



ADDRESSING SEISMIC SAFETY FOR WASHINGTON SCHOOLS

2026 Supplemental Capital Budget Decision Package

Agency: 3500 Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Budget period: 2026 Supplemental Budget

Budget level: PL

PROJECT SUMMARY

The 2022 Legislature passed SSB 5933 establishing the School Seismic Safety Program. This program provides grants to school districts and state tribal education compact schools (STECs) to support the costs of retrofitting or relocating facilities located in high seismic risk areas or tsunami hazard zones. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) requests \$49,200,000 to support a pilot initiative focused on addressing seismic vulnerabilities in unreinforced masonry school buildings. Funding will also advance seismic safety projects that have already received planning grant funding, enabling them to proceed into the design and construction phases during the 2027–29 biennium.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As outlined in 2022 SSB 5933, schools may apply for planning and construction grants to relocate facilities in tsunami zones, undertake seismic retrofits of school facilities, and construct vertical evacuation towers. Grant funding covers at least two-thirds of the total project costs, including direct and indirect costs like land acquisition. All projects funded through this program must also qualify for the School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP).

What is the problem, opportunity, or priority you are addressing with the request?

In consultation with OSPI's School Seismic Safety Committee (SSSC), schools that face both seismic and tsunami risks have been identified for prioritized funding. Many of these schools are located along the Pacific coast and in Grays Harbor County. Funding this request will allow OSPI to provide planning grants to school districts and STECs located in these areas. Planning grants support risk assessments and the development of conceptual remediation designs. Once a district or STEC identifies a project and receives a grant, the proposal must be presented to the SSSC. The committee will review the project and, by majority vote, recommend whether the project should proceed to request construction funding. This process will enable districts to advance projects through planning and design, ensuring they are ready for construction in the 2027–29 biennium.

What are you purchasing and how does it solve the problem?

Projects will be funded in two planning phases. Phase one covers geotechnical evaluations and project management costs for proposed school relocations, seismic retrofits, or vertical evacuation towers. Phase two funds conceptual design, cost estimation, and project management for the proposed solution. The geotechnical data collected during phase one will guide the design to ensure remediation strategies adequately address identified seismic and tsunami risks. Once the remediation plan is complete, the project team will present it to the SSSC, which will then make a recommendation to OSPI to bring before the legislature and request full design and construction funding.

Projects recommended by the SSSC and approved by OSPI will be prioritized for construction grants. Construction funding may include land acquisition, design, and other direct and indirect project costs. By law, grants will fund at least two-thirds of total project costs, with no maximum limit. Requests for additional funding above the two-thirds threshold will be presented to the Capital Projects Advisory Review Board (CPARB), which will make recommendations to OSPI for final funding decisions.

What will the request produce or construct?

This \$49,200,000 request will provide grant funding for projects identified on the attached priority list. These projects include schools at high risk of both seismic and tsunami hazards, as prioritized in consultation with the SSSC. The request also includes funding to address unreinforced masonry buildings currently used for instruction, which represent a significant seismic risk.

Which clientele would be impacted by the budget request? Where and how many units would be added, people, or communities served, etc.?

All public schools, including charter schools and state-tribal education compact schools will be better equipped to protect students from the risks posed by seismic events.

Does this project or program leverage non-state funding?

This project does not leverage non-state funding.

How is your proposal impacting equity in the state?

The projects requesting funding include schools that serve significant populations of students of color and students from lower-income households. These projects are located in areas designated as distressed by the Department of Employment Security. Funding these projects will enable communities to replace outdated school facilities with modern buildings that not only mitigate seismic and tsunami risks but also meet current health, safety, and educational standards.

What alternatives did you explore and why was this option chosen?

Fully funding this list of projects is the best strategy for addressing seismic safety issues in Washington schools.

ASSUMPTIONS AND CALCULATIONS

Funding Requested:

Fiscal Year 2026

- \$49,200,000

2027-29 Biennium

- \$0

2029-31 Biennium

- \$0

2031-33 Biennium

- \$0

2033-35 Biennium

- \$0

STRATEGIC AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Strategic framework:

This project supports Superintendent Reykdal's K–12 Education Vision of his goal for Washington's public education system to prepare every student who walks through our school doors for post-secondary aspirations, careers, and life. Seismic events are a serious threat to student health and safety when schools and school facilities are unprepared. By addressing this risk, this project supports OSPI's Strategic Goal #4, A Committed, Unified, and Customer-Focused OSPI that supports school districts through consistent, timely, and meaningful funding.

OTHER COLLATERAL CONNECTIONS

Greenhouse gas emission limits (RCW 70A.45.050):

The relocation and replacement projects funded by this grant program align with OSPI's Washington Sustainable Schools Protocol. In addition, many of the school facilities identified are at the end of their useful life or are close to the age eligibility requirements for replacement through SCAP. The schools replaced or retrofitted will meet current building codes which will decrease energy use and carbon pollution.

Is this project eligible for direct pay:

The proposed projects in this request do not meet the eligibility for direct pay.

Is there additional information you would like decision makers to know when evaluating this request?

No.

If the project was originally funded prior to the 2021-23 biennium describe the project and each subproject:

N/A

Governor's salmon strategy:

N/A

Historical significance:

Local school districts and STECs will be required to identify any buildings which may have historical significance.

Location:

Statewide.

Growth management impacts:

School districts are responsible for determining whether and how they need to participate in the planning process with the city or county planning authority.

Grant recipient organizations:

Local School Districts and State Tribal Education Compact Schools.

Application process used:

OSPI will continue to administer a competitive grant process to ensure all school districts have an opportunity to apply for grant funds.

OTHER SUPPORTING MATERIALS

References

Information technology (IT):

N/A