



**WACO ISD EDUCATION FOUNDATION  
COVER SHEET – PART II  
Application for Grant:  
2026-2027 Funding Cycle**

Assigned Grant Proposal #: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level(s): \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students DIRECTLY involved: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject Area(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Requested: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Grant Focus Area(s):** In order to be considered, Waco Education Foundation Innovation Grant proposals must fall under one or more of the E4 focus areas: early childhood development, enhanced programming for advanced students, extended education for staff, and emphasis on student performance. NOTE: In addition to meeting one of the E4 focus areas above, grant readers are especially interested in creative and innovative grant requests that target fine arts, STEM, literacy, or enrichment.

(check all that apply)

Early Childhood Development

Enhanced Programming for Advanced Students

Fine Arts

Literacy

Extended Education for Staff

Emphasis on Student Performance

STEM

Enrichment

## Assigned Proposal Number: 39

### From Clues to Conclusions: Texas History Through Museum Inquiry for Gifted Learners

Waco ISD will transition history from the classroom to the community by taking all 4th grade Gifted and Talented students to the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum. This immersive experience allows students to analyze primary sources and artifacts, connecting directly with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) regarding frontier history and law enforcement's evolution. By engaging with local heritage, students will develop critical thinking and research skills while exploring the complex legacy of the Texas Rangers. This project fosters a deeper civic identity and inspires the next generation of Texas historians through firsthand discovery.

#### Rationale

This project aligns with the Waco Education Foundation's focus on Creative Classroom Projects and District Initiatives by providing a unified, high-level enrichment experience for all 4th grade GT students. While classroom instruction introduces Texas history, this museum allows for the "Creative" application of historical inquiry, moving beyond textbooks to analyze actual artifacts and primary sources.

**Alignment with District/Campus Improvement Plans:** Our District Improvement Plan emphasizes Advanced Academics and the development of Critical Thinking skills. By centralizing this experience, we ensure equitable access to high-quality enrichment across all Waco ISD campuses. This project specifically addresses:

- **TEKS 4.3(C):** Identifying the impact of the Texas Rangers on the state's development.
- **DIP Goal:** Increasing the percentage of students performing at the "Masters" level by engaging GT students in complex, real-world research environments.

**The Need:** Currently, there is a gap between theoretical history and tangible local heritage. This project is needed to bridge that gap, utilizing Waco's unique resources to foster a sense of "place-based" learning. For many of our students, this is the first opportunity to interact with professional curators and historians, transforming their understanding of career paths in the humanities and social sciences.

**Goals: Development of Primary Source Literacy** We intend to bridge the gap between secondary school texts and professional historiography. Students are expected to:

- Identify and interpret at least three different types of **primary sources** (e.g., journals, artifacts, original photographs).
- Complete a "Curator's Challenge" field guide, requiring them to draw evidence based conclusions from museum exhibits

**3. Cross-Campus Collaboration and Synthesis** As a District Initiative, this project aims to create a shared intellectual vocabulary among the 4th grade GT cohort across Waco ISD. Following the trip, students will be expected to:

- Synthesize their findings into a **creative digital product** (e.g., a Canva presentation, a "virtual museum", or a mock historical journal).
- Present these findings at their respective campuses, fulfilling the GT requirement for sophisticated product development and communication.

**4. Career and Civic Awareness** By interacting with museum staff, students will explore the "Humanities in Action." A specific expectation is for students to identify at least two career paths related to history and preservation (e.g., Archivist, Curator, or Historian), expanding their vision for future academic pursuits.

### **Plan of Operation:**

This project is a multi-phased educational experience. It begins with a pre-visit inquiry lesson where students analyze historical people of Texas. The core activity is a curated site study at the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, where students will engage in an "Artifact Scavenger Hunt" designed to challenge their deductive reasoning. The project concludes with a campus based digital synthesis project where students curate their own "Virtual Museum".

### **Strategies & Objectives**

- **Strategy:** *Inquiry Based Learning.* Students act as "Junior Historians," using field journals to record observations.
- **Objective:** To move 100% of participating students toward "Masters" level understanding of Texas Frontier history (TEKS 4.3C).
- **Strategy:** *Cross-Campus Consistency.* Using a standardized curriculum across all Waco ISD 4th grade GT classrooms ensures equitable rigor.

### **School & Community Partners**

- **Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum:** Providing educator-led tours and access to primary archives.
- **Waco ISD Advanced Academics Dept:** Coordinating transportation and curriculum alignment.

Phase	Timeframe	Activity Description
Phase 1: Launch	Week 1	Classroom "Hook" lesson: The evolution of law enforcement in the 1800s.
Phase 2: Research	Week 2	Texas Rangers song analysis, reading and doodle notes and research in PebbleGo and TexQuest.
Phase 3: The Visit	Week 3	Field Trip Days: Scheduled by campus clusters (e.g., North/South zones) to manage capacity.
Phase 4: Synthesis and Presentation	Week 4-5	Students create "Digital Artifact Exhibits" in Google Slides and share with their peers.

## Communication and Dissemination

**WISD TV & Social Media:** We will partner with WISD TV to produce a "Minute with the Rangers" segment, highlighting the students' discoveries and the Foundation's contribution.

**Professional Development (PLCs):** The curriculum developed for this trip (Texas Ranger song, reading doodle notes and digital templates) will be shared during District GT Professional Learning. This allows other grade levels and subject areas to demonstrate an "Inquiry Based" model for their own classroom.

## Evaluation

**Product-Based Assessment:** Using the **Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) Rubric**, teachers will evaluate the "Virtual Museum" digital products. Success is defined as **90% of students** scoring "Proficient" or higher in the domains of *Multiple Perspectives* and *Communication*.

**Qualitative Feedback:** We will administer a "Junior Historian" survey to students and a "Strategic Impact" survey to participating teachers. We aim for **85% of students** to report an increased interest in local history and **90% of teachers** to report that the trip provided "high-value enrichment" difficult to replicate in a standard classroom.

## Key Personnel:

Role	Qualifications	Primary Responsibilities
Advanced Academics Director and Coordinator	Master's Degree Gifted & Talented Education; Oversight of district wide enrichment budgets and processes.	Strategic Oversight: Serves as the primary liaison between the District and the Foundation; ensures the project aligns with the District Improvement Plan.
Six Campus GT Teachers	TEA certified with 30 hour GT foundational training and annual 6-hour updates; Experts in differentiated instruction for 4th grade.	Instructional Delivery: Lead the pre-visit inquiry lessons, facilitate small-group analysis at the museum, and evaluate the final student digital products.

## Budget Narrative & Justification

**1. Transportation (Busing):** The primary expense of this grant is secured for the safe and equitable transport of approximately 150 4th grade GT students across Waco ISD. By coordinating district buses, we ensure that every student, regardless of their home campus location, has access to this high level enrichment. This cost covers driver time, fuel, and mileage for a multi-campus deployment.

**2. Museum Admissions (Students & Chaperones):** These funds provide direct access to the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum. We have negotiated a group educational rate to maximize the impact of the Foundation's investment. Admission includes not only gallery access but also engagement with professional curators, a critical component for our GT students to explore career paths in the humanities.

**3. Instructional Materials (Field Guides):** To transition this from a "trip" to a "research project," we require specialized instructional materials.

- **Texas Rangers packet:** reading, song analysis and note taking in addition to using PebbleGo and Texquest for research that scaffolds the students' inquiry process and serves as the foundation for their final digital synthesis products.

## Committed Funds & In-Kind Contributions

Waco ISD demonstrates a strong commitment to this project through the following matching contributions:

- **Personnel Salary & Time:** The Advanced Academics Director, Coordinator, and six GT teachers are committing over **100 combined hours** to curriculum design, logistical planning, and student supervision.
- **Administrative Support:** The District is providing the digital infrastructure (Google Workspace) for students to build and host their final "Virtual Museum" showcases.
- **Museum Partnership:** The Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum is providing an in-kind discount by waived or reduced fees for educators and support for our primary source inquiry sessions.

