina, she's going to run through a high-level introduction of the LASO grant. What is it? What does it help you pay for? Who can go after it? Those kinds of things. We want to make sure, before we dive into the nitty-gritty details, that this is the right grant opportunity for you. Then, after we've cleared those hurdles, Christina has a load of information on how to prepare for the competitive LASO opportunities. She's going to talk about evaluating if the LASO grants are right for your organization, the different elements of a successful proposal, and so much more. And then we're going to end with a quick overview of some of the additional services that Grants Office has and can provide you around this grant opportunity or others — whether you need someone to come in and review a draft of the proposal you're writing, or maybe just put pen to paper on your behalf and actually write the narrative if you're feeling a little overwhelmed. So with that, I'm going to pass things over into the very capable hands of Christina to get us started. Christina?

Understanding Learning Acceleration Support Opportunities

Program Background

Christina Fernandez:

Thank you so much, Elizabeth, and hello, everyone. I'm so excited to be here today to dive deeper into this program. I'm going to be referring to it as LASO as well — the Learning Acceleration Support Opportunities program. Now, I've been working with this program since about 2022, but it has been around in some forms since 2021. It actually started out as Texas COVID Learning Acceleration Supports,

or TCLAS, and when it was renamed is when I learned about it and started working with it. It's made a couple of changes since then, but overall has really remained the same over the last couple of years. At its core, it's really one of those programs that is kind of a one-stop shop for a variety of different programs. So for cycle five, this grant is going to house over 20 different funding opportunities in its one application process. And like Elizabeth said, we have a lot to cover today, so I will not be diving into every single program under the LASO umbrella, but hopefully what you gain out of today's conversation is the right tools and strategies to determine how and which program might be the best fit for you, based on the different strategies that they're listed under.

LASO Timeline

But before we dive into all of that, we do want to start out with the timeline. So applications are officially opening in two weeks, on September 23, and starting next week and running through the end of November, you're going to be seeing a ton of webinars and office hours from TEA — both more high-level, so general, just technical support, and then they're going to be doing some program-specific ones. And because I'm not covering every program today, I highly encourage you to make time for those, especially the program-specific sessions and the office hours, since that's where they're going to do those deep dives and where you'll really get to ask those nitty-gritty questions specific to your district and your program.

And then applications — you'll be given about 60 days, and applications will be due December 1 at 5:00 p.m. Central. So if you haven't already, go ahead and definitely put a calendar reminder and an alarm so that you don't submit after that 5:00 p.m. deadline. Definitely, you want to submit way before that time. And then after submission, TEA will be reviewing awards and will be making their preliminary announcements in February, with official notices going out in the springtime.

Program Summary, Eligibility, and Funding

So, to set the stage at a high level about LASO: again, this is one consolidated application that TEA uses to bundle 21 different grants, allotments, and in-kind supports, all aimed at supporting academic improvement. So while this program is open to all Texas public school systems, it's not a one-size-fits-all for every program. Eligibility is going to vary by program depending on a number of different things, like what type of campus or district you are, funding formula considerations, whether you received any of these awards in the past, what grade levels you're planning to serve, and a few other characteristics on top of that. So we're going to spend the end of this session taking a look at those various eligibility requirements and how it plays into your scoring. So stay tuned. And then just to round out about funding here: across all 21 programs, we're looking at around $400 million available, and funding is going to also vary depending on the program that you are applying for.

In-Kind Support Programs

So, like I mentioned, yes, there are 21 different programs included in LASO, but they all provide a different type of funding support. These are going to be the programs that you'll find offering in-kind supports. Think of TEA providing support in the form of services, resources, and product delivery. So rather than competitive grant dollars for you to manage, in-kind related programs will be the ones offering services that you could take advantage of — so think leadership training or technical assistance, help with curriculum development and implementation, and things like that. And as you'll see here, for cycle five, they actually added quite a few new in-kind support program options — things like early literacy intervention, supplemental math curriculums, and so on and so forth. One that did stay the same from cycle four is that Virtual and Hybrid Program Accelerator program, which actually is a hybrid between grant and in-kind supports — there's some nuance there — but mainly, as an in-kind program, they offer a lot more services, like cohort workshops and training calls and things like that.

Allotment Programs

Next is our allotment bucket, or allotment programs. Allotments are determined based on — well, specifically for these allotments, they're going to be based on Foundation School Program formulas — and are going to be available to every school system in the state. They all fall under the umbrella of Preparing and Retaining Educators through Partnership, or PREP, grants. And each PREP program has its own specific funding formula structure and is going to provide funding for up to a specific number of supported teacher candidates or employees per year per school system. So for cycle five, there are now five PREP pathways. We have the same three from last cycle, with two new additions: the alternative pre-service and the traditional pre-service. And each one of these programs is going to support a different stage of building and retaining your teacher pipeline, from growing your own educators locally, to residency and pre-service training, to also mentoring new teachers once they're in the classroom.

And actually, last cycle, applications to PREP programs were addressed outside of the eGrants system entirely, and so LASO was simply used more to facilitate that formula funding and those programmatic applications. So just something to keep in mind that may also be the case this year, but TEA will definitely be very clear about that when it opens.

Grant Programs

So this next group is really where we're going to be spending the bulk of today's presentation, as these are going to be your true grant programs. So unlike allotments, you are going to be scored pretty selectively against other applicants, and so that means that it's not enough to just meet those eligibility criteria. You're also going to be asked to make the case for why your district is the right fit for that specific program. And TEA is limiting the number of awards being made within each program. So

allotments are open to everyone and available for everyone; these have a certain finite number of awards. These are also going to be more or less the same from cycle four, in that no new programs have been added, but rather, the specifics may or may not change a little bit from program to program.

So just to give a quick overview of the different project types that these programs support, starting off with the Leadership and Instructional Foundations for Texas, also known as LIFT. This is going to support your district-wide instructional leadership and high-quality curriculum implementation efforts. And then its add-on is LIFT SI, or LIFT School Improvement Accelerator. This is just extending that LIFT support down to the campus level through professional learning communities. And then the School Improvement C&I Support Grant — a mouthful, so I'm going to be referencing it as SI CISG. Those funds fund curriculum and instructional improvements specifically for eligible Title I campuses who are working through federal accountability identification.

And then the Blended Learning Grant — that's going to support districts building out their digital instruction and adaptive software models. AP Computer Science Principles, as it sounds in the name, is expanding access to those advanced computer science courses. The Texas Strategic Staffing — this is going to be supporting your residency and staffing pipelines. The Additional Days School Year PEP Grant — this is going to fund either full calendar year redesigns or just summer learning models. And then the School Action Fund — that's going to be focusing on your innovative school models. And then the Early College High School and Pathways in Technology Early College High School, or P-TECH — both of those are pretty similar. One focuses more on dual credit and early college pathways, while the other is more focused on workforce development. So, again, these are going to be the top ten grant programs that we'll be going into more detail on, and I'll be reiterating all of that throughout as well.

Evaluating if LASO is right for you

So now that we have an understanding of the types of funding and supports being offered through these different programs, I want to now talk about how you might evaluate which grant program is going to be best for you, based on how TEA organizes these programs around their five learning strategies. Walking through each one of these to figure out where your district goals might actually align is going to be key here.

Strategy 1: Strategic Planning

So, starting off with strategy one, strategic planning. Now, this strategy isn't actually brand new. We just haven't seen it since 2021, back when this used to be called TCLAS. So it's more so making its return for cycle five, but because it's making this return, I still felt it was important to include it, even though none of the grant programs fall within it. Only one program, which is an in-kind support program known as

Local Accountability System, or LAS, actually fits into here. But I still think touching on it briefly, since it's been gone for several cycles, can help shape and determine how you might think about your other, broader planning processes. So this strategy is really going to be best suited for districts working on strategic planning and performance management. And as we go through the next four strategies, I encourage you to maybe jot down any themes or activities that I say that might align with what your district is trying to do, because then at the end we'll have a nice, big recap of where those buckets fit into.

Strategy 2: Curriculum and Instruction

So, the next strategy is the one that I think TEA seems to favor, as it does house more grant programs than any other strategy included in here today, which definitely aligns with how TEA treats and envisions their curriculum standards. So this strategy is really looking to go beyond just getting students up to those state standards. It's really about creating the conditions for students to really exceed them. So if your district is looking to prioritize rigorous or high-quality instructional materials that help students not just meet, but again, excel against state curriculum expectations, then this is likely where you'll want to be focusing your energy.

So in practice, that can look like a couple of different things. For some districts, it could be maybe engaging in a multi-year effort to strengthen curricular or instructional systems at the campus level. For Title I campuses, that might mean implementing high-quality instructional material within math and/or reading language arts that isn't currently a part of your Bluebonnet suite. There's also a huge emphasis in this strategy around technology, so using digital instruction and adaptive software to support your instructional practices. Also, from maybe a more operational standpoint, this could be a good fit for those looking to redesign their staffing models or scheduling to better support their other instructional goals. And then finally, this also does touch on expanding access to advanced coursework, like those within computer science.

Strategy 3: Strategic Talent Systems

Next, we have strategy three, strategic talent systems, which was previously called education and training during cycle four. But this strategy is all about investing in systems that really sustain your teacher pipeline — helping you to recruit and retain exceptional educators while elevating instructional quality across your district. So again, what does that look like in practice? That could really mean maybe you're going out to teacher pipeline and pre-service pathways, or growing your own future teachers, or it could be more on the operational side of things, like redesigning those schedules and staffing to support the new teacher residency models. There's also a strong focus on retention through this strategy — so focusing on new teacher retention and mentorship practices, whether that's helping brand-new teachers stay in the classroom, either through a structured mentorship program or hosting a

different set of mentorship practices. And then along with that, some districts have approached this, or are planning to approach this, from maybe more of that compensation angle, thinking about building their career advancement systems to reward their strongest educators over time.

Strategy 4: More Time

And now strategy four is all about more time. So this is going to be best suited for folks interested in restructuring their academic calendar through either a full year redesign or expanding instructional time through a summer learning model. So what does that look like in practice? You could be focused on maybe evidence-based programming and interventions that are relevant to your local needs, whether that's during an extended school year or over the summer. Or your focus could be more on the people side of that shift — so providing professional development specifically aimed at helping your staff implement that extended learning properly.

Strategy 5: Innovative School Models

And last but not least, we have strategy five. This is about innovative school models, and this is going to be best suited for folks interested in incorporating the Learning Acceleration Framework into how their campuses actually operate. So what does that look like in practice? You could be looking at a whole-school redesign — so rethinking how your entire campus operates, often maybe for someone who needs more than just incremental change but wants to do the full refresh there. Or you could be focused on early college and dual-credit pathways, so building out opportunities for your students to earn college credit or an associate's degree along with their high school diploma.

Recap of Grant Programs by Learning Strategy

So throughout those five strategies, I asked you to note which ones felt closest to where your district is right now. And if you felt that you wanted to maybe enhance your instructional materials, either through targeted assistance, digitally, or through advanced coursework, then you're going to fall under this curriculum and instruction bucket, or strategy, and those are going to be the grant programs that align most with those initiatives. If you felt you were in need of improving your teacher pipeline and redesigning your master schedules, that is going to be the Texas Strategic Staffing program. If you're interested in redesigning your school model, or your dual credit pathways, or creating some workforce development pathways, then you're going to want to look at those innovative school models — specifically, either School Action Fund, Early College High School, or P-TECH programs.

And then if you wanted to implement or sustain additional school days, then that more time strategy is definitely where you'll want to be focusing your time. Now, if you found yourself in multiple different

strategies, that is also okay, and definitely the reason why the LASO program does exist — to give you all of those options at once.

Preparing a competitive LASO application

How Selective Are LASO Grant Programs?

So, now that we know which programs to prioritize, I want to talk about what it actually takes to build a strong application for them. And we can't really do that without really understanding what TEA awards and favors. So first, I want to actually go through how selective these programs actually are, because that is really going to help shape where you want to spend your efforts. So this table was built from cycle four award data, and it covers the ten LASO grant programs that I previously mentioned. Across just these ten programs, over 700 unique districts applied to at least one of these programs, which results in over 1,500 applications.

So, very, very popular — everyone's interested — which is why I organized it in this way, because it's showing who was actually not funded. They submitted, but they were not funded. So, grouping these into tiers of highly selective, where about 61% or more did not receive funding; there's moderately selective, so that's anywhere between 30 to 60%; and then near-universal, where almost everyone who applied did receive funding. And the biggest insight I want you to take from this is that most of what makes a program selective isn't simply that there was a huge pool of applicants chasing a small amount of awards. It's really going to be about which of those applicants actually met the scoring criteria that TEA was interested in.

So, for example, the school improvement support grant, the SI CISG: TEA anticipated making about 50 awards for that program, but as you can see, they only awarded 36. And same thing with the School Action Fund. They were expecting to make 30 awards for that, but they only made 14. So in both cases, TEA definitely had the room to fund more districts than they did, but they just couldn't. And that really highlights where the gap is, and it wasn't in the lack of funding. It was more that applicants weren't fully meeting the eligibility requirements, or they didn't have all of the scoring documents in place or in order.

Now, some programs are definitely going to be truly more competitive because there just aren't enough awards — so, the flip side of what I just said — there just weren't enough awards for how many applications they received. That's going to remain true for programs like P-TECH or the Blended Learning Grant, where they made their fully anticipated amount of awards, but there were still so many applicants who were turned down. And that's because for programs like that, it's not just about meeting the eligibility or scoring requirements; you really need to also make the case for why your program

deserves funding, maybe over someone else's. So, really, the practical difference here: for programs like SI CISG and School Action Fund, being fully prepared and meeting every documented requirement is going to make you successful and get selected in the program. But for programs like P-TECH and Blended Learning, being prepared is going to get you through the door, but you'll also need to add a compelling narrative or interview to actually stand out in those competitions. So, let's get into what exactly each program is scoring against, so you know what you can begin preparing.

Selection Criteria: Programs Scored on Documentation

So, the programs on this slide fall within more of that selective criteria that I mentioned, in that your success is going to come down to specific, documentable things. So as we go through each one, think of it as: here's what you're being scored on, and here's what you should start preparing. So, starting with the first program. This one is only open to Title I campuses already identified either as comprehensive support, additional targeted support, or targeted support. So every application is really already in a similar boat, need-wise. So from there is where it comes down to ranking orders — so sorted into priority tiers by federal accountability status, and then ranked by State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, or STAAR, score. So there's no narrative or interview on this program.

What you're actually being scored on is your STAAR data and whether or not your calendar has at least 165 instructional days and if you have a full K-12 feeder pattern. So if you don't have either of those, you're definitely going to get pushed to the bottom of that ranking. So what you could begin preparing now is pretty simple: just confirm your calendar days and your feeder pattern status now, so that you don't miss those nuances there.

LIFT works on a similar rank-and-tier model, but it is open to any district who's willing to commit to Bluebonnet or another state-approved instructional material. So districts will be sorted into five priority tiers, starting with systems who have a state-appointed Board of Managers. They're also going to look at those folks that have an F rating, and then they're going to look at folks who are already Bluebonnet implementers, and then prior program participants, and then rural districts. So within those five tiers, they're also then going to go through your STAAR ranking again. So, keeping in mind your calendar and feeder pattern, that penalty is also going to apply here, and really the prep work is going to be knowing what your tier is, knowing your STAAR rank within it, and then making sure you have those calendar and feeder pattern information and documents.

And then for LIFT SI, that's the add-on to LIFT. Again, it only opens up once your program has already been awarded LIFT, so that is really going to be dependent. And then the Texas Strategic Staffing, or TSS, program, which also has a tiered ranking, but this is going to be more so based on the raw number of new, inexperienced teachers that your district has hired, and they will be excluding any previously awarded applicants. So if you've already received this program, then you're ineligible, and you are

definitely going to want to begin gathering those numbers as to how many new teachers your district has hired.

And the last one to round out our selective programs is going to be that AP Computer Science program. This one is open to every Texas public school. There's going to be no interview or narrative. However, your scoring is going to be mainly tied to how much you're expanding your course offerings and how much new teacher training or professional development you plan to do within those spaces as well. So begin gathering that information as you think through those programs. And so if you're preparing any of these five, again, the real work isn't writing a persuasive case. It's about making sure all of your documentation is in order. So definitely check your calendars, your calendar links, confirm your feeder patterns, pull your accountability ratings, and make sure your existing programs and designations are all documented and easy to point to.

Selection Criteria: Programs with a Narrative or Interview

And so now, moving on to a few programs that look a little bit different in their application, where, of course, track record and formulas, ratings, and things still have some weight, but there's definitely going to be an additional layer focusing more on your narrative and interview. So, starting with the School Action Fund: you not only, of course, need that track record, but you also have a live interview with that. So they're looking for schools with existing infrastructure, like having been previously awarded the Strong Foundations grant, folks who have a dedicated office of innovation, those that have an approved Teacher Incentive Allotment system, and additional points if you do have a designated Board of Managers. Now, once you've cleared that, you are going to be required to go into that virtual interview, which is going to make up two-thirds of that score.

So during that interview, they're going to want to hear about existing infrastructure — so your current practices and policies, your awareness of any changes or challenges as it relates to implementing the project — as well as they're going to want to see buy-in from your leadership. So organization and interview prep are really going to be critical here.

With the Blended Learning Grant, I do want to flag one thing: the academic cohort has been restructured and is now the Coherent Systems cohort for cycle five. So the scoring for this model, or this track, is going to look a little bit different. So again, if this is a program of interest, I would highly recommend going to that program-specific webinar through TEA. But in the past, this program — at least for the Strategic Operations cohort, that is still staying the same — and from what we know about that, they're looking at your usage data and any prior participation. And then again for that live interview — this is going to have a live interview — and for that, you're going to need to detail your understanding of the project, the risks that may come with its implementation, and your plans for engaging any technical assistance organizations.

And then I'm going to just jump to P-TECH and the Early College High School, just keeping track of time here. These two programs are going to work very differently from anything else that we've covered, because both are going to be limited to brand-new sites serving grades nine through twelve, and both are going to require a 20% local cost match. So unlike the rank-and-tier programs that we've been talking about, these are going to be scored almost entirely on that written narrative component. So 50 points will be given based on how well you make your case, and then any additional priority points are going to be given to favor rural, small, or districts with a Board of Managers. So, genuinely, your preparation for this program is going to look a little bit different, as it's going to be less about documentation and more about how clearly you can articulate your plans.

Application Materials to Prepare Now

So to bring it all together, and to maybe take away some of the overwhelmingness that this all sounds like, I want to just give an overview of the different program components and scoring criteria that we just talked about, and break it up into these three components with some action steps, so that you can take it back with you after the webinar and know what you need to begin preparing now. So, before the application even opens, you definitely can begin working on those documentation components. These are going to be really non-negotiable across all programs, but some programs are going to look at those more closely than others, and each of these is going to carry its own weight in the program and in deciding whether you get selected or not.

So for programs scored primarily on documentation and objective criteria, like LIFT or the SI CISG program, your prep work is going to be about making sure your paperwork is airtight, because that's what's being ranked. So start gathering your eligibility documentation — so like your Title I status, your board-approved school year calendar, STAAR data. You'll also want your partner vetting process documentation, so your process for vetting those partners, and depending on the program, you may also need an Educator Preparation Program, or EPP, Verification Form. So keep that in mind.

Another document to begin preparing now is your memorandums of understanding, or MOUs. So those partnership conversations and agreements are usually the piece that takes the longest to pull together, simply because you're waiting on someone else's calendar, right? So it's not just your own. So if your program does require an MOU or letter of support, start having those conversations now, as it'll just give you some extra buffer time in case a partner takes a while to get back to you or your schedules aren't aligning right away. And then for programs that have a narrative or interview component, your documentation is obviously still going to matter, but that added layer is where you're going to be able to present and explain your project, whether that's written or verbally.

And what you can prepare for now for that, at least for the narrative section, is the data and reasoning behind why this project is the one you're going after. So think about what motivated this initiative. What

challenges will you be solving through it? What opportunities came out of conversations with your stakeholders? And if you haven't had any conversations with internal folks, like board members or students, families, definitely now is also the time to begin engaging in those conversations. And you'll also want to begin outlining your key strategies and activities, especially around things like recruitment, and why you've chosen the project partners that you have. Specifically, you'll want to think about why you're choosing them in terms of the expertise that they may be providing, their cost-effectiveness, or the overall support that they will be providing for the project itself.

And for programs that are going to have that large interview component to it, reviewers are not just going to want to see the right people in the room, but they're also going to be checking to see if everyone is actually on the same page and that there's clear support for the project from every member. So there's a couple of ways you can start preparing for this now. So start by engaging your superintendent, your CFO, other senior district leadership, along with any program managers who will actually be boots on the ground running the project. With those folks, you'll want to start having real conversations about your district's readiness — so discussing what your existing practices and policies are, what, if any, operational shift would actually look like, and how you would sustain the project even after LASO funding ends.

So I know these can be tough discussions, and they are definitely going to require a lot of thought leadership and forward thinking, so you'll definitely want to spend time on this component and make sure that everyone has a clear understanding of the project, so that you are in lockstep throughout the interview and there's no accidental confusion or contradictions being had. So the biggest takeaway here is: don't wait until the application opens. There's definitely a lot of things you can begin working on now, so that when it does open, you can really hit the ground running and confirm all the details and components that you actually need.

The LASO Application Workbook

So, to help keep all of those various components organized, we put together a complimentary workbook that dives deeper into each of the ten specific grant programs we talked about today. And inside this workbook, every program is going to have its own readiness checklist, which is going to walk through the documents you'll need, the eligibility requirements, and the different scoring criteria specific to each program, so you're not trying to remember everything that I said today. And then for programs that are scored on narrative or interview responses, or that have those components in them, we've also included fillable text boxes right in this workbook, so that you can start drafting those responses and begin brainstorming ideas with your teams in a one-stop-shop place. And so with that, I will pass things back over to Elizabeth, so she could provide you a little bit more information on the different services that we offer as Grants Office.

Engaging with Grants Office services

Guidance for Grantseekers Online Library

Elizabeth Evans:

Wonderful. Thank you so much, Christina, for that excellent information. To wrap up today, before we move to the Q&A, I'm just going to take a few quick moments, while Christina grabs a glass of water and gets ready to answer your questions, to tell you a little bit about Grants Office. So if you do have any questions for Christina, please look at the bottom right-hand corner of your screen to drop those into the chat box while I speak. So, the main thing that we'd love to call attention to is our Guidance for Grantseekers Online Library. And I also want to call attention to our grant writing and proposal editing and feedback services that I referred to at the beginning of today's session. Our team here at Grants Office, filled with folks just like Christina, has over 25 years of experience across both the US and Canada doing proposal development work, helping clients find and pursue funding, and we've gathered that knowledge up into that online library of resources at no cost to you. So, whether you're looking for more hands-on support or just to poke around and do a little self-learning, we are ready to support you.

Grant Writing and Proposal Review Services

And know that we help organizations just like yourself plan and articulate your projects in a way that's really going to speak to a funder's goals and objectives, if you are interested in some more structured support. So if you followed along with today's session and plan to apply to the LASO program, but feel like you're going to need a little extra help to get across that finish line, please don't hesitate to reach out, whether that is for full proposal development or that proposal editing and review and feedback on the applications that you're drafting yourself. And like Christina mentioned, we have that LASO application workbook to help you get your thoughts gathered. Again, whether you are writing the application yourself or if you want to use one of our writers, we just ask that you take a stab at that workbook and fill in some of your ideas, so that then we can pass it along to our writer to translate that into a competitive narrative application for you to then upload and submit to TEA.

How Working with Grants Office Looks

So what does working with Grants Office look like? Just know that if you're interested in exploring our support, the first step is to contact us at grantwriting@grantsoffice.com. In that email, if you can attach the LASO workbook with whatever thoughts that you gathered thus far, it would be extremely helpful, so we can get a sense of where you're at. Again, you don't have to have full sentences or beautiful prose for all those prompts, but if you at least give us a general idea of each of your project components, that really helps us hit the ground running. From there, you would get to meet with folks like Christina to

discuss your project goals and your development needs. And if you contract with us for full proposal development, we'll actually get you connected with a grant writer who can then start putting pen to paper on your behalf. We try to give you at least two opportunities to review those drafts and provide feedback to make sure we've captured your goals and mission accurately, and then, as you work towards the LASO deadline, we'll give you all those application materials so you can upload them into the portal and click submit.

Fortunately, the grant hasn't opened yet, so now is a great time to be getting those early brainstorming thoughts pulled together. And also, if you're interested in that additional support, please don't hesitate to reach out. We'd be glad to help. That contact information Kate has dropped into the chat box, but it's also grantwriting@grantsoffice.com if you want to email that way.

Other Grants Office Services

Now, if you've followed along with today's event and the LASO program isn't right for you, I do want to call your attention to some of our other services that are available. We do offer research and consultation as well. So what that means is that one of our experts will sit down with you, discuss your upcoming projects or needs, and then go out and do a little bit of digging and pull together a report documenting relevant state, federal, and even foundation opportunities that would best support those initiatives. We also have a project building service that again allows you to sit down with a consultant just like Christina to build out a comprehensive project idea to an entirely different grant opportunity than the one we discussed today.

And last but certainly not least, we do have a subscription service known as Grants Office Communities, which gives you access to our database of more than 26,000 state, federal, and foundation grants in one central location, so you can do that research and project building all on your own, inside a singular platform that was designed for and by grants people. So Grants Office Communities always offers a two-week free trial, and if you haven't gone over to check that out yet, I definitely encourage you to do so.

So like I said, we do have that workbook available to you. If you're interested in our grant writing support services, feel free to reach out to us. We'll get a meeting scheduled, get a writer aligned, and then have a chance for you to give us that feedback, and give you an updated draft before you have to submit. And I already touched on those other services, but if you are interested in signing up for that two-week free trial, definitely please click on that QR code down in the bottom right-hand corner of your screen that will take you to the page where you can sign up for that service.

Q&A Session

So with that out of the way, it's now time for questions. And looking at our Q&A box here, it looks like we've got three in so far. If anybody else is still unsure if they want to submit questions, please feel free to do so.

Audience Questions

Q1: Is there any way around the 165-day calendar or full K-12 feeder pattern requirements for programs like SI CISG or LIFT?

Elizabeth Evans:

But the first question that we have for you, Christina, has to do with the calendar. So if our district doesn't have a 165-day calendar or a full K-12 feeder pattern, is there any way around that for programs like SI CISG or LIFT?

Christina Fernandez:

That is a great question. So as long as you are planning to either move to or commit to more than 165 calendar days, then you could still receive priority points for the SI CISG program as well as LIFT. And then for that feeder pattern, really the only way around that is if you have a local agreement with another school system that shows that they are covering your missing grade levels. Then that could qualify, or help be the way around that feeder pattern question, and you could still qualify that way.

Q2: When does the grant period start?

Elizabeth Evans:

Great, thank you so much, Christina. And the next question has to do with when the grant period starts. You mentioned preliminary announcements would happen in February, but when can we start work?

Christina Fernandez:

Yeah, so based on last year's cycle, which basically ran the same, they all started March 1, so you definitely can expect that similar timeline this year.

Q3: Does the cost match have to be cash, or can it be in-kind resources?

Elizabeth Evans:

Wonderful, thank you. And the last question that we have so far: for the cost match requirement, does that have to be cash, or can it be in-kind resources?

Christina Fernandez:

It can be both, or either-or. So TEA isn't too nitpicky on that for P-TECH or Early College High School, or ECHS; in-kind and cash are both acceptable there.

Closing

Elizabeth Evans:

Great, thank you. Well, it looks like that's all the questions that we have so far. So I will say, if folks have any follow-up questions later today or tomorrow, as you're thinking about this grant and working on things, or even a week or two from now, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. We're always happy to do what we can to support your grantseeking efforts. So, thank you so much for hanging on with us. I know we went a little bit longer, but Christina just shared such an amazing amount of wonderful information, and I definitely think that it was a great use of the time for us, at least. And I hope you would agree that it was a valuable use of your time, and we hope to see you on the next Grantscast. Thank you so much, all.

— End of Transcript —

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