



Shop 9, 7 O'Hanlon Place  
Nicholls ACT 2913  
ABN | 21 292 628 376

Email | [admin@actbga.org.au](mailto:admin@actbga.org.au)  
Phone | (02) 6285 1808

**AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT  
CAPITAL GRANTS PROGRAM  
FOR NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

**&**

**ACT EDUCATION DIRECTORATE  
BETTER SCHOOLS FOR OUR KIDS:  
NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE  
UPGRADES PROGRAM**

**INFORMATION TO ASSIST 2024 APPLICANTS  
FOR 2025 FUNDING (v.2)**

To obtain an application form and secure Dropbox folder,  
or if you require assistance, please contact our office on  
02 6285 1808 or [admin@actbga.org.au](mailto:admin@actbga.org.au)

**APPLICATIONS CLOSE  
12pm on Wednesday, 27 March 2024**

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## Timeline for Better Schools for Our Kids 2025 (Round 7) and Capital Grants Program 2025 Assessments

22 November 2023	Applications open.
Dec 2023–Mar 2024	Prospective applicants are expected to discuss their applications with the ACTBGA office. ACTBGA staff are available to make on-site visits and discuss potential projects.
13 March 2024	<b>Final date</b> by which prospective applicants can request an application to complete a grant submission in the combined 2025 funding round, two weeks prior to the application lodgement deadline.
27 March 2024	Applications close <b>12pm on Wednesday, 27 March 2024</b> . This is the time by which a complete and accurate application must be lodged for the round.
3 May 2024	Finance Subcommittee meets to review the financial aspects of applications for project affordability, financial viability and contribution capacity, and identify any initial questions for clarification and further information.
14 May 2024	Priorities Assessment Committee meets to review applications and identify any questions to be raised at school site visits.
21-23 May 2024	Priorities Assessment Committee members and ACTBGA staff visit applicant schools to discuss project proposals.
25 June 2024	Priorities Assessment Committee meets to review school visits and identify any final needs for clarification and further information.
28 June 2024	Finance Subcommittee meets to review responses to requests for clarification and further information, complete preliminary financial analysis.
5 July 2024	<b>Final date</b> by which schools may provide responses for clarification and further information.
30 July 2024	Priorities Assessment Committee meets to review responses to requests for clarification and further information, and begin project prioritisation and funding recommendations.
2 August 2024	Finance Subcommittee meets to finalise analysis and potential funding options for Priorities Assessment Committee.
13 August 2024	Priorities Assessment Committee meets to finalise project prioritisation and funding recommendations to be put to ACTBGA Board.
27 August 2024	ACTBGA Board meets to review recommendations from Priorities Assessment Committee and agree on project prioritisation and funding recommendations to be put to the ACT and Australian governments.  Project proponents are notified if applications are not being recommended, and the 14-day appeal period starts 2 business days after notification.
27 September 2024	Final date by which grant recommendations must be submitted to the ACT and Australian governments.
Nov-Dec 2024	Estimated timing of announcement of grants by the ACT and Australian governments. Once announced, the ACTBGA office will initiate exchange of documentation with successful CGP grant recipients to formalise grant acceptance, and facilitate execution of funding agreements between ACT Government and successful BSK grant recipients.

## The ACT Block Grant Authority

### **INTRODUCTION**

The ACT Block Grant Authority Incorporated (ACTBGA) is an incorporated, non-profit association set up by non-government school organisations in the ACT. Its core purpose is to administer funding from the Australian and ACT Governments for non-government schools in the ACT.

The ACTBGA administers the **Capital Grants Program (CGP)** for ACT non-government schools on behalf of the Australian Government, in accordance with its responsibilities under the *Australian Education Act 2013* and *CGP Guidelines*. This program provides capital grants to assist non-government primary and secondary school communities to improve capital infrastructure where they otherwise may not have access to sufficient capital resources.

The ACTBGA has been commissioned by the ACT Government to administer on its behalf, the **Better Schools for Our Kids: Non-Government School Infrastructure Upgrades (BSK)** program. This program provides capital grants to non-government schools to establish and upgrade infrastructure for Preschool to Year 12 students in the Australian Capital Territory.

The ACTBGA will assess and distribute funding to schools, in accordance with agreed criteria set under the programs.

### **STRUCTURE OF THE ACT BLOCK GRANT AUTHORITY**

The ACT Block Grant Authority Inc. Constitution sets out the structure of the ACTBGA. The structure is as follows:

#### **Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors manages the business of the ACT Block Grant Authority and consists of four Directors.

1. Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn (CECG) appoints one Director.
2. The Association of Independent Schools of the ACT (AISACT) appoints one Director.
3. CECG & AISACT jointly appoint a parent representative.
4. CECG & AISACT jointly appoint the Chair of the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors submits the final recommendations on the allocation of CGP grant funds to the Australian Government Department of Education and the final decision on allocation of BSK grant funds to the ACT Education Directorate.

#### **Priorities Assessment Committee**

The Priorities Assessment Committee is chaired by the Chair of the Board of Directors and also includes four nominees from AISACT and four nominees from CECG. The Priorities Committee undertakes the assessment of applications for grant funding and makes recommendations to the Board on the allocation of grant funds.

#### **Finance Subcommittee**

The Finance Subcommittee consists of one CECG nominee, one AISACT nominee, and is chaired by an independent member nominated by the ACTBGA Board of Directors. The Finance Subcommittee reviews the financial/budgetary aspects of applications (viability and affordability).

The ACTBGA Executive Officer provides a secretariat function to the Board of Directors, Priorities Assessment Committee and Finance Subcommittee.

## Assessment of Applications

### ELIGIBILITY

Capital grant program funds are limited and not all applications will be successful. The ACTBGA is required by the ACT and Australian governments to assess the eligibility of all applications received against legislated and contractual guidelines.

To be eligible to apply for grants for ACT and Australian Government capital funding, a non-government school must:

- be a member, or prospective member, of a BGA;
- be registered as a non-government school (registered under the Education Act 2004 (ACT));
- be in receipt of Recurrent Funding under the *Australian Education Act 2013* (Recurrent Funding);
- demonstrate to the BGA a financial need for the grant (that is, show that it and its supporting community do not have the capacity to meet the total cost of the project);
- demonstrate to the BGA that the project will contribute to the objectives of the respective programs;
- demonstrate to the BGA that the school has an appropriate maintenance plan in place and is able to meet the ongoing running costs of its facilities (or, for new schools, a proposed maintenance plan);
- demonstrate to the ACTBGA that adequate insurance is held over its buildings and contents;
- demonstrate to the ACTBGA that a minimum \$10m public liability insurance is held;
- be proposing a project that is consistent with sound educational planning, within both the school and the environment within which it is operating, especially in relation to the cost, size and use of facilities to be funded;
- be proposing a project that will not adversely affect the condition of a place in relation to the Commonwealth, state, territory or local government heritage legislation;
- demonstrate to the BGA that it is financially viable; and
- own the land or have a lease for the land and/or buildings that has a period to run commensurate with the period in which the capital grant may be required to be repaid if the school no longer provides school education.

Where applying for funding under the BSK Program for a preschool project, the applicant must:

- be eligible to be licensed to operate as a non-government preschool in the ACT (where a preschool program is delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher, in accordance with a national early years learning framework (<https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/national-quality-framework>) for 15 hours a week and 40 weeks a year (or equivalent), to preschool aged children (4-5 year-olds)

Funds are not available for:

- facilities which have religious worship as a principal purpose;
- facilities in a co-educational school where those facilities will not, as far as practicable, be equally available to male and female students at the school;
- where retrospective approval is sought (generally after a contractual arrangement to commence the project has been entered into);
- projects proposed to be undertaken solely by parents and friends;
- facilities where the majority of the use will be by full fee paying overseas, or other unfunded students attending a 'for profit' section of the school;

Further, CGP funds are not available for:

- facilities that are principally for pre-primary education, i.e. for students below the prescribed state/territory school starting age or where the facility is not in a formal school setting (for example, a school's attached Early Learning Centre would not be eligible for CGP funding).

## **ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

Eligible projects will be placed in order of priority for funding on the basis of:

- the relative educational disadvantage of the student population of the school;
- projects that increase capacity;
- projects that provide value for money and maximise outcomes from available funding;
- the readiness of the school to commence construction;
- projects that improve the amenity of non-government schools in respect of compliance of facilities with government requirements or supporting advances in school pedagogy.

The above assessment criteria adopted by the ACTBGA will assist the ACTBGA Priorities Assessment Committee to ensure the prioritisation requirements indicated in both the CGP Guidelines and ACT Government Services Agreement are met, and allow fair assessment of all project applications in the annual combined program application round.

## **MASTER PLAN – SOUND EDUCATIONAL PLANNING**

Access to ACT and Australian Government grant support for capital projects is dependent upon schools being able to demonstrate sound educational planning underpinning the proposed projects. A comprehensive, well-structured, up-to-date master plan represents the consultative process which has been undertaken to guide the future development of quality educational facilities for a school site.

Therefore, applicants are to include a copy of a master plan that covers at least 3 years beyond the year of construction for the proposed project. The provision of relevant extracts from a strategic plan is also encouraged.

## **FINANCIAL NEED AND LOCAL CONTRIBUTION**

The ACTBGA Finance Subcommittee will assess a school's financial need for the grant. School communities are expected to contribute to the cost of approved projects to their maximum capacity, taking into account their responsibilities to provide recurrent resources of an appropriate standard. If the school and its supporting community are assessed as being able to meet the total cost of the project (including through borrowings), no grant will be recommended.

Should a grant be recommended under the CGP, then the school must contribute at least 30%.

## **MAXIMUM FUNDING**

The maximum limit for a grant/grants is \$1,000,000 per school per program. However, for projects that are for the establishment of new schools, for new campuses, or (either wholly or primarily) for new education levels, grant/s of up to \$1,500,000 per school per program will be considered.

## **SCHOOL VISITS**

Members of the ACTBGA Priorities Assessment Committee will visit applicant schools in order to help gain adequate knowledge of the circumstances and needs of the school.

## **COST ESTIMATES**

To ensure the accuracy of all cost estimates, schools must obtain detailed cost estimates from a registered Quantity Surveyor prior to completing the application forms. Schools must also ensure a registered Quantity Surveyor completes the *ACTBGA Quantity Surveyor Project Cost Template* prior to completing the application forms. This template is available in the [ACTBGA Combined Grant Assessment \(2025 Funding\)](#) folder.

To facilitate fair assessment of applications and equitable funding of projects, the ACTBGA draws on construction industry data on average actual costs for particular types of school functional areas for the ACT, as determined by a quantity surveying firm engaged specifically for this purpose. Information on average costs is available from the ACTBGA on request. This information is taken into account, along with other factors, to help assess whether proposed project costs are reasonable.

## AREA STANDARDS

To encourage protection from sunlight for children, the area of unenclosed, external covered areas (including travel areas) may be totally discounted for the purpose of calculating a school's total area.

Facilities funded under the Commonwealth Local Schools Working Together initiative, the Trade Training Centres in Schools program, Trades Skills Centres program and/or the Building the Education Revolution program are no longer assessed as discounted areas.

Any proposed discounted areas should be discussed with ACTBGA staff prior to an application being submitted.

When completing an application form, schools must list all school spaces by their functional use. A list of functional spaces for primary and secondary schools is set out on **page 10**.

Please note that:

- all spaces must be listed including corridors, covered ways, undercrofts, shelters, stairs and toilets;
- measurements should show the floor areas of each space inside the walls;
- the condition of the facility should be indicated; and
- demountable buildings which will continue to be used after the funded facilities are completed must be included in a school's area.

The percentage of the former Commonwealth area standards that a school's area will be after the project is completed must be calculated in the following way:

$$\frac{[\text{Total area of school after project completed less discounted area (m}^2\text{)]} \times 100}{\text{Standard area for the school (m}^2\text{)}}$$

The standard area (m<sup>2</sup>) for the school is primary enrolments in the appropriate year multiplied by 6.13m<sup>2</sup> plus secondary enrolments in the appropriate year multiplied by 9.75m<sup>2</sup>. The appropriate year for enrolments is the first full school year after completion (normally 2026 for the 2025 round) in all cases other than that of new, rapidly growing schools, in which case enrolments for the second full school year after completion may be used (normally 2027 for the 2025 round). Internal wall measurements should be used in calculating areas.

The proportion of a project that takes it to more than the former Commonwealth area standards may not be considered for funding unless there are special circumstances – specifically, facilities needed for people with disabilities or schools that are able to demonstrate they have taken over non-purpose-designed facilities, or unless otherwise determined by the ACTBGA Priorities Assessment Committee.

## Application Forms

The PDF and excel spreadsheet based application forms are designed to collect all the information needed, to fairly and adequately assess the eligibility and priority of applications, for funding assistance. Where possible, please put information in all spaces indicated on the application forms. In cases where the space provided is inadequate, supplementary information is to be uploaded with the application forms. It is important that applicants pay close attention to the need for preparing an application that is complete and accurate, particularly in relation to project description and estimated costs.

Applicants will be asked to nominate the ACT and/or Australian Government capital grant program, under which the school would like to have this project grant application considered for funding.

ACTBGA encourages schools to nominate their project be considered under 'Either' program, unless there is a specific reason (e.g. only the 'BSK Program' offers funding for preschool projects, or the applicant wishes to seek a higher level of funding under 'Both' programs).

To ensure prospective applicants allow enough time to complete their application, the ACTBGA **will not** accept any requests for application forms after close of business on **Wednesday, 13 March 2024**.

The application forms must be submitted by **12pm on Wednesday, 27 March 2024**. This is the final time by which a complete and accurate application may be lodged for the 2025 funding round. Applicants are encouraged to discuss prospective applications with the ACTBGA prior to application submission.

Prior to submitting an application, schools should read the *BSK Program Procedures* and *CGP Program Procedures* available in the [ACTBGA Combined Grant Assessment \(2025 Funding\)](#) folder, along with the *Capital Grants Program Guidelines* (see <https://www.education.gov.au/school-funding/resources/capital-grants-program-guidelines>).

In deciding whether to apply, three of the key factors that prospective applicants should take into account are the school's CTC score, the extent to which the school has the capacity to pay for the project without assistance from the capital grants programs, and floor area relative to standards.

**Where two or more distinct projects for a school are being proposed, separate prioritised applications must be submitted.** As program funds are limited, grants are not guaranteed and not all projects will be successful.

Applications for retrospective assistance cannot and will not be considered. An application is considered to be retrospective if a school or system enters a commitment (e.g. signs a contract) prior to receiving a formal grant offer and approval of means of procurement details from the ACTBGA.

For a **new school, a new campus or a school seeking a new level of education**, the applicant must provide the following documentation at the time of the grant application:

- A copy of the certificate of incorporation and a copy of the memorandum and articles of association (if not yet approved for Grants for Recurrent Expenditure funding) or document stating the statutory body that operates the school.
- A statement of registration or a letter from the ACT Non-Government Schools Office, Education Directorate regarding progress towards registration.
- A detailed budget setting out the financial position of the new school, including, in the case of a CECG school, the financial contribution of the CECG towards the establishment of the new school.
- Evidence that it has a lease in place with a residual of at least 20 years or good prospects of securing at least a 20-year lease. This could take the form of either a copy of the lease agreement showing that the land necessary for the facilities has been secured for the intended purpose, or a copy of a 'letter of comfort' demonstrating clearly that the applicant has good prospects of securing a suitable lease.

Projects must contribute to the ACT and Australian governments' objectives for the respective programs, and this will be assessed based on the information submitted in the application form.



The following documents must be included with your application:

- Copies of insurance certificates
- Copy of the existing lease
- A certificate confirming existing area figures
- Master Plan
- Site plans clearly showing where the proposed building works will be located on the site
- Floor plans clearly indicating the total size of the proposed construction and the size of each separate space, including teaching spaces, storage, staff spaces and circulation areas (in m<sup>2</sup>)
- Capital Works Costing from a registered Quantity Surveyor
- ACTBGA Quantity Surveyor Project Cost Template
- Copy of maintenance plan
- Photographs of the existing/proposed site and context
- Audited Financial Statements for the last two financial years of the school
- Audited Financial Statements for the previous financial year of all Associated Bodies (if applicable)
- Financial data for the past two years, current year budget and projections for the next four years (excluding any income or expenditure relating to the proposed project)
- Fee schedule for the school

### **Notes on Plans**

\* Scale drawings (1:100 minimum) should show:

- floor plans
- major cross-sections identifying structure and materials
- elevations indicating the design features of the project and its relationship to adjacent buildings, and should be accompanied by advice on any reasons for costs being above standard costs (e.g. special footing requirements or other site conditions)

\* Site plan (suggested scale 1:500) should show existing buildings, the location of the proposed building(s) and other works, and the general ground slope. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide a clear distinction in drawings between what exists and what is being proposed.

\* A master plan that reaches at least 3 years beyond the year of the capital grant funding round. The provision of relevant extracts from a strategic plan is also encouraged.

\* Plans/drawings should normally be A3 size.

## Functional Spaces - Definitions

<b>Facility Type</b>	<b><i>Explanation/Example</i></b>
General Learning Area	Includes: classrooms, breakout spaces and classroom storage
Multipurpose Hall	Includes: hall, performing arts centre, sports court, gymnasium and applicable storage
Library	Includes: resource centre
Science	Includes: science laboratories
Arts, Tech, IT, Other	Includes: language, performing arts, Tech IT
Administration	Includes: reception, offices, sick bay, meeting and staff rooms
Vocational	Teaching to Certificate level
COLA	Permanent covered outdoor learning areas
Covered Walkways	Includes unenclosed covered walkways and unenclosed verandas
Special Needs	Disability focus, for example: lift, ramp
Amenities	Includes staff and student toilets, canteens and kitchen facilities
Storage	Includes maintenance and cleaning storage
Enclosed Travel	Includes corridors and enclosed pedestrian walkways
Temporary Buildings	Includes: demountable buildings that are intended to be removed or will only be used for staging of building works in the short term
Grounds	Includes: shade, car park, bus bay, playground
Security	Includes: fencing, lighting
Asbestos Removal	Any additional costs/structural issues due to the presence asbestos