

FAQs for Smart Schools Bond Act

1) Can an LEA/School District partner with one or more other LEA/School Districts to form a consortium to pool Smart School monies for a project that meets all other Smart School Bond Act expenditure requirements? The general scenario we are envisioning is for multiple neighboring school districts to pool and leverage their funds to create a shared fiber network to increase broadband access to their respective communities. Please let me know if you need additional information (we are in the very preliminary stages of planning) but we do not want to proceed if this is not possible at all.

Response: Yes, we welcome efforts that combine the Smart Schools Bond Act resources provided to multiple communities to leverage increased access. Each school district participating in the consortium will need to file an approved Smart Schools Investment Plan for the projects and submit a signed Memorandum of Understanding that sets forth the details of the consortium including the roles of each respective district.

2) Districts will demonstrate that they have contacted the SUNY teacher preparation program that supplies the largest number of their new teachers to request advice on this issue." Does this mean student teachers? Or do we take a list of folks we have hired and look where they graduated from?

Response: Contact the school from which you have made the most actual hires over the past five years.

3) Can nonpublic schools buy servers and connectivity equipment with their funds, or are they limited to devices such as laptops etc.?

Response: Nonpublic schools are eligible to participate in technology loans to be provided by their districts of location, if those districts choose to purchase devices with their Smart Schools allocations. They cannot purchase devices or other equipment on their own.

Nonpublic schools may borrow a server or other easily transportable equipment from their school district of location if the school district of location is going to purchase similar devices for its own use. Since the loaned devices remain the property of the district of location, nonpublic schools may not borrow devices that cannot be easily removed and returned to the school district. Hence, no wiring or other more capital-intensive work may be supported with Smart Schools Bond Act funds in nonpublic schools.

4) How should nonpublic enrollment be counted?

Response: Nonpublic school students should be counted as the number of kindergarten and above (school-age) students reported as attending the school on the BEDS enrollment report for 2014-15. This is similar to the counts used for instructional materials aids and mirrors the eligibility for services such as transportation.

5) Charter schools in co-located space? Can charter school students benefit from the funds? Are the rules different for connectivity vs. replacement of transportable units, etc.?

Response: Charter schools are not eligible for funding through the Smart Schools Bond Act. However, co-located charter schools may benefit from wireless technology purchased with Smart Schools funds and installed by the co-located public school. Please note however that co-located charters that contract with for-profit education management organizations may not be able to benefit from wireless technology purchased with Smart Schools funds due to private use concerns related to tax-exempt bonds.

6) In the Guidance document it is made clear that physical computer servers are allowed under the rules. There is no mention, however, of virtual servers. Can you clarify if virtualization technology (i.e. VMware, Citrix, Hyper-V) can be utilized under the SSBA?

Response: Virtual servers represent a software based service, which are not bondable.

Therefore, the costs of virtualization technology cannot be supported by Smart Schools funds.

7) Given the reference to "high-tech piece of manufacturing equipment" is it permissible under the Smart School Bond Act to purchase advanced manufacturing equipment that incorporates advanced technology to include computer numerical controls (CNC) or a computer controller that reads instructions and drives the machining application, examples include CNC milling machine, CNC Routers, CNC milling machine.....

Page 13 of the "Smart Schools Bond Act Implementation Guidance" document makes reference to, "other technology items that enhance teaching and learning. The CNC machines would fall under the category of "enhancing teaching and learning."

Response: Districts may use Smart Schools funds to purchase the equipment described above so long as the Smart Schools Investment Plan (SSIP) meets all other requirements and assuming the equipment is used for educational purposes, the plan and rationale for the use of these devices is described carefully in the SSIP and the purchase of such devices is consistent with the district's Educational Technology Plan.

8) Our district's phone system was just determined to be "end of life". Would a new district phone system which includes a new component in our PA notification system be an allowable expenditure in the Smart Schools funding? The system would allow for the emergency notification of a safety issue from a single classroom, rather than from the main office. It would

also include an upgraded voicemail system whereby staff could receive their voicemails via their e-mail accounts which would assist in parent/teacher communication.

Response: A new phone system is not educational or security technology as contemplated by the Smart Schools Bond Act. Further, to the extent that the notification aspect of the system may qualify as security technology, it appears to be software-based and Smart Schools funds cannot be used to purchase software.

9) In-district labor. A school district on Long Island has written: We are able to manage a great deal of items in house that many districts otherwise will contract. For wiring and cabling for instance, our facilities team is capable of doing all fiber and cable runs and doing the copper terminations. If the district wishes to utilize in house teams to manage the cost of this project, is that permissible within Smartschools and how would that information need to be validated for the state to provide installation reimbursement for labor along with the materials when that work is complete?

Response: If a school district uses Smart Schools funds to purchase equipment, the district can also use Smart Schools funds to pay for the labor costs directly associated with installation whether the personnel are employed by the district or an outside contractor. However, a district may not purchase the equipment with its own funds and use Smart Schools funds to pay only for labor.

10) Is leasing equipment (i.e.- Chromebooks) an option for using SSBA money?

Response: No. Just as leased equipment is not allowed under School or Connectivity projects, it is not an allowable expenditure under the Classroom Educational Technology category of projects. Bond Act funds are intended strictly for district-owned capital projects and expenditures of a known useful life.

Smart Schools Program Questions:

Please contact the New York State Education Department Office of Educational Management Services at (518) 474-6541 or by [email](#).