FEMA Continues Funding to Support the Safe Operation of Schools

Funding under FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) program continues to support the safe and continuous in-person operation of schools and school districts, including funding for high-quality masks.

The federal government is committed to working with schools to keep students and staff safe and maintain in-person instruction. Implementing science-based measures – like vaccinations, testing, improved ventilation, and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) like high-quality masks – will help keep schools safely open and reduce the spread of COVID-19. FEMA has worked with emergency managers in states, territories, and tribal nations to provide high-quality masks that they can distribute for free to schools, school districts, and other settings within their jurisdictions; we encourage all schools and school districts to engage the emergency manager in your state, territory, or tribal nation on obtaining these free resources. In addition to the funding provided to schools through the American Rescue Plan and other federal relief packages, schools and school districts may also use the FEMA Public Assistance program to seek 100% reimbursement for eligible costs related to health and safety measures supporting in-person learning.

Eligibility

FEMA's program eligibility guidelines are outlined in FEMA Policy 104-21-0003, Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: Safe Opening and Operation Work Eligible for Public Assistance (Interim) Version 2. To learn more about FEMA's program, eligibility, and how to apply for funding, please visit Assistance for Governments and Private Non-Profits After a Disaster | FEMA.gov.

Eligible Work and Costs

FEMA may provide funding to eligible Public Assistance applicants, including schools and school districts, who may receive FEMA assistance for the following measures implemented for the safe opening and operation of schools in response to COVID-19:

▪ Purchase and distribution of high-quality masks, including cloth face coverings and PPE.

▪ Cleaning and disinfection, including the purchase and provision of necessary supplies and equipment above the applicant's regularly budgeted costs.

▪ COVID-19 diagnostic and screening testing.

- Screening and temperature scanning including, but not limited to, the purchase and distribution of hand-held temperature measuring devices or temperature screening equipment.

- Acquisition and installation of temporary physical barriers to provide additional space (e.g., screens/dividers) and signage to support social distancing, such as floor decals.

- School-located vaccination clinics for students, staff, parents and school communities.

Schools and school districts may utilize FEMA Public Assistance to receive full reimbursement for costs for the purposes above. Schools and districts may also use Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding from the U.S. Department of Education as a way to provide the up-front cost for the above health and safety measures, and later seek reimbursement through the FEMA Public Assistance process. For example, a local education agency (LEA) may use ESSER funds for costs that may ultimately be covered by FEMA; however, once it receives funds from FEMA for those costs, it must reimburse the ESSER grant account. The LEA may then use those ESSER funds for other allowable ESSER costs. Conversely, if an eligible applicant applies for PA funding and then determines it will instead use funding from another federal agency, the Applicant should notify FEMA as soon as possible. Applicants must comply with the eligibility and terms and conditions of the respective grant programs. Pursuant to Section 312 of the Stafford Act, FEMA is prohibited from providing financial assistance where such assistance would duplicate funding available from another program, insurance, or any other source for the same purpose. In the simplest of terms, "double-dipping" is prohibited.

Cost Share

FEMA will reimburse 100% of the eligible costs associated with these activities from the beginning of the incident period through July 1, 2022. Work conducted after July 1 will be subject to the cost share established at that time.

Funding Availability

In case of an immediate need for funding, FEMA can expedite up to 50% of funding to eligible applicants with limited documentation required. All entities can apply for FEMA funding through the COVID-19 Public Assistance Simplified Application. Applicants can begin their application by contacting their local, state, tribal nation, or territorial emergency management office or by visiting grantee.fema.gov.

How do Schools Apply for FEMA Assistance?

Schools and school districts are considered applicants for assistance under a federal award given by FEMA to a recipient (the state, territory, or tribal nation managing the federal award under the declaration). Therefore, schools and school districts must apply for reimbursement through their state, territory or tribal nation.

1. **Attend an Optional Applicant Briefing.** States host virtual Applicants Briefings which provide an overview of the eligibility and funding process for schools, school districts, and other eligible entities within their boundaries. Attending a briefing is optional. Schools and school districts should contact their state, tribal, or local emergency management representative to coordinate a briefing. Regional contact information is available at: FEMA regional point of contacts.

2. **Submit a Request for Public Assistance.** Schools and school districts apply for assistance by submitting a Request for Public Assistance (RPA) through FEMA's Grants Portal. All applicants can create accounts directly in Grants Portal or work through their state to gain access. School applicants are prompted to fill in basic information about their school or district, such as contact information and location, and then required to submit the request for state review. For additional information, please see FEMA's Applicant Quick Guide to Grants Portal Account Creation and Request for Public Assistance.

3. **Submit a Project under Your Request for Public Assistance.** After the Request for Public Assistance is approved by your state emergency management agency, the school or school district submits a project application through the Grants Portal. A project application includes detailed information about the activities for which an applicant is requesting funding for, and lists supporting documentation to justify the request. FEMA created a streamlined project application for COVID-19 events, which allows direct project application into Grants Portal.

4. **Track Your Progress through the Review and Approval Process**. FEMA and your state review and validate the project application to ensure completeness, eligibility, and compliance with federal laws and regulations on items such as contracting, and environmental and historic preservation. The school or school district applying reviews all terms and conditions that FEMA or the state include in the project application and signs in agreement to the funding terms, including requirements for reporting on project work progress and completion.

5. **Keep FEMA and Your State Apprised with Post-Award Reporting**. The school or school district provides additional documentation as response efforts unfold and work is completed to document actual costs and expenditures of funds. It is important that the school or school district retain all records of project-related documentation. Upon completion of work, the applicant and recipient coordinate to formally close the project(s).

Other Information

Information about FEMA's efforts and support for the safe reopening and operating of schools and school districts can be found on FEMA.gov. Additional information for applicants can be found on the "Financial Support" section of that webpage. States, tribal nations, and territories that have outstanding needs or gaps in what they require to address COVID-19 should contact their FEMA Regional Office.

Additional assistance may be available from other federal agencies. Eligible schools are strongly encouraged to coordinate their requests for resources with funding made available by the U.S. Departments of Education, Interior (Bureau of Indian Education), and Health and Human Services, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Contact Us

If you have any questions, please contact FEMA Office of External Affairs:

▪ Congressional Affairs at (202) 646-4500 or at FEMA-Congressional-Affairs@fema.dhs.gov

- Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at FEMA-IGA@fema.dhs.gov

- Tribal Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at FEMA-Tribal@fema.dhs.gov

- Private Sector Engagement at (202) 646-3444 or at nbeoc@max.gov

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Also, follow Administrator Deanne Criswell on Twitter @FEMA_Deanne.

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Helping people before, during, and after disasters.