The Ready Access Program is a capital outlay initiative in its second year of successful implementation. The goal of Ready Access is to save state bond dollars while allowing districts the ability to complete their projects faster to address growth and facility modernization needs. It has provided the means for districts to streamline their capital outlay projects by receiving lump-sum state funding for all project phases under one Budget Act appropriation rather than waiting for separate phases of a project to be funded over multiple years’ Budget Acts.

Below are some frequently asked questions to help clarify some of the technical aspects of the Ready Access Program.

FAQs:

1. **How does a ready access project differ from a normal state-funded capital outlay project?**

   Ready Access projects have all phases of state funding provided in one Budget Act appropriation instead of the usual two or more years appropriations. Ready Access streamlines the state’s capital outlay process by at least one year (probably a lot more!) by providing districts with a lump-sum appropriation for all project phases (planning = P, working drawings = W, construction = C, and equipment = E). Districts can then design and build the project without waiting for additional state budget approvals. Other state review procedures are the same as a regular state funded capital outlay project.

2. **What are the eligibility requirements of a Ready Access project?**

   **LOCAL CONTRIBUTION** - Districts must provide a minimum 10% local contribution to the project.

   **SCOPE OF WORK** – Projects must be state supportable facilities and districts must agree to no scope changes. Proper planning of the project at the outset is essential.

   **PROJECT BUDGET** – The state must fund a substantial portion of each phase of the project. How this requirement is implemented in specific terms varies between projects but at a minimum the state should participate in funding at least 10% to 20% of each phase. Consult your facilities specialist to discuss your district’s specific needs. For example, districts may propose to fund all or a portion of the architectural fees for preliminary planning (P) phase and/or the architect fees for working drawings (W) phase of the project. The state would fund the remaining budget line items in the P & W phases of the project, i.e. project management fees, state architect plan check fees, community college plan check fees, soil tests and other costs (bid advertising costs, special consultants etc.). Any remaining funds needed to make up the minimum 10% local fund requirement would be applied to the construction and/or equipment phases.

   Adherence to the above requirements is mandatory and the failure to do so could result in removal of the proposed state funding.
3. **Did the Ready Access program change from previous years?**

   No. The Ready Access program continues to be a mechanism for districts to streamline the state capital outlay process by providing a lump-sum appropriation for all project phases.

4. **Then what has changed?**

   During the first years of the program, districts were allowed to use local funds to pay for the entire preliminary plans and working drawing phases of a project then seek state funding for the construction and equipment phases. This is no longer allowed. Beginning in fiscal year 2005-06, the state must fund a substantial portion of each phase of the project. The Department of Finance has always required that the state fund a significant portion of the INITIAL PHASE of the project seeking state funding in order that the Legislature and Governor may approve the proposed scope or work and financing arrangement before design begins. That requirement has not changed but due to efforts to negotiate the single appropriation aspect of the Ready Access Program, that requirement was not enforced during the first year.

5. **What is considered a substantial portion of funding for each phase?**

   The definition of substantial is not a specific percentage or dollar amount, however as a guideline, the state should fund 10% to 20% of each phase. Districts should develop the project budget to best suit their needs then consult their facilities specialist to find out if this is compatible with the state requirement.

6. **Why was the change in funding needed?**

   To allow the Legislature the ability to review and approve state-funded projects before districts are too far ahead in the planning process. The change in funding array will also avoid the significant financial risks districts undertake by proceeding with planning prior to state approval.

7. **If a district starts its Ready Access project prior to state approval will it lose eligibility points earned for the local contribution?**

   No. Eligibility points are calculated based on the proposed project budget and before a request for state funds is submitted. Accordingly a district must commit to the level of local contribution very early in the approval process. Once the project is considered scope approvable, eligibility points are assigned and projects are ranked according to total points. Funding approval is dependent upon relative ranking and available funds. **However, regardless of your project score, districts will lose their state funding by starting their projects prior to: 1) state approval of scope and budget in the State Budget Act, and 2) signature by the Department of Finance on the project’s DF-14D form. Your district will not get reimbursed from state funds for any expenses incurred prior to these state approvals.** This means that if you start your project before these state approvals, any expenses incurred with local funds will **NOT** be reimbursed with state funds pursuant to longstanding Government Code Section 13332.11(a). These local expenses must also be state supportable and within the legislatively approved project scope to be reimbursed with state funds.