

RCW 28A.525.159 School construction assistance grants for small school districts and state-tribal education compact schools. (1)

School construction assistance program grants for small school districts and state-tribal education compact schools must be determined in accordance with this section.

(2) Eligibility. School districts and state-tribal education compact schools with enrollments that are less than or equal to 1,000 students are eligible for small school district modernization grants. The advisory committee specified in subsection (4)(a) of this section may recommend amendments to the eligibility threshold as they learn more about the characteristics of school districts and state-tribal education compact schools that are unable to modernize their aging school facilities. Districts with incomplete information in the inventory and condition of schools data system are not eligible to apply for construction grants but may apply for planning grants.

(3) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must assist eligible school districts and state-tribal education compact schools that are interested in applying for a small school district modernization grant under this section by providing technical assistance and planning grants within appropriations for this purpose. Districts and state-tribal education compact schools seeking planning grants must provide a brief statement of the school condition, its deficiencies, student enrollment, student achievement measures, and financial limitations of the district or state-tribal education compact school. If applications for planning grants exceed funds available, the office of the superintendent of public instruction may prioritize the recipients of planning grants in order to help districts and state-tribal education compact schools with the most serious apparent building deficiencies, and the most limited financial capacity.

(4) Prioritized construction grants and advisory committee.

(a) The superintendent of public instruction must propose a list of prioritized grants to the governor by September 1st of even-numbered years. The superintendent of public instruction must appoint an advisory committee to prioritize applications from small school districts and state-tribal education compact schools. Committee members must have experience in financing, managing, repairing, and improving school facilities in small school districts or state-tribal education compact schools but must not be involved in a small school district modernization program grant request for the biennium under consideration. The office of the superintendent of public instruction must provide administrative and staff support to the advisory committee. The office of the superintendent of public instruction in consultation with the advisory committee must design a grant application process with specific criteria for prioritizing grant requests.

(b) The advisory committee created in (a) of this subsection must evaluate final applications from eligible school districts and state-tribal education compact schools. The advisory committee must submit a prioritized list of grants to the superintendent of public instruction. The list must prioritize applications to achieve the greatest improvement of school facilities, in the districts and state-tribal education compact schools with the most limited financial capacity, for projects that are likely to improve student health, safety, and academic performance for the largest number of students for the amount of state grant support. The advisory committee must develop specific criteria to achieve the prioritization. The submitted

prioritized list must describe the project, the proposed state funding level, and the estimated total project cost including other funding and in-kind resources. The list must also indicate student achievement measures that will be used to evaluate the benefits of the project. The superintendent of public instruction and the governor may determine the level of funding in their omnibus capital appropriations act requests to support small school district modernization grants, but their funding requests must follow the prioritized list prepared by the advisory committee unless new information determines that a specific project is no longer viable as proposed.

(5) Coordination with the school construction assistance program.

(a) The full administrative and procedural process of school construction assistance program funding under RCW 28A.525.162 through 28A.525.180 may be streamlined by the office of the superintendent of public instruction in order to coordinate eligible school construction assistance program funding with the small school district modernization grants. Such coordination must ensure that total state funding from both grants does not exceed total project costs minus available local resources.

(b) Projects seeking small school district modernization grants must meet the requirements for a school construction assistance program grant except for the following: (i) The estimated cost of the project may be less than 40 percent of the estimated replacement value of the facility, and (ii) local funding assistance percentage requirements of the school construction assistance program do not apply. However, available district and state-tribal education compact school resources are considered in prioritizing small school district modernization grants.

(6) Disbursement of grant funds and reporting requirements. The office of the superintendent of public instruction must award grants to school districts and state-tribal education compact schools. The grant must not be awarded until the district or state-tribal education compact school has identified available local and other resources sufficient to complete the approved project considering the amount of the state grant. The grant must specify reporting requirements from the district or state-tribal education compact school, which must include updating all pertinent information in the inventory and condition of schools data system and submitting a final project report as specified by the office of the superintendent of public instruction in consultation with the school facilities citizen advisory panel specified in RCW 28A.525.025.

(7) From May 20, 2025, through June 30, 2027, school districts receiving a small district modernization grant under this section may not combine this grant funding either with a school construction assistance program grant or with other grants awarded under this section to fund a single project. [2025 c 414 s 8042; 2020 c 299 s 1.]

Effective date—2025 c 414: See note following RCW 79A.25.210.