

Stronger Connections Grant

Application



OKLAHOMA
Education

**Building Safe and Healthy Oklahoma
School Communities**

Stronger Connections Grant is funded through 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.

STRONGER CONNECTIONS GRANT

Safe and Healthy School Communities

On September 15, 2022, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) was awarded \$11,776,526 in Federal K-12 funding from the U.S. Department of Education (Department) under the BSCA Stronger Connections grant program. Funds are to be used in accordance with Title IV, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) to provide students with safer and healthier learning environments. OSDE is required to award these funds competitively to high-need local educational agencies (LEAs) and ensure transparency and successful implementation of activities allowable under section [4108 of the ESEA](#) to support the ongoing needs of students, educators, families, and communities.

GRANT PURPOSE

The purpose of the Stronger Connections grant is to provide funding for Oklahoma LEAs to develop, implement and evaluate a comprehensive approach that prioritizes physical and emotional safety for their unique school community (SEC. 4108. [20 U.S.C. 7118]). Activities and practices that can be funded will create a sense of belonging, are trauma-responsive, teach positive behaviors, and prioritize physical and psychological safety and health in order to provide safe and supportive learning environments that improve academic achievement and the well-being of students (Wang & Degol, 2016 & Connell, et. al, 2015). Funding from the stronger connections grant must be used towards building safe and healthy learning practices that are culturally and linguistically responsive and provides a school climate where students are surrounded by adults they can trust and are committed to building healthy relationships (CDC and Prevention, 2009).

BENEFITS of PARTICIPATING

The Oklahoma Safe and Healthy Connections Grant will provide:

- Professional development and funding for training.
- Technical assistance to support the development, implementation, and sustainable practices.
- Development of family and community engagement partnerships.
- External coaching to support safe and healthy development and implementation.
- Trauma-Informed practices, emergency plan development, and site assessments.
- Development of personnel for safe and healthy school initiatives.

APPLICATION OVERVIEW

Getting Started

- Review the hyperlinked resources in the guidance document for tools to support the writing process.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to identify the school's needs surrounding a safer and healthier learning environment.
- The school team develops a plan for activities, practices and programs to include in the application.

Grant Management

For support or additional information contact:

- Cindy Swearingen, Office of School Safety and Security, cindy.swearingen@sde.ok.gov
- Amanda Sellers, Office of Student Support, amanda.sellers@sde.ok.gov

Application Timeline and Selection Process

- Submit application **by 6 p.m. on Dec. 22, 2022 to sdebsca@sde.ok.gov.**
- Anticipatory notification of award will be Jan. 4, 2023.
- Application should include school profile, narrative features (5 pages maximum), budget and signed letter of commitment.

Award Amounts

LEAs can receive **up to \$350,000** based on identified needs and implementation activities justified and outlined in the budget narrative. Grant timeline is from 2023-2026. Funding must be obligated/encumbered no later than Sept. 30, 2026.

Grant Narrative Features

Grant applications should include these narrative features and will be scored in each area with a **maximum of 120** points. Data and research resources must be cited.

[Strong Connections Rubric](#)

Grant Narrative Feature	Total Possible Points
Demonstration of Need(s)	25 pts.
Implementation Activities	30 pts.
Budget	20 pts.
Evaluation Plan and Sustainability	25 pts.
Total Points Available	100 pts.
Additional Points	Total Possible Points
Currently not receiving any other state grants	10 pts.
District has no school employed or contracted mental health professional	5 pts.
District has no school employed or contracted Safety Professionals	5 pts.
Total Points Available	20 pts.

SCHOOL PROFILE

School District:

Administrator Name:

Administrator Email:

Grades Served:

Total Student Population:

Check which best describes your school			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban	Virtual	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Suburban	Charter	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Percentage of Students	
On Free/Reduced Lunch	<input type="text"/>
English Learners (EL)	<input type="text"/>
On Individualized Education Programs (IEP)	<input type="text"/>
Title One Status (Yes or No)	<input type="text"/>

DEMONSTRATION OF NEED (25 pts)

LEA must show need in **one or more** of these identified areas: Community and school violence, Substance abuse, Bullying/harassment, High rates of chronic absenteeism, Referrals to the juvenile justice system, High reports of "threatening behavior", Exclusionary discipline, high student to mental health professional ratio, Students recently experienced a natural disaster or traumatic event.

Local data and research resources must be cited.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES (30 pts)

Implementation plans should define and contain data and research to support the activities and programs of a safe and healthy school community. Funds will be prioritized for LEA applicants that demonstrate development and implementation practices and activities to address needs through these areas: 1) Evidence-Based Practices, 2) Connecting Students, Families and Communities, 3) Developing Comprehensive Policies and Practices.

Please provide at minimum two overall project objectives.

Project Objective 1:

Project Objective 2:

The following narrative should indicate how you will achieve the identified project objectives.

Evidence-Based Practices

Implement comprehensive, evidence-based practices to meet students' behavioral, physical and mental well-being needs through positive school climates that increase access to multi-tiered supports.

Connecting Students, Families and Communities

Engaging students, families, educators, staff and community organizations in the selection and implementation of prevention and interventions that create safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments.

Include the team roster (if a team is established) or any MOUs with community agencies or partners.

Policies and Practices that Demonstrate Equity

Designing and implementing policies and practices that advance safe and healthy practices and are responsive to under served students, protect student rights and demonstrate respect for student dignity and potential.

Stronger Connections Grant | Budget (20 pts.)
Building Safe and Healthy Oklahoma School Community

LEA will provide a **budget and narrative** that supports the grant activities. All implementation activities and funding must be tied directly to improving district safe and healthy needs. Use the budget template to itemize expenditures and provide a justification narrative linked to activities.

Stronger Connections Grant | Budget

Building Safe and Healthy Oklahoma School Community

Name of District:				
Item	Year 1 2023	Year 2 2024	Year 3 2025	Year 4 2026
Personnel (Include benefits):				
Training/PD (Estimate travel, stipends, etc.):				
Supplies:				
Other:				
TOTAL YEARLY BUDGET				
		TOTAL BUDGET		

EVALUATION PLAN TO SHOW OUTCOMES and PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY (25 pts)

LEA provides an evaluation plan for how the district will use team-based problem solving and data-based decision-making to monitor fidelity and evaluate outcomes that create sustainable implementation practices that continue safe and healthy activities post-grant funding. LEAs must sign the Commitment to Safe and Healthy activities to assure participation.

The evaluation plan should include how the district will determine progress toward overall project objectives.

ADDITIONAL POINTS (20 pts)

Please indicate if any of the following apply and provide a statement or documentation to support the answer.

School Site does **NOT** currently receive any grant funding from SDE in these areas: School Climate Transformation, DOJ Grants, Nurses Corp, School Counselor Corp, Project AWARE, SSIP, or SPDG **(10 pts)** **YES**
NO

If YES, please indicate which grant your district is participating in

District has **no** school employed or contracted mental health professional I.E. School Counselor, Licensed Professional Counselor, School Psychologist, Social Worker, Recreational Therapist, Licensed Mental Health, etc. **(5 pts.)** **YES**
NO

If YES, please indicate the number of employed or contracted mental health professionals.

If NO, please provide a statement or documentation showing the lack.

District has **no** school-employed or contracted school-based safety professional I.E. SRO, Security Guards, etc **(5 pts.)** **YES**
NO

If YES, please indicate the number of employed or contracted safety professionals.

If NO, please provide a statement or documentation showing a lack.

Commitment to Building a Safe and Healthy Oklahoma School Community

District must sign the Commitment to Safe and Healthy activities to assure participation in the Stronger Connection grant from 2023-2026..

- District will Identify a Safe and Healthy Coordinator who will support activities to build capacity and sustain the Safe and Healthy programs.
- District will designate a team that meets at minimum 1 x monthly to review behavior and health and safety data to make decisions for school-wide prevention practices.
- District team will engage in data-based decision making that monitors and assesses safe and healthy activities, and will participate in Oklahoma Safe and Healthy Schools training.
- District will participate in the development of high-quality Emergency Operations Plans (EOP).
- District will complete surveys, forms and record-keeping procedures per grant requirements.
- District will attend and schedule professional development pertaining to Safe and Healthy schools each year.
- District will provide time and/or stipends for staff to attend ongoing training and technical assistance.
- District will participate in all aspects of training and technical assistance associated with Stronger Connections starting in 2023 and continuing through the 2026 school year.
- District and/or site members will serve on a team that supports students needing targeted or individual interventions that include but are not limited to: Behavioral Threat Assessment Team with OSDE supports providing resources, time, materials and personnel to support the implementation of new practices/procedures.
- District will comply with the terms outlined in the Reimbursement of Expenditures Agreement for utilizing funds appropriately and receiving reimbursement of expenditures.
- District will ensure activities and practices are delivered with fidelity and data is used to inform decisions.
- District agrees to follow all federal requirements of the Stronger Connections grant. Funds are to be used in accordance with Title IV, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) to provide students with safer and healthier learning environments.

Signature

By signing this commitment, the district is agreeing to the above expectations to work toward the building and implementation of activities for a safe and healthy school community dedicated to the creation of Stronger Connections.

Superintendent Signature

Date