

Texas Fitness Now Program Frequently Asked Questions

Authorized By General Appropriations Act, Article III, Rider 89, 80th Legislature

What is the purpose of the program?

The 80th Legislature established a grant program to award \$20 million during the 2007-09 biennium to economically disadvantaged middle schools to support in-school physical education, nutrition and fitness programs for students.

Who created this program?

Rider 89 in Article III of the General Appropriations Act (House Bill 1), passed by the 80th Legislature, authorized the creation of the Texas Fitness Now program. The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA) and Texas Education Agency (TEA) developed the program and set the guidelines. TEA will process the applications and distribute the grants.

Why was this program created?

The goal of the grant is to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes through emphasis on physical education and fitness in middle schools. To support in-school physical education (PE) programs, the grants seek to provide students with a foundation for a life of fitness and healthy lifestyle choices.

Who is eligible to apply for the grants?

The program targets students in Grades 6, 7 and/or 8. For this non-competitive grant program, schools with at least 75 percent of the students categorized as economically disadvantaged may be eligible. A list of qualified public school districts and charter schools is available on the Comptroller's Web site at www.window.state.tx.us. Using these guidelines, approximately 700 schools are eligible for this program, with more than 272,000 students eligible to benefit from this grant money.

Are fitness evaluations required?

Eligible schools must agree to conduct campus fitness evaluations twice a year — once before Oct. 15, 2007, and again at the end of the school year — utilizing the student fitness assessment instrument adopted by the commissioner of education.

Where do schools go to apply?

The actual grant application is available on TEA's Web site at: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/opge/formfund/pe/tfn/proguide.doc>. Information including program guidelines and a list of frequently asked questions is available online at the Comptroller's Web site: www.window.state.tx.us.

What is the closing date for this program?

Schools must submit program applications by 5 p.m. on Oct. 1, 2007.

What are the total funds available for this program?

Article III of the General Appropriations Act (House Bill 1) authorized \$20 million for the 2007-09 biennium.

How are the funds allocated?

Every eligible school (approximately 700 campuses) that meets certain program requirements will be eligible to receive a base allocation of \$1,500. The remaining balance of the grant funds — approximately \$8 million per year — will be divided by enrollment.

How may the school spend the grant money?

Schools must allocate funds so that at least 25 percent of the program focuses on nutrition education and activities, and 75 percent centers on physical fitness education and activities. Schools must use grant funds for items necessary to accomplish program objectives and provide budget schedules to TEA with evidence showing the project costs as reasonably related to expected outcomes. Funds may be used to purchase equipment and pay for training.

Are there any restrictions on the grant money?

Program funds can support existing PE programs featuring objectives consistent with the Texas Fitness Now program. Funds may not be used for activities that substitute for PE, such as athletics. Program funds may support amended objectives in the second year of the program, can support PE programs at only one grade level and may be used to purchase equipment specific to the program.

Are there any PE equipment or schedule requirements related to the grant?

The grant program has minimal equipment requirements, though schools must ensure students participate in physical activity for either 30 minutes per day or 225 minutes per two-week period for the entirety of the school year. The grant guidelines provide assistance in selecting and/or developing effective instructional materials, programs, learning systems and strategies based on a list of characteristics of quality physical education from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Can schools use program funds to provide stipends for PE teachers?

Program funds may help provide stipends to campus personnel to further the program objectives and to provide support for teachers participating in professional development workshops, conferences and/or conventions.

Who reviews the grant applications?

A select panel assembled by CPA and TEA comprising state health, nutrition and fitness experts and educators will review and evaluate the Texas Fitness Now grant applications.

What are the limitations on administrative expenditures?

No more than 5 percent of the total grant awarded for any fiscal year may be administrative expenditures, including both direct and indirect costs associated with accounting, auditing and salaries/benefits for program staff.

Why is fitness important?

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle increases self-esteem, decreases body fat, increases strength and endurance, prevents sports-related injuries, increases a student's cognitive ability and helps build a sense of "team" through partner and group exercises.

Who can schools contact for more information?

More information, including program guidelines and a list of frequently asked questions, is available online at the Comptroller's Web site: www.window.state.tx.us. The actual grant application is available on TEA's Web site at: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/opge/formfund/pe/tfn/proguide.doc>. Schools may also contact Marissa Rathbone at TEA, (512) 463-3064, for more information about the Texas Fitness Now program, or TEA's Division of Formula Funding, (512) 463-8525, for more information about grant funding.