

# Texas Partnerships Guide

2020-2021

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# SECTION ONE.

## ABOUT TEXAS PARTNERSHIPS

The Texas Education Agency is committed to improving outcomes for all public school students in the state via leadership, guidance, and support to school systems. In order to ensure that every child in Texas is prepared for success in college, a career, or the military, TEA has established a number of strategic priorities and goals including the reduction by half of the number of D and F rated campuses in the state.

To help achieve this goal, TEA launched Texas Partnerships and the state Legislature passed SB 1882 to incentivize districts to pursue such partnerships.

### **What is a Texas Partnership?**

In a Texas Partnership, the district authorizes a partner to operate an innovation or turnaround school (See: What does it mean to “authorize” a partner to operate a school?). The authorized partner has sole responsibility over personnel, including hiring, firing and managing staff, as well as sole authority over decisions related to curriculum, calendar, and assessments. The district holds the partner operator accountable through a performance contract outlining academic and financial performance measures for the partnership as well as the division of roles and responsibilities.

### **What is the benefit of engaging in Texas Partnerships?**

When executed successfully, Texas Partnerships offer districts the opportunity to expand the diversity of school options, bring in targeted expertise for innovation and turnaround support, and empower school leaders and partners with greater autonomy. In turn, partners typically receive access to a facility and district operational services. Most importantly, effective partnerships give more students access to great schools.

Texas Partnerships are a versatile tool that provide a way for each and every Texas district to ensure it is meeting the needs of all students. Unlike other school interventions, Texas Partnerships offer districts a vehicle through which to implement sustainable, lasting change for both current and future students, as well as the broader school district.

**Figure 1. Key Components of Texas Partnerships**

- District authorizes the partner to operate an in-district charter school
- The partner manages the district school and is responsible for student outcomes
- The partner has sole autonomy over personnel, curriculum, calendar, and assessments
- The district school board and staff hold partners accountable through a performance contract

## What does it mean to “authorize” a partner to operate a school?

Every Texas school district has the authority to authorize charter schools under Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 12, Subchapter C. In its role as a charter school “authorizer,” the local Board of a Texas school district is responsible for approving and overseeing charter schools in a manner that advances the objectives of Texas charter school law, including:

- Improving student learning;
- Increasing the choice of learning opportunities within the public-school system;
- Creating professional opportunities that will attract new teachers to the public- school system;
- Establishing a new form of accountability for public schools; and
- Encouraging different and innovative learning methods.

In accordance with nationally accepted professional standards for charter school authorizing, the local Board should ensure that district policies and practices uphold three core authorizing principles:

- 1) Maintaining high standards.** To maintain high standards, the Board should:
  - Set high standards for the approval of the charter schools it authorizes; and
  - Hold the charter schools it oversees accountable for meeting the performance standards and expectations set forth in the charter contract and state law.
- 2) Upholding school autonomy.** To uphold charter school autonomy, the Board should:
  - Honor and preserve core autonomies crucial to school success, including independent and effective board governance, personnel decision-making, educational programming, and budgeting;
  - Assume responsibility for holding schools accountable for outcomes, rather than inputs and processes; and
  - Minimize, within state and federal law, administrative and compliance burdens on all charter schools it oversees.
- 3) Protecting student and public interests.** Students’ well-being and interests should inform all Board actions and decisions. To this end, the Board should:
  - Hold its charter schools accountable for public education obligations, including fair treatment in admissions and disciplinary actions, and appropriate services for all students in accordance with law;
  - Hold its charter schools accountable for sound public governance, fiduciary responsibilities, and operational transparency in accordance with law;
  - Charter only high-quality schools that will operate ethically, transparently, and in compliance with applicable laws; and
  - Support parents’ and students’ ability to make informed choices about educational options by providing clear, accurate, and timely information regarding performance of the charter schools it oversees.

For more on in-district authorizing, including the charter application and review process, oversight and evaluation, autonomy, and accountability, see TEA’s Charter Authorizer Guidance (found on the [“Tools”](#) page of the Texas Partnerships website).

## Partnership School Benefits (SB 1882)

Districts have long been able to contract and partner with non-profit organizations to operate schools. Relatively few districts have done so, however. To maximize the potential for Texas Partnerships to improve student outcomes, the state Legislature signed SB 1882 into law in 2017. The bill encourages districts to use these partnerships to improve student outcomes by offering two new benefits: approved partnerships may receive additional state funding for the partnership school, and schools that received an overall F rating under state accountability are eligible to receive a two-year exemption from specific accountability interventions (See Figure 2). Districts access these benefits by completing a Texas Partnerships Benefits Application. This application is reviewed by an agency-selected review panel.

### Figure 2. Overview of Partnership Benefits

**Additional Funding.** Approved partnership schools may receive additional state funding for each student. This funding is available to districts that receive less per-pupil state funding for a partnership school than it would receive if the school was a state-authorized charter school. This potential additional funding applies to partnerships with Innovation or Turnaround Schools.

To estimate the potential financial benefit of SB 1882 for a specific school, refer to the Texas Partnerships Benefit Calculator on the [“Tools”](#) page of the Texas Partnerships website.

**Accountability Exemption.** Approved partnership schools with an overall F rating receive a two-year exemption from specific accountability-related sanctions to allow time for the partnership to improve academic performance.

For schools that have received consecutive unacceptable ratings for up to three years, the exemption begins the academic year after the school receives approval for partnership benefits.

For schools with four or more consecutive unacceptable ratings, the accountability intervention exemption begins the academic year the school applies for partnership benefits.

## About this Guide

The rest of this guide describes the different kinds of Texas Partnerships, outlines the process of applying for partnership school benefits, and provides guidance for developing strong partnership schools. The guide also provides a variety of resources for districts, including grant opportunities, tools, a collection of Frequently Asked Questions, and the Texas Partnership Benefits Application.

# SECTION TWO.

## TYPES OF TEXAS PARTNERSHIPS

Texas Partnerships are unique based on two factors: 1) the type of partner and 2) the type of partnership school.

### Types of Partners

There are two types of potential partners. The first type – **existing Texas partners** – includes state-authorized (Subchapter D) Texas charter operators, as well as district-authorized (Subchapter C) charter operators in good standing. To meet the state’s definition for “good standing,” the partner must have at least three years of experience operating a Texas charter school and received acceptable academic and financial accountability ratings for the three preceding school years. In addition, the partner may not be associated with a charter that has been revoked.

The second partner type – **new Texas partners** – include all other eligible entities, such as existing state- or district-authorized charter operators with less than three years of experience operating a charter school in Texas, non-profits, institutes of higher education, governmental entities, and out-of-state school operators.

**Figure 3. Two Kinds of Partners**

Existing Texas Partners	New Texas Partners
<p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State or district-authorized charter operators with at least three years of experience operating a charter school in Texas</li> <li>• Institutes of higher education, governmental entities, and other non-profits with at least three years of experience operating a charter school in Texas</li> </ul> <p><i>Existing partners must have acceptable academic and financial performance in each of the three preceding school years. Neither the partner organization, nor the key individuals involved, may be associated with a revoked charter.</i></p>	<p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing state or district-authorized charter operators with less than a three-year track record</li> <li>• Out-of-state charter operators (that have not operated in Texas), institutes of higher education, governmental entities, and other non-profits with less than a three-year track record</li> </ul>

### Types of Partnership Schools

There are two kinds of partnership schools. Turnaround Schools include schools that received an overall F rating the year prior to becoming a partnership school. In contrast, Innovation Schools include existing district schools that received an overall A, B, C, or non-consecutive D the year prior to becoming a partnership school, and wholly new schools with a new county district campus number (including early childhood programs serving PK3).

**Figure 4. Two Types of Partnership Schools**

<b>Turnaround Schools</b>	<b>Innovation Schools</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school received an overall F rating for the school year before operation of the district campus under the contract begins</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Existing schools that received an overall A, B, C, or D</li><li>• New schools, defined as new schools for state reporting; must receive a new county district campus number (CDCN).</li></ul>

# SECTION THREE.

## DEVELOPING STRONG LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

Before a district can apply to TEA for partnership benefits, the district must first authorize the partnership. This two-step process empowers districts to implement a process that meets the needs of their respective communities, while also ensuring that the partnership plan reflects best practices most likely to position the partnership to succeed. Developing strong partnerships capable of transforming schools and creating great new or innovative learning environments requires significant planning and implementation support as districts must work thoughtfully and intentionally with community members and partners. The steps that follow outline a pathway to developing such partnerships.<sup>1</sup> Practices that align with the statute and rules that govern Texas Partnerships are highlighted throughout this section.

### 1. Set A Vision

Texas Partnerships are a tool through which districts can meet their goals, and they are most effective when they connect to a district's broader vision for student success that considers academic goals, the diversity of student needs, expectations for low-performing schools, and a desire for continuous, and at times, dramatic improvement. Districts will form that vision in concert with the community and use that vision as the north star guiding all school actions. To develop a strong vision that drives the work with Texas Partnerships and other school actions, the district leadership team should consider the following:

- How could engaging in a partnership with a new or existing operator improve student learning and encourage innovative learning methods, and how is this tied to the district's broader strategy to improve student outcomes?
- How would a partnership create more professional opportunities that would attract teachers to your district?
- How would the district's process for selecting and overseeing the performance contract with a partner bolster accountability in the district?

Districts applying for Texas Partnerships benefits are required to adopt TEA's Model District Charter Authorizing Policy or a similar policy approved by TEA.

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<sup>1</sup> This section draws heavily from Public Impact & EdPlex. (2016). School restart authorization process guide. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact, and Denver, CO: EdPlex. Retrieved from [www.schoolrestarts.org](http://www.schoolrestarts.org). For more information on any of the topics mentioned here, see [www.schoolrestarts.org](http://www.schoolrestarts.org).

## 2. Identify Schools for a Texas Partnership

Any school could potentially benefit from an in-district charter partnership so long as doing so increases school operating autonomy, expands leadership capacity, and maximizes resources for the school. As districts assess school quality and student needs across the district to determine which schools would make the best candidates, two steps are helpful.

First, districts should establish and apply transparent and objective criteria for identifying existing schools or neighborhoods where a Texas Partnership would address a specific community need. That could mean launching a new partnership at an Innovation School in a rapidly growing part of town or restarting a struggling school at risk of closure as a Turnaround School. This first step should produce a list of likely partnership schools the district can share with potential partner organizations. The list also serves as a starting point for working with school communities in the partnership process (see Step 3: Engage the School Community).

Secondly, districts should identify schools for a Texas Partnership based on a school performance framework or additional criteria, such as school readiness, community support, and potential for matching it with qualified partner organizations. Districts should also consider alternative school actions, such as school closure or redesign, that may be more appropriate for meeting district and school objectives. Through this two-step approach, districts will be able to narrow the list of potential schools to focus on those most likely to succeed.

### 3. Engage the School Community

Community engagement is critical to establishing and maintaining successful partnerships, and this engagement should not happen at only one point in the process. Rather, districts should actively engage their community in the partnership process, giving students, parents, staff, and other community members an opportunity to ask questions, learn what is happening, voice their concerns and hopes, and actively participate in the process of choosing a partner. Texas Partnerships are more likely to succeed when the families those partnerships aim to serve are active participants in the process.

But what does effective community engagement look like? Although the specifics will be different for every school, clear and consistent communication is critical. The district should communicate about the reasons for the partnership, the district's goals for partnership, and what families can expect from the process. It is also important to set clear expectations for community involvement. Community members should know when they will have an opportunity to vote, shape a policy or statement, or provide feedback – and how the district will then use that information to shape the partnership

Finally, it is important to anticipate that district-charter partnerships may be controversial, especially in districts where such partnerships do not already exist, and families and school staff feel uncertain about the future of their school. Hence, districts must set clear expectations about the partnership, including how it will form and how it will work, and communicate at each step along the way.

## 4. Recruit Operating Partners

The next step includes publishing a Call for Quality Schools that invites potential partners to apply at the schools identified in Step 3. A strong Call includes:

- An overview of Texas Partnerships and anticipated roles and responsibilities
- Details about the schools and types of partnerships desired
- High-level student demographic data so operators can determine if they are a good fit
- Detailed information about the needs of students at each school
- Community priorities for the school
- Grant funds or supplemental funds available for the partnership, including an estimate of potential funding available to approved partnership schools
- Any non-negotiables for partnership from the district's perspective
- Clear, published criteria for evaluating operator applications

Texas Partnerships will only be as successful as the partners participating in them. But recruiting great operating partners is difficult and takes time. Districts should ideally begin recruiting potential operators as soon as they think they may want to partner and should begin cultivating a pipeline of leaders and high-performing school operators to support this work.

## 5. Collect and Evaluate Local Campus Partnership Applications

Campus partner applications allow the district to assess the partner’s capacity to operate the school, including how they will address the specific school needs identified in the Call (See Figure 6). Ideally, multiple organizations would apply to operate each school, providing the district and school community a variety of options. The district then evaluates applications to ensure applicants have the capacity to operate the school.

Districts should also carefully consider and clearly communicate the role that parents and other school community members will play in the application review and approval process, including how the application process will work and how and when decisions will be made. Districts can create opportunities for parents and community members to play an active role in the approval process by including community representatives on the application review team, or by forming parent/community councils that select partners (or submit preferences) from a pool of district-approved operators.

**Figure 6: Elements of a Strong Partner Application and Evaluation Rubric**

All districts must submit their local campus partner applications and evidence of evaluation in their benefits application package; however, the local campus partner applications are only evaluated in the benefits application for New Partners that will manage Innovation and Turnaround Schools (see Section 2, Figures 3 and 4, for more information on partner and school types).

***A strong partner application includes...***

- Evidence of the partner’s capacity to manage the campus, including ensuring the partner will have at least 3 people on the board and one full time staff member when the district applies for benefits (*Note: the governing board of the partner will be required to attend a TEA-approved governance training within a year of the approval of benefits, and the district will submit the names and background information of partner board members annually*)
- Evidence that the partner has a consistent vision and school culture
- Information about the partner’s curriculum, assessments, instructional strategies
- Description of how the partner will recruit and manage their staff, and any professional development activities or programs
- Evidence that the partner has staff in a leadership position with at least three years’ experience managing campuses with a track record of academic success if the partner will manage a turnaround campus.

***A strong partner evaluation process includes...***

- Employing a review panel to identify partner strengths, weaknesses, past performance, and best fit to campus and district needs
- Conducting capacity interviews with board members and proposed staff members

*Districts developing a partnership are required to use the Model Local Campus Partner Application or similar application. Districts are required to use the Model Scoring Rubric or a similar rubric. The model application and scoring rubric is available on the [Tools](#) page of the Texas Partnerships website. Districts not using these models must have their local application and scoring rubric approved prior to submitting the application for benefits; the rubric for this submission is also on the [Tools](#) page. (See: Section 4 Figure 7. Other Requirements by School- and Partner-Type)*

## 6. Nominate Partner Applications for Board Approval

All local campus partner applications must receive local board approval. Districts should be sure to schedule time for this step that recognizes both the board's meeting schedule and the time needed to win support. As noted earlier, it is not uncommon for board decisions to be controversial, with significant public testimony and input. The partnership may result in significant changes to school staff and educational programming.

Partnerships may also fundamentally shift in roles and responsibilities for the school district, the new charter operating partner, and other community members and organizations that have had an ongoing relationship with the school. District leaders can help prepare their local boards to make these difficult decisions by providing detailed information about the campus identification and partner selection and allowing adequate time for board members to evaluate the opportunity and hear community input.

## 7. Negotiate and Execute Performance Contracts with Selected Partners

In accordance with a district's local authorizing policy, the performance contract formalizes the partnership, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and sets expectations for the partnership. Any district that applies for partnership school benefits must submit an executed performance contract to TEA. TEA will review the contract against an evaluation form to confirm that the contract meets SB 1882 statutory requirements (these requirements can be found in the Performance Contract Evaluation Form on the [Tools](#) page of the Texas Partnerships website). To maintain eligibility for 1882 benefits, the performance contract must continually meet these requirements throughout the existence of the partnership. TEA will monitor the fidelity of implementation of performance contracts, and the district must notify TEA of any changes to the performance contract within 30 calendar days.

TEA has also created a model contract as a sample for districts to utilize in beginning negotiations and finalizing negotiation terms. The model contract and corresponding evaluation form can be found on the "[Tools](#)" page of the Texas Partnerships website.

# SECTION FOUR.

## APPROVAL PROCESS FOR PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL BENEFITS

After a district develops and authorizes a strong partnership (see Section 3), the district can apply to TEA for partnership benefits available through SB 1882. This section outlines the process and requirements for applying for benefits.

All districts seeking approval for a Texas Partnership must submit:

1. a completed Texas Partnership Benefits Application
2. the district’s Local Board-Approved Charter Authorizing Policy
  - If the district is not using the TEA model policy, the charter authorizing policy must be approved prior to the application submission
3. the Local Campus Partner Application submitted by the partner and the district’s completed evaluation documentation
  - If the district is not using the TEA model application and scoring rubric, these must be approved prior to the application submission
4. the signed Partnership Performance Contract.

TEA will not evaluate all documents for all partnership applications. The review process varies depending on the school- and partner- type (See Figure 7). The rest of this section describes each of the documents that TEA may evaluate as part of a district’s application for partnership benefits. TEA will review other documents for context and completeness only.

**Figure 7. Documents TEA will Evaluate to Determine Eligibility for Partnership School Benefits by School- and Partner-Type**

<b>School Type</b>	<b>Turnaround</b>	<b>Innovation</b>	<b>Turnaround</b>	<b>Innovation</b>
<b>Partner Type</b>	<b>New</b>	<b>New</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Existing</b>
Charter Authorizing Policy	Evaluated*	Evaluated*	Evaluated*	Evaluated*
District Authorizing Practice Questions	Evaluated	Evaluated		
Local Campus Partner Application	Evaluated*	Evaluated*		
Evidence of Evaluation of Local Campus Partner Application	Evaluated	Evaluated		
Partnership Performance Contract	Evaluated	Evaluated	Evaluated	Evaluated

\*Districts that are not using the TEA model Charter Authorizing policy or the TEA model Local Campus Partner Application must submit these documents by November 30, 2020 for approval. Districts using the model submit these documents with this complete application package (due March 31, 2021).

## Texas Partnership Benefits Application

The Texas Partnership Benefits Application includes a section on district charter authorizing policies and practices. In it, districts must describe how they are implementing their charter policies, including the resources available, the district staff that are dedicated to overseeing the partnership(s), the leadership of the district’s charter authorizing functions, and the process the district uses to review, monitor, and intervene at a school when necessary. **TEA will evaluate the policy implementation for districts partnering with a new Texas partner, regardless of school type.** Districts must also attach their Local Board-Approved Charter Authorizing Policy, and districts not using the TEA model policy must have their policy approved prior to the application submission

## Local Campus Partner Application and Evidence of Evaluation

For each partnership school, districts must attach the Local Campus Partner Applications that their partner submitted, as well as evidence of the district’s evaluation processes, including evidence of the capacity interview. Districts not using the TEA model application and scoring rubric must have their application and scoring rubric approved prior to the application submission. **TEA will only evaluate the Local Campus Partner Application for districts proposing a partnership with a new Texas partner.**

## Partnership Performance Contract

All districts that apply for partnership benefits must submit *the executed* Partnership Performance Contract. **TEA will evaluate the performance contracts to ensure they meet all statutory and rule requirements for all partnerships regardless of school or partner type.** Districts should refer to the Performance Contract Evaluation Form found on the “[Tools](#)” page of the Texas Partnerships website when drafting and negotiating contract terms to ensure alignment with regulatory requirements. The Performance Contract Evaluation Form clarifies contract criteria for partners’ operating authority, academic performance goals, financial goals, school enrollment and expulsion policies, contract terms, charter exemptions, service level agreements, per pupil or percentage funding allocations from the district, accountability for implementing an education plan, and consequences for breach of contract. TEA also created a Model Partnership Performance Contract districts can use as a template. If the performance contract does not meet all the criteria in TEA’s evaluation form, TEA may approve the contract contingent on the district making specific, requested modifications.

## TEA’S Review Process

Districts must submit all application materials to TEA by March 31, 2021 (5 PM) to be considered for the 2020-2021 review cycle. Districts may submit applications for partnership school benefits for schools authorized by the district to open in either 2020-21 or 2021-2022.

**Figure 8. Review Cycle for Partnership School Benefits**

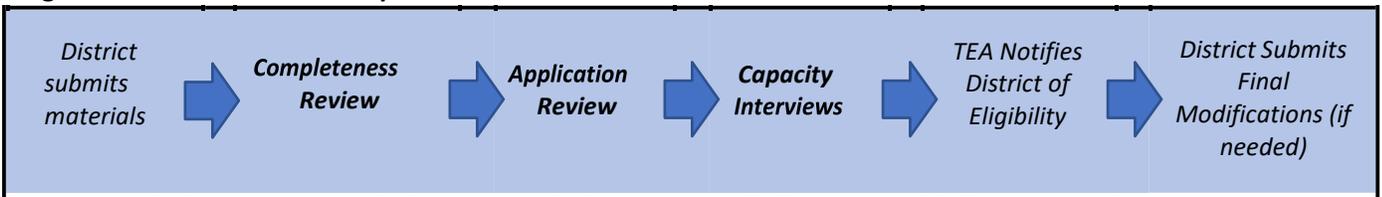
Districts submit completed applications	Application Review	TEA notifies district of eligibility	Districts submit additional information (if needed)
March 31, 2021 (5 PM)	Apr. 1-30, 2021	May 7, 2021	May 2021

TEA's application review will include the following steps:

1. **A completeness review.** TEA will first review the application for completeness and to ensure that districts have adopted and / or utilized all relevant policies and templates as required. If TEA determines that any part of a district's submission is incomplete, it will notify the district so it can re-submit the necessary documents. TEA will remove from consideration any applications that:
  - Are submitted after the deadline
  - Include plagiarized materials
  - Are from districts that did not submit a Letter of Intent by November 30, 2020
  - Are from districts that did not attend mandatory webinars or include partners that did not attend the mandatory webinar
  - Include an operating partner that has fewer than 3 members on its governing board and 1 full time staff member at the time the application is submitted to TEA
2. **Application review.** TEA will formally evaluate relevant pieces of each district's application (See Section 4, Figure 7 for which pieces TEA will formally evaluate based on the partner- and school-type). The review team will discuss individual findings and will establish a consensus rating for each section based on the criteria laid out in its published [evaluation forms](#) for each part of the application submission.
3. **Requests for Additional Information and Capacity interviews.** TEA may request additional information and/or conduct capacity interviews with districts submitting an application that do not meet a minimum threshold in the steps above. During these interviews, TEA staff may ask questions to clarify specific elements of the application(s) and to assess the district's and partner's capacity to implement the partnership plan laid out in their application. Districts should plan to include their Board Chair, Superintendent (or designee), the primary staff member(s) responsible for authorizing in the interview, and leadership representative(s) from the partner organization.

In the case that TEA determines that elements of the district authorizing policies and practices or partnership performance contract do not meet minimum statutory or regulatory requirements, the district may receive approval conditional on making specific modifications to their district authorizing policies and practices or partnership performance contract. In such instances, districts will have an opportunity to submit modifications (See Figure 10).

**Figure 10. Review Process Steps**



# SECTION FIVE.

## RESOURCES

Various resources are available to districts applying for partnership school benefits. TEA also offers two fellowship opportunities and has created a vetted list of support providers that can provide technical assistance. Districts interested in receiving additional support should contact [DSSI@tea.texas.gov](mailto:DSSI@tea.texas.gov).

### Grants

#### School Action Fund

The School Action Fund (SAF) aims to increase the number of students in great schools by providing customized planning and implementation support to school districts committed to transforming low-performing schools and creating better options for students through to bold and aggressive school actions. To this end, the SAF offers planning and implementation grants to support the planning and implementation of partnerships (See Figure 11).

**Figure 11: School Action Fund**

School Action Fund Grants	
<b>Amount</b>	Planning: ~\$250K Continuation: ~\$500K-\$1 million
<b>Can be used for...</b>	Planning a Partnership
<b>Grant term</b>	Planning: 1 year Continuation: 2 years
<b>Application opens</b>	March 2021
<b>Award granted</b>	July 2021
<b>How to apply</b>	Grant will post to <a href="#">TEA Grants Opportunities Page</a>
<b>Eligibility</b>	Partnerships at schools identified as comprehensive or targeted or new schools guaranteeing priority enrollment for students attending a comprehensive or targeted school

#### Charter School Program Grant

The Charter School Program Grant (CSP) aims to increase the number of great schools by supporting the start-up and replication of high-performing charter and partnership schools. To this end, the CSP offers a start-up and replication grant to support districts to implement and expand partnership schools. More information about future application cycles is coming in Fall 2020.



# APPENDIX A.

## TEXAS PARTNERSHIP TOOLS

All of the documents and related evaluation forms referenced in the table below can be found on the [“Tools”](#) page of the Texas Partnerships website.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DOCUMENTS	
<b>Texas Partnership Benefits Application</b>	<b>Texas Partnership Benefits Application</b> Document that districts must submit to TEA to apply for partnership school benefits. The application provides an overview of submission requirements, identifies required attachments, collects information about district authorizing practices and policies, and includes an assurances document the superintendent must sign.
	<b>Charter Authorizing Policies and Practices Evaluation Form</b> Form describes the criteria and process TEA will use to evaluate districts’ responses to the Charter Authorizing Policies and Practices section of the benefits application for partnerships that include new Texas partners.
<b>Local Partnership Authorizing Policy</b>	<b>Model Local Partnership Authorizing Policy</b> Document serves as a model district authorizing policy for Subchapter C charter schools that is consistent with legislative and regulatory requirements for partnership school benefits under SB 1882. Districts must adopt this, or a similar, TEA-approved policy to receive benefits for partnerships that include new Texas partners.
<b>Local Campus Partner Application</b>	<b>Model Local Campus Partner Application</b> Document serves as a model application for districts soliciting proposals from organizations interested in operating a partnership school. Districts must use this application or a similar application.
	<b>Local Campus Partner Application Evaluation Form</b> The rubric TEA will use to evaluate Local Campus Partner Applications that include new Texas partners. It is directly aligned to the Model Local Campus Partner Application. Districts must also use this (or a similar) rubric to evaluate the partner applications they receive from new Texas partners.
<b>Partnership Performance Contract</b>	<b>Model Partnership Performance Contract</b> Document serves as a model contract that districts and partners can use as a template for their partnership performance contract, which is required for all districts that apply for partnership school benefits. The included provisions reflect legislative and regulatory requirements of partnerships eligible for benefits under SB 1882.
	<b>Partnership Performance Contract Evaluation Form</b> Document that TEA will use to evaluate executed performance contract. The evaluation form is based on legislative and regulatory requirements of partnerships eligible for benefits under SB 1882. TEA will evaluate the quality of performance contracts for all partnerships regardless of school- or partner- type.

**OTHER RESOURCES**

<b>Texas Partnerships Benefit Calculator</b>	The "District Charter Funding FY2020" tab within the template allows districts to estimate the potential funding benefit generated by the campus as a Texas Partnership.
<b>Charter Authorizer Guidance</b>	This suite of charter school authorizing guidance serves as a model for Texas independent school district Board of Trustees seeking to authorize and oversee campus charters and(or) programs under Texas Education Code, Chapter 12, Subchapter C.
<b>Model Early Education Provider Application</b>	Document serves as a model application for partner organizations interested in operating an early education campus as an Innovation School. TEA strongly encourages districts to use this template for soliciting applications from early education partner organizations.
<b>Early Education Provider Application Evaluation Form</b>	Document serves as a model form that districts may use to evaluate partner-submitted applications to operate an early education Innovation School. The evaluation form is directly aligned to the Model Early Education Provider Application.

# APPENDIX B.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### General

#### **What is SB 1882?**

The Texas Legislature signed Senate Bill 1882 into effect in 2017 to encourage districts to use partnerships to improve student outcomes by offering two new benefits: 1) approved partnerships may receive additional state funding for the partnership school, and 2) schools with an overall F rating under the 2018-2019 accountability rating system (ratings released in fall 2019) are eligible to receive a two-year exemption from specific accountability interventions.

#### **Are partnership school benefits only for Turnaround Schools?**

No, districts may also pursue benefits for Innovation schools. Innovation Schools include existing district schools that received an overall A, B, C, or D the year prior to becoming a partnership school, and newly launched schools with a new county district campus number (including early childhood programs serving PK3).

#### **Are all districts eligible to apply for Partnership School benefits (SB 1882)?**

Any district that authorizes an eligible partner to run a school may be eligible for Partnership School benefits.

#### **What types of organizations are eligible to be partners?**

To be eligible for benefits, partner organizations must be non-profits (to include state- authorized charter schools), institutions of higher education, or government entities.

#### **What does it mean for a partner to be in “good standing?”**

To meet the state’s definition for “good standing,” the partner must have at least three years of experience operating a Texas charter school and must have received acceptable academic and financial accountability ratings for the three preceding school years. In addition, the partner may not be associated with a charter that has been revoked.

#### **What does it mean for a partner to run or operate a district campus?**

The partner has sole responsibility for personnel, as well as authority over decisions related to curriculum, calendar, and assessments. The district holds the partner accountable through a performance contract outlining academic goals for the school, as well as the division of roles and responsibilities.

**Do all partnership schools approved for benefits receive a two-year exemption from specific accountability interventions?**

To be eligible for the exemption, the partnership school must have received an overall F rating in the year prior to entering the partnership.

**When do accountability benefits begin? How long do they last?**

For schools with a first, second, or third year overall F rating, the accountability intervention exemption begins the academic year after the school seeks approval for partnership benefits. For schools with four or more consecutive overall F ratings, the exemption begins in the school year the district applies for benefits. The exemption lasts for two years.

**From which interventions are campuses participating in a Texas Partnership exempt?** Districts are only exempt from interventions outlined under TEC 39A.101(a) and 39A. 111 related to the performance of an approved partnership school. Specifically, the agency may not impose that the campus prepare and submit a turnaround plan, as outlined in TEC §39A.101(a), appoint a board of managers, as outlined in TEC 39A.111(1)), and/or close the campus, as outlined in TEC §39A.111(2)).

**How much additional funding can my Texas Partnership school expect under SB 1882?** To determine if district eligibility for additional funding, and to estimate the amount of additional funding, districts should use the Texas Partnerships Benefit Calculator on the [“Tools”](#) page of the Texas Partnerships website..

## District Procedures

**Does a district need to authorize a partnership school as a campus or in-district charter?** Yes. Per statute, the districts must authorize partnership schools as a campus or in-district charter.

**Can all districts authorize partnership or in-district charter schools?**

Yes. Districts should reference their local board policy for information regarding the local process.

**Does a district need to adopt specific board policies or authorizing materials?**

Possibly. Districts pursuing a partnership that includes a Turnaround Partnership school with a new Texas partner must use the TEA’s Model Local Partnership Authorizing Policy (or similar TEA-approved policy), Model Local Campus Partner Application (or similar), and Local Campus Partner Evaluation Form

**Can the district still provide transportation services for the partnership school?**

Yes. District and partners are required to create a service-level agreement outlining services the district will provide to the partnership school, which can include transportation and other support services.

## Governance

### **Are there restrictions on who can serve on a partner's board?**

Yes. Partner boards may not include any members of the independent school district's Board of Trustees, the Superintendent, or staff responsible for evaluating the Local Campus Partnership Application or overseeing the Partnership Performance Contract.

### **Are there restrictions on the composition of a partner's board?**

Yes. District staff may not comprise a majority of any board with which the district approves a Partnership Performance Contract.

### **Are there restrictions on the appointment of partner board members?**

Yes. Districts may not appoint a majority of the members of the governing board of the partner organization.

### **Are districts and partners required to meet conflict of interest standards?**

Yes. Local policy determines conflicts of interest. However, districts must provide an assurance that no member of the governing body of the partner will be related within the first degree of affinity or consanguinity with any members of the independent school district's Board of Trustees, the Superintendent, or staff responsible for granting the charter or contract to partner to operate or overseeing the performance contract.

## Partnership Performance Contract

**Does the Partnership Performance Contract need to include specific provisions?** Yes. Please reference the [Benefits Application Evaluation Rubric](#) for specific criteria regarding provisions.

**How long does the partnership last between the district and the operating partner?** To be eligible for Partnership School benefits, performance contracts must have a minimum term of three years with a maximum term of ten years. The district and the operating partner negotiate the length of the agreement.

**Can districts terminate the agreement before the term length has been met, or extend the agreement?**

Districts must hold a public hearing to either extend or terminate the agreement.

**Does the performance contract need to include academic performance measures?** Yes. See the [Benefits Application Evaluation Rubric](#) for contract requirements.

**Does the performance contract need to include financial performance measures?** Yes. See the [Benefits Application Evaluation Rubric](#) for contract requirements.

**Can the performance contract be contingent on a Turnaround School receiving an acceptable accountability rating?**

No. To receive partnership school benefits, districts must provide an assurance that the Partnership Performance Contract is not contingent on receiving an acceptable accountability rating.

## Staffing

**Who manages the principal or school leader?**

For a partnership school to be eligible for benefits, the partner must manage the principal or school leader.

**Are staff employees of the district, or of the partner?**

The partner or the district can employ staff. The district and the partner should outline employer and employee arrangements in the performance contract. The partner must employ at least one FTE to manage each school.

**Does the partner have authority to create its own employment evaluation instrument, or must it use the district's employment evaluation instrument?**

The partner may create and use its own employment evaluation instrument.

**Are employees of the partner eligible for the Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS)?**

Yes.

**Would all employees at a partnership school, regardless of employer, be eligible for district performance pay benefits?**

If the partner hires the employees directly, the partner may add performance pay benefits separate from the district's performance pay system. If teachers hired by the district directly have performance pay benefits in their contracts, they will be eligible for the program.

**Must campus staff turn over as part of a Texas Partnership?**

The partner has the sole authority to select, reassign, or terminate administration or teaching staff. The partner has the sole authority to determine whether any open positions exist in the school and has the initial and final authority to approve the assignment of a district employee applicant to the partner. The partner must hire and manage at least one employee prior to the submission of the benefits application.

## Application Process

**Can my district apply for benefits for more than one Texas Partnership?**

Yes. There is no limit on the number of Texas Partnerships that can receive benefits in a district. However, the district must submit the Local Campus Partner Application and Partnership Performance Contract for each proposed partnership school.

