

Alabama State Department of Education

Application Guide for the Alabama Stronger Connections Grant Program

These instructions are provided to help prepare a grant application/proposal for LEA programs to support safe and supportive schools with an emphasis on family and community connections. Specific instructions are provided for key features and proposal requirements. If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Kristie Shankles or Ms. Ayanna Long at SCGrant@alsde.edu.



Eric G. Mackey, State Superintendent of Education
Alabama State Department of Education



Alabama State Department of Education
Alabama Stronger Connections Grant Program Application Guide

Background and Guidelines for Applications 2022-2023

Authorizing Statute: Based on the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) of 2022, funding includes \$1 billion through Title IV, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for State Education Agencies (SEAs) to high needs LEAs.

Appropriation: \$ 15,404,231.00

Who is Eligible to Apply: All Alabama public school systems

Funding Availability: The maximum award for an applicant is \$400,000.00

Deadline for Grant Application: 4 p.m. on May 25, 2023

APPLICATION INFORMATION

- A. **Purpose:** The purpose of this grant is to support high-need public school systems to establish meaningful engagement between school and LEA leaders and students, parents, families and community members, and strong relationships between students and adult to support safer and healthier learning environments within a Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS).
- B. **Grant Criteria:** The grant will be funded based on consideration of the following criteria:
- a. Grants will be awarded to programs within districts identified as high need. An LEA may be defined as 'high need' upon meeting the following criteria from each section:
 - Serve no less than 20% of students from low-income families; **OR**
 - Serve not fewer than 10,000 students from low-income families; **OR**
 - For which there is a high percentage of teachers not teaching in the academic subject areas or grade levels in which the teachers were trained to teach; **OR**
 - For which there is a high teacher turnover rate or a high percentage of teachers with emergency, provisional, or temporary certification or licensure; **OR**
 - Identified as priority school designation (CSI, Failing, Turnaround School, Title I, or Full Support designation)

AND

 - For which there is a high student-mental health professional ratio (including counselors, MHSC, etc.); **OR**
 - For which there is a high rate of chronic absenteeism; **OR**
 - For which there is a high rate of exclusionary disciplinary action (i.e. suspension, expulsion, etc.); **OR**
 - For which there is a high rate of referrals to the juvenile justice system; **OR**
 - For which there is a high rate of student substance abuse; **OR**
 - Where students recently experienced a natural disaster or traumatic event
 - b. Grant proposals must include goals and priorities (based upon identified areas from Part **B.a.** above) to drive the multi-tier system of supports (MTSS) that includes an emphasis on Tier I, or school-wide services, to address the needs of the entire campus population in addition to potential Tier II and Tier III services to support individual student needs.



Alabama State Department of Education
Alabama Stronger Connections Grant Program Application Guide

- c. Preference is given to proposals that include one or more of the following:
 - Parent and Community Liaison
 - Parent Workshops/Training
 - Parent Communication
 - Parent Success Center
 - Incentives for Student Success
 - Mental Health Professionals (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, mental health services coordinators, and school-based mental health counselors)
 - School Resource Officers
 - Behavior Coaches
 - Tier I Behavior Supports
 - Tier II Behavior Supports
 - Tier I Foundational Wellness Supports
 - Tier II Foundational Wellness Supports

- d. All grant proposals must provide a means for assessing the impact of the proposed activity or program.

- C. Grant Application Procedures:** The following procedures will be implemented:
- a. Grant applications must be received by **4:00 PM CST on May 25, 2023**.
 - b. Grant applications must be submitted electronically, and electronic signatures will be accepted. The grantee must confirm that the electronic file was received. Applicants will be notified if the grant application requires additional information via hard copy.
 - c. Grant applications will be reviewed and scored within four weeks of the receipt of the grant application.
 - d. At least three reviewers will read and score each grant using a rubric based on its requirements.
 - e. Grant applications submitted after the specified timeline will not be accepted and will be returned to the applicant.
 - f. Grant applications that do not meet the specified grant requirements will not be accepted and will be returned to the applicant.

- D. Application Timeline:** Eligible applicants must submit a completed electronic application by **4:00 PM on May 25, 2023**.

The following is a tentative timeline for grant deadlines:

Event	Date
Application Deadline	May 25, 2023
Application Review Deadline	June 28, 2023
Acceptance Notification	June 30, 2023
Grant Cycle- District	July 1, 2023- June 30, 2026
Deadline for Project Completion	September 30, 2026
Final Analysis and Evaluation Deadline	September 30, 2026



Alabama State Department of Education
Alabama Stronger Connections Grant Program Application Guide

- E. **Award Conditions:** Funds for the project must be expended by September 30, 2026.

- F. **Reporting Requirements:** The LEA must submit a comprehensive needs assessment and analysis. Semi-annual progress reports should be submitted in a timely manner. A final analysis and evaluation must be submitted that summarizes the outcomes and Evidence of Success documented in the Evaluation. Selected districts will present project overview at the annual MEGA conference.

- G. **Rejection of Proposals:** The ALSDE reserves the right to reject any and all proposals as a result of this announcement and will do so if the proposal does not adhere to funding specifications or application preparation instructions.



Proposal Summary

Briefly describe your project

What are you planning to do, and how are you planning to do it? Provide a brief summary of the proposal that describes the needs to be addressed, the intervention(s) selected, outcomes of the project and how these opportunities connect to the Alabama Multi-Tier System of Support Framework while engaging families and communities.

Proposal Description

A. Create a Needs Statement:

- a. Identify the student needs the proposed project will address.
- b. Demonstrate how the LEA will analyze the needs of each school, such as instructional programs, school leadership, and school infrastructure. Emphasis should be placed on feeder patterns when appropriate.
- c. Discuss how the needs assessment aligns with the selection of the specific intervention model or area selected by the LEA.
- d. Describe the desired student outcomes.
- e. State the goals and objectives that address the needs for the program based on the district and/or school data sources.

B. Student Outcomes and Evidence of Success:

- a. Identify the specific area(s) of student growth that will result in the desired conditions listed in the needs statement.
- b. State the target goal(s) for student success (SMART goal).
- c. Describe how the LEA will provide effective oversight and support for implementation.
- d. Describe how the LEA will implement, to the extent practicable, in accordance with its selected intervention model(s), one or more evidence-based strategies.

C. School(s) and Communities:

- a. Name the schools that will participate in the proposed project.
- b. How many students will be impacted by implementation of the proposed project?
- c. Demonstrate what methods and considerations the LEA will use to consult with relevant stakeholders including family and community.
- d. Describe how the LEA will meaningfully engage families and communities in the implementation on an ongoing basis

D. Sustainability:

- a. Describe what actions the LEA has taken or will take to align other resources (Title I, etc.) with the selected intervention without supplanting existing resources.
- b. Describe how the LEA will work with the Local Board of Education to address potential barriers to implementation including but not limited modification of practices or policies.
- c. Describe how the LEA will sustain the reforms in its schools after the funding period has concluded.

E. Evaluation: *Click here to access the Evaluation Plan template ([Word/Google](#)).*

- a. List all evidence that will be used to determine the degree to which the outcome was met (Evidence of success).
- b. Describe how the evidence will be analyzed.
- c. Identify the person or position responsible for collecting and analyzing the evidence.



Alabama State Department of Education

Alabama Stronger Connections Grant Program Application Guide

F. **Project implementation plan:** *Click here to access the Implementation Plan template ([Word/Google](#)).*

- a. Complete the form to include estimated costs, detailed timeline, and the person or position responsible for leadership and implementation for each aspect of the project.
- b. The LEA's proposed activities for engaging families and the community should include:
 - Partnering with students, parents, and the community.
 - Linking family and community engagement efforts to student learning.
 - Developing the capacity of school staff to work with families.
 - Focusing efforts to engage families on developing trusting and respectful relationships.
 - Using school improvement parental involvement forums to cultivate trust and meaningful connections between school staff, students, and families.
 - Offering a rich variety of events—open houses, neighborhood walks, a summer academic and enrichment fair, workshops, and activities that not only communicate information, but lead to school staff, families, and communities building relationships.
 - Using strategies that make usual outreach methods more effective: providing materials in multiple languages, considering parent literacy and technology training, and holding events in safe and welcoming locations.
 - Providing parents with workshops to support student learning at home and become effective advocates for their children.
 - Ensuring resources are available at each school for parents unable to attend the sessions.
 - Offering professional development for school-based employees and communities with the assistance of parents in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners to increase student achievement.
 - Coordinating and building capacity by improving school and business connections/communications to improve student academic success.
 - Building community engagement into their school-wide school improvement plans.
 - Additional activities may include the following:
 - Increase of school staff or contract individuals to work with students and families with an emphasis on behavioral and foundational wellness
 - Mental Health Professionals (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, mental health services coordinators, and school-based mental health counselors)
 - Behavior coaches
 - Increase of school staff to work with students and families with an emphasis on school safety

G. **Budget:** *Click here to access the Budget template ([Excel/Google](#)).*

- a. Provide a detailed budget narrative for the proposed project. Use state guidelines for expenditures.
- b. Complete the Budget Summary. The proposed budget total should match the Total Amount Requested.