

GUIDE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Hosting an Application Fair

2027–2028 School Year

TEFA APPLICATION STATUS

Applications for the 2027–28 school year open in early December 2026, earlier than last year's February window. Start planning your fair date(s) now, and confirm them once the Comptroller and Odyssey publish the exact dates. Applications will open before funding is set.

Funding for the program will be decided during the 90th Texas Legislative Session, which begins in January 2027, and the number of new awards depends on that decision. Please don't promise families that a spot or funding is assured, and don't promise replacement funding or alternative assistance unless a specific arrangement has been approved.

Planning Timeline

Plan for multiple fairs at a variety of times to meet the needs of working parents.

Now

Look at your calendar for dates as early as mid-December, book the space, and inform your diocesan TEFA contact.

When dates are confirmed

Send invitations and the parent checklist, in English and Spanish, through school and parish channels.

One week out

Send a reminder and share the resources with your confirmed staff and volunteers.

Before the Fair

- **Choose a convenient time and location.** Evening or weekend sessions in a school computer lab, library, or parish meeting room work well.
- **Arrange staff and volunteers, including Spanish-speaking helpers.** If bilingual help is available only at certain hours, schedule designated sessions around those hours. The application also has a language option at the top right of the page.
- **Share your plans with your diocesan TEFA contact** and ask about resources or extra help.
- **Promote the fair** through school and parish communications, and **distribute the parent checklist** in English and Spanish so families can gather documents beforehand.
- **Provide reliable Wi-Fi, computers or tablets, charging stations**, and a well-lit area for photographing documents. Parents can also switch between computers and their phones by QR code to upload documents.
- Have staff and volunteers **watch Odyssey's step-by-step application walkthrough** beforehand.
- **Walk-ins should be welcome**, but you may choose to set up sign-up slots or appointments so you know how many helpers to schedule. Plan for a greeter at check-in, about one helper for every four families, someone who can walk through the special education section, and Spanish-speaking helpers.

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During the Fair

- From start to finish, **one application may take 15–20 minutes**. Please allow additional time for families with multiple children or additional requirements.
- **Help parents create their accounts.** The parent or legal guardian completing the application registers with their own information and chooses the Texas Education Freedom Account program. Either parent can create the account as long as they're listed on the tax return.
- **Guide families through the application.** Help with navigation and questions, and make sure parents add every child they're applying for to the same application. Staff should know where to find the student information and the special education sections. Families of a child with a disability who doesn't have an IEP on file with TEA will need a disability certification form from a practitioner, and getting it can take time, so they should start before the fair. A parent without a driver's license or state ID can select that option and use other residency documents.
- **Assist with document uploads.** Help parents photograph and upload documents using bright, even light and a dark background. Photos upload better than PDFs, which can trigger a manual review. Where possible, families finish any outstanding verification steps before leaving.
- Parents enter their own sensitive information, review their applications, and sign the required attestations. **Staff should not make eligibility decisions, give tax or legal advice, or sign anything for a parent.**
- To protect privacy, seat families so screens don't face other tables, and ask parents to log out when they finish. **School staff should not keep passwords, tax documents, identification numbers, or copies of personal records, and photos should be cleared from shared devices** when the fair ends.
- **Parents confirm the application was submitted and save their confirmation information.** "Under review" can mean Odyssey needs to verify a document, and "eligible" doesn't guarantee a funding award. If a child shows as "ineligible," check that the information entered is correct, and remember that editing a submitted application means re-uploading verification documents.
- Families may see error or rejection messages after submitting because of web traffic, and refreshing usually fixes this. **For anything else, staff can point families to Odyssey's help center and the program FAQ, then to the diocesan TEFA contact.**

After the Fair

- **Follow up with families.** Remind parents to check their Odyssey accounts and email for verification requests, decisions, and deadlines.
- **Explain that TEFA approval and school admission are separate processes.** Families must complete the school's enrollment requirements and any Odyssey school-selection steps.
- **Keep your diocesan contact informed.** Share the number of families assisted, common difficulties, and questions that need an answer, without sensitive family information.
- **Offer another session or individual follow-up** before the application deadline if families need more time to gather documents or resolve verification issues.

RESOURCES

Odyssey Application
Step-by-Step Video Walkthrough

TEA Texas Student
Unique ID Tool

COMING SOON

TEFA Disability
Certification Form