COMMERCE DEPARTMENT
DIVISION OF ENERGY RESOURCES

Questions & Answers

Electric School Buses: Application for Equipment

RFP Reference Number: COMM-ESB05-20260323

Response Date 06/02/2026

#	Question	Response	Date Responded
	SECTION I. Grant Overview		
	Can you estimate how long it might take an applicant to fill out a grant application?	While Commerce does not have an exact time estimate, we are aware this is an involved application. The application timeline should allow for sufficient time to complete the application.	2/28/2025
	How many grant rounds do you anticipate?	The $3.3 million made available for this round represents the total amount of funding still available to award for this program. If all this funding is awarded to applicants this round, there will be no further funding rounds	4/16/2026
	Does Dept of Commerce have the resources to come talk to a school board meeting to discuss the grant program and talk about the benefits of the electric school bus program?	Unfortunately, the Department is unable to present to individual potential applicants while an RFP round is live. However, interested school officials can reach out to MN350's Clean Transportation team who can share information on the benefits of electric school buses. Reach out to the Clean Transportation Team Lead, Sonita van der Leeuw, at sonita@mn350.org. Additionally, slides from our informational webinar and a pre-recorded version of the webinar will be made available on our website, mn.gov/electricschoolbus.	4/16/2026
	SECTION II. Funding Availability		
	A. Grant Amounts and Financial Need		
	B. Eligible Expenses		
	Can any eligible applicant be the one to purchase the electric school buses?	Grant funds can be used only to pay a school district or a transportation service provider to purchase electric school bus(es).	8/26/2025
	My question is whether leasing is eligible and if there are any special lease provisions.	Minn. Stat. 216C.374, subd 5 does not allow leasing of an electric school bus as an eligible expense, only purchase of a bus by a school district or transportation service provider.	8/26/2025
	Will there be partial awarding of an application? For instance, if we submit for 3 buses, will you award us just one, or is it 3 or nothing?	The decision to award applicants will be made on the basis of scoring and remaining funding available. If an applicant scores highly but there is not enough funding to award the complete amount requested, Commerce may offer a reduced grant award amount.	8/26/2025

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	We have to apply for at least one school bus and cannot just apply for charging infrastructure, correct?	Yes, the grant program requires that a potential grantee use the funding to pay for a portion of at least one school bus.	9/3/2025
	How does an applicant go about getting info on the installation of the charging stations?	Applicants can find information on charging station installation and cost from a few different sources: 1) Make sure to talk to the local electric utility that would provide power to the chargers. They can help identify how much power is available to be used by chargers and if any additional electrical infrastructure is necessary. Additionally, they may be able to provide rebates and other financial incentives to help further reduce the cost of chargers. 2) Minnesota's Department of Administration has cost information for different chargers in the state contract for chargers and electrical work in all 87 counties of MN. Cost information like this is also available through any other cooperative purchasing groups, such as Sourcewell. 3) The World Resources Institute's Electric School Bus Initiative has a variety of tools that can help applicants understand what needs to happen to ensure the chargers are installed and work correctly, such as a charger	
	C. Ineligible Expenses		
	Diesel heaters cannot be included as an eligible grant expense. Can other heaters, such as gas or propane heaters, be included, if they are installed by manufacturers at the factory?	Any auxiliary heaters that are added to the electric school bus as an option, where the purchaser could purchase the same bus without that addition, would not be covered by this grant. However, applicants can still purchase these auxiliary heaters and have them installed in the buses, and the cost of those heaters can be considered part of the match funding.	2/28/2025
	SECTION III. Eligibility		
	A. Applicant Eligibility		
	Why are charter schools not eligible?	Eligible school district types were determined by the enabling statute, Minn Stat 216C.374, to only include independent and special school districts, as well as Tribal contract schools.	11/27/2024

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	Can an applicant that was awarded in the previous Equipment round apply again in this round?	Applicants will only be able to get a total of three electric school buses from this program. If an applicant previously applied and was awarded, they could apply again so long as they did not receive funding for all three buses. The total number of school buses funded across different rounds of this program must add up to three or less.	3/31/2025
	We previously applied for this grant. Can we use the same forms that were signed by our board members, superintendent and ECE that we used in our previous application?	If the information provided on those forms and letters is still accurate, then the same forms and letters can be reused.	2/27/2025
	B. School Bus Requirements		
	Is there a timeline for taking possession of the bus? Is there no cause for exception to that if awardee is having difficulty with supply chain/delivery?	All applicants are required to begin operation of the buses within 18 months of contract signatures. Any issues that may arise with equipment delivery by the required deadline will be handled on a case-by-case basis.	3/30/2026
	Do you know if there are any bus vendors that have approved/certified their electric bus batteries to work in colder climates, i.e. northwest Minnesota?	To our knowledge, there is no approval or certification process electric school buses can go through to show they work in cold climates. However, Minnesota does have districts across the state who have worked with buses from manufacturers like Blue Bird, IC, and Thomas Built. You can learn which school districts in Minnesota have electric school buses operating from earlier grants, such as the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's funds, by looking at the World Resources Institute's (WRI) Electric School Bus Data Dashboard. Interested parties can also understand more about bus specifications, such as anticipated range, by looking through WRI's Electric School Bus Buyer's Guide.	8/26/2025
	C. Charger Requirements		
	If we apply and receive a grant but have other construction projects that may delay infrastructure installation, would that be a problem? What is the deadline for infrastructure build completion?	Commerce anticipates grant projects being completed within 18 months of full contract execution. Any issues that arise with infrastructure installation will be handled on a case-by-case basis	4/16/2026
	SECTION IV. Program Priorities		
	A. Priority Service Areas		
	SECTION V. Grant Application: List of Questions		

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	Are there any supportive documents or anything like that required for this application from a school board? Similar to the EPA's application, which had a school board member consent form required for submission, is the same for this application? Or is it more something the school board could submit if they wanted to, but are not required to do so?	The RFP requires a letter of Authority to Apply in the application that must be signed by the school superintendent. School Board members are not required to sign the letter but are welcome to do so.	4/24/2025
	D. Project Approach		
	We currently have a transportation building that is located near our old high school downtown. The School Board is considering building a new facility on our new campus which has our HS and elementary school attached to it. **One part of the grant application asks about the location of the chargers and the location of the buses. Should we include both locations in the grant or should we use our current location?**	**Please include both potential locations for the chargers in your application and make sure to note if the electric utility is different for either location.**	**6/1/2026**
	E. Budget		
	If an applicant is interested in demonstrating their use of federal funds to reduce the amount that they are requesting from Commerce, do those have to be already awarded EPA Clean School Bus funds or Clean Heavy Duty Vehicles funds? Or is it okay if the applicant intends to apply for the Clean School Bus program round due January 9th?	You can show that you either have already applied and been awarded funding **or** explain you will be applying to additional funding source(s).	11/27/2024
	We would be interested in obtaining federal tax credits, where can we find more information about them and how to apply? Is there an organization who can help us with this process?	You can learn more about federal tax credits available for the electric school bus on the IRS website. The World Resources Institute's Electric School Bus Initiative page provides various tools that school districts can use to help take advantage of tax credits related to electric school buses, including some recorded webinars, one on one office hours, and explainer sheets. Update: Additionally, Deloitte is providing 1-on-1 technical assistance for MN entities that are filing for Direct Pay tax credits. Supported through a contract with the Minnesota Departments of Administration and Management and Budget (MMB) in coordination with MN Commerce, this assistance is provided at no cost to eligible organizations based in Minnesota to assist with filing for a tax credit reimbursement or requesting a filing extension. Groups interested in working directly with Deloitte on a project should email StateofMNIRATaxComplianceSupport@deloitte.com	3/30/2026

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	SECTION VI. Questions and Information Session		
	Are there instructions available for completing the budget template?	Yes, please follow this link on YouTube Electric School Bus RFP Budget Tutorial	3/6/2025
	SECTION VII. Application Submission Instructions		
	SECTION VIII. Exhibits and Attachments		
	Where can I find the necessary exhibits and attachments?	All exhibits and attachments have been added as an attachment to the Funding Announcement in GrantVantage, the application submission portal. Exhibits and attachments to be available for download on the Department's Request for Proposal webpage as well.	3/30/2026
	SECTION IX. Notification and Next Steps		
	SECTION X. Application Review Process		
	The evaluation points for adequate consideration of maintenance for the bus and chargers don't seem to have an associated question in Section VI. Application List of Questions. How will those points be evaluated and awarded?	Those points will be evaluated based on applicants' answers to questions in Attachment 5. Contract Roles Worksheet.	11/27/2024
	SECTION XI. Timeline		