

Rio-South Texas Education and Community Development Foundation (RSTEF)

Notice of Funding Opportunity

June 1, 2026

The Rio-South Texas Education and Community Development Foundation (RSTEF) will begin accepting applications for the RSTEF Grant Fund Program 2026-2027 Funding Cycle beginning **July 1, 2026, through August 31, 2026**. Proposals submitted prior to July 1, 2026, and after August 31, 2026, will not be reviewed.

The Rio-South Education and Community Development Foundation (RSTEF) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit private foundation focused on increasing the skilled workforce population through postsecondary education and workforce development. RSTEF serves a seven-county region that includes Cameron, Willacy, Hidalgo, Starr, Zapata, Jim Hogg, and Webb counties.

RSTEF has established the RSTEF Grant Fund Program as a way to implement its strategic framework, leverage its community investments, and increase the impact of supported initiatives. The program works by partnering with other 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations, primarily 2-year and 4-year institutions of higher education, and investing in innovative initiatives that align with the RSTEF Strategic Framework.

The Rio-South Texas Education and Community Development Foundation (RSTEF) has developed a **strategic framework** with a focus on Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development and adopted the strategies of improving cultural awareness for educational attainment, investing in initiatives that align with current labor market demand, development for future workforce needs, and supporting the upskilling of the workforce.

The following are examples of initiatives/purposes that fall under the RSTEF's Focus and Strategies

- a. Programs that increase awareness of the value of education
- b. Programs with a focus on postsecondary degrees in target career clusters and occupations.
- c. Programs that provide credit recovery assistance for postsecondary students to continue or complete academic track in target career clusters and occupations.
- d. Programs that provide for the expansion of apprenticeship opportunities in target career clusters and occupations.
- e. Programs that provide for the expansion of internship opportunities in target career clusters and occupations.
- f. Programs that provide for the expansion or increase capacity through certification in target career clusters and occupations.
- g. Programs that provide for Adult Education (25+ w/lower educational attainment).

Eligible applicants should be 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations. Proposals should reflect 501(c)3 organizations as the lead applicant or applicant of record in the submission.

Proposals should align with the Foundation's Focus, Strategy, and Initiatives. Proposals should demonstrate a need for services and an innovative approach to addressing these needs. Each proposal shall clearly define its critical milestones, outcomes, and performance targets. Funding is limited to a 12-month performance period.

Proposals should be aligned with RSTEF Target Career Clusters & Target Occupations. These are defined as workforce development board identified in-demand occupations having 30 or more job openings annually and with an average wage of \$20/hour or more.

The program requires a dollar-to-dollar match in hard dollars. **RSTEF will not consider in-kind matching.** RSTEF seeks new investment dollars. Standard organizational budgets or existing program budgets will not be considered as matching funds. Student financial aid is considered as in-kind.

Administrative costs, defined as Personnel Salary, Personnel Benefits, and Indirect Costs, are limited to 10% of the funding request. An additional allotment of 5% is made for administrative supplies and materials. This is to stress RSTEF's focus on funding program costs such as tuition, scholarships, student stipends, and/or student salaries & benefits.

The proposal review process runs from September through November. Approved proposals are awarded by January 1st at the earliest.

Organizations interested in applying for funding should contact the RSTEF Grant Manager for a copy of the Grant Proposal Concept template. Email requests to rtapia@rstef.org.

Funding proposals should be submitted using the Grant Proposal Concept template by email to rtapia@rstef.org. Additional inquiries can be made via info@rstef.org or to Rio-South Texas Education & Community Development Foundation (RSTEF), 801 N. Bryan Road, Suite 167, Mission, TX 78572

Frequently Asked Questions

Do you need to be a 501(c)3 nonprofit to be eligible?

Yes. RSTEF only funds 501(c)3 nonprofits. This includes foundations for 2-year and 4-year institutions, workforce development boards, alumni foundations, and other nonprofit partners with the 501(c)3 designation.

Proposal should reflect a 501(c)3 organization as the lead applicant or applicant of record. If a 501(c)3 organization is applying on behalf of an institution of higher education, it should provide proof of its capacity to do so either through its organizational documentation (Article of Incorporation, Bylaws,

resolution, etc.) or via a cooperative agreement (MOU). If in partnership with another organization, a cooperative agreement is required.

How many application cycles are there?

RSTEF funds proposals on an annual basis.

When do you accept applications?

RSTEF accepts applications from July 1 to August 31.

What types of proposals do you fund?

RSTEF funds proposals that align with its strategic framework. RSTEF focuses on postsecondary education and workforce development. It supports strategies that improve cultural awareness for postsecondary education, initiatives that align the workforce with labor market needs, and support the upskilling of the workforce.

What is a target career cluster or target occupation?

RSTEF Target Career Clusters & Target Occupations are defined as workforce development board identified in-demand occupations having 30 or job openings annually and with an average wage of \$20/hour or more.

What is the limit on the amount a proposal can request?

RSTEF does not have a limit on the amount that can be requested. Proposals are funded based on the amount available to be awarded, the number of proposals submitted, the proposed impact, and the proposals' alignment with the RSTEF strategic framework.

What is the performance period?

RSTEF will fund proposals with a performance period of up to 12 months. Proposals with a performance period of less than 12 months will be considered. The exception being endowments which are expected to exist in perpetuity.

Will RSTEF consider multi-year funding?

No. RSTEF does not provide multi-year funding. RSTEF will only fund proposals with a 12-month performance period or less, except for endowments.

What about administrative costs or indirect costs?

RSTEF limits the administrative costs to 10%. Administrative costs are defined as Personnel Salary, Personnel Benefits, and Indirect Costs. An additional allotment of 5% is made for administrative supplies and materials. This is to stress RSTEF's focus on funding program costs such as training, tuition, scholarships, student stipends, and/or student salaries & benefits.

Do you fund equipment requests?

RSTEF will consider requests to fund equipment. 100 percent of RSTEF funds may be used for equipment for new programs. For existing programs, proposals must document that current equipment is either obsolete or past its life span.

Do you fund K-12 programs?

No. RSTEF's focus is on postsecondary education and workforce development.

Do you require a match?

Yes. RSTEF requires a dollar-to-dollar match.

Can the match be in-kind?

No. The match must be hard cash. Note that RSTEF seeks new investment dollars. Standard organizational budgets or existing program budgets will not be considered as matching funds. Student financial aid is considered in-kind.

What is your service area?

The RSTEF service area covers the Texas counties of Willacy, Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, Zapata, Jim Hogg, and Webb.

Is there a specific format for proposals?

Yes. Proposal should be submitted using the RSTEF Grant Proposal Concept template.

How do I get a Grant Proposal Concept template?

Please email the RSTEF Grant Manager to request a Grant Proposal Concept template at rtapia@rstef.org

How do I submit a proposal?

Funding proposals should be submitted using the Grant Proposal Concept template by email to the Grant Manager at rtapia@rstef.org