
Act 72 School Facilities Assessment Reports

Why did the state conduct a school facilities assessment?

In 2007, the state of Vermont suspended aid for school construction. This suspension has contributed to a growing backlog of deferred maintenance and renovation projects in Vermont's public schools and a lack of support and oversight at the state level.

In 2021, the Vermont General Assembly enacted [Act 72](#) to address the needs and conditions of public school facilities. Act 72 requires that the Agency of Education conduct a facilities assessment of the state's public school buildings. Assessments were completed throughout 2023. Supervisory Unions/School Districts (SU/SDs) received facility assessment reports for review in early November 2023.

How will the assessments be used?

The facilities assessment gathered baseline data on the overall health of school facilities. In Act 72, the General Assembly recognized that districts are not equally resourced. Therefore, the statewide assessment has allowed for all school districts to have equitable access to a comparable assessment methodology. The data generated from the facilities assessments will serve two primary purposes:

1. Help the state understand the varying facility conditions of school buildings, both within and across districts. The reports that SU/SDs receive are an assessment that capture a specific point in time using established industry standards and definitions. These assessments capture a high-level view and provide a way to rank buildings needs across the school systems. This data may inform the General Assembly should it undertake a state school construction aid program.
2. Facilitate access to data. The state and SU/SDs will have access to the facilities database in perpetuity. The database will be critically important for all districts as they develop the 5-Year Capital Improvement Plans required in Act 72 and actively update the database as renovations and upgrades are undertaken. The database will enable long-term planning for replacement reserve capital expenditures as schools and the AOE move toward implementing proactive and preventive maintenance initiatives.

Considerations

Resources

Members of the school community, stakeholders and the public are encouraged to visit

the [Act 72 School Facilities Assessment](#) webpage for more information about the facilities assessments, including a Frequent Asked Questions section and instructions on how to access copies of building reports.

Cost values

The facilities assessments use a base replacement cost of \$250 per square foot. One shared cost allows conditions and costs across systems and between schools to be compared and prioritized. However, this cost is only a one-to-one replacement cost (often referred to as “hard costs”) and does not include “soft costs” like labor, upgrades to meet new building code requirements or achieve new efficiencies, or contingencies.

Please Note: Costs included in this assessment are not reflective of all costs to bring facilities to current code. Instead they reflect the cost to replace existing facility items only. The AOE acknowledges that actual construction costs are much higher today with rising inflation, supply chain issues, and labor shortages.

To support budget planning, the AOE will provide cost tables that reflect these current market trends. SU/SDs will receive cost tables in January. Costs reflected in the tables will be based on information gathered from industry experts and budgets for recent construction projects in Vermont. The AOE is also researching construction cost index changes over time to come up with a rate of inflation that better reflects the current environment that can be applied when districts are forecasting future expenditures.

For more information on how costs are determined and used in the facilities assessments, please refer to the [Frequently Asked Questions section](#) of the Act 72 Facilities Assessment webpage.

Level of Detail and Specificity

The statewide facilities assessment is intended to be the beginning of a long-term effort to address deficiencies in school facilities. The reports that SU/SDs receive are an assessment that capture a specific point in time using established industry standards and definitions are not intended to have great specificity.

For those SU/SDs that have undertaken facilities assessments on their own to prepare for potential construction projects or long-term capital planning, the data generated from this current round of assessments can be viewed as supplemental. Completed assessments tied to construction planning are much more detailed than the statewide facilities assessments.

Definitions of Terms

The facilities assessment uses specific terms in ways that align with industry standards and may carry a different meaning for those not familiar with facilities and assessment jargon. For example, “Failed” does not necessarily mean “broken” or “unsafe” in this

context. Instead, it could mean that the system is beyond its Remaining Useful Life (RUL) and should be replaced. It is important that users of the reports refer to the definitions of these terms and understand that some of the judgments made are subjective. Each assessment contains a glossary section and users can also refer to the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on the Act 72 Facilities Assessment webpage for descriptions of commonly used terms.

In addition, each report contains an explanation of the Facility Condition Index (FCI) ratings. The sections “Purpose and Scope” and “Opinions and Probable Costs” provide helpful references to explain the narrative sections of the report and the data contained in the report. The data tables in the Component Condition Report (Appendix E) can provide a more comprehensive view of the report narrative.

Process for Updates or Corrections

SU/SDs will have an opportunity to review their reports and can request a correction for major errors. Major errors will result in the reissue of a new report before January 31, 2024. Minor errors or outdated information (i.e., a repair or replacement made after the date of the assessment) that do not impact the overall goal of helping inform a potential state aid construction program or hinder districts from developing their 5-year Capital Plan will be addressed through a regular cycle of updates to the facilities database and will not result in a revised report. The AOE will make the final determination as to whether requests constitute a major system error and/or otherwise impact a district’s ability to generate a capital plan.

Next steps

The AOE will work with SU/SDs to use assessment data to create a 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan.

The AOE will support access to and the use of assessment data. through the creation of a public-facing dashboard accessible from the AOE website, and tools for planning at the state and district levels.

Contact information

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