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ACT EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

FUNDING FOR

**BETTER SCHOOLS FOR OUR KIDS:
NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOL
INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM**

PROGRAM PROCEDURES

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Better Schools for Our Kids: Non-Government School Infrastructure Upgrades Program

INTRODUCTION

The ACT Government's Better Schools for Our Kids: Non-Government School Infrastructure Upgrades (BSK) program provides funding to assist non-government preschool, primary and secondary school communities to improve capital infrastructure, where they otherwise may not have access to sufficient capital resources. Schools have the primary responsibility for providing, maintaining and upgrading school facilities.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the BSK program is to improve the overall non-government schools' infrastructure for Preschool to Year 12 students in the Australian Capital Territory.

ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING

To be eligible to apply for funding, a non-government school must:

- be a participant, or prospective participant, in the ACTBGA;
- be registered as a non-government school (registered under the *Education Act 2004 (ACT)*);
- demonstrate to the ACTBGA that the school is financially viable;
- demonstrate to the ACTBGA that the school has a need for financial assistance to contribute towards or fund the project;
- demonstrate to the ACTBGA that the project will contribute to the objectives of the program;
- demonstrate to the ACTBGA that the school has an appropriate maintenance plan in place;
- 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;
- provide all information requested by the ACTBGA to fairly and adequately assess the eligibility and priority of grant applications; and
- be proposing a project that will not adversely affect the condition of a place in the Register of the National Estate in terms of the provisions of the *Australian Heritage Council Act 2003*.

Funds are not available for facilities:

- which have religious worship as a principal purpose;
- where a co-educational non-government school's facility will not, as far as practicable, be equally available to male and female students; or
- where retrospective approval is sought.

Preschools:

When applying for funding under the BSK Program for a preschool project, the applicant must be registered as a non-government school in the ACT. The applicant must also be aware of the laws and regulations, quality standards and approved frameworks applicable to becoming licensed and operating as a non-government preschool in the ACT (<https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/national-quality-framework>).

Preschool program means a program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher, in accordance with a national early years learning framework linked above, for 15 hours a week and 40 weeks a year (or equivalent), to preschool aged children (3–5-year-olds).

SCHOOL VISITS

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

ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS

BSK program funds are limited and not all applications will be successful. The ACTBGA is required by the ACT Education Directorate to assess the eligibility of all applications received against the program agreement.

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 and 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 the 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 review 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.

MAXIMUM FUNDING

Grant applications are not guaranteed and a maximum grant of \$1,000,000 is available to any one school. However, for projects that are for the establishment of new schools, new campuses, or new education levels, a maximum grant of up to \$1,500,000 will be considered in any grant round.

A school may only submit one BSK application for a grant in any round.

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 [BSK Forms & Procedures](#) section of the ACTBGA website.

To facilitate fair assessment of applications and equitable 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.

Where accurate cost estimates are not provided, the school may be excluded from further consideration in that round of grants.

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** of the **Information to Assist Applicants** document.

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 2028 for the 2027 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 2029 for the 2027 round).

Approved Projects

AWARDING OF GRANTS

Successful grant recipients will be notified in writing by the ACTBGA and will be provided with a Deed of Grant for signing, which is an agreement between the school and the ACT Education Directorate. The ACTBGA may part fund a grant where it is considered beneficial to the overall objectives of the program.

APPEALS

Where applications are not recommended for approval, the ACTBGA will afford schools the opportunity to have their applications reviewed by a process independent of the original assessment process. The *ACTBGA Appeals Policy and Procedures* are available [here](#).

TENDER APPROVAL

Schools must ensure that the procurement method chosen and tender process undertaken has been in accordance with ACTBGA procurement and tender procedures, available [here](#).

From 2024, tender documentation for BSK projects is required to be submitted to the ACTBGA for review and final project approval, prior to signing a contract with the school's preferred tenderer.

PAYMENT OF GRANTS

No grant payments will be made until a school has entered into a Deed of Grant agreement with the ACT Education Directorate that binds the school to the conditions upon which the grant was approved.

BSK grants will be paid on a milestone basis in accordance with the *ACTBGA Procedure for Claiming and Payment of Grant Funds to Schools*, available [here](#).

PROJECT VARIATIONS

When a grant has been approved in accordance with the school's submitted application forms, a school must seek the ACTBGA's approval prior to any changes to the project in respect of:

- Milestone Dates (Commencement, Midpoint, Completion, Final Acquittal)
- Total Project Cost
- Scope of Works

Approval must be sought through the submission of an *ACTBGA Variation Request Form* available [here](#).

REPORTING

Schools will be required to submit quarterly reports in February, May, August and November to the ACTBGA providing an update of the project's status and summary of documentation due.

Designated Use reports will also at times be requested by the ACTBGA.

The ACTBGA will email templates required for completion of all reports.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The ACT Government requires that recipients of grant funding be accountable both financially and educationally. For financial accountability, schools must, within 3 months after a project has been completed, submit to the ACTBGA documents prepared by architects and an independent accountant confirming the final expenditure of the project, that the project was completed as approved and that the grant monies were spent only on the approved project.

TIMING OF FUNDING

Intended applicants should be mindful that funds for an approved project may be paid over a two to three-year period. This may necessitate the raising of bridging finance until the final receipt of all grant funds. Consequently, the cost of bridging finance must be considered when estimating total project cost.

RECOGNITION OF ACT GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Schools must acknowledge ACT Government funding in all announcements and other publicity of all projects to which the ACT Government is contributing funds and install building plaques on all completed projects to acknowledge ACT Government funding.

Schools are not required to hold an official project opening ceremony under the BSK program. In the event that the school does wish to hold an official opening, the ACT Government Minister for Education may be invited to attend by contacting edudlo@act.gov.au.

Jointly Funded Projects

For projects jointly funded by the ACT and Australian governments, schools should be aware of the CGP requirements to hold an official opening ceremony, and contact the school openings inbox at SchoolOpenings@education.gov.au at least **two months** in advance of the planned opening with a **minimum of three** possible date options that do not coincide with Parliamentary sitting days.

It is strongly recommended an invitation be extended to the ACT Government Minister for Education for jointly funded projects.

REPAYMENT PERIODS AND RECOVERABLE AMOUNTS

Under the Deed of Grant agreement with the school, a calculated portion of the grant will become repayable where, at any time during the Designated Use Period, the facilities cease to be used principally for preschool, primary or secondary education purposes, or the facilities are sold or otherwise disposed of.

The Designated Use Period commences on the Date for Commencement of the Completed Project and ends on the day which is 10 years from the Date for Commencement of the Completed Project.

Where the Preschool/School has failed to comply with its Designated Use obligations, the formula to calculate the recoverable portion of the grant is :

$$\text{Recoverable amount} = G - [G/10 \times Y]$$

where G is the total amount of the Grant paid to the Preschool/School (excluding any such amounts that have already been recovered by BGA or the Territory); and

Y is the number of completed years since the commencement of the Designated Use Period, as at the time the Preschool/School first failed to comply with its obligations.