Inclusive Schools Fund guidelines

Round 3 – March 2017

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# Background

The Victorian Government made a commitment to establish Victoria as the Education State, where every Victorian has an equal right to the knowledge and skills to shape their lives. Part of this work is to promote inclusive practices in schools so they can better support all children and young people, including those with disabilities and special needs.

Every child deserves a great education to reach their full potential, especially those with special needs who already face additional challenges.

The Inclusive Schools Fund (the Fund) is part of the Victorian Government’s *Special Needs Plan* that aims to promote inclusive and innovative practices in schools to better support children with disabilities and special needs.

In 2015, $10 million was committed over four years for all Victorian government schools to improve the inclusive nature of their facilities and practices. The government announced a further $10 million in 2016, bringing the total investment to $20 million.

The first round funded projects at 33 government schools across the State, helping to make the school environments more inclusive for their students and communities.

Round 2 saw 41 government schools sharing in $7 million, which helps schools build new facilities to better support the social and educational needs of students with disabilities and special needs.

More information on the *Special Needs Plan* can be found on the Department of Education and Training [website](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/specialneeds.aspx?Redirect=1).

## The Victorian School Building Authority

The Victorian School Building Authority (the Authority) was set up in the Department of Education and Training to support the delivery of the growing education infrastructure program. Most of the functions of the previous Infrastructure and Sustainability Division have been transferred into the new Authority.

## Inclusive schools

Inclusive school systems are those that have accessible schools, classrooms, programs and teaching to support the inclusive education experiences of all children.

There are many definitions and ways of describing inclusion, but they all have a focus on all members of every school community belonging and being valued and supported to fully participate, learn, develop and succeed within an inclusive school culture.

The Authority supports the concept of universal design. We believe that it constitutes best practice in the delivery of environments that ensure access and participation for all.

More information on inclusive education and the Government’s commitment to inclusive schools can be found on the Department’s [website](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/specialneeds.aspx).

# Aim

The Inclusive Schools Fund provides funding for innovative projects that promote inclusive school environments. Projects should support students with disabilities to participate and engage with learning in Victorian government schools.

To achieve this aim, the Inclusive Schools Fund has developed the following program principles:

1. Increase participation and improve learning outcomes for students with disabilities through strengthening inclusive government school environments.
2. Promote inclusion in classroom organisation and teaching approaches that tailor to the needs of all learners on the same basis, including those with disabilities.
3. Create innovative school environments based on inclusive best practice and Universal Design for all schools to consider in facility planning and design for students with disabilities.

## The Disability Standards for Education

All works under the Inclusive Schools Fund adhere to the Disability Standards for Education (the Standards) which ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

The Standards clarify the obligations of education and training providers, and the rights of people with disability, under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA). More information on the Standards can be found on the Department’s [website](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/pages/legislation.aspx).

# Criteria

As rounds 1 and 2 of the Fund were heavily oversubscribed, Schools that received funding in Round 1 or Round 2 of the Fund are ineligible to apply for funding in Round 3.

In addition to normal value for money principles, the following criteria for the Inclusive Schools Fund have been developed to support the program principles.

Applications under the Inclusive Schools Fund must address all of the following criteria.

1. Increase participation and improve learning outcomes for students with disabilities through strengthening inclusive government school environments.

* Demonstrate how the project will create a more inclusive environment for both the student/s with disabilities and the whole student population
* Applications will require schools to identify outcome measurements to show how the proposed project will fulfil the principles of the Inclusive Schools Fund, for example:
  + Survey data from students/parents to determine whether the project increased the inclusive culture of the school – please include survey questions in the application.
  + Measure student engagement/interactions with one another. This may include a range of methodologies to capture information on:
    - Facilities usage
    - Student attendance
    - Student social participation
    - Retention

1. Promote inclusion in classroom organisation and teaching approaches that tailor to the needs of all learners on the same basis, including those with disabilities.

* Review your school’s current inclusion policies and practices and identify how the facility response will support these policies and practices.
* Submit your school’s Student Engagement and other relevant policies.
* Outline the types (and amount) of training related to inclusive teaching approaches that have been undertaken by school teaching staff (e.g. Inclusion Online courses, training in ABLEs, Disability Standards eLearning) and how the proposed project would facilitate further innovation in teaching and curriculum.
* Outline any other activities undertaken to make your school more inclusive.

1. Create innovative school environments based on inclusive best practice and Universal Design for all schools to consider in facility planning and design for students with disabilities.

* Outline the innovative and inclusive elements in the proposed project through references to research and/or the seven Universal Design principles referenced in Section 5 - Resources.

Funding will be prioritised on the basis of these criteria and the extent to which each application meets them so that, ultimately, students with disabilities are enabled to participate on the same basis as all students

The Victorian Government must responsibly prioritise and balance the needs of all applicants.

Please note that the aims of the Inclusive Schools Fund are broad and that participation in the Fund is not directly linked to participation in the Department’s Program for Students with Disability.

## Example projects

The following are examples of projects that would be considered under the Inclusive Schools Fund. Schools must consider the impact of and address any issues associated with the proposed projects on their facilities entitlement (see [Facilities Schedules](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sc/sites/Infonline/Facilities%20Schedules/Forms/AllItems.aspx) [restricted access]).

### Indoor inclusive learning spaces

Funding may be provided to create learning spaces that engage all students and focus on improving the social and emotional wellbeing of students. This includes flexible areas that can cater to a number of different learners and are innovatively linked with school programs.

### Outdoor sensory areas

For a number of students, a learning place that addresses sensory or learning needs can be an appropriate adjustment. These spaces are areas where students can voluntarily go to and need to be supervised at all times. Demonstration of how the sensory area will benefit all students and connect in with teaching practices is ideal.

### Quiet and supportive re-engagement spaces

Some students require options for individual learning spaces when they need to decrease sensory stimulus and overload, to assist in de-escalating or attending to tasks. This may be through subdividing larger spaces into more contained learning spaces. Proposed works should be simple (e.g. does not affect support walls) and must factor in asbestos removal costs where relevant.

## Out of scope

* Projects above $200,000
* Information Technology costs
* Staffing costs

Please note the following upgrades are out of scope for the Inclusive Schools Fund:

* modifications to make a facility compliant to the relevant disability legislation and standards – applications for these modifications can be made through the Accessible Buildings Program (please see below)
* loose furniture and specialist disability equipment (e.g. specialty chairs and toilet frames)
* significant capital works projects (e.g. demolitions, new buildings), as these are subject to the State Budget process
* the purchase of Relocatable Buildings which would extend or increase the number of school buildings
* maintenance funding for wear and tear of existing compliant facilities and/or works
* reimbursement for works already completed.

### Accessible Buildings Program

The Authority manages the Accessible Buildings Program which provides infrastructure modifications to schools to make it easier for students, parents and staff members with a disability to have access to education facilities.

These modifications ensure schools and the Authority are compliant with the relevant legislation and standards. Applications to the Accessible Buildings Program must meet the strict program criteria to be considered for funding.

For more information, see the Authority’s [Accessibility Policy](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sc/sites/Infonline/Policies%20Guidelines%20and%20Procedures/Accessibility_Policy.docx) or [Accessible Buildings Program Guidelines](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/needs/guidelinesaccessiblebuildingsprogram.pdf).

# Application process

Applications should demonstrate how projects will build and enhance a school culture of inclusion as well as enhancing the participation of specific students with disabilities.

A panel including representatives from each Region, the Authority, and the Disabilities and Additional Needs Unit will assess applications and provide recommendations to the Minister for Education for approval.

## How to make an application?

Schools are invited to submit applications to the Authority with a proposed infrastructure project that will promote inclusive school environments at a school.

Successful projects from previous rounds are listed here: <http://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/Pages/Inclusive-Schools-Fund.aspx>

**Applications for Round three will close at Midnight on Friday 2 June 2017.**

The application process for the Inclusive Schools Fund is now online via the “Smarty Grants” system.

[APPLY FOR ROUND 3 OF THE INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS FUND HERE](https://depteduearlychilddev.smartygrants.com.au/InclusiveSchoolsFundRound3)

(http:www.manage.smartygrants.com.au

You can make changes to your application any time until the closing date or until you submit your application.

Applications for funding should outline an infrastructure project that is innovative, based on best practice research and should demonstrate how the school will be more inclusive for all students.

Applications must address each of the criteria. Applications that do not complete each section of the application form will not be considered for funding.

## Costing and delivering the successful projects

Schools should include an *estimated* cost only of their project scope in the application.

After the successful projects are announced, the Authority will work with the schools and regional offices to fully cost the project and develop the scope of works.

Schools that receive funding for complex projects must not commence works; these projects will be managed by the Authority.

Grants for low complexity projects will be approved at the Authority’s discretion. Once schools receive grant funding, they may commence project works.

### Standards

Works will be undertaken in accordance with the:

* Building Code of Australia
* Australian Standards
* [DET Building Quality Standards Handbook](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/infrastructure/building-quality-standards-handbook.pdf)
* Disability (Access to Premises – Building) Standards 2010

# Resources

Schools must use research that is from a reputable (i.e. peer reviewed) source. This may include medical or psychology journals, research undertaken by occupational or physical therapists or research on inclusive school facilities from other education jurisdictions.

## Universal Design principles

* Equitable use
* Flexibility in use
* Simple and Intuitive use
* Perceptible Information
* Tolerance for error
* Low Physical Effort
* Size and Space for Approach and Use
* More information on this can be found in the Authority’s [Building Quality Standards Handbook](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/infrastructure/building-quality-standards-handbook.pdf)

## Department of Education and Training information

* [Disability Discrimination Act guidelines for Student Support Services](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/collaboration/SSS/SSS%20Guidelines/Disability%20Discrimination%20Act.aspx) [restricted access]
* [Disability Standards for Education eLearning](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/Services/Schools/Pages/Disability-Standards-for-Education-eLearning.aspx)
* [DET Building Resilience: A Model to Support Children and Young People](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/resilienceframework.aspx)
* [Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/studentengagementguidance.aspx)

## International Resources

* [Designing for disabled children and children with special educational needs](http://www.ase.org.uk/documents/bb102/bb102.pdf)
* [Resource lists from the National Clearinghouse For Educational Facilities](http://www.ncef.org/school-construction)
* [Including Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Schools in Ireland (OECD)](http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/centreforeffectivelearningenvironmentscele/42168831.pdf)
* [The 7 Principles of Universal Design](http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/)
* [Universal Design of schools and classrooms](http://www.heart-resources.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Universal-design-of-schools-and-classrooms.pdf)
* [Universal Design for the 21st Century: Irish and International Perspectives](http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/Conference-Proceedings/Universal-Design-for-the-21st-Century-Irish-International-Perspectives/)

# Contacts

## Central DET Office

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## Victorian Regional Offices

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **South-Western Victoria Region** | |  | **North-Western Victoria Region** | |
| Footscray | 8397 0300 |  | Coburg | 9488 9488 |
| Geelong | 5225 1000 |  | Bendigo | 5440 3111 |
| Ballarat | 5337 8444 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **North-Eastern Victoria Region** | |  | **South-Eastern Victoria Region** | |
| Glen Waverley | 8392 9300 |  | Dandenong | 8765 5600 |
| Benalla | 8392 9500 |  | Moe | 5127 0400 |