

FY25 Stronger Connections Grant

Grant Manual

Please consult this manual for information related to grants, including important dates, reporting requirements, and available assistance.

We encourage you to use this manual as a reference guide before seeking assistance, particularly when your grant consultant is not immediately available.

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Grant Information

Program Objectives

The Stronger Connections Grant aims to improve or establish safe, healthy, and supportive learning opportunities and environments for students and educators. The Stronger Connections Grant allows for a wide array of services and activities as allowed under ESEA Section 4108. This program, through the development or expansion of relationships involving LEAs, district/school leaders, educators, students, parents, families, and community members, will allow applicants to utilize data from an evidence-based needs assessment to develop an action plan that aligns with U.S. Department of Education recommendations. The following program objectives must be met:

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

Non-Allowable and Allowable Use of Funds

Please refer to the [FY25 Stronger Connections Grant RFP/NOFO](#) for a short list of non-allowables and allowables. Please refer to this [BSCA FAQ document](#) for additional information related to allowable and non-allowable activities and expenses pertaining to the Stronger Connections Grant.

Grant Timeline

The grant period will begin no sooner than July 1, 2024, and will extend from the execution date of the grant until June 30, 2025, with an opportunity to utilize remaining funds via a continuation application through the expiration on the grant on September 30, 2026. Funding in the subsequent years will be contingent upon compliance with federal and state law, state grantmaking rules, passage of sufficient appropriations for the program, and satisfactory performance in the preceding grant period. No promise or undertaking made in this NOFO/RFP is an assurance that a grant agreement will be renewed, nor does this NOFO/RFP create any right to or expectation of renewal.

Grant Period - Period of time between the annual project beginning date and the project ending date for each fiscal year of the grant cycle.

Start: July 1, 2024 → End: June 30, 2025 → Possible extension with amendment: September 30, 2026

Fiscal Year – The time period of July 1 through June 30 of the same calendar year (e.g., fiscal year 2022 refers to the time period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. Stronger Connections Grant is FY25.

Reporting Requirements

Grant Periodic Performance Report - Please note that your district administrator must grant you access to the Grant Periodic Reporting System before you will be able to login to upload your report. Scroll down to the

bottom of your system listing on your IWAS dashboard and click on the link that states "Want to sign up for other systems?" The Grant Periodic Reporting System is under reporting. After you request that system, you will be able to complete reports once your administrator has granted you access.

Signing up for IWAS Systems - Resources

- [Electronic Grants Management System \(eGMS\) Quick Help Guide](#)
- [IWAS User Guide](#)
- [State and Federal Grant Administration Policy, Fiscal Requirements and Procedures](#)

Required Reports

1. **Grant Periodic Performance Report** - Please note that your district administrator must grant you access to the Grant Periodic Reporting System before you will be able to login to upload your report. Scroll down to the bottom of your system listing on your IWAS dashboard and click on the link that states "Want to sign up for other systems?" The [Grant Periodic Reporting System](#) is under reporting. After you request that system, you will be able to complete reports once your administrator has granted you access.
 - a. **Final Program Report** – 30 days after program end; July 30
 - i. **Deliverable 1:** A progress report outlining the results of the components detailed in the LEA's logic model and evaluation of services and supports provided through this grant will be submitted to ISBE's point of contact within 30 days of the grant's completion.
 - Offering evidence-based social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health supports to students; creating positive, inclusive, and supportive school environments; and increasing access to school-based interventions and services during and/or beyond the school day.
 - 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 respond to underserved students, protect student rights, and demonstrate respect for student dignity and potential.
 - ii. **Deliverable 2:** Completion of annual reporting in IWAS.
2. **Quarterly Progress Reports - Microsoft Form**
 - a. **Deliverable 3:** Submission of quarterly metric reports and an update on progress toward sustainability. This information will be collected via a [Microsoft FORM](#) sent by the grant manager.
 - Quarter 1 – July through September; **Due October 20**
 - Quarter 2 – October through December; **Due January 20**
 - Quarter 3 – January through March; **Due April 20**
 - Quarter 4 – April through June; **Due July 20**
3. **Expenditure Reports** - Expenditure reports are always due 20 calendar days after the expenditure through date. You have the option of submitting monthly reports; however, there are typically only four month-end reports that are required. If a month end report is not required, it will disappear from EER on the 20th of the following month. The report MUST be submitted to ISBE by 11:59 p.m. on the 19th to ensure receipt by ISBE on the 20th. **You must continue to submit required reports until the grant period concludes, and the final expenditure report is submitted, even if you have fully expended your funding.** Required reports that are not received by that due date will result in the

project's funding being frozen until the required report is submitted. Additionally, funds are always frozen after the initial approval until we receive your first expenditure report.

a. **Quarterly Expenditure Reports (IWAS)**

- Quarter 1 – July through September; **Due October 20**
- Quarter 2 – October through December; **Due January 20**
- Quarter 3 – January through March; **Due April 20**
- Quarter 4 – April through June; **Due July 20**

b. **Final Expenditure Report**

- 30 days after program end; July 30

Funding, Disbursements and Expenditures

Resources

[Electronic Expenditure Reporting System User Guide](#)

[Funding and Disbursements Website](#)

[State and Federal Grant Administration Policy, Fiscal Requirements and Procedures](#)

[Grant Financial Information Website](#)

[FRIS Inquiry](#)

Assistance and Support

- Tina Mitchell – Funding and Disbursements
 - tmitchel@isbe.net
 - (217) 782-5256

Amendments

An amendment is an official request by a grantee to alter some portion of the grant, through a budget or programmatic amendment. Add a new amendment to your current grant application in the IWAS system. A budget amendment is an official request from the grantee to alter the executed grant agreement when one or more of the following criteria apply:

- a. The scope of the program is expected to change (e.g., adding a new component such as summer school)
- b. The grantee wishes to budget for more available funds (e.g., carryover, upward amendment)
- c. The expected expenditures exceed the variance allowed per program
- d. Adding a new expenditure item (i.e., function/object in accordance with 23 Ill. Adm. Code 100 (Requirements for Accounting, Budgeting, Financial Reporting, and Auditing))

Resources

- [FY25 Stronger Connections Grant RFP/NOFO](#)
- [ISBE's State and Federal Grant Administration Policy, Fiscal Requirements, and Procedures](#)
- [IWAS User Guide](#)
- [ISBE Stronger Connections Grant FAQ](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education FAQ](#)
- ISBE Call Center: 217/558-3600 or HELPDESK@ISBE.NET