

Common Issues in the Review of Smart Schools Investment Plans

In order to help us speed the review and evaluation of your Smart Schools Investment Plan (SSIP), prior to final examination by the Review Board, we have put together a list of things we MUST see in an SSIP – as well as a list of things that will require us to send an SSIP back to the district for revision. We hope you find this helpful. In addition, please be sure to review the FAQs located on the Smartschools website: http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/smart_schools/, which are updated frequently as we develop the program.

The Review Process

Initial Review – When first submitted an SSIP is put in the queue for Initial Review. The reviewer checks for thorough and complete responses to all required questions. If there are questions requiring revision, the review will unsubmit the SSIP back to the district.

Program Area Review – Depending on which categories the district budgets SSBA funds in, one or more SED Program Offices (Facilities Planning, Educational Design and Technology and/or Early Learning) will review the Plan. After their review, the Program Offices will return the SSIP for Expenditure Review, either approving or requesting revisions to the plan.

Expenditure Review – The reviewer completes a detailed review of specific budgeted items, including the descriptions, quantities, prices and other budget-related questions. Districts should expect to work extensively with NYSED to finalize their expenditures during this review process. This is generally the most time-consuming part of the entire process, as specific items need to be reviewed and researched to ensure they are appropriate, consistent with the district's Instructional Technology Plan, at or below State Contract prices and eligible for reimbursement with State Capital Bond funds supporting the SSBA Program.

Responsiveness to NYSED staff requests for information and modifications of the SSIP is critical to expeditious approval. In particular, district staff must be sure to review each section of their Plan for comments when requested and address each required point of clarification or correction completely.

Review Board – Once the Initial, Program Area and Expenditure Reviews are completed and the Plan has been recommended for approval by NYSED, the SSIP is sent to the Review Board staff. The reviewers will ask NYSED to reach out to districts with any questions or required revisions of the Plan or present the final SSIP to the Review Board itself for approval at the next scheduled meeting.

Characteristics of an Approvable Smart Schools Investment Plan

- SSIP Overview
 - Question 5: An upload has been made of any presentation or documentation of your SSIP that was presented to and approved by the Board and on the district website
 - Question 5a: Contains the specific address (url) of the district's webpage where the SSIP is posted for the public. It must remain posted and remain for the duration of the projects contained therein. **This should not be the 3-Year District Technology Plan.**
 - Question 11: Each category amount that you entered in the table matches the expenditure total from the corresponding section in the survey. (For example, the School Connectivity amount in the table must match the expenditure total in the School Connectivity section.)

- Project Categories
 - All required fields are filled out completely, addressing every aspect of all applicable questions. Many questions ask for details covering several areas, which all must be addressed to be considered complete.
 - The district has included the project number received from the SED Office of Facilities Planning and completed all related questions for all projects in School Connectivity, Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms, Transportable Classrooms and High-Tech Security. If a district has funds in any of these sections, they **must** have a project number. Districts that have minor installation costs of classroom technology equipment performed by an outside vendor should include those expenditures and details in the School Connectivity category, under Other expenditures. Such minor installation costs require a project number as well.
 - The final question in each category is completed with a full listing of all expenditures that equals the budget amount. It includes specific details, such as the make and model of items purchased, exact projected cost and other relevant information. The first column has an assigned Expenditure Type for each item based on the table at the end of this document. The expenditure sub-total amount for each expenditure type should equal the budgeted amount in each sub-category.
 - The expenditure review is the most time-consuming process of the SSIP, as we must carefully investigate all planned expenditures to meet the exacting requirements for being reimbursed with a State General Obligation Capital Bond. You may be requested to provide electronic copies of quotes for specific expenditures from vendors or other sources. Please submit such documentation via e-mail to smartschools@nysed.gov with your district's name and the specific SSIP project name it relates to in the subject line.
 - Responses regarding the nonpublic schools are accurate and include detailed information regarding the plan to purchase and loan devices to the nonpublic schools. The district must consult with the nonpublic schools within its district prior to preparing the initial SSIP for public comment and Board approval. Any nonpublic school that does not intend to participate in the SSBA Loan Program should submit a letter documenting such to the school district.
 - There is a fill-in table in the Classroom Technology category that provides the step-by-step calculation to determine the amount required to be loaned to the nonpublic schools located within your district. Other required information includes the specific devices being purchased for their use and the plan and schedule for annual requests of loans. Note that the submission of requests from the nonpublic schools to the public school cannot be required before June 1 of the school year prior to the actual loan request.
 - The nonpublic allocation has been included in the budget table in the Classroom Learning Technology category (Question 14). The required expenditures for the nonpublic schools must also be specifically identified in the expenditure table (Question 15). These expenditures must match the nonpublic loan amount from the nonpublic loan calculator in question 11. It is allowable to enter a “balancing amount” in the table for the nonpublic expenditures not yet specified by the schools.

Issues that will result in a Smart Schools Investment Plan being returned for revision:

- Missing project numbers and unanswered related questions in School Connectivity, Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms, Transportable Classrooms and High-Tech Security sections. The first step in any capital project is to contact the NYSED Office of Facilities Planning (OFP) and file an SSBA-specific Letter of Intent (LOI.) You will not be able to submit an SSIP for review until that step has been taken and you have received a project number and a determination of whether your plan qualifies for a streamlined or full project review by OFP.
- Expenditures that include the cost of ineligible items, such as:
 - product or equipment leases
 - professional development
 - administrative costs
 - expenditures excluded from the SSBA Hardware, Software, License and Fees Policy.

See: http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/documents/SSBA_Hardware_SoftwarePolicy.pdf

Smart Schools funds cannot be used to support these or any other operating expenses related to any SSBA project, as the State must sell tax-exempt capital bonds for these expenditures. Such costs must be supported with other local funds.

- Incomplete or unanswered fields throughout the entire SSIP. All questions and sub-questions in a category with budgeted funds are required, unless otherwise indicated.
- Omitting any elements related to the purchasing, loaning, inventorying and maintenance of the devices that must be shared with the nonpublic schools.
- Inconsistencies between written responses to questions and budget or expenditure items. Be sure that all narratives match the planned expenditures, particularly when resubmitting plans.
- Assigning the incorrect expenditure type to items in the detailed expenditure tables.
- Incorrect calculations (or entering incorrect numbers) in either the detailed expenditure table or the budget table.
- Expenditure items that lack the amount of detail needed for the reviewer to research pricing on the items.
- Waiting to respond to requested revisions and/or e-mails from NYSED regarding the SSIP. By responding quickly, the SSIP will move back into the review queue and continue through approvals. Delays in responses prevent the SSIP from moving forward.

Expenditure Types by SSBA Category

School Connectivity	Community Connectivity	Classroom Learning Technology	PreKindergarten Classrooms	Transportable Classrooms	High-Tech Security
Network/Access Costs Indoor access points Controllers Switches Servers Routers/gateway appliances Firewalls/security appliances Power supply, backup & batteries Antennas Cooling appliances Hardware extended warranties Licenses/software	Network/Access Costs Indoor access points Controllers Switches Servers Routers/gateway appliances Firewalls/security appliances Power supply, backup & batteries Antennas Cooling appliances Hardware extended warranties Licenses/software	Interactive Whiteboards Interactive Whiteboards Mounting equipment & stands Computer Servers Computer Servers Desktop Computers Desktop Computers Laptop Computers Laptop Computers Chromebooks Tablet Computers Tablet Computers	Construct Classrooms General Trades Plumbing Electric Furniture Enhance/Modernize Facilities General Trades Plumbing HVAC Electric Furniture	Construct New Space General Trades Plumbing HVAC Electric Furniture Demolition/Removal Enhance/Modernize Existing Space General Trades Plumbing HVAC Electric Furniture Demolition/Removal Other Costs Project incidentals Architect fees Contingencies Fees Other	Capital-Intensive Security Project Ceiling/floor/wall materials Door/window materials Ceiling/floor/wall removal & installation Door/window removal & installation Electrical materials, components Electric installation HVAC system HVAC system installation Electronic Security System Surveillance cameras DVRs, NVRs, video controllers, servers, & storage equipment VoIP telephones IP public address microphones & speakers Cabling & wiring Software & licenses for surveillance equipment Installation of surveillance equipment Hardware extended warranties Entry Control System Card readers & cards Visitor sign-in & badging systems Video intercoms Access control/door accessories Headend equipment, servers, storage appliances Lockdown and panic buttons Software & licenses for entry control equipment Installation of entry control equipment Hardware extended warranties Approved Door Hardening Door or window replacement Door or window accessories & hardware Window glass security film Reducing size of door or window Window bars/grills Other Costs Project incidentals Architect fees Contingencies Clerk of the work fees Bond fees Insurance fees Other
Internal Components and Connections Modules & components Cabling/fiber Appliance and network configuration Cooling components Hardware extended warranties	Outside Plant Costs Cabling/fiber Conduit systems Poles Outdoor access points Hardware extended warranties Tower Costs Tower Costs Customer Premises Equipment Modems Set-up boxes Routers Desktop Computers Laptop Computers Tablet Computers Professional Services Professional Services Testing Testing Other Upfront Costs Other Upfront Costs Other Costs Project incidentals Contingencies Fees Other	Other Costs Servers Carts and cabinets- charging & storage Printers (non-3D) 3D printers & laser engravers Cameras Projectors Storage devices Robotics Machinery Licenses/software Hardware extended warranties Mice, headphones & keyboards Cables & connectors Access points (non-public schools only) Non-public schools funds- unknown purchases Other	Other Costs Project incidentals Architect, engineer, consultant fees Contingencies Fees Other	Other Costs Project incidentals Demolition/Removal Architect fees Contingencies Fees Other	Other Costs Project incidentals Architect, engineer, consultant fees Contingencies Clerk of the work fees Bond fees Insurance fees Other