

# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION EQUIPMENT BOOST FOR SCHOOLS (2018)



BLIND AND LOW VISION TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY



As part of the Inclusive Education Equipment Boost for Schools, the Department is investing in equipment and technology that will support students who are **blind or partially sighted** to fully access and participate in **school-based learning**.

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## OVERVIEW

In 2018, the Victorian Government is giving schools extra resources, guidance, access to specialist expertise and support to embed inclusive education in all aspects of school life for students with disabilities and additional learning needs.

The Blind and Low Vision Technology Library is part of the \$12 million Equipment Boost for Schools initiative supporting inclusive education practices in Victorian government schools through three discrete funding streams:

### Flexible

Dedicated funding of \$5,000 provided to all schools through the Student Resource Package (SRP) for specialised equipment and assistive technologies to support a review and refresh of school-level inclusive education practice during Term 3, 2018.

### Specialised

An opportunity for schools to apply for high-value and/or highly specialised equipment and assistive technologies to meet the needs of individual student(s) or support improvements in whole-of-school inclusive education practice.

### Blind and Low Vision

Targeted supports for students who are blind or have low vision through the Statewide Vision Resource Centre (SVRC) Technology Library.

The Department of Education and Training (the Department) has developed this guidance to assist schools to apply for specialised equipment and assistive technology to support their students who are blind or have low vision.

Through this stream, the Department is:

- investing in equipment and technology that will support students who are blind or partially sighted to fully access and participate in school-based learning
- giving schools the opportunity to apply to access equipment which will address an identified need and will have a profound impact on student participation, learning and achievement
- providing teachers and allied professionals with a short term loan of specialised equipment for the purposes of training and student support.

This guidance supports applications under the Blind and Low Vision stream.

## STATEWIDE VISION RESOURCE CENTRE (SVRC)

The Statewide Vision Resource Centre (SVRC) is a service of the Department of Education and Training, supporting inclusion and achievement for Victorian students who are blind or have low vision. It provides:

- transcription of learning materials into accessible formats
- professional development and training for education professionals
- specialised teaching programs for eligible students
- specialised equipment and technologies for schools, via the Blind and Low Vision Technology Library
- the Educational Vision Assessment Clinic, in partnership with the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

For more information, see:

[Statewide Vision Resource Centre \(SVRC\) website](#)

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

Inclusive education means that all members of every school community are valued and supported to fully participate, learn, develop and succeed within an inclusive school culture. This includes making reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities and additional learning needs.

Data shows that Victorian schools make adjustments for 19 per cent of students because of a disability or an additional learning need. This would be approximately 115,000 students<sup>1</sup> in Victorian government schools, and this suggests that every government school may receive benefit from specialised equipment and assistive technologies that supports their capacity to deliver inclusive education.

The Equipment Boost for Schools supports Victorian government schools with dedicated funding for specialised equipment and assistive technologies. This comes at a time when schools are asked to review and refresh inclusive education policies and practices via the [Inclusion Boost](#).

Specialised equipment and assistive technology supports inclusive education practice by:

- removing barriers to access to curriculum content
- supporting full participation of students in learning activities
- supporting students to demonstrate knowledge and strengths at assessment
- allowing students with and without disabilities and additional learning needs to participate and learn together in the same classes/environment.

The Equipment Boost for Schools funding model aligns with the SHARE Principles of Inclusive Education. The model provides schools with flexibility to collaborate with students, parents, carers, teachers and support staff to tailor equipment and technology needs to the unique requirements of their school and students in line within these principles.

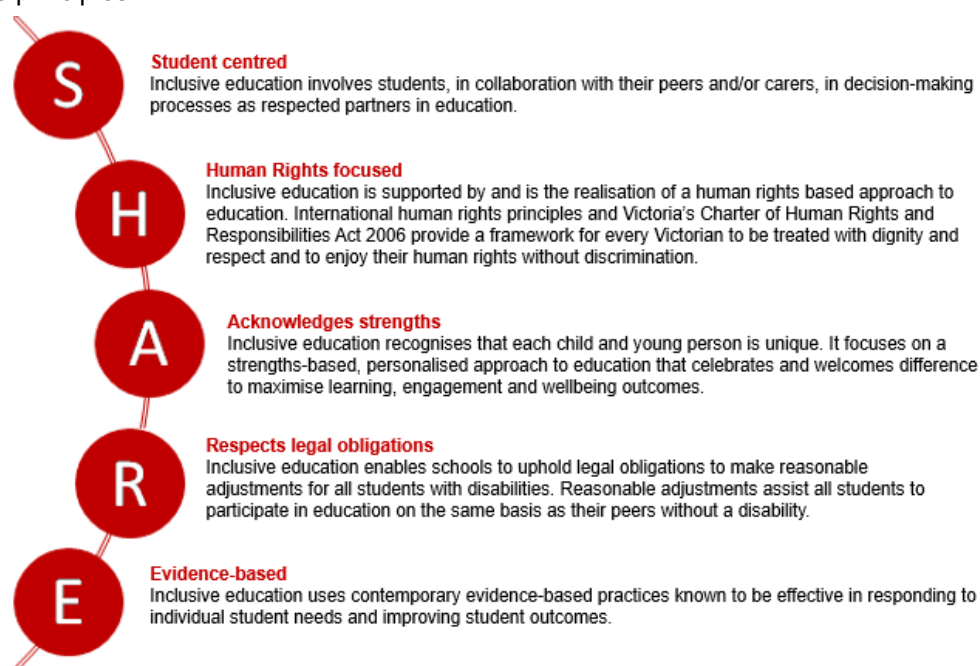


Figure 1. SHARE Principles of Inclusive Education (developed based on feedback captured in 2017 during public consultations on the Department's Education for All inclusive education policy).

<sup>1</sup> Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for Students with Disabilities, 2017 & Department of Education and Training February School Census, 2017

## BLIND AND LOW VISION TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY

Blindness and vision impairment are low-incidence disabilities that affect a small number of students currently attending Victorian schools. The impact of vision impairment can be profound, but with high-quality teaching and reasonable adjustments, including the provision of appropriate technology, students who are blind or have low vision can achieve learning outcomes on-par with their sighted peers.

The Department's Statewide Vision Resource Centre (SVRC) provides supports, including the provision of a range of technology options, for students who are blind or have low vision through its Blind and Low Vision Technology Library. SVRC procures items to be part of this library, based on the identified demand from schools.

Through the Equipment Boost for Schools, SVRC will receive additional funding to continue, and expand support for students who are blind or have low vision in Victorian government schools. This replaces the annual Equipment Grants previously provided to schools to purchase essential equipment for students with vision impairments not supported through any category of the Program for Students with Disabilities.

The initiative aligns with the four essential elements of the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) by building Professional Leadership and Excellence in Teaching and Learning, as well as promoting Community Engagement in Learning and Positive Climates for Learning.

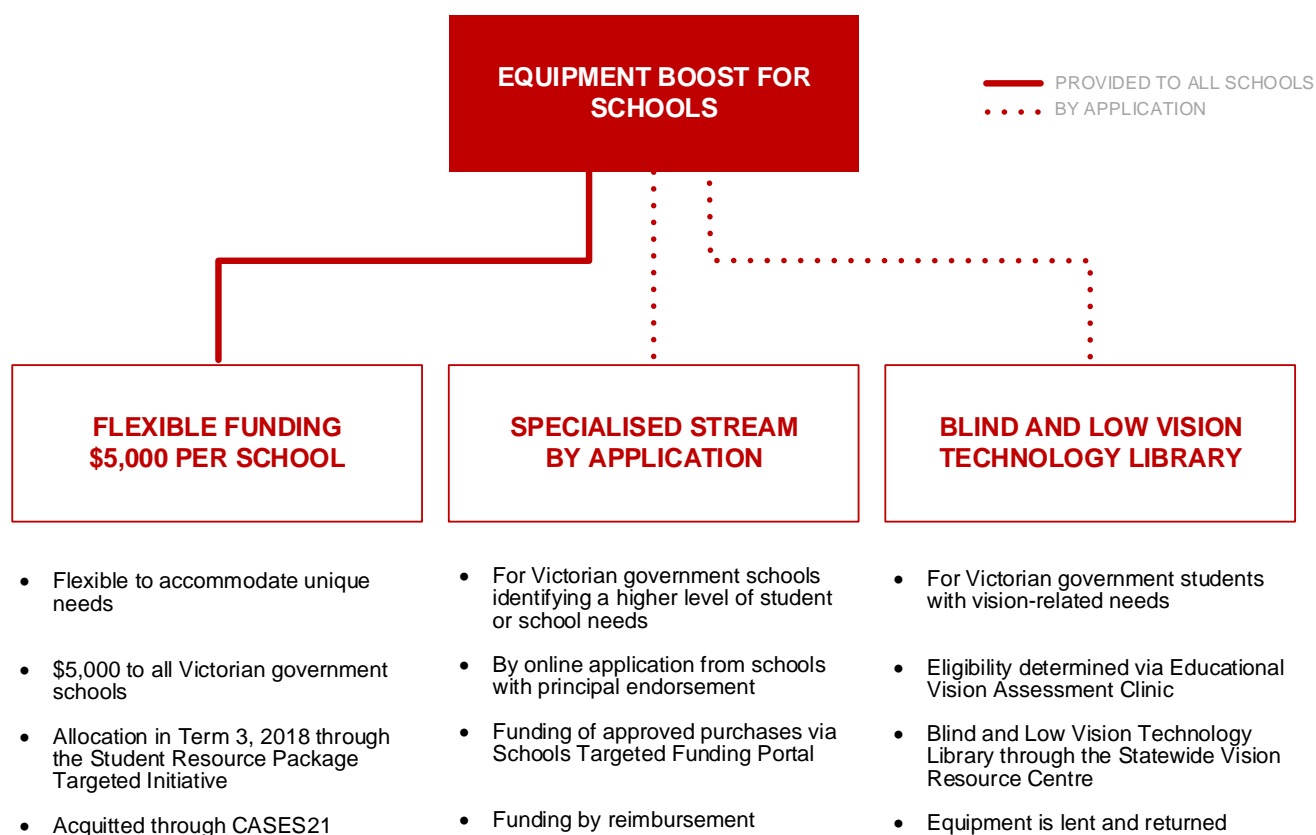


Figure 2. The Equipment Boost for Schools three-stream initiative in 2018.



## WHAT IS BEING PROVIDED?

Through this initiative, specialised equipment or assistive technology will be provided to address an identified vision-related need within the school and will have a demonstrated impact on students' access, participation and/or learning at school. This includes all aspects of school life, including classroom learning, co-curricular activities and access to recreational opportunities, including Outside School Hours Care.

Where applicable, support for maintaining loaned equipment and staff training in the use of this equipment will be provided by the SVRC. Staff working with eligible students can also apply to borrow equipment for professional learning and student support.

No funding is provided directly to schools through this initiative. All equipment will be procured, owned and managed through the SVRC Technology Library. Specialised blind and low vision equipment lending is not dependent on other funding provided through the Program for Students with Disabilities.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Equipment under this program will be lent out to Victorian government schools, following the assessment of the suitability of applications by the Department. Applications must include a description of and quote for the requested equipment, a report from the student's visiting teacher (Vision) and recent evidence of the student's vision condition, as outlined in **Appendix A**.

Eligibility for this program will be determined by the Department's Educational Vision Assessment Clinic<sup>2</sup> (EVAC). EVAC is staffed by a team of specialists including a paediatric ophthalmologist and orthoptist from the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital and education officers (specialist educators in vision impairment) from SVRC. The EVAC assessment includes a clinical eye assessment at the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital and a functional vision assessment at the student's school. EVAC is also used to determine eligibility for the Department's Visiting Teacher service and for all of the services provided by SVRC.

Non-government schools are not eligible to apply.

## HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be completed online at <https://inclusivedgrants.smartygrants.com.au/>

There is no requirement for the application to be completed by a specific individual or role within the school. Instead, schools are advised to select the most suitable person to complete the application based on their own circumstances. In most instances, this person will be the student's visiting teacher (Vision), but it can also be a classroom teacher, the school principal or another school staff member. The application form will ask schools to nominate a contact person in relation to the application.

Schools must provide evidence that their principal is aware of, and supports, the application. This can be done by ensuring the school principal signs the Visiting Teacher Report.

Applications will close at midnight on **Friday 17 August 2018**. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Schools may upload additional documentation to the online application form.

Schools can make changes to their application any time until the closing date or until they submit their application.

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<sup>2</sup> In exceptional circumstances, the Department can determine whether to lend equipment to a school for a student who has not yet been seen by EVAC, based on clear evidence, including a recent ophthalmological assessment.

## PRINCIPLES AND SCOPE

**While schools have the flexibility to apply for equipment that best suit the needs of their student(s), the following principles apply:**

- No funding is provided directly to schools through this program
- Equipment must:
  - directly support inclusive education practice within the school or in school-related activities
  - be consistent with the Victorian SHARE Principles for Inclusive Education (Student centred, Human rights focused, Acknowledges strengths, Respects legal obligations and Evidence-based)
  - be within the scope of the initiative.

In scope	Out of scope
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Specialised equipment</li> <li>✓ Assistive technologies</li> <li>✓ Staff training to effectively integrate new equipment and technologies purchased under the initiative into the school's programs and practices</li> <li>✓ Extended maintenance plans for new purchases of equipment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Equipment that can present a risk of physical harm or danger within the school environment if not appropriately supervised or individually prescribed</li> <li>× Equipment that is essential to meeting students' medical and/or safety needs and is provided elsewhere</li> <li>× Equipment readily provided elsewhere (for example, equipment provided under other departmental programs, or reasonable and necessary supports funded through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS))</li> <li>× Specialised equipment and technology for students in non-government schools</li> <li>× Equipment or technologies already purchased</li> <li>× Permanent infrastructural improvements and modifications to school buildings or grounds</li> <li>× Consumables such as braille paper, braille tape, tactile stickers, stereo/PIAF paper</li> <li>× Funding directly acquitted to schools (for example, for staffing costs)</li> <li>× Glasses and eyewear</li> <li>× Learning programs</li> <li>× Student support hours or program costs.</li> </ul>

## COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

Schools must complete the online application at <https://inclusiveedgrants.smartygrants.com.au/>. In completing this application, schools must upload the following:

### 1. A completed Visiting Teacher Report<sup>3</sup> (including principal endorsement)

A template of the Visiting Teacher Report can be found [here](#).

The Visiting Teacher Report must outline how the student's vision impairment impacts them at school, and how the recommended technology will support their learning and engagement.

In completing the report, the visiting teacher (Vision) is strongly encouraged to provide supporting documentation. This may include professional advice in relation to the student's needs, such as a formal assessment by a clinician or technology consultant. Where possible, the report should include existing evidence (for example, clinical assessments/recommendations, and applications for the Program for Students with Disabilities). The report should also explain how the requested equipment was identified as the most suitable solution to address the identified need, including details of any alternative options that were considered and why they were not suitable.

In the report, the visiting teacher (Vision) is required to provide details of any other sources of funding that have been considered to address the identified need, including details of any other applications for funding that have been made for the requested equipment.

The Visiting Teacher Report must be endorsed by the student's principal. A scanned copy of this report must be uploaded to the online application.

### 2. Written quotes

All applications must include at least one written quote for the requested equipment. Higher value items will require additional quotes, if required by the Department's [procurement policy and procedure](#). A scanned copy of the quote/s must be uploaded to the online application.

### 3. Recent evidence of the student's visual condition

Recent evidence of the student's visual condition should be attached to applications. This may include the student's Educational Vision Assessment Clinic (EVAC) Report, generally no more than three years old<sup>4</sup>. It can also include a recent ophthalmological report.

### 4. Additional documentation, as required

Any additional evidence that is necessary to support applications should be attached. This could include a technology or learning media assessment, or a recommendation or prescription for a specific low vision aid.

<sup>3</sup> In exceptional circumstances (for example, when a student does not receive support from a visiting teacher), the Department can determine whether to allow someone other than a visiting teacher to complete this report.

<sup>4</sup> EVAC reports that are more than three years old will only be accepted where the student has an eye condition in which there is no chance of a change in the student's visual acuity and field over time.



## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

### **New or second-hand equipment**

The SVRC will determine whether a successful applicant is provided with new or second-hand equipment, based on the availability of equipment at the time. Preference will be given to re-lending existing equipment, when available. SVRC will thoroughly check second-hand equipment prior to reassignment, to ensure it is in good working order.

### **Maintenance and repair**

Where possible, newly purchased equipment will include extended warranties for repair and maintenance. When maintenance and repair is required, schools will be responsible for liaising directly with the supplier, with support from the SVRC Technology Library Coordinator.

In cases where equipment is no longer within warranty, reasonable repair and maintenance costs will be covered by SVRC, so long as it is clear that the school and parent have made every effort to ensure this equipment has been used appropriately. To apply for maintenance or repairs, contact [vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au)

### **Replacing equipment**

When there is a continuing student need, it is expected that any loaned equipment should be used for as long as it can to adequately meet this need. If equipment is no longer able to carry out its original purpose, the school should contact [vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au) to request a replacement. Replacements will only be provided when SVRC is satisfied that the equipment no longer provides its intended function, and that the school and parent have made every effort to ensure this equipment has been used and stored appropriately.

### **Misuse, wilful damage or loss of equipment**

Schools, students and families are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure that the equipment they are provided with is kept in good working order. If the equipment is broken or rendered inoperable through misuse or wilful damage, the school or family may be responsible for the costs of repair or replacement. SVRC will assess applications to repair or replace equipment following wilful damage on a case-by-case basis to determine who will be responsible repair or replacement. If equipment has been lost, misused or wilfully damaged, a detailed report should be provided, outlining what has occurred, to [vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au)

### **Training and professional learning**

Training (both face-to-face and online) in the effective use of specialised equipment will be provided through the SVRC. This training will be provided by technology specialists, both within SVRC and from external experts.

Equipment training will be provided to teachers and support staff who work with students who are eligible for an equipment loan. For information about upcoming training, or to request additional training that is specific to school needs, please contact [vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au)

## APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

### Assessment priorities

Following the application deadline, the Department will review the eligibility and appropriateness of each application. This review will ensure public funds are spent appropriately and that the purchase, repair and distribution of equipment is efficient, equitable and focused on achieving clear positive student outcomes. Priority will be given to applications:

- that best demonstrate that the requested equipment addresses an identified need within the school and will have a profound impact on students' participation and learning at school
- for equipment or technology that provides a substantial or extensive adjustment to individual students' access and participation in education on the same basis as students without disability
- that best demonstrate the expected impact of the requested equipment or technology
- that represents value for money and adds value to existing supports.

### Application outcomes

SVRC will contact successful applicants via email by the end of Term 3, 2018.

Once an application has been approved, the school must:

- sign and return the principal and parent/carer equipment loan agreements, which will be provided by SVRC
- coordinate the pickup or delivery of any loaned equipment.

SVRC will notify unsuccessful applicants of the outcome of their application. Individual feedback on unsuccessful applications will be provided on request.

### Ongoing management of equipment

- Schools should note that equipment and technology will remain the property of the SVRC and must be managed in compliance with the SVRC loan agreement
- Ongoing management of all equipment and technology must be in compliance with relevant Department policies.

## EQUIPMENT FOR TRAINING PURPOSES

Equipment and technology is available for loan to school staff and visiting teachers, generally for a short period of time, for the purpose of training and student support. To apply, teachers or allied professionals should submit a [Request for Loan Form](#), outlining the reasons why a technology loan is required and the expected length of the loan. Evidence should also be provided with the request. Applications must be endorsed by the staff member's principal or manager and submitted online at <https://inclusiveedgrants.smartygrants.com.au/>

Please note:

- equipment for training purposes will only be lent to teachers and allied professionals who work directly with one or more eligible students
- equipment such as embossers or printers that are primarily used to support a student should be applied for via the student's application.

## FURTHER SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

For Equipment Boost for Schools guidance and implementation resources, see:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/equipmentforschools.aspx>

For information on the Equipment Boost for Schools Blind and Low Vision Technology Library, contact:

**Statewide Vision Resource Centre Blind and Low Vision Technology Library**

Inclusive Education Professional Practice Branch, Regional Services Group

Web: [www.svrc.vic.edu.au](http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au)

Email: [vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Phone: 03 9841 0242

For assistance with the online application process through SmartyGrants, contact:

**SmartyGrants Service Team**

Email: [service@smartygrants.com.au](mailto:service@smartygrants.com.au)

Phone: 03 9320 6888

## APPENDIX A – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must meet all of the following eligibility criteria.

Criterion	Supporting Information
1. The student has been assessed as eligible for blind and low vision supports by the Department's Educational Vision Assessment Clinic (EVAC)	The student's EVAC report <sup>5</sup>
2. The application includes at least one written quote for the requested equipment	Quotes
3. The application includes a <a href="#">Visiting Teacher Report</a> outlining how the student's vision impairment impacts them at school, and how the recommended technology will support their learning and engagement	Completed Visiting Teacher Report <sup>6</sup>
4. The application includes recent evidence of the student's visual condition	<p>The student's EVAC report that is less than three years old<sup>7</sup></p> <p>OR</p> <p>A recent ophthalmological report</p>
5. The application is endorsed by the school's principal	Visiting Teacher Report signed by the student's principal

<sup>5</sup> In exceptional circumstances, the Department can determine whether to lend equipment to a school for a student who has not yet been seen by EVAC, based on clear evidence, including a recent ophthalmological assessment.

<sup>6</sup> In exceptional circumstances (for example, when a student does not receive support from a visiting teacher), the Department can determine whether to allow someone other than a visiting teacher to complete this report.

<sup>7</sup> EVAC reports that are more than three years old will only be accepted where the student has an eye condition in which there is no chance of a change in the student's visual acuity and field over time.