



Safe Routes to School Mini-Grants Fall 2011

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I know about the mini-grant funds?

Q: What is the dollar value of each Safe Routes to School mini-grant, and how many will be awarded?

A: The National Center will award 25 mini-grants of \$1,000.

Q: Do these mini-grants require matching funds? Are they reimbursement-only funds, meaning that the applicant spends the money and submits receipts to the National Center to be reimbursed?

A: The mini-grants do not require matching funds, and they are not reimbursement funds. Once a recipient returns a signed confirmation letter, the mini-grant funds are disbursed to a recipient's organization. It is essential that the recipient organization agrees to retain all original receipts in the recipient organization's records in the event of an audit by the federal government.

Q: Are these funds subject to the same reporting requirements that State-distributed SRTS funds are subject to?

A: No. The reporting requirements differ from those associated with larger, State-disbursed SRTS funds. The National Center requires that mini-grant recipients submit two reports:

- (1) An informal report on activities midway through the implementation period; and
- (2) A final report in February 2012 that describes activities and budget expenditures accompanied by at least three digital pictures.

Mini-grant recipients may be asked to complete a brief questionnaire after the grant period.

What are the important dates I should know?

Q: What are the important dates that I need to know?

A: The application deadline is **Wednesday, May 18, 2011**. Mini-grant recipients will be notified by Monday, June 6, 2011, and will be formally announced in August 2011. Activities must be completed by December 31, 2011, or the end of the Fall 2011 semester, whichever is later. A brief final report is due in February 2012.

Who can apply?

Q: Are these mini-grants available to schools and organizations nationwide?

A: Yes.

Q: Are private schools eligible for mini-grant funds?

A: Yes.

Q: Can central office staff submit an application?

A: Yes, grant applications can be submitted by central office staff. All activities, though, must occur at one or more specific schools.

Q: Are high schools eligible for mini-grant funds?

A: Federal legislation requires that these mini-grant funds take place at elementary or middle schools. A high school group or club that wishes to partner with a nearby elementary or middle school to conduct SRTS activities is eligible to apply for mini-grant funds. A successful application will do two things: (1) show how the high school group/club will partner with the lower school; and (2) demonstrate that the funds will be used at and for the benefit of the lower school.

What are the application requirements?

Q: Does our school have to have a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program?

A: Your school must have a safe walking and/or bicycling to school program, or it must be willing to start such a program in order to be eligible for the mini-grant funds.

Q: Are the mini-grant funds only for schools/organizations that have already received a Safe Routes to School grant from their state?

A: No, any school or organization can apply for a mini-grant regardless of whether the school/organization has received other SRTS funds.

What types of activities are eligible?

Q: What kinds of activities can we do with the money?

A: The National Center wants to see proposals that fit a school's needs and interests. To give you some ideas about the possible ways in which these funds could make a difference, especially in relation to the school's needs and interests, please see minigrants.saferoutesinfo.org/eligible_activities.pdf.

Q: Could we also teach nutrition as part of this grant?

A: You could certainly teach nutrition as part of activities funded by the mini-grants, as long as the nutrition education is done in the context of a Safe Routes to School program. You might consider integrating safe walking and bicycling into the school's broader *Let's Move!** initiative, which includes nutrition, physical activity, and parental engagement.

* First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* Campaign has an ambitious national goal of solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation. More information can be found at www.letsmove.gov.

What types of items can we purchase with the funds?

Q: Our organization knows that these funds are subject to federal regulations. What items can we spend the mini-grant money on? What items do federal regulations forbid?

A: Below are examples of items that can and cannot be purchased according to federal regulations. **Please note that these lists are not exhaustive.** Because of the small award size, these restrictions may differ slightly from those associated with State SRTS grants. If you have questions about funding eligibility for specific activities or items, please email info@saferoutesinfo.org.

Yes! Federal funds CAN be spent on items like these:

- Promotional materials*
- Educational materials*
- Safety items (e.g., reflective vests and bands, bicycle helmets, bicycle lights)
- Bicycle racks
- Bicycles that benefit groups of students
- Bicycle rentals
- Digital camera rental
- Video camera rental
- Helmet camera rental
- Professional services (e.g., safety trainers)

No, Federal funds CANNOT be spent on items like these:

- Food and refreshments
- Staff salaries
- Stipends for volunteers
- Fund-raising activities
- Gift cards
- Contests, prizes, and incentives
- Bicycles for specific individuals
- Digital camera purchase
- Video camera purchase
- Helmet camera purchase

* Modest-cost promotional/educational materials with the broadest reach are more likely to be competitive in the application process.

Q: Could our school/organization use the mini-grant funds to pay for safety equipment such as safety vests, flags or hand signs for crossing busy streets, yard signs for walking-bus stops, solar flashing lights at crosswalks, etc.?

A: Yes, the mini-grant funds can be used to purchase safety equipment.

What information will the selection committee consider?

Q: Will geographic distribution be factored into the mini-grant selection decisions?

A: Yes. The selection committee considers the national geographic diversity of mini-grant recipients as a group.

Q: Will community characteristics be factored into the mini-grant selection decisions?

A: Yes. The selection committee seeks to have a variety of community types represented in the group of mini-grant recipients.

How can we help our application be competitive?

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A: The National Center seeks clear, well-thought-out application responses that:

- Propose activities that can address the school's particular situation or interests and that have the potential to have a broad reach and lasting impact;
- Demonstrate a reasonable connection between activities and desired outcomes, and include a plan for measuring those outcomes; and
- Include a clear description of how funding will be used for these activities.

Q: Should someone review my mini-grant application before I submit it?

A: The National Center strongly recommends that you ask someone else to review your proposal before you submit it. Reviewers who are not involved in writing the proposal may help to identify areas in the application that need more explanation.

You may also consider contacting your State SRTS Coordinator (www.saferoutesinfo.org/contacts) for a review of your application. The National Center's mini-grant program is not affiliated with State SRTS programs, and some coordinators may not have time available to review applications for the National Center's mini-grant program. Other coordinators – particularly from states with fewer mini-grant applicants – may welcome the opportunity to help their state's applicants be competitive in this mini-grant process. Reviewing applications for the National Center's mini-grant program is at the discretion of each State DOT.

Is there anything else we should know?

Q: How often are Safe Routes to School mini-grants given?

A: This is the fourth round of mini-grants that the National Center for Safe Routes to School has offered. In general, the National Center has a call for applications twice a year, once each in the spring and fall. Mini-grant recipients complete their proposed activities during the following school semester. The first round of mini-grant funds was awarded in Fall 2009 for implementation in Spring 2010. Succeeding mini-grant activities have taken place in Fall 2010 and Spring 2011.

Q: Where can we find more information about the Safe Routes to School mini-grants?

A: Information about the National Center for Safe Routes to School's mini-grants is here: minigrants.saferoutesinfo.org.

Q: What is Safe Routes to School, and where can we find more information about it?

A: Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a program that enables and encourages children to safely walk and bicycle on the trip between home and school. Federal legislation provides a dedicated State SRTS Coordinator to each state and Washington, DC, and funding to support each state's SRTS efforts.

Established in May 2006, the National Center for Safe Routes to School assists states and communities in enabling and encouraging children to safely walk and bicycle to school. The National Center serves as the clearinghouse for the federal Safe Routes to School program. The organization also provides technical support, resources, and online registration for U.S. Walk to School Day, and facilitates worldwide promotion of and participation in International Walk to School Day. The National Center for Safe Routes to School is part of the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center with funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration. For more information, visit www.saferoutesinfo.org.