Announcement: Call for Notices of Interest

Free Technical Support for a California K-12 Public School District Seeking Grant Funding for a Seismic Retrofit

1.0 Introduction

The Bay Area-based nonprofit Applied Technology Council (ATC) seeks to provide free technical assistance to a California K-12 public school district to prepare and submit an application for grant funding to seismically retrofit one of its buildings. ATC will provide this service as part of a grant it has received from the State of California and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) manages a federal grant program that provides funding to local government agencies and special districts, including public school districts, to seismically retrofit older, vulnerable buildings. This program is called the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), and it is funded by FEMA. HMGP also provides funding to mitigate the risk posed by other natural hazards, such as wildfire or flood.

To be considered for grant funding through HMGP, an eligible government agency or special district must prepare an application to CalOES that requires technical input from construction and design professionals, as well as an understanding of administrative requirements of the program. These demands can create barriers for some school districts, especially those with limited financial or human resources. The objective of this free service being offered by ATC is to assist a school district that would otherwise be unable, or significantly challenged, to prepare an HMGP application to seismically retrofit one of its buildings. While ATC expects that the application will be well received by CalOES, there is no guarantee that funding will be awarded as demand for HMGP funding may exceed available funds.

School districts who would like to be considered for this free service must complete and submit the Notice of Interest form **by November 30, 2026**, for consideration by ATC. Please carefully review this announcement before proceeding with the Notice of Interest.

This announcement includes the following sections:

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2.0 Eligibility Requirements

ATC will only consider school districts that meet the following criteria:

- The school district must be a public district in California, and it must serve K-12 students (i.e., school districts serving elementary, middle school, and/or high school students).
- The school district must be named in and have adopted a current FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan may be for the school district, for the county office of education covering the school district, or for a multi-jurisdictional area covering the school district (See Section 8.0 for more information).
- The school district must have at least one "Category 2" building on the AB 300 inventory (See Section 9.0 for information about identifying Category 2 buildings on the AB 300 inventory in your district).
- The school district must seek grant funding to retrofit one of its Category 2 buildings on the AB 300 inventory (this is the "target building").
- The target building must be currently in use and regularly occupied by at least 50 students on a typical school day.
- The target building cannot be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The school district must have DSA-approved existing construction documents (hard copy or electronic) for the target building (See Section 10.0 for information about how to obtain existing construction documents)
- The school district must have the financial capacity, or a plan to secure the financial capacity, to complete the seismic retrofit if the HMGP grant is awarded. The seismic retrofit may be part of a modernization or upgrade project, although only those costs associated with the seismic retrofit work are eligible for HMGP grant funding. If awarded, the grant would provide 75% federal funding, and the school district would need to provide a funding match for 25% of the costs to retrofit the building. Cash

and/or in-kind services may be used to cover match costs. In addition to construction costs, HMPG provides funding for professional services required to complete a seismic retrofit project.

- The school district must have a point of contact who is willing and able to work with ATC to prepare the HMGP grant application. This person, who needn't also be the one who submits the Notice of Interest to ATC, must commit to working with ATC to collect the necessary information and respond to questions or other requests from ATC in a timely manner.

School districts may submit more than one Notice of Interest. Each submitted Notice of Interest should be for one target building. However, school districts should consider the selection process described in Section 5.0 in preparing more than one Notice of Interest, as they should be able to determine in advance which target building will be most competitive.

3.0 Notice of Interest to ATC

The following questions are asked in the Notice of Interest:

- Name of school district
- Name of school campus with the target building
- Address of school campus with the target building
- Is the school district named in and has it adopted a current FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan. If yes, include the name of the plan and a link (if available).
- Unduplicated Pupil Count (UPC) based on 2024 data or newer of school campus with the target building
- Total student population of school campus with the target building
- The following questions are related to the target building
    - Use of building (e.g., classroom)
    - Number of stories
    - Approximate footprint (in square feet)
    - Average number of students who occupy the building during a typical school day
    - Is the building listed as a Category 2 building on the AB 300 inventory
    - Application ID ("appid") number on the AB 300 inventory
    - Structural system ("Struct Sys") on the AB 300 inventory
    - Is the building listed on the National Register of Historic Places
    - Do you have existing construction drawings (hard copy or electronic) for the target building

- Does the school district have the financial capacity or have a plan to secure the financial capacity to provide the required local funding match to complete the seismic retrofit work if the grant is awarded
- Describe why the school district is seeking this support from ATC
- Has the school district sought or secured California Seismic Mitigation Program (SMP) funding to retrofit the target building
- The following questions are related to the person completing this Notice of Interest to ATC
    - First and Last Names
    - Job title
    - Phone
    - Email
- The following questions are related to the point of contact who would work with ATC if the school district were selected
    - First and Last Names
    - Job title
    - Phone
    - Email
    - Do you commit to working diligently with ATC to collect the necessary information and to respond to questions or other requests from ATC in a timely manner in order to complete the HMGP application

4.0 Schedule

- Notice of Interest announced: October 1, 2026
- Deadline to submit questions to ATC: November 15, 2026
- Deadline to submit a notice of interest to ATC: November 30, 2026
- Selection of school district: December 31, 2026
- ATC and school district prepare and submit an application for HMGP to CalOES: June 30, 2027

5.0 School District Selection Process

All Notices of Interest received by ATC by the deadline will be screened for the eligibility requirements. ATC may email questions or ask for a short phone interview in order to confirm or clarify responses in the Notice of Interest. Those that meet all the eligibility requirements will be added to a short list and ranked by ATC based on the following criteria:

- Seismic hazard at the target building campus (50%)

- Unduplicated Pupil Count (UPC) as a percent of total student population at the target building campus (50%)

The score for each target building on the short list will be based on the following formula:

Score = S_{MS}/1.9 + UPC%/68%

where S_{MS} is calculated using the ASCE 7 Hazard Tool for ASCE/SEI 7-22 assuming Risk Category III and Default Soil Class.

The school district with the target building with the highest score will be selected for free technical support from ATC.

6.0 (After Selection) Process for Preparing the Application to HMGP

ATC will work with the point of contact at the school district to prepare the application to CalOES for HMGP grant funding. This process will start with a kickoff meeting between ATC and the school district point of contact and a review by a structural engineer on the ATC team of the existing construction documents for the target building. There is a chance that, despite it being on the AB 300 list, the building does not have critical seismic vulnerabilities. If this is determined to be the case after review of the drawings, ATC would pause working with that school district because it would mean that retrofitting the building would have limited impact on seismic safety.

Following the review of existing construction documents, the ATC structural engineer will visit the target building in order to confirm certain aspects of the documents. This visit will need to occur during regular working hours. Following the visit, the structural engineer will prepare a memo describing the findings, including confirming that the building has critical seismic vulnerabilities, describing the extent of those vulnerabilities, and describing in narrative form the general likely scope of retrofit work that is recommended. A copy of this memo will be provided to the point of contact. This memo also will be provided to a construction cost estimator on the ATC team, who will prepare a cost estimate for the retrofit work. To complete this cost estimate, the cost estimator may also need to visit the target building.

With this information, plus additional general information about the school district, target building campus, and target building provided by the point of contact, ATC will prepare a draft application for HMGP funding. All responses will be provided to the point of contact for review. It should be noted that the application to CalOES is submitted via an online portal. While ATC will be able to fill in responses to questions in the online portal on behalf of the school district, the school district will need to formally submit the application.

During the process of preparing the application, ATC may seek guidance from CalOES related to answering specific questions, in order to make the application as competitive as possible. ATC will ask the point of contact to participate in these meetings in order to ensure transparency in the process and deepen the point of contact's knowledge of HMGP.

After the application is submitted, it will be reviewed first by CalOES and later by FEMA. The entire review process can take 12-18 months.

7.0 Seismic Mitigation Program vs Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Although some California K-12 school districts have sought and received HMGP funding, ATC believes this program is not well known among school districts, which in general are more familiar with the California Seismic Mitigation Program (SMP).

HMGP has important advantages compared to SMP. The first is that HMPG covers 75% of eligible retrofit costs, including the professional design fees, compared to 60% of eligible costs for SMP (although in some cases SMP provides 100% of the cost of retrofit). The second is that HMGP has more flexibility in the retrofit standard that must be met for the work to be eligible. This means that school districts are eligible to receive funds to offset the costs of any seismic retrofit work that is permitted by DSA so long as the work can be shown to be cost effective. In contrast, SMP is only eligible to be used for comprehensive retrofits that seek to remedy all seismic deficiencies and improve the building to the equivalent of a new building seismic performance standard. This level of retrofit provides greater safety and reliability during strong earthquake shaking, but seeking this high standard is not always practical for school districts. The key point is that HMPG provides more flexibility in the retrofit standard that is sought, which can be less than or equivalent to the SMP required standard.

On the other hand, HMGP has important disadvantages compared to SMP. Applicants for HMGP can wait 12–18 months before learning if their grant is awarded, and once awarded, the project must be completed within three years, although one-year extensions may be granted. In contrast, applicants for SMP typically wait three to four months to learn if their grant is awarded once a fully approved plan set and funding request is submitted for processing. Once funds are released, which can take a few months after learning that the grant was awarded, the project must be completed within three years for an elementary school or within four years for middle or high schools. Lastly, SMP funding is more certain for districts that meet all the criteria. SMP projects are considered health and safety projects, which put them first in line for any available funding. In contrast, HMGP funding can be more competitive to obtain.

8.0 FEMA-Approved Hazard Mitigation Plans

Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMPs) are guides for identifying, evaluating, and reducing risks from natural and human-caused disasters. They are widely recognized as important tools among planners and emergency managers. Government agencies and special districts must have adopted a FEMA-approved HMP to be eligible for many FEMA mitigation grants, including HMGP. Specifically, to be eligible for HMGP funding, a school district must be named in and have adopted a FEMA-approved HMP at the time of application and at the time of obligation of HMGP funds.

There are three ways that a school district may be named in and have adopted a FEMA-approved HMP: (1) submit as a single jurisdiction HMP (i.e., a plan for the individual school district), (2) submit as an annex to a county multi-jurisdictional HMP (which is typically done through the County Office of Education), or (3) lead a multi-jurisdictional effort themselves.

It is the responsibility of school districts submitting an NOI to determine if they are named in and have adopted a FEMA-approved HMP. ATC cannot provide assistance in establishing a school district's status.

9.0 Identifying Category 2 Buildings on the AB 300 Inventory

Thousands of older California K-12 public school buildings are highly vulnerable to damage and even collapse during strong earthquake shaking. These buildings were designed and constructed based on older seismic standards that no longer meet acceptable performance requirements. A 2002 study conducted by the California Division of the State Architect (DSA) identified more than 7,500 California K-12 public school buildings that may have critical seismic vulnerabilities. These building were identified as "Category 2" buildings in the study, which was conducted in response to Assembly Bill (AB) 300. The list of these buildings is often referred to as the AB 300 inventory or list. Importantly, just because a building in on the AB 300 inventory doesn't necessarily mean that it has critical seismic vulnerabilities.

Districts can obtain a list of school buildings in the district that are included on the AB 300 list from DSA in one of two ways:

1. Districts with authorized users can go directly to the Project Document Request for School Districts page:
    a. Question 3: check the last box
    b. Question 4: check "Files". Additional form fields will open after answering Questions 1 through 4.

   c. Question 5: type “AB 300 list”
2. Districts without authorized users can:
   a. Make a request to authorize a user by completing the School District Documentation Authorization and then completing the request in Item 1, or
   b. Make a Public Records Act Request using the GovQA page portal
      i. Select “Submit a Records Request”
      ii. Select “Division of State Architect” from the dropdown menu identifying from which division/office you are requesting records.
      iii. The subject of the request should be “AB 300”
      iv. Input the “name of the school district” in the “Describe the Record Requested” field.

The list of buildings in a district on the AB 300 list that is provided by DSA may include both Category 1 and Category 2 buildings. Only Category 2 buildings are eligible for this free service. Category 2 buildings can be distinguished from Category 1 buildings based on their structural system (“struct sys”) on the AB 300 inventory. Category 2 structural systems include: C1, C1B, C2A, C3A, M, S1B, S3, PC1, PC1A, PC2, PC2A, RM1, URM, and URMA.

10.0 Obtaining Existing Construction Documents

Districts with authorized users can obtain existing construction documents for their target buildings from DSA through the Project Document Request for School Districts page:

1. Question 3: check the second box
2. Question 4: check “Plans”. Additional form fields will open after answering Questions 1 through 4.
3. Question 5: type the application number.

Districts without authorized users should see Item 2a in Section 9.0 for how to make a request to authorize a user.

11.0 Questions

Q: May I submit an NOI for a project that already has architectural and engineering designs?

A: Yes, you may submit an NOI for a project that already has partial or complete architectural and/or engineering designs.

Q: May I submit an NOI for a project that has secured SMP funding?

A: No. SMP and HMGP cannot be used to fund the retrofit of the same building, so an NOI for this project would not be eligible.

Q: May I submit an NOI for a project that may seek SMP funding in the future?

A: Yes, you may submit an NOI for a project that may seek SMP funding in the future. However, if selected for this free service, you would need to first seek HGMP funding and wait to seek SMP funding only if the HGMP application were denied. That is because SMP and HMGP cannot be used to fund the retrofit of the same building.

Q: May I submit an NOI for a project that has already started construction?

A: No. Projects that have already started construction are ineligible for HMGP.

Submit questions about this announcement or the NOI to Justin Moresco at jmoresco@atcouncil.org on or before November 15, 2026.

About ATC

ATC is a nonprofit organization founded in 1973 and headquartered in Redwood City, California. ATC's mission is to imagine, develop, and promote the advancement of technologies to enhance societal resistance to natural and other hazards. More information can be found at www.atcouncil.org.