System of Great Schools Network Application

TEA
Texas Education Agency

SYSTEM OF GREAT SCHOOLS
SGS
MORE STUDENTS IN BETTER SCHOOLS

Introduction

The System of Great Schools (SGS) Strategy is a district-level problem solving approach that seeks to understand school performance and community demands to make decisions about expanding what works, replacing what doesn't, and pursuing all possible options. **The mission of the SGS Network is to support district leaders to ensure that more students attend high-quality, best fit schools every year.** SGS Network districts choose to participate in a 4-year cohort-based program that provides district leaders with technical assistance, workshops and convenings, and support in applying for grants and other financial resources.

What is a System of Great Schools District?

SGS Network districts are committed to ensuring every student has access to a high-quality, best-fit school. SGS Districts vary in terms of size, make-up, and performance level, but they're united by a common goal: deliver the schools families want, need, and deserve in their communities.

The SGS Network consists of nineteen districts enrolling over 500,000 students. Through their participation in the Network, they have created 14 Offices of Innovation and created, redesigned, and restarted almost 190 schools.

The SGS team at Texas Education Agency (TEA) supports districts in the SGS Network to continuously improve outcomes for their students.

Through the application process, TEA will evaluate:

- an applicant's understanding of SGS Strategy,

- an applicant's willingness to act boldly for all students by identifying areas for growth, and

- school board and superintendent alignment with the SGS Strategy, especially with the singular goal of increasing a defined number and percent of students in A- and B-rated seats.

SGS Theory of Action:

Districts that join the SGS Network are ready to engage in bold and transformational change aligned to the following Strategy:

Set the right goal of providing all students access to a high-quality school that best fits their educational goals and individual needs.

Conduct an annual portfolio planning process that analyzes school performance, community needs, and parent and family feedback to inform action plans for all schools.

Take bold action driven by the annual planning process, including at least one school action per year.

Empower families by communicating each child's options, enrolling them in their desired program, and helping them overcome logistical barriers to attendance.

Create organizational structures to drive new policies and practices that accelerate the success, efficiency, and sustainability of the SGS Strategy.

SGS Network Benefits:

The SGS Network is a dynamic professional learning community of like-minded district leaders throughout the state. SGS Network districts are provided with the following:

- **Technical Assistance:** Districts are matched with an Executive Advisor (EA) firm, which guides them in understanding, planning, and implementing the SGS Strategy.

- **Tools and Resources:** Network districts are provided implementation tools such as models, templates, and exemplars that they can adapt to their local context. Additionally, while districts are not guaranteed grants, SGS Districts strategically apply for funding to jumpstart their initiatives, including:
  - School Action Fund: Open to eligible *comprehensive* and *targeted* campuses, the School Action Fund can be used for planning and implementation of *School Actions*.
  - Texas Partnerships: SB 1882 provides accountability and financial benefits to districts that partner with school operators through a rigorous authorization process.
  - Charter School Program (CSP) Replication and Start-up Grants: Eligible Texas Partnerships may apply for CSP grants to support implementation.

- **Professional Learning Opportunities:** The SGS Network offers a robust learning community which gathers for regular workshops and events, including:

Professional Learning	Frequency	Estimated Time Commitment
Superintendent & Cabinet Convenings	4-5 times per year	Day long, in-person events
Chief Innovation Officer Workshops	Every other month	4-6 virtual sessions per year
SGS Summit	Annual	2 days, in person

Eligible Applicants:

All Texas districts are eligible to apply. Ideal applicants have over 7,500 students, 10 or more schools, and the desire to pursue system transformation that leads to more high-quality, best-fit schools.

SGS Application Process and Timeline:

Date	Event
Dec 9, 2021	**Applications Released:** The application will be available on the TEA SGS website.
January-February 2022	**Informational Webinars:** Interested districts may learn more by attending a webinar and Q&A: 1. Thursday, January 27: 1-2pm (register here) 2. Thursday, February 10: 1-2pm (register here) **3.** Friday, February 25: 2-3pm (register here)
March 4, 2022	**Application due:** Please submit applications to SGS@tea.texas.gov.
March 21-25, 2022	**Phone Interviews:** TEA staff will conduct phone interviews with District leaders to add context to the written application and make an acceptance decision.
March 30, 2022	**Acceptance:** Accepted applicants will be invited to join the 4-year program.
March 30-April 7, 2022	**EA Firm Matching:** New Network districts interview and select and EA firm that will support implementation of the SGS Strategy from a pre-vetted list (updated March 2022.)
April 25-March 25, 2022	**Baseline Site Visit:** TEA staff and Executive Advisors will visit the district and select campuses to determine baseline ratings on the SGS implementation rubric and help district leaders identify the key priorities as the district begins to implement the SGS Strategy.

To learn more about the SGS Strategy and Network, interested applicants should register here to attend an introductory webinar and/or schedule a 1x1 meeting with the SGS team by emailing SGS@tea.texas.gov.

How to Apply:

- Email completed applications to SGS@tea.texas.gov by the deadline listed above.
- Submissions should be in 11-point font, single-spaced, and adhere to word limits.
- The application should be submitted as a Word or PDF file. There is no file type restriction on addenda.
- Late applications will not be accepted.
- Please email SGS@tea.texas.gov with questions.

System of Great Schools Application:

Page limit: 5 pages total

Section 1: SGS Preconditions

The SGS team at TEA is seeking districts that understand the SGS Strategy and the political will to implement it.

1. Why is now the right time to implement the SGS Strategy and join the SGS Network?
2. To what extent are District Board members willing to support innovative strategies to improve access to great schools?
3. How will the SGS strategy and Network support district leaders to meet their goals?

Section 2: Managing School Performance

SGS Network districts evaluate the quality of every campus in the District and use that data develop a clear Portfolio Plan, which includes a strategy to improve each campus in the District.

1. What data does the district use to make decisions about how to improve campuses and address community needs?
2. Which stakeholders and community members are involved in the district's strategic and long-term plans, especially to create new, restart, redesign, and close schools?
3. How could current performance management processes be improved?

Section 3: Expand Great Options

SGS Network districts expand high quality, best fit education options for all students by using all strategies available, including traditional school improvement methods as well as bold School Actions.

1. What does the term "high quality, best fit school" mean in your district's context?
2. Has the District created, restarted, redesigned, or closed any schools in the past 2-3 years in order to expand great options available to students? If so, what was the process to plan and implement those schools?
3. What is the District's approach to improving chronically underperforming schools (i.e., schools that are persistently rated comprehensive, targeted, D, F, or IR)?
4. Does the district currently authorize in-district charter partnerships?
    a. If yes, please describe the process for recruiting, vetting, and selecting partners.
    b. If no, please discuss whether the district is willing to explore the possibility of authorizing an in-district charter partnership.

Section 4: Improve Access to Options

SGS Network districts increase access to high-quality, best-fit options and help families choose a school that best fits their student's needs.

1. What is the district's vision for school choice? What would you like to be true in 3-4 years?
2. What support does the District provide to help families to choose the right school for their child? *Please link to any websites or supporting documents that the district uses to support students and parents.*
3. What support do District leaders need to improve equitable access to high-quality, best fit schools?

Section 5: Create New Organizational Structures

SGS Network districts create an Office of Innovation (OOI) to help drive System of Great Schools strategy throughout the district. The OOI's work is guided by the North Star Goal of increasing the number and percentage of students in A- and B-rated seats. The OOI leads the district's efforts to align policies and practices with all levers of the SGS Strategy.

1. Does the district currently have an Office of Innovation or similar office?
    a. If yes, please describe the roles and responsibilities of this office. Does the leader of this office report directly to the Superintendent and hold a cabinet-level position?
    b. If no, is the district willing to establish an Office of Innovation with a cabinet-level leader who reports directly to the Superintendent?
2. The SGS Strategy requires a balance between campus autonomy and district oversight, which can mean certain decisions are made at the campus level. How does the district determine which decisions are made at the district or campus level (ie, curriculum, budgeting, hiring, etc.)?
3. SGS Districts seek to understand how resources are allocated to campuses to ensure students with the highest needs get the right support. How does the district allocate resources to campuses? How might this process become more equitable?

Section 6: Supplemental Questions

1. Who are the key stakeholders and organizations in your community?
2. How do board members and the Superintendent engage these stakeholders to improve academic options for students?

Section 7: SGS Program Assurances

By completing this application, *the district Superintendent commits to implementing the following:*

1. The district and Board commit to setting a North Star Goal, which defines the number and percentage of students who will be in A/B seats within five-year period.
2. The district commits to conducting an annual Quality Seats Analysis (QSA), which includes academic achievement and growth measures, enrollment and demographic trends, and community input.
3. The district commits to using the QSA to develop an annual portfolio plan that articulates a clear strategy to improve every campus in the district.
4. The district commits to executing at least one *School Action* each year, such as creating a new school, restarting a low-performing school, redesigning a district school, or reassigning students to a higher-performing school.
5. The district commits to building a pipeline of school leaders and partner organizations to execute *School Actions* that are aligned with district needs.
6. The district commits to launching an annual Call for Quality Schools to announce the needs of the district and rigorously vet internal school leaders and/or external partner organizations and their plans to execute school actions.
7. The district commits to launching an Office of Innovation with a Cabinet-level Chief Innovation Officer (or similar position) who reports to the Superintendent.

8. The district commits to actively participating in all SGS-related professional learning activities, including CIO Workshops, Texas Authorizer Leadership Academy, Superintendent and Cabinet convenings, and the annual SGS Summit.
9. The district commits to developing and implementing equitable enrollment policies and practices.
10. The district commits to increasing equity, transparency, and flexibility through a student-based campus funding model.

Section 8: Contact Information

Please provide the information requested below.

District	
Mailing Address	
Superintendent Name	
Superintendent Email	
Superintendent Phone	
SGS Primary Contact Name	
SGS Primary Contact Email	
SGS Primary Contact Title	

_____   _____

Superintendent   Date

_____   _____

Chief Innovation Officer   Date