



How to Use QuickStart Mini-grants During Covid-19

Dear SRTS Partners,

Schools may not be returning in a familiar fashion this fall, but the VA SRTS QuickStart Mini-grants are back with three fall due dates of **August 13**, **September 10**, and **October 8**!

QuickStart Mini-grants are \$1,000 reimbursement grants that can be used to jump start SRTS programs and activities. Since these activities will look and feel very different this fall than in the past, we've put together a starter list of ideas below. When you're ready to fill out the easy online application, head over to https://www.virginiadot.org/programs/srts_quick_start_mini-grant_program.asp.

Here are a few ideas to consider:

- **Story walks (to purchase materials)**—Story walks consist of laminated placards containing the pages of a children's story that are placed along a walking route. Children go from placard to placard to read the story. Story walks are a fun way to encourage both reading and walking!
- **Traffic gardens (to purchase materials)**—Traffic gardens are temporary or permanent installations that are meant to simulate street environments and facilitate pedestrian and bicycle safety education for young children. They're relatively easy to make—typically just lines on pavement—and can be installed almost anywhere there is a paved surface, such as a publicly accessible location on school grounds, the blacktop at a local park, or a slow street (see below for more information on slow streets). Traffic gardens can be supported by outreach to parents to make them aware of where the traffic garden is and how to use it to teach children pedestrian or bicycle safety skills.
- **Safe driving initiatives (to purchase materials)** – More people working and learning from home has meant a decrease in the number of cars on the road and the wide open lanes encourage speeding. To help calm traffic in neighborhoods where more students and families are out walking and biking, check out the Zone In, Not Out [Safe Driver Pledge Kit](#) and [Yard Sign templates](#) on our [website](#).



A traffic garden was recently installed at Hollin Meadows Elementary School in Fairfax County using a QuickStart Mini-grant.



Example of Zone In, Not Out yard signs near Elkton Elementary School in Elkton, Virginia, which received a [Walkabout Mini-grant](#).

- **Bike racks (to purchase the rack)**—It’s never a bad time to install a bike rack. Even if children are not biking to school currently because of coronavirus, that will eventually change, and it might change in a big way, considering how many kids have taken up biking during the pandemic. Keep in mind, however, that bike rack installation costs cannot be covered by a QuickStart Mini-grant, and that a bike rack purchase should be accompanied by a bicycle safety education or promotion effort.
- **Street art (to purchase materials)**—Street art is similar to a traffic garden in that it can be temporary or permanent and usually consists of paint or chalk on a paved surface, in this case a street. Street art can incorporate pedestrian and bicycle safety messages, but it doesn’t have to. It could be a design that reflects the culture and values of the school community, or just something beautiful that people in the community will appreciate. One of the main benefits is to humanize the street, and in so doing cause drivers to slow down and parents, children, community members to come out and enjoy... while socially distancing of course. Street art projects are also a great way to engage students in an endeavor that taps into their creativity and gives them the satisfaction that comes from working with others and with seeing one’s creative vision realized in a public space.



- **Videos (to pay for production costs and equipment rental)**—Videos can be a powerful teaching tool during coronavirus times, or indeed any time. They can be easily distributed via email, social media, or the school’s website and can cover a range of pedestrian and bicycle topics, such as avoiding distractions while walking and biking, maintaining social distance while walking and biking, arrival and dismissal procedures, and basic bicycle repairs. Children are often adept at and interested (!) in creating videos. A video project could be a way to build on that. Videos can also be accompanied by worksheets or other materials that encourage learning and reflection.



Video of the Arlington Science Focus School Robotics Club demonstrating the pedestrian safety product they developed as part of SRTS youth leadership project.

- **Slow streets (to purchase barricades, signs, and other materials)**—Slow streets are neighborhood streets that have been temporarily closed to thru traffic to accommodate socially distant walking and bicycling during the Covid-19 pandemic. They’re often established by installing temporary barriers at intersections with signs indicating a lower speed limit (e.g., 15 mph) and “No Thru Traffic.” Slow streets may be implemented near schools to facilitate socially distant walking and biking to school. They’re a great place for kids to learn how to ride a bike or practice pedestrian safety skills, and they’re open and available even when school is closed. Slow streets may include traffic gardens and street art to help convey that they are intended for pedestrian and bicycle use. Slow streets require consultation with community members and approval by local government. Local governments are eligible to apply for QuickStart Mini-grants.
- **SRTS-focused youth leadership activities (to pay for materials needed for the activity)**— SRTS-focused youth leadership activities help youth develop the skills and abilities they need to be active and successful citizens through hands-on experience. Transportation to and from school is part of every young person’s daily experience. Youths are natural authorities on school transportation and have opinions about what works and doesn’t work. SRTS-focused youth leadership activities build on youth insights to create more walkable and bikeable communities. We’ve already mentioned street art and videos as opportunities to develop youth leadership but there are many more such opportunities. For example, youth could be involved in an effort to catalog barriers to walking and bicycling around a school. They might develop a pedestrian or bicycle safety campaign and related messaging, which could prove more effective at reaching the target audiences. The sky is the limit! SRTS-focused youth leadership activities may be

particularly helpful in low-income communities or communities of color, because of the need to bring more people of color into transportation-related fields.

These are just a few of the things you can do with a QuickStart Mini-grant during the Covid-19 pandemic. We hope you consider these ideas, but don't feel limited by them. There are lots of creative things you can do during these times. Most of all, please consider applying for a QuickStart Mini-grant. [Click here](#) for more information and a link to the online application.

If you have questions, or are looking for more ideas related to walking and biking during the pandemic, please call 1-855-601-7787 or send an email to info@virginiasrts.org.

Regards,

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