

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.