



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: March 1, 2023
To: Local Educational Agency Leads
Route To: School Principals, School Business Administrators, District Federal ESSA Grant Administrators
From: Kathy Ehling, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Educational Services

**The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Stronger Connections Grant (SCG)
Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO)**

On June 25, 2022, President Biden signed into law the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA). As part of this legislation, 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) for the Stronger Connections Grant (SCG) Program to implement activities allowable under [Section 4108 \(“Activities to Support Safe and Healthy Students”\)](#) of ESEA. New Jersey received an allocation totaling \$20,905,551, of which 99% (\$20,696,495) will be awarded to approximately 15 “high-need” local education agencies (LEAs), including charter schools and renaissance school projects, through a competitive grant process. The [BSCA SCG NGO](#) will be posted on the [Office of Grants Management](#) website.

Eligibility

The NJDOE determined whether an LEA is “high-need” and eligible to apply for SCG funds based on its poverty rate. LEAs meeting at least one of the following poverty measures will be eligible to apply:

- A threshold poverty level of 20% based on the LEA’s Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) enrollment; or
- A score above the average on the community poverty index developed by the NJDOE for each LEA using a series of economic indicators specific to the geographic location of each school district from the U.S. Census.

Project Prioritization

To maximize the positive and lasting impact of these funds, the NJDOE will award applicants that demonstrate a strong commitment to the following:

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

Webinars

To assist LEAs on ways to successfully budget their SCG funding, the United States Department of Education (USED) held a series of webinars to accompany the [Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Stronger Connections FAQ](#). These webinars can be viewed on the USED’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education website:

1. [Building Stronger Connections: Engaging Families and Communities](#)
2. [Selecting High Quality Evidence-based Strategies for Safe, Supportive and Health Schools](#) – Part 1
3. [Selecting High Quality Evidence-based Strategies for Safe, Supportive and Health Schools](#) – Part 2
4. [Professional Development and Training for all School Staff on Strategies for Safe, Supportive and Healthy Schools](#)

In addition, on March 15, 2023 at 10 a.m. the NJDOE will host a webinar focusing on school culture and climate, as well as creating alternative school discipline policies. Registration for this webinar is open to all LEAs on the [NJDOE Calendar of Events](#).

General questions regarding the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act – Stronger Connections Grant (SCG) program should be directed to titleIVA@doe.nj.gov.

c: Members, State Board of Education
NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group
Administrators of a State Facility

