



Energy Savings for Schools Program Frequently Asked Questions

Is my school eligible to participate in the ESS Program?

All schools in Colorado are eligible for consideration and any school that is interested in participating is encouraged to apply. Preference will be given to schools located in rural parts of Colorado, particularly in areas where residents also have low annual incomes. The Colorado Department of Education categorizes school districts according to how rural they are (view the Data Center tool [here](#)), while U.S. Census Bureau data on income determines areas of low income.

What are the main steps in the process?

Once a school fills out an application, the ESS team will review it based on certain factors, such as location, area income, and commitment from school leadership. Schools that are accepted into the program will be asked to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Colorado Energy Office and agree to program Standards for Success to ensure a level of commitment necessary for success.

To kick off the project, the school will provide its electricity, natural gas or propane, and water utility data to the ESS team to inform the site visit. The audit engineer will review the data and schedule an on-site visit to walk through the school and its grounds to identify opportunities to save energy and water and, if applicable, explore renewable energy opportunities. The ESS engineer will then prepare a report describing current conditions at the school and identified and quantified energy efficiency recommendations. The ESS Engineer will review this report with the school to help prioritize projects and identify next steps for getting them done. Throughout the process, the ESS team will work in partnership with each school and provide customized support and coaching along the way.

How much time is required of school staff and what expertise is needed?

The ESS Program provides start-to-finish support to help schools manage their energy more effectively and complete improvement projects. We anticipate that over the course of engagement with an individual school (up to 12 months from initial application to implementation), approximately 20 to 30 hours of school staff support time may be required. This will include filling out a program application, compiling and sending energy utility data, reviewing an audit report and recommendations, overseeing projects, and participating in webinars and recognition events. **Supporting staff do not need to be energy experts.** In smaller schools, a principal, a teacher, or other staff member may be the primary point of contact. For Larger schools, this may be a facilities manager.

How much will my school save on utility bills?

The degree of cost savings will vary from school to school depending on age, type of equipment, and other factors. All participating schools, however, are expected to achieve measurable energy, water, and cost savings from participating in the ESS Program and implementing some of the recommendations in the audit reports. Other benefits include greater occupant engagement and student learning opportunities.



Are there costs to participate?

There are no direct monetary costs for a school to participate in the ESS Program. The only costs for which a school will be responsible are associated with staff time to interact with the ESS team and any costs to implement projects after utility rebates and other funding and financing have been applied.

Can students participate?

Yes! We encourage student participation to provide hands-on learning opportunities about saving energy and water. Our audit reports and recommendations will be provided in a format that's easily transferrable to curriculum or other student activities. We also encourage students to shadow our audit team and are happy to explore other options as appropriate. In addition, schools may be eligible to receive an e-Gauge™ monitoring tool to see energy consumption in real time. Other resources will be made available related to conservation activities, curriculum, and awareness for students and building occupants.

What happens during the site visit?

An ESS engineer will meet with you and walk through your school building and grounds to identify opportunities to save energy and water. Audits will take anywhere from a few hours to half a day to complete depending on the size of the building, the complexity of its systems, and your availability. Systems typically inspected include HVAC, lighting, motor and drive systems, operation and IT systems, kitchen equipment, water fixtures, outdoor irrigation, and renewable energy (as available). A facility or staff member is required for escorting the audit team around the facility. **No audit experience is required from the escort.**

How long does the process take?

Overall, the process from filling out an initial application to helping schools install and implement projects varies. However, the ESS program goal is to complete the process for each school within 12 months, if possible. Once a school and the Colorado Energy Office sign an MOU, an on-site audit and renewable energy assessment will be scheduled within the next 2 months.

Who will be helping us?

The Colorado Energy Office's program administrator, Brendle Group, is a Colorado-based engineering consulting firm that frequently works with schools on energy management and sustainability. Brendle Group's team of energy engineers and program experts will be your main point of contact and will work with you throughout the process.

When can I get started?

An application form is available on the ESS Program website: bit.ly/CEOenergysavings. Applications can be submitted to ESS@brendlegroup.com and will be accepted on a rolling basis.

What other programs are supported by ESS?

The ESS Program supports, and in turn is supported by, a number of Colorado Energy Office and other related programs, including the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency for Schools (REEES) loan program, Supplemental Environmental Projects (SEPs), High Performing School Program (HPSP), Energy Performance Contracting (EPC), and the Renew Our Schools Program (RNOS). For more information about these programs visit bit.ly/CEOenergysavings.