



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Education**

# Local Schools Community Fund Guidelines

— 2019

## At a glance

Applications open:	25 July 2019
Applications close:	5:00 pm AEST, 30 September 2019
Eligibility:	Government, Catholic and independent schools
Funding:	Between \$1,000 and \$20,000
Projects:	Small scale projects and associated costs
Guidelines:	Version 1 (July 2019)

*Opportunity through learning*



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The document must be attributed as the 'Local Schools Community Fund Guidelines'.

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## Definitions

These definitions are for the purposes of these guidelines.

**The Act:** Refers to the *Australian Education Act 2013*.

**Approved authority:** Each school has an approved authority, which is approved under the Act:

- for a government school, the approved authority is the State or Territory government.
- for a Catholic or independent school, the approved authority is a body corporate that is approved by the Minister for a school.

**Campus:** A location of a school, which has multiple locations.

**The committee:** the Local Advisory Committee, which is to be formed by each Federal Member of the House of Representatives for their electorate.

**Electorate:** Federal electorate boundaries, which are the current boundaries as specified at <https://electorate.aec.gov.au/>.

**The Fund:** the Local Schools Community Fund.

**Goods and Services Tax (GST):** The GST is a broad-based tax of 10 per cent on the supply of most goods and services sold or consumed in Australia.

**Government school:** means a school that is conducted by or on behalf of the government of a State or Territory.

**Minister for Education:** Refers to the Australian Government Minister for Education.

**MP:** Federal Member of the House of Representatives.

**The Regulation:** Refers to the *Australian Education Regulation 2013*.

**School:** Refers to a primary school, secondary school or combined school.

**SchoolsHUB:** Refers to the online portal used by schools, which contains the Fund application form. Schools seeking to complete and submit an application form must be registered on SchoolsHUB.

## Purpose of the guideline

1. These guidelines set out the policy and processes for administration and delivery of the Local Schools Community Fund (the Fund).
2. These guidelines are not a stand-alone document and do not cover the entire obligations of approved authorities and eligible schools under the Fund. The guidelines should be read in conjunction with the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act), the *Australian Education Regulation 2013* (the Regulation) and relevant reference material issued by the Australian Government Department of Education (the department).
3. The Australian Government reserves the right to amend these guidelines as necessary.
4. These guidelines and other information about the Fund, including any changes to the guidelines, can be found on the department's website at [www.education.gov.au/local-schools-community-fund](http://www.education.gov.au/local-schools-community-fund).
5. This document sets out:
  - eligibility criteria
  - how to apply for funding
  - how applications for funding will be assessed
  - how successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified
  - responsibilities and expectations regarding the Fund.
6. Schools should read this document carefully before completing and submitting an application.

## About the Fund

7. The Australian Government has announced funding of \$30.2 million in 2019–20 to provide up to \$200,000 to each of the 151 federal electorates under the Fund.
8. For the purpose of section 69A of the Act, the Fund is prescribed under Part 6 of Schedule 1 to the Regulation.
9. The Fund is open to all schools—government, Catholic and independent—in receipt of Commonwealth recurrent funding for 2019 under the Act. The purpose of the Fund is to benefit students and assist established schools to meet their priorities through the contribution of funding for small scale projects and their associated costs.
10. Funding is only available for the 2019–20 financial year.
11. Funding is not available from the Australian Government to meet ongoing costs incurred by schools and approved authorities from approved projects under this Fund.
12. The department is responsible for administering the Fund.

13. For the purposes of this document, while individual schools may seek funding for, and deliver, projects, it is the approved authority for the school, as defined under the Act and the Regulation, which has responsibility for the school and accountability for the use of the funding.

## **Community consultation**

14. A Member of the House of Representatives (MP) will notify schools within their electorate of the Fund, the availability of these guidelines and the online application form.
15. Schools should identify their projects in consultation with their local school community, which includes established bodies at the school level such as School Boards, Parents and Citizens or Parents and Friends Associations.
16. Schools are required to declare on the application form that they have notified their approved authority before submitting an application. Schools should adhere to the requirements of their approved authority.
17. MPs in each electorate are responsible for forming a Local Advisory Committee (the committee), consisting of at least four members (including the MP), that will assess applications from schools within their electorate.
18. MPs will need to ensure that the government, Catholic and independent school sectors are all represented on the committee.
19. MPs will need to have finalised their committee arrangements prior to considering applications.
20. The committee composition should also consider the following:
  - gender diversity
  - appropriate experience in public governance and administration
  - experience and knowledge of the local community / school community
  - conflict of interest (see 'Conflict of Interest' section).

## **Funding available**

21. Each electorate has total funding of up to \$200,000 that can be allocated to successful applications that are approved by the Minister for Education. A higher amount may be determined by the Minister for Education at their discretion.
22. There is no minimum or maximum number of projects that can be funded in an electorate.
23. Schools can apply for funding for one project between \$1,000 and \$20,000. Where a school is composed of multiple campuses, the school or campus may submit an application for each campus to fund a project between \$1,000 and \$20,000.
24. The funding amount can be for the total cost of the project, or part of the cost where the school contributes an amount.
25. All funding amounts are exclusive of Goods and Services Tax (GST).

## Eligibility criteria

26. In order to be eligible to apply for funding, a school must be in receipt of Commonwealth recurrent funding for 2019 under the Act.

### Eligible funding activities

27. Projects will be for small scale capital and non-capital initiatives. Projects may include, but are not limited to one or more of the following components:
- a) master-planning
  - b) small scale extensions/refurbishments
  - c) installation of computer or ICT facilities/equipment/software
  - d) playground and sporting equipment
  - e) shade structures
  - f) landscaping
  - g) procurement of musical facilities, furniture, computer equipment (e.g. digital whiteboards), library resources
  - h) air-conditioning
  - i) measures to target student wellbeing
  - j) counselling or youth mental health support
  - k) excursions for students from remote areas
  - l) additional English as a second language support for refugee students
  - m) specific facilities for students with a disability in a school.
28. Funding is not available for the following:
- a) Projects for which retrospective approval is sought.
  - b) Projects where the majority of the use will be by overseas students or any other students who would not attract funding under the Act.
  - c) Projects that are principally for pre-primary education, i.e. for children below the prescribed state/territory school starting age, or where the facility is not in a formal school setting (for example, an Early Learning Centre attached to a school).
  - d) Ongoing costs incurred by schools and approved authorities from approved projects.

## How to apply

29. For an overview of the application, assessment and approval process, see Attachment A.
30. The online application form will be available on SchoolsHUB at <https://schools.education.gov.au>.
31. Applications may include more than one project component.
32. Applicants must be a registered user (with the role of Application Officer) in SchoolsHUB.
33. Schools can amend applications in SchoolsHUB any time prior to the closure of the application period.

## Application dates

34. Applications open 25 July 2019 and close at 5:00 pm AEST on 30 September 2019.

## Assessment criteria

35. Schools should address the assessment criteria in their application. The committee will use this information as the basis for their assessment.
36. The assessment criteria are:
  - who will benefit from the project
  - the expected benefits of the project for the school community
  - how the project provides value for public money
  - whether the project would proceed without this funding.
37. Schools will need to provide assurance that the project will be completed by 31 December 2020 and identify what consultation has occurred with their local school community to identify the project.

## Application assessment

38. Once the application period closes, the department will:
  - undertake eligibility and completeness checks of the applications
  - for government schools, provide details of applications to state and territory governments for their information
  - for Catholic and independent schools, provide access to details of applications to approved authorities, through SchoolsHUB
  - provide applications to the committee for assessment and recommendations. The committee will be provided with details of all applications from schools within their electorate.

39. Each committee will be required to submit a signed recommendation report to the department by 15 November 2019 which includes the following information:
- the composition of the committee, confirmation that the committee has applied the considerations listed in these guidelines and any declared conflicts of interest
  - confirmation that all schools in the electorate were notified and provided with the opportunity to apply for funding
  - an assessment of projects against the assessment criteria, identifying:
    - projects recommended for funding (up to a total of \$200,000 for the electorate)
    - a ranked list of suitable projects (but not recommended for funding due to full allocation of available funds)
    - projects not recommended for funding.
40. The department will submit each committee's recommendations to the Minister for Education for consideration.

### **Project approval**

41. The Minister for Education will review projects recommended by each committee.
42. Approval of projects will depend on the number of eligible quality applications received, the relative merits of applications, the amount of available funding and each committee's recommendations.
43. Decisions of the Minister for Education are final.

### **Notification of approval**

44. The Minister for Education will notify each MP in writing of the outcome of project applications within their electorate in early December 2019.
45. The department will then notify approved authorities and schools of the outcome of all project applications in early December 2019. Schools can commence approved projects once notification has been received from the department.

### **Public announcement of funding**

46. The Minister for Education may make public announcements about the Fund at any time and inform schools about the Fund.

## Managing funding

### Funding conditions

47. In order for approved authorities to comply with their obligations under the Act and Regulation, they must, among other things:
- a) spend the funding only on the approved project and its associated costs
  - b) spend or commit to spend funds received, including any interest earned, on the approved project within the year in which it is paid
  - c) ensure that the project is completed to a satisfactory standard, and within a reasonable time
  - d) keep full and accurate records in a form that will permit comprehensive information to be provided to the Commonwealth if required in accordance with the Act
  - e) allow the Commonwealth to inspect the project
  - f) meet the Commonwealth recognition requirements for the Fund (see 'Recognition Requirements' section).

### Payment of funds

48. Funds will be paid by the Commonwealth to state and territory governments, who will pay the funds to the approved authority of a school.
49. The Commonwealth will pay 100 per cent of the funds from the start of the 2020 calendar year, after project approval.
50. Where a project has been completed and there are unspent funds, the unspent funds may be returned to the department by offsetting from future payments to the approved authority.

### Funding variations

51. In exceptional circumstances, a school may seek a variation to their approved project. In this instance, schools should contact the department.

### Cancelled projects

52. If a project for which funds have been paid is subsequently cancelled, the funds allocated to the cancelled project will be offset from future payments to the approved authority. If a school wishes to cancel a project, they should contact the department in writing immediately. The Commonwealth may re-allocate the offset amount to other projects.

### Administration expenses

53. Schools and approved authorities can use up to five per cent of funds to meet the costs of administering the Fund. Funds must not be used for expenses relating to:
- security to obtain, or comply with, any form of loan, credit, payment or other interest; or
  - the preparation of, or in the course of, any litigation.

## Administration and reporting

54. Schools are required to provide a project closure report to the department upon completion of their project, outlining the benefits to the school and confirming the final cost of the project.
55. The financial acquittal of funds paid will be completed by the school's approved authority within their Acquittal Certificate (section 34 of the Regulation) as per the usual arrangements for funding provided under the Act.

## Recognition requirements

56. Schools must meet the following Australian Government recognition requirements for the Fund:
  - acknowledge the Australian Government's funding contribution in announcements and other publicity regarding the project
  - ensure that school communities are advised directly about assistance received from the Australian Government by such means as school newsletters.

## Records and information provision

57. Approved authorities must keep records relating to all income and expenditure of funds received in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and generally acceptable accounting practices. These records must be kept for at least seven years.
58. Approved authorities must keep adequate records to ensure:
  - financial accountability obligations are met
  - obligations under the Act are satisfied.

## Conflicts of interest

59. A conflict of interest can be real (or actual), apparent (or perceived) or potential.
60. A conflict of interest will occur if an individual's (or organisation's) private interests conflict with their roles and responsibilities under the Fund.
61. In their application for funding, the applicant must declare any conflicts of interest and describe how that conflict will be managed.
62. Once applications have been received by the department, if a school or approved authority then identifies a real, apparent or potential conflict of interest or that one might arise regarding the Fund, the school or approved authority must inform the department in writing immediately.
63. Committee members must declare any conflicts of interest to the committee and the department, including details of how these conflicts were managed during the assessment process.

## Banking requirements

64. The approved authority must ensure that adequate funds are available at all times in order to meet all project-related payment obligations as they fall due.

## Compliance with laws

65. Schools must comply with any relevant statutes, regulations, by-laws and requirements of any Commonwealth, State, Territory or local authority. These include, where applicable, relevant anti-discrimination laws and the:

- *Building Code 2016*
- *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)*
- *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*
- *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth)*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth).*

NOTE: In providing any data or any other information to the department pursuant to the Act or Regulation, giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under Section 137.1 of the *Commonwealth Criminal Code*.

## Privacy and freedom of information

66. The department is subject to the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* and the *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)* and any information schools/committees submit to the department will be subject to both of these pieces of legislation. Please also note that any documents a school/committee submits to the department may be subject to freedom of information applications.

## Contact information

67. Contact details for MPs are available at [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au).

68. The department can be contacted via email at [localschoolscommunityfund@education.gov.au](mailto:localschoolscommunityfund@education.gov.au).

## Further information

Further information about the Fund can be found at [www.education.gov.au/local-schools-community-fund](http://www.education.gov.au/local-schools-community-fund).

- Milestone
- MPs
- Schools
- The department
- Minister for Education

## Attachments

### Attachment A – Overview of application, assessment and approval process

