

AGENCY: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

TITLE: 2023 Clean School Bus (CSB) Grant Program

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: EPA-OAR-OTAQ-23-06

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 66.045

IMPORTANT DATES

Monday, April 24, 2023	Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Opens
Wednesday, July 26, 2023	Final Date to Submit Questions
Tuesday, August 22, 2023	NOFO Closes – Application Deadline
November 2023 to January 2024	Anticipated Notification of Selection
February to March 2024	Anticipated Awards

Application packages must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (www.grants.gov) no later than Tuesday, August 22, 2023, at **11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET)** in order to be considered for funding.

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Background and Summary

School buses travel over four billion miles each year, providing the safest transportation to and from school for more than 25 million American children every day.¹ While new buses must meet EPA's current emission standards, most buses on the road predate these standards and many are decades old. These buses emit dangerous levels of pollutants, including nitrogen oxides (NOx) and particulate matter (PM), in diesel exhaust. These pollutants contribute to poor air quality and negatively impact human health. Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollution inside and near older diesel school buses because they have a faster breathing rate than adults and their lungs are not yet fully developed; exposure to these pollutants thereby increases their risk of asthma and other respiratory illness, which has also been linked to students missing school.²

To address these harmful emissions, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Public Law 117-58, Section 741 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 16091) (the "Bipartisan Infrastructure Law") provides \$5 billion over five years [Fiscal Year (FY) 22-26] for the replacement of existing school buses with low and zero-emission (ZE) school buses [the Clean School Bus (CSB) Program]. Under the statutory design for the CSB Program, half of the available funding is dedicated to ZE school buses and half is dedicated to clean school buses. A ZE school bus is a school bus that produces zero exhaust emissions of any criteria pollutant or greenhouse gas; a clean school bus reduces emissions by operating entirely or in part using an alternative fuel, such as propane or natural gas, or is a ZE bus.³ This funding to support clean and ZE vehicles that transport our nation's children will benefit communities across the United States, especially communities that have been historically underserved. The reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from these bus replacements also helps address the outsized role of the transportation sector in fueling the climate crisis.⁴ The ZE or clean school buses can also cost less to maintain or fuel than the older buses they are replacing, which can free up needed resources for schools.⁵ These replacement buses will ensure cleaner air for students, bus drivers, school staff working near bus loading areas, and the communities through which the buses drive each day.

In its first year, the CSB Program conducted extensive program outreach and administered a national rebate competition. In August 2022, the rebate competition received an outstanding response from school districts across the country with nearly 2,000 applicants seeking to upgrade their school bus fleets with ZE or clean school buses. The response prompted EPA to almost double the funding level available for rebates in 2022 to nearly \$1 billion. In October 2022, EPA announced the 2022 CSB Rebates selections; approximately 400 applications were selected to replace more than 2,600 buses, almost ninety-five percent of which will be electric.⁶

¹ "EPA Clean School Bus fact sheet". <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exec/ZyPDF.cgi?Dockey=P1013NR1.pdf>

² <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-023-01088-7.pdf>

³ <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-02/420r23002.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/fast-facts-transportation-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

⁵ <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/benefits-clean-school-buses>

⁶ EPA also awarded funding for 109 propane buses and 6 compressed natural gas buses.

The 2022 Clean School Bus Rebates was the first of several funding opportunities for the multi-year CSB Program. EPA anticipates running both a grant competition, as detailed in the NOFO below, and a rebate competition in 2023.

EPA anticipates awarding approximately \$400 million in CSB funding under this NOFO, subject to the availability of funds, the quantity and quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. To ensure a healthy grant competition, this NOFO includes two sub-programs, one for school district and Tribal applicants (School District Sub-program) and one for third-party applicants (Third-Party Sub-program) to serve at least four school district beneficiaries. EPA is providing two separate competitions under this single NOFO to address the unique needs and concerns of diverse recipients and encourage participation in the CSB grants program.

This notice announces the availability of funds and solicits applications from eligible entities to incentivize and accelerate the replacement of existing school buses with clean and ZE school buses. Eligible activities are further described in Section III.D Project Requirements. Applications will be accepted from state and local governmental entities that provide bus service, including public school districts; eligible contractors⁷; nonprofit school transportation associations; Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, or Tribally-controlled schools responsible for the purchase, lease, license, or contract for service of school buses or for providing school bus service for a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funded school. See Section III.A for more information about eligible entities.

Applications will be evaluated on the extent to which they propose to replace buses that serve high-need local educational agencies; rural school districts; Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded school districts; and school districts receiving basic support payments for children who reside on Indian land. Further priority for funding will be given to applicants that leverage additional external funds, such as public-private partnerships, grants from other entities, or the issuance of school bonds, in order to support the proposed project activities.

This CSB Grants NOFO is a competitive grant program. Unlike the 2022 CSB Rebate Program that utilized a lottery to select winners, this grant competition will require an application that will be scored based on the criteria included in this NOFO. The CSB program anticipates opening another CSB Rebates funding opportunity later this year, which would fund similar activities, though has a shorter application, different selection mechanism, and different program requirements.⁸ Information on all CSB programs can be found at www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus.

B. Program Goals and Objectives

While new buses meet EPA's tougher emission standards, many older buses continue to emit pollutants that can be harmful to health like nitrogen oxides (NOx) or particulate matter (PM). Students are particularly vulnerable to air pollution inside and near older diesel school buses.

⁷ 'Eligible contractors' is defined further below under the III. Eligibility Information section.

⁸ Funding for school bus replacement is also available through EPA's CSB Rebate Program. The rebate program consists of an online application form and rebate recipients are selected through a lottery process. Information on EPA's CSB Program can be found at www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus.

These pollutants increase students' risk of asthma and other respiratory illness, which is also linked to missing school.⁹ Bus drivers and other school staff are also exposed to diesel exhaust. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides an unprecedented amount of funding to clean a substantial portion of the nation's fleet of nearly 500,000 school buses. These new cleaner school bus replacements will produce either zero or low tailpipe emissions compared to their older diesel predecessors, and having these older buses replaced with cleaner ones is an important program goal. School bus upgrades funded under this program will result in cleaner air on the bus, in bus loading areas, and in the communities in which they operate.

The CSB program aims to: 1) improve air quality by replacing highly polluting buses while accelerating the transformation to low and zero emission alternatives; 2) engage stakeholders in program development, 3) evolve the program, as needed, based on successes and lessons learned, 4) promote cost parity between bus technologies, 5) allow school districts multiple funding opportunities to apply for funding, 6) maximize the number of zero-emission and clean buses that get funded, and 7) ensure a broad geographic distribution of awards. To support development and implementation of the CSB Program, EPA utilized a variety of tools to engage with stakeholders, receive feedback, and transparently share information. EPA continues to coordinate with stakeholders and to develop an education and outreach plan that explains to potential grant and rebate applicants how to apply, describes eligible technologies and their benefits, and shares information on best practices and lessons learned. EPA has engaged in numerous efforts to gather feedback from stakeholders on the 2022 CSB Rebates, including a dedicated listening session for 2022 rebate applicants to provide feedback, a dedicated CSB email box for stakeholders to provide input, and other listening sessions at the regional level.

The 2022 CSB Rebates program was the fastest funding program to develop, provided the quickest timeline for fleets to receive funding, ensured straightforward rules that rebates were for bus replacements and infrastructure only, and included a streamlined application, selection, and funding process. Although a rebate program provides a variety of benefits, CSB is providing a grant program to give school districts multiple opportunities to apply for funding. Based on stakeholder feedback and lessons learned from the first funding opportunity, this NOFO intends to target beneficiaries with diverse needs and attempts to address gaps identified in the 2022 CSB rebate program. EPA intends to open another rebate application later this year. The agency encourages school districts to consider which competition structure best suits their needs.

In order to meet the unique needs of diverse recipients and address gaps identified in the 2022 CSB rebate program, the CSB grant program has designed two separate sub-programs under this NOFO: 1) School District Sub-program: for school district and Tribal applicants, targeting large single-fleet turnovers that may have been limited by the 25-bus maximum in the rebate program, and 2) Third-Party Sub-program: for third-party applicants to apply in partnership with school districts, particularly small, rural, Tribal, or low-income beneficiaries that may benefit from third-party technical support, grant administration and coordination (e.g., with utilities). Third-Party Sub-program applicants must serve at least four school district beneficiaries to be eligible for funding under this program. The sub-programs in the 2023 CSB grant program address several programmatic goals discussed throughout this section, along with other criteria listed throughout this NOFO. For additional details on each sub-program, please refer to:

⁹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-023-01088-7.pdf>

- 1) Project summary and approach
- 2) Environmental Results – Outputs, Outcomes and Performance Measures
- 3) Environmental Justice and Disadvantaged Communities
- 4) Project Location – Nonattainment or Maintenance Area
- 5) Programmatic Capability and Past Performance
- 6) Project Sustainability
- 7) Workforce Development
- 8) Project Resilience to Climate Impacts
- 9) Additional External Funds
- 10) Budget

The CSB program intends to increase program adoption by educating prospective applicants and stakeholders about the CSB program and the benefits of clean school buses. EPA continues to empower, engage, and support clean school bus stakeholders and recipients throughout program implementation by equipping them with the information and data needed to develop outreach plans, amplify key messages and collaborate with the other members of the clean school bus community beyond EPA. CSB funding opportunities continue to support underserved populations through meaningful and intentional outreach to increase the number of prospective applicants who would most benefit from reduced emissions through the replacement of buses in their communities.

Environmental Justice and Disadvantaged Communities Environmental justice (EJ) is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies. Meaningful involvement means people have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health; the public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision; community concerns will be considered in the decision-making process; and decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected. EPA will evaluate environmental justice issues under criterion 3 of Section V.A. of this NOFO.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law allows EPA to prioritize certain communities that will benefit from the CSB program. The CSB program statute enables the program to target communities with environmental justice concerns, that is, communities adversely and disproportionately affected by environmental, climate change, and human health harms or risks, and support a broad geographic distribution of funds. Additionally, CSB has been identified as part of the Justice40 Initiative, which provides a goal that 40 percent of applicable federal benefits flow to disadvantaged communities.¹⁰ In this program, “school district” refers to local education agencies (LEAs).¹¹ A directory of school districts and corresponding NCES District ID can be found here: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>. For the purposes of this funding opportunity “disadvantaged communities” must meet one or more of the following prioritization criteria:

⁹ *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*, 86 Fed. Reg., 7619 (Feb. 1, 2021).

¹¹ 42 U.S.C. § 16901(a)(6).

1. High-need school districts and low-income areas, limited to:
 - a. School districts listed in the [Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates \(SAIPE\) School District Estimates for 2021](#) as having 20% or more students living in poverty.
 - b. Title I-funded school districts and charter school districts not listed in the SAIPE dataset. See the Prioritization Self-Certification Instructions, which can be found on the [CSB Grants webpage](#), for more information on this option.
 - c. Title I-funded large public-school districts, defined as districts with more than 35,000 students and/or 45 public schools, that are in SAIPE but do not meet the 20% poverty threshold, may be eligible to self-certify the low-income prioritization status for part or all of their district. See the Prioritization Self-Certification Instructions, which can be found on the [CSB Grants webpage](#), for more information on this option.
 - d. School districts located in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.
2. Rural school districts, limited to school districts identified with locale code “43-Rural: Remote” by the [National Center for Education Statistics \(NCES\)](#).
3. Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded school districts
4. School districts that receive basic support payments under section [7703\(b\)\(1\) of title 20](#) for children who reside on Indian land.

School districts that qualify under one or more prioritization criteria above, except for 1.b and 1.c, are identified in EPA’s Prioritized School District List, found on the [CSB Grants Webpage](#).

This program criteria for “disadvantaged communities” is drawn from the prioritization authorization described in the CSB statute.¹² The methodology for calculating covered program benefits to disadvantaged communities may be updated in the future as additional funding opportunities are offered under the program and EPA receives input on previous funding opportunities.

C. Environmental Results and Strategic Plan Information

EPA assistance agreements must be results-oriented, aligned with the Agency’s strategic goals, and must demonstrate achievement of environmental results and/or public health protection. EPA requires that grant applicants and recipients adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements (see [EPA Order 5700.7A1, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements](#)). Applicants must include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs and, to the maximum extent practicable, well-defined outcomes that will demonstrate how the project will contribute to the Strategic Plan goal identified below.

¹¹ 42 U.S.C. § 16091(b)(4) (2023) (as amended by Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, H.R. Res. 2617, 117th Cong. § 405 (2022) (enacted)).

1. **Linkage to EPA Strategic Plan:** The activities to be funded under this announcement support EPA’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. Awards made under this announcement will support Goal 1, “Tackle the Climate Crisis;” Objective 1.1, “Reduce Emissions that Cause Climate Change.” Under this objective, “EPA will reduce air pollution on local, regional, and national scales to achieve healthy air quality for people and the environment.” All applications must be for projects that support this goal and objective. For more information see [EPA’s FY 2022 - FY 2026 EPA Strategic Plan](#).
2. **Outputs:** The term “output” means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period.

Expected outputs from the projects to be funded under this announcement include:

- Number of replaced school bus vehicles
- Number of school districts that replaced one or more school bus vehicles
- Number of school children transported on ZE or clean buses rather than diesel buses
- Number and type of electric vehicle charging infrastructure installed

Note: Third-party applicants should identify direct metrics for each school district beneficiary.

Other potential outputs may include, but are not limited to:

- Engaging affected communities with respect to the design and performance of the project
- The project’s inclusion in a broader-based environmental or air quality plan
- The implementation of contract specifications requiring the use of cleaner vehicles
- Documentation of a commitment to continue to identify and address air quality issues in the affected community
- Establishing a clear point of contact in a public platform for community issues and complaints
- The number of hours of ICE idling reduced
- A publicly documented policy or process for getting community input on operations and projects that impact air quality
- Number of trainings provided to staff, bus drivers, mechanics, or other electric vehicle service providers (including EVSE service providers)
- Provide support such as, but not limited to, sharing information, working with interested fleets, and addressing specific geographic needs. Documentation of the support must be provided.
- Demonstration and deployment of zero and near zero-emission vehicles and engines
- Number of trainings provided to staff, bus drivers, mechanics, or other electric vehicle service providers (including EVSE service providers)
- Dissemination of project/technology information via list serves, websites, journals, and outreach events

Progress reports and a final report will also be required outputs, as specified in Section VI.B. “Reporting Requirement” of this NOFO.

- 3. Outcomes:** The term “outcome” means the result, effect or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, but must also be quantitative. They may not necessarily be achievable within an assistance agreement funding period.

Expected outcomes from the projects to be funded under this announcement include:

- Improved ambient air quality in communities in which the buses operate
- Number of school children transported on ZE or clean buses rather than diesel buses, and therefore exposed to fewer diesel exhaust emissions on their school route commute
- Establishment of workforce training programs for zero emission vehicles and charging infrastructure
- Benefits to the communities affected by the project, including improvements to human health and the environment, the local economy, social conditions, and the welfare of residents in such communities

Other potential outcomes may include, but are not limited to:

- Community engagement
- Health benefits achieved
- Changes in driver behavior, such as reducing idling operations of clean school buses or optimizing efficiency of EV powertrain operations
- An increased understanding of the environmental or economic effectiveness of the implemented technology
- Increased public awareness of project and results
- Widespread adoption of the implemented technology
- An increased availability of domestic manufacturing and workforce for zero - and near zero-emission vehicles, engines, and other key components (e.g., batteries)

D. Statutory Authority & Assistance Listings

The statutory authority for this action is the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (or The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law), codified at 42 U.S.C. 16091 (as amended by Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, H.R. Res. 2617, 117th Cong. § 405 (2022) (enacted)) which authorizes EPA to offer funding assistance for projects to replace existing school buses with clean school buses and ZE school buses. For each fiscal year between 2022 and 2026, \$500 million is available to fund ZE and clean school buses, and \$500 million is available to fund only ZE school buses. The statute outlines several funding mechanisms for the new CSB Program including grants, rebates, and contracts. While EPA has authority under CSB to support grant programs, EPA’s authority to obligate grant funds is subject to the availability of appropriated

funds.

E. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated into the Solicitation

Additional provisions that apply to Sections III, IV, V, and VI, and/or awards made under this solicitation, can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#). These provisions are important for applying to this solicitation and applicants must review them when preparing applications for this solicitation. If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please contact the EPA point of contact listed in Section VII of this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

II. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

A. Amount of Funding Available

The total estimated funding expected to be available for awards under this competitive opportunity is approximately \$400 million. Funding and awards for each sub-program are dependent upon the number of meritorious applications received under each program, Agency appropriations, funding availability, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations.

Funding awards are dependent on the bus fuel type, bus class size, number of buses being replaced, and prioritization status as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Per-Bus Funding Levels and Prioritization Status

School District Prioritization Status	Replacement Bus Fuel Type and Size					
	ZE* – Class 7+	ZE* – Class 3-6	CNG– Class 7+	CNG – Class 3-6	Propane – Class 7+	Propane – Class 3-6
Buses serving school districts that meet one or more prioritization criteria	Up to \$395,000 <i>(Bus + Charging Infrastructure)</i>	Up to \$315,000 <i>(Bus + Charging Infrastructure)</i>	Up to \$45,000	Up to \$30,000	Up to \$35,000	Up to \$30,000
Buses serving school districts that are not prioritized	Up to \$250,000 <i>(Bus + Charging Infrastructure)</i>	Up to \$195,000 <i>(Bus + Charging Infrastructure)</i>	Up to \$30,000	Up to \$20,000	Up to \$25,000	Up to \$20,000

*Funding levels include combined bus and EV charging infrastructure. Recipients have flexibility to determine the split between funding for the bus itself and the supporting infrastructure.

B. Number and Amount of Awards

EPA anticipates awarding a total of approximately 25 to 50 cooperative agreement(s) under this announcement, subject to the availability of funds, the quantity and quality of applications received, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations.

Applicants in the School District Sub-Program must request a minimum of 15 school buses and can request up to a maximum of 50 school buses. Applicants in the Third-party Sub-Program must request a minimum of 25 school buses and may request up to a maximum of 100 school buses.

Applicants may submit a total of one application per EPA region under this solicitation. A single application may target multiple fleets, school districts, and/or bus types. Third-party Sub-program applicants are required to support at least four different school district beneficiaries, although there is no minimum number of buses per beneficiary (as long as the total number of buses for the third-party grant are between 25 and 100).

Applicants must request funding from the EPA regional office that covers their geographic project location. The term “project location” as used in this NOFO refers to the area(s) where the affected vehicles operate. See Section IV.B for additional information on project location and the geographic boundaries for each EPA regional office.

The anticipated award amounts and the relative allocations for the regions listed in Table 2 are approximations that are subject to change based upon a number of considerations including, but not limited to, the number of meritorious applications received by each region, Agency appropriations, funding availability, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations.

Table 2. Total Funding and Funding Limits by Region¹³

Region	Total Anticipated Funding per Region
1	\$27,393,700
2	\$37,062,100
3	\$37,282,600
4	\$59,670,700
5	\$51,600,400
6	\$51,033,400
7	\$28,292,500
8	\$27,740,200
9	\$52,089,700
10	\$27,834,700

D. Partial Funding

In appropriate circumstances, EPA reserves the right to partially fund applications by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. If EPA decides to partially fund an application, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the application, or portion thereof, was evaluated and selected for award, thereby maintaining the integrity of the competition and selection process.

¹² Allocation is based on a methodology that relies on the National Center for Educational Statistics' Elementary/Secondary Information System (NCES ELSI) dataset.

E. Additional Awards

EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this solicitation, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than six months after the original selection decisions. In addition, EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards under this announcement or to make fewer awards than anticipated.

F. Award Funding and Incremental/Full Funding

Awards may be fully or incrementally funded, as appropriate, based on funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other applicable considerations. In appropriate circumstances, EPA may incrementally fund applications. If an applicant is selected for incremental funding, EPA and the applicant will negotiate a final workplan, timeline, and budget which has clearly delineated activities or phases with separate budget estimates for each activity/phase of a project within the project period. A portion of the total requested funding will be awarded at the beginning of the project period for the specified activities/phases. Subject to the availability of funds, and other applicable considerations, additional funding may be awarded later as an incremental budget amendment to fund the remaining activities/phases of the project.

G. Period of Performance

The estimated project period for awards resulting from this solicitation will be up to 24 months, however initial project periods of up to 36 months will be allowed where justified by the activities, timeline, and milestones detailed in the workplan. The estimated project period of performance start date for awards will begin starting April 1, 2024.

H. Funding Type

It is anticipated that grants or cooperative agreements will be funded under this solicitation.

Successful applicant(s) will be issued a grant or cooperative agreement as appropriate. EPA awards cooperative agreements for those projects in which it expects to have substantial interaction with the recipient throughout the recipient's performance of the project. Although EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial federal involvement for these projects may include:

- Close monitoring of the successful applicant's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
- Collaboration during performance of the scope of work;
- EPA prior review or approval of project phases or the substantive provisions of proposed contracts found within the scope of the cooperative agreement;
- In accordance with 2 CFR § 200.317 and 2 CFR § 200.318, review of proposed procurement;
- Approving qualifications of key personnel (EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient); and

- Reviewing and commenting on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient).

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

A. Eligible Entities

Under this solicitation, only the following entities are eligible to apply for assistance, in accordance with Assistance Listing 66.045 and [EPA’s Policy for Competition of Assistance Agreements \(EPA Order § 5700.5A1\)](#):

1. Public School Districts
 - a. One or more local or State governmental entities¹⁴ responsible for:
 - i. Providing school bus service to one or more public school systems; or
 - ii. The purchase, lease, license, or contract for service of school buses;
 - b. A public charter school district responsible for the purchase, lease, license, or contract for service of school buses for that charter school; or
2. Tribal Applicants
 - a. An Indian Tribe (as defined by section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, 25 U.S.C. 5304), Tribal organization (as defined by the same section), or Tribally-controlled school (as defined by section 5212 of the Tribally Controlled Schools Act of 1988, 25 U.S.C. 2511) that is responsible for:
 - i. Providing school bus service to one or more Bureau-funded schools (as defined by section 1141 of the Education Amendments of 1978, 25 U.S.C. 2021); or
 - ii. The purchase, lease, license, or contract for service of school buses;
3. Third Parties
 - a. A nonprofit school transportation association; or
 - b. An eligible contractor.

Applicants falling under III.A.1 (school districts) and III.A.2 (Tribal applicants) must apply under the School District Sub-Program; Applicants falling under III.A.3 (third parties) must apply under the Third-Party Sub-Program.

Eligible contractor, as defined by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Public Law 117-58 (42 U.S.C. 16091), means any for-profit, not-for-profit, or nonprofit entity that has the capacity (1) to sell, lease, license, or contract for service clean school buses, ZE school buses, charging or fueling infrastructure, or other equipment needed to charge, fuel, or maintain clean school buses or zero-emission school buses, to individuals or entities that own, lease, license, or contract for service a school bus or a fleet of school buses; or (2) arrange financing for such a sale, lease, license, or contract for service. This group generally includes school bus dealers, Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), school bus service providers, and private school bus fleets that provide student transportation services.

¹⁴ Includes public school districts. In this program, “school district” refers to local education agencies (LEAs). A directory of school districts and their corresponding NCES District ID can be found here: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>.

Consistent with the definition of nonprofit organization at 2 CFR § 200.1, the term nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization that is operated mainly for scientific, educational, service, charitable or similar purpose in the public interest; is not organized primarily for profit; and uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operation of the organization. Note that 2 CFR § 200.1 specifically excludes Institutions of Higher Education from the definition of nonprofit organization because they are separately defined in the regulation.

Nonprofit organizations that are not exempt from taxation under section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code must submit other forms of documentation of nonprofit status, such as certificates of incorporation as nonprofit under state or Tribal law. Nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that lobby are not eligible for EPA funding as provided in the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. 1611.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No cost sharing or matching is required under this funding opportunity. Although cost sharing/matching is not required as a condition of eligibility under this competition, EPA will award evaluation points, under Section V.A. of this announcement, for applicants that demonstrate that they have leveraged or plan to leverage additional external funds in order to support the proposed project activities, such as public-private partnerships, grants from other entities, or the issuance of school bonds. For the purpose of this NOFO, these additional external funds will be considered “leveraged resources.” Leveraged resources or “leveraging” is when an applicant proposes to provide additional resources to support or complement the proposed project which are above and beyond the EPA grant funds they are requesting. Unlike funding awarded as part of this funding opportunity, leveraged resources do not need to be spent on eligible or allowable costs as listed in Section III.D Project Requirements. Additionally, these resources should **only** be described in the budget detail described in Section 10 of the project narrative template in Section IV.B of this NOFO and should **not** be included in the project budget on the SF-424 or SF-424A.

If applicants propose to leverage funds, EPA expects them to secure the leveraged resources described in their applications. If the proposed leveraging does not materialize during the performance period of the grant or cooperative agreement, EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action authorized under 2 CFR Part 200.

C. Threshold Criteria

All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described in Sections III.A, B, C, and D to be considered eligible. If necessary, EPA may contact applicants to clarify threshold eligibility questions prior to making an eligibility determination. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration due to the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. Application Content and Submission

- a.** Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV.B with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages in excess of the 15-page limitation will not be reviewed. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.
 - b.** In addition, applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) as stated in Section IV.A of this announcement (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV) on or before the application submission deadline published in Section IV.A of this solicitation. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV.A of this solicitation to ensure that their application is timely and properly submitted. Please note that applicants experiencing technical issues with submitting through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) should follow the instructions provided in Section IV.A, which include both the requirement to contact [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and email a full application to EPA prior to the deadline.
 - c.** Applications submitted outside of [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will be deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was due to EPA mishandling or because of technical problems associated with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov). An applicant's failure to timely submit their application through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) because they did not timely or properly register in [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) or [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a late submission. See Section IV of this solicitation for instructions on how to submit an application through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). EPA recommends the grantee maintains an active account throughout the project period of performance in order to avoid technical issues and delays.
- 2.** Applications must support Goal 1 “Tackle the Climate Crisis”; Objective 1.1: “Reduce Emissions that Cause Climate Change” of EPA’s Strategic Plan described in Section I.C.
 - 3.** School districts and Tribal applicants, as defined in Section III.A, must apply under the School District Sub-Program; third-party applicants, as defined in Section III.A, must apply under the Third-Party Sub-Program.
 - 4.** Applicants in the School District Sub-Program must request a minimum of 15 school buses and can request up to a maximum of 50 school buses. Applicants in the Third-Party Sub-Program must request a minimum of 25 school buses and may request up to a maximum of 100 school buses. If more than the maximum number of school buses are requested, an application will be considered for the maximum number of school buses allowable under the applicable sub-program.

5. Third-Party Sub-Program applicants must serve at least four school district beneficiaries in a single application to be eligible for funding under this program. Third-Party Sub-Program applicants must include documentation, such as the Third-Party Approval Certification Template, that the school district(s) being served are aware and approve of the third party's application. School districts not supported by a Third-Party Approval Letter or other documentation will not count towards eligibility.
6. Applicants may only submit one application per EPA region. Applicants that submit more than one application per EPA region will be contacted prior to EPA review of any of the applications to determine which application(s) the applicant will withdraw from the competition.

D. Project Requirements

CSB grants provide funding to eligible recipients so that they may replace existing school buses with clean and ZE models. Eligible activities include the replacement of existing internal-combustion engine (ICE) school buses with electric, propane, or compressed natural gas (CNG) school buses, as well as the purchase of electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) infrastructure and EVSE installations.

1. **Eligible Existing School Buses:** Applications must include projects which target school buses as further defined in this section. A "school bus" is defined as a passenger motor vehicle designed to carry a driver and more than 10 passengers, that the Secretary of Transportation decides is likely to be used significantly to transport preprimary, primary, and secondary school students to or from school or an event related to school.¹⁵ Buses to be replaced must:
 - a. Be a vehicle model year 2010 or older diesel-powered school buses that will be scrapped if selected for funding. If a fleet has no eligible 2010 or older diesel school buses and is requesting zero-emission school bus replacements, the fleet may either:
 - i. Scrap 2010 or older non-diesel internal combustion engine buses; or
 - ii. Scrap, sell, or donate 2011 or newer diesel or non-diesel internal combustion engine buses
 - b. Have a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) of 10,001 lbs or more.
 - c. Be fully operational at the time of application submission. Operational vehicles should be able to start, move, and have all necessary parts to be operational.
 - d. Have provided bus service to a public school district for at least 3 days/week on average during the 2022/2023 school year at the time of applying, excluding COVID-related or disaster-related school closures.

¹⁵ 49 U.S.C. § 30125, available at [https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:49%20section:30125%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:49%20section:30125%20edition:prelim)).

2. **Eligible School Bus Replacements and Infrastructure Equipment:** Applications must include projects which replace existing ICE school buses with propane, CNG, and/or electric school buses. If applicants are purchasing electric school buses, they may also receive funding for eligible charging infrastructure and installations.
- a. **Replacement School Buses:** All replacement school buses purchased with grant funding must:
- i. Have a battery electric, CNG, or propane drivetrain. Biofuels will not be included as an eligible replacement technology for this funding opportunity.¹⁶
 - ii. Be a new EPA or California Air Resources Board (CARB) certified vehicle model year 2021 or newer.¹⁷ EPA’s engine emission standards may be found at: www.epa.gov/emission-standards-reference-guide/all-epa-emission-standards. Engines certified by CARB may be found by searching CARB’s Executive Orders for Heavy-duty Engines and Vehicles, found at: www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/onroad/cert/cert.php. Note, EPA is not funding the conversion of old school buses to operate on battery electric, CNG, or propane drivetrains in this funding opportunity.
 - iii. Have a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) of 10,001 lbs or more.
 - iv. Be ordered after receiving official notification of selection for EPA funding.
 - v. Be purchased, not leased or leased-to-own.
 - vi. Serve the school district listed on the application for at least five years from the date of delivery, unless the award is to an eligible contractor and the contract with the school district ends before the end of the 5-year period, in which case those school buses may be operated as part of another school district eligible for the same or higher priority consideration.
 - vii. Meet federal safety standards and be maintained, operated, insured, registered, and charged/fueled according to manufacturer recommendations and state requirements.
 - viii. Not be manufactured or retrofitted with, or otherwise have installed, a power unit or other technology that creates air pollution within the school bus, such as an unvented diesel passenger heater.
 - ix. Not be purchased or otherwise subsidized with other federal grant funds. The total of funds from the CSB grant and other eligible external funds allocated for the bus replacements cannot exceed the cost of the new buses.
 - x. Upon request, be made available for inspection by EPA or its authorized representatives for 5 years from the date of delivery.

¹⁶ There are no unique biofuels engines or buses at this time. All diesel buses can run on a mix of regular diesel and biodiesel, making it very difficult to ensure that biofuel blends of a certain percentage are used exclusively in the vehicle from the start, much less over the vehicle’s lifetime. A vehicle which operates on a biofuels mix may have some small emissions benefits depending on numerous factors, but there are no differences in emissions standards between a regular diesel bus and one that may use biofuels as an in-use fuel. Thus, a bus that runs on a biofuel mix will not provide significant environmental benefits beyond the current diesel bus market options. Similarly, there are currently no hydrogen or LNG product offerings so hydrogen and LNG will not be included as eligible replacement technologies for this funding opportunity.

¹⁷ EPA Heavy-Duty Vehicle Certification Data is posted here: <https://www.epa.gov/compliance-and-fuel-economy-data/annual-certification-data-vehicles-engines-and-equipment>.

- b. **Infrastructure Equipment:** Eligible infrastructure is limited to installations and upgrades between the electrical meter and the charging port. This can include, but is not limited to, charging equipment (such as alternating current (AC) Level 2 charging equipment, direct-current (DC) fast charging equipment, or vehicle-to-grid (V2G) enabled equipment); design and engineering; installation costs such as trenching, wiring and electrical upgrades, labor, and permitting; and related intelligent equipment and software designed to monitor bus and infrastructure performance (such as telematics or charge management software).
- i. EPA funds must not be used for any infrastructure costs associated with work on the utility's side of the electrical meter. Funds can be used for battery energy storage systems (BESS) associated with new electric school buses funded in the program, as well as renewable on-site power generation systems that power the buses and equipment. To be eligible, these systems must be on the customer's side of the electrical meter.
 - ii. CSB grants cannot fund research and development, technology demonstration, commercialization, certification, or verification.
 - iii. All AC Level 2 charging infrastructure purchased under this program must be [EPA ENERGY STAR certified](#) at the time of purchase. EPA strongly recommends that all other charging infrastructure funded under this program be listed by a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL). EPA also strongly encourages recipients to consider long-term fleet electrical needs when installing charging equipment. Installing additional electrical capacity on the customer side of the meter to support future charging needs (e.g., purchasing and running additional electrical conduit during trenching and wiring upgrades) is an allowable use of funds.
 - iv. All electricians installing, operating, or maintaining EVSE must meet one of the following requirements: (i) Certification from the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP), OR (ii) Graduation or a continuing education certificate from a registered apprenticeship program for electricians that includes charger-specific training and is developed as a part of a national guideline standard approved by the Department of Labor in consultation with the Department of Transportation. For projects requiring more than one electrician, at least one electrician must meet the requirements above, and at least one electrician must be enrolled in an electrical registered apprenticeship program. In limited circumstances, EPA may provide an exception to the above requirements for grantees that can demonstrate there are no electricians meeting the above requirements available in their area, and that efforts to train local electricians to meet the requirements are not feasible (see details in Eligible and Ineligible Costs, below, for details on Training, Consulting, and Warranty Costs). EVITP certification of electricians working on a CSB-funded project is an allowable use as outlined further in Section III.D.4, below.
 - v. Applicants should be aware that Build America, Buy America requirements apply to eligible vehicle charging infrastructure equipment. Please refer to Section VI.C of this NOFO for additional information.

3. **Ownership and Usage Requirements:** To be eligible for funding, vehicles targeted for replacement must meet certain ownership and usage requirements. Applicants should demonstrate in their application that all funded vehicles would meet the criteria defined below.

If selected for funding, participating applicants must attest to each criterion below in a signed eligibility statement which includes each vehicle make, vehicle model, vehicle model year, vehicle identification number, odometer reading, engine make, engine model, engine model year, EPA family, engine ID or serial number, and vehicle registration/licensing number and state. This documentation will be required as part of the recipients' programmatic reporting to EPA to verify the eligible use of grant funds. A sample eligibility statement will be posted to the [CSB Grants webpage](#). The signed eligibility statement is not required at the time of application submittal.

- a. The existing vehicle must be fully operational at the time of application. Operational vehicles should be able to start, move, and have all necessary parts to be operational.
- b. The existing vehicle must have provided bus service to a public school district for at least 3 days/week on average during the 2022/2023 school year at the time of applying, excluding COVID-related or disaster-related school closures.

4. **Eligible and Ineligible Costs:** Applicants are encouraged to review [RAIN-2019-G02, “Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance” for further guidance on determining if a cost is eligible](#). The inclusion of ineligible activities may lead to a portion, or all of the application not being reviewed.

- a. **Ineligible Costs or Activities.** If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding. Funds awarded under this NOFO shall be used only for eligible vehicles (i.e., zero-emission or clean school buses), charging infrastructure and installation, and related activities. No funds awarded under this NOFO shall be used for ineligible vehicles, technologies, or activities as described in this section.

- i. **Federal Matching Funds:** Funding under this NOFO cannot be included as a cost or used to meet cost sharing or matching requirements of any other federally financed grant, as required under 2 CFR 200.306(b)(5) and 2 CFR 200.403(f). This includes funds received under EPA’s Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA) State Grants Program and federal Supplemental Environmental Project funds.
- ii. **Expenses Incurred Prior to the Project Period:** Funding under this NOFO cannot be used to cover expenses incurred prior to the project period set forth in any assistance agreement funded under this NOFO, except for eligible pre-

award costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.458 and as authorized by 2 CFR 200.309 and 2 CFR 1500.8.

- iii. **Emissions Testing:** Funding under this NOFO cannot be used for emissions testing and/or air monitoring activities (including the acquisition cost of emissions testing equipment), research and development, or technology demonstration, commercialization, certification, or verification.
 - iv. **Leasing:** Funding under this NOFO cannot be used for leasing vehicles or equipment. If financing is necessary, the purchase should be financed with a conventional purchase loan.
 - v. **Engine Replacements/Repowers:** Funding under this NOFO is only for newly manufactured, complete vehicles and cannot be used for repowers.
 - vi. **Federal Financed Grants:** Applications cannot include any costs that are included as a cost of any other federally financed grant, as required under 2 CFR 200.403(f). If these costs are included in an application, the activities associated with these costs will not be reviewed or selected for funding.
- b. **Project Implementation Costs:** Eligible project costs include those costs directly related to the implementation, management, and oversight of the project, including recipient and subrecipient personnel and benefits, equipment, contractual, travel, supplies, subgrants and rebates, and indirect costs.
 - c. **Vehicles:** Eligible project costs include the purchase price of eligible vehicles as defined in this Section, above.
 - d. **Electric Infrastructure:** Eligible project costs include electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) infrastructure for the new electric buses, including the unit and charging cable, mount and/or pedestal, electrical panels and their installation, upgrades to existing electrical panels or electrical service, wiring/conduit and its installation, and installation, such as design and engineering or labor (i.e., infrastructure costs associated with work on the customer's side of the electrical meter), as well as charge management software either as standalone or part of the EVSE unit.
 - e. **Delivery Costs:** Eligible project costs include costs associated with delivering the new replacement school bus to the project location. Applicants who plan to use funding for delivering new replacement buses should list the approximate costs under "Other" category costs in the budget submitted with their application. Applicants are encouraged to work with their EPA Regional Office to identify any potential approaches for maximizing efficiencies of scale when shipping buses (e.g., coordinating with other recipients to ship buses at the same time) and are encouraged to take delivery costs into account in their procurement process.

- f. **Performance-Monitoring Software & Equipment:** Eligible project costs can include intelligent equipment and software designed to monitor bus and infrastructure performance (such as telematics or charge management software).
- g. **Training, Consulting, and Warranty Costs:** Eligible project costs can include driver/mechanic training related to the maintenance and operation of new technologies, consulting on bus deployments, and bus warranties. Eligible costs can also include training to certify licensed electricians to install EVSE, such as certification through the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP). All of these project costs must be clearly identified with line-item expenses included in the submitted application.

h. Battery Electric Powered Projects

- i. Eligible costs include the purchase and installation of charging infrastructure for the new electric buses, including the unit and charging cable, mount and/or pedestal, electrical panels and their installation, upgrades to existing electrical panels or electrical service, wiring/conduit and its installation, renewable on-site power generation systems that power the buses and equipment (e.g., solar and wind power generation equipment) and their installation, or battery energy storage systems (BESS) on the customer's side of the meter.
 - ii. Funding under this NOFO cannot be used for: utility-owned power distribution; transformers and their installation; electricity; operation and maintenance to utility systems; or non-renewable stationary on-site power generation systems (e.g., generators) and their installation.
- i. **Fleet Expansion:** Funding under this NOFO cannot be used for the purchase of vehicles to expand a fleet, with the limited exception of the bus scrappage allowance listed below. The vehicle being replaced should be scrapped, sold, or donated, subject to Section III.D.1. If scrapped, the vehicle being replaced should be permanently disabled within the grant period of performance by:
- i. Cutting a three-inch-by-three-inch hole in the engine block (the part of the engine containing the cylinders) and cutting or crushing one chassis rail between the axles is the preferred scrapping method. Other acceptable scrapping methods may be considered and will require prior EPA approval. Recipients seeking approval for alternative scrapping methods must submit an alternative scrapping plan to the regional project officer detailing how the method will destroy and/or disable the engine and must, if approved, comply with the evidence requirements listed below, including digital photos.
 - ii. Disabling the chassis may be completed by cutting through the frame/frame rails on each side at a point located between the front and rear axles. Other acceptable scrapping methods may be considered and will require prior written approval from the EPA project officer.

- iii. Equipment and vehicle components that are not part of the engine or chassis may be salvaged from the unit being replaced (e.g., plow blades, shovels, seats, tires, etc.). If disabled engines, disabled vehicles, disabled equipment, or parts are to be sold, program income requirements apply.
- iv. Evidence of appropriate disposal is required in a final assistance agreement report submitted to EPA. Participating applicants should attest to the appropriate disposal in a signed scrappage statement. A sample scrappage statement will be posted to <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants>. The scrappage statement should include:
 1. Vehicle owner's name and address;
 2. Vehicle make, vehicle model, vehicle model year, VIN, odometer reading or usage meter reading, engine make, engine model, engine model year, engine horsepower, engine ID or serial number, as applicable;
 3. Name, address, and signature of dismantler;
 4. Date engine and/or vehicle/equipment was scrapped;
 5. Statement attesting to scrappage of vehicle/engine as defined above;
 6. Signature of applicant and bus owner, if different;
 7. Digital photos as follows:
 - Side profile of the bus, prior to disabling;
 - VIN tag;
 - Engine label (showing serial number, engine family number, and engine model year);
 - Engine block, prior to hole;
 - Engine block, after hole;
 - Cut frame rails or other cut structural components, as applicable;
 - Others, as needed

At the time of application, applicants applying through the school district sub-program may request an exception of the bus scrappage requirement. EPA will review and approve an exception to the bus scrappage requirement on a case-by-case basis. To be approved for an exception, applicants must:

- a. be prioritized as low-income; AND
- b. be seeking to purchase only ZE school buses; AND
- c. be currently contracting with a private fleet that owns school buses for their school transportation services and the school plans to own the new buses; AND
- d. attest, in the Budget Detail section of the Project Narrative, that the current contract provider is unwilling or unable to replace buses serving the district with ZE school buses.

Note: Third-party applicants are not eligible to apply for this scrappage allowance.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

A. Requirement to Submit Through Grants.gov and Limited Exception Procedures

Applicants must apply electronically through [Grants.gov](#) under this funding opportunity based on the Grants.gov instructions in this announcement. If your organization has no access to the internet or access is very limited, you may request an exception for the remainder of this calendar year by following the procedures outlined in [EPA's Exceptions to the Grants.gov Submission Requirement](#). Please note that your request must be received at least 15 calendar days before the application due date to allow enough time to negotiate alternative submission methods. Issues with submissions with respect to this opportunity only are addressed in section 2. *Technical Issues with Submission* below.

1. Submission Instructions

a. [SAM.gov \(System for Award Management\) Registration Instructions](#)

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using [login.gov](#)¹⁸ to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned to an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for details on this process.

If you have done business with the Federal Government previously, you can check your entity status using your government issued UEI to determine if your registration is active. SAM.gov requires you to renew your registration every 365 days to keep it active.

Please note that SAM.gov registration is different than obtaining a UEI only. Obtaining an UEI only validates your organization's legal business name and address. Please review the [Frequently Asked Question](#) on the difference for additional details.

Organizations should ensure that their SAM.gov registration includes a current e-Business (EBiz) point of contact name and email address. The EBiz point of contact is critical for Grants.gov Registration and system functionality.

Contact the [Federal Service Desk](#) for help with your SAM.gov account, to resolve technical issues or chat with a help desk agent: (866) 606-8220. The Federal Service desk hours of operation are Monday – Friday, 8am – 8pm ET.

¹⁸ Login.gov a secure sign in service used by the public to sign into Federal Agency systems including SAM.gov and Grants.gov. For help with login.gov accounts you should visit <http://login.gov/help>.

b. Grants.gov Registration Instructions

Once your SAM.gov account is active, you must register in Grants.gov. Grants.gov will electronically receive your organization information, such as e-Business (EBiz) point of contact email address and UEI. Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active Grants.gov registration. Grants.gov registration is FREE. If you have never applied for a federal grant before, please review the [Grants.gov Applicant Registration](#) instructions. As part of the Grants.gov registration process, the EBiz point of contact is the only person that can affiliate and assign applicant roles to members of an organization. In addition, at least one person must be assigned as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Only person(s) with the AOR role can submit applications in Grants.gov. Please review the [Intro to Grants.gov-Understanding User Roles](#) and [Learning Workspace – User Roles and Workspace Actions](#) for details on this important process.

Please note that this process can take a month or more for new registrants. Applicants must ensure that all registration requirements are met in order to apply for this opportunity through Grants.gov and should ensure that all such requirements have been met well in advance of the application submission deadline.

Contact [Grants.gov](#) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov to resolve technical issues with Grants.gov. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach a Grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. The Grants.gov Support Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, excluding federal holidays.

c. Application Submission Process

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to [Grants.gov](#) and click the red “Apply” button at the top of the view grant opportunity page associated with this opportunity.

The electronic submission of your application to this funding opportunity must be made by an official representative of your organization who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal financial assistance. If the submit button is grayed out, it may be because you do not have the appropriate role to submit in your organization. Contact your organization’s EBiz point of contact or contact [Grants.gov](#) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov

Applicants need to ensure that the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) who submits the application through Grants.gov and whose UEI is listed on the application is an AOR for the applicant listed on the application. Additionally, the UEI listed on the application must be registered to the applicant organization's SAM.gov account. If not, the application may be deemed ineligible.

d. Application Submission Deadline

Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) no later than **Tuesday, August 22, 2023, 11:59 PM ET**. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. Please note that successful submission of your application through Grants.gov does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award. Any application submitted after the application deadline time and date deadline will be deemed ineligible and not be considered.

2. Technical Issues with Submission

If applicants experience technical issues during the submission of an application that they are unable to resolve, follow these procedures **before** the application deadline date:

- a. Contact Grants.gov Support Center **before** the application deadline date.
- b. Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.
- c. Send an email with “Clean School Bus Grant Program” in the subject line to cleanschoolbus@epa.gov **before** the application deadline time and date and **must** include the following:
 - i. Grants.gov ticket/case number(s)
 - ii. Description of the issue
 - iii. The entire application package in PDF format.

Without this information, EPA may not be able to consider applications submitted outside of Grants.gov. Any application submitted after the application deadline time and date deadline will be deemed ineligible and **not** be considered.

Please note that successful submission through Grants.gov or email does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award.

EPA will make decisions concerning acceptance of each application submitted outside of Grants.gov on a case-by-case basis. EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to submit through Grants.gov due to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or relevant [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to submit prior to the application submission deadline date because they did not properly or timely register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov is **not** an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of an application outside of Grants.gov.

3. Application Materials

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement.

Mandatory Documents:

- Standard Form 424, *Application for Federal Assistance*. Please note that the organizational Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) must be included on the SF-424.
- Standard Form 424A, *Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs*

- EPA Form 4700-4, *Pre-Award Compliance Review Report*
- EPA Form 5700-54, *Key Contacts Form*
- Project Narrative Attachment Form, *Project Narrative* – Prepared as described in Section IV.B below.
 - Applicants must use the Project Narrative Attachment form in Grants.gov. The project narrative must explicitly describe how the proposed project meets the threshold eligibility criteria and address the evaluation criteria. The project narrative cannot exceed a maximum of (15) single-spaced typewritten pages, including the summary page, workplan, and budget table and detail. Excess pages will not be reviewed. Supporting materials identified below can be submitted as attachments and are not included in the 15-page limit. The project narrative must substantially comply with the specific instructions, format and content as defined.
- Applicants should use the “*Other Attachments*” Form in Grants.gov to attach and submit the following mandatory documents.
 - **Applicant Fleet Sheet**
 - (Required, does NOT count towards the 15-page limit): Applicants must use the Other Attachment form in Grants.gov to upload an .xls file of their applicant fleet sheet. The purpose of the applicant fleet description is to describe in detail the specific vehicles targeted for emissions reductions as well as installation of charging equipment to be implemented under the proposed project. Information provided in the applicant fleet sheet will be used to help determine project eligibility and for evaluation purposes as described below. Applicants are encouraged to use the sample format for the applicant fleet sheet found at:
<https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants>.
 - **Documentation of Third-Party Approval (for Third-Party Applicants only)**
 - (Required, does NOT count towards the 15-page limit): Third-party applicants must submit documentation, such as the Third-Party Approval Certification Template, that the school district(s) being served are aware and approve of the third party’s application. Documentation must be signed by an authorized representative of the school district beneficiary. Third-party applicants will only be considered for funding for school district beneficiaries that have signed the approval certification. Third-party applicants that do not submit signed approval certifications for at least four school district beneficiaries will be ineligible for funding. School districts not supported by a Third-Party Approval Letter or other documentation will not count towards eligibility.

Optional Attachment Documents. These are optional and are not included in the project narrative page limit. Use the “*Other Attachments*” form in Grants.gov.

- **Documentation of Partnership with Utility** (does NOT count towards the 15-page limit): Applicants that are applying for electric buses and charging infrastructure may use the Other Attachment form in Grants.gov to upload documentation, such as the Utility Partnership Template, as additional demonstration of robust engagement with their utility.

- **Self-Certification of Prioritization** (does NOT count towards the 15-page limit): Applicants that self-certify at least one school district not listed on the Prioritized School District List as “low-income” may choose to submit optional documentation of their Title I funding, as described in the Prioritization Self-Certification Instructions. Applicants are not required to submit this documentation and applicants that do submit this documentation will not receive additional points for it.
- **Leveraged Resources Commitment Letter(s)**: If applicable, applicants may include, as attachments to the application, commitment letters from or signed by project partners who are providing additional external funding that the applicant has leveraged or plans to leverage in order to support proposed project activities. These letters should be submitted as part of the applicant’s application package. Please do not ask partners to submit letters directly to EPA. This should be referenced under Section 9 “Leveraging of Additional External Funds” of the Project Narrative.
- Project Team Biographies
- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable. See [RAIN-2018-G02-R Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#).
- Partnership Letter(s) (does NOT count towards the 15-page limit): If applicable, letters of support that demonstrate strong, long-term involvement throughout the project from a variety of project partners are encouraged. Letters should specifically indicate how project partners and supporting organizations will participate in or directly assist in the design and performance of the project, or how obtaining support from project partners will allow the applicant to more effectively perform the project. Letters should be addressed to the applicant organization and included as attachments to the application. Letters submitted by partners directly to EPA will not be accepted.

When saving application files, please ensure that the following characters are **not** included in the file names: ~ “ # % & * : < > ? / \ { | } . Including these characters can cause problems with application files.

Applications submitted through [Grants.gov](#) will be time and date stamped electronically. If you wish to confirm receipt of your application from EPA (not from [Grants.gov](#)), please contact the Agency contact in Section VII within 30 days of the close of this solicitation.

Your organization’s authorized official representative (AOR) must submit your complete application electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](#) no later than **Tuesday, August 22, 2023, 11:59 PM ET**.

B. Project Narrative Instructions, Format, and Content

Instructions: The project narrative should substantially comply with the instructions, format, and content described below. It should also address the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. of the NOFO. The project narrative, including the cover page, workplan, and budget table and detail,

must not exceed a maximum of 15 single-spaced typewritten pages. Pages in excess of the 15-page limit will not be reviewed.

Supporting materials, such as project team biographies, partnership letters, and negotiated indirect cost rate agreements can be submitted as attachments and are not included in the 15-page limit. Supporting materials should also be submitted using the “Other Attachments” form, as described in Section IV.A.3 above.

Applicants should ensure that their project narratives are written clearly using understandable terms. Doing so will help ensure that the evaluation team members understand the purpose, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project.

Applicants are not required, but are highly encouraged, to use the project narrative format below, including the cover page.

(1) Cover Page:

The cover page should include the following information:

Project Title				
Applicant Information	Applicant Name: Address (Street, City, State, Zip): UEI Number: Office Phone and Fax Numbers: Contact Name, Email address and Website (if applicable):			
Entity Eligibility	<i>[Using the criteria outlined under Section III.A of this NOFO, please indicate entity type below with an X to confirm eligibility.]</i> <input type="checkbox"/> State or local governmental entity that provide bus service, including a public school district or charter school <input type="checkbox"/> Eligible contractor <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit school transportation association <input type="checkbox"/> Indian Tribe, Tribal organization, or Tribally-controlled school responsible for the purchase, lease, license, or contract for service of school buses or for providing school bus service for a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funded school			
Budget Summary	Use the definitions provided in section 10. Budget Detail to fill out this budget summary. The amounts listed in this summary should match the amounts listed in the budget table in section 10.			
	EPA Funding Requested [A]	Applicant Costs [B]	External Leveraged Costs [C]	Total Project Cost [A+B+C=D]
	\$	\$	\$	\$
Project Location(s)	<i>[Briefly describe the area(s) where the affected vehicles will operate. Primary project location (County, State, City, and Zip Code) should be included here. All locations listed on the fleet sheet should be included here as a summary]</i>			
Poor Air Quality	<i>[Briefly indicate which project location(s) are in areas designated as a maintenance or nonattainment area and the percentage of time vehicles will operate in the location(s).]</i>			
Project Period	Project Start Date:		Project End Date:	
	<i>[Provide proposed beginning and ending dates for the project.]</i>			
Short Project	<i>[Briefly describe your project in one to three sentences. Include the number of buses being replaced, the new bus(es) class(es) and fuel type(s), and charging equipment, if</i>			

Description	<i>applicable. Example description: Replace 20 Class 7 diesel school buses with 20 Class 7 electric school buses and DC fast charging infrastructure.]</i>
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- b.** Please complete the following table of information for all applicants and add additional rows as needed. Specific school bus vehicle data should be provided separately, in the fleet sheet attached to this application [excel]. For school district applicants, only the first row will be completed. For third-party applicants, please list all school-district beneficiary information. Please add additional rows as needed.

School District Name	NCES#	School Buses (#)	Fuel Type [ZE, CNG, Propane, Mix – define Fuel Type]	Charging Infrastructure [Y/N] and Type [EVSE Level 1, 2, 3, or Mix]
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				

- c. The following information is required ONLY for third-party applicants:**
 If a third-party applicant (meaning an eligible contractor or nonprofit school transportation association) is applying, please provide the school district beneficiary contact information. Threshold criteria requires at least four school district beneficiaries in a single application. Note: this section is only applicable to third-party applicants. Please add additional rows as needed. If not applicable, use N/A.

School District Name	NCES #	Location [City & State]	School POC (Point of Contact)	Phone #	Email Address
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					

(2) Workplan:

Applicants must ensure that the workplan addresses the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. of the NOFO. Applicants should use the section and subsection numbers and headings below which correspond with the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. of the NOFO. The workplan should be written clearly using understandable terms.

Section 1- Project Summary and Approach

This section should contain a detailed project summary and description of the proposed activities to be undertaken, consistent with Section I.B (Program Goals and Objectives) of the NOFO. Details of every activity for which the applicant is seeking funding should be included, such as how the activities, outputs, outcomes, and partnerships described throughout the application fit together to meet the goals and objectives of the CSB program.

Section 2 - Environmental Results—Outputs, Outcomes, and Performance Measures

a. Expected Project Outputs and Outcomes

Identify the expected quantitative and qualitative outcomes and outputs of the project as defined in Section I.C of the NOFO. Specific outputs and outcomes should be provided and may include short- and longer-term activities. Applicants should provide methodology for any emissions calculations. In addition to a narrative discussion of the outputs and outcomes, the applicant is encouraged to include a table such as the following:

Anticipated Outputs and Outcome Table [Example]*

Activities	Anticipated Outputs	Anticipated Outcomes
<i>Replacement of X existing school buses with low and zero-emission (ZE) buses</i>	<i>Number of replaced school bus vehicles</i>	<i>Emissions reductions along school bus routes such as tons of pollution reduced annually and/or over the lifetime of the buses, and improved ambient air quality in communities in which the buses operate</i>
	<i>Number of school districts that replaced one or more school bus vehicles</i>	
	<i>Number and type of electric vehicle charging infrastructure installed</i>	
<i>Replacement of X diesel buses in communities through which buses drive every day</i>	<i>Number of school children transported on ZE or clean buses rather than diesel buses</i>	<i>Benefits to the communities affected by the project, including improvements to human health and the environment, the local economy, social conditions, and the welfare of residents in such communities</i>
<i>Training provided to staff, bus drivers, mechanics, or other electric vehicle service providers (include EVSE service providers)</i>	<i>Number of trainings provided to staff, bus drivers, mechanics, or other electric vehicle service providers (include EVSE service providers)</i>	<i>Improved workforce training programs for zero emission vehicles and charging infrastructure and changes in driver behavior, such as reducing idling operations of clean school buses or optimizing efficiency of EV powertrain operations</i>
<i>Community engagement activities to ensure meaningful participation with respect to the design, planning, and performance of the project</i>	<i>Number and type of community engagement activities undertaken in affected communities to ensure meaningful participation with respect to the design, planning, and performance of the project</i>	<i>Community engagement advancement and increased public awareness of CSB project and results, and an increased understanding of the environmental or economic effectiveness of the implemented technology</i>

*Please refer to Section I.C for additional examples of expected and potential outputs and outcomes.

b. Performance Measures and Plan

Applicants should describe the proposed performance measures, which will be the mechanism to track, measure, and report progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes. Applicants should describe their plan for tracking and measuring progress toward achieving the expected project outputs and outcomes and how the results of the project will be evaluated, as described in Section I.C of the NOFO and Section.3.a of the workplan.

c. Timeline & Milestones

The reasonableness of the proposed timeline including key milestones for specific tasks and the likelihood of completion of the project’s goals and objectives by project end date.

Section 3- Environmental Justice and Disadvantaged Communities

a. Prioritization for Disadvantaged Communities

Applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which the applicant school district meets one or more of the following criteria:

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law allows EPA to prioritize certain communities that will benefit from the CSB program. The CSB program statute enables the program to target communities with environmental justice concerns and support a broad geographic distribution of funds. Additionally, CSB has been identified as part of the Justice40 Initiative, which provides a goal that 40 percent of applicable federal benefits flow to disadvantaged communities. For the purposes of this funding opportunity “disadvantaged communities” must meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. High-need school districts and low-income areas limited to:
 - a. School districts listed in the [Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates \(SAIPE\) School District Estimates for 2021](#) as having 20% or more students living in poverty; and
 - b. Title I-funded school districts and charter school districts not listed in the SAIPE dataset. See the Prioritization Self-Certification Instructions, which can be found on the [CSB Grants webpage](#), for more information on this option.
 - c. Title I-funded large public-school districts, defined as districts with more than 35,000 students OR more than 45 public schools, that are in SAIPE but do not meet the 20% poverty threshold, may be eligible to self-certify the low-income prioritization status for part or all of their district. See the Prioritization Self-Certification Instructions, which can be found on the [CSB Grants webpage](#), for more information on this option.
 - d. School districts located in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.
2. Rural school districts, meaning school districts identified with locale code “43-Rural: Remote” by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).
3. Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded school districts

4. School districts that receive basic support payments under section [7703\(b\)\(1\) of title 20](#) for children who reside on Indian land.

This program criteria for “disadvantaged communities” is drawn from the prioritization authorization described in the CSB statute. The methodology for calculating covered program benefits to disadvantaged communities may be updated in the future as additional funding opportunities are offered under the program and EPA receives input on previous funding opportunities.

School districts that qualify under one or more prioritizations above, except for 1.b and 1.c, are identified on EPA’s Prioritized School District List, found on the [CSB Grants Webpage](#). Please demonstrate prioritization status by completing the following table of information for all applicants, adding additional rows as needed. Applicants should read the Prioritization Self-Certification Instructions, which can be found on the [CSB Grants Webpage](#), to understand whether they are able to self-certify that a school district not listed on the Prioritized School District List as “low-income.” Third-party applicants will receive prioritization points based on the number of buses in the grant serving prioritized school districts. Applicants that self-certify will receive the same points under the prioritization evaluation criterion as those identified on the Prioritized School District List, and the same opportunity for a greater amount of funding per bus if the application is selected for funding.

List Of School Districts on this Application NCES ID ¹⁹	District Name	Number of Buses Serving the District	Prioritization Status [Yes/No] on Prioritized District List	<i>(If Applicable) Category of Self-Certification, as described in the Prioritization Self-Certification Instructions [Category 1, Category 2A, Category 2B, or N/A]</i>
<i>Ex. 0123456</i>	<i>School District A</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Category 1</i>
<i>Ex. 0123457</i>	<i>School District B</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Category 2A</i>
<i>Ex. 0123458</i>	<i>School District C</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Ex. 0123458</i>	<i>School District D</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>N/A</i>

¹⁹ Note: The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) ID numbers are assigned to schools and districts when they are initially reported to the U.S. Department of Education by the state education agency (SEA). The District ID listed for each district is a unique ID, used by both NCES and SAIPE. You will need to know your District ID for the application process. If you do not know your District ID, use <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/> to find out. There are several districts on this list that do not have District IDs. These districts have all been designated temporary alphanumeric District IDs (e.g., “BIE0001”), which applicants should use on their application if they choose to apply.

b. Community Engagement

In addition to the information included under 3.a. above, applicants should describe the quality and extent to which the project addresses engagement with these affected communities and/or populations, especially local residents, to ensure their meaningful participation with respect to the design, planning, and performance of the project. Meaningful involvement means people have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health; the public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision; community concerns will be considered in the decision-making process; and decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.

Partnership letter(s) may be included in the application as an attachment if applicable, which do not count toward the 15-page project narrative page limit; see Section IV.A of the NOFO. These partnership letters should describe the partner's support for and/or involvement with the project.

Section 4- Project Location – Nonattainment or Maintenance Area(s)

Applicants should list whether projects are located in an Ozone or PM2.5 nonattainment or maintenance area. Areas are located in an Ozone or PM2.5 nonattainment or maintenance area if they are designated, as of the release date of this NOFO, as nonattainment areas or maintenance areas for the following National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Data is sourced from EPA's Green Book of Nonattainment Areas for Criteria Pollutants (www.epa.gov/green-book):

- a) PM2.5 1997 Standard (Annual: 15 µg/m³, 24-hour: 65 µg/m³)
- b) PM2.5 2006 Standard (Annual: 15 µg/m³, 24-hour: 35 µg/m³)
- c) PM2.5 2012 Standard (Annual: 12 µg/m³, 24-hour: 35 µg/m³)
- d) Ozone (O3) 2008 Standard (8-hour: 0.075ppm)
- e) Ozone (O3) 2015 Standard (8-hour: 0.070ppm)

Note, a list of counties that have been designated as non-attainment areas or maintenance areas for the above NAAQS can be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants>.

Partial points may be awarded under this criterion depending on the percentage of time and buses that operate in an Ozone or PM2.5 nonattainment or maintenance area. The term "project location" as used in this NOFO refers to the area(s) where the school buses being purchased will operate. If a single application includes vehicles operating in more than one project location, this section of the work plan should indicate where the vehicles operate and the amount (%) of time the vehicles typically operate in each area. Note: The project location(s) should align with the information included in the fleet sheet attachment for each vehicle.

School District NCEIS ID	School District Name	County	State	City	Zip code	Number of Buses	% of Time Vehicles Spend in Area	Non-Attainment or Maintenance
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									Area [Yes/No]
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									

Section 5- Programmatic Capability and Past Performance

a. Past Performance

Submit a list of up to five federally-funded assistance agreements that the applicant is performing or has performed within the last three years. Assistance agreements include federal grants and cooperative agreements but not federal contracts. These assistance agreements should be awards directly to the applicant. For each of the agreements, include:

Federally Funded Assistance Agreement

Federal Agency	
Project Title	
Assistance Listing Number	<i>[Formally known as the CFDA number]</i>
Assistance Agreement Number	
Brief Description	<i>[No more than two sentences]</i>
Discussion	<i>[Include a discussion of whether, and if so how, the applicant was able to successfully complete and manage the listed agreements.]</i>

b. Reporting Requirements

For each of the assistance agreements listed, the applicant should describe their history of meeting the reporting requirements under the agreement(s). This should include:

Reporting Submission Quality	<i>[Discussion on whether the applicant submitted acceptable final reports under the agreement.]</i>
Timely Reporting on Progress	<i>[Extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on its progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under the agreement.]</i>
Reporting on Progress Barriers	<i>[If progress was not being made, whether the applicant adequately reported why not.]</i>

Note: In evaluating applicants under the past performance factors in Section V.A. of the NOFO, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these factors, which is half of the total points available for these sub-criteria in Section V.A. of the NOFO. If the applicant does not provide any response for these items, a score of 0 for these factors may be received.

c. Staff Expertise

Include information on the applicant’s organization, including a description of the staff’s knowledge, expertise, qualifications, and resources and/or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the proposed project’s goals. In addition to the optional tables below, biographical sketches, including resumes or curriculum vitae for key staff, managers and any other key personnel can be included as an optional project team biography attachment, as listed in Section IV.A of the NOFO; the optional attachment does not count towards the 15-page limit of the project narrative.

Staff Expertise [please add additional rows, as needed]

<i>Position Title</i>	<i>% FTE*</i>	<i>Resume Attached [Y/N]</i>	<i>Summary of knowledge, expertise, or qualifications to achieve project goals successfully [one to two sentences per staff member].</i>

**Full-time equivalent = Percentage (%) of full-time hours of the position title defined*

Project Partner [please add additional rows, as needed]

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Summary of knowledge, expertise, or qualifications to achieve project goals successfully [one to two sentences per project partner].</i>

Section 6- Project Sustainability

Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate applicants based on the extent to which the project results and benefits are sustainable and ability of the applicant and project partners to promote and continue efforts to reduce emissions from school buses after EPA funding for this project has ended.

For ZE projects, this may include, but is not limited to, demonstration of coordination and/or consultation with utilities on project feasibility including 1) charging needs; 2) upgrades needed; 3) costs; 4) rates for future service, and 5) timeframe for necessary upgrades. For applicants' convenience, EPA has created a sample template to guide applicants in their discussion with utilities ("Utility Partnership Template"). Applicants are not required to complete this template, or provide the information indicated in the template, but may do so as additional demonstration of robust engagement with their utility.

For non-ZE projects, this may include, but is not limited to, whether the applicant and/or its project partners have existing policies or new commitments to, by the end of the project period, adopt idle-reduction policies, adopt contract specifications requiring the use of cleaner, more efficient vehicles and equipment, or adopt other strategies to promote and continue efforts to reduce diesel emissions.

Section 7 – Workforce Development

Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate applicants based on the extent to which the application has demonstrated a plan to prepare the workforce for the project, such as conducting robust workforce planning to ensure current drivers, mechanics, electricians, and other essential personnel receive training to safely operate and maintain the new buses and infrastructure, as well as clarifying protections to ensure existing workers are not replaced or displaced because of new technologies.

Section 8- Project Resilience to Climate Impacts

Applicants should detail the quality and extent to which the project assesses and implements climate change adaptation considerations to help ensure that the project achieves its expected outcomes even as the climate changes. Adapting to climate change involves actions by individuals, businesses, governments, and others to build resilience and reduce vulnerability of human and natural systems to unavoidable climate impacts. Adaptation also reduces the long-term costs of responding to these impacts.

Applicants can demonstrate consideration of climate change adaptation through taking measures to anticipate, prepare for, and avoid adverse impacts of climate change. For example, assessing project vulnerability to local climate impacts when making siting decisions and operational plans. Measures taken to avoid damages could include ensuring fleets and equipment are protected from climate change impacts, such as flooding and sea level rise, and protecting infrastructure from storm damage.

Section 9- Leveraging of Additional External Funds

Applicants should list and describe any additional external funds they have leveraged or plan to leverage in order to support the proposed project activities, such as public-private partnerships, grants from other entities, or the issuance of school bonds. Applicants should also describe how these funds/resources will be used to contribute to the performance and success of the proposed project. For the purpose of this NOFO, these additional external funds will be considered "leveraged resources." Unlike funding awarded as part of this funding opportunity, leveraged resources do not need to be spent on eligible or allowable costs as listed in Section III.D Project

Requirements. Applicants will be evaluated based on the amount and type of additional external funds, how they will obtain the additional external funds, the likelihood the additional external funds will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the additional external funding commitment, and the role that the additional external funds will play in supporting the proposed project activities. Selected applicants are expected to abide by their proposed additional external funding commitments during grant performance. If the proposed additional external funds do not materialize during grant performance, EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action authorized under 2 CFR Part 200.

Note, applicants should **not** include additional external funds in the project budget on the SF-424 or SF-424A. They should, however, include these costs and contributions in the budget detail described in Section 10 of this project narrative template.

Section 10- Budget

This section of the project narrative is a detailed description of the budget found in the SF-424A and must include a discussion of the applicant's approach to ensuring proper management of grant/cooperative agreement funds, a detailed budget narrative, as well as the itemized budget table below. An applicant's budget table and budget narrative must account for both federal funds and any leveraged additional external funds they have secured or plan to secure in order to support the proposed project activities. Selected applicant(s) will need to submit a copy of their current indirect cost rate that has been negotiated with a federal cognizant agency prior to award. Additional guidance for developing the applicant's budget is available in [RAIN-2019-G02, "Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance."](#)

Additional external funds will be evaluated under the Leveraging of Additional External Funds criterion. Applicants who propose to use additional external funds should **not** include these costs or contributions in the project budget on the SF-424, SF-424A. They should, however, include these additional external funds in the budget detail described later in this section. If the proposed additional external funding does not materialize during grant performance, EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action authorized under 2 CFR Part 200.

The budget detail described under this section must clearly specify the amount of federal funding and the additional external funds for each category of total project costs.

a. Budget Detail

Proposed budgets should provide a detailed breakout by funding type included in the proper budget category for each activity requesting funds. Applicants should consult [EPA's Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance](#).

Applicants should provide a detailed breakout by funding type included in the proper budget category for each activity requesting funds. Applicants should use the instructions, budget object class descriptions, and example table below to complete the

detailed budget section of the project narrative. The budget detail and the budget table should be included in the project narrative and count towards the maximum 15-page limit. Additional budget documents, excluding the SF-424 and SF-424A forms, or project narrative pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed, as listed in Section III.C of the NOFO. Applicants should include applicable rows of costs for each budget category in their budget table to accurately reflect the proposed project budget. Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, installation or labor supplies, contractual costs, other direct costs (i.e., subawards, participant support costs), indirect costs, and total costs.

If the applicant has leveraged or plans to leverage additional external funding, the budget detail must clearly specify the amount of federal funding and the additional external funding for each category (see column labeled “Leveraged Costs”). If any eligible contractor, nonprofit student transportation association, Tribe, school district(s), and/or school districts’ school bus service provider(s) involved in the project intends to contribute funds to the project, the budget detail must clearly specify the amount of funding for each category (see column labeled “Applicant Costs”). For applicants proposing to implement a participant support cost or rebate program, the rebates are appropriately listed under the “Other” budget category as “Participant Support Costs.” See Appendix A for more information on participant support costs and [RAIN-2018-G05, “EPA Guidance on Participant Support Costs.”](#)

- **Personnel - List all staff positions by title. Give annual salary, percentage of time assigned to the project, and total cost for the budget period.** This category includes only direct costs for the salaries of those individuals who will perform work directly for the project (paid employees of the applicant organization as reflected in payroll tax records). If the applicant organization is including staff time (in-kind services) as a cost-share, this should be included as Personnel costs. Personnel costs do not include: (1) costs for services of contractors (including individual consultants), which are included in the “Contractual” category; (2) costs for employees of subrecipients under subawards or non-employee program participants (e.g., interns or volunteers), which are included in the “Other” category; or (3) effort that is not directly in support of the proposed project, which may be covered by the organization’s negotiated indirect cost rate. The budget detail must identify the personnel category type by Full Time Equivalent (FTE), including percentage of FTE for part-time employees, number of personnel proposed for each category, and the estimated funding amounts.
- **Fringe Benefits - Identify the percentage used, the basis for its computation, and the types of benefits included.** Fringe benefits are allowances and services provided by employers to their employees as compensation in addition to regular salaries and wages. Fringe benefits may include, but are not limited to the cost of leave, employee insurance, pensions and unemployment benefit plans. If the applicant’s fringe rate does not include the cost of leave, and the applicant intends to charge leave to the agreement, it must provide supplemental information describing its proposed method(s) for determining and equitably distributing these costs.

- **Travel - Specify the mileage, per diem, estimated number of trips in-state and out-of-state, number of travelers, and other costs for each type of travel.** Travel may be: integral to the purpose of the proposed project (e.g., inspections); related to proposed project activities (e.g., attendance at meetings); or to a technical training or workshop that supports effective implementation of the project activities. Only include travel costs for employees in the travel category. Travel costs do not include: (1) costs for travel of contractors (including consultants), which are included in the “Contractual” category; (2) travel costs for employees of subrecipients under subawards and non-employee program participants (e.g., trainees), which are included in the “Other” category. Further, travel does not include bus rentals for group trips, which would be covered under the contractual category. Finally, if the applicant intends to use any funds for travel outside the United States, it must be specifically identified. All proposed foreign travel must be approved by EPA’s Office of International and Tribal Affairs prior to being taken.
- **Equipment - Identify each item to be purchased which has an estimated acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit and a useful life of more than one year.** Equipment also includes accessories necessary to make the equipment operational. Equipment does not include: (1) equipment planned to be leased/rented, including lease/purchase agreement; or (2) equipment service or maintenance contracts that are not included in the purchase price for the equipment. These types of proposed costs should be included in the “Other” category. Items with a unit cost of less than \$5,000 should be categorized as supplies, pursuant to 2 CFR § 200.1, “Equipment.” The budget detail must include an itemized listing of all equipment proposed under the project. Refer to Section VI.C of this NOFO for additional information regarding Build America, Buy America requirements for consideration when developing your budget for infrastructure equipment. If installation costs are included in the equipment costs, labor expenses shall be itemized with the detailed number of hours charged and the hourly wage. If the applicant has written procurement procedures that define a threshold for equipment costs that is lower than \$5,000, then that threshold takes precedence.
- **Supplies - “Supplies” means all tangible personal property other than “equipment.”** The budget detail should identify categories of supplies to be procured (e.g., laboratory supplies or office supplies). Non-tangible goods and services associated with supplies, such as printing service, photocopy services, and rental costs should be included in the “Other” category.
- **Contractual - Identify each proposed contract and specify its purpose and estimated cost.** Contractual services (including consultant services) are those services to be carried out by an individual or organization, other than the applicant, in the form of a procurement relationship. [EPA’s Subaward Policy and supplemental Frequent Questions](#) has detailed guidance available for differentiating between contractors and subrecipients. Leased or rented goods (equipment or supplies)

should be included in the “Other” category. EPA does not require applicants to identify specific contractors. The applicant should list the proposed contract activities along with a brief description of the anticipated scope of work or services to be provided, proposed duration, and proposed procurement method (competitive or non-competitive), if known. Any proposed non-competed/sole-source contracts in excess of \$3,500 must include a justification. Note that it is unlikely that EPA will accept proposed sole source contracts for goods and services (e.g., consulting) that are widely available in the commercial market. Refer to [EPA’s Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for EPA’s policies on competitive procurements and encouraging the use of small and disadvantaged business enterprises.

- **Other - List each item in sufficient detail for EPA to determine the reasonableness and allowability of its cost.** This category should include only those types of direct costs that do not fit in any of the other budget categories. Examples of costs that may be in this category are: insurance; rental/lease of equipment or supplies; equipment service or maintenance contracts; printing or photocopying; participant support costs such as non-employee training stipends and travel, subsidies or rebates for purchases of pollution control equipment (such as truck owners to purchase cleaner trucks); costs associated with the delivery of new replacement buses; and subaward costs. Applicants should describe the items included in the “Other” category and include the estimated amount of participant support costs in a separate line item. Additional information about participant support costs is contained in [RAIN-2018-G05, “EPA Guidance on Participant Support Costs.”](#)

Subawards (e.g., subgrants) and participant support costs are a distinct type of cost under this category. The term “subaward” means an award of financial assistance (money or property) by any legal agreement made by the recipient to an eligible subrecipient even if the agreement is referred to as a contract. Rebates, subsidies, and similar one-time, lump-sum payments to program beneficiaries for purchase of eligible emission control technologies, such as the purchase of a new bus, are considered participant support costs. Please refer to Appendix A for detailed guidance on funding projects and partnerships and how to correctly categorize these costs in the workplan budget. “Other” does not include procurement purchases, technical assistance in the form of services instead of money, or other assistance in the form of revenue sharing, loans, loan guarantees, interest subsidies, insurance, or direct appropriations. Subcontracts are not subawards and belong in the contractual category. Applicants must provide the aggregate amount they propose to issue as subaward work as a separate line item in the “Other” category, and a description of the types of activities to be supported. Refer to [EPA’s Subaward Policy and supplemental Frequent Questions](#) for additional guidance.

- **Indirect Charges - If indirect charges are budgeted, indicate the approved rate and base.** Indirect costs are those incurred by the grantee for a common or joint purpose that benefit more than one cost objective or project and are not readily

assignable to specific cost objectives or projects as a direct cost. Examples of Indirect Cost Rate calculations are shown below:

- Personnel (Indirect Rate x Personnel = Indirect Costs)
- Personnel and Fringe (Indirect Rate x Personnel & Fringe = Indirect Costs)
- Total Direct Costs (Indirect Rate x Total direct costs = Indirect Costs)
- Direct Costs, less distorting or other factors such as contracts and equipment (Indirect Rate x (total direct cost – distorting factors) = Indirect Costs)

Additional indirect cost guidance is available in [RAIN-2018-G02, “Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements.”](#)

Example Budget Table (Required, part of the 15-page limit)

Line Item	Quantity	Cost [per unit]	EPA Funding ²⁰	Applicant Cost ²¹	Leveraged Costs ²²	Total Project Cost
Project Manager (\$40/hr, 10 hrs/wk, 102 weeks)	1	\$40,800	\$40,800	\$0	\$0	\$40,800
Project Staff (\$25/hr, 40 hrs/wk, 102 weeks)	1	\$102,000	\$102,000	\$0	\$0	\$102,000
TOTAL PERSONNEL			\$142,800	\$0	\$0	\$142,800
20% of Salary and Wages	1	\$28,560	\$28,560	\$0	\$0	\$28,560
TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS			\$28,560	\$0	\$0	\$28,560
Mileage for PM (\$0.17/mi, 25 mi/wk, 52 weeks)	1	\$221	\$221	\$0	\$0	\$221
Mileage PS (\$0.17/mi, 50 mi/wk, 52 weeks)	1	\$442	\$442	\$0	\$0	\$442
TOTAL TRAVEL			\$663	\$0	\$0	\$663
Class 7 zero-emission/electric school bus	10	\$350,000	\$2,800,000	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$3,500,000

²⁰ EPA Funding amount must be included on the SF-424 in Section 18.a and SF-424A in: cell 5(e) under Section A – Budget Summary; and Column (1) under Section B – Budget Categories.

²¹ Applicant Costs include costs funded by any eligible contractor, nonprofit student transportation association, Tribe, school district(s), and/or school districts’ school bus service provider(s) (as applicable). These costs should **not** be included on the SF-424 or SF424A.

²² Leveraged Costs include costs funded by additional external funds that the applicant has leveraged or plans to leverage, as described above in Section 9. Leveraging of Additional External Funds. These costs should **not** be included on the SF-424 in Section 18.b-e and SF424A

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)/propane school bus	5	\$100,000	\$400,000	\$100,000	\$0	\$500,000
AC Level 2 charger (240 V)	4	\$6,500	\$19,500	\$0	\$6,500	\$26,000
DC fast charger (DCFC, 25 kW) (480 V)	2	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$0	\$40,000
<i>Vehicles and Infrastructure</i>			\$3,239,500	\$470,000	\$356,500	\$4,066,000
Electrical service equipment upgrades (distribution lines, transformers, etc.)	1	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000
EVSE installation (trenching, re-paving, conduit, etc., engineering review and drawings, permitting)	1	\$30,000	\$0	\$30,000	\$0	\$30,000
<i>Construction Work and Equipment Upgrades</i>			\$0	\$80,000	\$0	\$80,000
Electrical panel maintenance	1	\$3,000	\$0	\$3,000	\$0	\$3,000
Maintenance support package (if not included in warranty)	1	\$4,000	\$0	\$4,000	\$0	\$4,000
Fleet management software/telematics	1	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,000
<i>Maintenance and Training</i>			\$0	\$7,000	\$1,000	\$8,000
TOTAL EQUIPMENT, CONSTRUCTION, AND MAINTENANCE			\$3,239,500	\$557,000	\$357,500	\$4,154,000
Materials	1	\$50	\$0	\$0	\$50	\$50
TOTAL SUPPLIES			\$0	\$0	\$50	\$50
EVSE software subscription (annual)	1	\$300	\$0	\$0	\$300	\$300
TOTAL CONTRACTUAL			\$0	\$0	\$300	\$300
Driver and technician training	1	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0	\$0	\$5,000
TOTAL OTHER			\$5,000	\$0	\$0	\$5,000

Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate = 10% (Indirect Rate x Personnel = Indirect Costs)	1	\$14,280	\$14,280	\$0	\$0	\$14,280
TOTAL INDIRECT			\$14,280	\$0	\$0	\$14,280
TOTAL FUNDING			\$3,430,803	\$557,000	\$357,850	\$4,345,653

b. Expenditure of Awarded Funds

Applicants should provide a detailed written description of the applicant’s approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.

c. Reasonableness of Costs

EPA will evaluate the reasonableness of the applicant’s budget based on the applicant’s narrative description of the budget and detailed breakout of requested funding for each work component or task. Provide a detailed description of every itemized cost, including how every cost relates to the project narrative and specific emission reduction activities. Instructions for what to include in the Budget Detail are described in Section 10.a. above.

Applicants must itemize the cost categories as listed below and the SF-424A form: personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual costs, other direct costs (subawards, participant support costs), indirect costs, and total costs. Round up to the nearest dollar and do not use any cents.

For applicants that have leveraged or plan to leverage additional external funding as described in Section III.B of the NOFO and Section 9 above, the budget narrative must include a detailed description of how the applicant will obtain the additional external funds and how the additional external funds will be used. Costs or contributions associated with additional external funds should **not** be included in the in the SF-424 or SF-424A forms.

Recipients may issue subawards, contracts, or participant support costs to implement projects. Please refer to Appendix A for detailed guidance on these funding options and how to correctly categorize these costs in the workplan budget.

Section 11 - Attachments (As listed in Section IV.A of the NOFO; this information does not count towards the project narrative 15-page limit):

Applicant Fleet Sheet (Required)

Applicants must provide a detailed applicant fleet sheet which describes the specific vehicles to be implemented under the proposed project. Applicants are encouraged to use the sample format for the applicant fleet sheet found at: <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean->

school-bus-program-grants. The applicant fleet sheet should be submitted as an attachment to the project narrative.

Applicants should describe, to the extent possible, the existing buses targeted for the proposed project, including but not limited to: the fleet owner; whether the fleet is publicly or privately owned; the project's place of performance; the on highway weight class; vehicle identification number(s); vehicle make; vehicle model; vehicle model year; odometer reading; GVWR; engine serial number(s); engine make; engine model; engine model year; engine family name; engine fuel type; annual amount of fuel used; annual miles traveled; annual idling hours; and remaining life. Applicants should describe, to the extent possible, the new buses that will be purchased using 2023 CSB Grant funding, including: year of upgrade action; GVWR; vehicle identification number(s), upgrade cost per bus; new engine model year; new engine family name; new engine fuel type; new annual idling hours; new annual miles traveled; whether the new bus will be equipped with an auxiliary heater; if applicable, whether the new bus will be capable of bidirectional charging; if applicable, the estimated range and capacity of the bus's battery; and, if applicable, the new annual fuel volume. If applicable, applicants should also describe, to the extent possible, the charging infrastructure that will be purchased using 2023 CSB Grant funding, including: the type of charger, the manufacturer, the model, the manufacture year, the maximum output power, the number of plugs, whether the charging equipment is capable of bidirectional charging; whether the bus and infrastructure will be used for V2G; the number of charging units; the equipment cost per unit; where the EV infrastructure will be located; who will own the EV charger; the installation cost of the infrastructure equipment; a description of the installation work; who will perform the installation; and the total cost of the equipment and installation. This information should be presented in a table format via the Applicant Fleet Sheet template.

Documentation of Third-Party Approval: (Required, if applicable) Third-party applicants must submit documentation, such as the Third-Party Approval Certification Template, that the school districts listed on the application are aware and approve of the third party's application. Documentation should be signed by an authorized representative of the school district beneficiary. Third-party applicants will only be considered for funding for school district beneficiaries that have signed the approval certification. Third-party applicants that do not submit signed approval certifications for at least four school district beneficiaries will be ineligible for funding. School districts not supported by a Third-Party Approval Letter or other documentation will not count towards eligibility.

Documentation of Partnership with Utility: (Optional) Applicants that are applying for electric buses and charging infrastructure may provide documentation, such as the Utility Partnership Template, as additional demonstration of robust engagement with their utility.

Self-Certification of Prioritization: (Optional) Applicants that self-certify at least one school district not listed on the Prioritized District List as "low-income" may choose to submit optional documentation of their Title I funding, as described in the Prioritization Self-Certification Instructions, which can be found on the [CSB Grants Webpage](#). Applicants are

not required to submit this documentation and applicants that do submit this documentation will not receive additional points for it.

Leveraged Resources Commitment Letter(s): (Optional) If applicable, applicants may include, as attachments to the application, commitment letters from or signed by project partners who are providing additional external funding that the applicant has leveraged or plans to leverage in order to support proposed project activities. These letters should be submitted as part of the applicant’s application package. Please do not ask partners to submit letters directly to EPA. This should be referenced under Section 9 “Leveraging of Additional External Funds” of the project narrative.

Project Team Biographies: (Optional) Provide resumes or curriculum vitae for key staff, managers, and any other key personnel. If submitted, this should be referenced under Section 5. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance of the workplan.

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: (Optional) The applicant will be required to submit this agreement if their application is selected for funding.

Partnership Letters: (Optional) If applicable, letters of support that demonstrate strong, long-term involvement throughout the project from a variety of project partners are encouraged. Letters should specifically indicate how project partners and supporting organizations will participate in or directly assist in the design and performance of the project, or how obtaining support from project partners will allow the applicant to more effectively perform the project. Letters should be addressed to the applicant organization and included as attachments to the application. Please do not ask partners to submit letters directly to EPA.

C. Releasing Copies of Applications

In concert with EPA’s commitment to conducting business in an open and transparent manner, copies of applications submitted under this NOFO may be made publicly available on the CSB website or other public website for a period of time after the selected applications are announced. Additionally, applications submitted under this NOFO may be released in part or in whole in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. EPA recommends that applications not include trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is confidential or privileged, or sensitive information, if disclosed, that would invade another individual’s personal privacy (e.g., an individual’s salary, personal email addresses, etc.). However, if such information is included, it will be treated in accordance with [40 CFR § 2.203](#). (Review EPA clause IV.a, Confidential Business Information, under [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).)

Clearly indicate which portion(s) of the application you are claiming as confidential, privileged, or sensitive information, or state ‘n/a’ or ‘not applicable’ if the application does not have confidential, privileged, or sensitive information. As provided at 40 CFR § 2.203(b) if no claim of confidential treatment accompanies the information when it is received by EPA, it may be made available to the public by EPA without further notice to the submitter.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

Only eligible entities whose application(s) meet the threshold criteria in Section III.C of this NOFO will be evaluated according to the criteria set forth below. **Applicants should explicitly address these criteria as part of their application package submittal in the project narrative, following the content requirements set forth in Section IV.** Each application will be rated using a point system. Applications will be evaluated based on a total of 120 points possible.

A. Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Points
Total Possible Points	120
1. <u>Project Summary and Approach:</u> Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate applications based on the extent and quality of the applicant’s project summary and overall approach. Specifically, EPA will evaluate the cohesiveness of the applicant’s project approach described throughout the application and how the overall strategy fits together to meet the goals and objectives of the CSB program.	10
2. <u>Environmental Results – Outputs, Outcomes and Performance Measures:</u> Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. (5 points) The extent and quality to which the applicant identifies and proposes outputs and outcomes, as described in Section I.C.2. and 3. B. (5 points) The quality of the proposed performance measures and effectiveness of the applicant’s plan for tracking and measuring its progress toward achieving the expected project outputs and outcomes, including those identified in Section I.C.2 and 3 of this announcement. C. (5 points) The reasonableness of the proposed timeline including key milestones for specific tasks and the likelihood of completion of the project’s goals and objectives by project end. 	15
3. <u>Environmental Justice and Disadvantaged Communities:</u> Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate applications based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. (20 Points) The extent to which the application benefits school districts that meet one or more of the criteria for prioritization listed in the NOFO in Section I.B. Specifically, communities served by high-need local educational agencies; rural school districts; Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded school districts; and school districts receiving basic support payments for children who reside on Indian land. B. (5 points) The extent to which the project addresses engagement with these communities and/or populations (see A above), especially local residents, to ensure 	25

<p>their meaningful participation with respect to the design, planning, and performance of the project.</p>	
<p>4. <u>Project Location – Nonattainment or Maintenance Area:</u> Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate applications based on the project location. Specifically, whether projects are located in an Ozone or PM2.5 nonattainment or maintenance area. Partial points may be awarded under this criterion depending on the percentage of time and buses that operate in an Ozone or PM2.5 nonattainment or maintenance area.</p>	5
<p>5. <u>Programmatic Capability and Past Performance:</u> Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate applicants based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. (5 points) Past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in the project narrative as described in Section IV.B of the announcement. B. (5 points) History of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in the project narrative, including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not. C. (5 points) Organizational experience, including staff expertise and qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. <p>Note: In evaluating applicants under items A. and B. of this criterion, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If the applicant does not have any relevant or available past performance or reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for sub-criteria A. and B. (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If the applicant does not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these sub-criteria.</p>	15
<p>6. <u>Project Sustainability:</u> Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate applicants based on the extent to which the project results and benefits are sustainable and can be continued after project completion.</p>	10
<p>7. <u>Workforce Development:</u> Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate applicants based on the extent to which the application has demonstrated a plan to prepare the workforce for the project, such as conducting robust workforce planning to ensure current drivers, mechanics, electricians, and other essential personnel receive training to safely operate and maintain the new buses and infrastructure, as well as clarifying protections to ensure existing workers are not replaced or displaced because of new technologies.</p>	5
<p>8. <u>Project Resilience to Climate Impacts:</u> Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate applications based on the quality and extent to which the project assesses and implements the climate change adaptation measures to help ensure that the project</p>	5

<p>achieves its expected outcomes even as the climate changes. The proposed applicant has demonstrated planning or action taken towards building project resilience and reducing vulnerabilities to climate impacts.</p>	
<p>9. <u>Leveraging of Additional External Funds:</u> Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate applicants based on the extent they demonstrate that they have leveraged or plan to leverage additional external funds in order to support the proposed project activities, as well as how these funds/resources will be used to contribute to the performance and success of the proposed project. This includes but is not limited to public-private partnerships, grants from other entities, and the issuance of school bonds. Applicants will be evaluated based on the amount and type of additional external funds, how they will obtain the additional external funds, the likelihood the additional external funds will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the additional external funding commitment, and the role that the additional external funds will play in supporting the proposed project activities. Selected applicants are expected to abide by their proposed additional external funding commitments during grant performance and the failure to do so may affect the legitimacy of the award.</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>10. <u>Budget:</u> Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate applicants based on the extent and quality to which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. (5 points) The proposed budget provides a detailed breakout by funding type in the proper budget category for each activity the applicant is requesting funding. B. (5 points) The applicant’s approach, procedures, and controls will ensure that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. C. (5 points) The proposed costs are reasonable to accomplish the proposed goals, objectives, and measurable environmental outcomes; and <p>The applicant’s budget detail in the project narrative should include both the federal funds being requested in this application and any additional external funds the applicant has leveraged or plans to leverage. However, applicants should only include the federal funds being requested in this application on the applicant’s SF-424 and SF-424A.</p>	<p>15</p>

B. Review and Selection Process

Although the School District Sub-program and Third-party Sub-program funding is being announced under this single NOFO, the applications will be reviewed separately, and separate ranking lists developed. School District Sub-program applications will be reviewed, ranked, and selected by one review panel, and Third-party Sub-program applications will be reviewed, ranked, and selected by a separate review panel. Assistance agreements funded under this announcement will be awarded and managed by each of EPA’s ten regional offices, depending on the location of the project.

Applications will first be evaluated against the threshold factors listed in Section III.C of this NOFO. Only those applications which meet all of the threshold factors will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria listed above by an EPA evaluation team. Applications will be reviewed by regional review panels. Each application will be given a numerical score and will be rank ordered by the review panel. Preliminary funding recommendations will be provided to the EPA

selection official based on these reviews and rankings. Final funding decisions will be made by the EPA regional selection official based on the rankings and preliminary recommendations of the EPA evaluation team and the other factors listed in Section V.C. below.

C. Other Factors

In making the final funding decisions, the EPA selection official may also consider geographic diversity of funds, number and size of awards, environmental benefits, applicability of different business models, and other Agency and programmatic priorities. Once final decisions have been made, a funding recommendation will be developed and forwarded to the EPA award official.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

EPA anticipates it will announce selection decisions in September through November 2023 and tentatively plans to issue awards by January 2024.

a. Submission Date and Times

The application submission deadline date and time for submission of applications is **Tuesday, August 22, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET)**. Applications submitted after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding.

b. Information Sessions

The EPA will host several information sessions regarding this NOFO. EPA encourages potential applicants to take advantage of these information sessions to learn more about the CSB program and the grant application process. Participants will have the opportunity to have their questions answered by EPA in a public forum. EPA will attempt to answer any appropriate questions in these public forums.

EPA will host multiple information sessions regarding this NOFO via teleconference/webinar. The first Funding Opportunity Information Session for this NOFO will be on Wednesday, May 10, 2023, at 3:00 p.m. (ET). Webinar links and dial-in information for the information sessions can be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants>. Additional funding opportunity information sessions while the NOFO is open will be scheduled and listed at <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants> and shared via the Clean School Bus Newsletter.

Questions and answers from these information sessions will also be posted in the questions and answers document located at <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants>.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

A. Award Notices

EPA anticipates notification to successful applicants will be made via telephone or electronic or postal mail by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application, or the project contact listed in the application. This notification, which informs the applicant that its application has been selected and is being recommended for award, is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by the Office of Air and Radiation. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer is authorized to bind the Government to the expenditure of funds; selection does not guarantee an award will be made. For example, statutory authorization, funding or other issues discovered during the award process may affect the ability of EPA to make an award to an applicant. The award notice, signed by an EPA grants officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms (e.g., work plan), which must be approved by EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

B. Reporting Requirement

Quarterly progress reports and a detailed final report will be required. Quarterly reports summarizing technical progress, planned activities for the next quarter and a summary of expenditures are required. The final report shall be submitted to EPA within 120 calendar days of the completion of the period of performance. The final report must include a summary of the project or activity, advances achieved and costs of the project or activity. In addition, the final report shall discuss the problems, successes, and lessons learned from the project or activity that could help overcome structural, organizational or technical obstacles to implementing a similar project elsewhere. The schedule for submission of quarterly reports will be established by EPA, after the grants are awarded. Award recipients may be provided with additional information and guidance on reporting performance measures and project progress after award.

Performance Measures. The applicant should also develop performance measures they expect to achieve through the proposed activities and describe them in their application. These performance measures will help gather insights and will be the mechanism to track progress concerning successful processes and output and outcome strategies and will provide the basis for developing lessons to inform future recipients. It is expected that the description of performance measures will directly relate to the project outcomes and outputs (see Section I.C), including but not limited to:

- Overseeing subrecipients, and/or contractors and vendors;
- Tracking and reporting project progress on expenditures and purchases;
- Tracking, measuring, and reporting accomplishments and proposed timelines/milestones
- Tracking and reporting project progress on installations/replacements by maintaining an accurate project fleet sheet
- Measuring and reporting on outcomes by maintaining an accurate project fleet sheet

- Efforts should be made to track, measure, and report the actual vehicle miles traveled, hours of use/operation, and fuel use for all vehicles involved in the project

The following are questions to consider when developing output and outcome measures of quantitative and qualitative results:

- What are the measurable short-term and longer-term results the project will achieve?
- How does the plan measure progress in achieving the expected results (including outputs and outcomes) and how will the approach use resources effectively and efficiently?
- What are the expected locations of the outputs and outcomes?

C. Buy America Requirements

Certain projects under this competition are subject to the Buy America Sourcing requirements under the Build America, Buy America (BABA) provisions of the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(IIJA\)](#) (P.L. 117-58, §§70911-70917) when using funds for the purchase of goods, products, and materials on any form of construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States. The Buy America preference requirement applies to all of the iron and steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used for the infrastructure project under an award for identified [EPA financial assistance funding programs](#). Please consider this information when preparing budget information.

These sourcing requirements require that all iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in Federally funded infrastructure projects must be produced in the United States. The recipient must implement these requirements in its procurements, and this article must flow down to all subawards and contracts at any tier. For legal definitions and sourcing requirements, the recipient must consult [EPA’s Build America, Buy America website](#).

CSB grants are subject to the requirements of BABA, which requires applicants to comply with Buy America preference requirements or apply for a waiver for each infrastructure project. The following potentially eligible projects under this competition meet the definition of “infrastructure” and are subject to Buy America preference requirements under BABA:

- Electric bus charging infrastructure, battery energy storage systems (BESS), or renewable on-site power generation systems that power the buses and equipment
- Any other permanent public structure that meets the infrastructure definition in [M-22-11](#)

ZE or clean school buses funded by this program are not considered “infrastructure.” While EPA encourages recipients to consider the purchase of domestically produced buses when possible, EPA does not endorse or otherwise prefer any specific brand of ZE or clean school buses.

When supported by rationale provided in IIJA §70914, the recipient may submit a waiver to EPA. The recipient should request guidance on the submission instructions of an EPA waiver request from the EPA Project Officer. A list of approved EPA waivers is available on the [Build America, Buy America website](#). Please continue to monitor this website for further BABA guidance or any future EPA-wide waivers that may impact the CSB grants program.

In addition to BABA requirements, all procurements under grants may be subject to the domestic preference provisions of 2 CFR §200.322.

See “Build America, Buy America” clause in [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

D. Final Approved Workplan and Modifications

Recipients must agree to carry out the project in accordance with the final approved workplan. Recipients are required to request prior written approval from EPA for any budget or program plan revisions, as defined in 2 CFR §200.308. Proposed modifications to the approved workplan, including additions, deletions, or changes in the schedule, shall be submitted in a timely manner to the EPA project officer for approval. Depending on the type of changes, a formal amendment to the award may be necessary. Major project modifications which include changes to the number of affected vehicles, equipment, or to the approved project location(s) may not be allowed.

VII. CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information, applicants should email written questions to: cleanschoolbus@epa.gov. EPA will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about any of the language or provisions in the announcement through the questions and answers document. Information regarding this NOFO obtained from sources other than these Agency Contacts may not be accurate. Please type “Clean School Bus NOFO Question” in the subject line of your email. All questions submitted via email will be answered and posted in the online FAQ document. The deadline for submitting questions via email is Wednesday, August 9, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. (ET). The final posting of the questions and answers document will be Wednesday, August 16, 2023.

All applicants are encouraged to review the questions and answers document posted at <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants> for further clarification of this NOFO. All applicants are encouraged to review the questions and answers document posted at <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants> for further clarification of this NOFO.

APPENDIX A – Further information Regarding Contracts, Subawards, and Participant Support Costs

I. Background

The Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) includes a separate row for “contractual” costs and “other” costs. As noted in Section 10 under Section IV.B, the “other” cost category on the SF-424A should be used to cover both subawards and participant support costs. Depending on the project, these costs may be applicable to a Clean School Bus grant application. This appendix helps clarify these differences. Additional information about participant support costs is contained in

[RAIN-2018-G05, “EPA Guidance on Participant Support Costs.”](#)

If a recipient intends to fund the proposed project’s technologies (i.e., vehicles, engines, equipment and/or appliances) that they do not directly own, such as vehicle fleets, the recipient may have the option to: (1) issue a contract; (2) make a subaward to an eligible entity; or (3) provide participant support costs to a program beneficiary. For options (2) and (3), the recipient may be able to fund technology and installation costs, but only subawards can be used to fund direct and indirect costs. If the grant recipient only intends to fund equipment and installation costs, the recipient may choose to provide participant support costs to a program beneficiary rather than a subaward.

II. Contracts

As described in 2 CFR § 200.331, a contract is for the purpose of obtaining goods and services for the recipient’s own use and creates a procurement relationship with the contractor.

Characteristics indicative of a procurement relationship between the recipient and a contractor are when the contractor:

- Provides the goods and services within normal business operations;
- Provides similar goods or services to many different purchasers;
- Normally operates in a competitive environment;
- Provides goods or services that are ancillary to the operation of the federal program; and
- Is not subject to compliance requirements of the federal program as a result of the agreement, though similar requirements may apply for other reasons.

Grant recipients that enter into procurement contracts, must comply with the applicable procurement provisions in 2 CFR § 200.317 through 200.327.

III. Subawards

Under 2 CFR § 200.1, subrecipient means a non-federal entity that receives a subaward from a grantee to carry out part of a federal program but does not include program beneficiaries receiving participant support costs; see Section IV of this appendix section below. Grant recipients may make subawards to subrecipients to carry out a portion of the grant project; in such case, the grant recipient is also known as a “pass-through entity.” Subawards establish a financial assistance relationship under which the subrecipient’s employees and contractors implement programs and projects to accomplish the goals and objectives of the grant. It is important to bear in mind that subrecipients are subject to the same federal requirements as the pass-through entity.

Under this competition, a non-federal entity is eligible to receive a subaward even if it is not eligible to receive a grant from EPA directly. While there may be some situations in which a subaward to an individual may be appropriate, those situations are rare.

Subrecipients only receive reimbursement for their actual direct or approved indirect costs and do not “profit” from the transaction. For-profit entities participating in grant activities are typically contractors rather than subrecipients.

EPA's Award Official must approve subawards to for-profit entities and individuals on the basis of either a precise description of the subaward in the EPA approved budget and project narrative, or on a transaction-by-transaction basis.

The applicant's project narrative and budget narrative should include detailed descriptions of any proposed subawards and include cost estimates for subawards as line items under the "Other" budget category in the SF-424A; see Section 10 in Section IV.B. Should a recipient decide to make a subaward that was not described in the approved project narrative and budget, the recipient must obtain prior written approval from EPA's Award Official for the subaward.

If a recipient chooses to pass funds from its grant to other entities through subawards, the recipient must comply with applicable subaward provisions of 2 CFR Part 200, the EPA Subaward Policy, and EPA's National Term and Condition for Subawards. Note that under 2 CFR § 200.331 through 200.333, there are extensive requirements for subrecipient monitoring and management that apply to pass-through entities.

Many of the federal administrative grant regulations in 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 1500, as well as the grant terms and conditions in the assistance agreement, "flow down" to subrecipients receiving a subaward. Such requirements need to be identified in the written subaward agreement between the recipient and the subrecipient.

There is no requirement for recipients to compete subawards under this NOFO; however, pass-through entities may choose to select subrecipients competitively provided this practice is consistent with applicable statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of their Clean School Bus grant.

Recipients may use the subaward template contained in Appendix D of EPA's Subaward Policy to assist them in complying with the "subaward content" requirements; however, EPA does not mandate the use of this template.

IV. Participant Support Costs

Recipients may provide participant support costs (PSCs) to program beneficiaries to enable beneficiaries to participate in the recipient's program or project. PSCs include rebates, subsidies, stipends, or other payments to program beneficiaries by a grantee, subrecipient, or contractor. For example, PSCs might be used for the purchase of eligible technologies or school buses. Program beneficiaries, rather than the grant recipient, would own the new technology.

PSCs differ from subawards in that the beneficiary is participating in the grant recipient's project or program instead of implementing their own project or program. Program beneficiaries may include but are not limited to individual owner/operators, private or public fleet owners, or residents in the applicable area; however, program beneficiaries are not employees, contractors or subrecipients of the grant recipient.

Recipients may also use PSCs to make purchases of technologies or vehicles on behalf of

program beneficiaries. In some situations, this approach allows grant recipients to achieve economies of scale and/or take advantage of existing purchase contracts. Competitive procurement requirements apply to the grant recipient when the recipient takes this approach.

The federal administrative grant regulations in 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 1500, as well as the grant terms and conditions in the recipient's grant agreement, generally do not "flow down" to program beneficiaries receiving PSCs except that costs must be reasonable and incurred within the grant project period. Requirements for compliance with civil rights laws and ensuring that program beneficiaries are eligible to receive federal financial assistance are applicable as explained in [EPA Guidance on Participant Support Costs](#). In addition, program beneficiaries must abide by requirements to ensure that the funds are used only for authorized purposes.

If a grantee, subrecipient, or contractor is issuing PSCs, it must have a written agreement in place. The written agreement should not be structured as a subaward agreement and should not refer to program beneficiaries as subrecipients consistent with 2 CFR § 200.1, "Subrecipient." In addition, the written agreement should not include language requiring the program beneficiary to comply with the federal grant regulations at 2 CFR § Part 200, 2 CFR § Part 1500, or the terms and conditions found in the award between the EPA and the recipient, other than requiring that the costs must be reasonable, necessary, and allocable. The written agreement should also include the following:

- A description of the activities and amounts that will be supported by the PSCs;
- The program and/or statutory requirements that the program beneficiary must abide by in order to ensure that the funds are used only for authorized purposes;
- Specify which party will have title to the technologies (e.g., vehicles, engines, equipment and/or appliances), if any, purchased with PSCs;
- Source documentation requirements to ensure proper accounting of the PSCs; and
- Any reporting that must be submitted by the program beneficiary.

EPA's Award Official must approve PSCs on the basis of either a precise description of the PSCs in the EPA approved budget and work plan, or on a transaction-by-transaction basis. The applicant's project narrative and budget narrative should include detailed descriptions of any proposed PSCs and include cost estimates for PSCs as line items under the "Other" budget category. Should a recipient decide to issue PSCs that were not described in the approved work plan and budget, the recipient must obtain prior written approval from EPA's Award Official. Moreover, after a grant is awarded, should a recipient decide to modify the amount approved (upwards or downwards) for PSCs, prior written approval from EPA's Award Official is also required.

When creating budgets, applicants/recipients must exclude PSCs from Modified Total Direct Costs for calculation of indirect costs as required by 2 CFR § 200.1, "Modified Total Direct Costs."

Resources:

[RAIN-2018-G05, "EPA Guidance on Participant Support Costs."](#)

[Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance](#)

Agreements

Grants Policy Issuance 16-01: EPA Subaward Policy for EPA Assistance Agreement Recipients, with attachments, includes:

- EPA Subaward Policy
- Appendix A: Distinctions Between Subrecipients and Contractors
- Appendix B: National Term and Condition for Subawards
- Appendix C: Model Programmatic Subaward Reporting Requirement
- Appendix D: Subaward Agreement Template

APPENDIX B – Application Submission Checklist

The application package *must* include all of the following materials. Use this checklist to ensure that all required materials have been included in your application package.

- SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance
- SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs

- EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report for All Applicants Requesting Federal Assistance
- EPA Form 5700-54, Key Contacts Form
- Application Narrative Attachment Form (not to exceed 15 pages)
 - Cover Page
 - Workplan
 - 1. Project Summary and Approach
 - 2. Environmental Results—Outcomes, Outputs and Performance Measures
 - 3. Environmental Justice and Disadvantaged Communities
 - 4. Project Location
 - 5. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance
 - 6. Project Sustainability
 - 7. Workforce Development
 - 8. Project Resilience to Climate Impacts
 - 9. Leveraging of Additional External Funds
 - 10. Budget
 - 11. Attachments
- Applicant Fleet Sheet (use "Other Attachments Form")
- Third Party Approval Certification, if applicable (use “Other Attachments Form”)

The application package *may* include any of the following materials. Use “Other Attachments Form” in Grants.gov to attach and submit the following documents.

- Utility Partnership Template
- Self-Certification of Prioritization, if applicable
- Additional External Funds Commitment Letters, if applicable
- Project Team Biographies
- Resumes
- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable
- Partnership Letters, if applicable

