

Stronger Connections Grant FAQs



Funding/Budgeting

Question	Answer
Will this grant be administered like other federal grants from the point of view that the budget narrative may be edited during the grant period?	The SCG is a competitive grant, so there will not be a CIP Budget Narrative for SCG. Your application will be through the Smartsheet that is linked from the SCG RFA.
Will there be a strict division between year 1 and year 2 of the budget?	If a district or consortium who is awarded the SCG is not able to spend the full amount in the first year, the district/consortium can get approval of a new budget for the second year.
What about the nature of the application? Are we allowed to change the items we want to budget for?	All activities paid for with SCG funds must be allowable under section 4108 of ESEA.
If you have contracted with a community service agency previously but do not have funding to continue would grant funding be allowed and not be considered supplanting?	Supplement not Supplant rules for federal funding are applicable to the Stronger Connections Grant. If you are considering continuing a project that was being funded through ESSER or state funding, for example, this would not be considered supplanting, as that funding is ending.
What kind of data tracking / monitoring will be involved if awarded?	The budget is what we will use for tracking and reporting purposes, unless we receive notification from the U.S. Department of Education that additional information is required. The Allowable Uses in section 2.4.2 of the RFA are the categories that will be needed for reporting.
For category 3, is the example on the slide the only allowable expense for that category? Or can other activities be allowed to support Safe and Inclusive School Climate?	No, that is not the only example. In the first question of the application, identify the need and in the second question, describe how you will meet that need.
Can we include transportation costs for an after-school program?	All activities paid for with SCG funds must be allowable under section 4108 of ESEA. If the activity is aligned to these parameters, a description of how transportation is aligned, necessary, and reasonable would be needed.

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Basic Information

Question	Answer
Will this session mirror the Feb. 1 session, or will new information be shared today?	It's the same information, with updates we have made to the RFA timelines.
Who and how do you want us to address questions privately?	Email Joanne Edmondson at joanne.edmondson@ode.oregon.gov .

Tribal Consultation

Question	Answer
If the affirmation letters are not all signed by March 8, the applications should still be submitted, and can be submitted later, correct?	An addendum to the RFA addresses when to submit signed affirmations and timelines for Tribal consultation.
Did we hear correctly that the tribal consultation affirmation forms are to be uploaded with the Smartsheet budget? Please confirm.	Yes. This will also be in the addendum.

Application Scoring

Question	Answer
Can you offer clarification related to section 2.4.1? Is it true that applicants may only select two categories? If so, can you clarify how an applicant can earn priority points?	You can write your application that includes all four funding priority categories, but you can only earn up to ten extra points (five points each for two funding priority categories). This does not preclude you from writing to all four categories.
Anything not included in the four funding priorities must be allowable under category five, correct?	Yes, all activities, even those included in the four funding priority categories, must be allowable under section 4108 of ESEA.
You don't gain extra points by applying for more than two funding priority categories, correct?	Correct.
When evaluators go through the application, are they looking line by line for allowable costs or are they considering the application as a whole? What if a request is considered too much? Will it be eliminated or just reduced? What if we want to hire someone - how do we budget for their salary if we do not know their experience or who will apply?	Section 4.3 in the RFA addresses how applications will be scored. We are uncertain at this time as to how many of the eligible districts will apply; but we are hoping to fund as many applications as possible. Please apply for funding that meets your most pressing needs.

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Funding

Question	Answer
Will the slide deck be shared after the meeting?	The slide deck from the February 1, 2024 Zoom webinar is available on the SCG webpage .
Is this grant the same as the Ron Wyden letter ?	No. While both the SCG and Senator Wyden’s letter dated January 31, 2024 utilize funds appropriated by Congress under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act , they are two completely separate funding streams. Senator Wyden’s letter refers to funds that are administered through the Oregon Health Authority, whereas SCG funds are administered through the Oregon Department of Education.
When will the application window open? Is this for one year only? What date will the funds be available?	The application window opened on January 30, 2024. The deadline for applications is March 8, 2024 . If an eligible applicant is awarded SCG funds, program implementation may begin April 1, 2024 and funds must be obligated by September 30, 2026.
How competitive is this grant? Will many districts get funded?	If all eligible districts apply and successfully meet all the requirements, ODE will take a look at the requested amounts and attempt to partially fund all successful applicants.
What is the total state allocation for the grant?	The ODE was allocated \$8,265,004 in funds.
Would you recommend that districts ask for a larger amount or a more reasonable amount, considering the allocated amount could possibly go to ALL districts?	Look at the needs of your district’s students and ask for funds for activities to meet those needs. If we have too many applicants, we may come back to you and ask for revisions.
If we are awarded \$375K each year, and don't spend \$375K the first year, does the remainder roll over?	If an SCG recipient does not spend down their budgeted funds in year one, they may submit a new budget form for approval to roll the costs into the second year.
What will be the reporting requirements? What will districts need to do for progress reporting?	Districts are required to submit expenditure reports on a monthly or quarterly basis for each funding year. ODE will ask for additional reporting requirements only if required by the U.S. Department of Education. The reporting requirements for budget categories have been aligned to the Excel document Attachment B - Budget . Additionally, the ODE may monitor eligible applicants who are awarded SCG funds.
Can we back date any expenses prior to April 1?	All funds must be obligated after April 1, 2024.

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Question	Answer
Is there any supplant/supplement clause, especially as ESSER funds disappear for our districts?	<p>The SCG is a federal grant and must follow all federal requirements in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR). Additionally, the SCG follows all requirements of Title IV-A, section 4108, which includes supplement not supplant requirements. Please refer to the SCG RFA, section 2.4.3.</p> <p>For more information, refer to the Supplement not Supplant Brief.</p>
Are there matching requirements?	There are no matching requirements for the SCG.
Is there a likelihood this grant funding will continue after 2026?	The Stronger Connections Grant was written into law as a one time grant, to be obligated by September 30, 2025. With the Tydings Waiver year, the obligation deadline extends to September 30, 2026.

Allowability

Please keep in mind that allowability is aligned with Title IVA, Safe and Healthy Students (Section 4108 of ESEA)

Question	Answer
Is it acceptable for funds to be spent during the Summer months?	Yes, SCG funds can be used anytime after an eligible applicant is awarded after April 1, 2024 and must be obligated by September 30, 2026.
How does helping students struggling with addiction connect with this grant?	This could be considered an activity under the mental health funding priority.
Can we use these funds to update school facilities to create a more secure environment?	Anything allowable under Section 4108 of the ESEA is allowable under this grant. Please refer to the funding priorities in the RFA.
Could districts pay for implementation of student management systems such as CHAMPS or instructional improvement systems such as AVID be allowable?	Activities to support positive school climates are allowable under Section 4108 of the ESEA.
What about community engagement activities in general?	Community engagement activities must be related to the district's needs assessment and allowable under Section 4108 of the ESEA.
Are there any prohibited uses of funds?	These funds may not be used to purchase a dangerous weapon or train school staff in the use of a dangerous weapon. Additionally, all activities must be allowable under Section 4108 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
Can districts use some of these dollars for	No, construction is not an allowable expense. Activities must be

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construction?	allowable under Section 4108 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
May SCG funds be used for food or student incentives?	The SCG is a federal grant and must follow all federal requirements in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR). Under EDGAR, there are specific requirements about purchasing food and student incentives with federal dollars. Please see the Purchasing Food with Federal Funds Brief and the Student Incentives Brief .

Consultation and Needs Assessment Requirements

Question	Answer
<p>Are charter schools eligible for SCG funds?</p> <p>How do we consult for charter schools? Does it matter if it is an online charter school?</p>	<p>Charter schools should be included in your SCG needs assessment and activities you are hoping to have funded.</p> <p>For charter schools, include them in your district’s needs assessment, just as you would with your other schools, similar to Title IVA.</p>
<p>For Tribal Consultation under Title VI, we are directed to go through the ESD. We are not applying through the ESD for this grant, so how would we consult with Tribes? Do we just go with local Tribes? Do we need to consult with Tribes that are located in different states?</p>	<p>The LEA-Consortium (LEA-C) Lead Applicant is ultimately responsible for the Tribal Consultation. However, the LEA-C should work with all of their Participating LEAs included on the LEA-C Lead’s application to ensure a timely and accurate Tribal Consultation. AND Each participating LEA (including LEA-C Lead) should conduct Tribal Consultations with each Tribe that has a Tribal Reservation boundary, unceded and/or pre-contact, and/or aboriginal lands, within 50 miles of the LEA.</p> <p>Please refer to Understanding the ESSA Law & How to Support Educational Sovereignty: A Toolkit for Tribal Consultation.</p>
<p>How should districts conduct private school consultation?</p>	<p>Consultation with private schools for SCG is similar to how you perform consultation under Title IV-A.</p> <p>You must consult with all private schools within your district’s geographic boundaries that are non-profit and enroll students in any grade K-12. You would not need to consult with private schools who are PK only.</p> <p>Before applying for the SCG, eligible applicants must invite private schools for consultation, so that eligible applicants can ensure private school’s specific needs are included in the application’s needs assessment and proposed budget. If the private school is non-responsive or declines to participate in</p>

Question	Answer
	<p>consultation, the eligible applicant does not need to include their needs in the application.</p> <p>If an eligible applicant has been awarded SCG funds, then the eligible applicant must re-consult with private schools and ask if they would like to participate in equitable services, even if the private school has previously been non-responsive or declined services. Consultation must occur annually for the duration of the SCG, even if the private school has been non-responsive or declined services in a previous year. However, after applications have been awarded, the private school can only participate in activities that have been approved in the SCG application.</p> <p>For example, if the eligible application received funding to provide mental health counseling to students, private schools must be allowed to participate in a mental health counseling program on an equitable basis to public school students if the private school is able to demonstrate a need for mental health counseling. However, the private school cannot request to receive services for creating school emergency plans as this was not an approved program in the applicant’s awarded application.</p> <p>If an eligible applicant has been awarded SCG funds, and the private school wishes to receive equitable services, an equitable share must be calculated.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Calculate the total number of students: add the total number of public school students to the total number of private school students. 2. Calculate the net district allocation: subtract the administrative costs and indirect costs from the total district allocation. 3. Calculate the per-pupil rate: divide the net district allocation by the total number of students from #1. 4. Calculate the equitable share: multiply the per-pupil rate by the total number of private school students.
<p>If we have a virtual private school, are we obligated to consult with them?</p>	<p>Equitable service requirements for the SCG are subject to the same eligibility requirements as Title IV-A, which can be found in ESEA section 8501. While Title I-A equitable service eligibility is based on the residence of individual private school students, Title IV-A equitable service eligibility is based on the physical location of the private school.</p> <p>If a virtual private school is physically headquartered within an eligible applicant’s geographic boundaries, then the eligible</p>

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Question	Answer
	<p>applicant has a responsibility to consult with the virtual private school.</p> <p>If an eligible applicant has a private school student who attends a virtual private school that is physically headquartered outside of the eligible applicant’s geographic boundaries, the eligible applicant does not have an equitable service responsibility for that individual private school student.</p>

Needs Assessment

Question	Answer
<p>Can districts use the Integrated Guidance to inform the answers to the narrative questions? How will that impact private schools’ participation in the needs assessment?</p>	<p>Yes, districts can use their Integrated Guidance to inform the answers to the narrative, as applicable.</p> <p>Private schools are not included in the IG needs assessment, so eligible applicants will need to reach out to the private school(s) to include their specific needs in the SCG application. Private schools that are non-responsive or decline to participate are not included in the application. There is not a requirement that private schools be included in the IG needs assessment.</p> <p>The ODE has provided sample needs assessments for equitable services, which eligible applicants may find helpful when assessing a private school’s specific needs.</p>
<p>Does SCG need a new needs assessment?</p>	<p>You may use a current needs assessment, such as the work you did for the Integrated Guidance and consider needs you were not able to fund with those dollars to inform activities you might like to apply to fund with the Stronger Connections Grant.</p>