

**Stronger Connections Grant Program for SAFE Schools  
Request for Applications (RFA) 2023-2024**

On June 25, 2022, President Biden signed into law the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act* (BSCA), an important first step toward reducing the risk of gun violence in our schools and communities. Through this legislation, Congress authorized \$1 billion in formula funding under Title IV, Part A of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) to State educational agencies (SEAs) to provide students with safer and healthier learning environments. Under the BSCA, SEAs must award these funds competitively to high-need local educational agencies (LEAs) to fund activities allowable under section 4108 of the ESEA. ESEA section 4108 allows funds to be used for activities that foster safe, healthy, supportive and drug-free environments and support students' academic achievement.

**Overview:** The New Hampshire Department of Education (NHED) will issue competitive grants to NH public and public charter local education agencies (LEAs) to support safe learning environments. Research consistently shows that safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments are associated with improved academic achievement and emotional well-being of students, as well as with reductions in disciplinary actions. The maximum amount that can be requested by an LEA is \$100,000 per school. There is no minimum amount.

Submission of and adherence to the General Assurances and Title IV-A Program Assurances by the LEA administrator is required as they have school board authority for fiscal administration of the grant and agreement to grant assurances for all applications.

Equitable Services are required as the funding was provided through Title IV, Part A. Each SEA reserving funds for State-level activities under the Stronger Connections program and each eligible LEA receiving a Stronger Connections subgrant must, after timely and meaningful consultation with appropriate private school officials, provide eligible private school students and educators services and other benefits that are equitable in comparison to services and other benefits provided with Stronger Connections funds to public school students and educators. (ESEA section 8501(a)(1), (3)(A)). After timely and meaningful consultation, as described further in Questions E-2 and E-3 of the [Stronger Connections Grant Program FAQs](#), an SEA or LEA makes the final decisions with respect to the services it will provide to eligible private school students and educators (34 C.F.R. § 299.7(b)(3)).

Distribution of grant funds by the Department of Education is completed through the Grants Management System (GMS). The district i4see coordinator must assign permissions to any personnel responsible to manage the grant.

### **Directions**

1. Review the following RFA information to ensure that the LEA meets eligibility requirements and that all grant application materials can be provided at the time of application submission. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. An LEA should submit a single application that considers all schools in need within the LEA.
2. Submit the Stronger Connections SAFE Schools Grant Application by the deadline **Friday, August 11, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.** Applications will continue to be accepted past the deadline depending on the availability of funds, priority will be given to applications received by the deadline. Applications will be scored by independent peer reviewers.

## Eligibility

1. **Must be for a public or public charter LEA**—applications must be submitted for each public LEA or public chartered LEA that is applying. Each District within a SAU must complete their own application. LEAs submitting applications must have approval from the Superintendent or Charter School Administrator prior to application submission.
2. **The LEA must meet the state criteria for high need** – applications must include information that supports how the LEA is experiencing two or more of the following factors:
  - High concentrations of poverty (at least 40 percent)
  - Students experiencing housing instability and homelessness
  - Students in foster care
  - High rate of chronic absenteeism
  - Referrals to alternative education placements
  - Community and school violence
  - Substance misuse.

## Use of Funds

For a use of funds to be permitted, the grantee must ensure the activity is allowable under Stronger Connections:

1. authorized under section 4108 of the ESEA;
2. reasonable and necessary for the performance of the grant;
3. allocable to the grant;
4. supplements, and does not supplant, other non-Federal funds that would otherwise be used to pay for authorized activities;
5. not one of the prohibited activities in ESEA section 4001(b) or section 8526; and
6. consistent with any other applicable Uniform Guidance provisions (see 2 CFR 200 et seq., in particular 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E). For an LEA, use of funds must also be consistent with the design of the SEA's Stronger Connections grant program and the LEA's approved subgrant application.
7. For the cost of installation of security equipment to be considered allowable, the installation must constitute minor remodeling under 34 CFR 77.1 and not require construction, renovation, or repair, which is a prohibited use of Stronger Connections funds. Minor remodeling means minor alterations in a previously completed building and does not include building construction, structural alterations to buildings, building maintenance, or repairs.

## Priority Areas

### 1. School Preparedness

For K-12 public schools throughout New Hampshire, school preparedness is strengthened by activities in the five preparedness mission areas: prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. Application must include activities that meet one or more of these competitive priority areas.

- **Prevention** is the action schools and school districts take to prevent a threatened or actual incident from occurring.
- **Protection** is the ongoing actions schools and school districts take to safeguard the school, students, and staff from an emergency event.
- **Mitigation** focuses on actions schools and school districts take to eliminate or reduce the loss of life, injuries, and property damage from an emergency event.
- **Response** is putting the school's and school district's plans into place to effectively respond to an emergency event and provide for the immediate needs of students and staff.
- **Recovery** is teaming with community partners to restore educational programming; the physical environment; business operations; and social, emotional, and behavioral health.

### 2. Allowable Categories

Applications must focus on at least one of these three priority areas for funding. See [the School Safety Preparedness Recommendations from NH Homeland Security and Emergency Management](#).

- **Access control** activities involve actively engaging/controlling the flow of people into the school facility. This is a physical security capability that all schools should have. Access control protects against unauthorized persons gaining access to facilities. Access Control involves some level of interaction with school staff that will make determinations about entry/denial. [Access control should be layered throughout the building as it will act as an obstacle towards threat progression.](#) Examples include electronic access systems, fencing, interior door locks, or reinforced glass at ground level.
- **Emergency alerting** activities involve abilities to communicate within the school using redundant systems. Leadership should be able to communicate directions from many locations within the school. Subordinate locations within the building must be able to communicate with leadership as well. The school must have redundant capabilities to make emergency calls for help to off-site emergency organizations and inform the public with official information. [Multifunctional alarm system information can be found here.](#)
- **Surveillance** activities involve physical security capabilities that all schools should have. The ability to view surroundings both internally and externally is a key element in early warning and defensive posturing. Surveillance cameras that are visible to the public mitigate the concept of anonymity and increase transparency in and around the school facility. Key leadership and certain administrative personnel should engage in and have routine access and exposure to surveillance monitoring as needed for security purposes. Surveillance monitoring should be located in areas of the school that have the ability to restrict access but not so restrictive that monitoring becomes difficult to access by authorized personnel during emergencies. [Click here for more information.](#) If an LEA chooses to use a video system, it should have a clearly established policy on the use of video systems on school property. The LEA has a responsibility not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or other protected classes when conducting surveillance and other security or safety activities using video systems. Certain security and telecommunication systems are prohibited by 2 CFR 200.216. Please refer to this [link for details.](#)

## Application Template

### 1. LEA Information

Please complete all information. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

- LEA name (the complete full name)
- Superintendent or Charter School Administrator information
- Business administrator information (required as they are the main contact for the fiscal administration of the grant)
- Documentation that the LEA meets the eligibility requirements of being a high need LEA as defined by NHED for the purposes of this grant (grant proposal).
- School Physical Security Assessment
- Budget Template
- Stronger Connections Equitable Services Affirmation

### 2. Budget

Complete the required Stronger Connections Schools Grant Budget Template. The maximum amount that may be requested is \$100,000 for each school building considered in the application, and the funding amount is based on need so please be as close to exact as possible with budget and funding requests.

Please note, that once the funds are awarded, LEAs will have 90 days from the award to submit their activity description for the project along with the budget into the NHED Grants Management System (GMS) for approval. Grants not submitted in GMS within 90 days of award will be reallocated to other schools. The grant funds must be expended by September 30, 2025. Final monthly reports for this grant must be submitted in GMS by November 15, 2025. Remaining funds past November 15, 2025, will be reallocated to other LEAs.

Grant funds shall be limited to the provision of:

- Access control systems, emergency alerting systems, and/or surveillance systems. The LEA must comply with all applicable laws related to record maintenance and retention, and with data privacy and limitations on disclosure and use. An LEA policy on video in the school is required for surveillance systems.
- Installation costs for the installation of one or more of those systems. Installation costs are limited to minor remodeling under 34 CFR 77.1 and do not require construction, renovation, or repair, which is a prohibited use of Stronger Connections funds.
- Equitable services to any non -public schools in the LEA catchment area. After timely and meaningful consultation with appropriate non-public school officials, services provided are limited to I. and II. above. Costs must not exceed the equitable portion of the funding request as calculated for Title IV-A purposes.

## Budget Template Example

### Stronger Connections Grant Budget Template

Please create a separate budget for each project within a school/for each school. Define the project utilizing the tabs at the bottom (Project #1, Project #2, etc.). Each District within a SAU must complete their own application. An application cannot be submitted by an SAU. Total project costs cannot exceed \$100,000.00 per school.

**School Name:**

**District Name:**

**SAU #:**

**Program Contact Name:**

**Program Contact Email:**

**Project Name:**

**Project Description (brief):**

**Amount Requested:**

Allowable Cost Category	Type of Cost	Description of Cost	Cost
Surveillance	Equipment	Purchase outside surveillance for courtyard area, does not have current system that faces this direction.	\$5,000.00
Surveillance	Contracted Services	Enter into contract with XYZ company to install above mentioned equipment.	\$11,700.00
Other	Equitable Services	Equitable services has been calculated and meaningful consultation has occurred with all private entities within the District. Equitable amount of the total project is \$3000.00. School A- \$1,500 School B- \$1,000 School C- \$500	\$3,000.00
Other	Indirect Cost	Indirect Cost negotiated at 2.7%	\$53.19
Other	Administrative Cost	Admin Cost (cannot exceed 2%)	\$100.00
<b>Total Cost of Project:</b>			<b>\$19,853.19</b>

### 3. Summary

- Provide evidence that the LEA meets the definition of High need, as defined by the NH Stronger Connections Program. Examples of evidence include:
  - Poverty levels as determined by U.S. Census community poverty data, or free and reduced meals percentages, or Community Eligible Provision, or alternative income documentation.
  - In school and out of school suspension rates, expulsion rates, incidents of violence, dropout rate, percentage of homeless, migrant and/or students in foster care can all be obtained on NHED's iReport website.
- Provide an overview of the LEA's current needs for access control, emergency alerting, and/or surveillance enhancements at any or all its school buildings. Describe if the school has a completed School Physical Security Assessment that was completed by the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management demonstrating the identification of the need for specified request. If not, describe how the need was determined.
- Explain how the proposed activities align with the priority areas of prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery.
- Describe the proposed access control, emergency alerting, and/or surveillance activities to be funded.

- Explain how the LEA will evaluate the enhancements the proposed activities will make to school preparedness.
- Provide a complete and clear budget narrative and cost breakdown for the proposed activities.

<b>Application Scoring Rubric Used by Independent Peer Reviewers</b>					
<b>Performance Criteria</b>					<b>Points Awarded</b>
<b>High Need</b> Evidence that the LEA meets the NHED definition of High need. <b>(30 points)</b>	<b>30 Points</b> Evidence of meeting 5 or more of the required factors.	<b>25 Points</b> Evidence of meeting 4 of the required factors.	<b>20 Points</b> Evidence of meeting 3 of the required factors.	<b>15 Points</b> Evidence of meeting the minimum of 2 of the required factors.	
<b>School Preparedness</b> Describe how the project meets one or more of the school preparedness priority areas of prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and/or recovery. <b>(20 points)</b>	<b>20 Points</b> Project meets all 5 priority areas of school preparedness.	<b>15 Points</b> Project meets 4 priority areas of school preparedness.	<b>10 Points</b> Project meets 3 priority areas of school preparedness.	<b>5 Points</b> Project meets 2 priority areas of school preparedness..	
<b>Allowable Categories</b> Describe how the project meets one or more of the allowable categories priority areas of access control, emergency alerting, and/or surveillance. <b>(20 points)</b>	<b>20 Points</b> Project meets all 3 priority areas of allowable categories.	<b>15 Points</b> Project meets 2 priority areas of allowable categories.	<b>10 Points</b> Project meets 1 priority area of allowable categories.	<b>0 Points</b> Does not address any of the priority areas.	
<b>Project Evaluation</b> Describe your process and timeline for evaluating the project for impact on school preparedness. The plan should contain measurable objectives you anticipate will be accomplished when the project is completed, the data you will collect, and the timeline for collection. <b>(20 points)</b>	<b>20 Points</b> A complete evaluation plan is described and contains clear measurable objectives identified for each considered school building. There is a data collection process and timeline described that will evaluate effectiveness of the activity to meet the objectives.	<b>15 Points</b> A general evaluation plan is described with general or unclear objectives identified for each considered school building. The data collection process and/or timeline is unclear or limited.	<b>10 Points</b> A general evaluation plan is described with no clear objectives identified. The data collection process and/or timeline is lacking.	<b>0 Points</b> No clear plan to evaluate the project activities for meeting objectives.	
<b>Budget</b> Complete and clear budget narrative and cost breakdown for the proposed activities. <b>(10 points)</b>	<b>10 Points</b> Budget includes clear explanation for all essential costs, with breakdown for each activity.	<b>8 Points</b> Budget has limited narrative, but includes all essential costs, with breakdown for each activity.	<b>6 Points</b> Budget has limited or no narrative, includes all essential costs, without clear breakdown for each activity.	<b>0 Points</b> Budget narrative is missing or budget does not include all essential costs, without clear breakdown for each activity.	