THIS TOOLKIT IS FOR GRANTS -

PLEASE USE THIS TOOLKIT FOR 2023 REBATES

EPA Clean School Bus Program: 2023 Grants

TOOLKIT FOR ADVOCATES

ABOUT THE CLEAN SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM

The EPA Clean School Bus Program (CSBP) is a 5-year, $5 billion program established by the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act of 2021, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The program provides funding for school districts to invest in electric school buses, as well as propane and compressed natural gas (CNG) school buses, and related charging infrastructure. EPA aims to distribute $1 billion each year through 2026 in the form of grants and rebates. The program prioritizes school districts that are low-income, rural, Tribal, or that can provide cost-share. In 2022, EPA launched the first round of funding through rebates, awarding $965 million to over 400 school districts for more than 2,500 new school buses, 95 percent of which are electric, the best option for children.

ABOUT THE CLEAN SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM **GRANTS**

The EPA is making $400 million available through a grants program this year. Electric, propane, and CNG buses are eligible for funding. Eligible applicants include (1) state and local governmental entities that provide bus service (such as school districts); (2) public charter school districts; (3) Indian Tribes, Tribal Organizations, or Tribally-controlled schools; (4) Nonprofit School Transportation Associations; and (5) Eligible Contractors (including OEMs, dealers, school bus service providers, and private bus fleets). EPA will provide a combined funding amount (up to $395,000 for priority school districts) to cover both bus and infrastructure costs for all awardees requesting electric school buses. The grants program will continue to prioritize funding for school districts with 20% or more students living in poverty, as well as districts that are rural or Tribal.

Unlike the inaugural 2022 Clean School Bus rebates, in which winners submitted a simple application and were chosen through a lottery, the grant program will be a thorough and competitive process. The EPA has released specific criteria that all applicants must meet, and will score and select applicants based on additional evidence and forms provided. Applicants will need to submit materials that highlight their programmatic capability, such as a utility partnership plan, a proposed budget, plans to meet environmental goals and plans, and ability to leverage other sources of private or local funding.

Additional information can be found on this AESB brief on the program guidelines and through the EPA's website. Applications opened April 28, 2023 and will close August 22, 2023 (a 120-day window). No priority will be given to applications submitted early.

KEY LINKS

- EPA Clean School Bus Program 2023 Grants website
- EPA Clean School Bus Program 2023 Grants Prioritized School Districts

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

The Alliance for Electric School Buses is committed to seeing the EPA Clean School Bus Program succeed. The 2022 rebates generated overwhelming interest in EPA funding for zero-emission school buses, with over $4 billion in applications and 90% of them requesting electric school buses. **It's important to maintain momentum in 2023.**

At the same, a competitive grants proposal requires more time and resources from school districts than the rebate application did. While the rebates aimed for a wide geographic distribution of funding -- at least one electric school bus per state and territory -- **this grants round is better suited for school districts that have already begun their electrification journey or are well-prepared to embark upon it.** Our coalition and partners are working to ensure that school districts receive the technical, community, and political support they may need to apply. **Advocates can help by targeting outreach to school districts who are truly invested in electric school buses.**

If you have 5 minutes:

1. Share the news on social media. Make sure to tag #CleanRide4Kids.

If you have 30 minutes:

1. Share the news on social media. Make sure to tag #CleanRide4Kids.
2. Send an email to your school district.

If you have 1 hour:

1. Share the news on social media. Make sure to tag #CleanRide4Kids.
2. Send an email to your school district asking if they want to apply for a CSBP grant.
3. Send an email to your state legislator, Congressional office or other local decision maker asking them to support your local school district(s) in applying for a CSBP grant.

If you have 2-3 hours:

1. Share the news on social media. Make sure to tag #CleanRide4Kids.
2. Send an email to your school district asking if they want to apply for a CSBP grant.
3. Send an email to your state legislator, Congressional office or other local decision maker asking them to support your local school district(s) in applying for a CSBP grant.
4. Send out a media release alerting news media of this new grant opportunity for your school.

If you have more time:

5. Contact your regional EPA office to understand how you can support school districts in your community applying for CSBP funds.

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KEY MESSAGES

- Applications for the EPA Clean School Bus 2023 grants are now open! $400 million is available for projects replacing diesel buses with new electric school buses. School districts with 20% of students living in poverty, as well as rural and Tribal school districts, will receive priority for funding in this competitive round. This is a historic program with a transformational opportunity for U.S. schools.

- Electric school buses produce zero tailpipe emissions, which is healthier for students and drivers, and have a lower total cost of ownership, reducing fuel and maintenance costs for school districts. They're also cleaner for the environment and quieter, too. School districts across the country are already successfully deploying electric school buses in all kinds of terrain and weather, from Montana snow to Arizona heat to Vermont hills. Drivers and students love them, and momentum is building for fleet electrification.

- There's never been a better time to replace aging, polluting diesel buses with a clean ride for kids. With ample resources from non-profit organizations, technical assistance from federal agencies, and the advice of hundreds of other districts who have already electrified, school districts can count on a strong supportive network to assist in their grant proposals.

- Check out if the 2023 Clean School Bus grants are right for your school district. Applications are due August 22, 2023.

Some communications guidance:

- Say "electric school buses" instead of "clean school buses." Because the EPA Clean School Bus Program also funds fossil fuel buses like propane and CNG, the phrase "clean school bus" now includes fuels that are *not* clean. Instead, say "electric school buses" or "zero-tailpipe-emission buses."

- Make sure to refer to this EPA Clean School Bus Program funding round as GRANTS, not rebates. CSBP rebate rounds have different guidelines and requirements. The EPA already completed their inaugural rebate round in 2022 and will launch another one later in fall or winter of 2023.

- Understand that not every school district is well suited to apply for an EPA Clean School Bus Program grant. Grant proposals take time and resources, further stressing under resourced school districts. Make sure your messaging says that this is an important opportunity for school districts who are *already* interested in and exploring electric school buses (e.g., already talking to their utility/electric service providers) or are *well prepared* from past experience with electric school buses.

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ANNOUNCING THE GRANTS OPENING

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS & GRAPHICS

Customize your social media posts to make sure they get seen, and don't forget to use the #CleanRide4Kids hashtag -- that's how AESB will amplify your posts.

- New opportunity to invest in a #CleanRide4Kids! @EPA just opened applications for its 2023 Clean School Bus Program Grants. Up to $400M for electric school buses is available.

  ⚡Is your school district ready to electrify?⚡ Learn more and apply by 8/22: https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants

- 🚨🚨 JUST ANNOUNCED: @EPA just opened applications for a $400 million grant competition to help school districts buy electric school buses. Now is the time to invest in a #CleanRide4Kids!

  Share the news with school districts in your community: https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants

- .[@tag or name of your school district], did you see the great news⁉️ @EPA just opened applications for the $400 million Clean School Bus Program Grants, and school districts can now apply for funding to purchase #electricschoolbuses! ⚡🚌 https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants

- Exciting news! @EPA just opened a $400 million grant competition for school districts seeking to electrify their school bus fleets.

  Is the Clean School Bus Program Grants the right opportunity for your school district to support a #CleanRide4Kids? https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants

- As a member of @alliance4esb, we're thrilled to see a new funding opportunity for school districts to invest in #electricschoolbuses! @EPA's $400 Clean School Bus Program Grants will improve children's health.

  Let's bring a #CleanRide4Kids to [LOCATION]: https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants

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SAMPLE MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
[DATE]

Contact: [PRESS CONTACT]

EPA Now Accepting Applications for $400 Million Clean School Bus Program Grants

Local [Environmental/Clean Air/Clean Energy] Advocates Call on [State/City/County] School Districts to Apply Now to Invest in Cleaner & Healthier Electric School Buses

[CITY, State] -- Today/Yesterday/On April 24, the U.S. EPA announced the opening of a new round of funding to help school districts invest in zero-tailpipe-emission electric school buses through its historic Clean School Bus Program. EPA will award up to $400 million in grants to projects that replace diesel school buses and meet eligibility criteria in a competitive process. School districts on the EPA's list of Low-Income, Tribal and Rural School Districts will be given priority for funding. [List of priority local/state school districts] are included in the EPA's priority list.

[Organization name] is committed to seeing more of [State/City/County]'s school districts transition to zero-emission electric models that will clean up the air children (and bus drivers) breathe on their way to and from school, and is calling on [State/City/County] school districts to apply for this funding.

> "Electric school buses are the only zero-emission alternative to diesel school buses, which emit toxic pollutants that harm the health of children and, as recent studies show, can even impact their academic performance and school attendance," said [Name, Title]. "We are urging [Name of School Districts] to apply for the Clean School Bus Program to bring electric school buses to [City/State/County]. We can't lose this opportunity to clean up the air for our communities."
>
> *OR*
>
> "Electric school buses are healthier for our children, cleaner for our environment and can save school districts money in fuel and operating costs," said [Name, Title]. "We welcome this funding opportunity and look forward to working with [Name of School Districts] to apply for the Clean School Bus Program and bring electric school buses to [City/State/County]."

The deadline for grant proposals is August 22, 2023. Throughout the application period, EPA will host a number of informational webinars and is accepting questions at cleanschoolbus@epa.gov. Grant recipients will be announced in November 2023 through January 2024, with awards distributed in February to March 2024. School districts that are interested in applying are encouraged to contact their electric utility immediately to begin planning their electric school bus charging needs.

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The Clean School Bus Program was established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed by Congress and signed into law by President Biden in 2021. As a member of the Alliance for Electric School Buses, a national coalition of not-for-profit organizations committed to an equitable electrification of the nation's school bus fleet, [Organization] has advocated for federal funding for zero-emission, electric school buses since 2019. Over 20 million U.S. children ride nearly 500,000 school buses, most which run on diesel, whose exhaust is a known carcinogen that can lead to or worsen respiratory illnesses like asthma. Low-income students and Black, Indigenous, Latinx and students of color are more likely to ride in school buses and be exposed to harmful pollution. Advocates throughout the country are calling for a full transition to zero-emission school buses that won't pollute the air our children and communities breathe. [include more information about asthma rates/advocacy efforts/other local details]

For more information on the Clean School Bus Program, visit https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/. School districts can also receive technical assistance through the EPA's

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About [Organization]: xxxxxx

SAMPLE MEDIA PITCH

Keep in mind
To pitch press on this news, consider a few things:

- Are there reporters in your state who have covered electric school buses or federal funding opportunities before? If so, they might be interested in this news.
- Are there advocates, community members or leaders who will want to share this news? If so, make sure they're available for a media interview before reaching out to the press.
- If your state has recently passed any electric school bus legislation, mention it. That will help show how this announcement is driving momentum for a #CleanRide4Kids in your state.
- Do you need help with talking points or customizing a pitch? Reach out to Carolina Chacon with the Alliance for Electric School Buses at carolina@chaconconsulting.com.

Sample subject lines (pick one):

- New grants program opens for STATE school districts to purchase electric school buses
- EPA launches grants opportunity for to bring a clean ride for kids to STATE

Sample email text:
Hello [NAME],

I wanted to make sure you saw the news: The EPA has just opened applications for its 2023 Clean School Bus grants. $400 million is available to projects that will replace diesel buses with electric school buses, the cleanest option for our children.

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Last year, XX school districts in STATE applied for the 2022 Clean School Bus rebates. X school districts were selected for an award and will be investing in X electric school buses. This grants opportunity is great for school districts that were waitlisted from last year's rebate round.

By switching to electric school buses, school districts can eliminate toxins from diesel exhaust that pollute the air our children and communities breathe and can lead to respiratory illnesses and other heart and lung diseases. XX,XXX, or X%, of children in [STATE] suffer from asthma. Electric school buses also help school districts save thousands of dollars in fuel and maintenance costs, and create a healthier working environment for bus drivers, attendants and mechanics. [If appropriate, add notes on potential climate impacts/greenhouse gas reductions.] Electric school buses are successfully operating in all kinds of terrain and weather, and momentum is building for a #CleanRide4Kids.

We hope you'll amplify this news in your [newspaper/broadcasts/etc] and make sure school districts in STATE know that federal grants are available for electric school bus projects.

Please let us know if you have any questions. We look forward to hearing from you!

[SIGNER]

SAMPLE EMAIL TO ELECTED LEADERS

Ask federal, state or local decision makers -- mayors, city councilors, county commissioners, state legislators, Governors, or members of your Congressional delegation -- for help in spreading the word about this funding opportunity. Community and political support will be helpful in this competitive grants round.

Keep in mind that if a school district chooses to apply, a letter of support from a local or state elected official could be helpful -- especially if that official can ensure the school district is able to provide cost-share for the project.

> *Hello NAME,*
>
> *I wanted to make sure you saw the exciting news: The EPA has just opened applications for its 2023 Clean School Bus grants. $400 million is available to projects that will replace diesel buses with electric school buses, the cleanest option for our children. Electric school buses produce zero tailpipe emissions (protecting our air quality and the health of students and drivers), save school districts money in maintenance and fuel, are cleaner than propane or diesel buses over their lifetimes, and are successfully operating in all kinds of terrain and weather.*

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[Share any personal details about why electric school buses or cleaner air matters to you. Are you a parent whose children ride school buses? Do you know someone with asthma or another respiratory illness? Are you concerned about carbon emissions for diesel?]

This is an important opportunity to secure funding for school districts who are ready to electrify their fleets. *EPA grants can cover funding for new electric school buses, charging infrastructure (on the customer's side of the meter), workforce training, staff time and benefits, contractors, technical assistance, and more. School districts with more than 20% of students living in poverty, as well as rural and Tribal school districts, will receive priority for funding.*

The selection process will be competitive, but EPA grant funding could prove transformational, especially for school districts with larger fleets or who were not able to apply during the last funding round. Resources are available to help school districts register for the funding opportunity, draft strong proposals, and plan for electrification with their electric service providers. ***As a champion of clean air and healthy communities, we hope you can help us spread the word to school districts in your [district/community/state] who may be interested and well positioned to apply for a grant.*** *Grant proposals are due August 22, 2023.*

[Add any details about how this funding could help this decision maker advance any of their goals, such as a state or local sustainability/climate plan]

Attached please find a fact sheet on the program, a directory of resources, and an explainer for school districts to determine if applying for a Clean School Bus grant is right for them. Please reach out if you need additional information, connections, or support.

Our children deserve a clean ride to school. We thank you in advance for helping us bring funding to [our community/district/state].

Best,

NAME

P.S. Through its 2022 rebates, the Clean School Bus Program is distributing $935 million for more than 2,500 electric school buses, at least one in every state as well as multiple Tribal nations and U.S. territories. There's at least one school district in your state that's already begun the electrification journey and can share their experience. Contact your Regional EPA Office to get connected and get your questions answered.

Don't forget to attach the following documents:

- CSBP Grants Fact Sheet

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- CSBP Comparing 2022 Rebates and 2023 Grants
- CSBP Grants or Rebates Fact Sheet and Decision Tree
- CSBP Grants Resource Directory
- ESB Contacts Directory

OUTREACH TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

SAMPLE EMAIL TO SCHOOL DISTRICT

Hello,

On behalf of [OFFICE/ORG], I wanted to be sure you saw the good news: **The EPA has just opened applications for the Clean School Bus Program 2023 Grants.** $400 million is available for projects that will replace diesel with electric school buses, with applications due August 22, 2023.

Clean School Bus Program grants can cover funding for new electric school buses, charging infrastructure (on the customer's side of the meter), workforce training, staff time and benefits, contractors, technical assistance, and more. EPA will provide a combined funding amount to cover both bus and infrastructure costs for awardees requesting electric school buses, up to $395,000 for priority school districts and $250,000 for non-priority school districts.

School districts with more than 20% of students living in poverty, as well as rural and Tribal school districts, will receive priority for funding; look up if your school district is on the EPA's 2023 priority list. School districts may also be able to self-certify as low-income school districts; check if your school district is on the self-certifiable list (requires download).

Eligible applicants for this funding opportunity include (1) state and local governmental entities that provide bus service; (2) public charter school districts; (3) Indian Tribes, Tribal Organizations, or Tribally-controlled Schools; (4) Nonprofit School Transportation Associations; and (5) Eligible Contractors (including Manufacturers, Dealers, School Bus Service Providers, and Private Bus Fleets). Funds will be distributed and grants managed via your Regional EPA Office.

For more information, please visit the EPA Clean School Bus Program grants website and read the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Please note that resources are available to help school districts register for the funding opportunity, draft strong proposals, and plan for electrification with their electric service providers.

Additionally, our [office/organization] is happy to be a resource for you as you consider this process. Please let me know if you have questions, and feel free to share this information with anyone in your networks who may be interested in applying.

Sincerely,

[SIGNATURE]

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P.S. These grants are made possible by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which provided an unprecedented $5 billion to transform the nation's fleet of school buses. In 2022, nearly $1 billion in funds were awarded through a rebate round. From now through 2023, EPA expects to make funding available via a grants round and a rebate round each year. You can check out this chart for a comparison between rebates and grants.

Attach:

- CSBP Grants Fact Sheet
- CSBP Comparing 2022 Rebates and 2023 Grants
- CSBP Grants or Rebates Fact Sheet and Decision Tree
- CSBP Grants Resource Directory

RESOURCE DIRECTORY FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Check out the Alliance's Contacts Directory and Resources Directory.

SAMPLE SLIDE DECK

Check out the Alliance's customizable (download or make a copy first) slide deck on the Clean School Bus Program 2023 grants.

SUPPORTING SCHOOL BUS ELECTRIFICATION

BENEFITS OF ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUSES

Key Talking Points

- Electric school buses are the cleanest, healthiest option for our communities. They produce zero tailpipe emissions, protecting students, drivers and communities from harmful air pollutants that can lead to asthma, cancer, and other heart and lung illnesses. Studies show that diesel pollution can also impact students' academic performance and even school attendance. Electric school buses also generate fewer carbon emissions than diesel and propane buses over their lifecycle. As the electric grid gets cleaner, with new renewable resources coming online, electric school buses will be powered by clean solar, wind and geothermal energy.
- Electric school buses have a lower total cost of ownership than diesel school buses. With fewer parts and an electric drivetrain, electric school buses can save school districts thousands of dollars in maintenance and fuel costs -- which can then be repurposed by schools for other expenditures. While propane, diesel, and gas buses rely on fossil fuels with volatile prices, electricity prices have remained steady over decades. For school districts replacing aging diesel buses, electric school buses are a sound long-term financial investment.

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- Electric school buses are safe and reliable. Approximately 1,000 electric school buses are successfully operating right now throughout the country, providing safe and reliable rides to school. Electric school buses have been found to perform well in different weather and terrain, from Montana snow to Arizona heat to Vermont hills. With proper training, bus drivers can maximize their range and minimize their charge time, ensuring that electric school buses can complete 90% of routes safely -- and without polluting the air our children breathe.
- Students and drivers love electric school buses. They are quieter, making it easier to hear students and other noises inside and outside the bus. They are smooth to drive and responsive. Drivers that get trained on electric school buses gain valuable skills with electric vehicles, and don't endanger their health breathing in toxic diesel fumes.
- Our communities deserve to breathe clean air, and EPA Clean School Bus Program funding can make this a reality. Let's invest in the only zero tailpipe emission fuel available: electric school buses.

Longer Context

Children deserve a clean ride to school. School buses are the #1 form of public transportation in the United States. Every school day, 20 million children ride on nearly 500,000 school buses, 95% which run on diesel. Diesel exhaust -- which can reach children when buses or idling or driving -- produces toxins that are up to 12 times more polluting than what children would encounter riding to school on a regular car. Diesel exhaust is a known carcinogen that can shorten lifespans and lead to heart and lung diseases, and is especially linked to asthma, which before the pandemic was the #1 cause of school absences. Low-income Americans and Black, Indigenous and Latinx children are more likely to suffer from and be hospitalized due to asthma -- *and* they are more likely to ride school buses. Diesel pollution has also been linked to lower test scores and worse academic performance, and studies have shown that replacing diesel school buses with cleaner options improves student attendance rates. By transporting children in diesel school buses, we are unfortunately putting their health and their futures at risk.

There is a clear solution: Electric school buses. Electric school buses produce zero tailpipe emissions, protecting our children, our communities and our environment from harmful pollution. Transitioning to all-electric school bus fleets would prevent the release of 5.3 million tons of climate pollutants each year, and protect students' (and drivers') lungs by keeping diesel exhaust out of the air inside and outside of the buses. Electric school buses are the cleanest option available for our air quality and our lungs. By replacing diesel buses with electric school buses in low-income communities of color breathing the dirtiest air, we can also address historic environmental injustices.

With fewer parts and no gas tank to fill up, electric school buses can also help school districts save thousands of dollars each year on fuel and maintenance costs. School bus drivers report that they are quieter and more pleasant to ride, without any noxious fumes or odors. Electric school buses enabled with bidirectional charging that can provide vehicle-to-building or vehicle-to-grid services can also improve community resilience by offering backup power sources in emergency situations,

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or serve as a revenue source for school districts by delivering energy back to the grid. As an industry, electric school buses can create new U.S. jobs in manufacturing and deployment.

In short, electric school buses protect children's health, boost their academic performance, reduce pollution, save school districts money on fuel and maintenance costs, and help local, state and federal governments meet their climate, economic and justice goals.

We need electric school buses now.

- Zero tailpipe emissions = cleaner air
- Reduced environmental pollution
- Quieter ride — no engine running!
- Healthier for students, drivers and communities
- Lower total cost of ownership thanks to maintenance and fuel cost savings
- Better academic outcomes and attendance for students
- Community resilience with bidirectional charging-enabled buses
- Career opportunities in electric school bus manufacturing, deployment and maintenance

ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUSES FAQ

Check out the detailed FAQs here.