

Utah State Board of Education

School Safety Enhancement Program (84.184A)

Project Abstract

The Utah State Board of Education (USBE), through the Utah School Safety Center, is requesting \$5,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY 2026) under the School Safety Enhancement (SSE) Program to carry out the Utah School Safety Enhancement Initiative. This statewide initiative will strengthen physical security, emergency communications, emergency preparedness, and local school safety capacity through a competitive subgrant process. Utah has already made significant progress through state law, administrative rules, statewide training, and state funding allocated to school safety. Even with that progress, statewide assessments continue to show millions of dollars in unmet school safety needs, especially in rural and geographically isolated communities.

USBE will award funds through a competitive subgrant process that prioritizes schools with the greatest documented need. Funds will support improvements to physical security, emergency communication systems, the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), multidisciplinary training, and technical assistance. In Utah, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) maintain Emergency Preparedness, Emergency Response, and Emergency Recovery Plans that together serve the same function as EOPs. The initiative is aligned with the Federal Commission on School Safety and the U.S. Department of Justice Critical Incident Review: Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School. It also builds on Utah's existing infrastructure, established partnerships, and grant administration experience to support efficient implementation, strong fiscal stewardship, rigorous monitoring, and long-term sustainability. Federal funds will supplement, not supplant, existing State and local investments.

1. Need for the Project

Utah has demonstrated a sustained commitment to school safety through state law, administrative rule, statewide training, emergency planning requirements, and targeted investments. Key statewide frameworks include Board Rule R277-400: School Safety and Security, Board Rule R277-471: School Construction Oversight, Inspections, Training, and Reporting, and Administrative Rule R698-13: School Safety.

State legislative investments through House Bill (HB) 61: School Safety Requirements (2023) and HB 84: School Safety Amendments (2024) provided more than \$120 million to strengthen school safety infrastructure statewide and create a consistent way to identify and respond to local needs. These investments were supported by comprehensive school safety needs assessments (SSNAs), the designation of school safety and security specialists, the implementation of minimum safety and security standards, and funding decisions based on documented need. LEAs have made meaningful progress, but the available funding has not fully closed the gap between identified safety needs and available resources. In FY 2024, schools requested more through the School Safety and Support Grant than was available, leaving millions of dollars in unmet need across the state. The FY 2025 grant cycle showed that additional needs remain, as LEAs used SSNAs to identify gaps such as secure entry systems, access controls, visitor management systems, surveillance technology, emergency communications, perimeter security, bleed control kits and first aid kits, classroom door locks, window security improvements, fencing, and other life-saving and safety improvements. Based on prior application data and the FY 2024 average request of \$102,418.20 per approved school applicant, projected need continues to exceed available funding. This grant will build on Utah's prior investments by directing additional resources to schools with documented safety and security needs and helping LEAs close remaining gaps in a fair, data-informed, and sustainable way.

Determining Greatest Need

USBE maintains statewide SSNA data that provides a consistent, objective method for identifying school safety needs. Funding decisions will consider SSNA data, physical security vulnerabilities, emergency communication deficiencies, facility age and infrastructure limitations, previous safety funding received, local fiscal capacity, student enrollment, geographic isolation and response times, rural designation, and project readiness.

Rural and Geographically Isolated Communities

The need is especially significant in Utah's rural communities, which often face limited tax bases, aging infrastructure, rising construction costs, workforce shortages, reduced staffing capacity, and longer emergency response times. Federal funding will help these communities close the gap in school safety and security needs.

Competitive Preference Priority: Rural Communities

Under the Competitive Preference Priority, Utah has a substantial number of public schools located within eligible National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale codes, including Town-Distant (32), Town-Remote (33), Rural-Fringe (41), Rural-Distant (42), and Rural-Remote (43). USBE will use available NCES locale designations, as applicable, during application review to inform prioritization of rural and town communities. USBE will prioritize projects serving rural and town communities by considering rural status, response times, local fiscal capacity, documented vulnerabilities, and project readiness. Rural LEAs will also receive targeted technical assistance, professional learning, and implementation support.

Alignment with National Recommendations

Consistent with Application Requirements (c) and (d), the project directly advances the goals and recommendations of the 2018 Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety and the U.S. Department of Justice Critical Incident Review: Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School (January 18, 2024), as shown in the crosswalk below:

- **Federal Commission on School Safety, Chapter 13 (Prevention and Physical Security):** Project activities that install or upgrade secure entry systems, access controls, classroom door locks, perimeter security, and surveillance technology (Goal 1) advance the Commission's recommendations to harden facilities and control access.
- **Federal Commission on School Safety, Chapter 16 (Active Shooter Training and Preparedness):** Multidisciplinary training, professional learning, and emergency preparedness exercises for school safety and security specialists, School Resource Officers (SROs), and school personnel (Goals 2 and 3) advance the Commission's recommendations to prepare staff and responders for active threat situations.
- **Federal Commission on School Safety, Chapter 19 (Emergency Planning and Response):** Updating Emergency Operations Plans, standardizing response protocols, supporting Incident Command System implementation, and coordinating with first responders (Goal 2) advance the Commission's recommendations for comprehensive emergency planning and response.
- **DOJ Critical Incident Review, Secure entry and door locks:** The review identified failures of interior door locks and secure entry as critical breakdowns; the project prioritizes reliable classroom locking mechanisms and secure entry systems (Goal 1) to directly address this finding.
- **DOJ Critical Incident Review, Communications and Radio Interoperability:** The review documented communication and radio interoperability failures; the project funds acquisition and upgrade of emergency communication systems (Goal 1) to strengthen reliable, interoperable communications.
- **DOJ Critical Incident Review, Command, coordination, and response:** The review found breakdowns in unified command and multidisciplinary coordination; the project supports ICS implementation, EOP updates, first-responder coordination, and active-threat exercises (Goals 2 and 3) to address these findings.

While Utah has made substantial progress, ongoing disparities in preparedness, access to training, and implementation capacity persist. Federal funding will address documented unmet needs while strengthening long-term statewide school safety capacity.

2. Quality of Project Design

The Utah School Safety Enhancement Initiative is intended to strengthen Utah's existing school safety framework, not create a separate or disconnected program. The project brings together SSNA data, competitive funding, technical assistance, implementation support, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

The design is informed by SSNA data, Utah statutes and administrative rules, evidence-based school safety practices, national school safety recommendations, and lessons learned from administering state funding allocated to school safety.

Funded activities will be selected based on documented need, evidence-informed practices, and alignment with applicable federal guidance.

Project Activities and Alignment with Program Priority 2

Goal 1: Strengthen Physical Security and Emergency Communications

The project supports the allowable activities under Program Priority 2 through a coordinated set of investments in physical security, communications, and preparedness. Under Goal 1, subgranted funds will help LEAs install or upgrade interior door locks and secure entry systems, including electronic access controls and classroom door-locking mechanisms; deploy deterrent measures, such as surveillance technology; strengthen perimeter controls; upgrade visitor-screening infrastructure through visitor management systems; and acquire or upgrade emergency communication systems. Under Goals 2 and 3, USBE will support the development and updating of emergency response and coordination plans, including EOP updates and first-responder coordination, and will provide training and preparedness exercises for SROs and school

personnel in active threat response. USBE will review all projects for alignment with federal requirements, state guidance, and evidence-based practices.

USBE will review proposed physical security projects to ensure they are limited to allowable equipment, technology, installation, or minor remodeling and do not constitute construction, renovation, or repair.

Goal 2: Improve Emergency Preparedness and Coordination

Projects may include updating EOPs, strengthening coordination with first responders, standardizing emergency response protocols, ICS, conducting emergency exercises, improving emergency communications, and using after-action debriefs for continuous improvement.

Goal 3: Expand Capacity Through Training and Technical Assistance

USBE will provide professional learning for school safety and security specialists, administrators, SROs, other school safety personnel, facilities personnel, and emergency response partners. Training topics include emergency planning, physical security, emergency communications, crisis response coordination, behavioral threat awareness, and emergency exercises.

Competitive Subgrant Process

USBE will conduct a statewide competitive subgrant process using procedures refined through three previous rounds of grant applications. LEA applications will include documented needs, proposed activities, budgets, timelines, sustainability plans, and coordination with public safety partners. A review team will use a standardized rubric to evaluate documented need, project quality, implementation readiness, sustainability, reasonable budget, and alignment with allowable activities. This process will support a fair and consistent review of applications.

LEA applicants will submit proposed budgets as part of the competitive subgrant process, and USBE will review each budget for allowability and alignment with approved activities.

Technical Assistance and Sustainability

Participating LEAs will receive implementation support, monitoring, and sustainability planning to help ensure improvements continue beyond the grant period. Because the project builds on existing state infrastructure, these investments will support long-term sustainability.

3. Quality of Project Services

USBE will provide coordinated statewide services that combine funding, technical assistance, professional learning, monitoring, and continuous improvement.

Funding

Funding awards will prioritize schools with significant security deficiencies, such as those that do not meet Utah's mandated minimum safety and security standards; rural and geographically isolated schools; economically disadvantaged LEAs; and schools with critical communication needs.

Technical Assistance

The Utah School Safety Center will provide application support, guidance on compliance and allowable projects, school safety planning consultation, coordination with local partners such as the Department of Public Safety (DPS), the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the Utah State Charter School Board (SCSB), and monitoring, reporting, and sustainability planning assistance.

Professional Learning and Partnerships

USBE will provide statewide training focused on emergency planning, communications, physical security, incident command, emergency exercises, behavioral threat assessment, and multidisciplinary coordination. Strong partnerships with law enforcement, fire services, emergency management, behavioral health providers, and community partners will support implementation.

Monitoring and Support Delivery

USBE will monitor implementation through progress checks, budget monitoring, site visits, compliance reviews, and continuous technical assistance. Services will be delivered through in-person support, virtual consultation, regional training, webinars, written guidance, and individualized coaching.

4. Quality of Project Implementation

USBE will implement the initiative through a structured framework emphasizing accountability, communication, monitoring, and continuous improvement.

Roles and Responsibilities

USBE, the State educational agency as defined in 20 U.S.C. § 7801(49), will carry out this project in a manner consistent with Program Priority 1. USBE will retain full programmatic and fiscal control while awarding competitive subgrants to LEAs for approved projects and activities. The Utah School Safety Center will lead project implementation, financial oversight, technical assistance, monitoring, data collection, reporting, and sustainability planning. Participating LEAs will implement approved projects and activities and meet reporting and monitoring requirements once their applications are approved.

Implementation Timeline

Table 1. Implementation Milestones, Responsible Parties, and Deliverables

Phase/Timeframe	Key Tasks/Milestones	Responsible Party	Deliverable
Phase 1: Launch (Months 1–6)	Release RFA; provide application support and webinars; convene review team; review applications; award subgrants; launch implementation.	SSE Project Director; State Education Specialists	RFA released; rubric applied; subgrants awarded

Phase 2: Implementation (Months 7–24)	LEAs procure equipment/services, install security improvements, enhance emergency communications, and update EOPs; the Utah School Safety Center conducts training/exercises and monitoring, processes reimbursements, and manages awards.	LEA subgrantees; Utah School Safety Center; Fiscal/Grants Manager	Completed security/communication projects; updated EOPs; reimbursements processed; and technical assistance.
Phase 3: Ongoing Monitoring and Support (Months 12–30)	Annual check-ins; selective site visits; data collection; technical assistance; implementation support.	State Education Specialists; Utah School Safety Center	Monitoring reports; site-visit summaries; interim data
Phase 4: Evaluation/Sustainability (Months 30–36)	Final reporting; outcome analysis; sustainability planning; dissemination of lessons learned.	LEAs; State Education Specialists; Utah School Safety Center	Final report; sustainability plans; best practices shared

5. Quality of the Project Management Plan

USB E has extensive experience administering large-scale state and federal initiatives, including state funding allocated to school safety through a recent multi-year School Safety Support grant.

Management Structure

The Utah School Safety Center will lead project administration with support from personnel experienced in school safety, grants management, fiscal oversight, procurement, monitoring, and evaluation.

Communication and Fiscal Oversight

USB E will maintain regular communication with LEAs through email listservs, implementation meetings, webinars, guidance documents, and individualized consultations. Established financial controls will ensure compliance with 2 C.F.R. Part 200, procurement requirements, and supplement, not supplant, provisions.

Monitoring and Risk Management

Monitoring activities include progress reporting, fiscal reviews, site visits, SSNA data, and performance tracking. Existing statewide systems and experienced personnel reduce risk and support efficient implementation.

6. Adequacy of Resources

USBE possesses the infrastructure, personnel, partnerships, and administrative systems necessary to implement this initiative successfully.

Existing Resources

Key statewide resources include the Utah School Safety Center, the required Utah SSNA, school safety and security specialists, statewide training infrastructure, grant administration systems, fiscal management and procurement systems, and monitoring and compliance processes.

Personnel and Partnerships

USBE staff have expertise in school safety, emergency preparedness, grants management, procurement, monitoring, evaluation, and technical assistance. USBE also maintains established partnerships with LEAs, DPS, DHHS, and SCSB that enable coordinated statewide implementation and support.

Financial and Administrative Capacity

USBE maintains established fiscal systems, internal controls, grant management processes, and reporting systems that ensure responsible stewardship of federal and state funds.

Sustainability of Resources

Because school safety is embedded in Utah law, administrative rules, staffing, assessments, and ongoing operations, project benefits will continue beyond the grant period.

Budget Narrative

USBE requests \$5,000,000 over the 36-month project period, presented in whole dollars and within the program's award range of \$500,000 to \$5,000,000. Approximately 90 percent of the

award will be distributed to LEAs through competitive subgrants for allowable physical security, emergency communication, emergency preparedness, and training activities, with awards prioritized by documented need as explained above. The remaining amount, up to 10 percent, will support program administration, including subgrant management, technical assistance, monitoring, and reporting. USBE will apply a restricted indirect cost rate consistent with its State Education Agency negotiated rate, and Federal funds will supplement, not supplant, existing State and local school safety investments.

7. Quality of the Project Evaluation

USBE will implement a comprehensive evaluation framework focused on implementation, outcomes, and long-term impact.

The Utah School Safety Center team will conduct the project evaluation internally. They will collect, analyze, and report data using a mixed-methods approach. The Year-3 targets are reasonable planning projections based on approximately 90 percent of the \$5,000,000 award flowing to LEAs through competitive subgrants, with up to 10 percent retained for administration. Because final activities will depend on LEA applications and approved subgrant activities, the targets are not fixed commitments. Data sources will include subgrant completion records, financial reports, monitoring findings, site visit outcomes, training and exercise records, and stakeholder feedback. Findings will be included in annual and final performance reports and used to support continuous improvement.

Evaluation Model

Project input includes Federal funding, existing statewide infrastructure, school safety and security specialists, technical assistance, public safety partnerships, and SSNA data. Core activities include competitive subgrants, approved subgrant activities, physical security improvements, emergency communication enhancements, EOP updates, training and technical assistance, and emergency preparedness exercises. These activities are expected to reduce

vulnerabilities, improve preparedness, strengthen emergency response coordination, increase the use of evidence-based practices, and expand statewide capacity. Progress will be measured through the federal performance measures presented in Table 2.

Data Collection and Performance Measures

Data will be collected through annual progress reports, financial reports, individualized support, monitoring activities, site visits, training records, and stakeholder feedback.

Measures will assess both outputs and outcomes, including completed, approved subgrant activities; improvements in preparedness; compliance with safety standards; coordination with responders; and long-term sustainability. The Year-3 targets below are planning estimates for application purposes and may be adjusted after the competitive subgrant process identifies which eligible activities LEAs request and USBE approves for funding.

Table 2. Federal Program Performance Measures, Baselines, and Estimated Year-3 Targets

Performance Measure	Baseline	Estimated Year-3 Target	Data Source	Goal
1. Schools with installation or upgrading of interior door locks and secure entry systems with grant funds.	0	20–35 schools	Subgrant completion records	Goal 1
2. Schools with installation or upgrading of deterrent measures with grant funds.	0	15–30 schools	Subgrant completion records	Goal 1
3. Schools with installation or upgrading of perimeter controls with grant funds.	0	10–20 schools	Subgrant completion records	Goal 1
4. Schools with installation or upgrading of visitor screening infrastructure with grant funds.	0	20–35 schools	Subgrant completion records	Goal 1
5. Schools acquiring or upgrading emergency communication systems with grant funds.	0	15–30 schools	Subgrant completion records	Goals 1–2

6. Schools with development or updating of EOPs with grant funds.	0	25–50 schools	LEA progress reports	Goal 2
7. Training and preparedness exercises for SROs and school personnel in active threat response with grant funds.	0	300–500 personnel	Training rosters	Goal 3

Continuous Improvement

Evaluation findings will be reviewed regularly to strengthen implementation, inform technical assistance, guide future funding decisions, and support statewide school safety improvements.

8. Sustainability

Sustainability is built into the initiative because the project strengthens systems that are already part of Utah’s school safety structure, including state law, administrative rule, staffing requirements, SSNAs, training, and technical assistance.

Participating LEAs will sustain improvements by:

- Preserving partnerships with local organizations
- Continuing updated EOPs
- Participating in ongoing training offered by the Utah School Safety Center
- Utilizing school safety and security specialists
- Incorporating lessons learned into future planning

The Utah School Safety Center will continue to provide statewide technical assistance, training, guidance, assessment support, and the dissemination of best practices after the grant period.

Federal funding will supplement, not supplant, existing investments and accelerate implementation of documented needs while strengthening permanent statewide capacity.

Program Assurances

USB E provides the following assurances consistent with the program requirements for the School Safety Enhancement Program:

- Administrative costs: USB E will retain up to 10 percent of the grant award for the administrative burden of managing the program, and the remaining 90 percent will flow through to LEAs as awarded for projects by USB E.
- Supplement, not supplant: Grant funds will supplement, not supplant, non-Federal funds that would otherwise be available for school safety activities.
- Building and life-safety codes: All school safety equipment and technology implemented with grant funds will comply with all applicable codes, including building and life-safety codes.
- No construction: No grant funds will be used for the construction, renovation, or repair of any school facility, consistent with Section 8526 of the ESEA and 34 C.F.R. 75.533; all activities will fall within the definition of minor remodeling.
- Restricted indirect cost rate: This program uses a restricted indirect cost rate, and USB E will apply its negotiated restricted rate consistent with U.S. Department of Education requirements.
- Prohibited uses: Grant funds will not be used for gender ideology, political activism, racial stereotyping, or the creation of hostile environments for students of particular races.
- Nondiscrimination: The project will be operated in a manner consistent with all Federal civil rights and nondiscrimination requirements.

Closing Statement

Utah has established a strong statewide school safety framework through legislative investment, statewide planning, objective needs assessment, dedicated leadership, and strong partnerships. At the same time, substantial documented needs remain, especially in rural and geographically

isolated communities. The Utah School Safety Enhancement Initiative will address these needs through competitive subgrants, technical assistance, professional learning, emergency preparedness, evaluation, and continuous improvement. The initiative will direct resources to schools with the greatest documented need while maintaining accountability, equity, and long-term sustainability.

USBE is ready to implement this initiative immediately, drawing on proven systems, experienced leadership, strong fiscal oversight, and established partnerships. Federal investment will accelerate critical school safety improvements, strengthen statewide capacity, and help ensure that every Utah student and educator has access to a safe, secure, and supportive learning environment.