AOE Stronger Connections Grant

Timeline:

• Live on GMS: March 29th
• Questions and Answers published by Friday, April 14, 2023.
• Grant applications due in GMS: Friday, May 12, 2023, at 4:30 p.m.
• Award decisions made by: Friday June 2, 2023.
• Period of performance: July 1, 2023 to September 30, 2026

Please note: a new security role needed to be created in GMS for this grant, so anyone working on the grant will need to request that the superintendent/authorized representative grant them access first. The role is named “leaconnections.”

Questions? Contact Beth Keister beth.keister@vermont.gov

Overview
As part of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA), 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. The U.S. Department of Education has allocated $4,833,025 of these funds to Vermont under the BSCA Stronger Connections grant program, 95.5% of which will be awarded competitively to high-need local educational agencies (LEAs) to fund activities allowable under section 4108 – the Safe and Healthy Students section - of the ESEA (see Title IV Allowable Uses). The AOE has established the following indicators of high-need which will be identified for each applicant using AOE data, and translated into a four-point scale (see scoring criteria appendix):

1. Poverty rates as measured by the percentage of free-and-reduced price meal-eligible students by supervisory union/district (SU/SD);
2. Rates of disciplinary incidents that result in exclusionary discipline (such incidents may include bullying, hazing, physical altercations, threats, and more depending on LEA policies) by SU/SD;
3. Rates of emergency or provisional licenses sought by SU/SD (as this implies a qualified educator shortage); and
4. Rates of chronic absenteeism by SU/SD.

LEA percentages will be compared to statewide average percentages for each indicator.
In addition, there will be an option in the application for LEAs to self-identify need for additional points (see Application Questions section below).

The LEA grants will support the following activities:

• Implementing comprehensive, evidence-based strategies that meet each student’s social, emotional, physical, and mental well-being needs; create positive, inclusive, and supportive school environments; and increase students’ access to place-based interventions and services.
• Engaging students, families, educators, staff, and community organizations in the selection and implementation of strategies and interventions to create safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments.

• Designing and implementing policies and practices that advance equity and are responsive to underserved students, protect student rights, and demonstrate respect for student dignity and potential.

Application Questions (for reference: applications must be completed within GMS)
Please see the application question text below. Refer to the Scoring Rubric for more detailed information on how questions will be scored and where high-needs data is derived from. Applications can score a maximum of 12 points.

High Needs data: 4 possible points
This information, based on the indicators above, will be calculated by AOE and is not required from the applicant.

Optional needs statement: 2 possible points
Please provide a brief narrative which includes data about your LEA and examples beyond the “high-needs” criteria already identified to further explain why your LEA has a high-need for these funds. Examples of such data might include: Youth Risk Behavior Survey data, bullying/hazing/harassment incident data, use of restraints, incidents of suicide ideation, or other local data that reflects your LEA’s need for additional student supports.

Spending Plan: 4 possible points
Please provide a brief overview of your LEA’s proposed activities, being sure to clearly indicate how they address the needs of your LEA (as evident in the “high-needs” criteria and optional needs question) and a rationale for why this/these particular activities or strategies were selected. Please also indicate a timeline for implementation, as this grant has a three and a half-year period of performance. Please also indicate how you will measure the impact of these funds on the outcomes you have targeted in your proposed activities or strategies.

Other Funds: 2 possible points
Please indicate how these funds would complement other funding sources you already have and contribute to a greater vision to meet students’ social, emotional, physical, and mental well-being needs, create positive, inclusive, and supportive school environments; and increase access to place-based interventions and services. Check the boxes for all related funding sources that you currently have and provide a brief description of how these SCG funds would help to support, build upon and/or sustain the work funded through the existing sources you have identified.

Additional required information in application (not scored):
• First year budgeted and projected/tentative years 2-4 budget
• Equitable services documentation of outreach
• General contact information, assurances, etc.