VICTORIAN SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY

BUILDING BLOCKS



BUILDING BLOCKS GRANTS
PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES 2021-22

AUGUST 2021

3-YEAR-OLD KINDER Best Start Best Life

VICTORIA State Government

Minister's Foreword

The Victorian Government is reforming early learning, making it bigger, better and fairer with record investment.

Children start learning well before reaching school, so it makes sense that's where we need to lay the foundation for building our Education State.

In an Australian first, we are rolling out funded kindergarten for three-year-olds as a vital part of that foundation.

We've delivering this reform because we know two years are better than one when it comes to early learning – children who start kinder at the age of three gain academic and social benefits that last into their school years and beyond.

But we also know many children are denied this benefit – their families can't afford to pay for it, or their local kindergarten doesn't have the space and resources to offer it.

We have committed to investing almost $5 billion over this decade to change that, deliver this important reform, and ensure we also have the extra places we need for four-year-olds as our population grows. That includes a $1.68 billion co-investment with the early years sector to build and expand kindergartens across Victoria. This is the largest investment in early-years infrastructure in Victoria's history.

In 2020, we launched our Building Blocks program to streamline funding and make it easier for local councils and other early learning providers to access the grants they need to support this massive expansion and this historic reform.

Today, we are improving Building Blocks by adding a new option of Planning Grants to make it easier and more efficient to prepare for capital works at your kindergarten.

Eligible organisations can apply for a one-off grant of up to $150,000 for design, developing and costing the scope of project(s), and other pre-construction planning that all infrastructure projects need. It can be used to plan an individual project or a pipeline of works that expand your kindergarten or maintain service continuity of existing capacity. You can complete this planning before applying for Building Blocks construction grants, ensuring your application is more robust and your project is 'shovel ready'. If your project requires additional planning funding, you can bolster your planning grant with your own contribution, but this is not a requirement.

I hope this latest initiative provides even more incentive to take advantage of Building Blocks funding. I encourage all eligible organisations to investigate the possibilities of these grants and embrace the life-changing potential of the reforms they bring.

I look forward to seeing the exciting proposals and new partnerships they generate.



The Hon Ingrid Stitt MP

MINISTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD



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BUILDING BLOCKS OBJECTIVES

From 2020, Building Blocks replaced the Children's Facilities Capital Program and the Inclusive Kindergartens Facilities Program, strengthening our commitment to continue to fund and support high-quality early years programs for Victorian children and their families.

Building Blocks offers grants to help build, expand and improve kindergarten buildings and facilities. It is critical to the success of the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten roll-out across the state. It also supports the sector to meet ongoing growth in demand for Four-Year-old Kindergarten. We are further improving Building Blocks in 2021 by adding a new option of Planning Grants. These can be used to cover the cost of design and all the pre-construction planning involved in building projects. It allows you to complete this planning before applying for construction funding under one of the Building Blocks grants streams.

Building Blocks features:

- significant increases to maximum State Government grant contributions, on top of those offered in 2019 and 2020
- greater flexibility for the sector to apply for the grants at any point in the year, with multiple assessments and announcements planned each year
- new building options, including modular kindergartens with construction and delivery fully funded by the Victorian Government. We can deliver these high-quality buildings quickly with lower costs, project management requirements and disruptions to kindergarten programs.

The Building Blocks program consists of:

- building kindergartens at, or next to, schools
- modular kindergarten buildings
- a Capacity Building grants stream
- an Improvement grants stream
- an Inclusion grants stream.

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten Infrastructure Funding Streams





PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM

Ahead of any infrastructure project commencing, time, resources and planning are needed to adequately scope, design and cost a project. This is why we have designed the **Building Blocks Planning Grant** program to offer optional additional support to plan and design projects, if needed (noting that undertaking a Planning Grant is not a pre-requisite to apply for other Building Blocks grants). This new funding initiative will further help the early learning sector plan the infrastructure needed for the roll out of Three-Year-old Kindergarten.

The Planning Grant program means you can:

- ✓ plan a project, or pipeline of projects, needed to help provide the kindergarten places needed to meet demand for Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten
- ✓ better prepare applications for Building Blocks Grants that will help deliver your projects.

More information on the Building Blocks Grants is available on the VSBA website.

Purpose of grant

The Planning Grant program funds eligible organisations to complete pre-construction planning for infrastructure projects needed to achieve the capacity for the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten reform, by funding resources and upfront costs incurred as part of this work.

For the purposes of this grant program, a '**planning process'** is the scope development, design and costing required of a project before it's tendered for construction.

Project requirements

Planning grants must:

- ✓ be used, and completed, within 12 months. This means that successful planning grant applicants have 12 months to complete their infrastructure planning processes, including identifying projects to apply for a Building Blocks construction grant.
- ✓ be used to plan for a project located in Victoria that is, or will be, licensed to provide a funded Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program, and must offer, or intend to offer, both programs. This can be sessional or integrated with long day care
- ✓ demonstrate how the proposed project(s) will create additional kindergarten capacity, or maintain service continuity of existing capacity, in line with the demand of Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten at a community and local government level. Projects should align to demand, as identified in the relevant Kindergarten Infrastructure Services Plan (KISP) (refer below)
- ✓ result in an application to the Building Blocks Grants program to deliver an identified project, within 12 months of completing the planning process.

Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plans

KISPs are a consistent, statewide planning tool designed to provide a better understanding of the demand for Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten at a community and local government level. They identify where additional infrastructure is required to meet increased demand for kindergarten places generated as a result of the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten reform and general population growth.

If there is a published KISP for the LGA where a project is located, applicants for the Planning Grant program should align their planning works to meeting demand as outlined in the relevant KISP. Published KISPs can be found here.



Funding available

A total of up to $6 million in grants is available in 2021-22. Eligible organisations can apply for up to **$150,000** for this planning work (GST exclusive). **Only one grant per organisation is permitted**.

Funding for a Planning Grant **is not** subject to an applicant co-contribution. Co-contributions are **not required** but are allowed**.**

Timeline

The planning work funded by a planning grant must be completed and acquitted within **12 months** of the execution of the Common Funding Agreement (CFA). CFAs must be signed and submitted by an authorised officer of the organisation no later than **four weeks** after receipt.

Before submitting your application, please speak to the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) Early Childhood Grants Team about the above timeline. If you don't think the planning works will be completed in this time, please discuss with the VSBA Early Childhood Grants Team.

Grant payments

Payments will be provided in milestone instalments at the discretion of the VSBA and will be outlined in the CFA. Milestone instalments will be paid to successful applicants via an electronic funds transfer to a nominated account as follows:

Milestone Payments:

- ✓ 70% upon signing of the CFA and execution by the VSBA
- ✓ 30% upon submission of final acquittal documentation within agreed timeframes, including appropriate supporting evidence of payments made and costs incurred.

The Common Funding Agreement (CFA) sets out obligations about the use of funds and the outcomes that the grant recipient is expected to deliver. The CFA also sets out circumstances in which the VSBA may require a grant recipient to repay funding, including if there is insufficient evidence of funds being appropriately expended within agreed timeframes.

WHO CAN APPLY?

Your organisation can apply if it is:

- a Victorian local government (council)
- a not-for-profit community organisation that is a legal entity (for example an incorporated association, incorporated cooperative or Indigenous corporation)
- a Victorian government school
- a Victorian non-government school registered with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority or Catholic Education Commission of Victoria.

For-profit organisations cannot apply for any grant streams within Building Blocks. Should you need any assistance clarifying your not-for-profit status, please contact the VSBA Early Childhood Grants Team.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications for the Building Blocks Planning Grant Program open on **8 September 2021.**

Applications close at **11.59pm on 10 October 2021.**

Application forms can be accessed online at https://vsba.smartygrants.com.au/. Applicants must be registered to use the Smarty Grants application system. Registration is a free and straightforward process.

For assistance with the online application system, please contact the Smarty Grants Support Desk by phone on (03) 9320 6888 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday or email service@smartygrants.com.au. You can also find a help guide and Frequently Asked Questions at http://applicanthelp.smartygrants.com.au/



All sections must be completed, and the application form submitted to be considered for funding. Changes can be made to an application any time until it is submitted.

WHAT CAN (AND CANNOT) BE FUNDED?

There are items that can and cannot be included in a Planning Grant application. The following table lists what the VSBA will and won't consider when reviewing applications.

WHAT CAN BE FUNDED	WHAT CANNOT BE FUNDED

• project management costs
• planning and design costs, such as:
  o quantity surveyor fees and reports
  o architect and design
  o geo technical services
  o feasibility studies
  o town planning consultants
  o planning permits
  o soil contamination reports
  o asbestos reports
  o environmental sustainability assessments for energy and or water efficiency, e.g. NABERS and NatHERS
• Planning and design project costs relating to capacity building projects, or projects that are required to maintain existing capacity
• planning for multi-staged projects
• staff salaries and training for staff involved in working on the proposed kindergarten infrastructure planning project (note: funding is one-off and does not cover on-going appointment)
• local design feasibility study (assessing multiple sites to determine opportunities and cost to meeting unmet demand)
	• costs already incurred
	• site preparation, including clearing or demolition (these may be funded by a subsequent Building Block Grant)
	• construction and commissioning (these may be funded by a subsequent Building Blocks Grant)
	• landscaping and car parking (these may be funded by a subsequent Building Blocks Grant)
	• fixed fittings and fixed equipment
	• site acquisition and lease costs
	• purchase of cars, buses and other vehicles
	• ongoing administration or operational costs
	• toys, portable equipment and consumables
	• additional funding due to project cost overruns
	• fundraising and marketing costs

The Building Blocks Planning Grant program **will not fund** planning for projects that:

- do not intend to create additional capacity or maintain existing kindergarten capacity required for the roll out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten
- are not for facilities that offer, or intend to offer, both Three and Four-Year-Old funded Kindergarten programs
- are intended to be located outside Victoria
- do not align with the program objectives
- do not meet the requirements outlined in these guidelines
- do not meet the assessment criteria
- have already been invoiced or paid.

AUSPICE ARRANGEMENTS

Not-for-profit community organisations in the process of becoming incorporated, or those without capacity to manage the funding, may arrange for an eligible organisation to apply on their behalf. This is known as an 'auspice' arrangement.



We will directly fund the auspice organisation, and they will agree to take the full legal and financial responsibility for the project. You can find more information about auspicing arrangements at www.nfplaw.org.au/auspicing.

If you would like to negotiate an auspice arrangement, you are responsible for identifying an auspice organisation and working with them to prepare the application. The VSBA will not make auspicing arrangements on your behalf.

Auspice arrangements cannot be used by for-profit organisations for any grant streams within Building Blocks**.**

ASSESSMENT

Once the closing date for applications has passed, the VSBA will:

- check to confirm that applications meet the eligibility requirements
- assess all eligible applications against the assessment criteria.

Following this process, the VSBA will provide its recommendations to the Minister for Early Childhood for final approval.

Building Blocks Planning Grant program assessment criteria

Funding recommendations will be based on the extent you can demonstrate that your planning process will address the following assessment criteria. These are weighted according to the specified percentages. All applicants should address the assessment criteria:

- The proposed planning process will relate to new or existing infrastructure which plans to deliver a quality kindergarten program that responds to the current or projected demand for funded kindergarten places. Applications must refer to demand estimates outlined in section 4.5 of the LGA's published KISP where the project is located. Non-council applicants can also reference published KISP data as part of an application (70%).
- The application provides clarity of high-level intended project scope and confidence that the planning process will support a project commencing (10%).
- The proposed planning process facilitates access for children of all abilities (10%).
- The proposed planning process promotes environmental sustainability, and includes environmentally sustainable features, for example in design or construction (10%).

In addition, all applications **must** include an attestation, signed by an authorised delegate (eg: CEO) that any funds obtained via this program will be used to achieve the program objectives and be expended in accordance with the organisation's probity and procurement obligations.

FUNDING CONDITIONS

Funded planning grant applications must result in infrastructure project plans that will lead to an application for construction funding under the Building Blocks Grants program within 12 months of completing the funded planning works. The proposed project must:

- offer or intend to offer a funded Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program for children
- result in infrastructure which will operate as a kindergarten service for at least 10 years from when the proposed planning work is completed.

To be eligible to receive a grant, applicants must:

- submit an application including an attestation signed by an authorised delegate (eg: CEO) that any funds obtained via this program will be used to achieve the program objectives and be expended in accordance with the organisation's probity and procurement obligations
- agree to the requirements outlined in these guidelines (failure to do so may result in funding being withheld)
- enter into a formal CFA with the VSBA, if successful in the application



- complete the planning works within 12 months, as outlined in the CFA
- apply for a Building Blocks grant to contribute toward an infrastructure project within 12 months of completing the planning works.
- submit an acquittal form and the required supporting evidence for approval by the VSBA upon completion of the planning process
- agree that no additional VSBA funding will be allocated to proposed planning process.

Failure to follow the above requirements could ultimately result in the VSBA recommending to the Minister for Early Childhood to withdraw the funding commitment.

The Common Funding Agreement (CFA) sets out obligations about the use of funds and the outcomes that the grant recipient is expected to deliver. The CFA also sets out circumstances in which the VSBA may require a grant recipient to repay funding, including if there is insufficient evidence of funds being appropriately expended within agreed timeframes.

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

The Betrayal of Trust Report found that survivors of institutional child abuse were sometimes unable to identify an appropriate legal entity to sue.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse also recommended that governments consider requiring organisations they fund to be insured against child abuse.

From 1 July 2019, non-government organisations funded by the Victorian Government to deliver services to children will be required, as a condition of funding to be:

- **incorporated separate** legal entities that can be sued in their own right in child abuse proceedings
- **appropriately insured** against child abuse.

The new requirements will improve the ability of child abuse survivors to bring a legal claim for compensation and ensure that successful claims can be paid.

ACQUITTAL REQUIREMENTS

All successful applicants are required to complete the following requirements and upload the following information into the VSBA reporting system to complete their acquittal:

- the VSBA's Certificate of Expenditure Acquittal, completed, signed and dated by two authorised representatives
- invoices and evidence of expenditure.

Please note, non-acquittal, incomplete acquittal or lack of invoices and evidence of expenditure may jeopardise future funding allocations to an organisation.

PROJECTS ON DET LAND

If you propose planning works on Department of Education and Training (DET) land, you must contact the VSBA's Early Childhood Grants team as early as possible during the development of your proposal to discuss the approach to land and planning works delivery. Phone (03) 7022 2564 or email building.blocks@education.vic.gov.au.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The grants offered under the Building Blocks Planning Grant program are highly competitive and organisations need to ensure that their application includes clear and convincing supporting documentation to increase the chances of being successful.

All applicants are required to provide:

- ✓ considered responses to the selection criteria, that demonstrate how the planning works will meet these



- ✓ (if seeking funding for staff salaries and training) a position description for funding of new or existing staff members, and a cost estimate (e.g. how many hours on planning works, ancillary costs)
- ✓ an attestation signed by an authorised delegate (eg: CEO) that any funds obtained via this program will be used to achieve the program objectives and be expended in accordance with the organisation's probity and procurement obligations.

If you are a **not-for-profit** or a **non-government school,** you are also required to provide:

- ✓ evidence of not-for-profit status (such as a copy of your Australian Business Number, registration as a not-for-profit, certificate of registration as charity, or a certificate of registration as an incorporated association)
- ✓ a signed certified accountant's confirmation of the applicant's last two years financial statements as evidence of financial viability
- ✓ (if an auspice arrangement is proposed) written confirmation from the auspicing party.

FURTHER INFORMATION

https://www.vic.gov.au/kinder. We encourage applicants to read the Frequently Asked Questions available on the VSBA website.

For further information regarding eligibility, program requirements and assessment criteria, please contact the VSBA Early Childhood Grants team by phone on (03) 7022 2564 or email building.blocks@education.vic.gov.au.

For further information regarding three-year-old kindergarten reform, please visit

INFORMATION PRIVACY

The information you provide will be dealt with in accordance with the Public Records Act 1973 and the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014.