



Funding the School Seismic Safety Grant Program

2027-29 Biennial Capital Budget Decision Package

Agency: 3500 Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Budget period: 2027-29 Biennial Budget

Budget level: PL

PROJECT SUMMARY

In the 2002 legislative session, the Legislature enacted Substitute Senate Bill 5933, creating the School Seismic Safety Program. This program provides grant funding to school districts and state tribal education compact schools (STECs) to support the costs of retrofitting or relocating schools located in high seismic risk areas and tsunami hazard zones. This funding request of \$507.2 million will continue to support current seismic projects funded in previous biennia (\$482.2 million) and a new pilot program to address the retrofit needs of unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings (\$25.0 million).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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When the Legislature created the program, it directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to form a School Seismic Safety Committee (SSSC) to evaluate and prioritize grant applications. Working with the SSSC, OSPI established a four-phase process schools must follow to apply for and receive seismic retrofit funding:

- Phase 1 – Geotechnical, which covers site investigations and soil/ground-stability studies;
- Phase 2 – Conceptual Design, which produces preliminary plans, scope and cost estimates;
- Phase 3 – Design, which develops detailed engineering and construction documents; and
- Phase 4 – Construction, which covers bidding, construction, and project closeout. This phased approach ensures projects progress from site assessment through final construction before funds are fully disbursed.

Based on the recommendation of the SSSC, the priority of the seismic safety program was to address the seismic mitigation needs of the school districts that have a high seismic risk and have schools located in the tsunami inundation zone. This was because students in these areas have a short amount of time to seek refuge during a seismic event and resulting tsunami. OSPI reached out to the coastal school districts to begin assessing their seismic and tsunami risks and determine what was the best course of action to mitigate risks associated with each school site. Depending on a school's seismic and tsunami risks, community needs, and availability of land for relocation, the type of project (seismic retrofit, relocation, or tsunami evacuation tower) was presented to the SSSC for funding.

Funding provided to OSPI in the 2022 supplemental budget and the 2023–25 and 2025–27 budgets has supported coastal school districts for school sites with high seismic risk. Two projects—the Cape Flattery/Neah Bay K–12 relocation and the Taholah K–6 campus relocation—have received Phase 4 funding. Other district projects are in various stages, primarily Phases 2 and 3; several have completed Phase 3 and are ready to proceed to construction pending funding by the Legislature. See Appendix A for the status of each coastal school district's funding phase.

2027-29 Funding Request (See Appendix A for Project Phase Detail)

North Beach School District

- \$36.5 million – North Beach Pacific Beach Relocation Phase 4 – Construction
- \$86.9 million – North Beach Pacific Beach Junior/Senior High Phase 4 – Construction

Hoquiam School District

- \$14.5 million – Hoquiam Middle/High School Consolidation Phase 3 -Design
- \$90.9 million – Hoquiam K-6 Relocation/Consolidation Phase 4 – Construction

Ocean Beach School District

- \$132.9 million – Ilwaco Middle/High School Relocation Consolidation – Phase 3 Design \$8.4 million & Phase 4 Construction \$124.5 million
- \$5.4 million – K-5 Mitigation – Long Beach Elementary Phase 2 Conceptual Design \$1.7 million & Phase 3 Design \$3.7 million

Aberdeen School District

- \$36.6 million – Harbor High School – Phase 4 Construction
- \$12.1 million – Site 3 AJ West Elementary School Relocation – Phase 2 Conceptual Design \$4.8 million & Phase 4 Design \$7.3 million
- \$14.2 million – Site 3 Miller Jr High Relocation – Phase 2 Conceptual Design \$5.5 million & Phase 3 Design \$8.7 million
- \$52.1 million – Site 4 Stevens Elementary Relocation – Phase 3 Design \$5.2 million & Phase 4 Construction \$46.9 million.

Unreinforced Masonry Pilot (URM) Program

OSPI requests \$25 million for a URM pilot program to collaborate with districts which have URM buildings that have a high seismic risk. The proposed project would provide grant funding to high-risk buildings for seismic retrofits to life safety standards. The pilot would provide Phase 1 geotechnical and structural assessment grant funding which could lead to a Phase 2 conceptual design to meet life safety standards and Phase 3 design grant funding to determine the overall cost of the proposed retrofit. This information will be used to determine the amount of Phase 4 construction grants which would be requested in the 2029-31 biennial capital budget.

What will the request produce or construct? Who or what will be impacted by the budget request and how will they be impacted?

The request would fund various school seismic projects from conceptual design to design and construction. These projects will help mitigate the seismic and tsunami risk of the schools located on and near the coast. These projects are significant to protect the health and safety of students and staff.

Identify the problem or opportunity addressed by this request. Why is the request a priority? What would be the result of not acting?

The legislature recognized the seismic risks on our state's schools with passage of SSB 5933 which created the School Seismic Safety Program. Since the passage, the legislature has provided \$225.4 million to the program through the 2025-27 biennium.

Without additional funding, these mitigation projects will not be able to continue, and students and staff will face great risk from seismic and tsunami events.

For new funding requests for programs or projects that have received previous appropriations (either a phase of construction or previous grant rounds), how much has been spent or put under contract?

Of the \$225.4 million appropriated to school seismic safety projects, \$2.2 million has not been obligated to date; of that amount, \$2.1 million is expected to be granted to the North Beach School District for Phase 4 design funding in Fall 2026, leaving \$0.1 million still unallocated.

Does this project or program leverage non-state funding? If yes, how much by source?

Senate Bill 5933 provides at least 2/3 of the total project cost of a seismic project and project must be coordinated with the School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP). Local funding participation levels are recommended to OSPI by its Citizen Advisory Panel (CAP). Schools make presentations to the CAP on what local resources they can contribute to each project. Contributions can be land if a school is to be relocated or other in-kind contributions such as on-site and off-site costs.

For major construction projects, describe the viable alternative solutions you considered. Why was this alternative chosen?

Each school district project was vetted through the school seismic safety committee which members are volunteers from architectural, engineering, project management, school districts and other industry professionals. In addition, the co-chairs of the SSSC are from the University of Washington's Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering and the Washington State Geological Survey. Throughout each phase of the grant process, the solutions presented were reviewed by industry professionals from conceptual to final design to ensure each project provided a viable mitigation plan and be cost effective.

For major construction projects, what project delivery method has been or will be selected and why?

Many of the resulting construction projects will use GCCM and progressive design build. A few projects will rely on the design bid build delivery method. School districts determine the delivery method which they feel will benefit their projects.

Location

- Address Statewide
- Zip Code Statewide
- County Statewide
- City Statewide
- Legislative District Statewide

Grant recipient organization

Local school districts.

RCW that establishes grant

28A.525

Application process used

N/A

Describe the Growth Management Impacts

N/A

Funding Requested

- 2027-29 \$507.2 million
- 2029-31 \$387.9 million
- 2031-33 \$72.6 million
- 2033-35 \$0
- 2035-37 \$0

STRATEGIC AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Provide context on how this request fits into the agency's work. Describe how this project supports the agency's strategic plan or would improve agency performance.

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.

How is your proposal impacting equity in the state? Which communities are impacted by this proposal? What are the measurable outcomes that would result from the project?

The coastal seismic projects are in school districts with high student participation in the free and reduced lunch programs and qualify for learning assistance program grant funding. In addition, the projects are in high poverty and high unemployment areas. The resulting school construction projects will provide these students and communities with update school facilities that reduce seismic and tsunami risks. In addition, the new school facilities will replace aging school buildings which do not meet the needs of modern educational standards.

OTHER SUPPORTING MATERIALS

If this project is linked to the Puget Sound Action Agenda and/or the Governor's Salmon Strategy, please follow the instructions in Chapter 14 of the operating budget instructions and Chapter 3 of the capital budget instructions.

This project does not impact the Puget Sound Action Agenda or the Governor's Salmon Strategy.

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

In addition to addressing the seismic and tsunami risks facing students and staff, many of these projects are or will be "shovel" ready to provide living wage jobs to construction and trade workers in areas where there are high unemployment rates above the state's unemployment rate.