School Capital Projects
General - Frequently Asked Questions

About this information sheet
This information sheet is designed to provide answers to common questions about capital works projects.

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

For updated information please visit:

1. What are the main phases of a capital project?
Capital works projects move through three phases:

Phase 1: Commencement and planning – this includes engagement of professional consultants including a project manager and architect, and the development of your initial project scope, budget and timelines. During this phase you will also be required to decide on which management model you wish to use for your project – School-led, a Partnership approach, or Department-led. For more information on the selection of a management model, see the fact sheet on Management Options for Schools.

Phase 2: Design and tender – during this phase the detailed design is produced by the architect to enable the project to be tendered to a builder.

Phase 3: Construction and handover – the final phase is when works are concluded and reviewed before your school takes over the building.

2. What support can the Department offer our school?
The Department has a great deal of expertise when it comes to infrastructure projects in schools. No matter which management model you choose, the Department will support your school with advice about:

- recent innovations in school designs and the links with learning and teaching
- the engagement of the project manager and architect
- the planning and construction stages
- developing a scope of works that can be delivered within a budget
- joint use opportunities and processes
- Government requirements for procurement and building standards.

3. How do we achieve the best educational outcome for our project?
Your school’s educational vision will guide the design of your project. Your school’s vision will act as a brief for the architect to develop ideas for the project.

4. Do we need a project manager?
Yes. It is standard practice to engage a project manager to help you ensure your project is delivered to the agreed scope and required standards, and within the budget and agreed timeframes.

Depending on the size and complexity of your school’s project, different project manager models will apply. For more information on project management models and project managers in general, see the fact sheet on Project Managers - Frequently Asked Questions.
5. What does a project manager do?

A project manager will ensure:
- any issues and concerns raised by the school are addressed in a timely fashion throughout the building project
- the architect delivers the project in the timelines agreed to in the contract
- the design of the project 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 site plans, construction manuals and any staff training for the operation of the facility are provided at the end of your project
- builders rectify any defects during the defects period.

6. 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)* in the appropriate education category, depending on the level of funding for your project.

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

The Department will provide you with a shortlist of recommended registered project managers 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 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.

7. Do we need an architect?

Yes. A qualified architect will provide your school with expert design options and ensure that your project meets all current building codes and legislative requirements.

8. Can we choose our own architect?

The engagement of an architect needs to be undertaken in accordance with Government procurement requirements. This involves selection of three potential architects and a transparent selection process.

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

If you have chosen the **School-led model**, you may choose any architect as long as they are registered on the *Victorian Government’s Construction Supplier Register (CSR)* in the appropriate education category, depending on the level of funding for your project.

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

The Department will provide you with a shortlist of recommended registered architects 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 architect.

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

If you have chosen the **Department-led model**, you will be consulted about the appointment of the architect, however the ultimate decision will rest with the Department.

The Department will select suitable architects for consideration based on discussions with you on the particular needs of your project.

9. **Who signs the contract for the project manager and/or architect?**

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

10. **Who pays for the architect and project manager?**

Fees for the project manager and the architect will be factored into your school’s project budget at the beginning of the project.

It is important to note that no additional funding can be provided by the Department to meet project management or other costs outside of the total budget provided for your project.

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

Payments will be made to consultants and contractors on receipt of documented progress reports confirming successful completion of the capital works stages.

Details of the payment process can be found in the **Capital Works Procedures Manual**.
11. Can we choose our own builder?

Yes, as long as the builder is registered on the Victorian Government’s Construction Supplier Register (CSR). This is a Victorian government register which qualifies builders, 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.

Builders will submit tender proposals for your project outlining their capacity to undertake the work.

The Department will provide you with advice on the suitability of shortlisted builders based on their experience, the size and scope of your project, and their capacity to undertake the project given current work commitments.

12. Can our project’s scope change?

Yes. Your plans and scope may change during the design process to ensure you can achieve the best possible scope of works within the budget allocated.

Any changes you make must be within your project budget. No additional funding can be provided by the Department to meet additional costs resulting from changes to your project’s scope.

13. When will our project start?

Your school’s project can start as soon as your school decides which management model it would like to use.

14. How long is it likely to take?

Planning a project in readiness for tender can take eight to ten months.

The tender period can take two months and construction time depends on the size of the project.
15. What things does our project funding need to cover?

Your project budget needs to cover all of the costs of your project including:

- planning and design development
- construction of the building
- external works and landscaping
- connection of external services
- furniture and fittings
- information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and equipment
- costs of tendering
- fees for project management, architects and other professional staff e.g. for surveying and geotechnical services.

Your budget will also need to include a contingency amount so that you can meet any unforeseen costs. The Department will provide your school with further information about how project budgets are structured, including notional allocation of funds to the different categories.

16. Can my school contribute additional funds to the project?

Yes. You need to make this decision early on, so that the architect can design the projects with certainty around the budget.

You may also choose to add extra funds once the project is complete e.g. for furniture and equipment.

Other questions?

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

**Barwon South Western, Gippsland, Western Metropolitan**

Don Burns

T: (03) 9637 3108  M: 0412 410 701

E: burns.don.j@edumail.vic.gov.au

**Eastern Metropolitan, Hume, Northern Metropolitan**

Doug Harnetty

T: (03) 9637 3053  M: 0419 622 159

E: harnetty.doug.j@edumail.vic.gov.au

**Grampians, Loddon Mallee, Southern Metropolitan**

Phillip Trengove

T: (03) 9637 3130  M: 0408 271 451

E: trengove.philip.s@edumail.vic.gov.au

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