WHITE HOUSE TOOLKIT:
Federal Resources for Addressing
School Infrastructure Needs

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN
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Introduction

Schools should be places where children can thrive. Yet outdated heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems can make classrooms uncomfortable and expose students and teachers to indoor air pollution that can trigger allergies, asthma attacks, and long-term health problems. The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to upgrading school facilities to create healthier learning environments, improve air quality, and lower energy bills for schools around the country.

An unprecedented amount of federal funds is currently available that can support school leaders in making building upgrades. A February 2022 study of school district plans for using the $122 billion in American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) funds shows that school districts will use $9.7 billion to upgrade heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, with an additional $4.9 billion going towards other improvements to facilities that prevent illness. Overall, more than 24% of funds will go towards keeping schools operating safely. In addition, the $350 billion in U.S. Department of Treasury (Treasury) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) program may be used by state, local, and Tribal governments to support schools, including improvements or new construction of facilities in certain communities, consistent with program requirements.

The Infrastructure Improvement and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, also includes funding to improve clean and energy efficient school facilities and school transportation. This includes $500 million for a new Department of Energy grant program to fund school improvements that reduce school energy costs, improve air quality and teacher and student health, and deploy renewable energy or alternative fueled vehicles and infrastructure (more details in this toolkit). $5 billion is included for a new EPA Clean School Bus Program that offers grants and rebates toward the replacement of older school buses with ones that reduce or eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and other pollution—including zero-emission, electric buses. $90 billion in Department of Transportation funding is included that can be used for school route projects that make it easier and safer for K-12 students walk and bike to school. Schools can explore additional opportunities across agencies at here.

In March, the Biden-Harris Administration launched the Clean Air in Buildings Challenge, a key component of the President Biden’s National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan, that calls on all building owners and operators – including schools, colleges and universities, and organizations of all kinds – to adopt key strategies to improve indoor air quality in their buildings and reduce the spread of COVID-19. We encourage schools to participate in the Challenge by assessing their indoor air quality and make ventilation and air filtration improvements to help keep occupants safe. Schools can learn more here.

To support the most effective uses of these and other funds to address school infrastructure needs, this toolkit reviews the resources related to school infrastructure that can support state educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools in undertaking this work. Local leaders can use this guide to identify sources of live technical support from federal agencies, key technical guides and financial resources, including for:

- Indoor air quality,
- Lead removal, and
- Energy efficiency.

This document is non-exhaustive. Agencies can offer additional information on specific topics upon request (see agency contacts in Section III).

This document originally published in March 2022.
I. Available Federal Funds

U.S. Department of Agriculture

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs can support school infrastructure in rural areas through:

- **Community Facilities programs** that support essential community infrastructure in rural areas, including schools and school bus acquisition, through loans, grants, and loan guarantees. See [https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities](https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities).
- **Electric programs** that provide reliable electricity in rural areas, including energy efficiency relending in partnership with local utilities for school retrofits, renewable energy installations and charging stations. See [https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/electric-programs](https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/electric-programs).
- **Energy programs** that support energy audits, renewable energy development, energy efficiency improvements, and installation of renewable energy systems, including for schools. For more information, see [https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/energy-programs](https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/energy-programs).
- **Telecommunications programs** – in addition to providing loans and grants to finance rural broadband deployment, the programs offer grants to support distance learning and telemedicine and community-based internet access centers. See [https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/telecommunications-programs/distance-learning-telemmedicine-grants](https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/telecommunications-programs/distance-learning-telemmedicine-grants).

U.S. Department of Education


- **Governors Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds:** Federal funds provided through GEER under the CARES Act and CRRSA Act can also support recovery in schools, including school infrastructure. See [https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/governors-emergency-education-relief-fund](https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/governors-emergency-education-relief-fund/).

U.S. Department of Energy

- **The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Grants for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Improvements at Public School Facilities.** The IIJA provides $500 million for competitive grants to make energy efficiency, renewable energy, and alternative fueled vehicle upgrades and improvements at public schools. Eligible uses include energy efficiency (envelope, HVAC, lighting, controls, etc.), ventilation,
renewable energy, alternative vehicles, and alternative fuel vehicle infrastructure improvements. A Funding Opportunity Announcement is expected to be released in late summer/early fall 2022 and will be posted at [https://eere-exchange.energy.gov/](https://eere-exchange.energy.gov/).

- The **State Energy Program (SEP)** provides annual funding to 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the five U.S. territories to support a nationwide infrastructure of state energy offices. SEP supports public facilities, including K-12 schools and universities. Find your [state energy office](https://eere-exchange.energy.gov/) for information on energy policies, programs, and financial incentives.

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

  - Applications are due April 19, 2022, for “Reduction in Lead Exposure in Drinking Water,” which includes $10 million for projects to conduct lead service line replacements or implement corrosion control improvements and $10 million for projects that remove sources of lead in drinking water (e.g., fixtures, fountains, outlets and plumbing materials) in schools or childcare facilities.

**U.S. Department of Treasury**

- **State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF)**: SLFRF, a part of the American Rescue Plan, delivers $350 billion to state, local, and Tribal governments across the country to support their response to and recovery from the COVID-19 public health emergency. SLFRF funds may be used to support schools, including improvements or new construction of facilities in certain communities, consistent with program requirements. For details, please see the [Overview of the Final Rule](https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/wiin-2107-lead-testing-school-and-child-care-program-drinking-water-state-grant-program), and the [Final Rule itself, posted on Treasury’s website](https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/wiin-2107-lead-testing-school-and-child-care-program-drinking-water-state-grant-program). Treasury is happy to work with jurisdictions seeking to deploy their funds for this critical eligible use.

**Federal and State Resources for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy**

- Opportunities across agencies related to infrastructure programs, many of which can be used in schools, are listed at [https://www.energy.gov/eere/buildings/federal-and-state-resources](https://www.energy.gov/eere/buildings/federal-and-state-resources).

**Federal Emergency Management Agency**

- [General Information about FEMA grants](https://www.fema.gov/grants). For general information about FEMA grants, see [https://www.fema.gov/grants](https://www.fema.gov/grants). For example, FEMA grants can support school infrastructure following disasters or through hazard mitigation.
II. Key Tools and Resources

A. Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)


- EPA Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Professional Training Webinar Series: These on-demand trainings include multiple 1-hour technical webinars designed to provide school district staff the knowledge and tools they need to execute an indoor air quality management program. See https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/indoor-air-quality-knowledge-action-professional-training-webinar-series.

- EPA Healthy Indoor Environments in Schools During COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond: Resources and guidance from federal agencies about indoor air considerations for schools during COVID-19 and for school reopening, as well as IAQ Tools for Schools improving healthy learning environments beyond the pandemic. See https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-drinking-water/mod1.

- EPA Clean Air in Buildings Challenge: This call to action and set of guiding principles and best practices helps building owners and operators reduce risks from airborne viruses and other contaminants indoors, including in schools. See https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/clean-air-buildings-challenge.

- Air Quality Flag Program: The U.S. Air Quality Index publishes local data about air quality, articulated by the colors of EPA’s Air Quality Index (AQI): green, yellow, orange, red, or purple. Schools can raise a flag that corresponds with how clean or polluted the air is. On unhealthy days, people can use this information to adjust physical activities to help reduce exposure to air pollution, while still keeping active. See https://www.airnow.gov/air-quality-index.


- The ABC’s of Asbestos in Schools. This guidance helps local educational agencies achieve compliance with regulations governing asbestos-containing materials in schools. See https://www.epa.gov/asbestos/abcs-asbestos-schools.

- Safer Choice is an EPA pollution prevention (P2) program, which includes practices that reduce, eliminate, or prevent pollution at its source, such as using safer ingredients in products. It is a voluntary program that works to advance the mission of EPA to protect human health and the environment. See https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice.

B. Lead Removal

- EPA 3Ts (Training, Testing, and Taking Action) for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water: EPA provides information and recommendations to prepare schools, childcare facilities, and states and territories to build programs to reduce lead levels in drinking water. See https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water; 3Ts Parent Template Letter https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water#mod1, a Sampling Data eTracker for Schools at https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water#school, and other interactive tools.

- EPA Ensuring Drinking Water Quality in Childcare Facilities During and After Extended Closures and Ensuring Drinking Water Quality in Schools During and After Extended Closures: These factsheets provide guidance on maintaining drinking water quality during extended closures and recommends start-up procedures when reopening to ensure that drinking water is safe for consumption. See https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/audience-factsheets.

- EPA WaterSense at Work: Best Management Practices for Educational Facilities: This resource promotes water-efficient techniques that can be applied across a wide range of facilities with varying water needs. See https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-01/documents/ws-commercial-factsheet-educational-facilities.pdf.
C. Energy Efficiency and Power

- **ASHRAE Advanced Energy Design Guides for K-12 Schools**: This guide for contractors and designers describes how to achieve deep energy savings for new construction and major renovations. See [https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/aedgs/zero-energy-aedg-free-download](https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/aedgs/zero-energy-aedg-free-download).

- **DOE Efficient and Healthy Schools website**: This online hub provides a comprehensive list of DOE’s resources for planning and designing, including on energy efficiency retrofits and renewable energy integration in schools. See [https://www.energy.gov/eere/buildings/efficient-and-healthy-schools](https://www.energy.gov/eere/buildings/efficient-and-healthy-schools) and [https://www.energy.gov/eere/buildings/energy-efficiency-retrofits-and-renewable-energy-integration-schools](https://www.energy.gov/eere/buildings/energy-efficiency-retrofits-and-renewable-energy-integration-schools).

- **EPA ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager®**: Schools can use EPA’s free online tool, ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager, to assess their facilities’ energy, greenhouse gas, and water performance. State and local education agencies can use benchmarking data to help determine opportunities for improvement and track results annually. EPA provides training and technical support to states and school districts using ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager® in their facility improvement programs. See [https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/benchmark](https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/benchmark).


- **Better Buildings Challenge K-12 Schools**: Through the Challenge, partners commit to reduce portfolio-wide energy use by 20-25% in 10 years or less and participate in peer sharing, showcasing project highlights, and direct partner support. K-12 schools can partner with DOE’s network of technical and industry experts to develop innovative cost-effective energy solutions, and get recognized for their leadership and innovation. See [https://betterbuildingsolutioncenter.energy.gov/challenge/sector/k-12-school-districts](https://betterbuildingsolutioncenter.energy.gov/challenge/sector/k-12-school-districts).

- **DOE Zero Energy (ZE) Schools**:
  - **Affordable Zero Energy (ZE) K–12 Schools: The Cost Barrier Illusion**: This document allows architects, engineers, owners, and researchers to challenge the notion that cost is a barrier to building ZE schools by identifying strategies that enable zero energy K–12 school design and construction that is comparable in cost to conventional schools.
  - **A Guide to Zero Energy and Zero Energy Ready K–12 Schools**: This guide was developed as part of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE’s) Zero Energy Schools Accelerator (ZESA), a collaborative effort between DOE; the National Renewable Energy Laboratory; and school districts, states, and educational support groups from around the country. Because education is managed locally in the United States, this research documents some of the ways U.S. school officials and educators configure school financing, design, construction, curriculum development, and other school-related matters in their areas. The steps outlined here document the process of creating a zero energy school and can provide a strong foundation for future ZE school projects.

D. General Planning and Recognition Resources

- **EPA ENERGY STAR® Certification for K-12 Schools**: ENERGY STAR® certified schools save energy, save money, and help protect the environment by generating fewer greenhouse gas emissions than typical schools. To be certified as ENERGY STAR®, a school must meet indoor environmental quality and energy performance standards verified by a licensed professional. See [https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/building_recognition/building_certification](https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/building_recognition/building_certification) and [https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/building_recognition/building_certification](https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/building_recognition/building_certification).
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Healthy School Environments: This website presents information on key topics about establishing and enhancing healthy school environments at https://www.epa.gov/schools. The site includes guides for schools to mitigate or remediate various environmental exposures, such as mold, PCBs, and mercury.


FEMA Public Assistance: FEMA’s Cost Estimating Format (CEF) is a uniform methodology to determine eligible permanent work costs for large construction projects, including those related to schools at https://www.fema.gov/assistance/public/cost-estimating-tool. The CEF provides a more reliable estimate for improved decision making.

FEMA Emergency Management Institute: The Institute has multiple courses related to multi-hazard emergency planning and safety for schools. For more information, see the training center website at https://training.fema.gov/programs/emischool/emischool.aspx/

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Sensible Steps to Healthy School Environments: These resources highlight cost-effective, affordable ways to protect the health of students and staff and include a Healthy Schools Checklist. See https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-06/documents/sensible_steps_final_may2017_web.pdf and https://www.epa.gov/schools/healthy-schools-checklist.

Efficient and Healthy Schools Campaign: Through this campaign, K-12 schools or their school districts —and especially schools serving low-income student populations— receive additional support when they commit to improve the health of and reduce energy usage in their schools. As a result of participating in the campaign, schools receive campaign newsletters on best practices and case studies, engage in peer-to-peer learning, and receive recognition for their exemplary efforts to improve energy efficiency and indoor air quality through operations and maintenance, HVAC upgrades and replacement, ongoing monitoring and data analytics, and support for a culture for efficient healthy school buildings. Through the Efficient and Healthy Schools campaign, schools can also connect with other Better Buildings technology teams and campaigns and get connected with technical resources for energy efficiency retrofits, low carbon technologies, financing, energy management tools, and indoor air quality. Technical assistance may also include technical review and data analysis of school building assessments, energy efficiency retrofit plans, and measurement and verification results. See https://efficienthealthyschools.lbl.gov/join.

U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools program recognizes early learning centers, schools, school districts, and colleges and universities that (1) reduce environmental impact and costs; (2) improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff; and (3) provide effective environmental and sustainability education. For additional information, including recent honorees, please see https://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/index.html. The related Green Strides School Sustainability Resources Hub connects all school communities with the free, publicly-available resources that Green Ribbon Schools effectively use. See https://www.greenstrides.org/.

DOE Building Energy Codes Program Technical Assistance: The Building Energy Codes Program (BECP) offers a comprehensive collection of information, resources, and technical assistance designed to answer questions and address issues related to energy codes. This includes frequently asked questions, publications, compliance software and tools, and training modules based on best practices. BECP’s team of building energy codes experts is also available to answer specific questions submitted through the web-based help desk. See https://www.energycodes.gov/technical-assistance.

E. Natural Disasters
FEMA P-1000 Safer, Stronger, Smarter: A Guide to Improving School Natural Hazard Safety: This training provides guidance on school operations (i.e., what to do before, during, and after an event) and on the physical protection of school facilities (i.e., what can be done to the structure and facility to improve safety). The training also includes some discussion of the FEMA P-1000 supplements, which provide guidance specific to earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and tsunamis at https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/risk-management/earthquake/training/fema-p-1000.

FEMA 424 Design Guide for Improving School Safety in Earthquakes, Floods, and High Winds: This publication provides design guidance for the protection of school buildings and their occupants against natural hazards, and concentrates on K-12 schools. The focus is on the design of new schools, but the repair, renovation, and extension of existing schools is also addressed. See https://www.fema.gov/pdf/plan/prevent/rms/424/fema424.pdf.


FEMA P-754 Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Handbook for Public Facilities: This handbook is intended to assist facility owners affected by wildfire disasters by suggesting mitigation measures that can be taken to reduce the vulnerability of damaged facilities to future wildfire incidents. See https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fema_p_754.pdf.

F. Contracting and Financing Investments in School Facilities

Financing Energy Upgrades for K-12 School Districts: This guide explicitly focuses on comprehensive energy upgrades, those that involve multiple measures and are targeted toward achieving significant and persistent energy savings. See https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2016/03/f30/financing-energy-upgrades-guide.pdf.


Energy Savings Performance Contracting (ESPC): A Primer for K-12 Schools: This primer explains how schools can use ESPC to save money by improving building energy efficiency and reducing operating costs while increasing occupant comfort and productivity. See https://betterbuildingsolutioncenter.energy.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/K-12-ESPC-Primer.pdf.

Making the Business Case for Energy Efficiency Improvements: EPA’s ENERGY STAR® Cashflow Opportunity Calculator helps make decisions about when and how to finance energy efficiency projects. School facility managers and financial decisionmakers can estimate how much new equipment can be financed using anticipated savings. See https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/save_energy_commercial_buildings/economics_efficiency_projects.

Reference for managing procurement under grant assistance to rebuild or retrofit school buildings: This online toolkit for managing procurements under grants includes links to training opportunities. See https://www.fema.gov/grants/procurement.
III. Points of Contact at Federal Agencies and Technical Assistance Opportunities

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development
Christopher McLean, Acting Administrator, Rural Utilities Service
Christopher.mclean@usda.gov

U.S. Department of Education
- Andrea Suarez Falken, Special Advisor for Infrastructure and Sustainability
  andrea.falken@ed.gov

U.S. Department of Energy
- For general inquiries into the Building Technologies Office’s Efficient and Healthy Schools Program contact Efficient.Healthy.Schools@ee.doe.gov or:
  - Sam Petty, Building Technologies Office, samuel.petty@ee.doe.gov
  - Sarah Zaleski, Building Technologies Office, sarah.zaleski@ee.doe.gov
- For Inquiries related to the Efficient and Healthy Schools campaign: EHSC@lbl.gov

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- For general inquiries related to environmental health and schools: Becky Cook-Shyovitz, Healthy Schools Coordinator, EPA Office of Children’s Health Protection, cook-shyovitz.becky@epa.gov
- For support regarding the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN Act) Grant Programs, contact WIINDrinkingWaterGrants@epa.gov.
- Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) Network: PEHSUs work with health care professionals, parents, schools, community groups, federal, state, and local government agencies, and others to address children’s environmental health issues. They are jointly supported by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and EPA. See https://www.pehsu.net/region2.html and https://icahn.mssm.edu/research/pehsu.
- For support regarding the use of ENERGY STAR® tools and resources, including ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager®: Caterina (Katy) Hatcher, ENERGY STAR® Public Sector National Manager, hatcher.caterina@epa.gov.

Federal Emergency Management Agency
- FEMA provides on-site and virtual grants management training or technical assistance on the grants management life cycle upon request. This training covers the administrative, program, and financial requirements for an award. For questions about Grants Management Training and Technical Assistance, please contact: fema-gpd-gmta.fema.dhs.gov
- For general information about FEMA grants, see https://www.fema.gov/grants.
  - For general questions please contact: ASKCSid@fema.dhs.gov, or call the ASKCSid Helpdesk: (800) 368-6498
- Procurement Disaster Assistance Training (PDAT) POC:
  - fema-gpd-pdat@fema.dhs.gov
- Hazard Mitigation Assistance: For general questions about FEMA’s hazard mitigation grant programs, please contact the FEMA Regional Office or State Hazard Mitigation Officers. For technical assistance questions, please contact:
  - FEMA’s Benefit Cost Analysis Tool email: BCHelpline@fema.dhs.gov
  - Building Science Feasibility and Effectiveness Help email: FEMA-BuildingScienceHelp@fema.dhs.gov
- Public Assistance Program
  - For Public Assistance program policy questions, please contact: FEMA-Recovery-PA-Policy@fema.dhs.gov
  - For technical assistance and system questions about Grants Portal and Grants Manager systems, please contact: fema-recovery-pa-grants@fema.dhs.gov
- Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation Help email:
  - EHPHelpline@fema.dhs.gov
U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- For general inquiries about lead remediation: HUD Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes: Leadregulations@hud.gov or Bruce Haber, Director of Program and Regulatory Support Division, Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, bruce.p.haber@hud.gov.

U.S. Department of Treasury

- For more information about State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds or with questions, contact SLFRP@treasury.gov.
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For details about specific uses of funds, please contact the relevant federal agency, by referencing the points of contact identified in section III.