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| Building Blocks Assessment Factsheet & Application ChecklistInclusion Stream2024 |

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## Introducing Building Blocks

The Building Blocks grants support the Victorian Government's unprecedented reform and funding of early childhood education.

The grants are funding a massive program of building, modernising and expanding kindergartens across the state.

This work, backed by new partnerships and record investment, means all Victorian children can now get 2 years of free kinder.

The reforms, and the benefits they bring, will continue to expand over the next few years.

Victorian 3-year-olds can now get at least 5 hours of kindergarten a week. That increases to 15 hours by 2029. Also, from 2025 to 2036, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will transition to ‘Pre-Prep’ – doubling play-based learning for every 4-year-old child in Victoria to 30 hours a week.

The government has invested $2.7 billion to work in partnership with local councils and early learning providers to build the kinders we need for these important reforms.

Building Blocks grants are key to evaluating the best projects to realise the government’s vision and achieve best value for this significant public investment.

## *We have designed this document to help you complete your Building Blocks Inclusion grant application.*

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| *After reading this assessment factsheet you should have a clear understanding of what information you need to include in your application.*  | *You should also understand how your application will be assessed after it has been submitted.* |

## Building Blocks Inclusion Grant Stream

Building Blocks Inclusion grants provide funding to upgrade early childhood buildings and facilities (including playgrounds), and purchase equipment to provide safe and more inclusive environments for children of all abilities.

There are two categories available:

* Buildings and Playgrounds
* Equipment

## Overview of Inclusion Stream Grants

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| Grant Type | Maximum funding | Minimum requirements |
| Buildings and Playgrounds | Up to $200,000 (ex GST) | Buildings and Playgrounds grants must improve early childhood buildings and facilities to provide safe and more inclusive environments for children of all abilities. Funding is for fixed fittings and equipment. |
| Equipment | Up to $10,000 (ex GST) | Equipment grants are offered to fund the purchase of inclusive educational equipment for kindergarten programs. Funding is for non-fixed equipment (i.e., non-fixed to buildings). |

For **Building Blocks Inclusion grants**, your project must be for a facility located in Victoria that is, or will be, licensed to provide a funded Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program. It must offer, or intendto offer, both programs. This can be sessional or integrated with long day care.

## Examples of items that can and cannot be funded

For a list of items that canandcannot be funded, refer to the Building Blocks [Inclusion Guidelines found on the VSBA website.](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/building-blocks-grants-inclusion)

A list of example projects that may be funded, can be found in this Factsheet in **Appendix A.**

## Eligibility Assessment

The grants offered under the Inclusion stream are highly competitive and organisations need to ensure that their applications include clear and convincing supporting documentation to increase the chances of being successful.

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.

Victorian kindergarten providers with a funded kindergarten service(s) at the time of application are eligible to receive funding. **For-profit organisations cannot apply** for any grant streams within Building Blocks.

For further information regarding eligibility, please refer to the [Inclusion Guidelines found on the VSBA website.](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/building-blocks-grants-inclusion)

## PROJECTS ON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LAND

If you propose a **Buildings and Playgrounds** 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 email: building.blocks@education.vic.gov.au.

Applications for projects on DE land must include:

* a completed [Land Use Proposal Form](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-grants) found on the VSBA website (refer to Projects on Department of Education land)

## Plan ahead – Soil and asbestos reports

Two documents that require the most time to secure are the **Soil Hygienist Report** and the **Asbestos Report**.

Applications for projects on Department land **are not required** to provide a soil hygienist report. The VSBA will complete this requirement following the submission of your application.

## Soil Hygienist Report

A Soil Hygienist Report is requiredfor any project that disturbs the soil (including installation of outdoor shade sails) to determine the suitability of the site for the proposed purpose of an early learning centre.

It is important that an environmental professional is engaged to provide a Soil Hygienist Report – and not a geotechnical report.  If applicable to your project, a Soil Hygienist Report **must** be included in your grant application.

**Soil Hygienist Reports must:**

* be performed by a qualified environmental professional
* align with standards such as the National Environmental Protection (Assessment of Contaminated Sites) Measure (NEPM)
* involve a desktop review of past site history and soil investigation samples for analysis of contaminants such as arsenic, asbestos, and heavy metals with particular focus on where project soil works are proposed
* compare contamination results against NEPM human health and ecological investigation levels as well as Victoria EPA Industrial Waste thresholds
* include a statement to indicate if the site is suitable for the intended use as an early learning centre and/or potential project risks
* specify if contaminated soil is identified above the levels specified for the intended use as an early learning centre.

If contaminated soil is identified above the levels specified for the intended use as an early learning centre, a Soil Management Plan (SMP)must be developed for safe management or removal and disposal of the contaminated soil. The SMP must also be provided as part of your grant application.

Examples of consultants who specialise in soil hygienist testing and site assessment, are listed below:

* The Australian Contaminated Land Consultants Association - [Australian Contaminated Land Consultants Association](https://aclca.com.au/)
* The State Government Construction Supply register [Construction Supply Register](https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/infrastructure-investment/construction-supplier-register) under Contamination Testing category.

## Division 6 Asbestos Audit Report

A Division 6 Asbestos Audit Report is site specific and is required for any project that involves work to a building constructed before 1990, where the fabric of the building will be disturbed. If applicable to your project, a Division 6 Asbestos Audit Report **must** be included in your grant application.

#### Division 6 Asbestos Audit Reports must:

* be performed by a trained professional such as an Occupational Hygienist
* contain the results of a visual and invasive inspection of a building to monitor and identify Asbestos Containing Material (ACM)
* include the logged results of the asbestos audit in an asbestos register, which is to be updated following all subsequent audit reports and removal works

Please note that a Division 5 Asbestos Audit Report will not be accepted.

If ACM is discovered in a building or site, an Asbestos Management Plan for removal and disposal of the ACM must be developed and provided as part of your grant application.

Information and examples of consultants who specialises in asbestos and site assessment, are listed at:

* The State Government Construction Supply register [Construction Supply Register](https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/infrastructure-investment/construction-supplier-register) under Contamination Testing category
* [WorkSafe](https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/asbestos) Victoria.

Division 6 Asbestos Audit Reports are not required for works to buildings constructed from 1990 onwards. Where this is the case, an applicant is required to provide:

* an asbestos report (if one is available) or evidence, such as an occupancy permit or statement from the landowner that the building is not older than 1990
* a letter signed by an authorised representative of the organisation that confirms the applicant will be responsible for any remediation and ongoing management should ACM or other contaminants be discovered during works undertaken at the site.

For further information about asbestos safety, including how to find and identify asbestos, asbestos management and asbestos disposal visit [Asbestos Victoria](https://www.asbestos.vic.gov.au/).

## Merit Assessment Criteria

Funding recommendations will be based on the extent you can demonstrate that your project addresses the merit assessment criteria. These are weighted according to the specified percentages.

The weightings align with Building Blocks Inclusion stream objectives. Merit assessment criteria can be found in the [Inclusion Guidelines on the VSBA website.](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/building-blocks-grants-inclusion)

## After the closing date

After the closing date for applications has passed, the Department will check to confirm that applications meet the following eligibility requirements:

* all required documentation has been provided (refer to the Application Checklist at **Appendix B**)
* assess all eligible applications against the merit assessment criteria
* convene an assessment panel to oversee recommendations and manage any conflicts of interest.

We may also undertake further project cost assessment in instances where project costs are particularly complex, or clarification is required.

The department will prioritise applications from eligible organisations that:

* meet each of the merit assessment criteria
* have provided all required information and documentation, such as soil and asbestos reports (where required)
* provide demonstrated clear evidence of costings

We will not consider late or incomplete applications.

## Review of application outcome

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

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

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

## Resources

The following links are provided as a starting point for considering best practice approaches to inclusion. Applicants are encouraged to undertake their own research to identify solutions that will meet their needs.

* **Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority:**[National Quality Framework](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about)
* **Department of Education:**Disability Standards for Education
[Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-early-years-learning-development-framework-veyldf)

International Resources

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| Centre for Excellence in Universal Design | [The 7 Principles of Universal Design](https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design/the-7-principles) |
| Health and Education Advice and Resource Team (HEART) | [Universal Design of Schools and Classrooms](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08a01ed915d3cfd000534/Universal-design-of-schools-and-classrooms.pdf)  |
| The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) | [Including Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Schools in Ireland (OECD)](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/including-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-in-schools-in-ireland_224824045146) |
| UNICEF | [The State of the World’s Children - Playgrounds of Inclusion](https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2013) |
| National Centre on Universal Design for Learning | [Universal Design Guidelines for Learning](https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl) |

# Appendix A – Examples funded projects

## Buildings and Playgrounds

**Indoor inclusive learning spaces**Funding may be provided to create learning spaces that engage all children and focus on improving their social and emotional wellbeing. This includes flexible areas that can cater for the needs of different types of learners and are innovatively linked with education programs.

#### Outdoor inclusive learning spaces, including playgrounds

For some children, a learning place that addresses sensory or learning needs can provide a stimulating environment that they require to support learning. These spaces are areas where children can go voluntarily and remain under supervision. Demonstrating how the outdoor learning spaces will benefit all children and connect with teaching practices will enhance your application.

A key objective under the Supporting Children and Families in the Early Years Compact is that all young children are engaged, confident and creative learners. An accessible and inclusive playground means it is as easy as possible for everyone to play, encouraging all children to be more physically active. Demonstrating how the playground is accessible by all children will enhance your application.

#### Acoustic treatments

The ability for a child to hear and understand what is being said in the classroom by the teacher is vital for learning. This ability can be significantly reduced by poor classroom acoustics. There are acoustic treatments that contain and absorb sound, thereby improving class concentration and allowing the teacher’s voice to easily reach all students.

Acoustically treated curtains can be installed in front of windows to reduce external noise in classrooms.

Hardwood flooring reflects rather than absorbs sound. Carpeting classrooms is a sufficient solution to dampen the interior noise of students and movement of furniture.

Installing acoustic panels or a suspended acoustical ceiling cloud (partial ceiling) to the current high ceilings will absorb sound, reducing interior noise within the room.

#### Sensory garden

Sensory gardens can provide a range of health benefits, including reduced stress and lowered blood pressure, and can also make a great contribution to emotional and physical wellbeing.

Sensory gardens should be designed with accessibility and inclusion in mind and could include a variety of raised beds and planters for vegetables and herbs, which will ensure they are easily accessible by all children.

These gardens can serve therapeutic and educational purposes for children. By providing plants with fragrance and colour, installing wind chimes or ground surfaces with different textures, the activation of a range of senses that range from sight and hearing, smell and touch, to even taste can be achieved.

#### Accessible ramps

You might need a sloping ramp with slip-resistant strips that provides access to the main entrance and integrates aesthetically with the building. The ramp will benefit those who use wheelchairs or walkers as well as those who may not use equipment but whose balance, strength, or stamina make stair climbing difficult or unsafe.

Having the ramp as the main access point for children of all abilities will encourage inclusion and integration.

Two handrails can be installed on both sides of the ramp and continuously around intermediate landings and extend beyond the entry and exit points.

The construction of the ramp will make it possible for all individuals to navigate their environments confidently and safely.

## Equipment

#### Multi-play equipment units

Multi-play equipment units are developed to encourage all children to interact within the same play space, can be modified and adjusted to fit all age groups and abilities.

The units can incorporate wheelchair accessible ramps, timber bridges, slides, scramble nets, accessible clamber ramps, climbing frames and sensory play panels.

Primarily these units provide children with challenging physical activity to train their coordination, confidence, and balance. These creative structures encourage imaginative playtime. They also offer all children opportunities to learn and develop their social skills by encouraging interactive, group play between peers.

#### Moveable items that can be purchased include (but are not limited to):

* access ramps to support transition between play areas and entry/exit to services
* safety surfacing (e.g. soft fall mats)
* wadding/protective padding for building structures, e.g. around veranda posts
* adjustable/inclusion tables and chairs to suit all abilities
* adjustable change tables
* adjustable walking frames
* mobility stools
* toilet frames/steps
* balance beams
* writing slopes wedges
* installation costs (for installing inclusive equipment funded through the Inclusion stream)
* indoor/outdoor **sensory** equipment such as:
	+ sensory wall panels
	+ resonance boards
	+ adjustable sand and water table
	+ tee pees
	+ toys
	+ multifunctional activity tables
	+ cushions
	+ chairs and flexi stools
	+ steppingstones
	+ hanging sensory/pod swings
	+ tactile equipment (e.g. sand, fidget toys)
	+ weighted and resistance equipment (e.g. weighted soft toys and blankets)

# Appendix B – Application Checklist

Buildings and Playgrounds checklist

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| Evidence | Description |  |
| Considered responses to the selection criteria | Responses must demonstrate how the project will meet each merit assessment criteria |
| Written confirmation of co-contribution (if applicable) | Authorised written confirmation from the applicant and all other funding organisations including contributions from the Federal Government, Victorian Government, local government, or other sources |
| Builder quotes and/or Quantity Surveyor Report, must include a minimum 10-15% (ex GST) cost contingency | **For projects under $200,000 ex GST** - Two appropriate cost estimates (quotes) from a qualified building professional registered for a trade that is consistent with the scope of the proposed works, **For projects $200,000 or more ex GST** - One Quantity Surveyor report from a registered Quantity Surveyor is required for building projects |
| Project Budget (ex GST) | A budget (i.e. a simple excel or word document) including a clear and accurately itemised table of Total Project Costs according to the quote/s provided (**ex GST**) and requested funding amount, which will be the total project cost minus any co-contribution |
| Soil Contaminates Report | A Soil Contaminates Report, including testing for arsenic, asbestos, and heavy metals from a qualified environmental professional is mandatory for any project that disturbs the soil  |
| Div 6 Asbestos Audit Report   | * A Division 6 Asbestos Audit Report is mandatory for any project where the fabric of the building is being disturbed (unless constructed before 1990)
* If the building was constructed before 1990, provide:
	+ - asbestos report (if one is available) or evidence, such as an occupancy permit or statement from the landowner that the building is not older than 1990
		- letter signed by an authorised representative of the organisation that confirms the applicant will be responsible for any remediation and ongoing management should ACM or other contaminants be discovered during works undertaken at the site.
 |
| Designs, Plans, Photos, Permits   | Professional schematic design drawings and site plans/ photos/ permits to illustrate what parts of the land or building will be changed by the project |
| Project Plan | A plan (i.e. a simple excel or word document) to support the dates nominated in the application for stages of the project |
| Affected services | If your project will directly affect service providers currently operating at the facility evidence that you have consulted with these providers such as letters of support or documented outcomes of consultation and engagement |
| Not-for-Profit Status | 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) |
| Signed financial Statements | Not-for-profit organisations and non-government schools must provide evidence of financial solvency such as a signed copies of audited financial statements for the **previous two financial years**. |
| Auspice Arrangement  | If an auspice arrangement is proposed, signed, written confirmation from both parties is required |
| Evidence of Land ownership  | The type of evidence required depends on **who owns the land**. * If a **local council or state/federal government agency**, own the land, or if **you are leasing the building or the landowner is not the building owner**, you must provide:
	+ certificate of land title with owners name and service address
	+ current lease with an end date at least four years after completing the project signed and dated by both parties; or
		1. If the current lease will end earlier than four years, the applicant must provide a signed letter from the landowner (on letterhead) referring to the specific property and project, stating they intend to allow the facility to operate as a kindergarten for at least four years after completing the project. It should not be dated more than three months.
	+ signed, written consent to undertake the work from the landowner (on letterhead) referring to the specific property and project, including who will deliver the project (i.e. applicant, landowner or the building owner) and any known risks or issues for the project site. It should not be dated more than three months.
* If **you (the applicant)** own the land for the nominated project site, you must provide:
	+ certificate of land title, LANDATA documents or council rates notice with owners name and service address.
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| Projects on Department owned land | Your application **must** include a **completed**[Land Use Proposal Form](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/building-blocks-grants-inclusion) (LUPF) found on the VSBA website (refer to Projects on Department of Education land). Follow the guidance in this form prior to submitting your application. |

Equipment checklist

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| Evidence | Description |  |
| Considered responses to the selection criteria | Responses must demonstrate how the project will meet each merit assessment criteria |
| Supplier quote (ex GST) | **One** appropriate cost estimate from a registered supplier that is consistent with the scope of the proposed works |
| Affected services | If your project will directly affect service providers currently operating at the facility evidence that you have consulted with these providers such as letters of support or documented outcomes of consultation and engagement |
| Not-for-Profit Status | 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) |
| Auspice Arrangement  | If an auspice arrangement is proposed, signed, written confirmation from both parties is required |