State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program:

What K-12 Leaders Need to Know

Through the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA) of 2021, Congress established the *State and Local Cybersecurity Improvement Act*, which established the **State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP)**, appropriating $1 billion to be awarded over four years in the form of grants to states and local government agencies, including public school districts.

The SLCGP is designed to advance four foundational cybersecurity risk management priorities:

- Governance and Planning: Developing and establishing appropriate governance structures, as well as plans, to improve capabilities to respond to cybersecurity incidents and ensure continuity of operations
- Assessment and Evaluation: Identifying areas for improvement in cybersecurity posture based on continuous testing, evaluation, and structured assessments
- Mitigation: Implementing security protections commensurate with risk
- Workforce Development: Ensuring staff are appropriately trained in cybersecurity

More specifically, SLCGP is seeking to advance the implementation of seven best practices:

- Multi-factor authentication (MFA)
- Enhanced logging
- Data encryption for data at rest and in transit
- End use of unsupported/end of life software and hardware that are accessible from the Internet
- Prohibit use of known/fixed/default passwords and credentials
- The ability to reconstitute systems (backups)
- Migration to the .gov internet domain

What are eligible expenditures under the SLCGP?

In general, grant funds may be expended for any purpose that addresses cybersecurity risks or cybersecurity threats on information systems owned or operated by, or on behalf of, a school district or other eligible entity. Funds may not be used to purchase cybersecurity insurance or for payments of extortion demands arising from ransomware incidents.

How can school districts apply for funding?

A minimum of 80% of state grant allocations must be passed through to local government agencies, which includes but is not limited to school districts. In addition, at least 25% of the total funds made available under the grant must be passed through to rural communities. School districts are not eligible to directly apply to the Federal government for funding; rather, they are considered to be subapplicants

under their state's grant. <u>Ultimately, it is up to the state to determine where and how to pass-through funds</u> (or items or services in lieu of direct funding).

What steps should school leaders take to benefit from the SLCGP?

School district representatives should proactively reach out to the office of their state's CISO/CIO to learn more about their state's plans to apply for and implement the SLCGP, including how school districts can benefit. A list of all state CIO contacts can be found at: https://www.nascio.org/member-profiles/

Initial state work must be focused on:

- Establishing a state cybersecurity planning committee
- Developing a statewide cybersecurity plan
- Conducting assessments and evaluations to establish statewide priorities for funding

Note: <u>The SLCGP requires every state to include a representative of public education institutions on its statewide planning committee</u>.

Where can I learn more about the SLCGP?

- State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program: https://www.cisa.gov/cybergrants
- Fact sheet: https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/SLCGP_Fact-Sheet_FY_2022_508c.pdf
- Frequently Asked Questions: https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/SLCGP_FAQ-FINAL_508c.pdf

About the K12 Security Information eXchange

The K12 Security Information eXchange (K12 SIX) operates as an information sharing and analysis center (ISAC) exclusively for the K-12 education sector. Organizations eligible for membership include school districts, charter schools and charter management organizations, private/independent schools, regional education agencies, and state education agencies. To learn more about K12 SIX, including membership benefits and how to join, please visit: https://www.k12six.org/