

Governor Phil Murphy

Murphy Administration Announces Availability of \$350 Million for School Construction Projects throughout New Jersey

01/26/2023

TRENTON – The Murphy Administration today announced the upcoming availability of \$350 million for high-priority capital projects in school districts throughout the state. Starting January 30, over 550 Regular Operating Districts (ROD) will be eligible to apply for a grant, made possible through legislation ([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/f911wi/nvcngavc/nrttx1__!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!OmX2J24dJhenofsp3G0DRDZIOGbnbP-PWOFuQ_m0VXGdGu97zlvJngqGKnaLzN-CZWN6dK43RelyNs4HphhiQ\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/f911wi/nvcngavc/nrttx1__!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!OmX2J24dJhenofsp3G0DRDZIOGbnbP-PWOFuQ_m0VXGdGu97zlvJngqGKnaLzN-CZWN6dK43RelyNs4HphhiQ$)) signed in 2022, to address critical operational building needs – including school facilities projects, emergent needs, and capital maintenance requirements.

“From day one, my Administration has made it a priority to support and improve our public school system – and helping our schools implement critical facility projects is an important component of those efforts,” **said Governor Phil Murphy**. “This funding demonstrates our commitment to strengthening our schools and cementing our legacy as a state that is dedicated to providing every student with a high-quality learning environment.”

School districts will be eligible to receive at least 40 percent of eligible project costs. To receive this funding, the scope of work for a school district’s proposed project must be 100 percent eligible for state support and fall under one of the thirteen eligible project categories.

Funds may be used to address health and safety needs – such as improving air quality to help protect against the spread of infectious diseases, essential upgrades or repairs, and other similar projects.

1. Proposed projects that can be classified under one of the eligible categories will be prioritized in the following order:
2. Essential building systems upgrades (*Repair or replacement of structural, mechanical/heating and cooling, electrical, and plumbing systems; Includes required refinishing work*);
3. Building skin (*Repair or replacement of roof, windows, masonry, etc.*);
4. Building code issues;
5. ADA upgrades (*Includes site and building access, toilet room renovations*);
6. Hazardous material abatement (*Radon, lead, asbestos, etc.; Includes required refinishing work*);
7. Security and communications systems (*Includes essential systems*);
8. Technology infrastructure upgrades;
9. Site drainage (*To remediate an existing problem; Not in conjunction with new construction*);
10. Elementary school playgrounds (*Includes the upgrade or replacement of existing playgrounds – but not new playgrounds – to meet life cycle, safety, and/or consumer product safety codes*);
11. Renovated or new early childhood classrooms (*Includes the renovation and/or new construction*);
12. Special population needs (*For program expansion or educational adequacy*);
13. Existing site upgrades, excluding athletic fields and tracks (*Includes upgrades to sidewalks, paving, fencing, and security lighting*); and
14. Renovation and/or new construction of capacity-generating classrooms to address overcrowding or substandard conditions.

The New Jersey Department of Education (DOE) will review districts’ applications and funds will be disbursed by the SDA once proposals have been approved. Following approval by the DOE, the project will be transmitted to the SDA to offer a grant to the district.

“Students and staff deserve to attend a school that offers a safe and secure learning environment,” **said Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education**. “This funding is designed to address the highest priority projects so we can work toward the goal of ensuring our school facilities are of the same high-quality as the instruction that is being provided within those school walls.”

“This grant funding will allow hundreds of Regular Operating Districts throughout the State to make critical school infrastructure upgrades, further supporting quality learning environments that will positively impact student learning,” **said Manuel M. Da Silva, CEO, New Jersey Schools Development Authority**. “Through our continued partnership with the DOE, SDA will support the advancement of school construction projects that improve and extend the lifecycle of the State’s school facilities.”

Upon proof of local share and completion of other required grant-related documents, the SDA will then be able to execute a grant agreement and issue payments as districts attain specific project milestones. Projects that require a local referendum to raise the local funding portion will not be eligible for this ROD funding.

RODs will have until May 1, 2023 to apply for these grants, and the DOE will determine eligibility within 90 days.

“We created this fund with the specific intention of using federal and state resources to reduce and avoid state debt, and to make strategic investments in our future,” **said Senator Paul Sarlo, the Chairman of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee, who spearheaded the Senate effort to create the fund**. “The Debt Defeasance Fund provides a financial cushion that protects taxpayers as well resources for investments in primary needs, including school construction, repairs and upgrades. Debt reduction and sustainable investments are fiscally-responsible means to meet the needs of our residents in more affordable ways.”

“Our commitment to managing State debt and prioritizing fiscally responsible investments has made it possible to fund school projects in communities across New Jersey,” **said Assemblyman Roy Freiman, first prime sponsor of the bill in the Assembly**. “Thanks to the New Jersey Debt Defeasance and Prevention Fund, our schools will have access to grants needed to make critical building repairs without borrowing money and accumulating interest that will cost taxpayers.”

Governor Phil Murphy

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