

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

Fiscal Year 2026 Safe Schools Fund Grant (SSFG)

Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) Application Guidance Document

Online Submission Deadline: September 30, 2025

Funded through: State of Maryland

Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS)
Care of: Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
schoolsafety.maryland.gov

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Dr. Carey M. Wright, State Superintendent of Schools
Kate Bryan, Executive Director, MCSS

NOTE: MCSS will begin accepting applications for the FY2026 Safe Schools Fund Grant starting June 16, 2025.

schoolsafety.maryland.gov

Eligibility: The Safe Schools Fund Grant is open to all twenty-four (24) local school systems within the State of Maryland.

Important Notes: The FY2026 SSFG administered by MCSS is funded with State issued Special Funds. Applicants must provide a copy of their **IRS Form W-9** to MCSS with their application.

Introduction & Scope: To enhance the use of the Safe Schools Fund, MCSS is encouraging local education agencies to consider partnerships with other local education agencies for training and exercise projects. MCSS supports partnerships between local education agencies that together determine the greatest need, and therefore, the best utilization of grant funds for their application.

Application Process: Applicants are required to apply for grant funding through the [MCSS website](https://schoolsafety.maryland.gov). To avoid incomplete applications, please read through and adhere to all the Application Requirements outlined in this NOFA.

To qualify, the online application must be submitted no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on **Tuesday, September 30, 2025.**

For further assistance, please contact the MCSS Grants Unit at:
mcss.mcass@maryland.gov

Table of Contents

GRANT OVERVIEW	3
SAFE SCHOOLS FUND GRANT – FY2026	3
PURPOSE OF THE GRANT	3
FUNDING AVAILABILITY	6
IMPORTANT DATES	6
ALLOCATION	7
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS	7
ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE EXPENSES	7
A. Allowable Expenses	7
B. Unallowable Expenses	8
GRANT MONITORING	8
INDIRECT AND FIXED COSTS	9
A. Indirect Costs	9
B. Fixed Costs	9
GRANT REVIEW	9
REPORTING AND REIMBURSEMENT REQUIREMENTS	9
A. Reporting Requirements	9
Safe to Learn Act Reporting Mandates	10
Bi-annual Progress Reports	10
Final Project Report	10
B. Reimbursement Requirements	10
RECORD RETENTION	11
GENERAL AND SPECIAL CONDITIONS	11

GRANT OVERVIEW

The Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018 (Senate Bill 1265, Chapter 30) became law on June 1, 2018. It established the Safe Schools Fund, and ushered in a new approach to school safety and security for Maryland's public schools. The purpose of the Fund is to provide grants to local school systems to enhance school safety. MCSS administers the Fund on behalf of the School Safety Subcabinet, which awards the grants from the Fund. The Safe to Learn Act also established the School Safety Subcabinet Advisory Board, which advises and assists the Subcabinet and agency with fulfilling the statutory duties.

The Safe Schools Fund Grant (SSFG) is one of three grants being offered by MCSS under the Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018.

SAFE SCHOOLS FUND GRANT – FY2026

The Governor has appropriated \$600,000 in FY2026 to the Safe Schools Fund for issuance to local school systems in the areas enumerated at [Md. Code Ann., Education Art. §7-1512](#). The Subcabinet shall review and approve all applications for the Safe Schools Fund Grant prior to issuance. The Subcabinet and MCSS reserve the right to request additional information from applicants related to project descriptions, use of the funds, and budget submissions. MCSS encourages applicants to include relevant support documentations such as quotes, statements of work, etc. when available; in order to enhance the review process and avoid any delays.

PURPOSE OF THE GRANT

The purpose of this Safe Schools Fund Grant is to provide funding for school safety and security related matters as described under [Md. Code Ann., Educ. Art. §7-1512](#). The grant funds are to be applied toward the cost of school safety-related projects and services as outlined below:

- 1. Conducting training for students and school personnel on de-escalation of situations and identifying and reporting behaviors of concern.**

Grant funds may be used to train students and staff on the proper use of de-escalation strategies/measures in properly addressing and managing student behavior, the conflict cycle and preventative measures, the development of meaningful relationships, how to recognize signs of escalation, and de-escalation tips to improve the climate and culture of the school and school community. Training could also include knowledge of trauma informed care and use of trauma informed strategies to de-escalate classroom and school conflict.

This training may be provided by consultants and/or subject matter experts in various formats to include, but not limited to: in-person training, webinars, seminars, discussion- and operational-based exercises, or use of technology-based training.

Training related to behaviors of concern may include the topics of self-harm, harm to others, expression of hopelessness, drug use, suicidal gestures, and known gang activity.

2. Conducting training of assessment teams.

Grant funds may be used to train administrators, school staff, support staff, and school resource officers to identify, properly respond to, and report threats or behaviors of concern that may pose a threat to the safety of an individual attending or working in a public school. MCSS recommends using the SSFG for Incident Command Systems (ICS) training or the National Incident Management System (NIMS) training.

In addition, grant funds may be used to train students to identify, and encourage students to report behaviors of concern exhibited by their peers or others that may pose a threat to the safety of an individual attending or working in a public school, including sharing thoughts about or plans for engaging in violence at the school. Grant funds may also be used to purchase training materials.

This training may be provided by consultants and/or subject matter experts in various formats to include, but not limited to: in-person training, webinars, seminars, discussion- and operational-based exercises, or use of technology-based training.

3. Conducting School Safety Evaluations.

Grant funds may be used to train school safety evaluation teams regarding the various aspects and use of the school safety evaluation tool, as well as the use of technology, software, and apps to conduct the safety evaluations. In addition, grant funds may be used to employ school safety consultants and/or subject matter experts to conduct the school safety evaluations and/or assess the outcomes of the evaluations.

4. Establishing Formal and Anonymous Mechanisms for Reporting Safety Concerns.

Grant funds may be used to develop and establish formal and anonymous mechanisms, policies, procedures, and processes for reporting safety concerns as well as the use of technology, software, and apps to support the reporting process. In addition, grant funds may be used to train administrators, school staff, support staff, students, parents, school resource officers and community members to identify and properly report safety concerns to the appropriate parties. However, a statewide Safe Schools Maryland Anonymous Reporting Systems has been established by the State and may be utilized by any public or private K-12 school statewide.

5. Reimbursing local law enforcement agencies for school resource officer training provided by the Center.

School Resource Officer training to be provided by the Center will be at no expense to local law enforcement agencies. School Resource Officers may register for any training provided by the Center, which is applicable to their roles that is offered at no expense. The SSFG shall not be used to pay for travel or hotel accommodations.

6. Enrolling school security employees in training provided by the Center.

School security employee training to be provided by the Center will be at no expense to local school systems. School security employees may register for any training provided by the Center, which is applicable to their roles that is offered at no expense. The SSFG shall not be used to pay for travel or hotel accommodations.

7. Developing plans to deliver school-based behavioral health and other wraparound services to students who exhibit behaviors of concern, including establishing systems to maximize external funding for services.

Grant funds may be used to develop or adopt programs, practices, or strategies that address the behavioral needs of students that may pose a risk of self-harm or harm to others. Behaviors of concern may include expressions of hopelessness, drug use, suicidal gestures or statements, and gang activity.

Funds awarded under this section may also be used to provide wraparound services to students and their families including mentoring, tutoring, child care services, housing referrals, transportation, crisis intervention, substance abuse prevention and treatment, legal aid, academic counseling, and career counseling.

In applying for grant funds under this section, local school systems shall provide evidence of how the external funding will be maximized to provide students with behavioral health and wraparound services. Evidence may include, if applicable, claims to health insurance plans for any covered health services.

8. Outreach to the broader school community to improve school safety, including heightening awareness of existing mental health services and other services.

Grant funds may be used to develop and implement outreach strategies, methods, mechanisms, materials, marketing efforts, community meetings/forums to the broader school community to improve school safety, including heightened awareness of existing mental health services and other services. In addition, grant funds may be used to acquire technology, software, and or apps to assist in outreach efforts as well as providing school safety training, to include exercises that test the school emergency plan, to the broader school community.

9. Providing information to students and parents on traveling safely to and from school, including data related to bus and pedestrian safety, strategies for ensuring personal safety, efforts of the local school system to improve safety, and information on available options for reporting incidents and concerns.

Grant funds may be used to develop and implement outreach strategies, methods, mechanisms, materials, and marketing efforts to inform students and parents what local school systems are doing in this area. In addition, grant funds may be used to acquire technology, software, and or apps that would assist local school systems in this area.

10. Assisting local school systems to improve and monitor traffic control measures in the immediate vicinity of schools to reduce the potential for pedestrian and vehicle accidents.

Grant funds may be used to acquire technology, software, and/or apps that would assist local school systems in this area as well as staff training. In addition, grant funds may be used to compensate law enforcement for enforcement efforts to address traffic safety violations occurring in the immediate vicinity of schools to reduce the potential for pedestrian and vehicle accidents.

All training and/or services shall be provided by trained professionals and/or subject matter experts. Training formats may include in-person training, webinars, seminars, discussion- and operational-based exercises, and use of technology-based training.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Funding for Grants offered by MCSS is provided by the State and is based on approval from the State Legislature and the Governor. The performance period for the FY2026 Safe Schools Fund grant is from **July 1, 2025 (start date) to December 31, 2025 (end date)**. Grant funds will be obligated by MCSS once a completed Notice of Grant Award is issued. Funds are paid on a reimbursable basis.

The Safe Schools Fund grant may supplement existing State and local funds for program activities but not replace those funds that have been appropriated for the same purpose.

IMPORTANT DATES

Begin Accepting Applications	June 16, 2025
Application Deadline	September 30, 2025
Award Approval/Denial Notice	Up-to 30 Days after Subcabinet Decision ¹
Notification of Grant Award (NOGA) Issuance	Up to 30-days after Award Approval Notice
Award Start Date	July 1, 2025
Award End Date	December 31, 2026
<u>Bi-annual Progress Reports:</u> July – December 2025 January – June 2026 July to December 2026	<u>Due Dates:</u> January 30, 2026 July 31, 2026 January 29, 2027
Final Project Report	February 12, 2027

¹ The School Safety Subcabinet meets on a quarterly basis. Approval/denial notices will be sent within 30-days after the Subcabinet has reviewed the application.

ALLOCATION

Each jurisdiction may apply for up to the **maximum allowable amount of \$25,000**. In order to be eligible, each local education agency must meet the application requirements outlined in this NOFA. The Subcabinet shall review and approve all applications for the Safe Schools Fund grant prior to issuance.

The School Safety Subcabinet and MCSS reserve the right to partially approve or completely deny grant applications that do not fully meet the application requirements.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

The application requirements include the following:

- a. Statement of need narrative – *(required)*
- b. Detailed project description – *(required)*
- c. Project Budget / Spend Plan² - *(required. Template provided)*
- d. Quotes – *(optional but may be required depending on your request)*
- e. Program literature – *(optional but may be required depending on your request)*

ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE EXPENSES

A. Allowable Expenses

Local school systems are encouraged to use the guidance provided under the "[purpose of the grant](#)" when coming up with project ideas for this grant. Below is a list of allowable expenses under this grant. Please note that this list is not all-inclusive.

- a. Contractual services (e.g., contractual services or personnel, project partners, subject matter experts, etc.).
- b. Materials and supplies³ (e.g. outreach materials, learning kits, training supplies, etc.).
- c. Equipment⁴ and associated delivery and installation costs (e.g., radios, security cameras, visitor management systems, etc.).
- d. Training (e.g., include Incident Command Systems (ICS) training, National Incident Management System (NIMS) training, training registration costs, etc.)
- e. Security related software.
- f. A single project that costs at least \$1,000.
- g. Other charges*

*Other charges should have a direct correlation to the overall project or task being performed and will be considered on a case by case basis.

² Use the Itemized Budget template available on the [MCSS website](#).

³ Materials and supplies needed specifically for the purpose of executing the Grant.

⁴ Any equipment purchased that costs at least \$5,000 or greater per unit is subject to a three-year retention period.

B. Unallowable Expenses

Below is a list of unallowable expenses under this grant. Please note that this list is not all-inclusive.

- a. In-State travel
- b. Out-of-State travel
- c. Hotel accommodations
- d. Door entry/locking upgrades
- e. Structural repairs and fencing/barriers
- f. Vehicles
- g. Capital projects
- h. A single project that costs less than \$1,000

GRANT MONITORING

MCSS continually monitors each grant to ensure that State funds are being used as intended and grant awards are compliant. Generally, grant monitoring is performed through the thorough review of quarterly progress reports and reimbursement requests with support documentation. However, MCSS reserves the right to perform on-site visits as part of its grant monitoring activities. Grantees shall be notified at least thirty (30) days in advance prior to a monitoring on-site visit and must ensure that the following conditions are met:

- a. Grantee is responsible for tracking every aspect of their project deliverables.
- b. Prior to an on-site monitoring visit, grantee shall make available to MCSS staff, all necessary documentation needed during such visit.
- c. Grantee shall allow MCSS staff access to all grant related records to verify grant expenditures and activities upon receipt of notification from MCSS.

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INDIRECT AND FIXED COSTS

A. Indirect Costs⁵

The Maryland Department of Legislative Services defines Indirect Costs as “overhead expenditures that cannot be directly charged to the program providing services. Indirect costs represent administrative and support services an agency provides (such as budgeting, accounting, and purchasing) to allow the direct delivery of services.” Some additional indirect costs may include depreciation or use allowances on buildings and equipment as well as the costs of operating and maintaining facilities. ***There are no indirect costs permitted in the Safe Schools Fund.***

B. Fixed Costs

Fixed costs **are** permitted through the funding provided by this grant. All details for fixed costs related expenses MUST be clearly outlined in the Project Description and must be specifically and easily identified with a particular project as outlined in the Project Description submission. Fixed costs may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Salaries/Wages & Fringe Benefits⁶
- b. Contractual salaries
- c. Materials and Supplies⁷
- d. Equipment⁸

GRANT REVIEW

MCSS shall review each application submission for sufficiency before submitting to the School Safety Subcabinet. The Subcabinet will review and award grants on a quarterly basis, to correspond with their meeting times. The Subcabinet and MCSS reserve the right to request additional information as necessary. Local school systems are encouraged to submit applications in a timely manner to allow ample time for review and approval by the Subcabinet.

REPORTING AND REIMBURSEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Invoices shall be submitted to MCSS via email: mcss.mcss@maryland.gov All invoices and reports submitted to MCSS shall not contain personally identifiable information (PII) or sensitive information.

A. Reporting Requirements

There are three types of reporting that is required under the FY2026 Safe Schools Fund Grant: Safe to Learn Act Reporting Mandates, Bi-annual Progress Reports, and a Final Project Report.

⁵ [Indirect Costs](#)

⁶ Staff, technicians and other personnel(s) needed specifically for the purpose of executing the Grant.

⁷ Materials and supplies needed specifically for the purpose of executing the Grant.

⁸ Any equipment purchased that costs at least \$5,000 or greater per unit is subject to a three-year retention period.

Safe to Learn Act Reporting Mandates

- a. On or before **August 1, 2025**, and each August 1st thereafter, each local school system shall complete the [Incidents of Force Report](#)⁹ and submit to MCSS any incidents of force between a school security employee and a student while the school security employee is carrying out the employee's duties.
- b. On or before **August 1, 2025**, and each August 1st thereafter, each local law enforcement agency shall complete the [Incidents of Force Report](#)¹⁰ and submit to MCSS any incidents of force between their SROs and a student while the SRO is carrying out the employee's duties.
- c. On or before **September 1, 2025**, each local school system shall file the [SRO Adequate Coverage Report](#) with MCSS showing each public school assigned SROs or the Adequate law enforcement coverage planned for that school facility. Law enforcement agencies are encouraged to collaborate with their local school system counterparts to ensure accurate reporting.

Bi-annual Progress Reports

- a. Grantee is required to submit a Bi-annual Progress Reports (QPR) detailing a summary of work completed including milestones achieved and any obstacles encountered during the previous two quarters.
- b. The Bi-annual Progress Reports are due **30-days** after the end of each period. Please refer to the *important dates* section of this NOFA for the schedule. The form is available on the [MCSS website](#).
- c. Reports* must be submitted on time. The Grant will be considered not in compliance for missing or late reports.

*Invoices will not be reimbursed if progress reports and final reports have not been submitted.

Final Project Report

A Final Project Report (FPR) is due to MCSS no later than 45-days after the end of the grant period. Please refer to the important dates section of this NOFA for the final report due date.

B. Reimbursement Requirements

- a. All FY2026 Safe Schools Fund Grant reimbursement requests shall be submitted directly to MCSS.
- b. No grant monies will be reimbursed for costs or obligations incurred, or work performed, prior to the beginning date of this notice of funding.
- c. Grantee shall use the MCSS invoice template when submitting reimbursement requests. The form is available on the [MCSS website](#).
- d. Support documents¹¹ shall be included with all reimbursement requests. Examples of support documents include but are not limited to, timesheets, copies of proof of payment to vendors or contractors, copies of original invoices, contractual agreements, proof of completion of work such as photos (before and after), etc.

⁹ Local law enforcement agencies will submit reports of incidents of force between an SRO and a student.

¹⁰ Local school systems will submit reports of incidents of force between a school security employee and a student.

¹¹ Reimbursement requests with no support documents will not be processed.

- e. Grantee shall submit reimbursement requests via email to mcss.mcss@maryland.gov.
- f. Final invoice or request for reimbursement related to this grant must be submitted no later than **45-days** after the end of the duration of this grant. MCSS will not process or reimburse any invoices or reimbursement requests submitted beyond this date.

RECORD RETENTION

- a. The Maryland Center for School Safety is a government entity; upon submission, this application is considered public information, except as otherwise provided by law. The Maryland Center for School Safety does not sell collected grant information. Under the Maryland Public Information Act (PIA) (MD State Government Code Ann. Gen. Provisions Art., § 4-101, et seq.), you may request in writing to review grant award documentation. Please send those requests to the Maryland Center for School Safety, c/o Maryland State Department of Education, 200 W. Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201. Please visit the Office of the Attorney General [website](#) for additional information.
- b. Grantee shall retain grant documents and equipment purchased using grant funds for the retention period of three (3) years after final invoice submission. MCSS, the Department of Budget and Management, the State Comptroller, the Legislative Auditor, or any combination of the aforementioned State agencies may examine and audit this evidence upon request, at any reasonable time within the retention period.
- c. Grantee shall allow MCSS and its affiliated agencies, the Maryland State Department of Education, the Department of Budget and Management, the State Comptroller, and the Legislative Auditor; to examine and audit this supporting documentation on request and at any reasonable time within the retention period.
- d. Grantee shall retain reports, activity logs, timelines, and any additional related supporting documentation for any other expenses that are covered in whole or in part by any grant funds.

GENERAL AND SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Grant awards are subject to these General and Special Conditions. The MCSS reserves the right to add Special Conditions, if and when needed, during the life of the award period. These General Conditions outline the post-award policies, procedures, guidelines, and business rules from MCSS for grant funds.

- A.** Any expenditure of Grant funds that is not consistent with the purposes of the grant award, or that violates any requirement, term or condition of the Safe Schools Fund grant or the Notice of Grant Award agreement will be disallowed.
- B.** All grant related activities must be completed no later than **December 31, 2026**.
- C.** In order to be eligible for reimbursement, a single project shall cost at least \$1,000.
- D.** Grantee shall ensure that all work performed pursuant to the SSFG and this agreement is completed by contractors and/or staff holding all necessary certifications and licenses.
- E.** Grantee shall ensure that any business or non-profit organization operating in Maryland with which Grantee contracts or partners to carry out the purposes of the Grant is registered and in good standing with the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation.
- F.** All work performed pursuant to the Grant shall comply with all applicable State, local, and federal laws and regulations.

- G. Grantee is responsible for ensuring that any equipment acquired using State issued grant funds is protected from theft, loss and damage. MCSS must be notified if any grant funded equipment is lost, stolen, or damaged.
- H. Grantee should establish safety measure protocols for activities taking place on school premises during an emergency, including projects that:
 - a. Maintain open lines of communication between schools and law enforcement agencies; and
 - b. Incorporate active shooter response training.
- I. The award may be terminated by one or both parties with written notice. If the award is terminated before the end of the funding period, an accounting of the year-to-date expenses must be provided within thirty (30) calendar days after termination.
- J. Any salaries, positions, personnel expenses, contractual expenses, equipment, travel, and other expenses paid for with Safe School Fund grant must be used to **supplement** your organization's existing budget, and **may not replace** any funds that were already included in your entity's existing or projected budget. **Supplanting** is the use of the Safe Schools Grant fund to replace State, federal or local funds which were previously appropriated / budgeted for, or otherwise would have been spent on, the specific purpose(s) for which this subaward has been awarded.
- K. All grant funds related to the award project shall be encumbered, obligated (requisitions, purchase orders, or contracts, which are negotiated purchases), or expended (payment of an invoice) by the end of the award period.
- L. Failure to expend encumbered funds within 45 days following the end date of the grant period may jeopardize reimbursement and/or result in the de-obligation of funds. In that event, remaining obligations will be the sole responsibility of the recipient. Reimbursement **is only** for work completed during the grant period.
- M. Any requests for grant realignment or modifications of any kind to any portion of this award must be submitted in writing prior to occurrence. All realignment requests shall be submitted using the MCSS template which can be found on the [MCSS website](#). Realignment requests may include but is not limited to:
 - a. Budget revisions of any type, including proposed expenditures in a budget category that was not previously approved in the application stage.
 - b. Change to staff specified in the personnel category (where applicable).
 - c. Any change that was not approved when the funds were originally awarded.
- N. When issuing public statements, press releases, or other documents relating to this project, or when conferences, seminars, workshops, or forums are held in reference to this project, the grant award recipient agrees that the source of funding of this project and the role of the MCSS must and will be clearly acknowledged. The grant award recipient will ensure that all publications resulting from this project will have the following language on the publication:

"The Maryland Center for School Safety funded this project via a grant award from the Safe Schools Fund Grant (SSFG). All points of view expressed in this document, publication, or presentation, are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the State of Maryland."
- O. All final financial reports under the grant award shall be submitted no later than **forty-five (45) days** after the end date of the award period.
- P. Grantee affirms that it shall not discriminate in any manner against any employee, applicant for employment, or clients of services, because of race, color, religion, creed, age, sex, marital status, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, or limited English proficiency, so as reasonably to preclude the performance of such employment and/or services provided. The grant award recipient agrees to include:

- a. A provision similar to the one contained above for any underlying contract utilized for services under this award, except for those contracts for standard commercial supplies or raw materials; and
 - b. A non-discrimination poster, publicly displayed, acknowledging that the entity does not discriminate and provides an avenue for employees, program beneficiaries, and any relative vendors, to file a discrimination complaint directly with the grantee, the MCSS, and/or directly with the Maryland Commission on Human Relations, 6 St. Paul Street, 9th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21201 (410-767-8600), the Baltimore Office of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), 10 South Howard Street, 3rd Floor, Baltimore, MD 21201 (410-962-3932), or directly with the Office of Civil Rights Office of Justice Programs (OJP), 810 7th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20531.
- Q.** The grant award recipient must promptly report any credible evidence of fraud, waste, abuse and similar misconduct with grant funding to the MCSS.
- R.** All correspondence should be directed to mcss.mcss@maryland.gov.

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