

National School Transportation Association Clean School Bus Grant Program

Request for Applications

SUMMARY: This notice announces the availability of funds and solicits applications for pilot demonstration projects designed to assist school districts and their private school bus company partners in determining how best to implement activities that reduce pollution from school buses through the use of EPA verified or certified pollution reduction technology.

DATES/DEADLINES: To allow for efficient management of the competitive process, NSTA is requesting that eligible organizations submit an informal notice of "Intent to Apply" by December 15, 2003. Submission of Intent to Apply is optional; it is a process management tool that will allow NSTA to better anticipate the total time required for efficient review, evaluation, and selection of submitted proposals.

The deadline for submission of final proposals is January 15, 2004. Applications submitted via U.S. Mail must be received by the deadline date.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS: All questions or comments must be communicated in writing via facsimile or electronic mail to the contact person indicated in the section titled "For Further Information Contact" below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Robin Leeds, phone 860-953-2782; fax 860-953-8404; email leeds@costa.necoxmail.com; or Jeff Kulick, phone 703-684-3200; fax 703-684-3212; email jkulick@mindspring.com.

CONTENTS BY SECTION

- I. Overview and Deadlines
- II. Eligible Entities
- III. Background and Scope of Work
- IV. Funding Issues
- V. Selection Criteria
- VI. Evaluation and Selection
- VII. Proposals
- VIII. Executive Order 12372 Compliance
- IX. How to Apply

I. Overview and Deadlines

A. Overview

NSTA is soliciting grant applications for pilot demonstration projects to assist school districts and their contractor partners in their efforts to reduce pollution from diesel-powered school buses through the use of EPA verified or certified pollution reduction technology. Through this solicitation, NSTA seeks

to support efforts to compile information about ways to overcome any structural, organizational, or technical challenges that may arise in implementing a project to reduce pollution from school buses, including information regarding the effectiveness of verified or certified technology on a range of school bus engine types operating in a variety of conditions. The results of these case studies will be made available to other school districts and school bus companies who elect to pursue similar projects.

More than 24 million children ride a bus to and from school everyday, spending roughly 3 billion hours on school buses each year. We know that school buses are the safest way to transport children. We want to ensure that they are also the cleanest way to transport children. The Clean School Bus USA initiative, which this grant program is part of, has three primary goals: 1) to reduce school bus idling; 2) to retrofit existing buses with devices that reduce pollution, and 3) to replace the oldest buses with new, cleaner buses. By documenting successful approaches to reducing pollution from school buses, NSTA is providing an important tool for school districts and their transportation partners across the country as they move to implement similar clean bus projects.

B. Deadlines

In order to manage the selection process efficiently, NSTA requests that an informal "Intent to Apply" be sent by December 15, 2003, to the contact person listed under the section labeled "For Further Information Contact." Please provide names of both the school or school district and the contractor, point of contact, phone number, email address and project title.

An informal notice of "Intent to Apply" simply states in the form of email or fax that your organization intends to submit a proposal to be received by the deadline. Submitting an "Intent to Apply" does not commit an organization to submit a final proposal. The "Intent to Apply" is an optional submission; those not submitting "Intent to Apply" may still apply by the deadline.

The deadline for receipt of completed final proposals (a narrative work plan, and one completed and signed federal grant application package, plus four copies of the complete submission) is January 15, 2004. Refer to Section VII, Proposals, for detailed instructions on preparing and submitting proposals.

II. Eligible Entities

Applications will be accepted from schools and school districts in partnership with their private school bus transportation providers who are NSTA members. Both the school or district representative and the contractor representative must sign the application. Applicants must demonstrate a commitment to undertake a cooperative effort with the purpose of demonstrating implementation strategies for reducing emissions from school buses through the use of EPA verified or certified pollution reduction technology.

III. Background and Scope of Work

The purpose of this solicitation is to fund projects that will demonstrate and document various ways to successfully implement projects that reduce pollution from school buses through the use of EPA verified or certified pollution reduction technology.

NSTA was granted assistance from EPA to provide funds for school bus retrofit and replacement demonstration projects in contracted districts that will serve as case studies to provide guidance to other school districts seeking to implement similar projects. Your work plan must describe the activities and approaches you plan to undertake, the methodology you will use to evaluate the project, and the way in which you will document and distribute the results of the demonstration.

Applicants are advised that retrofit and/or replacement technologies must be verified or certified technologies through EPA's Retrofit Program or another EPA certification program. Technologies for existing buses may include, but are not limited to, installation of pollution control hardware, engine upgrades, and/or ultra low sulfur diesel fuel (15 parts per million). Grant funds may be applied only to the cost differential between current diesel fuel and ultra low sulfur diesel or other fuel additives. Applicants may also seek funds for new EPA certified clean diesel school buses. New buses may be equipped either with OEM clean diesel technology or with after-market products. Grant funds may be applied only to the cost of the clean diesel technology, but applicants may consider the cost of the new buses a financial contribution to the project.

A list of partners to this program who are providing financial support in the form of discounted pricing, free training, or other considerations is included.

All applicants must contribute a minimum of 5 percent of the total project cost. The cost-share may be provided in the form of cash or an "in-kind" contribution. An in-kind contribution is the reasonable value of property and services that benefit the project. For example, administrative support, installation/maintenance of pollution control equipment, the cost differential of ultra low sulfur fuel, the cost of new buses for the project could all be considered "in-kind" contributions.

Matching funds must comply with 40 CFR 30.23 (for non-profit organizations) or 40 CFR 31.24 (for governmental agencies).

IV. Funding Issues

The estimated project period for awards resulting from this solicitation is March 2004 to December 2005. Total available funding is approximately \$400,000.

NSTA anticipates awarding up to 10 cooperative agreements, with approximately 50% of the funding directed toward retrofit of buses currently in service, 30% of the funding directed toward replacement of older vehicles with new buses, and 20% of the funding directed toward use of ultra low sulfur diesel fuel only. The number of awards and distribution of funds are subject to availability of funds and the quality of applications submitted.

Cooperative agreements permit substantial involvement between the NSTA Project Coordinator and the selected applicants in the performance of the work supported. Although NSTA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to our involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated involvement for this project will be:

1. close monitoring of the successful applicant(s) performance;
2. collaboration during the performance of the scope of work;
3. review and comment on reports prepared under the grant agreement.

V. Selection Criteria

A. Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible for these awards, a school or school district must partner with a private school bus carrier who is a member of the National School Transportation Association.

Eligible applicants must provide evidence, by contract or history, that the buses involved in the project will remain in the district for at least five years.

Eligible applicants must provide documentation that the district and the contractor have instituted an

anti-idling policy, both at school locations and at the bus terminal.

B. Evaluation Factors

Each eligible application will be evaluated according to the criteria set forth below. Applications that are best able to directly and explicitly address these criteria will have a greater likelihood of being selected for award. Each application will be rated under a points system, with a total of 100 points possible.

Criterion	Maximum Points per Criterion
<p>Implementation Plan: Describe, in detail, the plan for implementing the project including a timeline for each phase of the project. Indicate how you will acquire and install the equipment and include a list of potential partners. Describe the type of retrofit technology or technologies and the type of fuel (provide a plan for acquiring fuel if is ULSD fuel). <i>Please note: Prior to the installation of any retrofit technology, representative buses in the fleet must be data logged to ensure that the proposed technology is appropriate.</i></p>	25
<p>Policy Support: Demonstrate a commitment (or existing effort) to implement policies that support retrofit projects by reducing pollution in other ways (i.e. anti-idling policies for school buses, indoor air quality improvements such as Tools for Schools, energy efficiency measures, engine block heaters, or other pollution reduction/education programs).</p>	25
<p>Sustainability: Provide information about how you will train skilled staff, identify effective implementation strategies that can be replicated, and measure and share results. This information will be helpful to educate other communities about how to pursue similar projects. If appropriate, provide information about any existing school bus retrofit projects including the number and type of vehicles, type of technology, funding level, partners involved, and challenges overcome.</p>	20
<p>Financial Participation: Describe your contribution. Although applicants must provide a minimum of 5 percent of the total cost of the project (can be cash or in-kind resources), applicants who provide a more significant financial contribution will receive extra points.</p>	15
<p>Fleet: Describe the school bus fleet. Include the number of buses in the fleet, the date the engine was made, the name of the engine and body manufacturers, annual fuel consumption, annual hours of operation, annual miles the fleet travels, the fleet replacement rate, the type of retrofit technology you plan to use, and the number of buses or engines you plan to retrofit or replace. Also indicate who owns the buses, who operates the buses, and who maintains the buses.</p>	15

C. Other Factors

To develop a more comprehensive understanding about implementing school bus retrofit/replacement projects, NSTA, in evaluating applications, will carefully consider other factors that are designed to ensure geographic equity, the demonstration of a variety of different technologies and fuels, as well as a balance between urban and rural and large and small school districts. These factors are as follows:

1. **Geographic Equity:** NSTA will attempt to distribute funds throughout the United States in both urban and rural as well as large and small school districts to determine how projects are implemented in different locations.
2. **Air Quality:** NSTA is interested in knowing if the school buses operate within an area that has poor air quality. Poor air quality areas can consist of areas designated (or at risk of future designation) by EPA to be in non-attainment or maintenance for a criteria pollutant, or that have localized air pollution problems.
3. **Environmental Justice:** NSTA is interested in knowing if the buses serve communities that are considered low-income, minority, have high asthma rates, or receive a disproportionate amount of pollution from diesel vehicles.
4. **Technology Diversity:** NSTA is interested in evaluating a range of technologies and fuels.
5. **Ridership:** NSTA is interested in specific information about ridership such as the number of children who ride the bus and the average length of time they are on the buses.
6. **Partners:** NSTA will consider letters of support for and/or commitment to the project from potential partners. These letters could include information on any matching funds or in-kind resources that partners will provide.

VI. Evaluation and Selection

Applications will be evaluated and ranked by the NSTA Grant Project team, with assistance from EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality. The team will base its evaluations solely on the selection criteria disclosed in this notice. Final award decisions will be made by NSTA. NSTA expects to complete the Evaluation/Selection process by March 1, 2004. All applicants will be notified promptly, after final selections, regarding their application's status.

VII. Proposals

Applications must contain a narrative work plan, and one completed and signed federal grant application package. The complete grants application package and guidance in completing the forms can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/AppKit/index.htm>. You must submit the SF 424 with appendices A & B; biographical sketches of the Project Manager and other key personnel; Form 4700-4, Pre-award Compliance Review Report; and Form 5700-49, Debarment and Suspension Certificate.

The narrative, a maximum of 10 pages in length, must explicitly describe the project and address how it meets each of the selection criteria disclosed in Section V. Pages exceeding the maximum length may not be considered. Please include four copies of everything submitted. A duplicate of the cover letter should be attached to each copy submitted. Please do not include binders or spiral binding. The application should conform to the following outline:

1. Project title.
2. Name, contact person, phone number, fax and e-mail address of both school/school district applicant and school bus contractor.
3. Work plan. Summarize the project and specifically explain how the project meets the criteria.
4. The amount of funding you are requesting from NSTA.
5. The total cost of project (identify other funding sources including any in-kind resources).
6. A detailed budget. Clearly explain how NSTA funds will be used as well as how any matching contributions -- both financial and in-kind services -- will be used. Provide a budget for the following categories:
 - Personnel
 - Fringe Benefits
 - Contractual Costs
 - Travel
 - Equipment
 - Supplies
 - Other
 - Total Direct Costs
 - Total Indirect Costs: must include documentation of accepted indirect rate
 - Total Cost
7. The project period. Provide beginning and ending dates (for planning purposes, applicants should assume funds will be available in March 2004).
8. Reporting. Discuss how you will meet the reporting requirements, including quarterly updates (schedule established by NSTA) and a detailed follow-up report that summarizes the project and includes problems, successes, and lessons learned.

Applicants should clearly mark information in their application that they consider confidential.

VIII. Executive Order 12372 Compliance

Applicants selected for funding will be required to provide a copy of their proposal to their [State Point of Contact](#) (SPOC) for review, pursuant with Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. This review is not required of initial applications and not all states require such a review.

IX. How to Apply

COMPLETED APPLICATION PACKAGES must be received via regular mail or express mail no later than 5:00 PM EST, January 15, 2004. Applications received after the deadline date will not be considered for funding. Please provide an original application package, as described in Section VII, Proposals, four copies of the application package, and one completed and signed Application for Federal Assistance. Facsimile and e-mail submissions will not be accepted.

Mailing and Express Delivery (FedEx, UPS, etc.) Address:

National School Transportation Association
625 Slaters Lane, Suite 205
Alexandria, VA 22314

NSTA Clean School Bus Grant Partners

These vendors have provided price discounts, training, installation, or other in-kind contributions to the NSTA Clean School Bus Grant project. All offer EPA-verified technology that applicants can include in their proposals.

International Truck and Engine Company, Inc.

4201 Winfield Road

PO Box 1488

Warrenville, IL 60555

Offers new OEM-equipped clean diesel technology buses, diesel particulate filter (DPF) retrofits, technician training

Clean Diesel Technologies, Inc.

300 Atlantic Street, Suite 702

Stamford, CT 06901

Offers diesel oxidation catalyst/fuel-borne catalyst (DOC/FBC) systems, installation, technical support

Donaldson Company, Inc.

1400 West 94th Street

Bloomington, MN 55441

Offers closed crankcase ventilation (CCV) filtration systems in combination with DOCs or DPFs, DOC only, DPF only, or CCV only

Johnson Matthey

1397 King Road

West Chester, PA 19380

Offers Continuously Regenerating Technology (CRT) DPFs, installation, training

Sprague Energy

2 International Drive, Suite 200

Portsmouth, NH 03801

Offers ultra low sulfur diesel fuel (ULSD) at state contract price or lower, delivery wherever product is available throughout U.S., training in changeover and maintenance of fuel infrastructure

Thomas Built Buses

1408 Courtesy Road

High Point, NC 27260

Offers new OEM-equipped clean diesel technology buses (EPA verification expected first quarter 2004)