



Equitable Access to Clean Classroom Air

2024 Supplemental Capital Project Request

Project Class: Grant

Starting Fiscal Year: 2024

Project Summary

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) requests \$20 million to improve classroom and school building air quality through a new grant program that provides fully funded heating, ventilation, and air condition (HVAC) systems, air filtration enhancements, and general air quality improvements, that improve student health, safety, learning, and academic achievement statewide. To ensure equitable access to HVACs and clean air statewide, OSPI proposes allocating these resources to school districts with 1,500 students or less. Priority will be given to districts with limited bonding capacity and districts relying on costly, energy inefficient equipment.

Project Description

Children are more sensitive to health impacts of climate change including heat and wildfire smoke exposure. The Environmental Protection Agency's 2023 report on the health impacts of climate change on children shows that temperature increases of 2 degrees Celsius are associated with 4% reductions in academic achievement per child relative to average learning gains experienced each school year. New diagnoses of asthma associated with wildfire smoke are estimated to increase statewide. Many schools in Washington have inadequate heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to keep students safe and comfortable with temperatures getting warmer and wildfire smoke becoming a more pervasive problem. Black, Hispanic/Latino, and students identified as low-income report the lowest rates of air conditioning in schools, and therefore are likely to experience these impacts disproportionately. This grant would help schools make improvements to HVAC systems to increase air filtration and cooling capabilities, thereby, increasing equitable access to clean air statewide.

What is the problem/opportunity? Identify: priority, underserved people/communities, operating budget savings, public safety improvements & clarifying details. Preservation projects: include information about the current condition of the facility/system.

Many of Washington's school buildings do not contain HVAC, cooling, or ventilation systems, that keep students and teachers comfortable, and filter out air pollutants generated by wildfire smoke, agricultural practices, transportation related emissions, and general industry. As climate change continues to impact Washington, particularly through increased forest fires that generate significant smoke levels, it is imperative that our school buildings are prepared to continue serving students, while protecting their health and safety.

The state School Construction Assistance Program distributes state revenue inequitably, benefiting property-wealthy school districts while failing to provide solutions for our small school districts that cannot pass a capital levy or bond. The practical impact of this funding mechanism is that many of our smaller school districts, which are often located near forestlands, are left without resources to

modernize their school buildings, or replace their HVAC systems. This inequity is exacerbated by the fact that many wealthy communities, and their students, are learning in safe classroom environments with clean air.

What will the request produce or construct (i.e., building predesign or design, construction of additional space, etc.)?

This request will fund HVAC replacements/repairs, as well as funding to improve and repair general improvements to air quality/control systems. This request would create a new ongoing grant program.

How would the request address the problem or opportunity identified in question 1? What would be the result of not taking action?

This request will improve classroom air quality by allowing school districts to repair and replace their existing HVAC and air delivery systems. Without this request, students learning in small districts that cannot pass capital bonds/levies will continue to learn in classrooms that do not protect them against air quality issues. The severity of the issue will amplify each summer as wildfires continue to threaten the western United States.

Improved cooling and air filtration systems will equip schools to provide a safe space for students and communities during extreme weather events. The effects of climate change are already negatively impacting student learning and safety; preparing schools for climate resilience must be a priority if we want students to have safe and comfortable learning environments.

What alternatives were explored? Why was the recommended alternative chosen? Be prepared to provide detailed cost backup. If this project has an associated predesign, please summarize the alternatives the predesign considered.

Alternatives include allowing districts that cannot pass a bond or levy to participate in the SCAP program, Small District Modernization Grant Program, or making direct appropriations to school districts via the Capital Budget.

Which clientele would be impacted by the budget request? Where and how many units would be added, people or communities served, etc.

This proposal would help school districts with 1,500 students of less repair/replace their HVAC, and/or make improvements to school building air quality systems. Units delivered will depend on price, availability, and individual district needs. Locations served will vary based on applicant location.

Does this project or program leverage non-state funding? If yes, how much by source? If the other funding source requires cost share, also include the minimum state (or other) share of project cost allowable and the supporting citation or documentation.

Most school districts do not have the additional capital funds needed to make improvements to HVAC systems. Non-state funds will not be used to complete the projects.

Describe how this project supports the agency's strategic master plan or would improve agency performance. Reference feasibility studies, master plans, space programming and other analyses as appropriate.

This project supports Superintendent Reykdal's K-12 Education Vision of his goal for Washington's public education system to prepare every student who walks through our school doors for post-secondary aspirations, careers, and life.

Does this project include IT related costs, including hardware, software, cloud based services, contracts or staff? If yes, attach IT Addendum.

N/A

If the project is linked to the Puget Sound Action Agenda, describe the impacts on the Action Agenda, including expenditure and FTE detail. See Chapter 12 Puget Sound Recovery) in the 2021-23 Operating Budget Instructions.

N/A

How does this project contribute to meeting the greenhouse gas emissions limits established in RCW 70A.45.050, Clean Buildings performance standards in RCW 19.27A.210, or other statewide goals to reduce carbon pollution and/or improve efficiency?

While increased air ventilation does increase energy use, improved HVAC systems will reduce a school's overall energy use. This will help schools be prepared to meet the Clean Buildings performance standard and improve energy efficiency. Grants awarded will help school districts meet OSPI's Washington Sustainable Schools Protocol.

How does this project impact equity in the state? Which communities are impacted by this proposal? Include both demographic and geographic communities. How are disparities in communities impacted?

Climate change affects all students statewide. Washington has countless communities that cannot pass bonds/levies. Students learning in these communities do not have guaranteed access to clean air quality in their classrooms, even though many of their peers are provided clean air daily. This disparity disproportionately affects low-income students of color and exacerbates pre-existing environmental injustice. Grant applications will be prioritized to promote equity and reduce health disparities across the state.

Is there additional information you would like decision makers to know when evaluating this request?

N/A

Location

Address: 600 Washington St SE

Zip Code: 98504

County: Thurston

City: Olympia
Legislative District: 22

Describe Growth Management Impacts

School districts are responsible for determining whether and how they need to participate in the planning process with the city or county planning authority.

Grant Recipient Organization

Washington State Public School Districts

Application Process Used

OSPI will prioritize the school district applications by scoring them using criteria including building condition assessment scores, frequency of extreme weather events, including but not limited to wildfire smoke instances, and improvements to student health and safety.

Funding Requested

- 2025: \$20,000,000
- 2026: \$0
- 2027: \$0
- 2028: \$0
- 2029: \$0
- 2030: \$0
- 2031: \$0
- 2032: \$0
- 2033: \$0