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# Funding Guide

## For School Climate Improvement

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This guide outlines the steps for securing funding to implement Community Matters' Programs to support your school climate improvement efforts. It contains resources and tools that will be helpful in the process.



**COMMUNITY  
MATTERS**

*Empowering Youth  
Transforming Communities*

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# Funding Guide for School Climate Improvement

## 1. Identifying Potential Funding Sources:

Finding potential funders and donors can be as simple as connecting with community organizations, local businesses and individuals who care about young people and schools and therefore may be compelled to underwrite or financially contribute to the program. Some possible sources include:

### **Service & Civic Clubs:**

A list of these clubs can be found through your local Chamber of Commerce. Many service groups are interested in supporting local schools and youth. If you are not a member of a service club, your colleagues might be – ask! Many service and civic clubs challenge their members to contribute to a matching campaign. Schools that have used this strategy have been very successful at raising funds to support their climate improvement programs.

*Some examples include: Rotary, Kiwanis, Odd Fellows, Masons, Lions, Soroptimists, AAUW, 20-30 Clubs, and Alumni Associations*

### **Parent/Teacher Association:**

Many Parent/Teacher Associations contribute to programs at their school when a compelling request that meets a need on campus is made. See Appendix B and C for verbiage on the Safe School Ambassadors and Safe School Buddies Programs.

### **Local Businesses:**

Local businesses (especially bank chains) often want to fund bullying prevention programs, particularly if there are issues of vandalism, truancy, or other youth-oriented problems prevalent in the community. Many businesses have a designated amount of funding that they give to local nonprofits each year through their charitable giving program. Check with the parents of your students as some businesses also match employee contributions.

*Some examples include: Employee matching from employers/companies such as Wells Fargo, or annual local giving from chain stores such as Home Depot, Starbucks, and other locally owned businesses.*

### **Foundations:**

Identify local, state, or regional foundations that fund youth-oriented or school-focused programs. Your County Office of Education or district grant writer may have some good leads on potential foundations. Also try the local United Way or Community Foundation in your area. Google is a viable resource as well.

### **Individual Donors (including parents):**

Contact friends, family, neighbors and colleagues to identify which organizations or clubs they belong to or know members in and which companies they may work for that have employee-match programs. You can also send out letters to individuals to request donations or run a “donor campaign” by sending letters to many people at once.

There are many reasons an individual donor may want to adopt or sponsor a specific school and fund the total cost of Community Matters’ Safe School Ambassadors and other programs. It is very effective to determine what *personal* links and connections exist between your school’s climate improvement efforts and your potential donors. Some examples of reasons individuals may feel compelled to contribute include:

The potential donor may:

- Have been bullied as a child.
- Be a graduate of the school and wish to see the reduction of bullying and harassment on the campus.
- Have a child who has been bullied at this or other schools.
- Have children or grandchildren at this school.
- Have a son or daughter who is a teacher.
- Been a bully as a child and wishes to make amends as an adult.
- Be a philanthropist with a focus on supporting youth-oriented programs.

## **2. Researching the Potential Funder:**

One of the most important steps to successfully securing funding is to understand the priorities of the potential funder or donor. An efficient way to gather information about foundations or government agencies is to look at funding guidelines and program areas on the organization's website. There you can learn what they fund, the application process, their deadlines, how much they are likely to give, and any pertinent contact information. It is always worthwhile to find out if anyone in your network knows someone at this organization and find out if s/he will make the first call or contact on your school's behalf.

While each potential funder may have a different approach, the basic process is outlined below:

- If there is a website, look at it to determine application process
- If there is no website, call or email to identify who is the person in charge of charitable giving
- Send an email or call to introduce yourself and the Community Matters program(s) of your choice, and to inquire about their process for funding programs
- They may want a short proposal, which Community Matters can help with
- You might request to do a brief presentation to their group – we can provide you with support materials for your presentation
- Follow-up with a phone call to check status and discuss next steps

## **3. Letters of Request**

While each source may have specific templates and guidelines, we have provided templates to help get you started (Appendix A). It is highly important to use the information you found during your research to customize your requests to each potential donor or funding source. Hopefully in your research, you discovered the priorities of the funder and the levels of funding offered. It is recommended to use the funders language in the request as it shows alignment with their priorities. It is common to request a portion of the total amount needed from individuals or PTA groups. If there are no limits given as to how much the request can be for, it is common to ask for the total amount needed.

To ensure an advantage in what is often a very competitive process, it is very important to follow all the funding and solicitation guidelines and submission instructions **exactly** as they are listed. There are so many requests received that even one mistake (forgetting to send in the right number of copies, not having the appropriate signatures, missing a deadline) can eliminate your request from being considered. The following section clarifies the difference between a grant or a donation as it is important to be clear about what you are requesting; a grant or a donation.

## **4. Difference Between a Grant and a Donation**

### **Grant:**

Funding for a set amount, for a particular period of time, for a particular purpose. A grant is usually requested by writing a proposal to an organization or corporation that provides set amounts via a "RFP" (Request for Proposals) or LOI (Letter of Intent/Inquiry) process that has set deadlines and guidelines. Grants are the most "formal" way to acquire funding.

\*Please contact Community Matters if you need us to provide specific grant language on any of our services

**Donation:**

An amount of money designated by an individual or organization to go to a particular organization or project of that organization (a “cause”). Donations may vary in amount and are not usually restricted to certain times of year or specific guidelines.

**5. Follow Up:**

After you have submitted your request for funding, these follow-up steps will help ensure that all your research, time, and effort is well spent:

- Call within a week to verify that they have received the solicitation request.
- Ask if they have any questions or concerns and be sure to respond to them promptly.
- Ask about their decision-making and notification estimated timeline and how you will receive notification.
- Make sure they have your contact information in case anything further is requested/needed.
- Thank them for their consideration.
- If appropriate, check on status periodically if you have not heard from them in the time frame they indicated.

**6. Approval of the Funding Request:**

When you receive notification that your funding request has been approved, contact Community Matters’ Director of Outreach and Services to discuss and initiate the contracting process:

LeeAnn Lichnovsky, Senior Director  
[leeann@community-matters.org](mailto:leeann@community-matters.org)  
(707) 823-6159 x111  
[www.community-matters.org](http://www.community-matters.org)

**Letter of Request Template  
Civic or Service Organization**

[Name of School]  
[Address]  
[City], [State] [Zip]

[Date]

[Service Club or Civic Organization]  
Attn: [Name of primary contact if applicable]  
[Address]  
[City], [State] [Zip]

Dear [Members]:

I am writing to request [\$ \_\_\_\_\_] to fund the Safe School Ambassadors® Program (SSA) or [name of other program] at our school for the [school year] school year. We are reaching out to community service organizations such as yours to support us in implementing one of the nation’s most effective programs in reducing school violence and bullying.

As you may know, schools throughout the country face an unprecedented challenge with budget cutbacks. Schools are under increased pressure both to improve students' academic performance *and* address their growing social/emotional needs. These goals must be achieved in a climate where simple misunderstandings often escalate into more serious issues and even violence.

Here at [Name of School], we see peer mistreatment as a very serious problem, one that demands an increasingly large amount of the administration’s time, and resources that are very limited.

For too many youth bullying is commonplace, and recreational cruelty is accepted as a rite of passage. For many students, social isolation, verbal abuse, ridicule, bullying, racial intolerance and sexual harassment have become daily occurrences.

**The Safe School Ambassadors Program – In over 2,000 schools in 38 US states, Paraguay, Canada, Guam, Japan and Puerto Rico.**

The Safe School Ambassadors (SSA) Program, created by California-based nonprofit Community Matters, is a student-centered model that engages the socially influential leaders of a school's diverse groups and cliques. SSA equips these young people with powerful, nonviolent communication and intervention skills they can use with their friends and classmates when they see harassment, exclusion, bullying, and other forms of mistreatment.

The Safe School Ambassadors program is based on a solid foundation of research and principles that have been proven in the field for many years. Why the SSA Program works:

- **Involves the “change-agents”.** The program identifies and recruits “socially-influential” students. Research shows that these are the students who determine what’s OK and not OK and have the power to change the ways young people treat each other.
- **Results are measurable.** Ambassadors’ recorded interventions and school discipline data provide vital **evidence** of the effectiveness of the Safe School Ambassadors program. In a third-party evaluation of the SSA program, the evaluators concluded the following: Analysis of

suspensions and other discipline indicators at SSA schools showed reductions averaging 33%, while indicators at matched control schools rose 10% during the same years.”

- **Results radiate.** In a class of 40 trained Ambassadors, each student averages two interventions per week. During a 30-week school year, that would mean over 2,400 interventions a year. The impact radiates outward like a pebble in a pond when “bystander” classmates observe the interventions of Ambassadors and learn from their peers that bullying and violent behavior is not acceptable—or, in their terms, “not cool.”

[Name of School] has been in discussion with Community Matters to bring the SSA Program to our campus. However, due to budget cuts, the funds once available for school security and safety are no longer accessible. We need community support in order to bring this field-tested and results-proven program to our school.

We are asking for your financial support of [\$\_\_\_\_\_, or a portion thereof] [\$\_\_\_\_\_] to fund the Safe School Ambassadors Program at [Name of School]. Please contact me if you have any questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,

[Name]  
[Title]

**About Community Matters:**

Headquartered in Santa Rosa, Community Matters is a nationally recognized leader in bullying prevention, school safety measures and school climate improvement. Their evidence-based Safe School Ambassadors® Program is a student led and delivered bullying prevention program proven to reduce suspensions by as much as 34%. The program has been delivered to over 2,000 schools in 41 states and internationally, with over 100,000 students trained.

## Letter of Request Template Grants and Foundations

[Name of School]  
[Address]  
[City], [State] [Zip]

[Date]

Foundation  
P.O. Box 123  
Any City, Any State Zip

Dear [Foundation]:

We respectfully submit the following request to implement the Safe School Ambassadors Program at our school.

### The Need:

For many youth, peer-on-peer relationships indicate that bullying is still commonplace and recreational cruelty is accepted as a rite of passage. Social isolation, verbal abuse, ridicule, bullying, racial intolerance, and sexual harassment may be subtle and/or out of sight of school administrators or other adults.

### The Challenge for Schools Today:

School communities face an unprecedented challenge: increased pressure to improve students' academic performance *and* address their growing social/emotional needs, all this in a climate where tension between racial and other groups is increasing, and simple misunderstandings often escalate into more serious forms of hurt or violence.

In this [county or school district], administrators report that this peer mistreatment is a very real problem, one that requires an increasingly large amount of their time and resources.

### Safe School Ambassadors:

The Safe School Ambassadors® (SSA) Program is a student-centered model that engages the socially influential students of a school's diverse groups and cliques. SSA equips these young people with powerful, nonviolent communication and intervention skills they can use with their friends and classmates when they see harassment, exclusion, bullying, and other forms of mistreatment.

The Safe School Ambassadors Program is based on a solid foundation of research and principles that have been proven in the field for many years. Why SSA works:

- **Involves the “change-agents”.** The program identifies and recruits “socially-influential” students. Research shows that these are the students who determine what's OK and not OK and have the power to change the ways young people treat each other.
- **A skills-based program.** It equips students with powerful, nonviolent communication and intervention skills so they can speak up and take effective action when they see their friends and classmates mistreat others.
- **Results are measurable.** Ambassadors' recorded interventions and school discipline data provide vital **evidence** of the effectiveness of the Safe School Ambassadors Program. Ambassadors fill out action logs that record their interventions. These logs, along with school discipline data provide vital evidence of the effectiveness of the Safe School Ambassadors Program in:
  - decreased incidents of mistreatment,



- increased attendance on the part of often-targeted students,
- increased acceptance and improved relationships among students

In a third-party evaluation of the SSA program, the evaluators concluded the following: Analysis of suspensions and other discipline indicators at SSA schools showing reductions averaging 33%, while indicators at matched control schools rose 10% during the same years.”

- **Results radiate.** In a class of 40 trained Ambassadors, each student averages two interventions per week. During a 30-week school year, that would mean over 2,400 interventions a year. The impact radiates outward like a pebble in a pond when classmates observe the interventions and learn from their peers that bullying and violent behavior is not acceptable; or in their terms “not cool”.

### **[Name of School]'s Proposal**

[Name of School] is requesting [\$XXXX] to implement the Safe School Ambassadors® Program in our school. The cost of the program includes 2 days of on-site training for 30-40 students and 6-8 adults; materials; year-round coaching, and access to our online tools.

Upon receipt of the grant funds, [Name of School] will contract with Community Matters to implement the program.

### **About Community Matters:**

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Sincerely,

[Name]  
[Title]

## Letter of Request Template Individuals and Parents

[Name of School]  
[Address]  
[City], [State] [Zip]

[Date]

Dear **Name:**

As you know, schools throughout the country face an unprecedented challenge with budget cutbacks. Schools are under increased pressure to both improve students' academic performance and address their growing social/emotional needs. As if this weren't challenging enough, these goals must be achieved in a climate where bullying, violence and other forms of mistreatment are on the rise.

Here at [Name of School], we are committed to providing students with a quality education in a safe environment that is conducive to learning. However, we see peer-on-peer mistreatment as a very serious problem, one that demands an increasingly large amount of the administration's time, and resources that we no longer have because the budget cutbacks have resulted in fewer counselors, campus supervisors and school resource officers.

Students have tremendous power and influence in setting the social norms on campus and are best positioned to create a safe and secure climate within their social groupings. These range from the various socio-economic and ethnic cliques, athletes to artists, classical musicians to rappers, and so on. We have an opportunity for students to participate in a proven program that will provide them with the skills and tools to help reduce bullying, mistreatment and harassment at our school. Safe School Ambassadors (SSA) is an effective, evidence-based program implemented in nearly 2,000 schools in 38 US states, Paraguay, Canada, Guam, Japan and Puerto Rico.

The SSA Program, created by California-based nonprofit Community Matters, is a student-centered model that engages the socially influential leaders of a school's diverse groups and cliques. SSA equips these young people with powerful, nonviolent communication and intervention skills they can use with their friends and classmates when they see harassment, exclusion, bullying and other forms of mistreatment.

The Safe School Ambassadors program is based on a solid foundation of research and principles that have been proven in the field for many years. Why SSA works:

- **Involves the “change-agents”.** The program identifies and recruits “socially-influential” students. Research shows that these are the students who determine what's OK and not OK and have the power to change the ways young people treat each other.
- **A skills-based program.** It equips students with powerful, nonviolent communication and intervention skills so they can speak up and take effective action when they see their friends and classmates mistreat others.
- **Results are measurable.** Ambassadors' recorded interventions and school discipline data provide vital **evidence** of the effectiveness of the Safe School Ambassadors Program. Ambassadors fill out action logs that record their interventions. These logs, along with school discipline data provide vital evidence of the effectiveness of the Safe School Ambassadors program in:
  - decreased incidents of mistreatment,
  - increased attendance on the part of often-targeted students,
  - increased acceptance and improved relationships among students

In a third-party evaluation of the SSA Program, the evaluators concluded the following: Analysis of suspensions and other discipline indicators at SSA schools showing reductions averaging 33%, while indicators at matched control schools rose 10% during the same years.”

- **Results radiate.** In a class of 40 trained Ambassadors, each student averages two interventions per week. During a 30-week school year, that would mean over 2,400 interventions a year. The impact radiates outward like a pebble in a pond when classmates observe the interventions and learn from their peers that bullying and violent behavior is not acceptable; or in their terms “not cool”.

[Name of School] has been in discussion with Community Matters to bring the SSA Program to our campus. However, due to budget cuts, the funds once available for school security and safety are no longer accessible. We need YOUR support.

We are looking to complete our funding by [date]. Please make your check payable to [Name of School] and put “SSA Program” in the memo line. Thank you for investing in the safety and success of our young people and our school.

Sincerely,

[Name]  
Title

**About Community Matters:**

Headquartered in Santa Rosa, Community Matters is a nationally recognized leader in bullying prevention, school safety measures and school climate improvement. Their evidence-based Safe School Ambassadors® Program is a student led and delivered bullying prevention program proven to reduce suspensions by as much as 34%. The program has been delivered to over 2,000 schools in 41 states and internationally, with over 100,000 students trained.

**Safe School Ambassadors® Program**  
For Elementary, Middle and High Schools  
(Students in Grades 4-12)

**Premise:**

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The overarching goals of the Safe School Ambassadors® (SSA) Program are to build, maintain and sustain a safe and positive school climate, which empowers teachers to educate more effectively and students to learn and grow more successfully. The SSA Program fosters school safety by empowering influential students to safely intervene when they witness mistreatment such as bullying, cyberbullying and other harmful behaviors that can lead to tragedies such as suicide and gun violence.

SSA is a long-term prevention and early intervention program. The core element of the program's approach is empowering and equipping a diverse group of socially influential students to shift the social norms on a campus (and over time, in a community) by changing their own behavior, leading by example and encouraging their friends to do the same. School climate and social norms do not change overnight; they change over time. Therefore, the SSA program is most successful when it is implemented and championed with a long-term strategic approach in mind.

The SSA program is most effective when implemented over a 3-year timeframe, which allows it to develop strong roots that anchor it firmly into school culture and practice. After the first three years of Community Matters providing the SSA Training, schools are provided the opportunity to move into a Training of the Trainer (TOT) model. When schools move to the TOT, Community Matters partners with the school to support the program in a long-term sustainable way. With this approach, the SSA Program and the premises on which it stands, become embedded into the school practices as a way of thinking, communicating and behaving.

**Overview:**

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The program engages socially influential student leaders from the school's social groups and cliques across campus. These leaders are carefully identified through student and staff surveys. They are selected based upon specific criteria, such as: strong position and influence in their peer group, good communication skills, and a history of standing up for friends. They participate in a two-day interactive training along with several adults who serve as program mentors. The training gives student Ambassadors the motivation and skills to safely resolve conflicts, defuse incidents, and support isolated and excluded students. After the training, Ambassadors meet in small groups called Family Groups on a regular basis. These meetings, led by the adult mentors, provide time for strengthening skills, data collection of Ambassador interventions, and inspiring student and adult commitment to the program. On average, student Ambassadors intervene with actions learned in the training 2+

per week. During a school year, these individual actions often add up to more than **2,400** interventions, which impacts the whole school in a positive way.

### **Expected Outcomes:**

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The Safe School Ambassadors® Program is evidence based. It was included on SAMHSA'S *National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices* as a Legacy Program. In 2010, results from the study showed that during the designated time period:

- SSA schools showed suspension rate **decreases of 33%**
- Non-SSA control schools showed suspension rate **increases of 10%**

When the Safe School Ambassadors program is implemented and delivered with fidelity, the following results are reported:

- Decreased incidents of bullying, harassment, cyber bullying, violence, exclusion and other forms of harmful behaviors and mistreatment
- Increased attendance and academic performance
- Reductions in the costs and losses in both time and money related to suspensions
- Improved relationships among and between students and adults
- Increased respect for diversity and different ways of thinking and acting
- Increased feelings of connectedness to school and each other

When students observe the interventions of Ambassadors, they start to feel more comfortable and motivated to take action and speak up; ultimately turning bystanders into “upstanders”. This shift creates a “ripple effect” on campus that over time results in changing the schools’ social norms. Norms of ambivalence and acceptance of cruel behavior fade and are replaced with a school climate where students take pride in caring for each other and it is socially acceptable and encouraged to stand up for each other and to get help when needed.

### **Cost:**

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- Discounts may be provided for larger districts and for partners
- Prices include supplies and materials, technical assistance and post training support, access to program tools and best practices, and trainer fees and travel
- Prices for the Training of the Trainer (TOT) are handled on an individual service basis

### **Year One- Implementation (Initial Training): \$7,200**

Community Matters trains up to 40 new elementary, middle, or high school students and 5-8 adults. Students then meet in small Family Groups throughout the year. (*1:6 adult to student ratio for each day*).

### **Year Two and Three - (Expansion Trainings): \$7,200 per year**

Community Matters trains up to 40 new elementary, middle, or high school students and 5-8 adults; on Day 2 schools may add **up to** 12 previously-trained veteran Ambassadors. (*1:6 adult to student ratio for each day*).

### **Training of the Trainer (TOT): *Price determined on an individual service basis***

After three years of successful implementation with a Community Matters trainer, schools become eligible to move into a TOT model where the school sustains the program with support from Community Matters.

## **Safe School Buddies Program** For Students in Grades 1-3

### **Program Premise and Overview:**

The Safe School Buddies (SSB) Program is designed for students in first through third grades. The SSB Program empowers and equips socially influential students to promote kindness, respect for others, and to be positive role models with their peers. At its core, the SSB Program prepares younger students to become upstanders, to set positive and inclusive social norms on campus and also to become Safe School Ambassadors when they enter 4<sup>th</sup> grade. This is achieved by focusing on social interactions, emotional awareness and self-regulation.

The SSB Program starts with a two-day interactive training for up to 30 students and up to 6 adults (1:5 adult to student ratio). The training provides the Buddies with examples of mistreatment and helps them understand what mistreatment looks and feels like. They learn and practice age-appropriate “Buddy Actions” they can use when they see different types of mistreatment such as teasing, put downs and exclusion. They also learn age-appropriate ways to effectively resolve conflict and problem solve. After the two-day training, Buddies meet in small groups, called Family Groups on a regular basis throughout the year. These meetings, led by the adult mentors, provide time for strengthening the skills learned during the training.

### **Expected Outcomes:**

When the SSB Program is implemented and delivered with fidelity, the following results are expected:

- Increased awareness and understanding of what it means to be a good friend and positive influence in a peer group
- Decreased incidents of mean spirited and hurtful behaviors
- Increased ability to peaceably resolve conflicts and problem solve
- Increased respect for diversity and different ways of thinking and acting
- Positive feelings of connectedness to school and each other

The SSB Program is most effective when implemented over a 3-year timeframe, which allows it to develop strong roots that anchor it firmly into school culture and practices. After the first three years of a Community Matters trainer providing the 2-day SSB Training, the school can move into a Training of the Trainer (TOT) model whereby selected adults at the school are trained to provide the 2-day SSB Training for the students and to keep facilitating the program. When schools move into the TOT model, Community Matters partners with the school to support the long-term sustainability of the program. With this approach, the core values and principles of the SSB Program become imbedded into the school practices as a way of thinking, communicating and behaving.

## **Program Support:**

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Community Matters provides the following materials and technical assistance for successful implementation of the program:

- Program Advisor Handbook; includes resources for all aspects of program operations
- Family Group Facilitator Guides to help adults empower and support Buddies in their Family Group meetings; includes agendas and activities for the meetings
- Buddy workbooks and materials that support the training and guide further skill development for the Buddies
- Ongoing live coaching for the adults by phone and/or email
- Regular e-newsletters with tips and best practices
- Web-based resources

## **Cost:**

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### **Year One- Implementation (Initial Training): \$7,200**

Community Matters trains up to 30 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade students and 6-8 adults. Students then meet in small Family Groups throughout the year.

*(1:5 adult to student ratio for each day).*

### **Year Two and Three - (Expansion Trainings): \$7,200 per year**

Community Matters trains up to 30 new 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade students and 6-8 adults; on Day 2 schools may add **up to** 12 previously trained veteran Buddies.

*(1:5 adult to student ratio for each day).*

### **Training of the Trainer (TOT): *Price determined on an individual service basis***

After three years of successful implementation with a Community Matters trainer, schools become eligible to move into a TOT model where the school sustains the program with support from Community Matters.

- Discounts may be provided for larger districts and for partners
- Prices include supplies and materials, technical assistance and post training support, access to program tools and best practices, and trainer fees and travel
- Prices for the Training of the Trainer (TOT) are determined on an individual service basis