



2024-25 School Safety & Security Grants

Funding Announcement Q&A Tracker

Updated on September 24, 2024 @ 8:00 AM

***New Questions & Responses Added in Red**

The School Safety and Security Grant program was created to ensure all schools in the Commonwealth of PA are safe environments where students can learn and thrive. This funding is available to support physical security enhancements designed to prevent or mitigate potential physical threats and behavioral health supports to prevent, mitigate or address student mental health needs. Schools should be mindful of these core goals when applying for funds.

School entities are encouraged to conduct both a Physical Assessment and a Behavioral Health Support Assessment to identify the needs and strengths of their school(s) prior to submitting for application. The Physical Assessment helps identify the vulnerabilities of a physical school building and/or the areas surrounding the school. A vulnerability is any aspect that should be considered for improvement that can be exploited by an aggressor. Likewise, the Behavioral Health Support Assessment is an exercise in reviewing the school entity's behavioral and mental health supports, to determine if there are any gaps in service provision that the school should address to reduce potential threats or student self-harm.

About this Document:

This guide will provide an overview of questions and answers regarding the [2024-25 School Safety & Security Grants](#) funding announcement and application process, which opened on August 8, 2024.

Responses will be provided as staff is able to process questions through September 26, 2024.

Questions?

Please contact PCCD at RA-CD-SSSC@pa.gov with '2024-25 School Safety & Security' in the subject line.

Table of Contents

1. Eligible Activities/Expenses	3
2. Application Process/General Questions	5
3. Eligible Applicants	9

1. Eligible Activities/Expenses

1.1. Do we have to meet all Level 1 standards of the Baseline Criteria in order to use these funds for items in Level 2 or Level 3 or any other eligible project activity?

Answer: Level 1 represents the most basic safety elements a school entity should have in place. If your school entity does NOT meet all Level 1 Baseline Criteria, you should utilize your grant funding on one or more of the available activities to meet the Level 1 standard OR explain to PCCD how other resources or means are being utilized to satisfy the criteria in the Baseline Criteria questions listed within Egrants. Additional information will be requested of any school entity that has gaps within the Level 1 criteria. Once Level 1 is met, school entities can expend funding on any other eligible related project activity.

1.2. Do school entities have to arrange for the assessment to be conducted by an individual recognized to perform such assessments on the PCCD School Safety and Security Assessor Registry? Or can a District committee perform a self-assessment of our Behavioral Health & School Climate and/or Physical Security needs?

Answer: School entities are not required to arrange for an assessment to be conducted by an individual on the [PCCD School Safety and Security Assessor Registry](#). A school entity may perform a self-assessment at any time using [School Safety and Security Assessment Criteria Toolkit](#). However, if a school entity is seeking funding to meet any recommendation made in their assessment outside of Level 1 Baseline Criteria and their school entity does not currently meet all Level 1 criteria, the assessment must be conducted by an individual on the PCCD School Safety and Security Assessor Registry.

1.3. Our district is in the process of creating and expanding our PBIS system. The district's School Psychologist is trained as a trainer and is responsible for assisting district staff in implementing the initiative. Can we put the salary/benefits of the school Psychologist into our School Safety & Security Grant?

Answer: Per statute, grant funding must not be used to supplant/replace state, federal or local funds that would otherwise be available to provide for program-related services. PCCD funding is to be used in addition to other funds that are made available for services.

1.4. I wanted to make sure that we will be able to use this funding for contracted behavioral health services. Please let me know.

Answer: Yes, the School Safety and Security grants can be used to support contracted behavioral health services.

1.5. With regard to social workers: I have followed all the links, including section 1306-B(J)(1-31). The words used are 'licensed' and 'qualified.' It is critical that we know exactly what PCCD is looking for as we do not have a social worker and we need this defined (regarding the credentials/requirements).

Answer: School entities might find the [webinar](#) on Baseline Criteria Standards for School Entities helpful in finding clarification in eligible activities as well as identifying needs of their schools. In recognition of broad workforce challenges, the reframed criteria provide greater flexibility for meeting Baseline Criteria (e.g., contracted services) while aligning with statutory requirements related to school safety and mental health. While we recognize that the language of Section 1306-B(j) references specific professions, several activities also allow for flexibility in service provision.

1.6. Do social workers need to be licensed?

Answer: Pursuant to the PA Public School Code, School Safety and Security Grants (including School Mental Health Grants) may be used for costs associated with training, compensation, hiring, and/or contracting with school social workers, licensed social workers, and licensed clinical social workers, among other eligible services/positions. There are minimum qualifications established for each of these positions by various state agencies responsible for oversight, certification, and/or licensure (e.g., the PA Department of Education's Certification and Staffing Policies and Guidelines #87 for [School Social Workers](#) or licensure requirements for [social workers](#) and [clinical social workers](#) established by the Pennsylvania Department of State). As noted in the response to question 1.7, the Behavioral Health Baseline Criteria were reframed in order provide greater flexibility for school entities to increase student and employee access to quality trauma support services and behavioral health care. If choosing to apply for a school social worker, please pay attention to licensing requirements for said position. If access to a licensed social worker is limited in your area, social work services by a qualified individual is acceptable.

1.7. Could you please explain the student services plan? Is it a separate plan with specific guidelines?

Answer: Under Pennsylvania state law (i.e., 24 P.S. §26-2603-B, 22 Pa. Code §12.41, 22 Pa. Code Chapter 4), every six years, each school entity must prepare a written plan for the implementation of a comprehensive and integrated K-12 program of student services based on the needs of its students. Additional information regarding these planning requirements is available on the PA Department of Education's [Comprehensive Planning webpage](#).

1.8. Can attendance incentives be included as a budget line item for this grant solicitation. For example, we would like to add gift cards and food as an item. Is that allowed?

Answer: If a school entity is applying to develop or implement a research-based program within their school that aims to address risk factors to reduce incidents of problem behaviors (see Eligible Project Activity #10 allowed under [24 P.S. §13- 1306-B\(j\)\(1-30\)](#)) and incentives are a component within the program, then yes, those types of incentives would be allowed.

1.9. Does the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS Survey) qualify for a Student Assistance and Behavioral Health Assessment aligned with standards and guidance adopted by the SSSC?

Answer: No. While the PAYS data may inform the assessment, the intention of the [Student Assistance and Behavioral Health Assessment](#) is to gather information and analysis on the school entity's climate, including the availability of Student Assistance Programs and behavioral health professionals to provide assistance to the school entity.

1.10. We are applying for the School Safety & Security Grant. I have a question about the assessments. Is this mandatory in order to receive the funds? Most districts that I spoke to were unaware of this assessment, as were we. Was that information disseminated through superintendents?

Answer: Adopted as part of Act 44 of 2018, [Section 1303-B of the PA Public School Code](#) directed the School Safety and Security Committee to develop [assessment criteria](#) for schools to use as a resource to conduct a Physical Security Assessment of their facilities as well as a Student Assistance and Behavioral Health Support Assessment of their mental health needs. Conducting the assessment is part of the [Level 1 Baseline Criteria](#) for school entities. Thus, it is required that a school entity complete the assessment during their project period phase if they have not previously done so. Please note that school entities may conduct their own assessment

to meet this criterion or select an individual from the [School Safety registry of assessors](#) to conduct their assessment.

1.11. Are walkie talkies an allowable expense?

Answer: Security and communications equipment, such as walkie talkies, are normally eligible under Activity (12) Security Planning and Purchase of Security-Related Technology.

1.12. Can IU's apply to create programs/trainings that would serve all districts within their service area? For example, can an IU apply to hire and provide social workers/LPC's to districts, and have staff trained as trainers in trauma informed schools and classrooms?

Answer: Applicants can apply for a project that serves multiple districts if funding is used to support activities listed under section 5, Eligible Program Activities and Expenses, under the funding announcement. It is incumbent upon the applicant to submit an application that they believe complies with the statute.

1.13. We would like to use most of our assigned grant funds (\$70,000) to implement a School Police Officer (SPO). We are a separate school entity and would like to have this security measure in place on our campus. Are we able to utilize our funds for this expenditure?

Answer: Yes, this funding can be used for physical security enhancements (i.e. School Police Officers), behavioral health improvements, or both (see activities under Section 1306-B(J)). Baseline Level 1 Criteria are applicable for this funding and your request for school security personnel falls under the section **School Security Personnel & Law Enforcement**: If school security personnel are present, they have been hired/contracted and trained according to requirements** in Pennsylvania state law. (Note: "School security personnel" are defined as school police officers, school resource officers, and school security guards. See PA Public School Code, Article XIII-C (School Security)).

1.14. Would this grant permit our District to purchase cell phone lock bags?

Answer: Act 55 of 2024 added a new mental health activity (activity #31) that allows school entities to apply for funding to support the purchase of cell phone lockable bags. A school entity that applies for funding for these bags must adopt a policy relating to prohibiting the use of cell phones during the school day. Please note that school entities will need to meet all other Level 1 behavioral health criteria prior to being eligible to select this activity for grant funding.

1.15. Does the policy for school entities related to cell phone bags need to be a standalone policy or can it be part of our already existing device policy?

Answer: School entities may adopt policies in whatever format they choose to meet this requirement. PCCD just needs to confirm that a policy or statement exists that the school entity prohibits the use of cell phones during the day.

1.16. We have had a security officer for the past 6 years and contract out with a security company to supplement. As I read this, are we now allowed to use PCCD Safety Grant money to pay for the service, or part of the service?

Answer: Yes, under 24 P.S. §13-1306-B(j)(18), costs associated with the training and compensation of school security personnel are an allowable expense. However, schools cannot use these funds to replace funding that is being used for a specific item or activity already in their budget (supplantation).

1.17. I read that the new requirement is for "school districts only." Can you confirm if this applies to charter schools or not?

Answer: That is correct, the new full-time school security personnel requirement applies to school districts only.

1.18. Is creating a secure entry vestibule into a main office would be able to be covered by the grant funding? I'm not sure if this is considered a construction item and construction or renovation items were not listed under either the eligible or ineligible lists.

Answer: Yes, this funding can be used for physical security enhancements (i.e., Secure Entry Vestibule), behavioral health improvements, or both (see activities under Section 1306-B(J)). Baseline Level 1 Criteria are applicable for this funding and your request for creating a secure entry vestibule falls under the section School Campus, Building, and Classroom Security. Depending on the project you are hoping to submit for, you will find criteria under the baseline that addresses items such as protective doors with viewing panes, door handles that cannot be barred, a single entry in and out of each school building during school hours, etc.

1.19. Regarding the language at the bottom of page 4 and the top of page 5 of the funding announcement specific to "expenditures made prior to the official award notice." Does this mean that if we are requesting funds to begin effective the start of the 24-25 school year (even though we're not officially awarded it until sometime after January), that we will be able to use to these funds to account for the services rendered from July 1, 2024 through the award date?

Answer: Yes, expenditures that have been included in the school entity budget at the time of receiving an official award notice would be eligible expenses. Grant expenditures must be incurred during the project period of the grant (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2026). PCCD will not be able to reimburse the school entity for expenses prior to that date.

1.20. We have two existing SRO's that we contract with our regional police force. Since they have been existing roles/items within our budget, the non-supplant rules would not allow us to use this grant to help fund the costs of these positions?

Answer: That is correct. If the funding for the School Resource Officers has been historically funded through the district budget, that would fall under supplantation which is unallowable.

1.21. How recent does the Physical Security Assessment need to be to meet Level 1 Baseline Criteria?

Answer: Act 44 of 2018 does not provide a requirement for how often, or recent, a school entity must complete an assessment for either the Physical Security or Behavioral Health & School Climate of said entity. Whether being conducted by a school entity, or an approved PCCD provider, the assessment simply needs to align with the criteria established by the School Safety and Security Committee. You can find more information on School Safety and Security Assessments on the PCCD [website](#).

If you are seeking to cite a Physical Security Assessment as justification to apply for funding for an item or activity outside of a Level 1 need, you will need for the assessment to have been conducted by an individual on the SSSC registry or PSP RVAT Unit.

1.22. Is there a separate grant available for \$50,000 specifically for a police officer, or should I plan to apply for that funding through the existing grant? The reason I ask is that we are planning to add a police officer at our elementary school with PCCD funding, but I want to ensure we don't miss out on any separate grant opportunities for a police officer if they are forthcoming.

Answer: School districts may use School Safety and Security Grant Program funding to pay for costs associated with the training and compensation of school security personnel. Please note that while Act 55 of 2024 did establish a School Security Personnel Restricted Account for the purpose of making reimbursements to school districts for the costs associated with school security (at an amount not to exceed \$50,000 per school district to support one school security personnel that has completed their requisite training), this fund is subject to the availability of funds – which have not yet been appropriated – and does not begin until July 1, 2025. More information about the reimbursement process will be provided in 2025 if allocations are made to that Account during FY25-26.

1.23. I have a question about the change that 2024-25 School Safety & Mental Health Grants expand eligible uses to fund new school safety personnel, which is a new requirement this year. Can school districts that have had school security personnel (contracted with a security company, used the state/local police, etc.) use these funds as well, even though they have already been meeting this requirement and those folks are already employed by the district? Or can only districts that have not met this requirement yet use the funds for this use? We have some school districts that already have personnel wondering if they can use their grant funding for this purpose.

Answer: The FY24-25 School Safety & Mental Health grant funding still has the provision in it that says funding cannot be supplanted – so if you have a school district that is already paying for their school security personnel with other sources of funding and that funding is still available for that use, they cannot swap it out with FY24-25 school safety grant funding. As you noted, the suggestion that school districts can use their FY24-25 funding to support hiring personnel is for those districts that currently don't meet the one full-time personnel requirement.

2. Application Process/General Questions

2.1. I just logged into my Egrants account, and I am unable to find the grant application for this grant. Can you help?

Answer: In order to apply and access the School Safety and Security Funds, applicants must FIRST register for [PCCD's Egrants system](#). Please note that PCCD's Egrants system is separate and distinct from the PA Department of Education's Egrants system. If you are already registered within the system, but do not have access to the school entity that you are associated with, please contact the PCCD Egrants helpdesk for assistance at (717) 787-5887 or (800) 692-7292 and select option 9 and then option 6, when prompted. You can also email the PCCD Egrants helpdesk at: RA-eGrantsSupport@pa.gov.

2.2. I know my school has received funding in the past, but due to administration changes, we are unsure who is registered and who has access. What should we do?

Answer: Please contact the PCCD Egrants helpdesk for assistance at (717) 787-5887 or (800) 692-7292. You can also email the PCCD Egrants helpdesk at: RA-eGrantsSupport@pa.gov. They will be able to provide you with information on who may be registered as a User Manager within your school that can assist you with obtaining the required roles.

2.3. How do I start an application?

Answer: Please see our [Grant Guides](#) for walkthroughs on each part of the application process.

2.4. Where do we confirm the allocation amount for our district? I do not see it in E-grants.

Answer: It is in Appendix A of the written funding announcement document. As this written solicitation contains additional instructions and information not found in the Egrants application, all applicants are strongly encouraged to read it first prior to submitting their application in Egrants.

2.5. With the tight timeline, will we be able to send a tentative plan (may not have all the details such as identified vendors or board approval) and then update/revise after the submission deadline?

Answer: School entities need to submit an application to us by the deadline and we are requesting that the application be as complete as the is possible. If your information is incomplete or needs revision, PCCD staff will be reaching back out to you to resolve those issues past the deadline. Please note that this may delay the approval of the award.

2.6. I am in the process of completing the application for our school district and I ran into a problem with the section "School Security Personnel Survey." When we answer "yes" to the question about our school district having at least one full-time school security personnel who have completed the required training, the system is giving me an error and telling me to answer question 2.1 even though I answered "yes" to question 2.0. What should I do?

Answer: Unfortunately, for applicants that began their application in Egrants prior to August 21, there is an error in the logic of questions 2.0 and 2.1 under the section "School Security Personnel Survey." For those applicants, if you are receiving an error after you answer "yes" to question 2.0, you will need to answer "no" for question 2.1 (relating to seeking a waiver).

For school districts that begin their application after August 21, the skip logic has been removed and you should not see this error. Please fill out this section as directed.

2.7 The Main Summary page is not populating Authorized Signatories for our school entity even though we have been through the PCCD grant application process a few times before.

Answer: With the recent upgrade to Egrants, applications must be electronically signed within Egrants. . To electronically sign the application, at least one person from your organization must have the E-signature role in Egrants. Please use the link below to access instructions which explain how to request the E-signature role.

[E-signature Access Request Instructions](#)

[E-signature Access Request Form](#) (This must be attached to your access request in Egrants)

Should you need any assistance in this process, we recommend contacting the Egrants Helpdesk at (717) 787-5887 or (800) 692-7292, or by emailing RA-eGrantsSupport@pa.gov.

2.8 Would a COSTARs purchase satisfy the procurement requirements since this is funded by the state?

Answer: Utilizing a cooperative purchasing mechanism such as COSTARs, in and of itself, does not satisfy competitive procurement requirements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to retrieve the minimum number of quotes or solicited bids required. Failure to follow procurement guidelines may result in the disallowance of costs.

3. Eligible Applicants

3.1. Who is eligible to apply under the 2024-25 School Safety and Security Grants?

Answer: [Per Section 1314.1-B of the PA Public School Code](#), only school districts, area career and technical centers (CTCs), intermediate units (IUs), and charter schools, including regional charter schools and cyber charter schools) are eligible to apply under the **2024-25 School Safety and Security Grants**.

3.2. My school entity is not listed in Appendix A of the Funding Announcement. Are we eligible for this fund?

Answer: Appendix A of the Funding Announcement is inclusive of all eligible applicants. If your school entity is not listed in Appendix A, it is not eligible for this fund. You may want to refer to the Targeted School Safety Grant Program for Nonpublic Schools as an alternative.

3.3. Our school is currently working on expending the previous School Safety Grant. Are we permitted to apply for the new grant that just out as well?

Answer: Yes. School districts, area career and technical centers (CTCs), intermediate units (IUs), and charter schools, including regional charter schools and cyber charter schools are eligible to apply under the **2024-25 School Safety and Security Grants**.

3.4. Can funds be used on Early Intervention locations or only K-12?

Answer: The focus of the School Safety and Security Grant Fund Program is for facilities primarily serving K-12 students. We recognize, though, that some school entities may serve a range of students from pre-K through 12th grade. If a school entity/facility/program serves children in earlier grades (such as Pre-K programs) in addition to K-12 students, funds may be used to support physical security and mental health/behavioral health expenses. However, entities/programs/facilities that exclusively provide early childhood education programs would not be eligible under this funding announcement.