

Pandemic Guide to Government Funds

Billions for Facility Improvements and
Emergency Preparedness



Setting the Stage for Change

The pandemic has driven increased government funding to upgrade institutions such as schools, which are vulnerable in times of crisis.

The good news? There's government funding, to the tune of billions of dollars, readily available to transform our schools. Tribal nations, county, city, and state governments also get access to these funds. In this resource guide, we'll explain **how to access these funds** and use cooperative purchasing groups to streamline your purchasing.



Getting Schools in Shape

Why now? Our buildings aren't getting any younger. Nearly 1 in 3 buildings in the United States is more than 50 years old. Approximately 70% of buildings in the United States are more than 20 years old. Nearly everyone has a local school that's seen better days.

In Vermont, many of the state's high schools and middle schools were built in the 1950s and 1960s. **When funds for schools have been tight**, maintenance, like updating and repairing HVAC systems has been deferred.

Typically, school building documentation is scattered, so renovations, maintenance and emergency response are bottlenecked, and facilities teams who take care of our schools are slowed by these kinds of inefficiencies.

Decades of building drawings are clogging school storage rooms, but technology can speed access to information needed to improve emergency response.



School Task Forces

According to the CDC, schools are required to have a pandemic task force comprised of the facility's IT director, the health and safety director, the superintendent of the school district, the principal, facilities manager, and others to implement disaster preparedness, disaster response and day-to-day safe operations of our schools.

The CDC also has issued guidelines on checklists of areas, facility-by-facility, space-by-space, in terms of what is required and what needs to be implemented in each school campus, including cleaning, disinfecting, and making improvements to HVAC systems and equipment **to contribute towards reducing the concentration of virus particles in the air.**

The Procurement Process

Applying for government funds is relatively easy. Applicants should identify the need to modernize school infrastructure and technology and ensure the need is related to the pandemic response.

Healthcare related expenses attributable to coronavirus may cover a range of items and services, including:

- Workforce training
- Acquiring technology, equipment and supplies
- Developing and staffing emergency operation centers

The array of solutions funded by the available federal funds runs the gamut. **Many dormant modernizing projects are being surfaced to the top tier.**

Work with your department's leader and procurement team to access the federal funds allocated to your school district or department.

The next step is to focus on how procurement can be streamlined. **Work with your procurement team to identify co-ops and GSA Schedules** that can be leveraged to acquire the solution being funded.

ESEA: The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. This includes school improvement, according to the Education Post blog.

Title 1 Schools

According to the Student Debt Relief website, schools with a student base that are lower income are provided with title 1 funding to help those who are behind or at risk of falling behind, aiming to bridge the gap between low-income students and other students.

The financial assistance is provided through state educational agencies (SEAs) to local educational agencies (LEAs) and public schools.



American Rescue Plan of 2021

With the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021, schools have significant federal resources available to implement evidence-based and practitioner-informed strategies to meet the needs of students related to COVID-19.



According to the Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, the American Rescue Plan Act was signed into law **to provide \$1.9 trillion package of assistance measures**, including \$122 billion for the ARP Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund. Funds are provided to state educational agencies and school districts **to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools** and address the impact of the pandemic on the nation's students.

ARP education funds may also be used to improve indoor air quality for in-person instruction, including:

- Inspection, testing, and maintenance of current ventilation systems and approaches
- Purchasing portable air filtration units, such as HEPA air filters
- Purchasing MERV-13 (or higher) filters for your HVAC system and ACs
- Purchasing fans
- Repairing windows and/or doors so that they can open to let fresh air in
- Servicing or upgrading HVAC systems consistent with industry standards



Cooperative Purchasing Groups

Finally, companies and organizations can come together and combine their buying power through Cooperative Purchasing Groups.



Public agencies across the US depend on their procurement departments to source, bid, negotiate, and contract, critical business supplies and services. While such practices protect public interest and bring order and transparency to the purchasing process, they can require months to finally reap their rewards. In an environment where products and services need to be acquired quickly, traditional “requests for proposals,” otherwise known as RFPs, can hinder progress.

When time is of the essence, a purchasing cooperative (or “co-op”) can be a procurement department’s best friend.



Contracts available through purchasing co-ops offer terms, pricing and project descriptions that are vetted and pre-approved. **When a purchasing requirement and a co-op contract align, it can allow a school or government agency to bypass the time it takes to gather and evaluate competing bids**, present those bids to decision-makers, gain consensus, set an implementation schedule, and complete a purchase.

Purchasing Cooperatives and the GSA Schedules are being leveraged actively across the nation to meet the needs of county, city, K-12, higher ed, and specialty agency needs **while reducing the cost and time of procurement**.

Service and solution contracts found on co-ops like BuyBoard, GoodBuy, Purchasing Cooperative of America (PCA) and even the Government Services Administration (GSA), meet the procurement requirements for a direct and timely purchase. ARC is an approved vendor for all of these agencies.

GSA Schedules



The General Services Administration (GSA) is a US Government Agency that oversees federal procurement.

Many schools have already leveraged GSA schedules to acquire goods and services and technology. The GSA Schedule, also referred to as Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) and Federal Supply Schedule, is a **long-term government-wide contract** with commercial firms providing federal, state, and local government buyers **access to more than 11 million commercial supplies and services** at volume discount pricing.

The GSA Schedule program has 12 product and service categories, **including one for facilities**.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Answers provided by Kumar Wiratunga, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships and Government Services, ARC Document Solutions.



Q. Are there any limits to what types of projects can be funded by federal stimulus funds?

A. There's really no limit in terms of how technology has been applied in response to the pandemic. Agencies are looking at modernizing how they engage their constituents, how they engage their students, how they engage faculty, and how they engage parents in a school environment.

Q. Are universities eligible for these funds?

A. Yes, universities through the CARES Act and ARPA are eligible. There are billions of dollars available to meet their needs.

Q. I don't know if my department can use federal funds. How do I find out?

A. Talk to your department heads about how they are planning a response to the funds that are available. The procurement department is your next stop. Because the procurement staff is receiving requests from other departments, even though your department may not be pursuing it, they are aware of the process and can provide guidance. **They will also be able to give you a glimpse about the types of projects that are being funded and the mechanism for applying for them and creating a use case for that purpose.** On the use case, the predicate is about pandemic response need.

Q. What's the ARC Facilities mission in reaching schools?

A. Schools can use this federal funding to elevate and prioritize the needs that they have in digitizing content and making it available simply on a mobile app. This digitization need is a direct response to emergency preparedness and **the ability to respond** during this pandemic. As such, the funds are available to modernize this access to critical facility documents.

How ARC Facilities Can Help

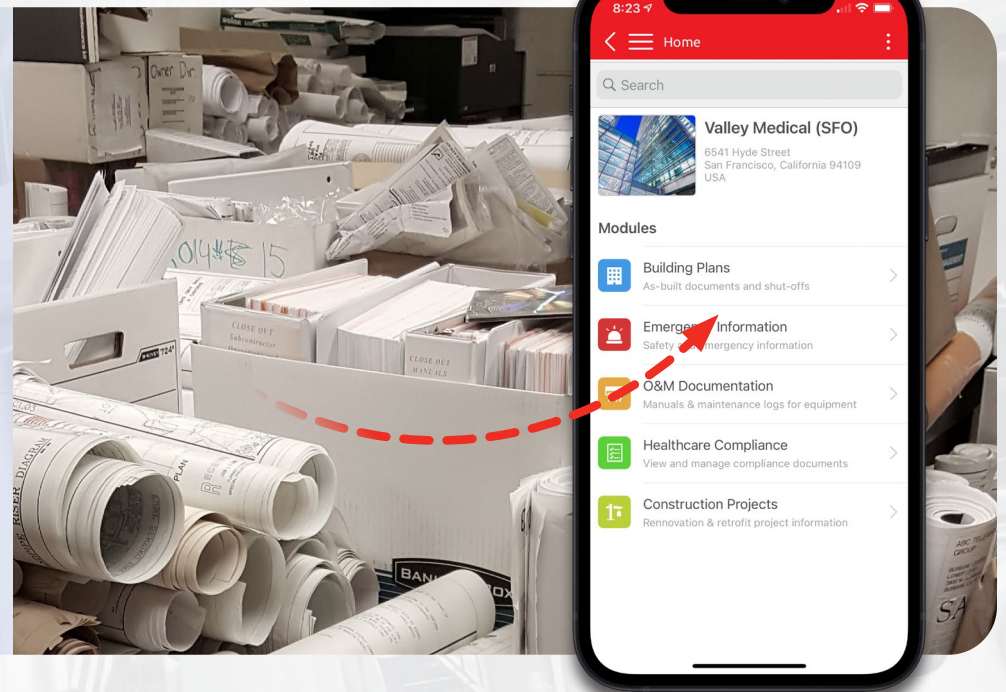
ARC Facilities works with schools, colleges, and universities across the US who are plagued with inefficiencies, including messy plan rooms storing decades of building documents. With our award-winning mobile app, technicians can quickly find equipment documentation to repair and upgrade HVAC systems for improved indoor air quality at schools, which will help students, teachers, families, and staffs be safe as returns to schools and universities continue.

What we do is scan and organize these documents into our mobile-first platform which **uses artificial intelligence and machine learning** to extract building information, and deliver it via an easy-to-use mobile app.

The app provides a means for facilities teams and campus safety **staff to manage this content** internally, to have access to it, but also to share this information with first responders.

If there's anything we've learned from the pandemic, **consider the importance of emergency preparedness** and the ability to respond from anywhere.

ARC Facilities is an approved GSA schedule holder, and we are on several co-ops as well.



Facility Checklist:

- ☑ Start by walking around the school building and prioritizing your technology needs. **Consider that technology goes way above broadband and tablets.** Consider how mobile devices can address inefficiencies associated with both emergency response and safety for students.
- ☑ Read up on the CDC Guidelines.
- ☑ Do a deeper dive into **how to obtain funds** from the CARES Act and other resources and keep your pandemic task force in the loop.
- ☑ Consider cooperative purchasing groups to get **the best pricing on goods and services.**

Sources

1. Center for Disease Control (CDC)
2. Title 1 Schools
3. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA)
4. Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)
5. American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021
6. CARES Act
7. GSA Schedule

COVID Response Checklist for Facilities Teams

How the ARC Facilities Solution Qualifies Under ARPA

- ☑ Can be used to identify and properly map CDC social-distancing signage across multiple locations.
- ☑ Allows facilities team and technicians to remotely access critical building information.
- ☑ Enables planning of occupant routing, potential isolation zones, HEPPA filters and air purifier locations, and managing HVAC maintenance.
- ☑ Can be used to locate and map hand sanitizing stations.
- ☑ Improves FM team's ability to rapidly respond to maintenance issues with hand sanitizers, air purifiers, HVAC and other related building equipment.
- ☑ Standardizing ARC Facilities across all locations means building specific knowledge is available to all team members. This allows better response in the event team members are required to isolate/quarantine. For example, a team member assisting at an unfamiliar location due to someone being quarantined, can access building specific information, despite it not being their home location.
- ☑ Team members working from quarantine can access information remotely using this system, potentially assisting or guiding an onsite technician over the phone; a task not currently possible with paper or other physical records.
- ☑ In the event of an emergency incident, ARC Facilities enables easy sharing of building floorplans and other information with first responders.

To find out how ARC Facilities can help you, [request a demo today](#)
or send an email to
solutions@arcfacilities.com