School Capital Projects
Project Managers - Frequently Asked Questions

About this information sheet

This information sheet is designed to provide answers to common questions about project managers for school capital works projects under the Government’s revised capital works policy.

This information sheet will be regularly updated to respond to queries from schools.

For updated information please visit:

1. Do we need a project manager for our capital works project?

Depending on the size and complexity of your school’s project, different project manager models will apply.

If your project has a budget exceeding $5 million it is a requirement of funding that you engage a separate independent project manager and architect for your project. This may also apply where a project is deemed to be particularly complex or high risk by the Director of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) Infrastructure and Sustainability Division.

The project manager must be suitably qualified to help you ensure your project is delivered to the agreed scope and required standards, and within the budget and agreed timeframes.

For all other projects, you may choose to engage a separate project manager, or consider engaging an architect who will also assume project management responsibilities.

2. How does this differ from the previous capital works process?

Under the previous capital works process, in many cases the architect engaged on projects also carried out the role of project manager. Subject to the thresholds and requirements outlined above, in most cases schools will now be required to engage a separate independent project manager and architect.

The new process ensures that in larger and more complex projects, project managers and architects will be solely dedicated to performing their respective responsibilities. This will assist in delivering complex projects on time and on budget.

3. What does a project manager do?

- Your project manager is your partner in your building project, and will be your first point of contact during the commencement, design and construction phases.

- The project manager works in the interest of the school to ensure the project is planned, monitored and managed within the agreed scope to deliver the best possible outcome for your school community.

The project manager is responsible for ensuring:

- any issues and concerns raised by the school are addressed in a timely fashion throughout the building project

- all project risks and issues are assessed and managed proactively

- the architect delivers the project in the timelines agreed to in the contract

- the design of the project meets the needs of the school and can be delivered within the budget provided
• construction costs, including all variations, are managed within the budget
• the Department’s reporting requirements are met throughout the project, including project expenditure and progress
• you are consulted appropriately if issues arise that require changes to the scope of the project or extensions of time for completion
• all plans, construction manuals and any training required are provided to your school at the end of the project
• builders rectify any defects during the defects period.

4. What is a ‘suitably qualified’ project manager?

Project managers must be registered on the Victorian Government’s Construction Supplier Register (CSR) to be qualified to manage government funded capital works. This is a Victorian government register which lists project managers, architects and other construction professionals for engagement on projects across State Government departments and agencies.

CSR registration requires firms to demonstrate that they have the experience as well as the technical and financial ability to deliver government construction projects.

Ideally, project managers should have experience in delivering projects of a similar size and scope, and experience in delivering successful capital works projects for schools.

5. Can we choose our project manager?

Your involvement in the selection of a project manager will vary depending on which model of project management you have selected.

If you have chosen the School-led model, you may choose any project manager as long as they are registered on the Victorian Government’s Construction Supplier Register (CSR).

The Department will provide you with a shortlist of recommended registered project managers for you to consider based on their experience, the size and scope of your project, and their capacity to undertake the project given current work commitments.

You may wish to add to this list based on your local knowledge or your understanding of the specific requirements of your project.

If you have chosen the Partnership model, you will be jointly responsible with the Department for selecting an appropriate project manager.

The Department will still provide you with a shortlist of recommended registered project managers, and you may still add to this list.

If you have chosen the Department-led model, you will have input and be consulted about the appointment of the project manager; however the ultimate decision will rest with the Department.

The Department will select suitable project managers for consideration based on discussions with you on the particular needs of your project.
6. How is the project manager appointed?

Once potential project managers have been shortlisted, if you have selected the School-led or Partnership model, your school will have the opportunity to interview your preferred candidates, with the assistance of the Department, before selecting your chosen project manager.

The Department can assist you with advice on the issues that should be covered through the interview process.

Submissions and interview results are evaluated using an evaluation framework to inform your final decision. The Department can provide you with the appropriate templates to assist in completing your evaluation.

7. Who signs the contract for the project manager?

The Department’s Infrastructure and Sustainability Division will sign the contract under delegated authority from the Minister for Education.

8. When do we need to appoint a project manager?

If the full funding for your project has been approved, you will need to select a suitable project manager as soon as possible after you enter the commencement phase of your project.

It is essential that the project manager is involved from day one to assist you in matters such as:

- planning the project assisting in selecting and appointing a suitable architect (where a separate architect is required)
- refining the project brief and scope of works developing a project budget commencing work on site conditions to be considered.

Where funding has been approved for planning only, you are only required to select an architect to undertake planning works. Once funding for the remainder of your project has been announced, you may need to select an independent project manager subject to the requirements outlined in point 1.

9. Who is responsible for payment of the project manager?

The Department holds the funding for the project and is responsible for payments to consultants such as project managers. This is the case whether the project is being built under a School-led, Partnership or Department-led model.

Fees for the project manager and the architect will be factored into your school’s project budget at the beginning of the project.
10. What proportion of the budget should be held to meet project management costs?

In general, you should allow approximately 2-3 per cent of your budget to meet project management costs. The Department can assist in formulating an indicative budget for your project, including proportions of funding to be allocated for project management, planning, design and construction.

It is important to note that every aspect of your capital works project must be met within the total announced budget.

Schools should be aware that any variations made to the scope of the project during the capital works process may result in additional project costs, including cost for works, consultant fees, project management fees, and delay costs.

11. What is the role of the program manager, as opposed to the project manager, under the new model?

The program manager is an organisation employed directly by the Infrastructure and Sustainability Division to manage the overall state wide capital works program, and co-ordinate project planning, design, construction, and adherence to budgets.

The program manager plays a review and monitoring role throughout the capital works process, providing advice to the Department on the feasibility of achieving proposed plans and designs within assigned budgets.

The program manager also monitors the progress of construction and expenditure to ensure that quality standards are met and that variations to the scope of projects do not result in budget overspends.

For more details on the specific responsibilities of the program manager throughout a capital works project, refer to Capital Works Procedures Manual.

Other questions?

If you have questions which are not covered above, please contact the relevant Program Team Leader from the Infrastructure and Sustainability Division:

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