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SAFETY & SECURITY  
ON DOORS

# NCSSD GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

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## FOCUS: SCHOOL SAFETY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (SSE / 84.184A)

A NEW FEDERAL OPPORTUNITY FOR STATES

DEADLINE: JULY 28, 2026



STRENGTHEN SCHOOL SAFETY  
SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE



SUPPORT EMERGENCY PLANNING,  
COORDINATION, AND TRAINING



LEVERAGE FEDERAL RESOURCES  
FOR LASTING IMPACT



The NCSSD Government Relations Committee connects education, safety, and security leaders to advance national school safety priorities.



**NOT AN OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENT**

Prepared by NCSSD for stakeholder use and reference.



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# 1. Executive Summary for NCSSD Stakeholders

**Why this matters:** The School Safety Enhancement Program is a new state-level opportunity that can support statewide school safety systems and physical security. The phrase that should drive NCSSD coordination is: **only one application per state**. That means local districts, school safety directors, public safety partners, and practitioners need to coordinate with the SEA quickly rather than treating this as a separate local application.

- **Direct applicant:** State Educational Agency (SEA).
- **Local role:** LEAs/districts should prepare needs data and coordinate with the SEA; they may be subgrantees if the SEA builds that into its plan.
- **Strategic risk:** If local practitioners do not engage early, the state application may miss operational realities, local infrastructure gaps, or responder coordination needs.
- **Best framing:** Assessment-driven, governance-led, layered, code-compliant, and sustainable school safety improvements.
- **Avoid:** Product-first messaging, eligibility overstatements, procurement shortcuts, or implying that every district can apply directly.

Official ED program page: [ED SSE Program Page](#)

Official application package: [SSE Application Notice and Instructions PDF](#)

# 2. What the SSE Grant Is

**Program description.** The SSE program provides competitive grants to State Educational Agencies to develop, implement, and strengthen statewide school safety systems and the physical security of schools. It is connected to infrastructure security, emergency response planning and coordination, training, preparedness exercises, and evidence-informed school safety measures.

<b>Program name</b>	School Safety Enhancement Program (SSE)
<b>Assistance listing</b>	84.184A
<b>Opportunity number</b>	ED-GRANT-26-056
<b>Applications available</b>	May 27, 2026
<b>Application deadline</b>	July 28, 2026 at 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time
<b>Intergovernmental review deadline</b>	September 25, 2026
<b>Estimated funding</b>	\$93,000,000 total; estimated award range \$500,000 to \$5,000,000; estimated 30 awards
<b>Project period</b>	Up to 36 months

**Note:** This is the first year this grant has been competed, so there are no previous SSE awards to benchmark against. States should rely on the official ED page, application notice, and Grants.gov/Simpler listing.

# 3. Who Can Apply and Who Cannot Apply Directly

**Direct eligibility is narrow.** The eligible applicant is the State Educational Agency, as defined in federal law. Only one application per state is permitted. This makes the opportunity highly strategic and time-sensitive.

Entity	Can apply directly?	Practical role
<b>State Educational Agency / State Department of Education</b>	Yes	Submit the one state application; decide direct administration, subgrant process, or hybrid model.
<b>LEA / school district</b>	No, not directly	Coordinate with the SEA; submit needs data, assessment findings, project priorities, and letters of support; may receive subgrant if selected.
<b>Private or faith-based school</b>	Not directly	Ask the SEA/nonpublic school office whether needs can be represented through an authorized state process; do not assume eligibility.
<b>Law enforcement / fire / EMS / emergency management</b>	No	Support emergency planning, training, exercises, and coordination; provide letters or needs data through SEA/LEA channels.
<b>Vendor, integrator, consultant, nonprofit, association</b>	No	Neutral education/support only; avoid implied pre-selection, procurement shortcuts, or product-first messaging.

**Subgrant nuance**

An SEA grantee may award subgrants to LEAs if the state application identifies that approach. The SEA may also administer the program directly and is not required to subgrant. LEAs are not authorized to make subgrants under this program.

## 4. What the Grant Funds

**Federal priority language.** To meet Absolute Priority 2, the SEA must describe how funds will support one or more of the following school safety systems or physical security categories.

Federal category	Plain-English meaning	NCSSD/ULSS lens
<b>Interior door locks and secure entry systems</b>	Installing or upgrading interior locking and controlled-entry functions.	Door function, classroom/interior layer, egress, access control, key control, training, and proof-of-life testing.
<b>Deterrent measures</b>	Examples include security cameras, metal detectors, and other deterrence measures where justified.	Not stand-alone; connect to policy, monitoring, response workflow, staffing, privacy, and sustainment.
<b>Perimeter controls</b>	Exterior access management and campus perimeter control improvements.	Campus exterior perimeter layer; site circulation, gates, exterior awareness, traffic/vehicle interface, and responder access.
<b>Visitor screening infrastructure</b>	Visitor management, screening workflows, controlled entry, and infrastructure that supports visitor accountability.	Building perimeter layer; front office procedures, ID verification, entry release authority, records, and reunification implications.
<b>Emergency communication systems</b>	Acquiring or upgrading systems that support emergency alerts, communications, and coordination.	District-wide and digital infrastructure layers; mass notification, radio/PA, mobile alerts, accessibility, outdoor coverage, and redundancy.

Federal category	Plain-English meaning	NCSSD/ULSS lens
<b>Emergency response and coordination plans</b>	Developing or updating EOPs and coordination plans with public safety and other partners.	Governance, ICS, SRP/SRM alignment, reunification, MOUs, hazard annexes, and after-action improvement cycles.
<b>Training and preparedness exercises</b>	Training and exercises for SROs and school personnel in active threat response.	Age-appropriate, trauma-informed, options-based protective action, staff roles, first responder coordination, and exercise evaluation.

### Recommended project logic

Assessment -> prioritized gap -> allowable SSE category -> code/procurement review -> implementation -> training -> exercise/verification -> sustainment.

## 5. Requirements, Restrictions, and Watch-Outs

Requirement / restriction	Stakeholder meaning
<b>One application per state</b>	The state needs one coordinated strategy. Local districts should quickly identify the SEA lead and input process.
<b>No cost share or match required</b>	States are not required to bring matching funds, though sustainment still matters.
<b>Administrative cost cap</b>	Administrative costs may not exceed 10% of the annual grant award.
<b>Supplement, not supplant</b>	Funds should add to available non-federal resources, not replace funds that would otherwise support the same activities.
<b>Code and life-safety compliance</b>	All equipment and technology implementation must comply with applicable codes, including building and life-safety codes.
<b>No construction/renovation/repair</b>	The program may not be used for construction, renovation, or repair of any school facility; projects must be scoped carefully.
<b>Required alignment to federal reports</b>	Applications must describe alignment with Chapters 13, 16, and 19 of the 2018 Federal Commission report and relevant recommendations from the DOJ Robb Elementary critical incident review.

**Code-compliance reminder.** For physical security projects, particularly door locks, access control, entry systems, and perimeter controls, stakeholders should keep egress, accessibility, fire/life safety, first responder access, maintenance, and operational procedures at the center of the conversation.

## 6. Step-by-Step Application Playbook for State Educational Agencies

**Purpose.** This section converts the official application process into a practical state workplan. NCSSD stakeholders can use this as a discussion guide when talking with SEA partners or state school safety leaders.

- 1. Identify the SEA lead.** Confirm which state office owns the single application: SEA grants office, school safety office, state school safety center, or another designated lead.
- 2. Create the state workgroup.** Include SEA grants, school safety, finance, procurement/legal, facilities, emergency management, public safety, LEA practitioners, rural/high-need representation, data/evaluation, and communications.

3. **Confirm SAM.gov and Grants.gov readiness.** Verify active SAM.gov registration, UEI, Grants.gov registration, Authorized Organization Representative access, and internal submission authority.
4. **Download the official application package.** Use the ED SSE page, the Grants.gov/Simpler listing, and the official Application Notice and Instructions PDF as the source of truth.
5. **Decide the delivery model.** Choose state-administered, competitive LEA subgrants, named/noncompetitive LEA subgrants, or a hybrid model.
6. **Define the high-need LEA prioritization method.** Describe how the state will identify and prioritize LEAs with the greatest need. Use risk/readiness assessments, EOP gaps, physical security gaps, rural access, local capacity, public safety coordination needs, and equity considerations.
7. **Select allowable project categories.** Map each activity to the listed SSE funding categories: interior door locks/secure entry, deterrent measures, perimeter controls, visitor screening, emergency communications, response/coordination plans, and training/exercises.
8. **Build the project design.** Create measurable goals, objectives, outcomes, capacity-building logic, and sustainment plan.
9. **Build the management plan.** Assign responsible parties, timelines, milestones, procurement steps, data collection tasks, subgrant oversight, training/exercise schedule, and reporting responsibilities.
10. **Build the budget and budget narrative.** Complete SF-424A and provide an itemized budget by year and category: personnel, fringe, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, other, and indirect costs. Match totals across forms.
11. **Build the evaluation/performance measurement plan.** Show how the state will collect reliable, valid, meaningful data for the seven ED performance measures.
12. **Assemble required forms and attachments.** Include SF-424, ED Supplemental, SF-424A, abstract, project narrative, budget narrative, resumes, project objectives/performance measures, letters, supplementary information, appendices, and lobbying forms.
13. **Submit through Grants.gov Workspace.** Use Workspace, upload final flattened PDFs, confirm file names are unique and short, and submit early.
14. **Verify validation.** Do not rely only on email. Track the application in Grants.gov and confirm a successful status such as Validated, Received by Agency, or Agency Tracking Number Assigned before the deadline.
15. **Complete intergovernmental review.** Follow state-specific Executive Order 12372 / State Single Point of Contact procedures where applicable, with the listed intergovernmental review deadline of September 25, 2026.

## Potential SEA Delivery Models

Model	How it works	Strength	Risk / watch-out
<b>State-administered</b>	SEA coordinates statewide services, purchases, training, or technical assistance.	Consistency and speed.	Local needs may be underrepresented if practitioners are not engaged.
<b>Competitive LEA subgrants</b>	SEA runs a state competition after award.	Structured, transparent, locally responsive.	Takes time and administrative capacity.
<b>Named LEA subgrants</b>	SEA identifies specific LEAs in the application.	Targeted and fast.	Selection must be justified and defensible.
<b>Hybrid</b>	Statewide supports plus targeted LEA subgrants.	Often strongest for system-building.	More complex to manage and evaluate.

## 7. What LEAs/Districts Should Do Now

**District action is urgent even though districts do not apply directly.** The district's job is to give the SEA actionable, defensible, evidence-based needs that can be included in the state application or later state subgrant process.

### Local Needs Packet

Packet item	What to include
<b>District profile</b>	Number of schools, student population, grade spans, rural/urban/suburban context, special facility conditions, shared-use sites, nontraditional campuses.
<b>Risk/readiness summary</b>	Recent assessment findings, EOP review findings, after-action reports, drill findings, door/security hardware issues, communications gaps, responder coordination gaps.
<b>Prioritized project list</b>	Project title, school(s) affected, allowable SSE category, problem statement, estimated cost, implementation window, code considerations, sustainment owner.
<b>Evidence</b>	Assessment excerpts, photos if appropriate, door function inspections, communications tests, visitor management gaps, training records, public safety coordination notes.
<b>Letters of support</b>	Superintendent, board leadership if appropriate, police/sheriff, fire/EMS, emergency management, regional service agency, community partners.
<b>Sustainment plan</b>	Maintenance responsibility, refresher training, system testing, annual EOP update, exercise schedule, replacement planning.
<b>Questions for the SEA</b>	Is the state applying? What is the LEA input process? Will there be subgrants? What is the timeline for local data?

### District message to the state

We understand the SEA must apply. We want to make sure local school safety needs are represented through a clear state process. Please tell us whether the state intends to apply, who is leading, whether LEA subgrants are planned, and what needs data or letters are due.

## 8. What NCSSD Stakeholders Can Do

- **Share accurate eligibility information.** Make clear that the SEA is the direct applicant and only one application per state is allowed.
- **Identify the state lead.** Help practitioners determine whether their SEA, school safety center, or grants office is preparing an application.
- **Encourage practitioner input.** School security directors can help states identify real operational gaps, not just procurement categories.
- **Promote assessment-driven packaging.** Push states and LEAs to link requests to risk/readiness assessments, EOP gaps, code review, training, and sustainment.
- **Watch for high-risk messaging.** Avoid framing the grant as a hardware-only opportunity or implying a vendor/product endorsement.
- **Track state responses.** Use a simple 50-state tracking sheet to note state application intent, lead agency, LEA input process, subgrant model, due dates, and stakeholder contacts.

- **Elevate policy concerns.** Flag unfunded mandates, unsafe barricade/egress conflicts, code concerns, and procurement issues early.
- **Support rural and high-need communities.** The competitive preference priority includes rural applicants, and many rural LEAs need help packaging needs data quickly.

## What NCSSD Stakeholders Should Avoid

- Do not tell districts they can apply directly unless ED or the SEA creates a confirmed pathway; the official applicant is the SEA.
- Do not imply NCSSD endorsement of a specific product, vendor, or procurement path.
- Do not treat this as a door-only, camera-only, or technology-only opportunity.
- Do not encourage purchases or specifications before state procurement and code requirements are understood.
- Do not overlook planning, training, exercises, communications, and responder coordination; those are central to the grant design.

## 9. State-Level Questions and Tracking Fields

### Questions to Ask Each State Educational Agency

- Is the state applying for the School Safety Enhancement Program by July 28, 2026?
- Who is the designated SEA lead or grant office contact?
- Is there a state school safety center or public safety partner involved?
- Will the state use direct administration, competitive LEA subgrants, named LEA subgrants, or a hybrid model?
- How will the state identify and prioritize high-need LEAs?
- What data, assessment findings, project summaries, or letters should LEAs submit?
- What is the deadline for LEA input?
- Will nonpublic/private/faith-based school needs be considered through any official state process?
- How will rural LEAs be represented?
- How will code/life-safety compliance be reviewed for locks, entries, access control, and other physical security improvements?
- How will emergency management, law enforcement, fire/EMS, and school security directors be included in planning and exercises?
- How will the state measure, verify, and sustain funded improvements after the grant period?

### Suggested 50-State Tracking Fields

Tracking field	Use
State	State name
SEA lead	Name/office/email if known
Application intent	Yes / No / Unknown / Monitoring
Local input process	Public survey, invitation, regional contacts, state safety center, or unknown
Subgrant model	State-administered / competitive LEA / named LEA / hybrid / unknown

Tracking field	Use
LEA data due date	State-specific deadline before July 28
High-need criteria	Assessment findings, rurality, local capacity, infrastructure gaps, EOP gaps, etc.
Nonpublic consideration	Confirmed / not confirmed / not applicable / needs clarification
Rural priority status	Rural communities included? NCES locale codes addressed?
Public safety coordination	Law enforcement, fire/EMS, emergency management participation
Code/procurement review	Process known / unknown / needed
NCSSD follow-up	Who will contact, by when, and what information is needed

## 10. Copy-Ready Outreach Language

**Use/adapt this language for NCSSD stakeholder emails, state outreach, or internal coordination.** Before sending, verify state-specific contacts and any NCSSD approval requirements.

### Short Stakeholder Alert

#### Copy-ready alert

A new federal School Safety Enhancement Program (SSE) opportunity has been posted for FY 2026. This is a state-level grant: eligible applicants are State Educational Agencies, and only one application per state is permitted. Local districts should contact their SEA immediately to confirm whether the state will apply, how LEA needs can be submitted, whether subgrants are planned, and what evidence or letters are needed before the July 28, 2026 deadline.

### Email Template to SEA / State School Safety Contact

#### Subject: School Safety Enhancement Program (SSE) - State application and LEA input process

Dear [Name/Office],

I am reaching out regarding the FY 2026 School Safety Enhancement Program (SSE), Assistance Listing 84.184A. The official guidance indicates that eligible applicants are State Educational Agencies and that only one application per state is permitted.

Can you confirm whether [State] intends to apply by the July 28, 2026 deadline? If so, who is leading the application, and what process should LEAs and school safety practitioners use to submit needs, assessment findings, project priorities, letters of support, or public safety coordination information?

We are especially interested in ensuring the state application reflects practical school safety needs, including emergency operations planning, responder coordination, training and preparedness exercises, emergency communications, secure entry/visitor screening, perimeter considerations, and code-compliant door/security hardware improvements.

Thank you for any guidance on the state process, deadlines for local input, and whether the state plans to administer the project directly, run LEA subgrants, name specific LEAs, or use a hybrid model.

Respectfully,

[Name]

## 11. Official Links and Source List

**Use these official sources as the source of truth.** Because grant requirements can change, stakeholders should verify details directly before advising schools or submitting information.

Source	Use it for	Link
<a href="#">ED SSE Program Page</a>	Program overview, funding estimate, deadline, eligibility, pre-application resources.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>
<a href="#">Simpler.Grants.gov SSE Listing</a>	Opportunity summary, award range, expected awards, closing date, opportunity number.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>
<a href="#">SSE Application Notice and Instructions PDF</a>	Official application rules, priorities, forms, scoring criteria, budget instructions, restrictions, performance measures.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>
<a href="#">SchoolSafety.gov Grants Finder Tool</a>	School safety grant discovery and ongoing federal funding updates.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>
<a href="#">Grants.gov Applicant Registration</a>	Federal applicant registration information.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>
<a href="#">Grants.gov Workspace Overview</a>	How applicants complete and submit applications using Workspace.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>
<a href="#">Grants.gov Applicant Training</a>	Videos and training resources for applicants.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>
<a href="#">SAM.gov Entity Registration</a>	Entity registration and Unique Entity ID information.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>
<a href="#">SAM.gov Entity Registration Checklist</a>	Data checklist for preparing SAM.gov registration.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>
<a href="#">ED Common Instructions (Federal Register, 2025)</a>	General ED discretionary grant application instructions.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>
<a href="#">Federal Commission on School Safety Final Report</a>	Required alignment reference: chapters 13, 16, and 19.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>
<a href="#">DOJ Critical Incident Review - Robb Elementary</a>	Required alignment reference for recommendations addressed by proposed activities.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>
<a href="#">DOJ Release on Robb Elementary Critical Incident Review</a>	Official DOJ announcement and context for the critical incident review.	<a href="#">Open official source</a>

## Closing Practitioner Note

**The key NCSSD value is practitioner realism.** This opportunity can support meaningful improvements if states hear from the people who understand daily school operations, public safety coordination, door/security hardware realities, emergency communications, training fatigue, sustainment challenges, and the difference between a product purchase and a functioning school safety system. The recommended message is simple: use the grant to build capacity, not just buy components.