

**Frequently Asked Questions Version 4, issued  
17th January 2025**

<b><u>Query</u></b>	<b><u>Response</u></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These questions and responses should be read in conjunction with the revised Applicant Guidelines, issued on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024</li><li>• New questions and responses have been highlighted in green</li><li>• If you are unable to upload your application, or if you are having issues with your online application, please contact Pobal immediately</li></ul>
<b>Application Process</b>	
How do I apply?	Applications must be submitted via the online application on the Early Years Hive. Applications received in any other format will not be accepted. It will not be possible to submit any additional information or supporting documentation once the application has been submitted.

<p>Can you view all tabs without completing the required details?</p>	<p>Yes, you can move freely between all tabs, however you must click save if you haven't completed all mandatory fields. You will be permitted to save a draft of your application form and come back to it, at a later time, however you will not be permitted to submit the application unless all mandatory fields have been completed. We strongly advise that you double check your application form, and all attachments before you submit the form. It will not be possible to submit additional information or edit your application form once it has been submitted.</p>
<p>When will the applications open?</p>	<p>Applications are now open</p>
<p>When will applicants be notified of the outcome of their application?</p>	<p>The closing date is 27th January 2025. Eligibility checks and appraisals will take a number of weeks so it is anticipated that applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application in March, subject to Ministerial approval.</p>
<p>Will there be a similar round of funding in 2026?</p>	<p>There are currently no planned future capital funding schemes</p>
<p><b>Applicant Guidelines and Timelines</b></p>	

<p>It was stated applications would open end of Nov-closing date 20th Jan. Given it will not be open for applications till later this week, 2 weeks later than anticipated, will the closing date still be 20th Jan?</p>	<p>The Building Blocks Extension Scheme was initially announced in December 2023 and further information was provided July. Because the funding is required to be spent in 2025, the closing date needs to be kept as close to the beginning of the year as possible to allow for this. Given slight delays in the release of application documents, one additional week has been provided for applications so the closing date is now 27th January.</p>
<p>When will the applicant guidelines be made available</p>	<p>Applicant guidelines have now been made available.</p>
<p><b>Minimum Requirements</b></p>	
<p>What is the minimum number of places that need to be created.</p>	<p>The minimum number of places per strand can be found in the applicant guidelines of the strand you are applying for. This will also be dependent on the amount of funding you are applying for.</p>
<p>Is the required capacity based on Full Time Equivalents</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>What are the minimum requirements in relation to hours/weeks?</p>	<p>Service must confirm that they will deliver the additional places for full day care (more than 5 hours per day), and 42 weeks per year for the term of the charge.</p>

<p>Can an ECCE only service or a SAC only service apply?</p>	<p>ECCE only and SAC only services are eligible to apply only if the intention is to use the funding to create places for the 1-3yr old cohort, for full time care for a minimum of 42 weeks per year. Once the works are complete, revised and updated appropriate Tusla registration must be put in place.</p>
<p>Can I apply for funding to refurbish my existing premises, e.g. replace windows, upgrade existing facility?</p>	<p>No - the scheme has been put in place to deliver additional full-time capacity for 1-3 year olds.</p>
<p>Can I use funding to expand my baby room or my SAC room?</p>	<p>The funding must deliver the required number of additional places for the 1-3 year old cohort in line with the grant amount. If baby places or SAC places are additional to these minimum requirements, funding can also be used for these.</p>
<p>If a community service is intending on buying another ELC premises that is currently operational, would this be deemed an increase in places for the purposes of Building Blocks?</p>	<p>It would be up to the applicant to make the case in the application that the places would otherwise be lost if this is the case. The fee rates from the applicant service would apply, rather than the fees in the existing service.</p>
<p>Can ECCE age be included in the increase in numbers e.g. full day care for 2 years and 8 months etc?</p>	<p>The aim of Building Blocks is to tackle the estimated undersupply of full-time places, particularly within the 1-3-year-old (pre-ECCE) age cohort. Places for children in other age brackets will also be eligible for funding, once the service is creating at least the minimum numbers of places in the priority age cohort as outlined in the Table in Section 1 of the Applicant Guidelines.</p>

Which strand to apply for	
Does "Extension" include a building on an existing childcare site that will NOT be attached to the existing building?	If a service is applying under the construction strand, they must own the land on which it is to be constructed. If a service is applying under the extension strand, the additional capacity does not have to be physically connected to the existing premises (e.g. installation of modular rooms). It must however be capable of supporting a charge. In this regard, they must engage with the owner of the premises.
I am considering applying under the private part of the grant. My premises is at capacity but I have purchased a unit 3 doors away. It has full planning permission and I would love to cater for 1-3 year olds in this new unit. Am I eligible to apply?	A private service may only apply for funding to physically extend their premises. The grant cannot be used to fit out or reconfigure a new premises.
Where an existing childcare service is looking to construct additional capacity adjacent to the existing premises, can they apply under the Construction grant scheme?	Yes. Community services may apply for funding to construct a premises as long as they own the land on which the premises is to be constructed. The new premises must be used exclusively for ELC/SAC services. They must also ensure they satisfy the requirements of the scheme.
<b>Is my project eligible?</b>	

<p>Our setting facilitates care for children from 6 months of age. Care requirements for children from 6 months to 1 year are a huge demand in our area however we do not have sufficient space to facilitate it. Is it strictly spaces for children from the age of 1 year of age up that the grant is going to cover?</p>	<p>The funding must deliver the required number of additional places for the 1–3-year-old cohort in line with the grant amount. If baby places or SAC places are additional to these minimum requirements, funding can also be used for these.</p>
<p>Creche is proposing to purchase additional rooms to be built by the owner of adjacent site. He is prepared to build and sell extension (those rooms) to the creche. value will be up to €1.0m. If only one option to buy from owner of the site who will build the rooms can Procurement guidelines apply.</p>	<p>In order to be eligible under the purchasing scheme, the building must exist at the date of application.</p>
<p>We are a Not For Profit organisation. How do you suggest we raise the shortfall which we will face in our community playgroup, scheduled for demolition due to defective blocks?</p>	<p>Applicants must provide evidence of own funding, where the project value exceeds the allowable grant. This includes bank statements, evidence of credit facility or other. Services that cannot satisfy this requirement will not be recommended for funding. Some services may hold reserves and others may be in a position to access credit on the basis of the additional income that will be generated from the new places. It is a matter for the service applying to secure the additional funding.</p>
<p>Are defective blocks allowed to apply or is it sustainability? we have been advised to apply for building blocks by Pobal/CCC</p>	<p>If the applicant can meet all the requirements of the Building Blocks grant scheme then an application can be submitted.</p>

<p>Our building is scheduled for demolition and we are in temporary accommodation for safety reasons. Do we apply for this grant or is there another funding for us?</p>	<p>If the applicant can meet all the requirements of the Building Blocks grant scheme then an application can be submitted.</p>
<p>We are a community centre that provides space for our community creche. Can we apply for this grant to purchase a building to help them provide more spaces to deal with their waiting list?</p>	<p>Applicants must be existing Core Funding partner services, they cannot be third parties.</p>
<p>Can this funding be used to purchase a private service (That has exited core funding) by a community provider with the intent to bring back into core funding and running as community service?</p>	<p>If the applicant can meet all the requirements of the scheme then an application can be submitted. There is no information provided here that would preclude an application from this service.</p>
<p>We have an opportunity to Purchase a new building from an Approved Housing Body, would the OPW consider taking over the Building and for our service to Operate the Child Care?</p>	<p>This is not within the remit of this scheme.</p>

<p>The strands and grant value were not announced until this week, our plans are already submitted to the council, where are we supposed to get additional funding for the construction of a purpose built centre? At the moment we are SAC, we can't provide care for 1 to 3 and SAC without offering ECCE? Would additional funding be considered as some ECCE children are under 3?</p>	<p>Some information about the scheme was provided in December 2023 with further information in July 2024. From the outset it has been clear that the focus of this scheme is to provide additional places for children aged 1-3 (pre ECCE). In order to be eligible to apply for the scheme applicants must create full time places for 1-3 year olds.</p>
<p>We plan to extend our places by 33 for 1-3 year olds this will involve a new building onsite. But for ease of management and operation of the service - we plan to relocate the ECCE and SAC rooms to the new build and adapt the ECCE and SAC rooms in the current building - this will keep all 1-3 years olds in same building - is this ok?</p>	<p>If the project creates full time places for 1-3 year olds an application can be submitted. From the information provided, it appears the application is eligible</p>
<p>Where a Community Childcare Service plan to build a new building on their site, would this be considered an Extension or a Construction project.</p>	<p>This may be considered under the construction strand if the applicant owns the land on which the new building is to be constructed. The title to the property must be capable of supporting the registration of a legal charge (see section 4.8 Charges).</p>



<p>We have a vacant room at present that can accommodate 10 1-3 year old children but if we take them in we have no room to move children up along. Can we apply for the grant to extend our preschool room and therefore indirectly provide places for the 1-3 year olds</p>	<p>If the project creates full time places for 1-3 year olds an application can be submitted. From the information provided, it appears the application is eligible</p>
<p>If the purchase of a building could be possible in the grant and also if this purchased housed the older age group ECCE and Afterschool care and we used an existing room within the existing service for 0-3 year olds, would this be compliant for the application for creating 10 additional places 0-3 years?</p>	<p>The minimum number of new places required to be delivered for the purchasing scheme is 20 places. If the service can deliver at least this number of places, this project is eligible. The purchasing project does not have to directly accommodate the new 1-3 year old places if catering for other age groups of children in the extension will create the places for 1-3 year olds. However, please note that the Universal Design Guidelines must still be applied to the space accommodating the 1-3 year olds.</p>
<p>If we apply for this funding and say we are successful, would we be then allowed to apply to future funding?</p>	<p>There are no planned future capital funding schemes, and at this point cannot confirm this.</p>
<p>Why is there is a distinction between extension and building?</p>	<p>Services wishing to construct a premises are required to own the land on which the building is to take place whereas extension projects may be considered for leasehold properties. The scale of the projects is also anticipated to be different, with construction projects somewhat larger. The number of child places to be delivered per band of funding is equivalent across all strands.</p>

<p>If the extension being built is large could it become eligible for the bigger size grant?</p>	<p>The maximum grant values, project value thresholds and required number of places to be provided by band of funding have been agreed and will not be altered.</p>
<p>Will there be an option for a proposed private full day care service to access funding for a new service?</p>	<p>No, Private Providers can only apply for the Extension Grant funding.</p>
<p>We are hoping to build an extension for our preschool and afterschool and free up them rooms to cater for extra 1-3 year olds? is this allowed?</p>	<p>If the project creates full time places for 1-3 year olds an application can be submitted. From the information provided, it appears the application is eligible</p>
<p>For strand 4 - construction of a new premises there is a requirement for the applicant to own the site. If the site is shared with local primary school, can they apply? Can they apply with a long-term lease, or must they own the site outright?</p>	<p>For the construction grant, the applicant must own the site outright.</p>
<p>What type of equipment can be bought with the grant e.g. table, chairs, changing units, water trays etc. be bought?</p>	<p>Tables, chairs, changing units and water trays would not eligible unless built-in/fixed. These items would be considered movable fixtures and therefore not eligible.</p>
<p>Can a private service apply to become a community service and apply for funding to purchase a building?</p>	<p>To be eligible under the Purchasing Strand, applicants need to be a community service by the closing date for applications.</p>
<p>A community service wants to apply for an extension - they own the building, but the land is leased. There is 10 years left on the lease of the land. Does this make the service</p>	<p>In order for the charge to be applied, the premises and the land <b>must</b> be owned by the same party.</p>

<p>ineligible to apply for the extension or can the service proceed once they own the actual building?</p>	<p>Under the Extension strand, the owner of the premises must own the land on which the existing premises is situated. Under the Construction strand, the applicant must own the land on which the premises is to be constructed. Under the Purchasing strand, the successful applicant must own both the land and the premises. These requirements are to ensure a single Charge may be applied as set out in the Communique and the applicant guidelines.</p>
<p>Where a community childcare service wants to apply for a new build under the Construction grant scheme and the site they propose to build on is not owned by the service provider, is this service eligible to apply for the grant?</p>	<p>Under the Extension strand, the owner of the premises (whether a service provider or a landlord) must own the land where the extension is being proposed. Under the Construction strand, the applicant must own the land on which the premises is to be constructed. These requirements are to ensure a Charge may be applied as set out in the Communique and the applicant guidelines.</p>
<p><b>Charges</b></p>	
<p>Who funds the charges accrued while getting the plans and permissions?</p>	<p>Eligible professional fees incurred from 7/12/23 may be refunded to successful applicants.</p>
<p>I see that there will be a register of charge on the building, is there a similar register for sites in community-based projects?</p>	<p>A charge will apply to all successful applications</p>

<p>For a community service building on local primary school site where site ownership is not possible is a license agreement acceptable?</p>	<p>In order to apply under the extension strand the owner's permission is necessary and a charge will be applied. In order to apply under the construction strand the applicant must own the land and a charge will also apply</p>
<p>Is there any circumstance where a shorter lease will be considered</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p>Have to wait on meeting within the dioceses to get lease extended signed off so won't have it in writing until February. Is that ok?</p>	<p>A lease must have a minimum of 22 years unelapsed to be capable of supporting the charge. At the point of the application window closing the lease must therefore have a minimum of 22 years unelapsed. Longer lease lengths are preferable.</p>
<p>What is the minimum lease required to apply?</p>	<p>A lease must have a minimum of 22 years unelapsed to be capable of supporting the charge. At the point of the application window closing the lease must therefore have a minimum of 22 years unelapsed. Longer lease lengths are preferable.</p>
<p>If an existing service has a lien until 2026 (NCIP) can they still apply?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>If the provider wishes to sell on their business as a going concern prior to the 22 years, are they obliged to pay back a percentage of the grant money award. If the provider wishes to sell on their business and NOT to be used as a</p>	<p>The charge will be for a period of between 15 and 17 years. If the premises is disposed of during this period, the Minister may seek to de-commit the grant. It important to distinguish between the charge period and the lease length.</p>

childcare service at any time either before or after the 22 years, what are the implications?	
Service have planning permission to construct a new building on a site adjacent to the local school they can only get a long term lease on the land - are they eligible to apply?	The service must own the land on which the premises is to be constructed.
Where a service wishes to apply for a grant under the Extension strand, how long will the Charge be applied for?	A Charge will be applied for a period of 15-17 years. In order to support this Charge, there is a legal requirement that the applicant owns the premises or has a lease of 25 or more years with a minimum of 22 years remaining on the lease.
<b>Planning Permission</b>	
Can we apply this year for development of drawings / planning permission etc to be ready for 2026?	No, this scheme is for capital funding for 2025.
We have applied for planning permission but not approved yet. Should we be putting it out for tenders yet or wait for planning approval?	As part of the application, you must demonstrate that you are engaging with the planning process. You can submit your planning application number.
It is scored on readiness, how would services have gone ahead to get planning with no details available on the grant available and not sure if we would be eligible to apply?	Some information about the scheme was provided in December 2023 with further information in July 2024.

Is Planning Permission needed before application is made?	Evidence that you are engaged in the planning process must be submitted as part of the application process.
By engaging in Planning Process - would we need at least a Planning Permission number to show stage we are at?	Yes, or confirmation from the local authority that planning has been applied for.
Our service has been granted planning and fire cert- our application for disability access has been submitted, do we need that to be granted before we can apply?	No.
We have planning permission for a 2 room service but would need to reapply for planning for a third room to meet the eligibility criteria, should we reapply now or is our current planning sufficient for the purpose of the application?	You must demonstrate that you have started engaging with the planning process for the project for which you are applying.
Under Building Blocks is there a proposed timeline that applicants should be adhering to in relation to public procurement. An architect has been secured who will manage the tender process on behalf of the applicant. However, given the tight timeline for application, the applicant may not be in a position to receive any comparative architect quotes, however they can retain a paper trail of their attempts – will this suffice from a procurement perspective?	The applicant must ensure they have sought the necessary quotes to comply with Public Procurement requirements.

<p>If a private applicant is extending their service by building a large extension, are they still eligible to apply if the foundations are in place.</p>	<p>Service can apply for funding under the scheme - any works completed prior to award of funding will not be eligible for funding. The overall value of the project cannot exceed €650,000.</p>
<p><b>Project Execution Plan (PEP)</b></p>	
<p>When will the PEP be made available?</p>	<p>The template has been made available.</p>
<p>Is a costings prepared by a QS acceptable in the PEP?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>Is a building specification with floorplans required for the community extension strand?</p>	<p>Yes, and should be submitted as part of the PEP.</p>
<p>If you are purchasing a building do you need a PEP?</p>	<p>Yes, a PEP is a mandatory document for all strands of funding. If no upgrade works are required, this can be reflected in the PEP.</p>
<p>Do we need to follow procurement guidelines to find someone to do the Project Execution Plan?</p>	<p>In order for design team fees and expenses to be considered eligible expenditure, services must demonstrate that procurement guidelines have been adhered to.</p>
<p>Is it possible for an architect to be compensated through the extension grant, or would we need to pay them separately?</p>	<p>Professional fees are eligible expenditure, for successful applicants only.</p>
<p>Will the PEP be tailored towards individual services?</p>	<p>The template has been made available, it is the same across all strands.</p>
<p>Is there a minimum requirement of who needs to be on the design team?</p>	<p>The size of the design team is subject to the size and complexity of the proposed project. Smaller projects may only require the services of an Architect / Engineer with the assistance of a Quantity Surveyor. The roles of</p>

	<p>project supervisor design process (PSDP- Health &amp; Safety) and Assigned certifier (AC- Building Control) may be carried out by your Architect / Engineer. Please discuss with your Architect / Engineer.</p>
<p>Will OPW scoring matrix document be made available to service providers/CCCs?</p>	<p>Yes, it was made available with the applicant guidelines.</p>
<p>A service is hoping to purchase what was already an existing creche however, to accommodate the number of children required and to comply with various regulations, there will be a need for capital works when purchased. Should the quote include all: design fees, equipment, building work and purchase? Does the service need to get 5 quotes for the fit-out equipment separate to the capital work?</p>	<p>All costs outlined should be included in the PEP. The purchase of premises is not subject to procurement requirements. Professional services and the adaption of the premises may be subject to procurement requirements. All costs associated with the building adaptation should be included in the PEP and depending on the overall cost, will require either 5 tenders or e-tendering for the entire adaptation project. (See section 4.5 Procurement Requirements of the Applicant Guidelines).</p>
<p>Should the two independent valuations under the Purchasing Grant scheme be included with the PEP?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Where an architect develops the PEP for submission as part of the grant application, what costings should be included in the PEP and is it sufficient that an architect provides the costings?</p>	<p>Copy of a cost report prepared by a Quantity Surveyor is required. Architects may provide project budget costs in the case of relatively small extensions only. Project budget costs to be provided as elemental breakdown, i.e. Preliminaries, Demolition &amp; alterations, site works, super structure wall, floors, roof, steelwork, completion, wall, floors, roof. Electrical, mechanical, sanitary, fittings, etc.</p>



<b>Need</b>	
<p>In many areas we know there is an undersupply of places. This is without having additional housing developments coming on board. There may not be any new housing developments planned for the area, but there may still be a need.</p>	<p>An Estimated Demand Model will be the primary basis on which to appraise need. This is developed based on objective data about numbers of children and registrations. In addition, there is the opportunity for applicants to outline additional details that specify the need in their area.</p>
<p>What evidence is required for a waiting list?</p>	<p>It is up to each applicant to demonstrate the need in their area, this may include but is not limited to waiting list information.</p>
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
<p>Why can the grant not be available to projects over 1.5 million?</p>	<p>There is a limited amount of public funding available and in order to ensure a good mix of projects the €750,000 maximum grant and the €1.5 million maximum project size were put in place.</p>
<p>Are quotes and grants exclusive or inclusive of VAT?</p>	<p>The quotes should be inclusive of VAT with the VAT amount clearly outlined. If the applicant is registered for VAT the funding will be paid exclusive of VAT</p>
<p>Childcare services are not VAT registered.</p>	<p>The majority of childcare services are not VAT registered, but some are.</p>
<p>What would be repayment terms and conditions? Do we need to pay some interest on this grant?</p>	<p>There is no interest charged on the grant funding.</p>
<p>We are not registered for VAT - I assume we include our VAT costs within the Budget guidelines?</p>	<p>Correct.</p>

<p>Can a community service partly fund an extension project where the value is less than €500,000</p>	<p>It is open to the service to outline a rationale for why they are seeking less than they are eligible for and this will be considered as part of the appraisal process. We would encourage all services that are considering applying to engage with their local City or County Childcare Committee, who are there to support services in the application process.</p>
<p>Under the Purchasing strand, the Applicant Guidelines state two valuations are required. Where a service has numerous valuations with large differences, which two valuations should be included and should a price be agreed prior to submission of the application?</p>	<p>The purchase price should be agreed prior to submission of the application as this will determine the amount of funding required and the valuations should, where possible, be close to the price agreed and the current market value of the property. The application should include detailed specification of the property and sale price, and an agreement in principle with the vendor to purchase the building.</p>
<p>If 10 spaces are being created which is between €100,000 – €199,999, does this figure include VAT?</p>	<p>It should include VAT if not VAT registered, and exclude VAT if registered for VAT.</p>
<p>A private service is selling as a turnkey property. Everything is included in the asking price - staff, equipment, retention of current service users etc. Is this an eligible purchase?</p>	<p>The only eligible costs are the building and fixtures and fittings. Indirect costs such as the 'good will' of the business (retaining staff, current services users) are not eligible under the Building Blocks scheme.</p>
<p>If a service applies for Building Blocks to purchase a vacant premises to repurpose, do the fees need to be in line with the current fees in their existing service?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>If a community service is purchasing a private service, and the fees of the service they are proposing to purchase are higher than the applicant's service fees, can they charge the private service's fees?</p>	<p>No.</p>

<p>At what point does the tender process commence?</p>	<p>The tender process can commence prior to the submission of a grant application. Applications will be appraised on three criteria, one of which is 'Readiness to Complete the Project'. When appraising applications, the Office of Public Works will consider at what stage the tendering process is at and the readiness to progress the project. However, applicants must bear in mind that any costs incurred in the tendering process will not be reimbursed if unsuccessful.</p>
<p>Under the Purchasing strand, does the agreed purchasing price need to be a legal document?</p>	<p>No, at the time of application the applicant needs written evidence from the vendor on the agreed purchase price.</p>
<p>If an application is approved under the Purchasing Grant scheme, is the booking deposit on the chosen property an eligible expenditure under the grant?</p>	<p>The deposit is part of the purchase price so therefore may be considered eligible.</p>