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

MASTER PLAN GRANTS PROGRAM

**INFORMATION TO ASSIST APPLICANTS
FOR THE 2025 ROUND v1.0**

To obtain an application form and secure login access to the school's document storage folder on the ACTBGA website, or if you require any assistance, please contact our office on 02 6285 1808 or admin@actbga.org.au

**APPLICATIONS CLOSE
12:00pm on Wednesday, 26 February 2025**

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Timeline for Master Plan Grants Program 2025

27 November 2024	Applications open and prospective applicants are invited to request an application for completion.
Dec 2024-Feb 2025	Prospective applicants may discuss their applications with the ACTBGA office. ACTBGA staff are available to make on-site visits and discuss potential applications, if required.
12 February 2025	Final date by which prospective applicants can request an application to complete, two weeks prior to the application submission deadline.
26 February 2025	Applications close 12:00pm on Wednesday, 26 February 2025 . This is the time by which a complete and accurate application may be lodged. ACTBGA will raise any initial questions for clarification within 7 days.
14 March 2025	Due date by which schools may provide initial application clarification and further information.
2 April 2025	Assessment Committee meets to review applications and identify any questions to be raised with schools. ACTBGA will raise any supplementary questions for clarification within 2 days.
11 April 2025	Final date by which schools may provide supplementary information.
30 April 2025	Assessment Committee meets to review supplementary responses and further information, and to finalise funding recommendations to be put to ACTBGA Board.
27 May 2025	ACTBGA Board meets to review recommendations from Assessment Committee and consider funding recommendations to be put to the Australian Government.
28 May 2025	Grant recommendations will be submitted to the Australian Government. Project proponents are notified if applications are not being recommended, and the 14-day appeal period starts 2 business days after notification.
June–July 2025	Estimated timing of announcement of grants by the Australian Government. Once announced, the ACTBGA office initiates exchange of documentation with successful grant recipients to formalise grant acceptance.

Please note that the dates above are subject to change. Any changes to the timeline will be noted in blue text.

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.

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

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.

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

The Board of Directors submits the final recommendations on the allocation of grant funds to the Australian Government Department of Education.

MGP Assessment Committee

The Master Plan Grants Program (MGP) Assessment Committee is chaired by the Chair of the ACTBGA Board of Directors, and includes one nominee from each AISACT and CECG with relevant experience. The MGP Assessment Committee undertakes the assessment of applications for grant funding and makes recommendations to the ACTBGA Board on the allocation of grant funds.

The ACTBGA Executive Officer provides a secretariat function to the ACTBGA Board and the MGP Assessment Committee.

The Master Plan Grants Program

THE PROGRAM

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 *CGP Guidelines* outline the scope, objectives and priorities of the program. It should particularly be noted that Australian Government capital grants are intended only to supplement funds provided by the owners of the schools. State and territory governments and non-government authorities have the primary responsibility for providing, maintaining and upgrading school facilities.

To encourage and support the sound educational planning of school sites, the MGP process has been established to provide schools with access to funding through CGP for the creation of a new, detailed master plan, or review of an existing master plan.

The availability of funding for school-based master planning purposes extends from Sections 8, 9, 37 d) and g), and 53 a) of the *CGP Guidelines*.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the CGP are to:

- Provide and improve school capital infrastructure, particularly for the most educationally disadvantaged students
- Ensure attention to refurbishment and upgrading of capital infrastructure for existing students, while making provision for needs arising from new demographic and enrolment trends
- Pursue the Australian Government's other priorities and objectives for schooling:
 - Providing better learning environments
 - Responding to new demographic or enrolment trends
 - Supporting quality teaching
 - Supporting parental and community engagement
 - Supporting safety for the school community
 - Supporting the curriculum
 - Supporting educational opportunities for Indigenous students
 - Supporting educational opportunities for students with a disability
 - Addressing another area of particular educational disadvantage

Schools applying for capital grant funding under CGP are required to have an acceptable master plan. The master plan represents the sound educational planning which is required to ensure that requests for grants are focussed on development of educational facilities at the right time, in the right place for a school.

The extension of CGP funding via a dedicated master plan grant program will support member schools to demonstrate a high standard of planning in the submission of future capital grant applications, and assist schools to meet the objectives of the CGP.

ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING

To be eligible to apply for grants for Australian Government capital funding under the MGP, a non-government school or its Approved Authority must:

- be a member, or prospective member, of a BGA;
- be in receipt of recurrent funding under the *Australian Education Act 2013* (Recurrent Funding) unless they are a new school;
- 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 BGA that adequate insurance is held over its existing school buildings.

Projects where a contract has already been entered into or where work has commenced for the proposed master plan work that is the subject of the grant application, prior to Ministerial approval being announced, will not be eligible for funding.

New Schools

To be considered for CGP and MGP funding, proposed new non-government schools must be able to demonstrate some certainty of successful establishment, operation and governance in relation to Commonwealth, State or Territory and local government requirements. ACTBGA acknowledges the importance of master planning for newly established and developing schools and encourages consultation with our office which will enable Approved Authorities of new schools to prepare an eligible master plan grant application.

ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS

The ACTBGA is required by the Australian Government to assess the eligibility of all applications received against legislated guidelines.

Eligible projects will then be considered for funding, based on the following:

- The relative educational disadvantage of the student population of the school, with a school's CTC score being the primary indicator of financial need, noting additional information will be required to demonstrate financial need for schools with a CTC score of 112 and above (see **Maximum Funding**);
- The school has a current, detailed strategic plan, to support the master planning process (see **Master Plans - Sound Educational Planning: The Strategic Plan**);
- Minimum of 2 quotes have been supplied from registered architects, incorporating the scope requirements for an eligible master plan (see **Required Scope of Master Plan Works**).

Maximum Funding

The maximum limit for a grant is specified below:

Need Indicator	Level of Funding (excl. GST)
CTC 111 and below	Master planning costs, up to \$50,000
CTC 112 and over	Master planning costs, up to \$50,000 upon demonstration of financial need

Required Scope of Master Plan Works

The minimum scope that should be considered by an architect when quoting for master plan works should include the actions following.

- > Initial briefing with the school / stakeholders
- > Development of a return brief (architect reflects the brief back to the school to confirm their needs and considerations are included in the scope)
- > Seeking engagement and input from broader school / parish / community
- > Collated community responses to be included in the master plan brief
- > Alignment of brief with school / system strategic plan and business plan
- > Planning Authority review to confirm any planning or heritage / statutory constraints including;
 - Bushfire and flood prone land, hazardous materials, flora and fauna, etc.
- > Consideration of demographic data that underpins the school's 5-10 year enrolment projections
- > Detailed review of current facilities and space audit, and comparison with educational standards to ascertain equity of areas
- > Review of accessibility needs and facilities related issues
- > Consideration of any traffic and parking requirements
- > Planning and approvals pathways for any capital development proposed
- > Development of conceptual planning options
- > Iterative review of development concepts until a preferred design is agreed.

The school's business plan for expenditure on capital works needs to be considered to ensure that any facilities plans have a sound financial basis.

A master plan should be costed by a Quantity Surveyor (QS) as part of the planning process, to allow it to be synchronised with a school's business plan (see **Master Plans - Sound Educational Planning: The Business Plan**).

APPROVED PROJECTS

Projects must not commence until approval has been received by the Australian Government.

The normal CGP requirements of grant acceptance agreements, proof of expenditure and an accountant's certificate apply to MGP grants.

Grant recipients are required to have their master plan completed by 31 December in the year of funding approval.

Receiving Master Plan Grant Payments

Grant recipients will make a claim for the approved grant funds through the submission of a *Master Plan Grant Claim Form*, once the project can be declared 100% complete, in terms of value (i.e., all invoices relating to the work have been paid).

The school's claim for payment of the approved grant will be made when:

- The master planning process is 100% complete, as demonstrated by submission of evidence of total cost, such as invoices and/or ledger entries, with the claim form.
- The final master plan is provided to ACTBGA, with the claim documentation.

ACTBGA is unable to pay the approved grant amount until the above documentation is provided.

Important note: where the amount spent on the completion of the master plan is less than the approved total cost of the project, the BGA will be obliged to withhold from the grant payment the difference between the total projected project cost and the expended amount (excl. GST).

Eligible Costs

Costs which may be included as part of the grant claim include those related to:

- The lead consultant, such as an architect;
- secondary consultants required to contribute to the planning process, such as quantity surveyors, engineers (acoustic, electrical, civil, traffic, hydraulic), landscape architects and fire professionals.

Master plan grants are not intended to contribute to any additional strategic planning related costs, required to complete the master planning process.

Accountability

A master plan grant project is not acquitted until the grant recipient has submitted an *Accountant Certificate*, which will be due within three (3) months of payment of the grant.

Master Plans - Sound Educational Planning

Access to Australian and State Government grant support for capital projects is dependent upon schools being able to demonstrate sound educational planning underpinning 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.

CONSIDERATIONS

A school site Master Plan is one of the major, school-based planning documents. It extends from an overarching Strategic Plan which is, in turn connected to a long-term business plan. Together, these promote a rational, cohesive approach to decisions influencing the direction and development of a school as a learning environment.

A Master Plan provides a roadmap for a school's future capital projects for a defined period, at a point in time. It operationalises the collective vision for the physical development of a school; its buildings and other site-based infrastructure, in support of student learning outcomes.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

School leaders will develop a Strategic Plan in consultation with other stakeholders which will likely include staff, parents, students and the wider community.

A Strategic Plan will give consideration to varying combinations of the following elements:

- Mission and vision – the core values, underpinning educational philosophy, religious beliefs and goals for the school
- Desired education outcomes
- Statutory requirements and changes (e.g., Australian Curriculum)
- Teaching and learning pedagogy
- Year levels to be catered for
- Subdivisional grouping (e.g., early learning, middle school)
- Class sizes
- Integration / separation of subject areas (e.g., specialist faculties to be together or dispersed)
- Desired enrolment growth and maximum enrolment
- Future plans for expansion in year levels, streams etc
- Any specialised curriculum offerings or programs (e.g., Montessori, Reggio Emilia or International Baccalaureate)
- Any specialisation in particular curricular programs (e.g., VET offerings)
- Relationships and programs undertaken with the local community (e.g., local business, community groups, church)
- Context of the community within which the school exists
- Implications of any anticipated changes to any of the above over time.

Much of this information may already be covered in existing documents, but it is important to consider the relationship between each element of the Strategic Plan and the future site development required to meet the educational facilities needs of the school community.

THE BUSINESS PLAN

The school's Business Plan for expenditure on capital works also needs to be considered to ensure that any facilities plans have a sound financial basis. A Master Plan should be costed by a Quantity Surveyor (QS) as part of the planning process, to allow it to be synchronised with a school's Business Plan. Costing the stages or key components will enhance the annual capital expenditure budget and make the financial forecasts more meaningful.

THE MASTER PLAN

A Master Plan should be undertaken by planning, architectural and/or building design professionals in conjunction with school leaders and others, as required. Meaningful Master Plans will evolve from a close collaboration between educators and facilities designers who appreciate each other's area of expertise. It is necessary to work closely with the designers engaged, to foster an in-depth understanding of the educational facilities requirements of the Strategic Plan.

The simplicity or complexity of a Master Plan will be determined by:

- the size of the school
- its stage of development, and
- the clarity of the Strategic Plan for the future.

Strategic Plan/Master Plan Relationship

Often, schools use the finalised Master Plan as a marketing tool as it provides a tangible record of the vision held by the school's governing body for quality educational delivery well into the future. A good Master Plan will flow from a clear understanding of the intentions of the Strategic Plan and an analysis of the site features, including any constraints.

The Master Plan should be regularly reviewed and updated as it is a living document. As such, it should not include too much detailed information, as this may serve to discourage the desire to make improvements in response to the range of factors which impact on schools. The Master Plan must be maintained as current and relevant to be useful.

Developing a Master Plan will have different considerations for a new (greenfield) site, compared with one that contains existing buildings. Not all of the elements of the site and its buildings listed below will need a detailed assessment for every school, however, during the master planning process consideration should be given to the need for inclusion of elements such as:

Site Planning

A. Environmental

- Existing site features – topography, including site slope, soils type, water courses, overland and stormwater flows, as well as potential for flooding and bushfire
- Significant trees and other plantings, both on the site and on adjoining sites, for retention or with restrictions for use, such as wetlands or koala habitat
- Summer and winter winds (take advantage of desirable and protect from undesirable)
- Landscaping, gardens and plantings
- Heritage impacts.

B. Government and Service Provider Requirements

- Local government / State government planning requirements
- Any existing site easements, unless benefitting the site
- Water, sewer, stormwater, electricity, green energy options, gas and communications services (internal and external) locations and capacities to meet future development needs on the site
- IT services – copper cabling, optical fibre cabling, wireless coverage.

C. Buildings and other site infrastructure

- Existing buildings and their suitability for inclusion in current and future development
- Other existing site infrastructure
- Disability access requirements around the site and to buildings
- Intended building locations, including room for expansion with permanent and/or relocatable / temporary buildings
- Consideration of the sites for relocatable / temporary buildings and their ease of being installed and removed
- Acoustic treatments
- Locations of formal and informal play areas (grassed and paved), including desirable orientations (north-south preferred)
- Locations of and relationships between general learning, specialist learning, outdoor learning areas, administration and recreation buildings
- Playgrounds, seating / eating areas
- Desirable views from buildings
- Site security and any fencing (need or no need), including line of sight for supervision and safety of students.

D. Site Access

- Public entrance locations and the image to be created for the school
- Desired access points for vehicles and paths pedestrians and bicycles
- Service and emergency vehicle access
- Car parking access and pick up/set down provisions
- Separation of pedestrian and vehicle access routes
- Shelter locations and requirements.

E. Community and Neighbours

- Neighbouring properties, their current and potential developments and any impact that may have on the school
- School noise abatement for neighbouring properties
- Potential for colocation of education facilities with community useable facilities, i.e., halls, sporting fields, open spaces.

Building Planning

A master plan should be used as the basis to determine the scope of work for any proposed building project and to brief the architect / building designer accordingly. Projects proposed for government capital assistance through ACTBGA must be consistent with sound educational facilities planning.

- Compliance with building and construction codes
- Single and multi-storey options and implications
- Building orientations and proportions for desirable natural passive environmental design provisions
- Locations of building entrances
- Relationships between buildings
- Relationships between buildings and outdoor areas
- Implications of staging new building and redevelopment projects, including builder's access for future building works
- Assessment of existing buildings for suitability for redevelopment or demolition
- Security and safety issues
- Understanding the difference between building design, trends and fads.

Additional items that ACTBGA suggests being considered in building planning to support sound planning and assist with future-proofing design, are as follows:

- Environmental sustainability considerations incorporated into the building design, and subsequent construction process;
- Heating, cooling and ventilation (HVAC), and indoor air quality review and consideration.

Acknowledgement and Thanks

Materials and advice of the following parties have been accessed whilst preparing documentation for the ACTBGA Master Plan Grants Program:

- SA Independent Schools Block Grant Authority and architect Andrew Tidswell
- QLD Independent Schools Block Grant Authority
- Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, Planning and Facilities Team