

Project Narrative

Bipartisan Stronger Connections Grant

- Established under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) of 2022.

Purpose: 1) Establish safe, healthy, and supportive learning opportunities and environments; 2) Prevent and respond to acts of bullying, violence, and hate that impact our school communities at individual and systemic levels.

1. PROJECT TITLE	Restorative Justice and School Safety Preparedness		
2a. FEDERAL TITLE PROGRAM & ALLOWABLE USE(S) OF FUNDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Stronger Connections Grant (SCG) is provided to State Education Agencies and Local Education Agencies under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022. SCG funds are distributed under Title IV, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to support the multi-level establishment of safe and healthy learning environments that address school issues such as violence, bullying and hate. Required uses of these funds are limited to activities under section 4018 of the ESEA, related to providing support for safe and healthy students at 95%. SEAs may reserve up to 5% for their purposes. Funds must be tracked separately from a State or Local Education Agency’s Title IV, Part A formula allocation. Funds must not be used to supplant, but rather to supplement. 		
2b. SEA OR LEA SERVICES	Project will be implemented at the SEA/LEA		
3. POPULATION and NUMBERS to RECEIVE SERVICES	3a. GRADE LEVEL(S) & NUMBER of STUDENTS to RECEIVE SERVICES	3b. PARTICIPANT TYPE(S) & NUMBER of PARTICIPANTS to RECEIVE SERVICES	
	Grade Level(s)	Number of Students	Participant Type(s)
	K-12	10,256	Students
			Public School: 8,556 Private School: 1,700
4. NEED(S) for PROJECT	<p><u>Prompts:</u></p> <p>1. <u>Identified Need for This Project</u></p> <p>There is a significant need for more safe, healthy, and supportive learning opportunities and environments in the CNMI Public School System to ensure students' academic success and overall well-being. Unfortunately, bullying, violence, and hate in schools have become commonplace in a historically peaceful island community.</p>		

According to the most recent data YRBS, the prevalence of bullying among high school students in the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI) was 21.5%, higher than the national average of 15.7%. Regarding physical violence, 8.3% of NMI high school students reported being in a physical fight on school property in the past 12 months, trending upward from prior years. Even more concerning is the prevalence of carrying a weapon on school property in the past 30 days was higher in NMI (9.8%) compared to the national average (4.2%). Regarding hate-related behaviors, while the YRBS does not collect data specifically on hate crimes, it does ask about behaviors related to prejudice and discrimination. In the NMI, 18.6% of high school students reported being bullied because of their race, ethnicity, or national origin, higher than the national average of 7.0%. It's important to note that it is disproportionately more alarming when this data is disaggregated into marginalized populations, such as LGB and females.

These occurrences in such a small community have an incredible social impact on students and school communities individually and systematically. The adverse effects of these incidents can be long-lasting, causing emotional trauma, anxiety, and even physical harm. Research has shown that bullying, violence, and hate in schools can have long-lasting effects on students' mental health and academic performance. According to a National Center for Education Statistics study, 20.8% of students in the United States reported being bullied during the 2018-2019 school year. Furthermore, incidents of hate and bias have been on the rise, with the Anti-Defamation League reporting a 47% increase in incidents of anti-Asian hate in 2020. These statistics underscore the urgent need for effective strategies to address bullying, violence, and hate in schools.

Therefore, it is essential to establish safe, healthy, and supportive learning opportunities and environments and prevent and respond to bullying, violence, and hate that impact our school communities individually and systematically. The most appropriate, culturally responsive, and systemically viable approach for our public school system is a "restorative justice" and "trauma-informed" approach to policy and practice supporting the district's Safe and Caring School Strategic Priority.

Restorative justice and trauma-informed approaches are evidence-based strategies to help prevent and respond to bullying, violence, and hate in schools. Restorative justice involves repairing the harm caused by an incident and rebuilding relationships between those involved in a way that fosters accountability and respect. Coincidentally, this is rooted in *chencule'* the indigenous ideal of reciprocity and community, a cultural protective that needs reinforcement. It focuses on the needs of the victim, the offender, and the community and aims to restore relationships rather than punish the offender. Again, cultural competence is an important consideration. Restoring relationships reinforce the indigenous ideal of *inafa' maolek*, meaning to do good, to do better for oneself and one's community. Complementing the aforementioned is the Trauma-informed approach which recognizes the impact of trauma on individuals and prioritizes safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment in all aspects of the school community.

Integrating restorative justice and trauma-informed approaches into disciplinary SOPs and policies can help establish safe, healthy, and supportive learning opportunities and environments that prevent and respond to bullying, violence, and hate that impact the CNMI school communities at individual and systemic levels. By prioritizing the needs of all individuals involved and fostering a sense of accountability and respect, these approaches can help reduce the likelihood of future incidents and promote healing and reconciliation in the aftermath of a harmful event.

Research has shown that punitive disciplinary policies like zero-tolerance policies and crisis response SOPs that are not trauma-informed can negatively impact students' academic achievement, mental health, and engagement in school. On the other hand, restorative justice and trauma-informed approaches promote healing and reconciliation, foster a sense of accountability and respect, and create a safe and supportive school environment. Research has shown that restorative justice practices like peer mediation and community-building circles can improve school climate, reduce the likelihood of future incidents of harm, and reduce suspensions and expulsions while improving student academic outcomes. Therefore, prioritizing the needs and well-being of the individuals involved, and promoting healing and reconciliation, is crucial to creating a safe and supportive school environment that benefits all members of the school community. Additionally, recognizing and addressing the impact of trauma can help prevent retraumatization and promote a sense of safety and empowerment for all members of the school community.

In conclusion, a significant need to establish safe, healthy, and supportive learning opportunities and environments is critical for students' academic success and overall well-being in the CNMI Public School System. By integrating restorative justice and trauma-informed approaches into disciplinary SOPs and policies, we can create safe, healthy, and supportive learning opportunities and environments that prevent and respond to bullying, violence, and hate that impact our school communities at individual and systemic levels. These evidence-based strategies can help reduce the likelihood of future incidents, promote healing and reconciliation, and foster a sense of safety and empowerment for all school community members.

2. Explanation of How Project Activities Connect to the Need for This Project

One major project will address the needs described above. That is to establish a whole-school approach to restorative justice and trauma-informed practices to promote healing, accountability, and respect and create a safe and supportive school environment in CNMI Public School System. There are three annual objectives over the life of the three grant cycles.

By the end of School year 1, the CNMI Public School System will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify gaps in the current systems and practices that contribute to the prevalence of bullying, violence, and hate and determine the feasibility of establishing a restorative justice and trauma-informed program as measured by the completion 4 data dialogues and a system-wide action plan.

The first activity is to hire five Restorative Justice and Trauma-Informed Coaches to help train staff and implement restorative justice practices throughout the district. The district will employ a School Environment Emergency Manager to develop and implement emergency management plans and protocols.

The district will conduct a Data Dialogue to analyze data on restorative justice and trauma-informed indicators and the results of a SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the program. The district will also examine data on disproportionality and gaps to identify areas where the program can have the most significant impact. These activities will help the CNMI Public School System establish a strong foundation for a comprehensive restorative justice program that prioritizes the safety and well-being of all students and staff and sets the personnel capacity and needs-based approach needed for subsequent success. Lastly, a framework program or adaptation for cultural applicability to drive the Restorative Justice and Trauma-Informed efforts will be identified. And, the Quarterly success will be determined by 75% of stakeholders attending the quarterly Data Dialogue meetings.

	<p>By the end of school year 2, all CNMI Public School System staff will be trained in restorative justice and trauma-informed practices. A tiered restorative justice approach will be implemented in all schools, including prevention, intervention, and post-incident responses. Success will be measured by the number of staff who have completed the training.</p> <p>The following to support the above objective include training 100% of the staff in healthy justice practices by the end of the school year. The third activity is implementing a tiered restorative justice approach in all schools by the end of the school year, including prevention, intervention, and post-incident responses. The final activity is to conduct at least one monthly community-building circle in each classroom. These activities will ensure that all staff is trained in restorative justice practices. A tiered restorative justice approach is implemented in all CNMI Public School System schools, including prevention, intervention, and post-incident responses. Quarterly success will be measured by the established number of targeted schools trained.</p> <p>By the end of year 3, the CNMI Public School System will successfully implement, monitor, support, and establish baseline data to determine the effectiveness of the restorative justice and trauma-informed program. The execution of 4 data dialogues will measure the success.</p> <p>The school system will conduct a baseline assessment mirroring the indicator established in the year and integrating critical principles of restorative justice and trauma-informed programs. The data will be collected and discussed at quarterly data dialogues, ultimately supporting improvement planning and establishing a baseline or starting point to track progress annually and drive continuous improvement. The data will be used to identify areas of success and areas that need improvement in the program and drive ongoing professional development. Moreover, support will be provided to all staff to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of the program. By executing these activities in sequence, the CNMI Public School System will successfully implement, monitor, support, and establish baseline data for the restorative justice and trauma-informed program, leading to a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.</p>
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5. GOAL STATEMENT/OBJECTIVES

5a. Goal Statement:

To establish a whole-school approach to restorative justice practices and emergency preparedness in the CNMI Public School System, which promotes healing, accountability, and respect, and creates a safe and supportive school environment that benefits all members of the school community.

Prompts:

1. State one main goal for this project to achieve during the three-year grant cycle. (Although the project may encompass several activities, there should be a common thread (i.e., goal) that connects all project activities into one main goal for this Consolidated Grant project).
2. Explain how the goal will meet the project's need(s).

5b. Annual Objectives:

Year 1: By the end of School year 1, the CNMI Public School System will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment with the goal of identifying gaps in the current systems and practices that contribute to the prevalence of bullying, violence, and hate, and determine the feasibility of establishing a restorative justice and trauma-informed program as measured by the completion 4 data dialogues and a system-wide action plan.

Activities:

- **Hire 5 Restorative Justice and Trauma-Informed Coaches**
- **Hire School Environment Emergency Manager**
- **Data Dialogue**
- **Restorative justice and trauma-informed indicators**
- **SWOT Analysis Results**
- **Disproportionality and gaps results.**

Quarterly will be Data Dialogue Results

Year 2 Objectives: By the end of the school year 2, all staff in the CNMI Public School System will be trained in restorative justice and trauma-informed practices, and a tiered restorative justice approach will be implemented in all schools, including prevention, intervention, and post-incident responses. Success will be measured by the number of staff who have completed the training.

Activities:

- **Identifying Framework,**
- **Training Coaches,**
- **Train 100% of staff in restorative justice practices by the end of the school year.**
- **Implement a tiered restorative justice approach in all schools by the end of the school year, including prevention, intervention, and post-incident responses.**
- **Conduct at least one community-building circle per month in each classroom.**

Year 2 Objectives:

- **Implement a restorative culture in all schools by the end of the school year.**
- **Reduce the number of out-of-school suspensions by 50% compared to the previous year.**
- **Conduct at least two restorative practices per month in each classroom.**

Quarterly Measure: Trainings completed by quarter

Data Baselineing and Implementation:

Year 3 Objectives:

- **Embed restorative practices into all aspects of the school, including classroom management and academic instruction, by the end of the school year.**
- **Increase student engagement and connection to school, as measured by a 20% increase in attendance rates compared to the previous year.**
- **Conduct at least three restorative practices per month in each classroom.**

Prompts:

1. List the annual objective for each year in the application cycle. There should be one annual objective for each year which means a total of 3 (i.e. one for Year 1, one for Year 2, and one for Year 3). Each of these three annual objectives should be aligned to the project goal statement in section 5a above.
2. Explain in what ways each objective will support accomplishing the main project goal.
3. Make sure that each objective is SMART:
 - o Specific
 - o Measurable
 - o Achievable
 - o Relevant
 - o Time-bound

5c. Means of Evaluating Program Outcomes: *Complete the attached Means of Evaluating Program Outcomes Chart* **Evaluation:** The success of the project will be evaluated through regular progress monitoring and data analysis. Data will be collected on discipline rates, attendance rates, academic achievement, and school climate. These metrics will be used to assess progress towards achieving the objectives and to adjust implementation strategies as needed.

Note: The “Means of Evaluating Program Outcomes” is also available on the Department’s Consolidated Grant to the Insular Areas website at: [Link to Website](#). Applicants will submit this chart annually, for each “Project Narrative”, as they implement their Consolidated Grant activities within the three-year application cycle.

Note: If a unit of measurement (i.e. metric) does not have baseline data, the applicant should indicate that the baseline data is not available.

Applicants should note if the unit of measurement (i.e. metrics) are evidenced-based. More information about the term “evidence-based” is included below:

ESSA Section 8101(21): Evidence-Based Definition:

- (A) IN GENERAL. — Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the term “evidence-based”, when used with respect to a State, local educational agency, or school activity, means an activity, strategy, or intervention that —
 - (i) demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on —
 - (I) strong evidence from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented experimental study;
 - (II) moderate evidence from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or
 - (III) promising evidence from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or
 - (ii)
 - (I) demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and
 - (II) includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.
- (B) DEFINITION FOR SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES FUNDED UNDER THIS ACT. — When used with respect to interventions or improvement activities or strategies funded under section 1003, the term “evidence-based” means a State, local educational agency, or school activity, strategy, or intervention that meets the requirements of subclause (I), (II), or (III) of subparagraph (A)(i).

What is an “Evidence-Based” Intervention? (from section 8101(21)(A) of the ESEA)

“...the term ‘evidence-based,’ when used with respect to a State, local educational agency, or school activity, means an activity, strategy, or intervention that –

- (i) demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other *relevant outcomes* based on –
 - (I) *strong evidence* from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study;
 - (II) *moderate evidence* from at least one well-designed and well-implemented *quasi-experimental study*; or
 - (III) *promising evidence* from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias;
 or
- (ii)
 - (I) *demonstrates a rationale* based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other *relevant outcomes*; and
 - (II) includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.

5c. Means of Evaluating Program Outcome(s) Chart

This document is available on the Department’s Consolidated Grant to the Insular Areas website at: [Link to Website](#)

Project Title: Restorative Justice and School Safety Preparedness

Means of Evaluating Program Outcome(s) Chart #

Project Activity	Corresponding Annual Objective	Data Source	Unit of Measurement (i.e. metric) %	Evidence - Based	Baseline Data	Quarterly Performance Targets			
						Please focus on outcomes rather than outputs. (e.g., 40% of teachers will self-report as feeling “well prepared” to use new tools and resources in the classroom to improve instruction by December 2023 versus 40% of teachers will participate in professional development.)			
Conduct comprehensive needs assessment to identify gaps in disciplinary practices.	By the end of School year 1, the CNMI Public School System will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment with the goal of identifying gaps in the current systems and practices that contribute to the prevalence of bullying, violence, and hate, and determine the feasibility of establishing a restorative justice and trauma-informed program as measured by the completion 4 data dialogues and a system-wide action plan.	Discipline referrals, incarceration reports, suspension and expulsion data.	% of incidents of bullying, violence and acts of hate prevalent in the district and by school.	Please indicate: Yes	Determine baseline by the end of school year 2023-2024.				
						By the end of December 2023 25% of schools will have conducted their needs assessment.	By the end of March 2024 50% of schools will have conducted their needs assessment.	By the end of June 2024 75% of schools will have conducted their needs assessment .	By the end of September 2024 100% of schools will have conducted their needs assessment .
Conduct tabletop exercises for school specific threats and hazards.	(e.g., By the end of the 2023-2024 school year, 80% of teachers will self-report as feeling “well prepared” to maintain physical and psychological safety during a crisis.	Evaluation form	% of teachers who report feeling prepared to maintain the physical and psychological safety of their students during a school crisis.	yes	Will determine baseline data at the beginning of School Year 2023-24	By the end of December 2023 20% of teachers will report feeling well prepared to maintain physical and psychological safety in a crisis.	By the end of March 2024 40% of teachers will report feeling well prepared to maintain physical and psychological safety in a crisis.	By the end of June 2024 60% of teachers will report feeling well prepared to maintain physical and psychological safety in a crisis.	By the end of September 2024 80% of teachers will report feeling well prepared to maintain physical and psychological safety in a crisis.

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6. PROJECT DESCRIPTION	<p>6a. BASIC PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION</p> <p><u>Prompts:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementing Restorative Justice in Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Tier I - building a community culture that builds relationships, repairs harm and supports students who do not feel a sense of belonging. Building awareness of restorative justice and gathering data from the district and school. o Tier II - Integrating restorative justice practices to replace punitive discipline and creating support for students. o Tier III - Involving stakeholders, parents, the community in the intervention model and decreases rates of punitive discipline. 2. Taking a trauma informed approach to reviewing, practicing tabletops and revising emergency and safety plans in schools that address specific threats and hazards.
	<p>6b. SUPPLEMENTAL PROJECT AND MANAGEMENT</p> <p><u>Prompts:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hire Restorative Justice Coaches for each island and each level on Saipan. 2. Hire Emergency Manager to support schools in their preparedness planning. 3. Training on restorative justice and trauma informed care. 4. Conducting comprehensive needs assessment, SWOT analysis, and quarterly data dialogues to identify punitive practices and create an action plan.

7. Personnel Needs			
Position Title and Number of Position(s)	Brief Description of Position	Purpose of Position	Type of Position (Full-Time Equivalent (FTE), Part-Time, Hourly, Per Diem)
Emergency Operations Manager (1)	A School Emergency Manager is responsible for ensuring the safety and security of students, faculty, and staff in the event of an emergency or disaster. Overall, the School Emergency Manager	The purpose of the SEM is to support school emergency teams to become confident in their ability to prevent, intervene in and provide postvention for threats and hazards that might impact their school community.	Full time

	plays a crucial role in ensuring that the school or district is prepared to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies and disasters, minimizing the risk of harm to students, faculty, and staff.		
Restorative Justice Coach (5)	The restorative justice coach will be assigned to Rota, Tinian and Saipan (elementary, middle and high) to work with one another as a team and with individual schools in order to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, create a systemwide and school wide restorative justice implementation plan and to implement restorative justice strategies in schools. These coaches will monitor the progress of schools with the goal of decreasing the rates of punitive disciplinary practices and increasing restorative practices thereby giving students the skills to heal relationships, learn participatory decision making, conflict resolution and maintain community.	The role of the coach is to guide the school in understanding their discipline practices and how it has impacted the culture of their school and the students they serve. It is also to help facilitate the dialogue necessary to plan for a change in practice from punitive means of discipline to restorative practices in order to create a culture of connectedness, trust and healing. The coach will not be a substitute teacher or a member of the administrative team, but a support for school staff as they learn strategies for addressing bullying, violence, hate and other issues impacting student well-being.	80% LOE School Site 20% LOE SEA Site for planning and PD purposes. SEA LOE - May have to meet with SSS directors to plan professional development, review implementation plan, monitor and make revisions to the project as needed.

Prompts for Personnel Needs:

1. List the federally funded positions necessary to implement this project.
2. Provide a brief description of the positions and how the positions support the project's goals.
3. Indicate the amounts of time (FTE), such as hours or percentages of time to be expended by each position under this project.

Budget Narrative

1. PROJECT TITLE: Bipartisan Stronger Connections Grant					
BUDGET SUMMARY PAGE					
BUDGET CATEGORIES		INDIRECT COSTS	FY 2022 CARRYOVER FUNDS SUBTOTALS	FY 2023 FUNDS SUBTOTALS	TOTALS
2. Personnel Salaries, Wages, & Fringe Benefits		\$ 10,068.96		\$ 264,972.50	\$ 264,972.50
3. Travel		\$ 1,105.04		\$ 29,080.00	\$ 29,080.00
4. Equipment		\$ 950.00		\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
5. Supplies		\$ 38.00		\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
6. Contractual (Purchased Services)					\$ -
7. Other					\$ -
Indirect Cost Rate:					
	Subtotals	\$ 12,162.00	\$ -	\$ 320,052.50	
				Grand Total:	\$ 320,052.50

Itemized Indirect Cost Categories and Calculations	
Please break down each budget category and corresponding amount that the Insular Area includes in column G (row 15) above to show what is included in the Indirect Cost base below. For example, this itemized list should match each Insular Areas' Indirect Cost agreements base for calculaing Indirect Costs. The information provided should demonstrate what the Insular Areas includes in its indirect cost calculation.	

Note:

2023 Implementation: \$320,052.50

Grant Award: \$938,320.00 available for obligation through September 30, 2026

4. EQUIPMENT				
Equipment Type	Purpose of Equipment	Itemized Budget – Machinery/Equipment, Information Technology Equipment, Computer Hardware, Computer	FY 2022 Carryover Funds	FY 2023 Funds
Laptop Computers	To create and facilitate presentations, collect data, communicate with schools and stakeholders and monitor progress of goals and objectives	Laptop computer, clicker, battery pack, earphones,		\$ 25,000.00
		Equipment Subtotals	\$ -	\$ 25,000.00

5. SUPPLIES			
Supply Type	Itemized Budget – Office Supplies, Repair and Maintenance Supplies, Small Tools and Equipment (e.g., computers, cameras, instructional materials)	FY 2022 Carryover Funds	FY 2023 Funds
General Office Supplies for EOP	Paper clips, tablets, pens, chart paper, etc. (\$83 x 12 months)		\$ 1,000.00
Supply Subtotals		\$ 0.00	\$ 1000.00

7. OTHER DIRECT COSTS				
Other Direct Cost Items	Purpose of Direct Cost Item	Itemized Budget – Space Rental, Required Fee, Honoraria and Travel (where a contract is not in place for services), Training, and Communication and Printing Costs, Etc.	FY 2022 Carryover Funds	FY 2023 Funds
Other Subtotals			\$ -	\$ -