



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DATE: May 11, 2023
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Dr. Lisa Coons, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Stronger Connections Grant Award Opportunity**

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is pleased to announce the opportunity for school divisions to apply for a competitive grant award under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) – Stronger Connections Grant (SGC) Program.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) provides \$1 billion in funding to State educational agencies (SEAs) to be distributed under Title IV, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The BSCA specifies that SEAs must make competitive subgrants to high-need local educational agencies (LEAs), as determined by the SEA, for activities to support safe and healthy students under section 4108 of the ESEA. The BSCA requires an SEA to define “high-need LEA” for the purposes of eligibility for Stronger Connections funds.

Under the Stronger Connections grant program, Virginia’s school divisions will be evaluated and identified as a “high-need LEA” based on an evaluation rubric that considers: 1) Incidents of “Early Warning Indicators for School Violence”; 2) The school division’s chronic absenteeism rate; 3) The school division’s student-to-staff ratio of counselors, school psychologists, and social workers; and 4) The school division’s participation in the Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) Program (Title V, Party B of the ESEA) or the Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) Program. Attachment A includes the criteria used to determine high-need LEAs based on a point system for incidents of “Early Warning Indicators” from the Student Behavior and Administrative Response (SBAR) reports, division level percentage of chronic absenteeism,

student to staff ratio, and participation in either RLIS or SRSA grant programs. While any school division may apply for the school safety Stronger Connections grant, divisions that score 40 points or higher on the evaluation criteria will be identified as high need by the Department and eligible for a grant award.

Attachment A contains information on the grant award, the application, and an upcoming technical assistance webinar. Additional information can be found on the [Stronger Connections](#) webpage.

For questions regarding the Stronger Connections Grant, please contact Marsha Granderson, Title IV Coordinator, at (804) 786-1993 or Marsha.Granderson@doe.virginia.gov.

LC/MM

Attachment:

- A. [Stronger Connections Grant Award Package](#) (Word)