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| Building Blocks Grants 2023 PLANNING Stream Guidelines  |
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Minister’s Foreword

The Victorian Government continues to work closely with kindergarten services across the state to reform early learning − making it bigger, better, and fairer.

Because of new partnerships and record investment, all Victorian children can now get two years of free kinder.

We can all be enormously proud of that achievement, but that’s just the start of our Best Start, Best Life reforms.

Victorian three-year-olds are now benefitting from at least five hours of kinder a week. We will increase that to 15 hours by 2029. Over the next decade, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will transition to ‘Pre-Prep’ – doubling play-based learning for every four-year-old child in Victoria to 30 hours a week.

We’re also building 50 Victorian government-owned and affordable early learning centres. We’ll build these in areas that have unmet demand, making it easier for families to get childcare. The first four centres will be open in 2025.

As we reform early learning, we are transforming communities. Children will get a better start to their education, families will save money, and parents will have greater flexibility to return to work if they choose.

Change of this scale does not happen overnight. It requires a lot of hard work, serious commitment, and sensible planning. That’s where the Building Blocks grants come in.

Since launching in 2020, Building Blocks has funded new kindergarten buildings, expansions and improvements, supporting the sector to create additional kindergarten places across the state. It’s allowed us to expand early learning and work more closely with local government and not-for-profit providers to deliver more, and better integrated, family and community services.

The results speak for themselves, but there’s still work to do to deliver this once in a generation reform. Building Blocks Planning Grants make it easier and more efficient to prepare for capital works at your kindergarten. They offer up to $150,000 to design, plan and cost projects, laying the groundwork for you to then seek funding through the Building Blocks Capacity grant stream.

The 2023-24 State budget provides further funding for increased Building Blocks Capacity grants rates, and the opportunity to make Planning Grants available throughout the year. This shift will make it even easier for Local Government and other not-for-profit providers to plan for, and meet the demand for kindergarten services driven by the Best Start, Best Life reforms.

Planning grants are another important step to keep our early learning reforms rolling. When combined with the record funding now available through Capacity Building Grants, the opportunities they offer are truly life-changing. I look forward to seeing the exciting proposals and new partnerships they generate.





 Ingrid Stitt MP

**Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep**

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### **BUILDING BLOCKS OBJECTIVES**

The Victorian Government is delivering an unprecedented early childhood reform agenda.

In June 2022, the Best Start, Best Life reform was announced. A key component of this reform, which will commence from 2025, includes increasing hours for Pre-Prep (Four-Year-Old Kindergarten) from 15 to 30 hours by 2032. This means that over the next decade, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will increase to a universal 30-hour a week program of play-based learning for four-year-old children across Victoria.

The Best Start, Best Life reform builds on the Victorian Government’s commitment of $1.68 billion, announced in 2018, to support the delivery of increased hours and the roll-out of infrastructure expansion required for the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten reform.

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is already rolling out across the state, expanding universal access to 15 hours of government-funded kinder every week. Three-Year-Old Kindergarten programs are gradually increasing., reaching 15 hours per week across Victoria by 2029. Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will [transition to Pre-Prep in stages](https://www.vic.gov.au/pre-prep) from 2025. From 2032 all children across Victoria will be eligible for 30 hours of Pre-Prep each week.

To support these major reforms the Victorian Government is expanding kindergarten infrastructure. It has committed to introduce the Best Start, Best Life reform over the coming decade and to co-invest with the early childhood sector to build and expand kindergartens across the state. The Building Blocks grant program is an integral part of that commitment and is critical to success of universal access to increased hours of Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten across Victoria over the next 10 years.

See *What Type of Grant Can I apply for?* below for further details on the funding streams and amounts available.

### **PLANNING GRANT STREAM**

The **Building Blocks Grants - Planning Stream helps** fund planning and pre-construction work for kindergarten building projects that will support the roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and Pre-Prep. For the purposes of this grant stream, the ‘planning process’ includes the scope development, design and costing required for a project before it is tendered for construction.

### **WHAT TYPE OF GRANT CAN I APPLY FOR?**

The **Planning Grant** stream offers additional support by covering the cost of design and the pre-construction planning involved in building projects.

A Planning Grant means you can:

* plan a project, or pipeline of projects, to help provide the kindergarten places needed to meet demand for the roll-out of Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten and/or Pre-Prep
* better prepare applications for Building Blocks grants that will help deliver your projects.

Being awarded a Planning Grant is not a pre-requisite to apply for other Building Blocks grants.

**Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plans**

Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plans (KISPs) provide a consistent, state-wide planning framework designed to support local government planning to meet increased demand for kindergarten places generated as a result of the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten reform.

As part of the Best Start, Best Life program there will be updates to KISPs in 2023, however this process will extend beyond this coming grant round. Your application should align with forecast unmet demand in the existing KISP for the area, and/or demonstrate that the project will support demand in the early years of the roll-out of Pre-Prep. Please refer to [[details of the roll-out schedule for Pre-Prep](https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/pre-prep-begin-rolling-out-regional-victoria).](https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/pre-prep-begin-rolling-out-regional-victoria)

While a KISP is not a funding document and does not commit any party to funding specific projects, future investment requests through Building Blocks and decisions about local government or not-for-profit projects must address unmet demand identified in the relevant KISP.

For the local government area (LGA) where a project is located, applicants to the Planning stream must either refer to the published KISP or, because KISPs will be updated throughout 2023 to respond to Pre-Prep demand, an application could also cite agreed Department estimates about future demand as part of the application, to demonstrate that the project is in an area with infrastructure need. Please refer to [Published KISPS and Department estimates](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/capitalprogram.aspx).

**Project requirements**

Planning grants must:

* be completed within **12 months** of Common Funding Agreement (CFA) execution. 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 Capacity Building 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, and/or Pre-Prep, at a community and local government level. Projects should align to demand, as identified in the relevant KISP or demonstrate alignment with supporting the roll-out of Pre-Prep.

**Funding available**

Eligible organisations can apply for up to **$150,000** (GST exclusive).

Co-contributions are **not required** but are allowed**.**

**Project completion**

The planning work funded by a planning grant must be completed and acquitted within **12 months** of the execution of the CFA.

### **WHAT CAN (AND CANNOT) BE FUNDED?**

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| **What can be funded** | **What cannot be funded** |
| * project management costs
* planning and design costs, such as:
	+ quantity surveyor fees and reports
	+ architect and design
	+ geo technical services
	+ feasibility studies
	+ town planning consultants
	+ planning permits
	+ soil contamination reports
	+ asbestos reports
	+ 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 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)

site acquisition and lease costs* ongoing administration or operational costs
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### **EXCLUSIONS**

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

* do not address unmet demand as identified in the relevant KISP
* do not intend to create additional capacity or maintain existing kindergarten capacity required for the roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and/or Pre Prep through a subsequent Building Blocks Capacity Building application
* are not for facilities that offer, or intend to offer, both Three and Four-Year-Old funded Kindergarten/Pre Prep 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.

### **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.

### **PROJECTS ON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LAND**

If you propose a **Planning** project on land owned by the Department of Education (DE) you must contact the VSBA Early Childhood Grants team as early as possible during the development of your proposal, to discuss the approach to land and project delivery. The VSBA Early Childhood Grants team can be contacted by emailing building.blocks@education.vic.gov.au.

Applications for projects on DE land must include:

* a completed **Land Use Proposal Form**
* a copy of any existing lease or agreement between relevant parties
* a detailed design of your proposal
* 2 quotes from a qualified professional for projects less than $200,000 or 1 Quantity Surveyor report for projects of $200,000

Successful grant recipients must also enter into a lease agreement with DE (if not already) in addition to their Common Funding Agreement.

Further information on these requirements can be found in the [Frequently Asked Questions](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-grants).

### **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

A Building Blocks [Planning Assessment Factsheet](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/building-blocks-grants-planning) is available on the VSBA website to help you understand the planning assessment process.

This factsheet explains the type of information you need to include in your application. Please make sure that you refer to this factsheet when preparing your application.

Following the assessment process, the Department will provide its recommendation to the Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep for final approval.

The Minister reserves the right to provide strategic investment to projects. The Minister may also, on advice from the Department, provide funding to partners, in exceptional circumstances to support the provision of funded Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten services across the state.

### **FUNDING CONDITIONS**

Organisations that receive a grant must:

* agree to the requirements outlined in these guidelines (failure to do so may result in funding being withheld)
* enter into a formal Common Funding Agreement with the Department
* where applicable, follow the Building Blocks Acknowledgement and Publicity Guidelines, including liaising with the Department and holding events on request, such as sod turns and openings, and erecting signage for projects
* submit an acquittal form and the required supporting evidence for approval by the Department upon completion of the project
* agree that no additional Department of Education state funding will be allocated to the proposed project and if additional costs arise, they must be met by the applicant.

To remain eligible for funding, you **must not** enter into a contract or commence any works proposed in your application before we inform you of the application outcome.

Before submitting your application, we encourage you to review the following documents which further clarify your obligations for receiving *Building Blocks* funding.

* [Acknowledgement and Publicity Guidelines](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/building-blocks-acknowledgement-and-publicity-guidelines)
* Common Funding Agreement Terms and Conditions

### **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.

### **Relationship with other funds**

There are other grant programs that provide funding for the development of early childhood facilities and services. The Department must be advised of other funding applications for your project. We reserve the right to consider grant applications made for other programs, offered by the Department or other government departments, and to submit Planning stream applications to other Department agency led grant programs for consideration for funding under those programs where appropriate.

### **Project reporting requirements**

As a condition of funding for Planning grants, successful applicants must comply with project monitoring and reporting requirements, including:

* quarterly status reports through an online reporting system to provide an update on progress, updating proposed, forecast, and actual dates for project milestones, flagging risks and issues, and providing the required evidence when payment milestones have been met
* advising the Department of scope changes (relating to time, cost, and project scope) by completing and submitting a Request for Variation (RFV) form via the online reporting system
* site inspections, meetings and teleconferences with Department staff or representatives if required, this may include more frequent updates as your project nears completion;
* production of contracts, receipts and/or invoices when requested; and
* acquittal through an online reporting system

Information about Project Extensions can be found in the [Frequently Asked Questions](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-grants).

### **ACQUITTAL REQUIREMENTS AND PROJECT VARIATIONS**

All successful applicants are required to upload information into the Department’s reporting system to complete their acquittal.

Recipient organisations must contact the Department immediately if they:

* Require a project extension
* Propose a change in project scope
* Propose a change in project costs which results in either an overspend or underspend.

Applicants will be required to complete a Request for Variation form (submitted through the online reporting process), together with detailed evidence that explains the reason for the variation.  The applicant will be asked to allocate any underspend towards additional eligible items in line with the guidelines before an acquittal is accepted. Overspends remain the responsibility of the organisation.

Further information on acquittal requirements and variation requests can be found in the [Frequently Asked Questions.](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-grants)

### **HOW TO APPLY**

Applications for Building Blocks Planning Grants stream are open all year round, however, applications are batched for assessment several times during the year. Please refer to the Building Blocks website for the next closing date.

Application forms can be accessed online through [SmartyGrants](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 email the Smarty Grants Support Desk or call 03 9320 6888 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday. You can also consult the [help guide](http://applicanthelp.smartygrants.com.au/).

### **REVIEW OF APPLICATION OUTCOME**

If you are unsuccessful in obtaining funding for a *Building Blocks* Capacity grant you may:

* contact the Early Childhood grants team for feedback on your application and outcome or;
* seek a review into the assessment of your application.

The VSBA Early Childhood Grants team can be contacted by emailing building.blocks@education.vic.gov.au.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Before applying, please refer to the Building Blocks [[Planning Assessment Factsheet](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/building-blocks-grants-planning).](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/building-blocks-grants-planning)This factsheet contains important information about your grant application.

Please also read the[Frequently Asked Questions](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-grants).

If you have any queries, contact the VSBA Early Childhood Grants team at building.blocks@education.vic.gov.au.

### **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.