Stronger Connections Grant Proposed Process

Ohio Department of Education

November 22, 2022

Summary:
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 September 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 Department defines as "High-Need" for school health and safety.

Proposed High-Need Definition:
The Department acknowledges that all LEAs have a need for school health and safety resources. The Department will provide a tiered competitive application that allows LEAs with the greatest need to receive support. LEAs will be grouped into High-Need Priority Tiers 1, 2 and 3 based on rates of poverty, chronic absenteeism, discipline data, and additional school health and safety needs indicated on the Stronger Connections Grant application.

Proposed Application Process:

- The Department will load a baseline amount to all LEAs using the poverty-based Title IV, Part A formula. These Tier 1 funds will be 50 percent of the total Stronger Connections Grant award. The minimum an LEA applicant will receive is $5,000.
- The Department will load additional Tier 2 funds to LEAs based on high rates of chronic absenteeism and discipline referrals. Tier 2 funds will be 25 percent of the Stronger Connections Grant award.
- LEAs must apply by a set deadline to receive their baseline amount.
- Equitable services will be calculated using a per-pupil approach.
- The application will move through the standard CCIP approval process and must be in Final Approved status before Project Cash Requests may be submitted.
- Once the initial SCG application period closes, the Department will award the final 25 percent of the SCG funds to High-Need Tier 3 LEAs based on additional safety and health needs as indicated on the SCG competitive application.
- Tier 3 factors will include: indication of need for additional SCG funds beyond the base amount; significant safety and health needs beyond the base amount; consultation with nonpublic schools in the attendance area; indication of multiple aligning implementation areas and strategies in the Implementation Plans section. The composite score will be weighted based on answers to these factors and the total enrollment of the district.
- These LEAs will need to submit a revised application to budget the additional funds. Equitable service amounts may change for LEAs awarded additional funds.

The Department will have an open comment period from December 6 to December 12, 2022. Please send input and comments on the proposed Stronger Connections Grant process to strongerconnections@education.ohio.gov.