



Stronger Connection Grant (SCG)

FY24 LEA Competitive Application Process

Recorded Webinar

March 2023



Stronger Connection Grant (SCG)



Welcome!

Please visit
www.azed.gov/StrongerConnections
for all grant and program resources and
guidance documents

If you have any questions,
please contact us at:
StrongerConnections@azed.gov



Webinar Agenda



What is the Stronger Connections Grant?



LEA Award Details and Grant Requirements



Arizona's Stronger Connection Grant Focus:

- *Required Program Activities*
- *Allowable Local Uses of Funds*
- *Unallowable Uses of Funds*
- *Local matching funds requirement*



Overview of the FY24 Stronger Connections Grant LEA Competitive Application in GME:

- *Application Elements*
- *Assurances & Requirements*



LEA Application Scoring Criteria & Rubric



LEA Competitive Application Timeline



Contacts and Resources



Stronger Connection Grant (SCG)

The *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA)*, signed on June 25, 2022, appropriated \$1 billion to establish the **Stronger Connections Grant (SCG)** Program

- ADE received notice of our award on September 15, 2022

Total Award:	\$20,826,927
Project Term:	September 2022 – September 30, 2026 (~48 months)

Total Administrative Costs Reservation (1%)	\$208,269.27
Total Amount for Discretionary SEA Activities (up to 4%)	\$833,077.08
Total Required LEA Assistance (95%)	\$19,785,580.65
Total All	\$20,826,927



Stronger Connection Grant (SCG)

How does the Stronger Connections Grant relate to Title IV-A?

- The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act requires that funds may only be used for activities that would be allowable to support safe and healthy students under Title IV-A, Sec. 4108 of the ESEA. ED has further defined that *“an SEA may design its Stronger Connections LEA subgrant competition in a manner that prioritizes a certain scope of LEA activities within the breadth of one or more specific allowable activities”* (Bipartisan Safer Communities Act – Stronger Connections Frequently Asked Questions; A-3)

How can LEAs access Stronger Connections Grant?

- States are required to hold a **competitive application process for ‘High Need LEAs’** to apply for the Stronger Connections Grant. States can define what is a ‘High Need LEA’ and the mechanics of the LEA competitive application process - to include the timeline for awarding funds. States may also choose to define specific areas of focus for allowable grant activities, within the general scope of what would be allowable under Title IV-A, Sec. 4108 of the ESEA



Arizona's Stronger Connection Grant

ADE's Stronger Connections Grant is focused on providing resources to 'High-Need LEAs' to hire, train and support effective **School Safety Officers (SSOs)** for their school(s)



LEA Award Details and Grant Requirements

Who is eligible to apply?

All non-profit LEAs meeting the state's definition of a 'High Need LEA' (see below) are eligible to apply

How is 'High Need LEA' defined by ADE for the Stronger Connections Grant?

'High Need' LEAs are defined for the Stronger Connections Grant as public, non-profit LEAs (school districts or charter schools) with no School Resource Officers (SROs) **at one or more of their schools**

What is the maximum award size that LEAs can apply for?

LEAs may apply for **up to a maximum of \$500,000 per proposed participating school** included in the LEA's application. ADE must reserve a minimum of \$19,785,580.65 to support LEA grants through the Stronger Connections Grant program

How long will LEAs have to use these funds?

The period of availability for Stronger Connections Grant funds runs through **September 30, 2026**. Given this, the grant will allow for LEAs to hire and support School Safety Officer personnel over three school years (SY23-24, SY24-25, and SY25-26)



LEA Award Details and Grant Requirements

Does the grant have a supplement and not-supplant requirement?

Yes. LEA grantees must ensure they will follow the supplement not supplant requirements in section 4110 of the ESEA for SCG funds

Is there a Maintenance of Effort requirement?

Yes. The Maintenance of Effort requirements of ESEA Sec. 8521 apply for LEAs receiving Stronger Connections Grant funds

Are school districts required to provide equitable services?

Yes. LEA grantees must ensure they will provide equitable services, as applicable, to students and teachers in non-public schools as required under section 8501 of the ESEA. **Equitable services requirements do not apply to Charter LEAs**

Successful school district applicants will be required to complete applicable equitable services requirements, such as identifying eligible, participating private schools, calculating proportionate share and engaging in timely and meaningful consultation with officials from eligible private schools to determine how services would be provided to participating private schools



LEA Award Details and Grant Requirements

How will eligible LEAs apply for grant funds?

Eligible 'High Need LEAs' will apply for the FY24 Stronger Connections Grant through completing an online application in the ADE online Grants Management system, at gme.azed.gov

When will applications open for LEAs to apply?

The FY24 Stronger Connections Grant LEA Competitive Application will open on **March 21, 2023**, and will remain open for a 6-week application window for LEAs to submit applications

What is the deadline for LEAs to apply?

The deadline for LEAs to apply for the Stronger Connections Grant through the FY24 LEA Competitive Application process is **May 2, 2023**



LEA Award Details and Grant Requirements

What are the Competitive Preference Priorities for applicants?

LEAs may qualify for up to an additional 50 points as part of the LEA competitive application process based on meeting one or more of the following competitive preference priorities:

Points	Competitive Preference Priorities
20	LEA received an award for the state School Safety Program (SSP) grant, but was unable to hire an SRO
10	LEA has high reported local school community crime rate / conditions data
5	LEA is considered a 'Small LEA', with a total K-12 enrollment of 600 students or less
5	LEA is defined as 'Rural' by the State, per ARS §15-249.13
10	LEA is considered a 'Rural and Remote' LEA (all schools in the LEA are defined as Rural Fringe, Distant or Remote (NCES Local Code 41, 42, or 43)

ADE will award points for Competitive Preference Priorities based on data from the following sources:

- ADE School Safety Grant Program
- LEA FY24 Stronger Connections Grant application Program Narrative Questions response
- School Finance Unit
- FY24 Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP)



Arizona's Stronger Connection Grant Focus

What are the **Required Program Activities** for LEA Grantees?

ADE has identified the following required program activities for LEA SCG grantees:

Required Stronger Connections Grant Program Activities

- Administer the grant and participate in any program evaluation and reporting that may be required by ADE or the US Department of Education
- **Hire School Safety Officer(s) (1 FTE equivalent)** for each campus included in the LEAs approved application
- Ensure participation of SSO in the required SSO-related training series, as determined by the ADE SCG program
- Ensure participation of LEA and participating school staff in all required SCG training, as determined by ADE SCG program
- Revise / update local LEA and participating school safety plans
- Provide support for any firearms-related training that may be required for SSOs using non-federal funds



Arizona's Stronger Connection Grant Focus

What are the **Allowable Local Uses** of Stronger Connection Grant Funds?

ADE has identified the following allowable local uses of SCG funds for LEA SCG grantees:

Allowable Local Uses of Stronger Connections Grant Funds

- Salary and Benefits for School Safety Officer(s)
- Reasonable and necessary administrative costs, to include indirect costs as applicable, for the LEA to administer the grant
- Support for required SSO training, to include registration and travel expenses (as applicable)
- Support for LEA and school staff to attend additional training and networking opportunities facilitated by ADE SCG staff, to include registration and travel expenses (as applicable)
- Reasonable and necessary equipment and supplies to support the implementation of the SSO model



Arizona's Stronger Connection Grant Focus

What can Stronger Connections Grant funds not be used for?

LEAs grantees must ensure that SCG funds are not used for the provision to any person of a dangerous weapon* or training in the use of a dangerous weapon as prohibited under Section 13401 of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which amends section 8526 of the ESEA

*[*A “dangerous weapon” is defined in section 930(g)(2) of title 18, United States Code as a weapon, device, instrument, material, or substance, animate or inanimate, that is used for, or is readily capable of, causing death or serious bodily injury, except that such term does not include a pocketknife with a blade of less than 2 1/2 inches in length.]*

Additionally, SCG funds may not be used for school construction. Per ED: *“BSCA Stronger Connections grants are appropriated for carrying out activities under subpart 1 of Part A of Title IV of the ESEA, specifically for activities under ESEA section 4108. ESEA section 8526(1) prohibits using funds under the ESEA “for construction, renovation, or repair of any school facility, except as authorized under [the ESEA],” and there is no specific authorization for construction, renovation, or repair in ESEA Title IV, Part A. Accordingly, Stronger Connections funds may not be used for school construction.”* (Bipartisan Safer Communities Act – Stronger Connections Frequently Asked Questions; D-1)

Further, the transferability flexibility associated with Title IV-A funds does not apply to the Stronger Connections Grant program. Stronger Connections Grant funds an LEA receives **may not** be transferred to other authorized ESEA programs consistent with ESEA Section 5103



Arizona's Stronger Connection Grant Focus

Is there a local matching funds requirement?

Yes. LEAs grantees must ensure that local, non-federal matching funds will be available and used to fulfill all required weapons trainings for School Safety Officers, as applicable, to ensure compliance with Section 13401 of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which amends section 8526 of the ESEA

How will eligible LEAs apply for grant funds?

Eligible 'High Need LEAs' will apply for the FY24 Stronger Connections Grant through completing an online application in the ADE online Grants Management system, at gme.azed.gov



Overview of the Grant Application in GME



The **FY24 Stronger Connections Grant** application may be accessed through the **ADE Grants Management** system at: gme.azed.gov

You will need to sign into the Grants Management system using your **ADEConnect** login information to access the application. **Access to the Grants Management system may need to be granted to you by your local LEA ADEConnect Entity Administrator**

The Funding Application is named:
“Stronger Connections Grant”
under Fiscal Year **2024**



Complete All Required Sections in GME



FFATA & GSA Verification
FFATA & GSA Verification
Program Information / Instructions
Program Information / Instructions
Contact Information
Contact Information
Assurances
Assurances
Proportionate Share Determination
Proportionate Share Determination
Stronger Connections Grant
<input type="text" value="District Level"/>
Budget
Budget Overview
Stronger Connections Grant School Allocations

- ✓ The application includes both **District Level** and school **Site Level** budget sections
- ✓ The LEA should complete a **Site Level budget** for **each proposed participating school** included in the LEA application
- ✓ LEA-level activities, such as project administrative costs, should be budgeted at the District Level



Stronger Connections Grant
<input type="text" value="XYZ High School (999987999)"/>
Budget
Budget Overview
Program Narrative Questions
Related Documents
Stronger Connections Grant School Allocation



Overview of the Grant Application in GME



FFATA & GSA VERIFICATION

PROGRAM INFORMATION / INSTRUCTIONS

CONTACTS

ASSURANCES

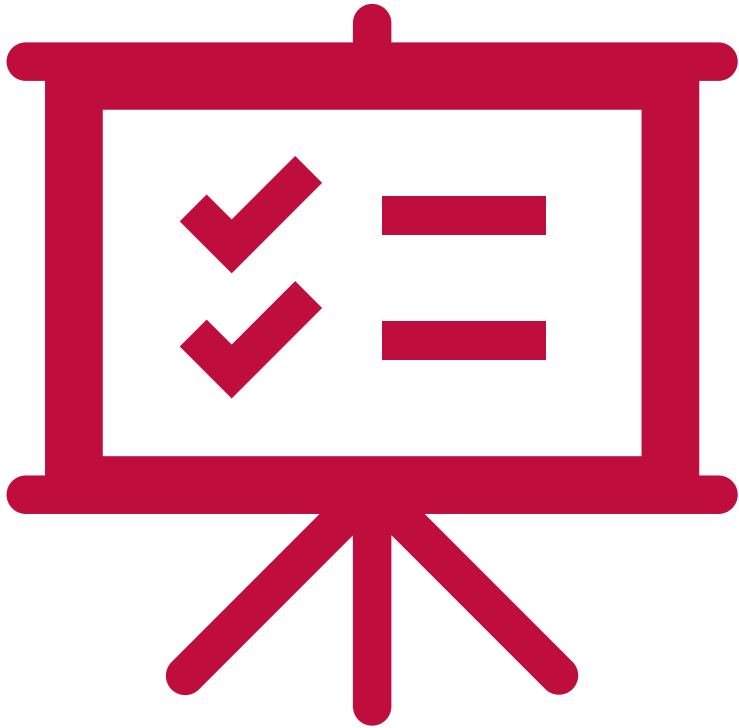
PROGRAM NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

BUDGET

PROPORTIONATE SHARE DETERMINATION *



FFATA and GSA Verification



- ✓ Be sure to submit your **FY24 General Statement of Assurance** in GME
- ✓ Ensure your **SAM.gov information** is up to date
- ✓ Provide a **short description** of your grant funded project



Program Information / Instructions

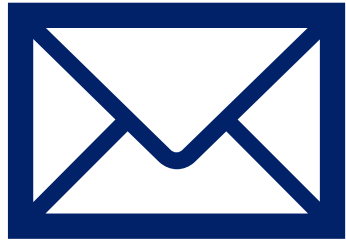
✓ This section includes general **program information and instructions** for LEA applicants

✓ Please also view the ***Stronger Connections Grant FY24 LEA Competitive Application Guidance*** for this competition and the ***Stronger Connections Grant (SCG) – FY24 LEA Competitive Application Scoring Rubric*** to help complete your application

✓ All **guidance documents and application resources** may be found at:
www.azed.gov/StrongerConnections



Contact Information



CONTACT INFORMATION

Required Contacts				
Stronger Connections Grant - LEA Primary Contact Name	Contact Title	Contact Phone	Contact Email	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	

Additional Contacts - Participating Schools				
Participating School	SCG Participating School - Primary Contact Name(s)	Contact Title	Contact Phone	Contact Email
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



Here you must include **one primary LEA-level point of contact** - as well as **additional site-level points of contact** for all proposed schools included in the LEA's application



Assurances in GME

All assurances are required to be eligible to receive funding through the FY24 Stronger Connections Grant



Each assurance must be checked in this section

Stronger Connections Grant (SCG) - Grant Assurances

Checking "Yes" assures that the statement is true. All assurances are required to be answered as "Yes" for the LEA to be eligible to apply for the Stronger Connections Grant.

The Local Education Agency (LEA) hereby assures the State Education Agency (SEA) that the LEA:

* Complies with: ALLOWABLE USES OF FUNDS

- The LEAs will ensure SCG funds are only used for activities allowable under section 4108 of the ESEA, as further defined and proscribed by ADE for the SCG program.

* Complies with: PROHIBITED USES OF FUNDS

- The LEAs will ensure that SCG funds are not used for the provision to any person of a dangerous weapon* or training in the use of a dangerous weapon as prohibited under Section 13401 of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which amends section 8526 of the ESEA.

[*A "dangerous weapon" is defined in section 930(g)(2) of title 18, United States Code as a weapon, device, instrument, material, or substance, animate or inanimate, that is used for, or is readily capable of, causing death or serious bodily injury, except that such term does not include a pocketknife with a blade of less than 2 1/2 inches in length.]

* Complies with: LOCAL MATCHING FUNDS REQUIREMENT

- The LEAs will ensure that local, non-federal matching funds will be available and used to fulfill all required weapons trainings for School Safety Officers, as applicable, to ensure compliance with Section 13401 of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which amends section 8526 of the ESEA.

* Complies with: ASSISTANCE TO NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- The LEA ensures it will provide equitable services, as applicable, to students and teachers in non-public schools as required under section 8501 of the ESEA, and ensure that:

- A public agency has title to materials, equipment, and property purchased with SCG funds.
- A public agency has title to materials, equipment, and property purchased with SCG funds.
- Services to a non-public school with SCG funds are provided by a public agency directly, or through contract with, another public or private entity.
- Equitable services provided with SCG funds are secular, neutral, and nonideological.

* Complies with: SUPPLEMENT AND NOT SUPPLANT

- The LEA ensures it will follow the supplement not supplant requirements in section 4110 of the ESEA for SCG funds.

* Complies with: MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT

- The LEA ensures it will follow the Maintenance of Effort requirements in section 8521 of the ESEA for SCG funds.

* Complies with: LOCAL TRACKING OF FUNDS

- The LEA ensures it will track SCG funds received separately from its regular allocation under Title IV, Part A of the ESEA.

* Complies with: DATA REPORTING AND EVALUATION

- The LEA ensures it will participate, as requested, in any US Department of Education or ADE evaluation of the SCG program and will cooperate with any audit or examination of records with respect to such funds.

By checking the box below and signing my name, I attest that these assurances have happened or will happen:

* Yes

* Signature



Program Narrative Questions

The LEA must provide responses to each narrative question from the LEA perspective **and** on behalf of all schools proposed by the LEA to participate in the LEA's Stronger Connections Grant application.

All program narrative questions on this page must be addressed by the LEA

LEA Stronger Connections Grant – Program Narrative Questions:

* Please describe your LEA's current School Safety plan model at both the LEA and school level. Include how the addition of a School Safety Officer will further support the implementation of your plan:

* Please describe all current, or potentially new, community-based partnerships that may be in place, or available, to support the LEA's implementation of their School Safety plan:

* Please provide summary information regarding current (SY22-23) local school community crime rate / conditions, and provide the applicable data source:





Budget Notes

LEAs must complete a ***proposed*** budget as part of the LEA competitive application in the Grants Management system

Sufficient details must be provided in the Budget Narrative, and the LEA must:



LEAs may begin to obligate their grant funds after their application has been **Substantially Approved by ADE**

Stronger Connections Grant funds may be budgeted and expended through September 30, 2026

- ✓ Ensure they are only applying for a total award of up to \$500,000 for each proposed, participating school
- ✓ Ensure the detailed budget narrative is completed and coded correctly per the USFR / USFRCS with minimal to no mathematical errors
- ✓ Ensure that all requests for funds are reasonable, necessary, and allowable, per the requirements of the Stronger Connections Grant (SCG) program
- ✓ Ensure that all budgeted activities supplement, and do not supplant other non-Federal funds that would otherwise be used to pay for authorized activities

The full Period Availability for the Stronger Connections Grant runs through September 30, 2026
Funds may not be drawn down until the LEA Application is approved





Budget Notes

REMINDER:

- ✓ The application includes both District Level and school Site Level budget sections
- ✓ The LEA should complete a **Site Level budget** for each **proposed participating school** included in the LEA application
- ✓ LEA-level activities, such as project administrative costs, should be budgeted at the District Level

FFATA & GSA Verification

[FFATA & GSA Verification](#)

Program Information / Instructions

[Program Information / Instructions](#)

Contact Information

[Contact Information](#)

Assurances

[Assurances](#)

Proportionate Share Determination

[Proportionate Share Determination](#)

Stronger Connections Grant

District Level ▼

[Budget](#)

[Budget Overview](#)

[Stronger Connections Grant School Allocations](#)



Stronger Connections Grant

XYZ High School (999987999) ▼

[Budget](#)

[Budget Overview](#)

[Program Narrative Questions](#)

[Related Documents](#)

[Stronger Connections Grant School Allocation](#)



Proportionate Share Determination

LEA grantees must ensure they will provide equitable services, as applicable, to students and teachers in non-public schools as required under section 8501 of the ESEA. **Equitable services requirements do not apply to Charter LEAs**

Successful school district applicants will be required to complete applicable equitable services requirements, such as identifying eligible, participating private schools, calculating proportionate share and engaging in timely and meaningful consultation with officials from eligible private schools to determine how services would be provided to participating private schools

Successfully funded school district applicants for which equitable services requirements would apply will only be required to complete this section after they are provided notice of their award. Once approved, the LEA application will then be placed on a programmatic hold and the LEA will not be able to draw down funds until the equitable services process is completed

This section will be **hidden in the LEA application until the grant is placed into a Revision Status after LEA final awards have been determined. Additional guidance will be given to LEAs on how to complete this section at that time**



Prior to Grant Submission

- ✓ Ensure **FY24 GSA** is uploaded to GME
- ✓ Verify that the **FFATA brief summary** is completed
- ✓ Verify that all **Assurances** have been completed
- ✓ Verify that all **Program Narrative Questions** sections have been completed
- ✓ Ensure all proposed **budgeted activities** are **allowable** per the requirements of the competition and **coded properly** per the **USFR or USFRCS** (charter LEAs)



LEA Application Scoring Criteria & Rubric

All LEA Applications will be scored by ADE program staff using the **FY24 LEA Competitive Application Scoring Rubric**, which may be found on at www.azed.gov/StrongerConnections

LEA applications submitted by the competition deadline will first be reviewed for **administrative completeness**:



School Safety & Social Wellness

Stronger Connections Grant (SCG)
FY24 LEA Competitive Application Scoring Rubric

LEA Name	Entity ID #	CTDS #
LEA Primary Point of Contact	Email	Phone

Proposed Participating School(s)	Entity ID #	CTDS #	Budget Requested
			\$
			\$
			\$
			\$
			\$
SUBTOTAL			\$
Total LEA-Level Proposed Budget			\$
TOTAL ALL			\$

LEA Application Administrative Completeness Review Checklist	
LEA Application Submitted by the Application Deadline	
FFATA / GSA Section Completed	
LEA Assurances Fully Completed	
LEA and Participating School(s) Contact Information Fully Completed	
Proposed Budget Completed	
Program Narrative Questions Completed	
LEA Application Checklist Reviewed with No Deficiencies	



LEA Application Scoring Criteria & Rubric



School Safety & Social Wellness

Stronger Connections Grant (SCG)
FY24 LEA Competitive Application Scoring Rubric

LEA Application Scoring Summary

Points will then be provided based on how the LEA meets the **Competitive Preference Priorities**, and then the application will be scored per the **Application Requirements**:

Total Possible Points	Points Earned	Competitive Preference Priorities
20		LEA received an award for the state School Safety Program (SSP) grant, but was unable to hire an SRO
10		LEA has high reported local school community crime rate / conditions data
5		LEA is considered a 'Small LEA', with a total a K-12 enrollment of 600 students or less
5		LEA is defined as 'Rural' by the State, per ARS §15-249.13
10		LEA is considered a 'Rural and Remote' LEA (all schools in the LEA are defined as Rural Fringe, Distant or Remote (NCES Local Code 41, 42, or 43)
Total Points		Competitive Preference Priorities

Total Possible Points	Points Earned	Application Requirements
15		Quality of the Project Budget
30		Quality of LEA and School Level School Safety Plan
25		Quality of Community-Based Partnerships to Support Local Implementation
30		Severity of Local School Community Crime Rate / Conditions
100		Application Requirements

Scorer Name	Total Points Available	Total Points Earned	Date	Initials



LEA Application Scoring Criteria & Rubric

The following is the **LEA Application Requirements Scoring Rubric**:



School Safety & Social Wellness | **Stronger Connections Grant (SCG)**
FY24 LEA Competitive Application Scoring Rubric

LEA Application Requirements Scoring Rubric

	0-5	6-10	11-15	
Quality of the Project Budget (15 Points)	Budget contains multiple errors and insufficient details Budget contains unallowable activities per the SCG allowable activities framework Total proposed budget per school exceeds the \$500,000 per school maximum	Budget narrative contains sufficient details, coded mostly correctly per the USFR / USFRCS with some mathematical errors Budget elements are allowable per the SCG allowable activities framework, but additional detail may be required to confirm all are reasonable and necessary	Detailed budget narrative completed and coded correctly per the USFR / USFRCS with minimal to no mathematical errors All budget elements are reasonable, necessary and allowable per the SCG allowable activities framework	
				Total Points



LEA Application Scoring Criteria & Rubric

The following is the **LEA Application Requirements Scoring Rubric**:

	School Safety & Social Wellness	Stronger Connections Grant (SCG) <i>FY24 LEA Competitive Application Scoring Rubric</i>
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	0-10	11-20	21-30	
Quality of LEA and School Level School Safety Plan (30 Points)	LEA response is vague and unclear LEA response does not include information on behalf of all LEA proposed participating schools	LEA plan is clear with generally sufficient details provided for both the LEA and all proposed participating schools	LEA plan is clear and detailed for both the LEA and all proposed participating schools	Total Points

	0-8	9-17	18-25	
Quality of Community-Based Partnerships to Support Local Implementation (25 Points)	LEA response is vague and unclear	LEA response includes general details outlining relevant local community-based partnerships Response is not fully clear on how partnerships would be leveraged to support the implementation of their School Safety plan	LEA plan is clear and detailed and includes information on how both existing and potential new partnerships would be leveraged to support the implementation of their School Safety plan	Total Points



LEA Application Scoring Criteria & Rubric

The following is the **LEA Application Requirements Scoring Rubric**:



School Safety & Social Wellness

Stronger Connections Grant (SCG)
FY24 LEA Competitive Application Scoring Rubric

	0-10	11-20	21-30	
Severity of Local School Community Crime Rate / Conditions (30 Points)	LEA response is vague and unclear	General information on school community crime rate / conditions are provided. However, relevant data sources are not fully cited	Clear, detailed information on school community crime rate / conditions are provided. Relevant data sources are clearly identified and fully cited	
				Total Points

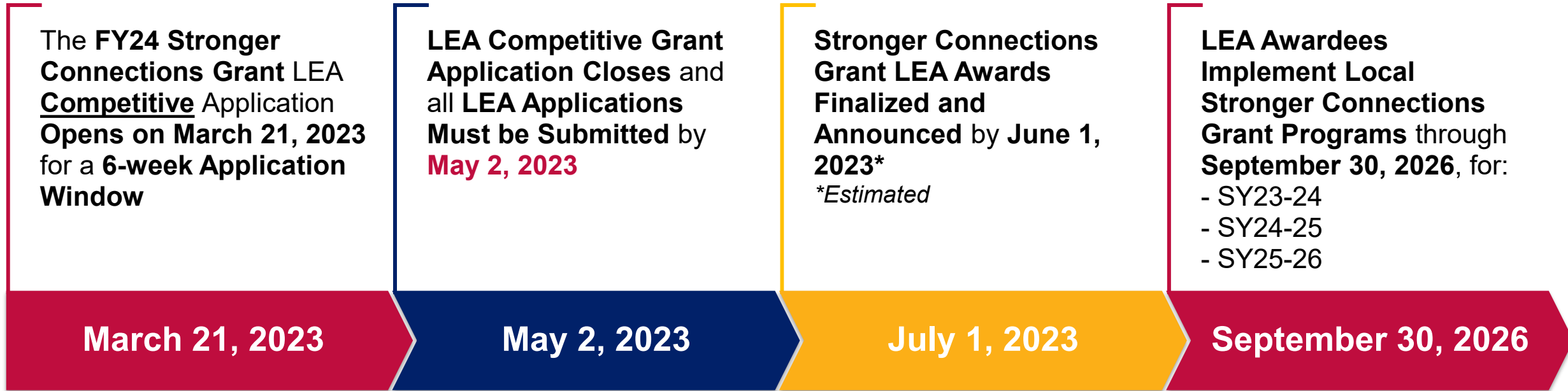


Application Directions Reminders

- ✓ Review the ***Stronger Connections Grant FY24 LEA Competitive Application Guidance*** for this competition
- ✓ Eligible LEA and School teams collaborate to complete the application, provide all required documentation, and check and sign all assurances
- ✓ Use the ***Stronger Connections Grant (SCG) – FY24 LEA Competitive Application Scoring Rubric*** when completing the application, to include the program narrative questions section
- ✓ Application completion with **all required documents** in GME by **May 2, 2023** is required. Additional inquiries from ADE will not be made. **If all required documents are not in GME, the application will not be scored**
- ✓ The application will be scored using the **scoring rubric** provided
- ✓ Awards will be made based on the scored rubric. **Seventy percent (70%) of points is required for funding.** The total awards made will be driven by the quality of scored applications and the total of available funding
- ✓ LEAs will be notified of award or non-award by July 1, 2023



LEA Competitive Application Timeline Review



The full Period of Availability for the Stronger Connections Grant runs through September 30, 2026



Stronger Connection Grant – Contacts & Resources



**Thank you for viewing
this webinar!**

Please visit
www.azed.gov/StrongerConnections
for all grant and program resources and
guidance documents

If you have any questions,
please contact us at:
StrongerConnections@azed.gov

