Stronger Connections Grant Program

Introductions

Hank Weikert - Webinar Co-host

Amy Blakey - Webinar Co-host

Julie Wayman - Panelist

Ashton Millet - Panelist

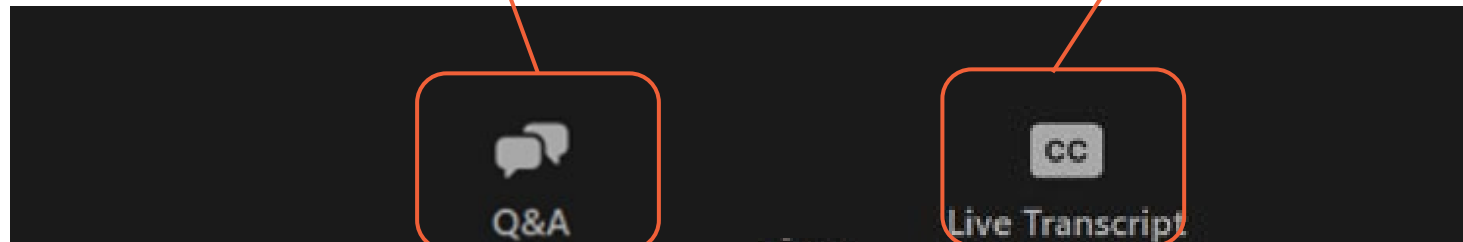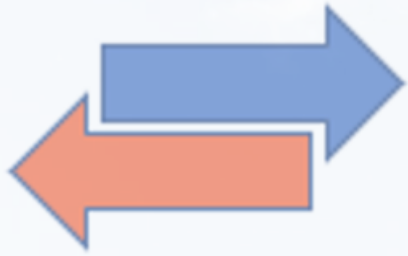Tammy Gendke - Panelist

Scott Erwin - Panelist

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Zoom Webinar Controls

Use the Q&A Box to submit questions to panelists or address technology issues

Turn on or off closed captions.

Q&A

CC
Live Transcript

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Conference/Webinar Agenda

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Topics for the Conference

Grant Program Background Information

Texas Center for Student Supports

Stronger Connections Grant Program

Private Nonprofit School Participation

Application

Eligibility

Allowable Use of Funds

Errata

Closing Thoughts

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Background Information

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Stronger Connections Grant Program

Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) sponsored by Texas Senator John Cornyn

Provides funding for:
- School-based mental health
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- School safety resources
- Increased access to mental and behavioral health services through telehealth

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Texas received $93 million dollars to promote:

- Activities that support safe and health students
- Partnerships with students, families, educators, and communities
- A school community in which students feel safe, supported, connected, and included

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What has been happening in Texas Schools?
Through our work with schools, we hear anecdotal accounts about increasing student behavior issues and lack of support.
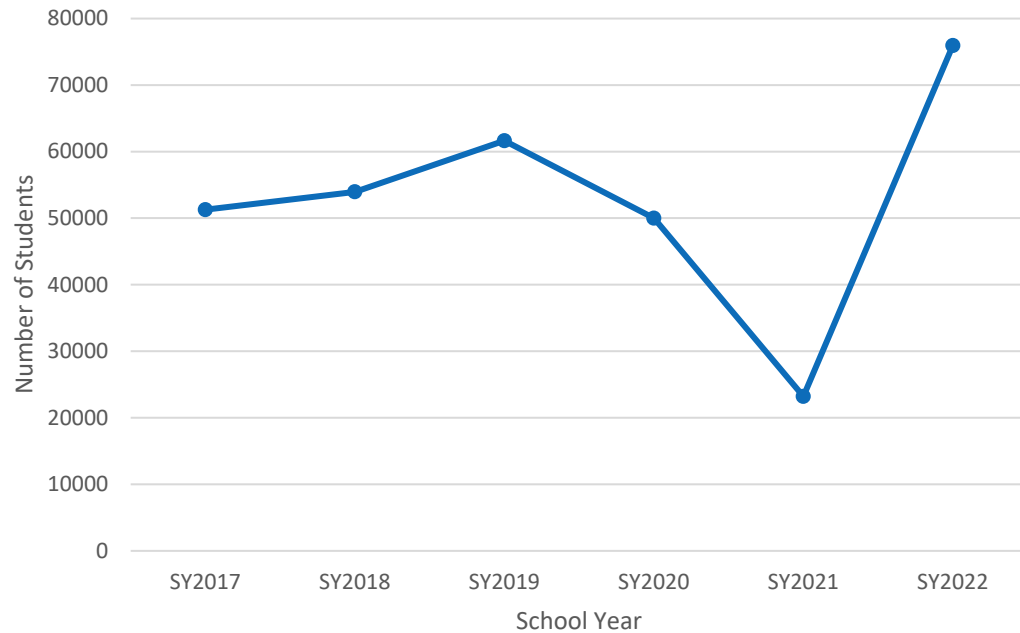
What does the data say?

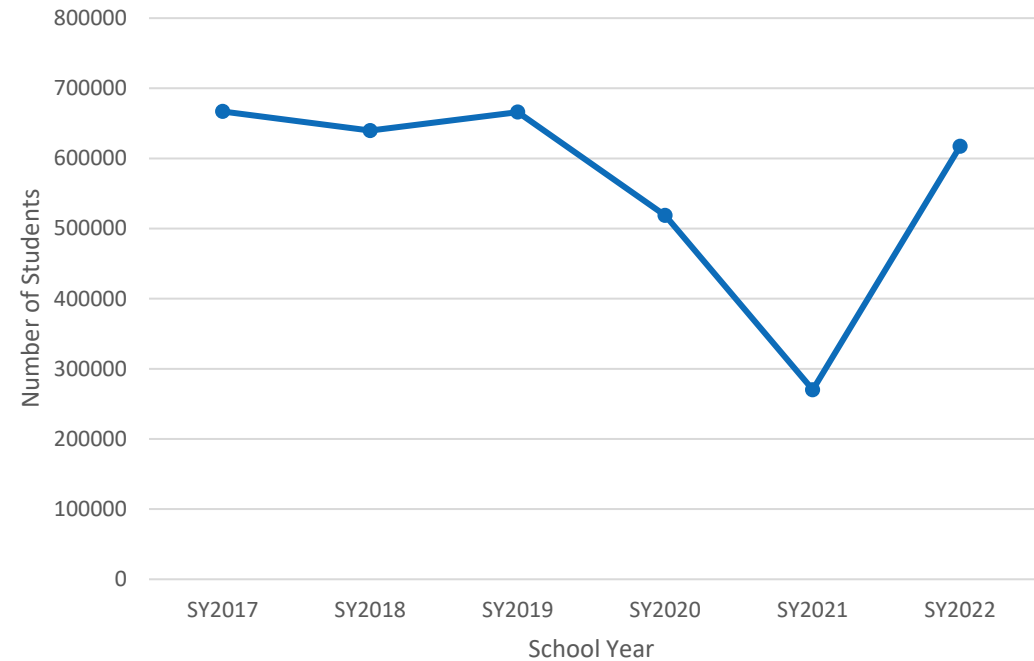| Offense	SY2017	SY2018	SY2019	SY2020	SY2021	SY2022
Controlled Substance	51270	53952	61627	49996	23208	75931
Code of Conduct	667017	639676	666035	518692	270135	617356
Fighting	80318	79495	88970	67105	29585	92956
Bullying				1675	1121	3671

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Controled Substance Violation

Code of Conduct Violation
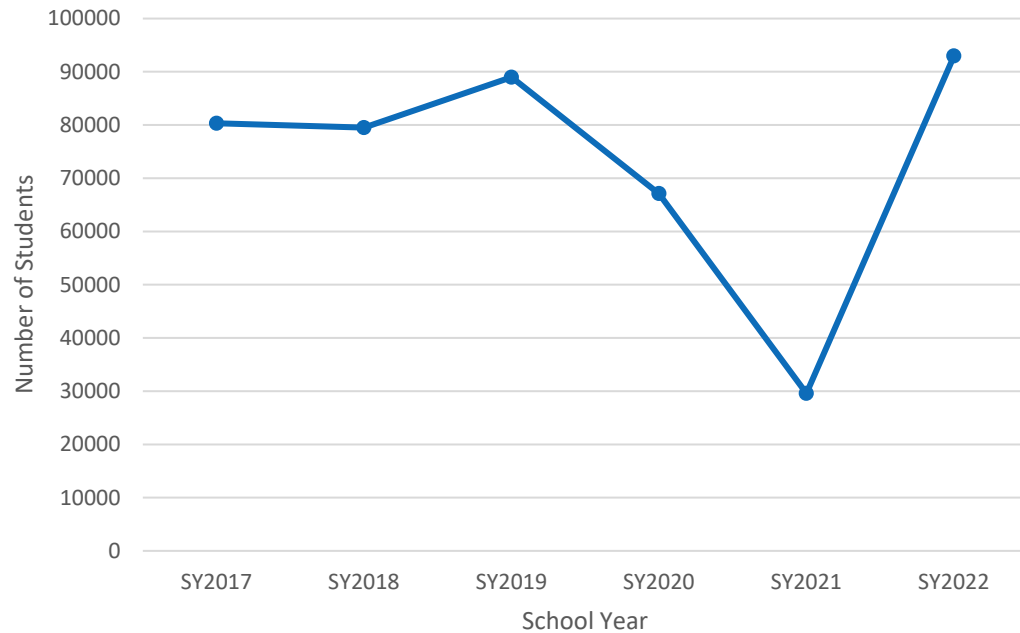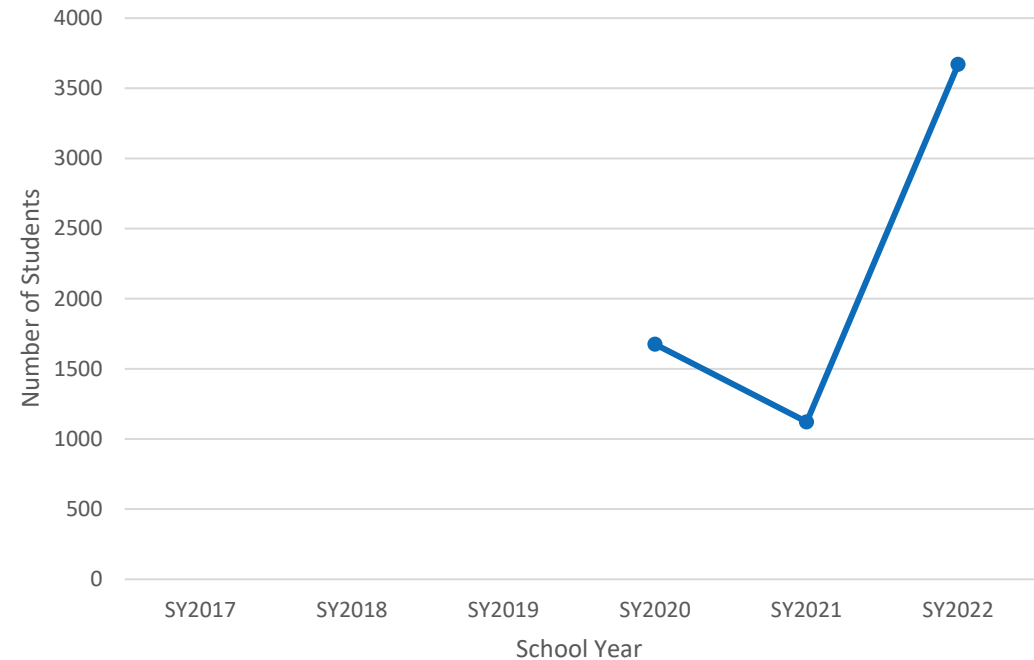
Stronger Connections Grant Program

	19-20	20-21	21-22
Threats Reported	37069	37586	67440
Threats Assessed	33137	34993	59669
Assessed Threats Referred for Support	24528	25819	31790
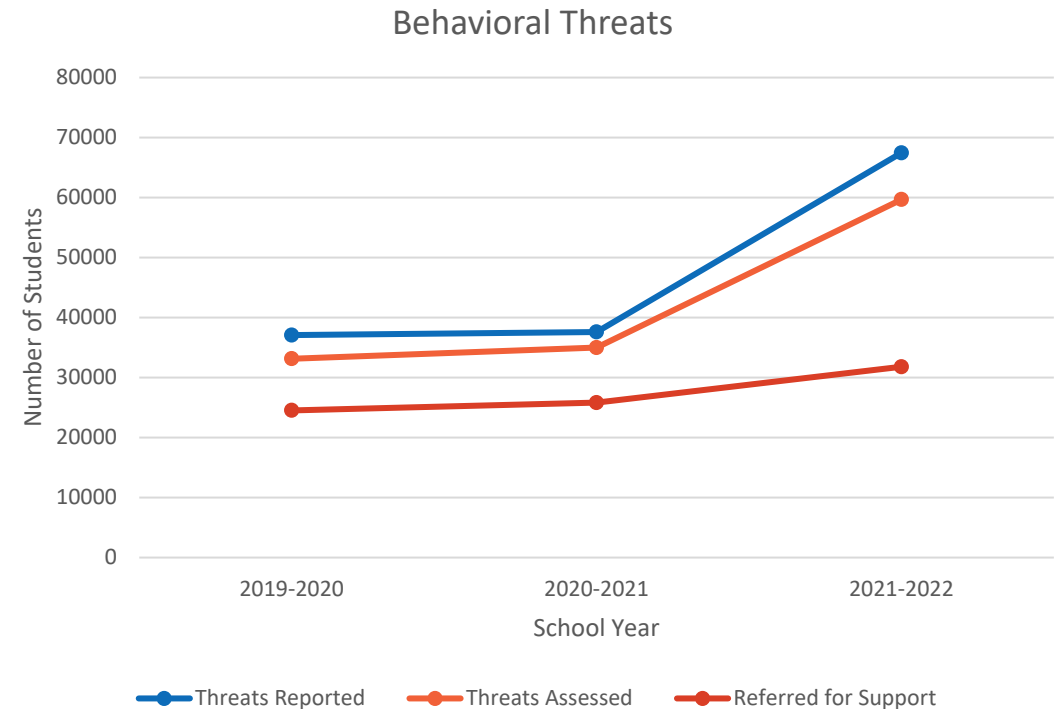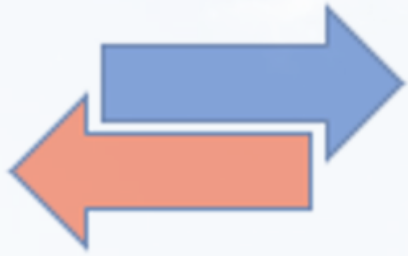
Behavioral Threats

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Texas Center for Student Support

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Texas Center for Student Supports

One ESC will establish the Texas Center for Student Supports that will promote systemic change in the way that school districts address the needs of students by providing safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments resulting in improved academic achievement and mental, behavioral, emotional, and physical health and well-being of students.

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Texas Center for Student Supports

The Center will:

- develop a Student Support Program that will be implemented by school districts awarded the Stronger Connections Grant.

- Solicit input and feedback from an advisory group of campus and district leaders, teachers and other educators, ESC staff, parents, and students (as appropriate)

- Establish collaborative partnerships with the University of Texas (UT) Behavior Science and Policy Institute and the UT Institute for Excellence in Mental Health to develop content and training for the Student Support Program

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Texas Center for Student Supports

The Student Support Program will include:

- content and training to improve school climate and implement a student support team structure

- a data collection tool to monitor and analyze school climate and support trends

- alignment of Behavior Threat Assessment reviews and outcomes with the student support team structure

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Texas Center for Student Supports

The Center will develop:

- A support network through the ESCs to provide support and coaching to school districts awarded the grant

- A PLC structure through the ESCs to provide grantee school districts opportunities for training and collaboration

- Align current training and support workstreams that currently exist within the ESCs to the Student Support Program

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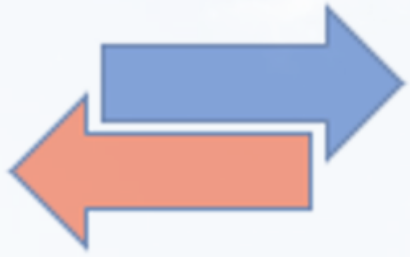
Stronger Connections Grant Program

Stronger Connections Grant
Student Support Program

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Purpose of Program

The purpose of the Student Support Program is to:

- promote systemic change in the way that school districts support students and address and respond to bullying, violence, and acts of hate

- Provide students with safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments

- Address student mental, behavioral, emotional, and physical health and wellness needs through the implementation of the Student Support Team structure

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Student Support Team Structure

The Student Support Program will provide awarded grantees with training, coaching, and support for staff to implement strategies that promote:

- student relationships and trust with each other and with staff
- a student sense of belonging to the classroom and school communities
- student feelings of physical, emotional, and social safety

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School Climate Improvement

The Student Support Program will provide awarded grantees with:

- training and instruments to analyze school climate and bullying

- training, coaching, and support to analyze school climate data

- professional learning, coaching, and support in the development and implementation of plans to address school climate needs

- training, coaching, and instruments to collect and analyze data regularly throughout the school year to monitor improvements in peer and staff relationships, student sense of belongingness, trust, feelings of safety, and improvements in self-regulation

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Student Support Team Structure

The Student Support Program will provide awarded grantees with training, coaching, and support to:

- recognize and identify mental, behavioral, emotional, and physical health and wellness needs

- implement tier I universal instruction and supports that address the mental, behavioral, emotional, and physical health and wellness of students

- develop referral pathways that school staff can access to provide students with responsive and effective supports an interventions to meet identified needs through tier II and tier III supports

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Student Support Team Structure

The Student Support Program will provide awarded grantees with training, coaching, and support to:

- develop a case management system that supports and monitors the efficacy of supports and interventions provided to students

- establish partnerships with local community, county, and statewide organizations to support identified student needs

- Align student support activities with the interventions and supports developed by the Behavioral Threat Assessment team following a threat assessment

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Parent and Family Engagement

The Student Support Program will provide awarded grantees with training, coaching, and support to:

- provide parents and families with opportunities to participate in training on student supports at home

- establish partnerships with parents and families to promote understanding of the universal support provided to students, involve parents early and throughout the student support process

- Serve as a resource to parents and families with mental, behavioral, emotional, and physical health resources

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Student Support Program Outcomes

Implementation of the Student Support Program will result in:

- Increases in the number of students referred for and receiving mental, behavioral, emotional, and physical health and wellness support

- Increases in climate assessment responses reporting student belongingness, trust, improved relationships with peers and staff, and improvements in self regulation behaviors

- Decreases in student absences, behavioral referrals, removals from class, and exclusionary discipline outcomes

- Decreases in incidents of harmful, threatening, and violent behavior

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Stronger Connections Grant Program Questions

Can my district create our own student support program and work with the Texas Center for Student Supports?

My district has a program that we want to implement using grant funds, can we include costs associated with this program in the budget?

Where can I get information about the TCSS referenced in the program guidelines?

Must the elementary, middle, and high school feed into one another, or may they be members of different feeder patterns?

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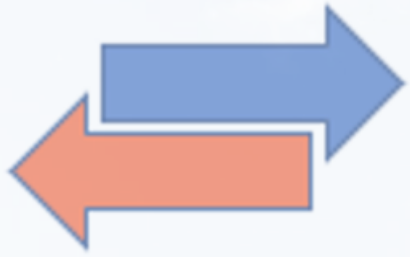
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Stronger Connections Grant Private Nonprofit Participation Requirement

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Private Nonprofit Requirement

This grant program requires private nonprofit school participation.

Prior to applying, applicants must contact the private nonprofit schools located in their school boundaries to notify them of the opportunity to apply for the grant program.

Communication with private nonprofit schools must be documented

If private nonprofit schools want their students and staff to receive services under the grant program, the private nonprofit schools must collaborate in the planning and development of the project

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Private Nonprofit Requirement

Applicants must provide equitable services to students at participating private nonprofit schools

Expenditures for equitable services must be reserved according the calculations in the General and Fiscal Guidelines.

School districts that are awarded the grant are required to locally maintain documentation of the equitable services calculations for monitoring and audit purposes

Applicants must complete the PNP section of the application

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Private Nonprofit Requirement Questions

Private Non-Profit participation applies to this grant program. How does this work for the private schools? How is information shared with the private school about PNP participation?

My Private Nonprofit school would like to participate in the grant program but the district in which we are located is not applying. Do they have to apply so we can participate?

Stronger Connections Grant Program

Grant Application

The grant application, information, and related documents are located on the TEA Grant Opportunities webpage

- Program Guidelines
- Application
- Eligibility List
- Notice of Intent to Apply
- Reviewer Information

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Stronger Connections Grant Program

Grant Application Timelines

May 19, 2023	Request for Application (RFA) available
June 6, 2023	Grantee Conference/Webinar
June 23, 2023	Last day to submit FAQs
June 30, 2023	FAQs posted to TEA Grant Opportunities webpage
June 30, 2023	Notice of Intent to Apply due
June 30, 2023	Reviewer Information Form due

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Grant Application Timelines

July 18, 2023	Grant applications due by 11:59 P.M. (central time)
August 31, 2023	Competitive Review completed
November 10, 2023	Notice of Grant Award (NOGA)
November 15, 2023	Beginning date of grant
September 30, 2025	End date of grant

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Grant Application Questions

Where can I find the request for application (RFA) to apply for this grant?

I am not a grant writer, can you help me with my application?

Where can I find the CDN and UEI for my district to apply for this grant?

My district has an enrollment of 10,000 students or fewer and is eligible for funding between $850,000 to $1,000,000. I am creating a budget using percentages based on that amount. Can you provide guidance or feedback on creating a budget for my grant project?

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Grant Application Questions

The application has a section for requesting grant funds. Is there an estimated amount I need to work with or do I just enter the amount that I anticipate my district will need?

My district has a high school that serves only freshmen. Would this be considered a high school for the purposes of this grant?

How must the LEA demonstrate their partnership with their local ESC as part of this application?

What is the cost sharing requirement for this grant program?

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Grant Application Questions

The grant program requires 5% matching funds. Is there a restriction on the source of funds or can they come from a privately funded grant from a Foundation, federal, or local funds?

How should the 5% cost match be represented in the budget table on the 'Request for Grant Funds' question? How should the funds be categorized?

Can cost share funding include the salary of a current district position?

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Grant Application Questions

My district is a small district with one campus. With only 60 potential awardees, are larger districts prioritized? Is it appropriate for my district to apply for this grant program?

Do I need to complete and submit the reviewer form?

Can you provide a suggested profile for who should serve as a reviewer to help applicants identify appropriate individuals?

We acknowledge that the award funding ranges from $850k to $1.5 million, depending on school population. Can the TEA clarify if schools with less than 10k students must apply for at least $850k?

Stronger Connections Grant Program

Stronger Connections Grant Eligibility

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Stronger Connections Grant Program

Stronger Connections Grant Eligibility

School districts and open enrollment charter schools that meet the TEA definition of a high-need LEA are eligible to apply for the grant program

TEA defines high need LEA as any LEA with high numbers of students living in poverty, as well as LEAs with high percentages of students living in poverty (e.g., at least 40%) where students recently experienced a natural disaster or traumatic event, including the pandemic

Eligible LEAs are included on the eligibility list posted to the TEA Grant Opportunities webpage

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Stronger Connections Grant Eligibility Questions

The applicant is asked to describe how the three campuses (elementary, middle/intermediate, and high school) will be supported by the grant program and assure that the Student Support Program will be established on all three campuses. Does a district need to operate elementary, middle, and high school campuses to be eligible to apply?

What is the definition of a high needs LEA and how do I determine if my district is eligible for the grant program?

How do I find out if my district is eligible to apply for this grant?

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Stronger Connections Grant Eligibility Questions

Awards for small districts will be between $850,000 to $1,000,000. The minimum award is much higher than what would be needed for a particularly small district. Does this mean that we really aren't eligible for the grant program?

If school districts are not on the eligibility list, can they still apply? We understand that this grant program prioritizes high-need communities, but we believe we saw where any district affected by the pandemic can apply. Is this true?
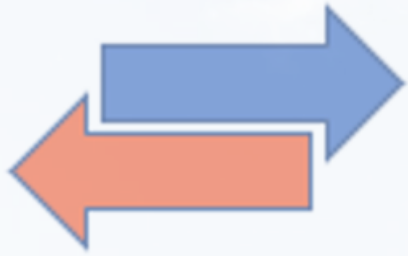
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Stronger Connections Grant Allowable Use of Funds

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Stronger Connections Grant Allowable Use of Funds

Stronger Connections Grant funds can be used for the following activities:

- Payroll costs

- Costs for conference attendance

- Costs associated with training and support provided by the Texas Center for Student Supports

- General costs associated with the fulfillment of the program

- Stipends for non-employees

- Capital Outlay

Stronger Connections Grant Program

Stronger Connections Grant Unallowable Use of Funds

Stronger Connections Grant funds cannot be used for the following activities:

- Debt services
- Field trips
- Membership in civic or community organizations
- Hosting conferences
- Out of state travel

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Stronger Connections Use of Funds Questions

What happens to the grant funds if my district does not expend them by September 30, 2025?

How can a school district develop staff to do the work before the 2024-2025 school year when they can't hire until after November 15th?

Under allowable expenses, the 'stipends for non-employees', would this include contract work or hiring a consultant?

Can my district hire a clinician licensed in drug and alcohol treatment to provide group and individual counseling as an intervention?

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Stronger Connections Use of Funds Questions

- Can grant funds be used to fund existing crisis counselors currently employed by the district?

- If my district is not allowed to use funds from this grant program to support projects that we want to implement, where can we find other grant programs or funding for the project?

- Can grant funds be used to fund presenters and mentor programs to our school to promote safety, a sense of belonging, and support transitions to middle and high school?

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## Stronger Connections Use of Funds Questions

- Can grant funds be used to fund end/beginning of year transition activities to prepare students to enter middle school and high school?

- My district would need to hire staff to implement the Student Support Program. With the November 15, 2023, beginning date of the grant, it will be difficult to hire staff at that time. Can my district hire staff now when they are available and then fund the position if awarded the grant?

- This grant opportunity provides a large sum of funds for small districts. Can you provide some ideas on how the funds can be used?

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Stronger Connections Use of Funds Questions

- Can the TEA clarify or elaborate on the requirement on the budget section: Required 6% of funds for technical assistance provided by the regional ESC?

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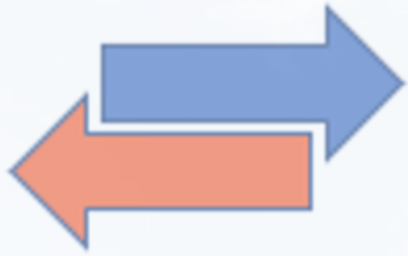
Stronger Connections Grant Program

Stronger Connections Grant Errata – Changes to the Program Guidelines and Application

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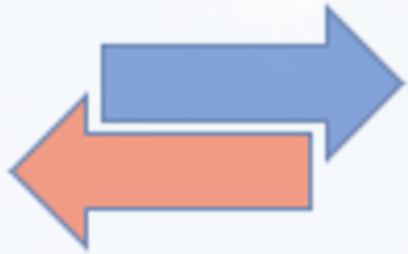
Stronger Connections Grant Errata

- Application Funding – Removed the funding floor for LEAs with 10,000 students or fewer

- Program Requirements – Changed the requirement from "describe how three campus will be supported" to "the campuses that will be supported"

- Program Assurances – Changed the assurance to make it applicable to LEAs with fewer than three campuses and LEAs that do not have elementary, intermediate/middle school, and high school campuses

- General Allowable and Unallowable Activities and Use of Funds – Capital outlay is now allowable with required pre-approval from TEA

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Stronger Connections Grant Errata

- Application Part 1
- Revised to include capital outlay to the budget section
- Updated Assurances
- Download and transfer information to the revised application form

Stronger Connections Grant
Closing Thoughts

Stronger Connections Grant Program

Stronger Connections Grant Closing Thoughts

- Great opportunity to improve the student experience Texas schools

- FAQs questions submitted by June 23, 2023

- Notify private nonprofit schools of the intent to apply for the grant program

- Notice of intent to apply and reviewer information form due on June 30, 2023

- Applications due at 11:59 P.M. (central time) on July 18, 2023

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Additional Questions

Send questions to
hank.weikert@tea.texas.gov

Questions will be added to the FAQ

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Thank You for Attending the Grantee Conference/Webinar

We look forward to reviewing your applications

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