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**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 2025 APPLICANTS
FOR 2026 FUNDING (v.1)**

To obtain login details for an online application form and secure document upload folder, or if you require assistance, please contact our office on 02 6285 1808 or admin@actbga.org.au

**APPLICATIONS CLOSE
12:00pm on Friday, 28 March 2025**

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Timeline for Assessment of Better Schools for Our Kids 2026 and Capital Grants Program 2026

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 6 December 2024 | Applications open. |
| December 2024 –March 2025 | 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. |
| 14 March 2025 | Final date by which prospective applicants can request online access to complete a grant submission in the combined 2026 funding round, two weeks prior to the application lodgement deadline. |
| 28 March 2025 | Applications close 12pm on Friday, 28 March 2025 . This is the time by which a complete and accurate application must be lodged for the round. |
| 30 May 2025 | 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. |
| 3 June 2025 | Priorities Assessment Committee meets to review applications and identify any questions to be raised at school site visits. |
| 10-12 June 2025 | Priorities Assessment Committee members and ACTBGA staff visit applicant schools to discuss project proposals. |
| 1 July 2025 | Priorities Assessment Committee meets to review school visits and identify any final needs for clarification and further information. |
| 4 July 2025 | Finance Subcommittee meets to review responses to requests for clarification and further information, complete preliminary financial analysis. |
| 18 July 2025 | Final date by which schools may provide responses for clarification and further information. |
| 29 July 2025 | Priorities Assessment Committee meets to review responses to requests for clarification and further information, and begin project prioritisation and funding recommendations. |
| 1 August 2025 | Finance Subcommittee meets to finalise analysis and potential funding options for Priorities Assessment Committee. |
| 12 August 2025 | Priorities Assessment Committee meets to finalise project prioritisation and funding recommendations to be put to ACTBGA Board. |
| 26 August 2025 | 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. |
| 30 September 2025 | Final date by which grant recommendations must be submitted to the ACT and Australian governments. |
| November- December 2025 | Estimated timing of announcement of grants by the ACT and Australian governments. Once announced, the ACTBGA office will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initiate exchange of documentation with successful CGP grant recipients to formalise grant acceptance.• 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 also 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 in 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 (3-5 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).

SCHOOL VISITS

Members of the ACTBGA Priorities Assessment Committee will be invited to visit all applicant schools in order to understand the circumstances and needs of each school. These site visits provide a formal opportunity for a school and its representatives to present its project to the committee in person, and answer any questions that may arise regarding the application submission.

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.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Schools should ensure the proposal put forward is the minimum viable project which considers value for money principles; i.e. be proposing a project that meets the educational needs of the school in a way that is cost effective over the life of the facilities, taking appropriate account of the value of good quality materials and building and design practices that:

- (i) maximise the life of the structure
- (ii) maximise the potential for environmental performance
- (iii) avoid design features that make no significant educational contribution, and which may increase construction, maintenance or operating costs.

Projects must meet the objectives of the respective programs and student enrolment projections provided in the application must be sound for the period closely following the completion of the project.

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.

FINANCIAL NEED AND LOCAL CONTRIBUTION

The ACTBGA Finance Subcommittee will evaluate a school's financial viability and 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 can be recommended.

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

MAXIMUM FUNDING

BSK

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

CGP

The maximum grant a school is able to apply for under the CGP program is \$1,500,000 per school. However, for projects that are for the establishment of new schools, for new campuses, or (either wholly or primarily) for new education levels, a grant of up to \$2,000,000 per school will be considered.

New Schools

Under the CGP, a new school in its establishment phase may submit an application for funding that includes up to two additional project stages, noting that funds under this program are limited and multi-stage projects are subject to the same competitive application assessment process.

In the event that a multi-stage project is approved for funding, new schools should be aware of grant conditions for all successful projects under this program, whereby if the final project cost of a later stage is less than the original approved project cost at the time of application, the ACTBGA is required to reduce grant accordingly.

Program specific grant allocations are ultimately at the discretion of the ACTBGA Board. Once the board has considered project priority and grant recommendations, successful projects may be allocated an amount under a particular program that is higher than the maximum grant specified, or differs from the amount requested by a school under a particular program in its application, in order to support program administration and equitable distribution of grant funding to prioritised projects.

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 both [CGP](#) and [BSK](#) Forms & Procedures sections of the ACTBGA website.

To facilitate fair assessment of applications and funding of projects, the ACTBGA draws on construction industry data of 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 considered, along with other factors, to help assess whether proposed project costs are reasonable.

AREA STANDARDS

The proportion of a project that takes it to more than the former Commonwealth area standards for primary and secondary students, or beyond the minimum operational requirements for indoor preschool spaces for students under the *National Quality Framework*, 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.

PRESCHOOL SPACES

Schools submitting a project for early learning or preschool facilities should include the area measurements for both total facilities and the 'unencumbered' indoor space per the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) definition.

ACECQA specifies operational requirements of indoor spaces set out in the *National Quality Framework* is 3.25m² of unencumbered indoor space for each child. Unencumbered space does not include areas such as passageways, bathrooms, space set aside for the use or storage of cots, staff or administrative rooms, storage areas and any space not suitable for children. The area of a kitchen is not counted as unencumbered space unless it is primarily used as part of an educational program.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SPACES

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.

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

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 (m²) for a school is calculated from primary enrolments in the appropriate year multiplied by 6.13m², plus secondary enrolments in the appropriate year multiplied by 9.75m². The appropriate year for enrolments is the first full school year after completion (normally 2027 for the 2026 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 2028 for the 2026 round).

Application Forms

The online application form and excel spreadsheet application data tables 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 may wish to seek a higher level of funding by applying 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 **Friday, 14 March 2025**.

The application forms must be submitted by **12:00pm on Friday, 28 March 2025**. This is the final time by which a complete and accurate application may be lodged for the 2026 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 *CGP Program Procedures* and/or *BSK Program Procedures* available in both [CGP](#) and [BSK](#) sections of the ACTBGA website, along with the *Capital Grants Program Guidelines* available [here](#) on the Department of Education website.

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. New schools may submit a single application including up to two additional building stages, with any additional stages to be considered under the CGP.

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 receiving approval 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 team of the ACT 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 10-20 years or good prospects of securing at least a 10-20 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 m2)
- **Capital works cost estimate** from a registered quantity surveyor
- Completed **ACTBGA Quantity Surveyor Project Cost Template**
- Copy of **maintenance plan**
- **Photographs** of the existing/proposed site and context
- **Fee schedule** for the school
- **Independent schools: audited financial statements** for the last two financial years of the school
- **All schools: audited financial statements** for the previous financial year of all associated bodies (if applicable)
- All **ACTBGA Application Data Tables** tabs completed, noting the following requirements:
 - **All schools: Section H financial data** for the past two years based on *Department of Education Financial Questionnaire*, current year budget and projections for the next four years (excluding any income or expenditure relating to the proposed project).
 - **Catholic schools: Section H financial data**—school level actuals 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) including assumptions used; data certified by an independent registered accountant.

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

| Facility Type | <i>Explanation/Example</i> |
|-----------------------|--|
| 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 |
| Early Learning Centre | Complete building, including learning areas, wet areas, kitchens, admin areas, etc. |
| Grounds | Includes: shade, car park, bus bay, playground |
| Security | Includes: fencing, lighting |
| Asbestos Removal | Any additional costs/structural issues due to the presence asbestos |