



To the Administrator Addressed

Commissioner Mike Morath

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DATE:	May 11, 2023
SUBJECT:	Texas Stronger Connections Grant Opportunity
CATEGORY:	Safe and Supportive School Program
NEXT STEPS:	Please Share as Appropriate

Overview

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is committed to supporting local educational agencies (LEAs) in their efforts to improve the safety and security of school facilities for staff, students, and visitors. On June 2, 2022, Governor Abbott charged the Commissioner of Education with rule development to ensure existing school facilities are held to heightened safety standards, and to determine costs of more secure facilities in schools.

Also in June, Governor Abbott and the Legislature [provided \\$17.1M](#) for school districts to purchase silent panic alert technology. In October, Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, and Speaker Phelan announced [\\$400M](#) in additional school safety funding to assist school districts in replacing or upgrading doors, windows, fencing, communications, and other safety measures. In January 2023, the 2023-2025 School Safety Standards Formula Grant was released for school systems. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) of 2022 provides historic funding to support State educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools in establishing safe, healthy, and supportive learning opportunities and environments. The Title IV Stronger Connections Grant offered to states is a direct result of the BSCA. The Texas legislature is currently deliberating on additional funding to support school systems with enhanced school safety measures.

Background

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) was awarded \$93,985,252 in federal K-12 funding from the U.S. Department of Education under the BSCA Stronger Connections grant program within Title IV, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) for state educational agencies (SEAs) to provide students with safer and healthier learning environments. These funds will be awarded through non-competitive and competitive grants to high-need local educational agencies (LEAs) that ensure transparency and successful implementation of activities allowable under section 4108 of the ESEA to support the ongoing needs of students, educators, families, and communities. All three grants conclude on 9/30/2025.

Grant Opportunities

The Texas Stronger Connections grants will provide funding for selected Texas LEAs to develop, implement and evaluate a comprehensive approach that prioritizes physical and emotional safety for their unique school community (SEC. 4108 [20 U.S.C. 7118]). Funded activities and practices should prioritize safety, create a sense of belonging, implement trauma-responsive approaches and teach positive behaviors in order to provide safe and supportive learning environments that improve academic achievement and the well-being of students.

The Texas Stronger Connections Grant will provide:

- Professional development and funding for training for Safe and Supportive Schools Programs
- Technical assistance to support development, implementation, and sustainable practices.

- Development of family and community engagement partnerships.
- External coaching to support safe and healthy development and implementation.
- Trauma-Informed practices, emergency plan development, and site assessments.
- Development of personnel for Student Support Team framework and implement school-related related Initiatives.

Timeline:

Non-Competitive: Stronger Connections Grant Pilot- Uvalde CISD is a non-competitive direct grant to support recovery efforts.

- 5/19/2023: Application posted for Stronger Connections Grant Pilot-Uvalde CISD
- 7/18/2023: Application due to TEA with grant period to be determined upon receipt of application

Competitive: 2024-2025 Stronger Connections Competitive Grant will be awarded to high-need LEAs

- 5/19/2023: RFA Posted and open to all high-need LEAs
- 7/18/2023: Application due to TEA
- 11/15/2023: Beginning of grant period

Texas Center for Student Supports (ESCs)

The Texas Center for Student Supports will support systemic change in the way school systems address the academic and nonacademic needs of students by providing safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments resulting in improved academic achievement and mental health, behavioral and emotional health, and physical health and well-being of students. The chosen ESC will support efforts including the selection and management of technical assistance providers across priority areas for the grant program. This project will also provide support to Texas LEAs and ESCs by providing resources and tools to support continuous improvement efforts.

Timeline:

ESCs: Texas Center for Student Supports will be awarded to one Education Service Center (ESC) to house the center.

- LOI
- 5/30/2023- Application due to TEA
- 7/1/2023- Beginning of grant period.

For Further Information

Please see the below contacts for questions regarding various components of 2023-2025 School Safety Standards Grant program:

- **Grant Contact** CompetitiveGrants@tea.texas.gov
 - For questions regarding the grant program, eligibility, application, or any other grant-related questions please contact Michael Kuntz (michael.kuntz@tea.texas.gov).
- **Safety Standards and Program Contact**
 - For questions regarding the School Safety Standards rule and uses of funds please contact Hank Weikert (SafeandSupportiveSchoolProgram@tea.texas.gov).

For additional information on the ADC or grant application, contact your assigned negotiator listed on the [Grant Administration Division Contacts](#) page.