



Partner Alliance for Safer Schools

WHITE PAPER: Funding for School Safety: A Readiness-First Framework

The volunteers who make up the Partner Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS) bring together their research and expertise from the education, public safety, and industry communities to develop and support a coordinated approach to effectively apply proven security practices in schools. The PASS team is also dedicated to developing white papers on specific, school-safety topics.

The content in these white papers may point to specific products, brands, or organizations as illustrations of how certain safety and security measures are implemented. PASS does not endorse specific products or brands. Together, the volunteers and partners of the PASS share a single vision: making all schools safer is both achievable and urgently needed.

AUTHORS

Main Authors: PASS Technical Committee

KEY TOPIC

Understanding school safety funding as a governance, assessment, and implementation challenge that must be aligned to PASS Rev 7, official funding sources, state-specific direction, and long-term sustainment.

PROBLEM SOLVED

This white paper addresses a recurring school safety failure point: teams often pursue money, quotes, or grant narratives before they have clearly defined the problem, assigned ownership, assessed the gap, verified the funding lane (pathway), and planned for implementation.

This white paper provides clear, PASS-aligned guidance on:

- Prioritizing readiness instead of shopping lists
- Using PASS Rev 7 to frame the need and identify ownership
- Registering early and using official federal and state sources directly
- Monitoring a constantly changing legislative and policy landscape
- Connecting funding decisions to implementation and sustainment

RELEVANT PASS GUIDELINES SECTION

- Structure of the PASS Guidelines/Layered Security (pp. 6-7)
- Baseline Practices and Obligations (p. 8)
- Risk Assessment – A Prerequisite (p. 12)
- Layers of Protection and Security Components (pp. 15-16)
- Using the PASS Guidelines to Formulate a Comprehensive Security Plan (p. 18)
- District-Wide through Classroom/Interior layer sections as applicable (pp. 21-133)

MOST RELEVANT FOR

- School and district leaders
- School safety and security directors
- Facilities, operations, and maintenance leadership
- IT and communications leadership
- Grant writers, finance leaders, and compliance staff
- Private, charter, independent, and faith-based school leaders

TIME TO READ

Approximately 10-12 minutes

PASS POSITION STATEMENT

PASS affirms that school safety funding should begin with readiness, not products. Funding decisions should follow assessment, ownership, project packaging, verification through official sources, and planning for implementation and sustainability. Because live state and federal requirements can change quickly, PASS does not support quote-driven planning or assumptions built on outdated summaries.

PASS POSITION

School safety funding should begin with readiness, governance, and validated need. It should not begin with a quote, a device list, or a rush to match a project to money before the district has assessed the gap and verified the funding pathway.

This companion white paper frames school safety funding as a readiness, governance, and validated-need issue before it is ever treated as a grant issue. It should be used alongside the companion toolkit for the operational workflow, official-source links, state-resource direction, registration guidance, and implementation-level details that follow the framework introduced here.

PASS believes school safety funding should begin with assessment, ownership, and operational needs—not product selection, rushed grant pursuit, or assumptions about eligibility. This white paper explains that position. The companion toolkit shows how to operationalize it.

PASS expects teams to:

- Use PASS Rev 7 to define the layer, gap, and target condition
 - Register early in the required grant systems
 - Use SchoolSafety.gov tools and state resources directly
 - Monitor legislation, policy, and agency guidance that can affect eligibility or allowable use
 - Connect every funding request to governance, operations, and sustainment
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I. Executive Summary

School safety grant funding is one of the most complicated endeavors in K-12 safety. It sits at the intersection of governance, facilities, technology, student support, procurement, registration systems, state and federal rules, and changing policy expectations.

Too often, teams begin the process in the wrong place: after a product has been selected, after a quote has been requested, or after a deadline is already approaching. That sequence produces avoidable risk and weakens both the funding strategy and the operational outcome.

Using PASS Rev 7 as the foundation, this paper explains why funding must be tied to assessment, project packaging, official-source verification, and registration. It also emphasizes the importance of using SchoolSafety.gov tools, state resources, and current legislative and policy monitoring as part of sound school safety governance. For the step-by-step workflow, see Toolkit pp. 2-5 and 10-13.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See PASS Rev 7 pp. 6-8, 18

See Toolkit pp. 2-5, 22

II. Purpose of This White Paper

This white paper is designed to provide school leaders, safety directors, facilities teams, IT leaders, grant personnel, and non-public school communities with a common planning framework for school safety funding.

It is not a product guide, legislative tracker, or a shortcut to funding. It is a PASS-aligned framework for organizing the work before a team chooses a lane or writes a narrative.

This white paper stays at the framework and leadership level. For the practical workflow, official starting points, registration steps, state verification, and implementation-level details, use the companion toolkit in combination with this paper.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See PASS Rev 7 pp. 6-7, 12, 15-18

See Toolkit pp. 8-10

III. The Core Problem: Funding Without Framework

The most common failure point in school safety funding is not simply the absence of money. It is the absence of a framework that explains what the problem is, where it sits, who owns it, and how the work fits into a larger safety plan.

Without that discipline, projects become fragmented, quotes become plans, opposing needs confuse, and the district struggles to explain why a request belongs in a given funding pathway.

This is why PASS Rev 7 matters. It provides the structure needed to translate concern into an organized, defensible project.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See PASS Rev 7 pp. 6-8, 12, 15-18, 21-133

See Toolkit pp. 7-10

IV. Why PASS Rev 7 Should Be the Foundation

PASS Rev 7 organizes school safety across five layers, including district-wide, digital infrastructure, campus perimeter, building perimeter, and classroom/interior. This layered structure makes funding work more precise and defensible. See PASS Rev 7, pp. 6-7 and 15-18.

A strong PASS-based funding request can explain the affected layer, the current condition, the target condition, the gap, the ownership structure, the implementation sequence, and the sustainment plan. See PASS Rev 7 p. 12, 18, and the applicable layer sections on pp. 21-133.

When teams cannot answer those questions, they are not yet funding-ready.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See PASS Rev 7 p. 18

See Toolkit pp. 2-5, 12-17

V. A Readiness-First Model for School Safety Funding

A readiness-first model follows a disciplined sequence: build the team, conduct the assessment, package the work, match the funding pathway, verify through official sources, and implement and sustain.

This model is more than a grant process. It is an operating discipline. It keeps teams from forcing one project into the wrong pathway and helps sequence capital work, prevention work, student-support work, recovery work, and nonpublic-school pathways.

READINESS-FIRST WORKFLOW

CONCERN → ASSESSMENT → OWNERSHIP → PROJECT PACKAGE → FUNDING PATHWAY →
OFFICIAL VERIFICATION → APPLICATION → IMPLEMENTATION & SUSTAINMENT

The companion toolkit expands this sequence into practical steps, quick-start guidance, and working tools.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See PASS Rev 7 pp. 6-8, 12, 15-18

See Toolkit pp. 10-13, 20-21

VI. Why School Safety Funding Is So Complex

School safety funding is inherently complex because it brings together different applicant types, procurement rules, layered implementation needs, reimbursement versus direct funding, and program-specific deadlines, roles, and implementation timelines.

It also requires coordination across leadership, security, facilities, IT, student support, finance, legal, and external partners. A technically correct application can still fail operationally if the implementation and sustainment work were initially misunderstood.

That complexity is exactly why school teams should avoid oversimplified vendor summaries and work from official sources first.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See PASS Rev 7 pp. 8, 12, 18

See Toolkit pp. 4-5, 10-12

VII. Registration and Official Sources Are Foundational

Registration is not a minor administrative task. It is a gateway to eligibility. Many federal opportunities require an active entity record, a unique entity ID, and completion of the relevant application systems well before the team can submit.

Likewise, official tools are not optional extras. SchoolSafety.gov, Grants.gov, SAM.gov, JustGrants, and the relevant state offices are the authoritative sources for current program mechanics, deadlines, applicant pathways, and allowable uses.

Teams that delay registration or rely only on secondhand summaries create avoidable risk.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See Toolkit pp. 4-5, 12-13, 18-20

VIII. Use the SchoolSafety.gov Tools and State Resources Directly

The SchoolSafety.gov tools should be treated as core starting points because they help teams find state contacts, screen federal opportunities, and organize readiness work before a district commits to a strategy. See Toolkit pp. 4-5 and pp. 10-13.

State resources matter just as much. States differ widely in how they organize school safety offices, hardening grants, prevention grants, nonprofit pathways, reimbursement structures, and school type eligibility. See Toolkit pp. 12-13 and pp. 18-20.

The landscape is constantly changing. Teams should verify live details through official federal and state sources every time they move toward a funding decision.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See Toolkit pp. 4-5, 10-13, 18-20

IX. Monitor Current and Proposed State and Federal Legislation

School safety funding does not exist in a vacuum. State and federal legislation, appropriations, agency guidance, and policy changes can affect eligibility, allowable use, timing, reporting requirements, implementation conditions, and which school types may participate. That makes policy monitoring an operational necessity, not an optional extra.

Monitoring legislation is not a political add-on. It is part of sound governance and risk management. A district that ignores legislative and policy shifts can build a plan around assumptions that no longer hold.

Teams should monitor both enacted and proposed changes when they are materially tied to funding, compliance, readiness expectations, or implementation conditions. A great resource for monitoring school safety legislation is the [NSCA track legislation map](#). Select your state on the map and review the bills related to school safety at the state or federal level. Please note that PASS only provides education and information for lawmakers to improve school safety and provide adequate funding for any mandates. We monitor priority bills and share that information with our partners, allied trade associations, and school safety organizations.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See PASS Rev 7 pp. 15-18 and applicable layer sections

See Toolkit pp. 15-17

X. Project Packaging and Governance Matter More Than Product Lists

School leaders should resist the urge to treat equipment categories as projects. The real project is the operational problem to be solved — visitor entry, classroom/interior protective capability, digital resilience, communications, threat assessment, mental health support, or staff capability.

Packaging the work correctly helps the district separate quick corrections from capital projects, distinguish prevention lanes from hardening lanes, and align real ownership for implementation and sustainment.

This is one reason the companion toolkit repeatedly warns against quote-driven planning. A quote may support scope development, but it should not replace assessment, code review, governance, or implementation planning.

Why Quote-Driven Funding Fails

Quotes can be useful inputs, but they are poor substitutes for assessment, governance, and scope discipline. Starting with a quote often narrows the discussion too early, confuses product categories with projects, and bypasses the work of verifying code, ownership, sustainment, procurement, and lane fit. That is how schools end up writing weak narratives or forcing unrelated needs into one request.

DO NOT LET A QUOTE BECOME A PROJECT.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See Toolkit p. 17; pp. 18–20

XI. Public, Nonpublic, and Faith-Based Pathways Require Care

Public-school assumptions do not automatically carry over to private, independent, charter, or faith-based settings. Applicant path, equitable services rules, nonprofit eligibility, state-specific service lanes, proposed legislative changes, and facilities governance can all differ materially.

Nonpublic school communities should use the same PASS discipline to define need, but they must verify the legal and administrative pathway before assuming direct eligibility. See Toolkit p. 17 and pp. 18-20.

This is an area where official state and federal guidance is especially important.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See PASS Rev 7 pp. 8, 12, 18

See Toolkit pp. 4-5, 16-17, 21

XII. Funding Is Only the Start: Implementation and Sustainment

Receiving funding does not complete the work. The improvement still has to be procured, installed, integrated, trained, maintained, monitored, and refreshed over time. See PASS Rev 7 baseline and planning references on pp. 8 and 18, plus Toolkit pp. 16-17 and p. 21.

For that reason, a strong proposal should address implementation and sustainment before submission. Districts should know who will lead the work, who will maintain it, how training will occur, and how success will be measured afterward.

A project that cannot be implemented and sustained is not truly funding-ready.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See Toolkit pp. 2-5, 20-22

XIII. Conclusion

School safety funding should not be episodic, reactive, fragmented, or vendor-directed. It should be readiness-based, governance-informed, and grounded in official sources that reflect current requirements.

PASS Rev 7 gives school communities the structure and discipline to define need, organize work, and pursue funding. The companion toolkit turns that structure into practical action, official-source verification, and implementation guidance.

When used in combination, the white paper and toolkit can help schools, districts, and nonpublic communities move from concern to action in a way that is more defensible, sustainable, and more clearly aligned to the real operational work of protecting students, staff, and school communities.

PASS REV 7/TOOLKIT CROSS-REFERENCE

See Toolkit pp. 2-5 and pp. 20-22 for quick-use guidance, checkpoints, and core takeaways.

Appendix A. Crosswalk to PASS Rev 7 and the Companion Toolkit

The table below shows where the themes in this white paper align to PASS Rev 7 and where readers can use the companion toolkit for deeper operational guidance. Use the PASS Rev 7 pages for the foundational framework, and the toolkit pages for the practical next step. White paper references correspond to the current companion toolkit and should be verified if the toolkit is updated.

White paper topic	PASS Rev 7 pages	Companion toolkit pages
Purpose and framework	Rev 7 pp. 6-8, 18	Toolkit pp. 2-5, 22
Need for assessment before funding	Rev 7 p. 12; pp. 15-18	Toolkit pp. 8-10, 21

Layered planning and ownership	Rev 7 pp. 21-133	Toolkit pp. 7-9, 16-17
Official federal tools and registration	Rev 7 supports disciplined planning; see pp. 6-8, 18	Toolkit pp. 4-5, 10-12
State resources and live verification	Rev 7 layered logic applied through state context	Toolkit pp. 12-13, 18-20
Project packaging and lane fit	Rev 7 pp. 15-18; layer sections as applicable	Toolkit pp. 12-17, 21
Nonpublic and faith-based pathways	Rev 7 layered assessment logic applies	Toolkit p. 17; pp. 18-20
Implementation and sustainment	Rev 7 baseline practices and comprehensive planning, pp. 8, 18	Toolkit pp. 4-5, 16-17, 21

Appendix B. Leadership Checklist Before Pursuing a Funding Lane

Before a school or district moves toward a specific funding lane, leadership should be able to answer the following questions clearly:

- Have we defined the actual problem in operational terms rather than product terms?
- Have we identified the affected PASS layer or layers?
- Have we completed or planned the appropriate risk and readiness assessment?
- Do we know who owns this issue, who will implement it, and who will sustain it?
- Have we separated capital, prevention, student-support, recovery, and nonprofit considerations appropriately?
- Have we checked the official federal and state resources directly?
- Are registrations current and proposal logistics understood well before deadline week?
- Are we monitoring current and proposed legislative or policy changes that could affect this work?