

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
Principals
Public Information Officers

FROM: Laura Bayne
Deputy Superintendent, Division of Strategic Engagement

DATE: December 16, 2025

RE: 2026 Stronger Connections Subgrant Opportunity

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 \$825,000 will be distributed on a competitive basis. The SCDE anticipates awarding approximately 5 subgrants, with the minimum of \$50,000 and the maximum award being \$200,000. The deadline to apply is **February 6, 2026**. Award amounts will be determined based on the quality of applications received and total funding requested. Final budgets may be negotiated based on demonstrated needs. All subgrant awards are contingent upon total allocations to the SCDE by the US Department of Education (USED).

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.

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 the RFP for a list of eligible LEAs.

The SCDE's Office of Student Support (OSS) will offer a pre-application technical assistance webinar via [Microsoft Teams](#) on **Tuesday, January 13, 2026**, from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. Participants will be able to log in 15 minutes prior to the start of the session to test their equipment's audio settings. While participation is not mandatory in order to submit an application, it is *highly* recommended.

December 16, 2025

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.