Stronger Connections Grant Submitted Questions & Answers

The below information represents the responses to the formal question and answer period (questions submitted via email, phone call and/or presented at Coffee and Conversations or the Q&A office hours.)

Questions & Answers

Q1: Contracted services and/or community partnerships—are these permissible uses of the SCG funds?

A1: Using SCG funds to support community and/or community organization partnerships, and/or to establish contracts with external (non-LEA) partners would generally be encouraged given that one of the priorities of the grant is community and other stakeholder engagement. Such partnerships can also be helpful in many other ways in contributing to student well-being and can provide important capacity for implementing activities or programs. However, establishing a community partnership or contracting with a community partner is not a requirement of the grant.

As always, we would need to review the specific proposal in order to make a determination, but activities proposed in this grant application do not need to be limited to those carried out by LEA staff or strictly within the LEA, although they can be. As a reminder, federal procurement guidelines do apply, and for those contracted services that exceed fair market value ($2,000/day per consultant), a scope of work detailing reasonableness and necessity of the excess cost may be required.

The grant prioritizes engagement of all stakeholders to ensure their needs and opinions are considered in the determination of how the funds are used.

Q2: Does supplement-not-supplant (SNS) apply to these funds?

A2: Yes, SNS does apply to these funds. These grant funds may not be used for activities that are required by federal, state, or local law or have been previously paid for with non-federal funds. However, in cases where the other funding source in question is ESSER, for which SNS does not apply and which will be ending, it may not apply.

Q3: Would SNS apply to activities funded under the AWARE grant?

A3: AWARE grant is federal, so activities funded with AWARE could be continued or extended with these funds.

Q4: Services or activities previously funded under ESSER: can SCG funds support these same services or activities and/or would supplement-not-supplant (SNS) apply?

Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information please contact:

Beth Keister, Federal and Education Support Programs, at beth.keister@vermont.gov

A4: SNS does not apply to ESSER funds. Services and activities provided with ESSER funding can be supported by SCG so long as they are allowable under section 4108 (safe and healthy schools) of Title IVA.

Q5: "Are equitable services allocated to independent schools using the Title IV (per student) formula?"

A5: Yes, the SCG will use the same formula as Title IV to determine allocations for independent schools.

Q6: "The federal guidance says the initial 'consultation will allow the LEA to consider the needs of all students and educators—both public and private—in developing its application, and to include the projected costs for equitable services in the application.' Does this mean that, if an independent school expresses a desire to participate, [the applicant] must develop its application with the participation of that school in mind, but that we are not required to include the school in the process of developing the specifics of application? This process is in contrast to other Title programs where we give the independent schools the opportunity to request the services they want and then include the specific requests in the application up front."

A6: The required documentation at the time of application is <u>outreach to the independent schools</u>, to determine if the school is interested in participating. The applicant <u>does</u> need to develop their application with the participation of those independent or private schools (who have indicated interest) in mind, and they do need to involve interested independent schools in the development of the proposal. <u>However, they are not required to submit *documentation of consultation or those specifics at the initial stage of applying*</u>: only the outreach needs to be documented at the first application submission. If an award is issued, the AOE will prompt the applicant/grantee to then go in and complete documentation of consultation and provide more specific information at that time, via what is technically an amendment process.

Q7: How will equitable services be calculated?

A7: Equitable services will be calculated the same way they are for Equitable Services of Title IV: a proportional share of total enrollment of the LEA and participating Independent Schools.

Q8: Is a data inventory required?

A8: AOE will collect the data and assign points for the high-needs section. If the applicant chooses to complete the optional needs statement question (and we encourage all applicants to do so), they should use any additional data that they feel will provide context and contribute to a holistic picture of need for the SU/SD. However, the data provided does not need to be presented in the form of, for example, the data inventory the CFP application.

Q9: Can SCG funds be used to purchase food (for example, to provide food at a community event)?

A9: Generally speaking, food is not considered "reasonable and necessary" under the Uniform Guidance and will therefore be unallowable. However, AOE can reach out to USED to

determine if there are any specific scenarios within the context of this grant that might allow for "light refreshments" or other food.

Additional information

1. The administrative/indirect cap is set by the state educational agency (SEA, which is AOE) and is 2% for this grant.
2. Ideas offered for the optional needs statement question during the Coffee and Conversations meeting: "Local threat assessment tracking data and school climate data could also be used… as part of the holistic picture of need."

VERMONT
AGENCY OF EDUCATION