U.S. Department of Education
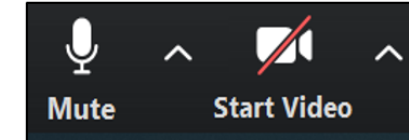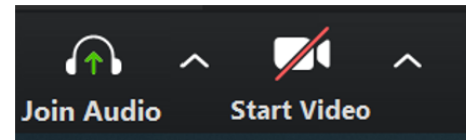
Bipartisan Safer Communities Act 2022 (BSCA) – Stronger Connections Grant Program Webinar
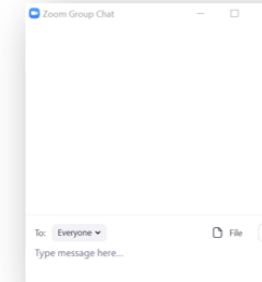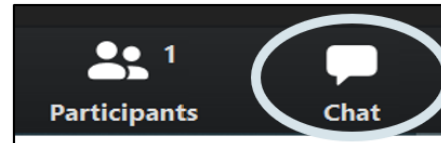
September 27, 2022

Housekeeping

Join Audio, Mute/Unmute, Connect Phone and Computer, Start/Stop Video

Access and Engage in Chat

Access Participants
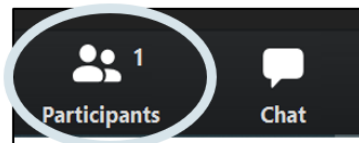
Rename Yourself – Example: Ashley Walther (T4PA Center) *(Hover over your name > click More > Rename.)*

Participants (5)

AW Ashley Walther (T4PA Cent... (Me)   Mute   More >   Rename
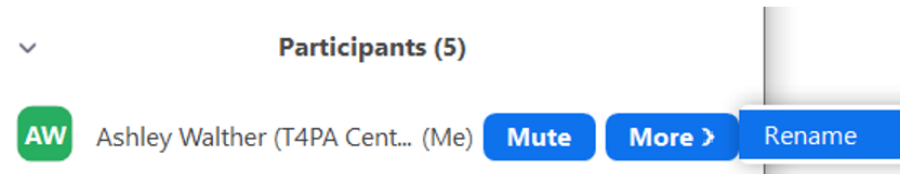
Questions

- Please type any questions you may have in the chat box.
- We are planning future webinars and will use your questions to determine future topics.

Agenda

- **Welcome**

- **Overview**

- **Release of Funding & Supporting Documents**

- **Review of Primary Focus Areas**

- **Closing & Next Steps**

Stronger Connections Grant Program

Overview:

- Authorized by the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) on June 25, 2022:
  - "Provided further, that $1,000,000,000 shall be for activities under section 4108 of the ESEA and, notwithstanding section 4105 of such Act, States shall make awards on a competitive basis to high-need local educational agencies as determined by the State."

- Department distributed funds to States on September 15, 2022 and State by drawing down funds agrees to a set of GAN assurances

- Secretary encourages:
  - Implementing comprehensive, evidence-based strategies
  - Engaging students, families, educators, staff, and community organizations
  - Designing and implementing policies and practices that advance equity

Stronger Connections Grant Program

September 15, 2022 – Release of Funding & Supporting Documents:

- Dear Colleague Letter
- Grant Award Allocations to States
- Grant Award Notification Assurances
- Grant Award Notification Assurances – Outlying Areas, HI and PR
- Optional Requested Information Template

Available at: https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/safe-supportive-schools/student-support-and-academic-enrichment-program/

Ruth Ryder

Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Policy and Programs – Formula Grants
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Dear Colleague Letter from the Secretary

States encouraged to prioritize funds to LEA applicants that demonstrate commitment to:

- Implementing evidence-based strategies that meet students' social, emotional, physical and mental well-being needs; create positive, inclusive, and supportive school environments; and increase access to place-based interventions and services.
- Engaging students, families, educators, staff and community organizations in the selection and implementation of strategies and interventions to create safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments.
- Designing and implementing policies and practices that advance equity and are responsive to underserved students, protect student rights, and demonstrate respect for student dignity and potential.

Dear Colleague Letter from the Secretary

State definition of "high-need LEA"

- As States consider establishing criteria for <u>high-need LEAs</u> consistent with Congressional intent, the Department encourages States to consider a focus on LEAs with high rates of poverty <u>and</u> with one or more of the following characteristics:
  (1) a high student-to-mental health professional ratio;
  (2) high rates of chronic absenteeism, exclusionary discipline, referrals to the juvenile justice system, bullying/harassment, community and school violence, or substance abuse; or
  (3) where students recently experienced a natural disaster or traumatic event.
- The Department encourages a measurement of poverty that considers LEAs with high numbers of students living in poverty, as well as LEAs with high percentages of students living in poverty (e.g., at least 40 percent).

Grant Award Notification Assurances

Assurances 1 – 4

1. The SEA will award no less than 95 percent of its allocation to make awards on a competitive basis to high-need LEAs, as determined by the State.
2. The SEA will reserve no more than 1% of its SCG grant allocation for administration and will use any remaining funds not awarded to LEAs for State-level activities to support section 4108 of the ESEA.
3. The SEA will ensure that LEAs use SCG funds for activities allowable under section 4108 of the ESEA.
4. The SEA will ensure that LEAs do not use funds for the provision to any person of a dangerous weapon1 or training in the use of a dangerous weapon as prohibited under Section 13401 of BSCA, which amends section 8526 of the ESEA.

Grant Award Notification Assurances

Assurances 5 – 7

5. The SEA will ensure that LEAs receiving SCG funds provide equitable services to students and teachers in non-public schools as required under section 8501 of the ESEA.

- The SEA will ensure that a public agency maintains control of funds for the services and assistance provided to a non-public school with SCG funds.
- The SEA will ensure that a public agency has title to materials, equipment, and property purchased with SCG funds.
- The SEA will ensure that 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.
- The SEA will ensure that equitable services provided with SCG funds are secular, neutral, and nonideological.

6. The SEA will ensure that LEAs receiving SCG funds follow the supplement not supplant requirements in section 4110 of the ESEA.

7. The SEA will track the SCG funds separately from its regular allocation under Title IV, Part A of the ESEA and will ensure that its LEAs will also do so.

Grant Award Notification Assurances

Assurance 8

8. The SEA will submit to the Department, no later than 90 days after the SEA receives its award, the following information:

- The SEA's definition of "high-need LEA" for purposes of the SCG program. The SEA has the authority to define "high-need LEA" and may define the term, for example, as an LEA with a high rate of poverty and with one or more of the following characteristics: high student-to-mental health professional ratio; high rates of chronic absenteeism, exclusionary discipline, referrals to the juvenile justice system, bullying/harassment, community and school violence, or substance abuse; or has experienced a natural disaster or traumatic event.
- Whether the SEA provided the public with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment and provide input on its definition of "high-need LEA" and a description of any such notice and opportunity.

Grant Award Notification Assurances

Assurance 8 (cont)

8. The SEA will submit to the Department, no later than 90 days after the SEA receives its award, the following information:

- Whether the SEA prioritized the use of SCG funds by LEAs in the SEA's competitive subgrant process and a description of any such priorities.
- Whether the SEA specifically prohibited one or more of the allowable uses of SCG funds by LEAs in the SEA's competitive subgrant process in addition to any statutory prohibitions and a description of any such prohibitions.
- Whether the SEA provided the public with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment and provide input on the design of its competitive subgrant process and a description of any such notice and opportunity
- Whether the SEA will require LEAs to describe in their application how they have engaged or plan to engage with families, educators, and the local community in determining how these funds will be used.

If the SEA is unable to respond in full to the information requested above by the reporting deadline, the SEA will provide, by that deadline, an update on its status related to these items.

Grant Award Notification Assurances

Assurances 9 – 10

9. The SEA will submit such other information to the Department as the Secretary may later require, such as:

- The identification of the LEAs awarded SCG funds.
- How the SEA and its LEAs are using SCG funds.
- Whether the SEA will evaluate the effectiveness of the SCG program, including the effectiveness of LEA use of SCG funds and, if so, how it will do so.

10. The SEA will ensure that any LEAs that receive SCG funds will participate, as requested, in any Department evaluation of the SCG program and will cooperate with any audit or examination of records with respect to such funds.

Optional Requested Information Template

1. **Definition of High-Need Local Educational Agency (LEA)**

   A. Provide the SEA's definition of "high-need LEA" for purposes of the SCG program. If the SEA has not finalized its definition of "high-need LEA," provide an update of its status in defining the term, including a projected date for completion of this task.

   B. Did the SEA provide, or does the SEA intend to provide, the public with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment and provide input on its definition of "high-need LEA"?

Optional Requested Information Template

2. SEA's Competitive Subgrant Process

A. Did the SEA prioritize the use of SCG funds by LEAs in the SEA's competitive subgrant process?

B. Did the SEA specifically prohibit one or more of the allowable uses of SCG funds by LEAs in the SEA's competitive subgrant process in addition to any statutory prohibitions?

C. Did the SEA provide the public with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment and provide input on the design of its competitive subgrant process?

D. Will the SEA require LEAs to describe in their applications how they have engaged or plan to engage with families, educators, and the local community in determining how these funds will be used?

Stronger Connections Grant Program – Reporting and Evaluation

Working internally on reporting requirements. At a minimum:

- The identification of the LEAs awarded SCG funds.
- How the SEA and its LEAs are using SCG funds.
- Whether the SEA will evaluate the effectiveness of the SCG program, including the effectiveness of LEA use of SCG funds and, if so, how it will do so.

Considerations: Coordinate with other reporting systems; Timing; Lessons learned from ARP reporting; Inform future evaluation.

Closing & Next Steps

- School Mental Health Community of Practice
  - Wednesday, October 12, 2022
- We are planning future webinars and will use your questions to determine future topics.