

## **Climate Resilient Schools: Request for Letters of Interest**

### **Overview**

U.S. EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection received funding to help schools develop and implement strategies to make their school buildings more resilient to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

Funding will support direct technical assistance that brings together school districts, state school facilities agencies, state emergency response agencies, state public health agencies, and community-based organizations to analyze gaps where school buildings are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The result of the analysis and technical assistance workshops will enable targeting of school upgrades to ensure schools are able to remain open and functional during climate impacts. This funding will support work with up to four school districts and their partners.

The goal of this project is to achieve multiple co-benefits, including:

- Creating healthy learning environments through improved indoor air quality and reduced exposure to environmental contaminants in schools.
- Keeping schools open over the long-term in the face of increased frequency and severity of climate change impacts, including but not limited to hurricanes, flooding, drought, tornadoes, wildfire smoke events, and extreme heat events.

### **Project Steps**

After the four projects are selected, EPA will hire a team of consultants to help facilitate either in-person or virtual workshops for each participating community. The workshops will convene partners to discuss steps to retrofit a school building to remain operational, or allow for a quick and safe reopening, during climate change impacts.

The first workshop will focus on identifying high-risk communities and priority school sites. The goal of this step will be to work with partners, including impacted community members, to identify locations within the school district with a high proportion of people at high risk from health impacts from climate change.

Following the first workshop, EPA and its consultant team, which will have expertise in disaster policy and community engagement, will facilitate additional workshops to create an action plan for the selected school, including:

- Roles and responsibilities of all partners.
- Plans and procedures for implementing building retrofits.
- Funding plan to complete retrofit work and to ensure long-term operations and maintenance.
- Contracting requirements for retrofits, including energy efficiency standards and local building codes.
- Plan for how this initial approach could be applied in other school buildings within the community, including ongoing partnership between some or all participants.

EPA hopes these workshops will result in a clear plan for how partners will work together, what steps are required to implement retrofits, and how public school facilities can become more resilient over the long-term.

### Key Information

- **Eligibility:** The letter of interest can come from a school district or state, tribal or county/local governments.
- **Deadline:** **January 19, 2024**
- **How to apply:** Submit a two-page letter of interest.
- **Timeframe:** EPA expects to select up to four recipients in February 2024 and provide all technical assistance within approximately one year.
- **Project Notes:** This program is not a grant. EPA will hire and manage the contract. This program, with the contractor, will provide technical assistance and guidance for planning school renovations and retrofits. This program will not fund plan implementation.

### How the Program Works

1. Interested applicants submit a letter of interest.
2. EPA reviews the letters of interest and selects up to four recipients for assistance.
3. EPA contacts the selected recipient to discuss mutual expectations, roles and responsibilities, schedule the workshops, and review details about the program. During at least two conference calls before the workshop, direct consultation occurs between EPA staff, consultants, technical experts, and local decision-makers whose work relates to the project. The relevant decision-makers will vary for each project but might include representatives from: public health agencies; school facilities agencies; environmental/natural resources programs; emergency response agencies; school districts; and community-based organizations.
4. EPA will hire contractors to work along with EPA staff to conduct a multi-day workshop in the community through which a collaborative process will yield a set of short- to mid-term actions the partners can take to implement a school retrofit.
5. EPA will provide a final action plan detailing the workshop outcomes and outlining near-term next steps for implementing at least one school retrofit, plus longer-term options for retrofitting other schools within the community or state.

### How to Apply

Submit a letter of interest – **no longer than two pages** – that contains the following information. (Please **do not** submit maps, letters of support, or other supplemental information).

1. **Identify the geography and partnership.** Define the geographic bounds of your partnership – is it a city, county, school district, or tribal area? Please describe who your key partners are and the history of the partnership, if any. Describe how you will work across departments and with other organizations in your area to implement this project. If there is a clear lead for your partnership, please explain how this leadership role came about.
2. **Describe the climate impact risks.** Briefly describe why climate change is a concern for the community. Please include information about how this assistance would align with and support

related efforts, including any recent disasters, planned updates to related plans such as a hazard mitigation plan, emergency response plan, public health plan, or climate action plan.

3. **Describe your plan for engaging traditionally underrepresented communities**, including low-income, minority, tribal, and/or overburdened<sup>1</sup> communities, in the technical assistance workshop.
4. **Demonstrate support from elected officials and the public.** Applicants need to identify persons and/or organizations that support the project and will work toward its implementation. Please include a list of references for each of the following (formal letters of support are not necessary):
  - a. Elected Officials or Leadership Support: can include Tribal councils, state agency leads, city or county councils, school district leadership, and representatives from other decision-making bodies with the appropriate government.
  - b. Public or Community Support: can include community-based organizations from underrepresented communities, environmental justice advocates, or neighborhood groups.
5. **Describe your expected capacity for implementation.** EPA hopes to identify project partners that are likely to implement at least one school retrofit shortly after the conclusion of the technical assistance workshop. Please describe how you expect to implement actions identified through this assistance, including availability of funds to perform the retrofit(s).
6. **List the primary point of contact including title, address, email, and phone number.**

The letter must be signed by a school district official, or other elected official or representative of the tribe, state, county, or city, which might include one or more elected officials, an agency decision maker, or a nonprofit leader. **This signature represents support and commitment to this program and assistance.**

**The letter must be submitted in an attachment (Microsoft Word or PDF file) by email to [EPACChildren@epa.gov](mailto:EPACChildren@epa.gov) no later than Friday, January 19, 2024, at 8:00 pm Eastern Time. Please use the subject line "Climate Resilient Schools Letter of Interest."**

If you have questions about this request for letters of assistance, please contact [EPACChildren@epa.gov](mailto:EPACChildren@epa.gov).

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<sup>1</sup> An overburdened community is defined as a community with "minority, low-income, tribal, and indigenous populations and communities in the United States that experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks as a result of greater vulnerability to environmental hazards. This increased vulnerability may be attributable to an accumulation of negative and a lack of positive environmental, health, economic, or social conditions within these populations or communities."