

CCIP Note #521**Re:** Stronger Connections Grant (SCG) Competitive Application Process**Date:** Feb. 17, 2023**To:** Superintendents, Treasurers, Authorized Representatives, Fiscal Representatives and Consolidated Funding Application Contacts, Nonpublic School Principals**Stronger Connections Grant**

The Stronger Connections Grant (SCG) was authorized under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA), Public Law 117-159, passed on June 25, 2022. The Ohio Department of Education (the Department) received an SCG award of \$35,078,494 on Sept. 15, 2022. The SCG is a supplement to the Title IV, Part A, Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) program.

The purpose of the SCG is to provide students with safer and healthier learning environments. The SCG must be awarded competitively to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that the State Education Agency (SEA), the Ohio Department of Education, defines as “High Need” for school health and safety. Additional details on the Stronger Connections Grant can be found in the United States Department of Education [letter](#), and earlier communications from the Department can be found in CCIP Notes [506](#), [514](#) and [515](#). LEAs that received Title IV, Part A funds in State Fiscal Year 2023 will be eligible to apply for the Stronger Connections Grant.

Definition of High-Need LEA

The Ohio Department of Education acknowledges that all eligible LEAs may have a high need for school health and safety resources, while some LEAs may have a higher or highest need. Ohio defines a high-needs Local Education Agency (LEA) as an LEA with high rates of poverty, chronic absenteeism and exclusionary discipline. Ohio also considers important school health and safety indicators to determine an LEA’s need, including nonpublic school need, family engagement and commitment to evidence-based health and safety practices.

Competitive Application Process

The Department will make a competitive grant application available to eligible Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the Department’s Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan (CCIP) e-grants system from *March 1 to April 1, 2023*.

Eligible LEAs will find the Stronger Connections Grant application in the CCIP Fiscal Year 2024, under the Competitive Funding Application section:

Competitive Funding Application	Revision	Status	Status Date
21st Century	0	Not Started	2/2/2023
ARP Homeless Targeted Support Grant	0	Not Started	2/2/2023
Agriculture Education 5th Quarter	0	Not Started	2/2/2023
Equity for Each Grant	0	Not Started	2/2/2023
Equity for Each Jan 2022	0	Not Started	2/2/2023
FAFSA Completion Program Grant	0	Not Started	2/2/2023
Innovative Workforce Incentive Program Grant 2	0	Not Started	2/2/2023
Reaching All Students	0	Not Started	2/2/2023
Stronger Connections Grant	0	Not Started	1/23/2023
Transportation Collaboration Grant FY23	0	Not Started	2/2/2023

The Department provides the [Stronger Connections Grant application template](#) to assist LEAs with planning prior to the application being available in the CCIP. The Department encourages LEAs wishing to be considered for a Stronger Connection Grant to begin consulting stakeholders and use the application template and other information outlined in this CCIP note to work on the application. LEAs are also encouraged to leverage existing collaborative teams, such as a district leadership team, and to engage diverse groups of local stakeholders to guide the use of Stronger Connections Grant funds.

LEAs must complete the Stronger Connections Grant application and submit it in the CCIP in Authorized Representative Approved status by *April 1, 2023*, to receive a Stronger Connections Grant award.

The Department has taken steps to make the Stronger Connections Grant an accessible competitive application process:

- The Department has pre-scored LEAs on Tier 1 and Tier 2 health and safety factors collected from the district through Electronic Management Information System (EMIS) data, including rates of poverty, chronic absenteeism and exclusionary discipline. The [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document contains more information on the Stronger Connections Grant scoring process.
- The Department will pre-load a base amount into the CCIP based on Tier 1 and Tier 2 scoring. The Department compiled a document with [estimated award amounts](#) for eligible LEAs.
- LEAs may use the base to effectively consult with stakeholders and community partners to determine the need and scope of the proposed Stronger Connections Grant program.
- LEAs that certify they have a high need, agree to the assurances and submit the Stronger Connections Grant application during the application window will receive at least the base amount.
- The Department will review all LEA applications. When the CCIP application shows the status Final Approved, the LEA will receive an approval notice in the CCIP History Log. The LEA will have a Substantially Approved Date for the initial application of April 1, 2023.
- If an LEA has additional health and safety needs beyond the base amount, the LEA may indicate this on the application.
- The Department will competitively score all LEAs that indicated a need beyond the base amount. Information on Tier 3 scoring can be found in the Stronger Connections Grant Frequently Asked Questions.
- LEAs that receive additional Tier 3 funding will have the amount loaded on the Additional line of the Stronger Connections Grant Allocations page. These LEAs will need to submit a CCIP application revision to budget the additional funds.
- **LEAs that do not apply within the application window will have the Tier 1 and Tier 2 base amounts removed from the Stronger Connections Grant Allocation page and reallocated to LEAs that demonstrate the highest need on their competitive application as a part of Tier 3.**

Trainings and Support

The Ohio Department of Education will host Stronger Connections Grant webinars on the following dates:

Webinar:	Date:	Time:	Meeting Link:
Stronger Connections Grant Webinar	Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2023	11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Click here to join the meeting
Stronger Connections Grant Webinar (Repeat Session)	Thursday, Feb. 23, 2023	3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Click here to join the meeting

The webinar will cover the Stronger Connections Grant requirements, the application process, practices for identifying health and safety needs, evidence-based approaches, and additional requirements of the Stronger Connections Grant.

Additional Resources

[Stronger Connections Grant Frequently Asked Questions](#)
[Stronger Connections Grant Estimated Award Amounts](#)
[Stronger Connections Grant Application Template](#)
[U.S. Department of Education Resources](#)

If you have questions, please contact strongerconnections@education.ohio.gov.