

Learning Inside Out



School Building Authority Capital Fund Fiscal Year 2023 Application

December 13, 2022

Rhode Island Department of Education – School Building Authority | 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02909

Telephone (401)222-4600 Website: www.ride.ri.gov

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The State of Rhode Island is committed to providing high quality educational opportunities for all public school students. Outdoor classrooms provide opportunities for experiential learning to enhance classroom instruction, promote social-emotional health, and increase environmental literacy. Schoolyards that are intentionally designed to benefit both wildlife and people provide a unique opportunity to connect students to nature while restoring habitat for local wildlife. Outdoor learning spaces contribute to the successful performance of educational programs.

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School Building Authority Capital Fund – Inside Out

The state of Rhode Island is committed to providing high-quality educational opportunities for all public school students. The SBA Capital Fund is used to repair and improve public school facilities and their grounds throughout the State. Funds are distributed on a priority basis to ensure the greatest impact on facility gaps in the State's priority areas. In Fiscal Year 2023, \$50M is available for projects in addition to the \$88.5M allocated for Housing Aid commitments and \$250M Statewide School Construction Bond.

A key component of 21st century learning is connecting education to the natural environment. Not only do the outdoors provide unique hands-on learning opportunities, but studies show that students who spend more time outdoors experience better focus, and better emotional and physical health. **The Rhode Island Department of Education is creating a new initiative in FY 2023 to help create an array of outdoor classrooms and schoolyard habitats to bring Rhode Island students outdoor experiential education.** The \$7.5M in grant funding will be available through a competitive application process, with at least 70 projects being awarded up to \$100,000. The focus of this initiative is to create, enhance, and support access to natural resources for every youth in the State of Rhode Island, while directly addressing problems that threaten natural resources:

- Environmental Literacy: Providing students and the community with greater understanding of the importance of maintaining and preserving natural habitats to the larger ecosystem.
- Climate change: integrating stormwater management practices, planting trees to increase carbon sequestration and reduce the effects of urban heat islands and educating communities about climate risks and mitigation will increase environmental literacy and promote resiliency.
- Inequitable access to the outdoors: increasing access to nature in historically disinvested neighborhoods, this Program will provide more opportunities for outdoor recreation to underserved and underrepresented communities.
- Habitat loss and degradation: strategically creating, restoring, and enhancing habitats at hundreds of schools will support pollinators and other wildlife and promote landscape connectivity.
- Community disconnection: Linking these spaces with community use and engagement to foster a greater sense of stewardship in the communities.

The School Building Authority has partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to provide LEAs with additional resources. **Professional consultants for landscape design and professional development/educational commissioning services shall be provided by the State, at no cost to LEAs.**

Who is eligible?

All Rhode Island LEAs who own their facilities are eligible.

If your LEA has an interest in the Learning Inside Out Initiative, please submit application(s) by April 3, 2023. Your proposal should identify the school site targeted for each project and list the amount of funding requested for the project.

Timeline

<u>Applications Available:</u>	December 13, 2022
<u>Application Information Session:</u>	TBD
<u>Applications Due:</u>	April 3, 2023
<u>Council Meeting:</u>	April 2023
<u>Substantial Completion*:</u>	August 30, 2024

Submit applications by C.O.B. 04/03/2023 to: SBACapitalFund@ride.ri.gov

Purpose

The objective of FY 2023 Learning Inside Out Initiative is to begin creating schoolyard habitats, or outdoor learning spaces that benefit both people and wildlife. The scoring rubric awards incremental points based on the type of project, number of students impacted, wealth of the community, individual building needs, and timeline.

Examples of Eligible Projects

- Creating Outdoor Project Based Learning Spaces
- Common Spaces with Dual Student/Community Use
- Outdoor Classroom Infrastructure
- Outdoor Equipment and/or Learning Tools
- Pollinator Gardens
- Removing invasive plants and replacing/landscaping development with native plants and trees
- Creating Nature Trails

As part of an eligible project, professional development providing guidance on how to integrate curriculum with the newly designed space will be provided. This will include, but is not limited to:

- Professional development, facilitated by an approved professional development provider to be scheduled in coordination with participants.
- Professional learning to include best practices for taking students outside to explore and learn; experiential, integrated learning activities that support classroom curriculum in science, language arts, math, and art; lists of age-appropriate fiction and non-fiction materials; equipment and supply sources; and links to community-science projects.
- Professional learning workshops for teachers of grades K - 6 is based on [Audubon's "Schoolyard Habitat Resource Guide"](#) and will be integrated into existing curriculums. Trainings will be modified for teachers of older grade levels.

Project Prioritization

The application has several mechanisms to identify and prioritize educational enhancement projects by awarding points based on the communities' needs, the number of students impacted, planned use, and completion date.

- Type of Project: Preference will be given to high impact visual environmental/ecological enhancements, creation of 21st century learning spaces, and spaces with dual student/community use.
- Number of Students Impacted: Community spaces will be prioritized over single classroom projects.
- Project Schedule: Projects that can be completed prior to the start of the 2024-2025 school year or by December 31, 2023 are given preference. All projects must be completed by August 30, 2024.
- Equity Boost: Factors in a community's reimbursement rate.
- Schools as a Tool Protocol: Projects should implement the [School as a Tool protocol](#)

Project Sustainability

Eligible projects will identify and prioritize long-term sustainability by providing detailed plans for:

- The continued maintenance of the project's outdoor component, including identifying maintenance funding sources.
- Community outreach and long-term engagement with the outdoor space
- On-going professional learning opportunities for educators
- Student engagement and curriculum alignment

We welcome all questions, which can be directed to the School Building Authority.

Keelia Kentor, ALEP
Education Facilities Planner / Architectural Design
Reviewer
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keelia.kentor@ride.ri.gov

Learning Inside Out Application
April 3, 2023

Local Education Agency:	
Contact Person (Superintendent):	
Address:	
Phone:	
Email:	
Project Location:	
Project Cost:	

Project Description:

Please describe why you are interested in creating an outdoor classroom at the school(s) included in this application. Include the following information for each school that is included in this application:

- a. How would your school use an outdoor classroom for teaching and learning?
- b. How does the LEA plan to sustain the project beyond the initial grant funding?

Please refer to <https://www.fws.gov/media/schoolyard-habitat-project-guide> for further guidance.

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Scoring Criteria

Criteria	Maximum Points Available
<u>LEA Project Prioritization</u>	(20 points)

- If the LEA is submitting more than one high priority project, these must be prioritized by urgency. **LEAs should only submit project prioritization on one application.** The LEAs highest five (5) priority projects will receive points. Please list the projects below in order of urgency, with the highest priority at number 1:

- | | | |
|----|-------|-------------|
| 1. | _____ | (10 points) |
| 2. | _____ | (7 points) |
| 3. | _____ | (5 points) |
| 4. | _____ | (3 points) |
| 5. | _____ | (1 point) |

<u>School as a Tool Protocol Adoption</u>	(15 points)
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- LEAs that complete the [School as a Tool protocol](#) as part of their project must commit to the 5 major components outlined in the “Rhode Island School as a Tool Protocol SCHOOL/DISTRICT Agreement” agreement:

<u>Sustainability/Long-Term Use</u>	(15 points)
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- The municipality/LEA has provided a thoughtful plan for sustaining the proposed project for the long-term. This plan should include considerations regarding the project’s long-term incorporation into the school’s curriculum, as well as the financial sources to support ongoing maintenance and programming related to the project.

<u>Equity Boost</u>	(20 points)
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- In addition to the scoring criteria listed above, all projects will receive points based on the LEA’s Housing Aid share ratio (reimbursement rate)

<u>Number of Students Impacted</u>	(10 points)
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- October 1, 2022 enrollments for the schools in which the project will occur will be used in scoring the SBA Capital Fund applications. LEAs are awarded 1 point for each 50 students, for a maximum of 10 points..

<u>Environmental/Ecological Enhancements</u>	(10 points)
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- Outdoor learning spaces are designed to benefit both people and wildlife. The project will include at least one element of habitat restoration or similar features to support local wildlife (e.g. native plants to support pollinators, stormwater mitigation features such as a rain garden, etc.).

<u>Project Schedule</u>	(10 points)
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- Project can be completed by December 31, 2023..... **(10 points)**
- Project can be completed by April 22, 2024..... **(5 points)**

Assurances (please initial on each line):

The LEA must assure that:

- _____ Funds will be used exclusively for the project described above, in accordance with the guidelines of the funding request.
- _____ Projects must comply with School Construction Regulations and RIGL 16-7-41.1, including but not limited to those concerning accessibility.
- _____ **Project will be substantially complete by August 30, 2024.** If the project is not complete by this date, the project amount will be deducted from the LEA's FY 2025 Housing Aid.
- _____ The project complies with all requirements set forth in the most recent Northeast Collaborative for High Performance Schools Protocol (NECHPS)
- _____ Project will receive all required design review prior to commencing with construction.

Certification of Eligibility:

I certify under penalty of perjury that to the best of my knowledge, the information in this proposal is true and correct and is in compliance with statutes and administrative provisions of the Rhode Island Department of Education. The governing board of the above named school LEA has authorized me to sign this application on its behalf, and has certified through a resolution that the LEA has met the criteria contained in this proposal.

Signature of Superintendent

Date

Signature of School Committee Chair

Date

Signature of Municipal Finance Director

Date