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| Building Blocks Assessment Factsheet  Improvement Stream 2024 |

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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.

## Improvement stream

The Building Blocks Improvement stream offers grants for projects that upgrade and improve early learning facilities or invest in IT equipment.

There are three grant categories available:

* Early Learning Facility Upgrades
* Minor Infrastructure
* Information Technology

Grants support local councils and early learning providers to build and expand kindergartens.

Improvement grants also support early years providers to purchase Information Technology equipment.

Building Blocks is an integral support of the Best Start, Best Life reform and is critical to the success of universal access to increased hours of funded Three-Year-Old and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten across the state.

## *We have designed this document to help you complete your Building Blocks Improvement 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.* |

## Overview of Improvement Stream Grants

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| Grant Type | Maximum funding | Minimum requirements |
| Early Learning Facility Upgrades | Up to $750,000  (ex GST) | Early Learning Facility Upgrades must enhance or improve the quality of the learning environment  Applicants are also encouraged to consider the potential for renovated facilities to support the provision of other early childhood services  Although not a requirement, upgrades that increase capacity of approved places at existing facilities will be viewed favourably in the assessment process  Applicant co-contribution is required |
| Minor Infrastructure | Up to $150,000  (ex GST) | Minor Infrastructure grants must enhance the quality of the learning environment  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, and must offer or intend to offer both programs. This can be sessional and/or integrated with long day care. If you are unable to deliver both programs, please contact the VSBA Early Childhood Grants team to discuss your options  Applicant co-contribution is **not** required |
| Information Technology | Up to $2,000  (ex GST) | Information Technology grants support the purchase of desktop, laptop or tablet computers and televisions for use in the delivery of educational programs or service administration  Applicant co-contribution is **not** required |

For **Building Blocks Improvement 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.

## Eligibility assessment

The grants offered under the Improvement 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.

Depending on the grant you are applying for, you will need to ensure that all the required documentation has been provided (refer to the Application Checklist **Appendix**).

## Projects on Department of Education land

If you propose an Early Learning Facility Upgrade or Minor Infrastructure 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](mailto: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)
* a copy of any existing lease or agreement between relevant parties
* a detailed design of your proposal
* 2 quotes from a qualified professional
* If the project is located on DE land, the VSBA will procure a Quantity Surveyor report
* Successful grant recipients must also enter into a lease agreement with DE (if not already) in addition to their Victorian Common Funding Agreement

# Plan ahead – soil and asbestos reports

2 documents that require the most time to secure are the **Soil Hygienist Report** and the **Asbestos Report**. It is recommended that applicants obtain these reports or engage in these services prior to the commencement of the application process.

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, 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, recommendations for a soil management plan must be developed (e.g. for safe management or removal and disposal of the contaminated soil) and 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, 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, removal, and disposal plan 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 Improvement stream objectives.

Merit assessment criteria can be found in the [Improvement Guidelines](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/building-blocks-grants-improvement) found on the VSBA webpage.

## Project Management Requirements

For **Early Learning Facility Upgrades** grants, a qualified and experienced project manager must be identified at the time of application and appointed within 4 weeks of the funding announcement. The name and contact details (email, telephone number, including mobile) of the proposed project manager must be included in the application. The project manager must be appointed before the Common Funding Agreement can be executed.

## 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 Application Checklist **Appendix**)
* assess all eligible applications against the 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.

Projects will be recommended for funding primarily on their rating against the Assessment Criteria; however, subject to budget availability and volume of applications received, the Department may prioritise applications from eligible organisations that:

* increase/maintain capacity in areas of demand
* demonstrate compliant past performance and successful delivery of former projects funded under Building Blocks grants, and
* are deemed critical to the facility remaining operational

We will not consider late or incomplete applications.

## Review of application outcome

If you are unsuccessful in obtaining funding for a Building Blocks Improvement 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](mailto: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) |
| National Centre on Universal Design for Learning | [Universal Design Guidelines for Learning](https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl) |
| 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) |
| Beyond Blue | [Universal Design for Learning](https://beyou.edu.au/resources/disability-inclusion-guide/universal-design-for-learning) |
| Special Education Degrees Guide | [30 Most Impressive Accessible and Inclusive Playgrounds](https://www.special-education-degree.net/30-most-impressive-accessible-and-inclusive-playgrounds/) |

# Appendix – Application Checklist

### Early Learning Facility Upgrade & Minor Infrastructure Checklist

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| Evidence | Description |
| Considered responses to selection criteria | Responses must demonstrate how the project will meet these 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 |
| Builders quotes and/or Quantity Surveyor Report, including a minimum 15% contingency in project quotes  (**GST exclusive**) | **For projects under $200,000 - Two** appropriate cost estimates from a building professional registered for a trade that is consistent with the scope of the proposed works,  **OR**  **For projects $200,000 or more - One** Quantity Surveyor (QS) report from a registered Quantity Surveyor is required for building projects\* Projects on land owned by the Department valued at over $200,000 are not required to obtain a QS report\*\* |
| Project Budget  (**GST exclusive**) | 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 (**GST exclusive**) and requested funding amount, which will be the total project cost minus any co-contribution |
| Soil Contaminates Report (if applicable) | Where soil works, including playground upgrades, will be conducted, a Tier 1 preliminary soil assessment report, from a qualified Soil Hygienist. This must include testing for contaminates. Projects on land owned by the Department are not required to provide this\*\* |
| Asbestos Report (if applicable) | A Division 6 Asbestos Audit Report is required where the fabric of the building is being disturbed Projects on land owned by the Department are not required to provide this\*\* |
| Designs, Plans and Permits | Professional schematic design drawings and/or site plans 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 or providers of services in the area that would be relocated to the new facility, evidence that you have consulted with these providers such as letters of support or documented outcomes of consultation |
| 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 \* | A signed certified accountant’s confirmation of the applicant’s **last 2 years** financial statements as evidence of financial solvency for the last 2 years |
| Local Government Endorsement \* | Provide a letter of support for this project from the CEO of the Local Government Area (or authorised delegate), dated within 3 months of your application closing date |
| Auspice Arrangement\* | If an auspice arrangement is proposed, written confirmation from the auspice party is required |
| Evidence of Land ownership  Note: **If the land is owned by the Department of Education,** you must complete a [Land Use Proposal Form](https://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/building-blocks-grants-inclusion)) | The type of evidence required depends on **who owns the land**. Evidence of the following must be provided:   * building ownership * authorisation to build on the site * intention to operate a facility for **at least 4 years after completing the project** * land ownership * **Land Ownership Required Evidence** * **If you own the land** for your nominated project site, you can provide a copy of the land title, LANDATA documents or council rates notice showing your organisation’s name and the service address. * **If the local government or a third party own the land,** you must provide a copy of the title with project address and owners name as well as the current lease with an end date at least 4 years after completing the project:   1. If the current lease will end earlier than four years from the date that the CFA is signed, the applicant will need to provide a letter from the landowner stating they intend to allow the facility to operate as a kindergarten for at least 4 years after completing the project   2. We also require signed, written approval to undertake the works (on letterhead of the organisation) from the landowner. * **Where the landowner is not the building owner**, the applicant needs to provide evidence of:   1. title of building ownership   2. permission to undertake works   3. authorisation for the applicant to use the building to operate a kindergarten for 4 years after completing the project. |

Note: Items marked with an Asterix (\*) are ONLY required if you are a not- for-profit or non-government school.   
  
\*\*For kindergartens located on a government school site or land owned by the Department of Education, applicants will **not** be required to obtain the necessary Quantity Surveyor report, Asbestos Division 6 Report or Soil Hygeine report. The VSBA will obtain the relevant reports on the applicant’s behalf after applications close.

Information Technology Checklist

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| Evidence | Description |
| Considered response to selection criteria | Response must demonstrate how the project will meet the 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 |
| Supplier quote  (**GST exclusive**) | **One** appropriate cost estimate from a registered supplier that is consistent with the scope of the proposed works are required for a total project cost |
| 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, written confirmation from the auspice party is required |

Note: Items marked with an Asterix (\*) are ONLY required if you are a not- for-profit or non-government school