

PRESS RELEASE



**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Minister O’Gorman announces €9 million in capital funding for “greener, warmer” early learning and childcare services

Tuesday 04 March 2023

- **Green energy and retrofit upgrade grants of €35,000 to €75,000 announced under the Building Blocks – Improvement Grant**
- **Building Blocks - Improvement Grant is part of a wider Building Blocks Capital Programme for early learning and childcare services under the National Development Plan**

The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’ Gorman, today announced the allocation of €9 million in grant funding for 141 early learning and childcare services under the Building Blocks - Improvement Grant.

Grants range from €35,000 to €75,000 across two separate strands: Green Energy and Retrofit.

Under the Green Energy Strand, grants are being provided for improvements to increase energy efficiency, utilising renewables where feasible, such as the installation of solar panels and heat pumps, insulation and water conservation measures.

The Green Energy Strand will support the Climate Action Agenda and the Programme for Government, which aim to transition to a carbon neutral economy by the end of 2050 and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030.

The Retrofit Strand will support existing services in need of upgrading. Eligible works include kitchen works and refurbishment, upgrading of sanitary facilities for children and adults, roof repairs/replacement, and upgrading of flooring.

Speaking about today's announcement, Minister O'Gorman said

"As every sector aims to reduce carbon emissions, in line with Ireland's Climate Action Plan, I am delighted that early learning and childcare providers across the country will be using these grants to install solar panels, insulate buildings and improve energy efficiency. This will mean greener, warmer buildings, with the added benefit of lower running costs for providers."

In addition, through the retrofit grant, providers will now have an opportunity to make small changes that can have a big difference, such as new floors, doors and kitchens."

The Minister also signalled that plans for the €45m Building Blocks - Capacity Grant and a €15m Building Blocks - Innovation Grant are in development, with details of the Building Blocks - Capacity Grant to be announced in the coming months.

Note for Editors:

The Building Blocks – Improvement Grant is broken into two strands, Green Energy and Retrofit. Applicants are only permitted to apply for one strand.

Eligible works under the Green Energy Strand include:

- works to reduce emissions and increase energy efficiency (BER rating). Improving the fabric and energy efficiency of an existing building
- utilising renewables where feasible and measures that improve ventilation
- installation of solar panels. Planning permission, if required, for the installation of solar panels only
- heat pumps (for example: air, ground or water source pumps), zoning of heating system
- water conservation (for example: water efficient equipment, harvest rainwater, grey water systems)
- efficient heat generators
- insulation of attic, walls (internal or external), floors, roof, dry lining
- pipe insulation
- solar thermal collectors/solar hot water collectors (installation of a larger hot water cylinder, ancillary works to house cylinder – not requiring planning permission)
- boiler upgrade
- electrical vehicle charging points for staff

Eligible works under the Retrofit Strand include the upgrade of electrical, plumbing, gas and heating systems to ensure they meet regulations and standards. Costs associated with installation, replacement and upgrade of areas that form an integral part of the building, for example:

- kitchen works and refurbishment

- upgrade of sanitary facilities for children and adults
- roof repairs/replacements
- insulation of roof, walls (internal or external), floors, attic
- replacement/repairs of windows
- external/internal door repair/replacement
- upgrade of flooring
- static wheelchair ramps
- stairways
- automatic doors
- installation of a lift
- electrical wiring
- electrical switches
- electrical distribution boards
- fixtures

**Issued by the Press and Communications Office at the Department of Children, Equality,
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