



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
Principals
Public Information Officers

FROM: Laura Bayne
Deputy Superintendent, Strategic Engagement

DATE: March 12, 2024

RE: 2024–25 Stronger Connections Subgrant Program (Revised)

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) announces that the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Stronger Connections Discretionary Subgrant is now available online. Approximately \$10,400,000 in funding will be distributed on a competitive basis and the deadline to apply is **May 1, 2024**.

The purpose of the Stronger Connections Subgrant Program, as stated in the [frequently asked questions](#), is to provide students with safer and healthier learning environments and fund activities allowable under [section 4108 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(ESEA\)](#). Subgrant funds must be used to develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive programs within high need LEAs.

Character education programs have been shown to positively impact school climate and student indiscipline. Accordingly, the Department strongly encourages applications that use this grant to implement or expand evidence-based character and resilience education, as outlined in SC Code §59-17-135, [South Carolina's Character Education Act](#). This does not include programs aligned with the "CASEL wheel" or other SEL-based materials.

Eligible applicants are South Carolina Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that demonstrate a high need as identified by 1) a high percentage of students living in poverty (40 percent or higher) and 2) either a high rate of bullying/harassment, a high rate of chronic absenteeism, or a high rate of exclusionary discipline. See page 49 of the RFP for a list of eligible LEAs.

The SCDE will offer a technical assistance webinar via [Adobe Connect](#) for interested applicants on **March 14, 2024, from 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.** No password is required to join the session. Participants will be able to log in 30 minutes prior to the start of the session to test their equipment's audio settings and to download/print handouts. While participation is not mandatory to submit an application, it is highly recommended.

Visit the [SCDE Grant Opportunities](#) page for updated information on grants, eligibility, application deadlines, and technical assistance. For more information about the Stronger Connections Subgrant Program, contact Kimberly Smith at 803-734-8113, strongerconnections@ed.sc.gov.