



EPA Clean School Bus Program: 2023 Grants

Are EPA Grants or Rebates the Better Fit for My School District?

The EPA Clean School Bus Program is a historic opportunity for school districts. No other federal program is exclusively dedicated to electric school buses, and already in its first year EPA has doubled the number of electric school buses on the road. Now through 2026, EPA will offer up to \$1 billion in funding through grants and rebates, prioritizing low-income, rural, and Tribal school districts. In 2023, EPA plans to offer another rebate round in the fall, approximately \$600 million.

[EPA grants and rebates have significant differences.](#) Though who's eligible to apply, what kind of buses are eligible for replacement and for funding, and who is prioritized will stay the same throughout the program,¹ application requirements will vary each funding round. School districts should consider closely which funding opportunity -- grant or rebate -- is best suited for them.

The 2023 grants require a more comprehensive application with a competitive selection process. Unlike the 2022 rebates that asked for a one-page application and used a lottery to select winners, EPA will review, score, rank, and select 2023 grant proposals based on a variety of criteria. Applicants will have up to 15 pages, plus attachments, to craft a winning program narrative and budget. EPA has provided application templates and examples, and numerous government agencies and non-profit organizations are offering free technical assistance.

EPA expects to award only 25-50 projects through the 2023 grants, while over 400 school districts were awarded rebates in 2022. EPA is targeting deployment of electric school buses at a larger scale, with a minimum of 15 school buses for school district applicants and 25 for third-party applicants.

Who Should Apply for the 2023 Grants?

The 2023 Clean School Bus Grants might be right for school districts that have:

- Experience** with federal grants, grant reporting and good past performance
- Expertise** with electric school buses or similar sustainability projects, via staff or contractors
- Cost-share**, or additional funds to contribute to the project from utilities, state grants, green banks, or other public-private partnerships
- A relationship with their electric utility.** Utility support early on in the project is necessary.

Additionally, we *strongly* urge applications from school districts who:

- Qualify as priority** under the EPA's criteria for low-income, rural, and Tribal school districts (or who can self-certify part or all of their school district as low-income).
- Suffer from poor air quality** due to diesel pollution. See EPA's list of counties in nonattainment for ozone and particulate matter pollution, who qualify for additional points.

Not sure if this is you? Check out [our decision tree guide](#) for more information, or reach out directly to Carolina at carolina@chaconconsulting.com with your questions.

¹ *Unless Congress decides otherwise. The program law has been amended once, to provide flexibility in contract length for school buses leased through third-parties and to allow private fleets to apply for funding.