

# NWEA School Improvement services align with Stronger Connections Grant program funding

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). This \$1B in federal funding for the Stronger Connections Grant program is to be awarded by the SEAs through competitive grant opportunities to high-need local education agencies (LEAs).

States are responsible for establishing criteria for which LEAs would be classified as high-needs, but the U.S. Department of Education includes in its recommendations that funds should be prioritized based on commitments to actions in key areas.

Below is a list of areas your state is likely to prioritize in its application review, along with alignment to sample language you can adapt as needed to your specific context in your grant application if you are interested in using funds to purchase NWEA School Improvement services:

<b>POSSIBLE FUNDING PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA - APPLICANTS WHO ARE</b>	<b>SUGGESTED LANGUAGE FOR NWEA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SERVICES ALIGNMENT</b>
<p>Implementing evidence-based strategies that meet students’ social, emotional, physical, and mental well-being needs; creating positive, inclusive, and supportive school environments.</p>	<p>To create a more positive, inclusive, and supportive environment in each of our district’s schools, we want to use UChicago Impact’s® 5Essentials® Survey and associated professional learning. The 5Essentials Survey is an evidence-based diagnostic assessment of a school’s organizational conditions, culture, and climate that helps schools organize, prioritize, and evaluate what education research shows matters most in improving outcomes for kids, including their sense of safety, belonging, and well-being. The 5Essentials Survey would be administered annually to students and teachers in our district, along with a family component. Resulting data illuminate key insights about each school’s organizational strengths as well as areas ripe for opportunity across the 5Essentials: effective leaders, collaborative teachers, involved families, supportive environment, and ambitious instruction. Within the survey, the “supportive environment” essential aligns directly to the priorities of this grant, including if students feel safe both in and around the school building and while they travel to and from home (“safety” core measure). Additionally, the survey places a premium on trust—between teachers and students, teachers and teachers, teachers and the principal, and parents and teachers. Trust is an essential component of creating a safe, healthy school environment.</p> <p>After taking the survey, each school receives individualized web-based reports that offer a comprehensive view of their school environment—providing a clear line of sight to our educational environment. The 5Essentials reporting site enables educators to identify how well-organized each school is for improvement and each school’s measures of a supportive environment.</p>

**POSSIBLE FUNDING PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA – APPLICANTS WHO ARE**

**SUGGESTED LANGUAGE FOR NWEA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SERVICES ALIGNMENT**

Implementing evidence-based strategies that meet students’ social, emotional, physical, and mental well-being needs; creating positive, inclusive, and supportive school environments. (continued)

The 5Essentials Survey meets Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) criteria as a Tier 2 evidence-based practice, which is important to our district since we want to use the most rigorous, research-based approach possible to provide for our students. The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research data shows that schools strong in three or more of the 5Essentials were 10 times more likely to improve student outcomes than schools weak in three or more of the 5Essentials.

Of great importance to building a more supportive environment in our schools is that our district and school leaders receive professional learning designed to help us leverage 5Essentials Survey insights to create improvement plans that strengthen the organizational conditions linked to long-term school and student success. We will engage in the following 5Essentials professional learning programs using funds from this grant: Understanding the 5Essentials, Building Adult Trust, Fostering Supportive Environments, Data and Root Cause Analysis, and Improvement Planning. Application of this 5Essentials data to spur action and change is why our district believes the 5Essentials Survey and associated professional learning are critical to creating a school environment that will help keep our kids safe and supported. (continued)

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.

Our district believes that engagement of all stakeholders in the decision-making process improves outcomes and builds trust. We reached out to principals, teachers, and our parent organization to identify what they found important and to gain their perspective on using the 5Essentials Survey and professional learning as a district. Additionally, the 5Essentials Survey would provide us with reliable, statistically valid data from students, families, educators, and staff. We can use the data this year—and in years to come—to identify changes in viewpoint among teachers, students, and families and to continually understand their needs to create a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment.

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.

The 5Essentials is a foundational step on an equity journey. Schools need strong conditions and learning environments in place for all staff and students, at a minimum, to do deeper equity work. This happens by looking at the ways in which students perceive their environments and experiences in the school and, by using the disaggregated data, looking for variance in students’ reports of their experiences. Analyzing the subgroup data will help our schools understand whether students across different populations are experiencing school similarly. If they are not, we will examine equity issues and identify the root causes.

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<p>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. (continued)</p>	<p>Additionally, the 5Essentials Survey elevates student voice and sets the stage for meaningful improvement work, which, at its core, is about addressing variance and creating strong outcomes for all students. Equity necessitates that we listen to all students, understand their unique perspectives and experiences (as measured by the 5Essentials Survey and viewed through the lens of disaggregated results for student measures), and seek to support students in manners that are responsive to their needs and experiences. (continued)</p>
<p>Processing to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed plan.</p>	<p>The effectiveness of this plan will be evaluated by identifying the year-over-year growth in 5Essentials measures, which will be a result of actions the school and district have taken to improve learning environments. Additionally, school leaders participating in the professional learning will report on the effectiveness of the professional learning through a survey at the end of each session.</p>

Complete the form to learn more about NWEA School Improvement services and the 5Essentials Survey.  
 Visit [NWEA.org/contact-us/sales-information](https://nwea.org/contact-us/sales-information)



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