

## **Philanthropy Advocates**

***formerly Texas Education Grantmaker Advocacy Consortium (TEGAC)***

**RFP for Advocacy Grants, Early Grade Success Policy Work Group**

### **Introduction**

Philanthropy Advocates, formerly the Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium (TEGAC), is a geographically and politically diverse consortium of 54 private, corporate, and community foundations from across Texas working together to promote, protect and improve public and higher education.

Research, innovation, seeding best practices, and rapid response form the foundation of what Texas philanthropy provides to state lawmakers and policymakers. Since 2012, Philanthropy Advocates has engaged the philanthropic sector to participate in research and advocacy around important public and higher education policy issues. Philanthropy Advocates is committed to serving as a trusted, non-partisan resource to Texas lawmakers that provides fact-based data on Texas public schools and post-secondary institutions. In 2019, we joined Educate Texas, housed at the Communities Foundation of Texas, to further our impact.

With our members' guidance, Philanthropy Advocates concentrates on public and higher education policy issues that have the greatest impact on student outcomes, including early grade success, pathways to college and career, effective teaching, and school finance.

Philanthropy Advocates has supported research and advocacy around statewide early childhood policy for close to a decade. In 2019, Philanthropy Advocates' membership decided to further our work in early grade success to deeply focus on ensuring our state's young English learners (ELs) receive high quality early literacy education.

In spring 2020, Philanthropy Advocates commissioned its longtime research and advocacy partner, Texans Care for Children, to identify key data and best practices on teacher effectiveness and educational outcomes of Texas EL students. Texans Care for Children and Philanthropy Advocates - in partnership with IDRA, TxAEYC and the University of North Texas, Denton - have formed the Texas Early Childhood English Learner Initiative. The Initiative works to:

- Build a diverse statewide Advisory Group of advocates to support young ELs with active workgroups of experts to provide feedback on community level efforts serving ELs and shape community-level and statewide policy recommendations;



- Research key data and best practices on teacher effectiveness and educational outcomes of Texas EL children;
- Identify policy levers and opportunities to improve teacher effectiveness and educational outcomes of young EL students;
- Monitor the short and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to better understand the challenges faced by early education providers; and explore available data to better understand how the coronavirus may impact student readiness and how far EL students may have fallen behind;
- Develop a consensus legislative agenda to improve teacher effectiveness and strengthen early childhood systems for EL students;
- Launch a strategic communications campaign to share research, best practices and policy opportunities through a dedicated campaign webpage, printed materials, earned media, presentations, events, and use of online tools and social media;
- Educate policy leaders and staff at the legislative, executive and community level to build greater awareness and share policy opportunities;
- Partner with the Philanthropy Advocates statewide membership, leadership and workgroups to seek expert guidance, build advocacy strategy, and mobilize diverse communities leading up to and during the 2021 Legislative Session;
- Cultivate a set of legislative champions to boost support of young EL students in the 2021 Legislative Session; and
- Execute a strategic advocacy campaign to achieve the policy recommendations during the 2021 legislative Session.

### **Grant Details and Required Activities**

As part of its ongoing efforts to provide objective and non-partisan data on public education in Texas, Philanthropy Advocates is immediately seeking proposals from organizations to assist and coordinate with Philanthropy Advocates and the Texas Early Childhood English Learner Initiative to disseminate these research findings to the general public, media, and policymakers leading up to and through the 2021 Texas Legislative Session.

Philanthropy Advocates will award grants to nonprofit organizations with demonstrated experience and capacity to engage diverse audiences in important education issues. Each organization may only submit one proposal. Proposals should include a full budget and request should not exceed \$25,000.

Grant recipients must agree to:

- Participate and coordinate with Philanthropy Advocates, Texans Care for Children and the Texas Early Childhood English Learner Initiative in a strategic advocacy campaign to engage and educate policymakers and members of the media leading up to and through the 2021 Texas Legislative Session.
- Participate in regularly scheduled conference calls and select Philanthropy Advocates /Educate Texas meetings over the course of the grant period.

- Produce a brief report, outlining successes and challenges of the project at the conclusion of the grant period.
- Acknowledge funds granted under a grant agreement must be used for advocacy activities only and should not be used for direct or grassroots lobbying.

### **Grant Application Process**

**The application deadline is Thursday, September 10, 2020. Grant awards will be announced by Friday, September 25, 2020. The grant period will begin October 1, 2020 with a mandatory orientation session in October and end on September 30, 2021.**

Applicants should submit proposals via email to Becky Calahan at [bcalahan@cftexas.org](mailto:bcalahan@cftexas.org).

All proposals should include:

- Cover letter on organization's letterhead and signed by director
- Executive summary
- Narrative (no more than 5 pages) with project description, goals, activities, timeline, key staff, & plan to measure results
- Proposed budget
- Previous examples of media outreach and/or outreach with grassroots organizations
- Organization background
- Proof of nonprofit status:
  - W-9
  - Current list of Board of Directors
  - FY 2019 Financial Statement

### **Additional Background Information**

English Learners (ELs) represent a significant and growing percentage of students enrolled in Texas public schools and in licensed child care centers. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) defines ELs as “a student whose primary language is not English and whose English language skills are such that the student has difficulty performing ordinary classwork in English.” According to the TEA, ELs comprise over 38 percent of pre-k students (about 100,000 kids) and approximately one in five students overall. But what do policymakers know about the quality of their learning environments and teacher effectiveness in child care and in the early grades? Unfortunately, we have little Texas-specific information on what is working well and where significant gaps exist. We lack good, disaggregated data on outcomes for EL children in child care and the early grades, which curricula and assessment tools work best for the EL population, the adequacy of the pipeline of bilingual teachers with early childhood experience, and how early childhood programs engage the parents of EL children. We do know that EL children are less likely than their peers to access high-quality early childhood programs, be

proficient in both reading and math assessments, or graduate high school. Acknowledging these challenges, House Bill 3, the school finance reform overhaul passed in 2019, funds full-day pre-k for eligible students (including EL children) and increases funding for English learners who attend dual language programs (i.e, programs that provide instruction in English and a student's native language concurrently). However, there was no complementary effort to improve educational supports for EL children before they reach pre-k.

State policymakers should be proud of their new investment in full-day pre-k, but for these new investments to improve third grade reading proficiency and guide all students to early grade success, researchers, advocates, policymakers, and community leaders must come together to provide research-based, community driven recommendations to improve teacher effectiveness and strengthen early childhood systems for our young ELs.

We have also noted that early childhood advocates have lacked a plan to improve teacher effectiveness for your young EL children. In discussions with members of our early childhood network across the state, we found that there is a lack of data on the current status of young EL children in Texas, a shifting landscape of strategies on how best to serve them.

This project is especially critical in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, with children missing out on structured learning and even distance learning if they lack internet access. As families experience unemployment and an uncertain financial future, many EL children will experience traumatic stress and social isolation that will add to their academic challenges when they return to school. Experts are predicting a significant "academic slide" in particular for young EL and low-income students by the time schools re-open. Now, more than ever, there is a need for strengthening collaboration among groups working on issues related to supporting young ELs, dissemination of best practices in teacher effectiveness for this population, and a coordinated advocacy strategy leading into the 2021 Legislative Session to ensure schools and child care centers have the supports they need to boost student outcomes for the EL population.