

Building Blocks Expansion Grant Scheme 2024

Frequently Asked Questions

All applicants must read and be familiar with the [Applicant Guidelines](#). Within this guide there is detailed information relating to eligibility, the application process, funding and timelines.

Eligibility	Application	Funding	Timeline
#	Question	Answer	
1.	I am an SAC Only service. Can I apply?	<p>The scheme is open to all Early Learning and Care Services (ELC) and School Age Childcare Services (SAC) who confirm they will increase the number of places for 1- 3-year-old (pre-ECCE) age cohort in either full-time or part- time care for a minimum of 42 weeks per year.</p> <p>SAC service providers who intend to apply must demonstrate how they are expanding their service to meet the requirements of the scheme.</p>	
2	If a part time 38-week service intends to increase to 42 weeks, can they apply?	<p>Yes. A 38-week service may apply for this grant as long as the minimum requirements are met, which includes offering the mandatory additional full time or part time places for 42 weeks per year.</p> <p>For more detailed information on minimum requirements, please see Section 3.4 of the Applicant Guidelines.</p>	
3	If a service provider meets the minimum requirement for the 1-3 year old (Pre-ECCE) age cohort, can they also use part of the funding for the expansion of SAC?	<p>Yes. The scheme is open to all Early Learning and Care Services (ELC) and School Age Childcare Services (SAC) who confirm they will increase the number of places for 1- 3-year old (pre-ECCE) age cohort in either full-time or part- time care for a minimum of 42 weeks per year.</p> <p>Once the minimum requirements for the scheme have been met service providers are also permitted to expand services in other age cohorts.</p>	
4	Can a sessional service that intends to open Part Time apply?	<p>Yes. The scheme is open to all Early Learning and Care Services (ELC) and School Age Childcare Services (SAC) who confirm they will increase the number of places for 1- 3-yearold (pre-ECCE) age cohort in either full-time or part- time care for 42 weeks per year.</p>	
5	Are service providers committed to the fee on their fee table for 5 years after the last date of payment of the grant?	<p>On 3 April, information on existing fee tables will be examined to determine whether or not they meet the maximum fee thresholds required in order to be eligible for Building Blocks - Expansion Grant Funding.</p> <p>As a requirement of the scheme, only partner services are eligible to apply and services who are awarded this grant will be required to remain a Partner Service under Core Funding for 5 years from</p>	

		<p>the last payment of the grant, during which time the rules of funding relating to that programme will continue to apply.</p>
6	<p>On what date will the information on my fee table be examined</p>	<p>3 April. Information on the active Fee Table on 3 April will be examined to ensure that applicants are within the requirements for the maximum fee threshold. This assessment will form part of the decision making process.</p> <p>It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all information on the Fee Table is up to date on 3 April, and that fees included on Fee Table outline weekly fees.</p> <p>Amendments made to the Fee Table after this date will not be taken into consideration.</p>
7	<p>If I am meeting the priorities of the Building Blocks Expansion grant scheme in terms of creating full or part time places in the 1-3 year old (pre ECCE) cohort, but am not clear if we meet other criteria will my application still be considered</p>	<p>DCEDIY may use discretion in very exceptional cases to allow applications to be considered once the overarching objective of Building Blocks Expansion Grant Scheme may be met.</p> <p>Applicants must be aware that there is no guarantee that the application will be successful, and only successful applications will have applicable professional fees reimbursed.</p> <p>You should contact your CCC to discuss.</p>
8	<p>Will it be possible to submit an application after the deadline if we are still awaiting planning permission?</p>	<p>If planning permission is required for the project, applications must either include the planning permission number or confirmation from the planning authority that a planning application has been submitted.</p> <p>If planning permission is required and a valid planning application number, or proof of planning application is not submitted, then the application will be deemed ineligible. It will not be possible to submit any further information to support the application once the window for application for this funding is closed.</p> <p>Time delays should be factored into your project planning and timelines. Funding will not be released to successful applicants until a successful outcome in their planning application has been received and submitted to Pobal within 20 working days of the notification of offer of funding.</p> <p>The professional report must clearly state whether planning permission is required or not.</p>

9	What if I don't receive the professional report by the deadline?	<p>Applications submitted without a professional report will be deemed ineligible. It will not be possible to submit any additional information to support the application once the window for application for this funding is closed.</p> <p>A professional report is mandatory for both Private and Community applicants.</p>
10	I submitted my application, but now have additional documents to attach?	<p>It will not be possible to reopen the form to allow applicants to make amendments. No application forms, supporting documents or additional information will be accepted via email, hardcopy or through a request on the Early Years Hive.</p> <p>Applicants are advised to review the checklist of required documentation in section 7 of the Applicant Guidelines</p>
11	When submitting the lease agreement as part of the application, what period does this agreement need to cover?	<p>At application stage a rental/ lease/ licence agreement must be submitted with a date to June 2029. If a rental/ lease / licence agreement with a date to June 2029 is not available at application stage, please provide both the current rental/ lease / licence agreement along with a letter of intent, signed by both landlord and lease holder.</p> <p>For successful applications, a rental/ lease/ licence agreement with a date in place to June 2029, must be submitted to Pobal before the first instalment of funding is released.</p>
12	What is meant by "Letter of Intent"?	<p>A "Letter of Intent" in this context is a letter of confirmation from the landlord that an updated lease until June 2029 can be supplied to the service if their application is successful. When the property is not owned by the applicant, a rental/lease/licence agreement stating that the premises can be used as a childcare facility up to June 2029 must be submitted if successful.</p> <p>If this is not available at the time of the application, then the applicant must submit the existing rental/lease/licence agreement along with a letter of intent stating that the premises can be used as a childcare facility up to June 2029.</p> <p>The letter of intent should be signed and dated by both the landlord and the leasee . For successful applications, a rental/ lease/ licence agreement with a date in place to June 2029, must be submitted to Pobal before the first instalment of funding is released.</p>
13	Will services who apply for the Expansion Grant receive notification of the outcomes before the Extension Grant Scheme opens?	<p>Yes. The application form for the Expansion Grant Scheme opened on 22 February 2024 and the application for the Extension Grant Scheme will open later in 2024.</p> <p>Notifications are due to issue to all applicants on the outcome of their application for the Expansion Grant Scheme in Q2 of this year.</p>

14	What professions can produce the professional report required as part of the application?	<p>A professional report is mandatory for both Private and Community applicants. This report can be completed by a competent person including but not limited to registered architect, chartered engineer, registered quantity surveyor or building surveyors etc.</p> <p>Detailed information of what must be included in the professional report can be found in section 3.6 of the Applicant Guidelines</p>
15	Is it possible for a service to close for a short period to allow the project works to be completed?	<p>Service providers should demonstrate, through the professional report, how they have considered any operational risks that might arise in the delivery of this project. The report should also outline any planned contingencies to address risks or required closures in order to complete this project. Within the application, there contains a section in which you can confirm the potential disruption to the service while the works are being completed. <i>(Question 15 within the "Achievability" section of the Application)</i></p>
16	What kind of evidence can be attached to support the case for local need?	<p>Evidence of local need may include reference to or proof of the following: Waiting Lists/ Confirmation of new housing developments in area / demonstrable increase in demand / Recent increase population of the 1 -3 year old (Pre ECCE) age cohort in the area through migration or other / Confirmation of other local Early Years service providers closing.</p> <p>This list is not exhaustive.</p>
17	Is it possible to apply for additional staff amenities within this grant, where an increase in places requires more staff?	<p>Yes. If additional staff amenities are required to be put in place to facilitate additional staff to be employed to enable 1-3 year old (pre ECCE) places, then it is reasonable for these amenities to come within the scope of the grant..</p> <p>Please refer to Table 4.1 for eligible and ineligible expenditures before including costs relating to staff amenities to ensure their eligibility. Applicant Guidelines</p>
18	Can we tender for the construction project and use our own resources to engage with the architect for the design and planning application stage?	<p>Yes. The overall project costs cannot exceed €100,000. This includes professional reports and works. Additional costs incurred outside the project can be self funded.</p>
19	Where can we get more information on the e-tendering process?	<p>Please click the following link to get more information on the E-Tendering Process : Gov.ie - GOV.IE Procurement Guidelines eTenders – eTenders Website</p>

20	Is this grant only for internal renovations or could a small extension be submitted in this grant?	The Expansion Grant is focused on supporting the creation of additional places within the 1–3-year-old (pre-ECCE) age cohort. Once the total project costs do not exceed €100,000 and all other minimum requirements can be met then a small extension can be considered eligible for Building Blocks - Expansion Grant Scheme funding.
21	Does the application only require one professional proposal with costings?	A single Professional Report is acceptable; however all applicants must adhere to public procurement guidelines , and the eTendering process .
22	When will the first funding be issued for this grant?	A provisional timeline for payments can be located within the Applicant Guidelines under Section 8 . Please note that these dates are provisional and may be subject to change.
23	Is it possible to use this grant to purchase a prefabricated modular structure to increase capacity?	No. A prefabricated modular structure is listed under ineligible costs; however, it would be possible to apply for funding to renovate/upgrade an existing prefabricated structure on the basis that this premises is currently the premises from where the childcare service is being delivered.