

Learning Inside Out Initiative

FAQs

A. PARTNERING WITH DISTRICTS

- 1. How can community members, non-profit organizations, and other partners play a role in this initiative and support school districts to move forward with an application?**

Community members and partner organizations should contact their districts directly to better understand how they can help support an application. As part of the application, districts are encouraged to fill out the [School as a Tool protocol](#), which outlines a variety of options for how community partners can engage with the districts, including but not limited to Section I: Establish a Green Team and Section IV: Inform and Involve the Community).

- 2. How can MBEs (Minority Business Enterprises) who are interested connect with the school districts to create interest in participating?**

Please reach out to districts directly.

- 3. Would someone be able to come to my site and give feedback?**

Although we would love to see each site individually, we do not have enough capacity to visit every project site. However, we are happy to meet with you virtually to discuss your project. Feel free to share photos, maps and any other resources to help describe your project. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [Schoolyard Habitat Project Guide](#) is a really great resource that can help you start thinking about what you might be able to do with your space. Additionally, applicants and partners are welcome to join the following events for technical assistance with their applications:

- RIDE and partner agencies for the Learning Inside Out Initiative will host two office hours sessions. Representatives will be available to answer questions about your projects.
 - Friday, February 10 from 8-9 a.m. [Register here](#)
 - Tuesday, March 7 from 4-5 p.m. [Register here](#)
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership and URI's GEMS-Net Partnership are hosting a workshop on February 25. [Register here](#)
- The RI Farm to School Network is offering FREE training and technical support for Learning Inside Out applications. Join them February 13th to learn more. [Register here](#)

- 4. How does a landscape designer or educational commissioning vendor become available to assist districts?**

If a vendor is interested in providing services for this initiative, they should apply to the appropriate MPA from the list below. Vendors must register on the Ocean State Procures website: [OSP Login | Rhode Island Division of Purchases \(ri.gov\)](#) and then find the MPA and apply to be included on it. RIDE will be issuing an RFP to vendors listed on the following MPAs:

MPA 589: School Redesign
MPA 489: Natural Resource Consulting Services
MPA 494: Architectural Services
MPA 584D: Environmental Engineering
MPA 621: Educational Commissioning
MPA 596: Childhood Nutrition Planning

5. Will schools have a choice as to which landscape design and professional development vendors that they use from the state’s pre-approved lists (MPAs)?

As of now, it has not been decided whether vendors will be assigned to award recipients, or if districts will be able to select their vendors from a RIDE approved list.

6. Will RIDE assist local businesses to connect with funded programs to assist with continued maintenance and PD after the initial RIDE phases are completed?

Local businesses are encouraged to connect with districts directly to determine how they can best support the projects in their district(s) of interest.

B. FUNDING

1. What is the maximum amount of funding schools can apply for?

Each project (not district) is eligible to receive up to \$100,000. Projects do not necessarily need to be by school but could be by project type. For example, a district may elect to submit a project that provides outdoor classroom lighting at all the elementary schools in their district as one project. Projects that are approved will receive the full amount requested, so long as it is within the \$100K limit.

2. In addition to funding for building outdoor learning spaces, can grant funding also go toward professional development to assistant organizations, like Audubon or others?

No. Funding is to be used only towards the creation of outdoor learning environments at locations under the care and control of a public K-12 district (i.e. capital efforts). Non-profit entities providing programmatic efforts are NOT eligible recipients. These services will initially be supported by RIDE funds separate from the project funding that is allocated to LEAs. Ongoing professional learning will be the responsibility of the district. See above section on “Partnering with Districts” for more information.

3. How many projects can be included in an LEA’s application?

There is space for 5 projects on the application, but there is no limit to the number of projects that may be included in an application (attach additional sheets as necessary). Please note that applications containing multiple projects should note the priority for each project submitted, as that will impact the scoring for each application.

4. Can funds be used to include security features (e.g. fencing, lighting, video installation, etc.)? Can you apply for a playground shade structure if native plants are incorporated around the area?

Yes, these items are eligible.

C. APPLICATION COMPONENTS

1. What exactly is the "School as a Tool" protocol? Where is it located?

"School as a Tool" protocol is an agreement, by which the School/District commits to implementing the School as a Tool / RI Sustainable Schools Protocol, pursuant to the RIDE School Construction Program. It can be found on the Learning Inside Out webpage: [Learning Inside Out | Rhode Island Department of Education \(ri.gov\)](#)

2. Can we also create a video as part of the application submission?

Yes, but as a supplement to the written application, not as a replacement.

3. Do we need to break down the costs on the application?

A strong application will include a detailed cost estimate that outlines all of the project components. Please reach out to RIDE if you need assistance with cost estimates.

4. Does the district apply for every school within the district or do individual schools apply for their projects?

All applications should be coordinated at the district level. Signoff by the district/superintendent is required as part of the application submission.

D. ELIGIBILITY

1. Do the arts play a role as it pertains to motivating, preparing, and introducing this whole initiative?

There is certainly opportunity to incorporate utilization of these outdoor spaces into a school's arts curriculum (or any subject). Strong applications will demonstrate a variety of uses for the space across subjects.

2. Do the outdoor spaces we build need to be right at school facilities or can they be at other public facilities that can be easily accessed by the schools?

While the spaces do not need to be located at the same location as the school facilities, they **MUST** be located on properties under the care and control of the school district. Projects located at properties owned by other entities are not eligible for funding. Please consider and include a discussion of transportation considerations if the project is to be located separately from the school property.

3. Are charter schools eligible to apply?

All public K-12 local educational agencies (LEAs) in the state of Rhode Island are eligible to apply, including public charter schools. **HOWEVER**, as stated in Question 2 above, the property **MUST** be under the care and control of the applying LEA. Therefore, charter schools located on leased property **are not** eligible.