



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



pobal

government supporting communities

Building Blocks Capacity Grant Expansion Scheme 2024

Applicant Guidelines



**Rialtas na
hÉireann**
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

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1. Introduction

1.1 Building Blocks – Capacity Grant

The aim of the Building Blocks – Capacity Grant is to support Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) services to expand their existing facilities by creating additional quality early learning and care spaces. The aim is to tackle the estimated undersupply of full time and part 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 (please see next section for further information). The Building Blocks – Capacity Grant is part of a wider Building Blocks Capital Programme for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare under the revised National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP).

Funding will be split into **two** strands:

Expansion Grant Scheme:

- For the renovation or reconfiguration of the existing Early Learning and Care or School Age Childcare facility.
- Funding will be made available from early 2024 to applicants to fund renovations or reconfigurations of existing Early Learning and Care or School Age Childcare facilities, to create additional early learning and care places in areas of identified undersupply.
- In order to be eligible for funding services must commit to increasing their service provision by:
 - **a minimum of 5 places** for the 1-2 year old age group **and/or**
 - **a minimum of 6 places** for the 2-3-year-old (pre-ECCE) age group **and/or**
 - **a minimum of 6 places** in a combination of both age groups –
- Places must be in either full day or part time, for a minimum of 42 weeks per year.
- Places for children in other age brackets will also be eligible for funding once the minimum requirements are met.
- Projects of between €50,000 and €100,000 will be funded to deliver additional capacity, e.g. where services can renovate/upgrade existing space to cater for more children. This grant will be open to both private and community-based services, under the following conditions:
 - Private Providers can apply for funding between €25,000 (min) and €50,000 (max).
 - Community Providers can apply for funding between €50,000 (min) and €100,000 (max).
 - Match funding will be required for privately owned services, with a maximum contribution by the Department of 50% of total project costs. Match funding will not be required of community-led services.
- Total project costs must be outlined as part of the application and supported with quotes etc. Applications with total project costs exceeding €100,000 (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations) will be deemed ineligible.

Extension Grant Scheme:

- A larger scale extension grant, which will operate from later in 2024 and into 2025.
- Applications will open for service providers later in 2024 to commence larger-scale extension projects that will need to be completed in 2025.

- Projects between €100,000 and €500,000 will be funded.
 - Private Providers can apply for funding between €50,000 (min) and €250,000 (max)
 - Community Providers can apply for funding between €100,000 (min) and €500,000 (max).
- Priority will be given to the extension of full-time and part-time places within the 1-3-year-old (pre-ECCE) age groups, within areas of identified undersupply.
- Match funding will be required of private services, with a maximum contribution by the Department of 50% of total project costs. Match funding will not be required of community-led services.

Please Note

- Both community and private service providers may only be funded for **either** the Expansion Grant Scheme **or** the Extension Grant Scheme, therefore, successful applicants under the Expansion Grant Scheme will not be eligible to apply for the Extension Grant Scheme once it opens for applications.
- The application form for the Expansion Grant Scheme will open on 22 February. The application form for the Extension Grant Scheme is anticipated to open in Q4 2024.
- Where an owner has **multiple services**, the maximum number of applications that can be **submitted** is 2, per strand/ scheme. Only one application can be submitted per individual facility.

Applicants (successful and unsuccessful) who applied for Building Blocks- Improvement Grant Scheme operated in 2023 **are permitted** to apply for the Expansion Grant Scheme as long as all pre-requisites are met.

This document focuses on the Expansion Grant Scheme ONLY.

1.2 Overview of the Expansion Grant Scheme

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has designed the Building Blocks Capacity Grant – Expansion Scheme. The scheme will be administered by Pobal and is detailed in these guidelines. The scheme focuses on small-scale projects to increase capacity in the 1-3-year-old (pre-ECCE) age cohort for full day or part time places.

This grant will be open to both private and community-based services, however there will be different funding amounts and conditions for both. These are detailed below.

Private providers:

- Total project costs cannot exceed €100,000 (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations). Where total project costs are found to exceed €100,000, the application will be deemed ineligible.
- Can apply for funding amounts between €25,000 (min) and €50,000 (max) to renovate/ upgrade an existing premises to cater for quality additional early learning and care spaces. Private providers can only apply for 50% of total project costs.
- Private providers **must** contribute 50% of the total project costs applied for.

- The grant will be paid in 4 instalments. Grant spending must be matched with own funds as the project progresses. Instalments will be based on the value of 100% reported expenditure, split 50/50 between the grant and own match funding.
- Other public funding cannot be used to co fund this project.
- As part of the application process, private providers must demonstrate and confirm that match funding amounts are in place and are ringfenced for the purposes of this project and must confirm that the match funding will not be used for any other purpose. Please see section 3.4 for further information.
- Multi service organisations can submit a maximum of two applications per scheme. Only one application can be submitted per service.
- More details on payments and reporting can be found below in this document in section 6.2 and 6.3.

Successful applicants will be required to complete their projects before **31 December 2024**. Any expenditure incurred after this date will not be eligible for funding and may result in partial or full decommitment of funds.

Applicants will be required to report on expenditure periodically. Four payment instalments will be made to providers. Please see **Section 6** for more detailed information on payments.

Total project costs for private providers cannot exceed €100,000 (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations), inclusive of professional fees i.e. If total project costs or total value of quotes exceed €100,000 (including VAT), the application will be deemed ineligible.

Community providers

- Can apply for funding amounts between €50,000 (min) and €100,000 (max) to renovate/ upgrade existing premises to cater for quality additional early learning and care spaces.
- Community Providers **will not** be required to contribute match funding.
- Other public funding cannot be used to co fund the project.
- The grant will be paid across 4 instalments.
- Multi service organisations can submit a maximum of two applications per scheme. Only one application can be submitted per service.

Successful applicants will be required to complete their projects before **31 December 2024**. Any expenditure incurred after this date will not be eligible for funding and may result in full or partial decommitment of funds.

Applicants will be required to report on expenditure periodically. Four payment instalments will be made. Please see **Section 6** for more detailed information on payments.

Total project costs for community providers cannot exceed €100,000 (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations), inclusive of professional fees. If total project costs or total value of quotes exceed €100,000, the application will be deemed ineligible.

1.3 The Role of Pobal

Pobal has been appointed to administer the Building Blocks – Expansion Grant Scheme on behalf of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).

For more information about Pobal and what we do, please visit our website at www.pobal.ie/

Applicants can contact the Early Years Provider Centre (EYPC) with any queries by raising a service request on Hive under: **Building Blocks Capacity Grant – Expansion Scheme** and selecting the relevant sub-category. Alternatively, applicants can call (01) 5117222 for support with queries.

PLEASE NOTE: If applicants contact Pobal with an ICT issue within 48 hours of the closing date and time, Pobal cannot guarantee that the ICT issue will be resolved in time to submit the application.

2. Eligibility Criteria

2.1 Who is eligible to apply for Building Blocks – Expansion Grant Scheme?

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 group in either full-time or part-time care, and who also meet the following basic eligibility criteria:

1.	Service Reference Number	Have a Service Reference Number for the facility of the address from which the current provision of service is being made and which is the subject of the application.
2.	Tusla	Are a Tusla-Registered ELC/SAC service provider for the premises for which the proposed works will apply.
3.	Partner Service	Are a Partner Service i.e. in contract for Core Funding, at the time of application and if successful must agree to remain as a partner service for 5 years from the date of final payment of the grant. If the Partner Service withdraws a Core Funding contract before the end of this 5-year term, pro rata decommitments will apply.
4.	NCS/ECCE 2023/2024 Contract	Have an active NCS 2023/2024 or ECCE 2023/2024 contract with at least one child registered in the current programme call. For NCS, applicants must ensure that all steps of the registration have been completed (i.e., the claim has been confirmed by the parent).

If any of the criteria above are not met, the application form will not be made available on the Early Years Hive to the service provider.

Reminder:

- Both Community and Private services may only be funded for **either** the Expansion Grant Scheme or the Extension Grant Scheme.

- The application form for the Expansion Grant Scheme will open on 22 February, 2024 and the application for the Extension Grant Scheme will open in Q4 2024.
- Where an owner has **multiple services**, the maximum number of applications that can be submitted is 2 per organisation.

Only the Primary Authorised User (PAU) or PAU Delegate will be able to access and submit the application for Building Blocks – Expansion Grant Scheme. The application will **not** be visible to any other user of the Early Years Hive.

If applicants believe they are eligible to apply, are logged on to the Early Years Hive as the PAU or PAU delegate and the application form is not available on their Early Years Hive account, the applicant can contact the Early Years Provider Centre (EYPC) by raising a service request on the Early Years Hive under the programme: **Building Blocks – Expansion Grant Scheme** and selecting the relevant sub-category.

2.2 Who is not eligible to apply?

1. Service providers (community or private) who do not meet all the eligibility criteria.
2. Applicants wishing to improve the quality of their facilities or infrastructure without increasing the capacity for 1-3-year-olds (pre-ECCE) age group in the service for full day or part time care.
3. Services seeking a contribution towards a new greenfield site and construction of building.
4. Childminders.
5. Drop-in Centres.
6. School Age Childcare only service providers are not eligible to apply unless the purpose of the grant is to expand in order to provide Early Learning and Care places to the to the 1-3-year-old (pre-ECCE) cohort.

2.3 Maximum Fee Threshold

In order to ensure that Building Blocks investment does not result in the delivery of places that are unaffordable to most parents, this scheme applies a maximum fee threshold for applicant services. Applicants are required to confirm that the fees that they charge on 3 April 2024 for places do not exceed the maximum fee threshold for the relevant care type.

- The maximum fee threshold for full time care is €295 per week.
- The maximum fee threshold for part time care is €190 per week.

Further detail on the establishment of the maximum fee threshold and how it will be applied can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

In advance of any offers of funding being issued, a verification check will be performed against the Fee Table which is published on the Early Years Hive on 3 April, 2024.

In order for the verification to be performed all fee tables must indicate **weekly** fees for all session types.

3.Application Process

3.1 What does the application process involve?

Applications must be made via the online application form on the Early Years Hive. No application forms, supporting documents or additional information will be accepted via email, hardcopy or through a request on the Early Years Hive.

Some information on the application form will be pre-populated from the applicant's records on the Early Years Hive. If any of the details are incorrect, please contact the Early Years Provider Centre by raising a service request on Hive under the programme: *Building Blocks – Expansion Grant Scheme* and selecting the relevant sub-category.

The call for applications is a competitive application process. Your application will be in direct competition with all other applications received. Only applicants that meet all eligibility criteria and have submitted all the necessary documents will be considered for funding.

The application form must be completed in full. If applicants have not completed all mandatory questions, they will not be able to successfully submit the application form.



- On application, Private providers must provide evidence of their ability to provide match funding to the value of 50% of total project costs. Private providers must provide evidence that match funding is in place and must declare that the match funding will be ringfenced for the purposes of this project and that it will not be used for any other purpose.
- On application, both community and private providers must demonstrate how they are increasing the capacity of their full day or part time service to the 1-3-year-olds (pre-ECCE) age cohort.

3.2 Can applications be amended once submitted?

➤ **Before application submission:**

- Applicants will be able to edit, save and exit the application form as often as required whilst the application window is still open.
- When an application is still in Draft status, applicants will be able to cancel the application and start again.
- It is important to review the checklist of required documents which is contained in section 7 of this document before submitting your application.
- Submission of applications will only be permitted during the application window, and after the application window closes it will not be possible to submit late applications, amend submitted applications or provide additional supporting documents or additional information in support of the application.

➤ **After application submission:**

- 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.
- If applicants no longer wish to apply for the grant, it will be possible to withdraw the application. This can be done by contacting Pobal to withdraw the application by raising a service request on Hive under the programme: *Building Blocks – Expansion Grant Scheme* and selecting the relevant sub-category.
- **The first application submitted per Service Provider is final. For multi service organisations, the first two applications submitted are final.**
- It will **not** be possible to withdraw an application in order to submit an alternative application.

Please note

- **We strongly advise that applicants review the application for content and to ensure all documentation has been uploaded (please see the application checklist in section 7 of this document) in advance of submission.**
- **We advise applicants to ensure that the professional report includes all information referred to in the professional report checklist in section 3.6 of this document.**
- **Late applications, those mistakenly left in draft or those with errors will not be accepted. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the application is complete and successfully submitted by the application closing date.**
- **Service providers must ensure they have an up to date fee table submitted on Hive on 3 April 2024**
- **Pobal will not request or accept any further information from applicants during the appraisal process. All application forms will be appraised based on the information submitted.**

3.3 How can applicants prepare to apply?

- Have Early Years Hive log in details ready to enable access to the application form.
- Read this document and view the online guides which will be available on the Early Years Hive when the application process opens.
- **Include a mandatory professional report as this is a requirement of the application process.** Applicants must seek advice from a relevant professional and provide a professional report to support the application. If a professional report is not added as part of the application process, the application will be deemed **ineligible**. Professional fees will only be reimbursed to successful applicants, up to a maximum of 15% (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations) of the capital costs.
- Total project costs for either community or private providers cannot exceed €100,000 (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations), inclusive of professional fees i.e. if total project costs or

total value of quotes exceed €100,000 (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations), the application will be deemed ineligible. Professional fees included in the application will form part of the total project costs. See Section 3.6 for further details on a Professional Report.

- Include VAT status. Applicants who are VAT registered can apply for costs up to €100,000 exclusive of VAT (Community) or €50,000 exclusive of VAT (Private). Non-VAT registered service providers can only apply for costs up to €100,000 inclusive of VAT (Community) or €50,000 inclusive of VAT (Private).
- Ensure the proposed works are eligible for the grant. Please see section 4.1 for more information on eligible and ineligible expenditure.
- Have any mandatory documents, supporting documents and additional information ready. Please see section 3.5 for more information on mandatory documents.
- Have a planning permission reference number ready if planning permission is required.
- Applicants must give consideration to the potential impact of the proposed capacity increase on the planning permission which is currently in place for the facility.
- Must ensure adherence to the Early Years Services regulations.
- Seek quotations, ensure the quotations are detailed with itemised costing and directly related to the proposed works and the professional report.
- Adhere to [Public Procurement](#) guidelines. In any instance where public procurement guidelines have not been adhered to it may result in decommitment of funds.
- Be as concise as possible in preparing the proposal and information included in the application form.
- Allocate enough time to complete the application. It will not be possible to submit an application after the closing date.
- Outline any displacement of current services that may arise with the increased capacity funded with this grant. Displacement of current services may include discontinuation of specific service provisions to allow for another service type.
- If necessary, reference should be made to any disruption of services that will be required to complete the works, e.g. will the service need to close for a period?
- **(Private Providers only)** Evidence of dedicated match funding. Match funding must be ringfenced for this project and can only be used for this project.
- All service providers must ensure that they have an up to date fee table submitted on the Early Years Hive on April 3, 2024

3.4 What are the minimum requirements for the application stage of this grant?

The table below outlines some of the requirements that should be reviewed when submitting an application for Building Blocks – Expansion Grant Scheme.

	Requirements	Notes
1.	<p>An increase of a minimum of 5 places for the 1-2 year-old age group and/or a minimum of 6 places for the 2-3-year-old (pre-ECCE) age group and/or a minimum of 6 in a combination of both age groups – in either a full day or part time service.</p> <p>Applications which do not meet these minimum requirements will be deemed ineligible.</p>	<p>Priority will be awarded to applicants who demonstrate they can increase more than the minimum requirement and can provide evidence of local need to support this.</p>
2.	<p>If increasing full time places: Applicants must offer the additional full day care places for more than 5 hours per day and for a minimum of four days per week for 42 weeks per year.</p> <p>Applications outlining provision below 5 hours per day and four days per week for 42 weeks per year for the additional full day care places will result in an ineligible application.</p>	<p>During the appraisal process consideration will be awarded to applicants who offer full day services for more than 5 hours per day and can provide evidence of local need to support this.</p> <p>In order to be considered for a higher score under this criteria, applications must demonstrate that full time service provision is for 7 hours per day or more and at least 42 weeks per year and at least 4 days per week, for it to be considered an increase above the minimum requirements</p>
3.	<p>If increasing part time places: Applicants must offer the additional part time places for more than 3.5 hours per day, four days per week and 42 weeks per year.</p> <p>Applications outlining provision below 3.5 hours per day, four days per week and 42 weeks per year for part time places will result in an ineligible application.</p>	<p>During the appraisal process consideration will be awarded to applicants who offer part time services for more than 3.5 hours per day, four days per week and 42 weeks per year.</p> <p>In order to be considered for a higher score under this criteria, applications must demonstrate that part time service provision is for 4 hours per day or more and at least 42 weeks per year and at least 4 days per week, for it to be considered an increase above the minimum requirements</p>
4.	<p>Applicants must commit to offering the additional places for the required hours and weeks, for a 5-year period from the date of last payment of the grant.</p>	<p>Failure to adhere to this rule may result in full or partial decommittal of funds.</p>

5.	Applicants must commit to remaining as a partner service for a 5-year period from the date of last payment of the grant.	Failure to adhere to this rule may result in full or partial decommitment of funds.
6.	<p>Apply for funding for a project, which must be completed by 31 December 2024. Any expenditure incurred after this date will not be eligible for funding and may result in full or partial decommitment of funds.</p> <p>Total project costs cannot exceed €100,000. Applications demonstrating project costs above this, through documents submitted or through invoices submitted will be deemed ineligible. Note: Other public funds cannot be used to co fund any element of this project.</p>	Applicants will be required to give a start and end date for the project. Applicants must demonstrate within the application that the project is achievable within these dates. This should be reflected in the professional report. Applicants are reminded that any works started before an approval of funding notification will not be eligible. Please see section 3.6 for more information on the professional report.
7.	If the premises is not owned by the applicant, have the permission of the owner of the premises to complete the proposed works.	<p>The owner's permission document will confirm that the facility in which the proposed works are carried out must remain a childcare facility for 5 years from the final payment.</p> <p>An Owner's Permission template can be found here. All related works will need to be listed on the owner's permission document.</p> <p>Where the premises is owned by a Board of Management/Board of Directors, the template should be completed by two members of the Board, one to be the Chairperson or Director.</p>
8.	If the applicant is renting the premises, they must have a rental/lease/licence agreement in place until June 2029.	<p>At application stage a rental/ lease/ licence agreement must be submitted with a date to June 2029.</p> <p>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> <p>Any exit from a rental/lease agreement, from the date of last payment up until</p>

		<p>June 2029, will result in a pro-rata decommittal of funding.</p> <p>The applicant will be required to confirm this as part of the process of submitting their online application form and it will also be included as a condition of funding in the subsequent contract for successful applicants. Compliance with this condition will be checked by any audit or verification visit by Pobal or other appointed representatives of DCEDIY.</p>
9.	Universal Design Guidelines	All works funded under this grant should be in line with the Universal Design Guidelines and referenced in their professional report. Applicants are required to confirm that they have read the Universal Design Guidelines and taken account of these in their projects.
10.	For Private providers : Must contribute 50% of project costs up to a maximum of €50,000 (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations).	<p>Match funding must be ringfenced for this project and can only be used for this project.</p> <p>Acceptable evidence includes one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank statement: the applicant must provide a recent bank statement clearly showing the name and address of the organisation, demonstrating that the additional funding required to complete the project is in place. A screenshot of an online bank statement will suffice once all required information is visible on the screenshot. Applicants must confirm that this money is ring fenced to complete the project and will not be used for any other purpose. • Separate bank account: whilst not mandatory, it is preferable that where a service provider is using their own additional funds to complete the project, a dedicated bank account is used to manage the Building Blocks – Expansion Grant Scheme project. • If the project as outlined in the application is in receipt of funds from any other source the applicant must declare and provide details if same. • Loan agreement from a financial institution e.g., bank or credit union.

		Other public funding cannot be used to co-fund the project.
11.	If planning permission is required.	<p>If planning permission is required, it is mandatory to submit planning application number with the application.</p> <p>If it is a case that you have submitted a planning application, but a planning application number has not yet been awarded, please attach a copy of the email received confirming that it has been submitted and enter 000s in the planning application number on the application form.</p> <p>Where planning is required and either a planning application number, or confirmation that a planning application has been submitted, is not included with the application, the application will be deemed ineligible.</p> <p>Please note the planning application process could take months to conclude and may include an appeals process where an application for planning is declined. It is advised that you contact your local planning authority for information and requirements on planning permission. Time delays should be factored into your project planning and timelines. Pobal and DCEDIY have no control over the timeframes require planning applications.</p> <p>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>
12.	Have a professional report: Professional reports are <u>mandatory</u> for both Private and Community Services.	<p>See section 3.6 for more information on the professional report and information that must be included.</p> <p>Professional fees will only be reimbursed to successful applicants, up to a maximum of 15% (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations) of the capital costs.</p> <p>Maximum overall costs awarded (capital costs + professional fees) cannot exceed €100,000 (including VAT for non-VAT</p>

		registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations) Please see section: 3.6 for further details.
13.	Follow Public Procurement Guidelines and submit quotes for any items applied for under the grant.	All applicants are required to comply with Public Procurement Guidelines when purchasing goods and services in respect of this grant. The applicant must agree to retain the receipts, invoices and evidence of compliance with procurement process for up to 5 years from the final payment of the grant. Please pay particular attention to the number of quotes that are required for different funding amounts. This will be relevant if the application is deemed successful.
14.	Ensure that quotes submitted relate directly to the works outlined in the application and professional report.	Applicants must obtain and retain quotations from independent suppliers for each eligible item. Applicants may begin the process for e-tendering from the date of the first announcement of this grant scheme. (7 December 2023) Quotations or tenders for each cost applied for must be provided as part of the application. The application form will provide the option to attach quotations. Expenditure is only eligible from the date of notification of the successful outcome of the application for funding, with exception of professional fees which are eligible from the date of first announcement of this grant. (7 December 2023)
15.	Applicants must indicate if the organisation is VAT registered on the application form.	Organisations registered for VAT cannot claim VAT under this grant, however the VAT amount must be included in the budget table. Organisations which are not registered for VAT can claim VAT as part of the application. The VAT amount must be included in the budget table and will be calculated within the grant approved amount. Please note: Total project costs awarded (capital costs + professional fees) cannot exceed €100,000 (including VAT for non-VAT registered

	organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations).
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3.5 What mandatory documents are needed?

This table summarises the key mandatory documents required as part of the application process with further explanation below. Absence of these mandatory documents will deem the application ineligible.

Mandatory Documents	Community Service	Private Service
Rental/Lease/Licence Agreement	<p>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</p> <p>If this is not available at the time of application, 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. The letter of intent should be signed and dated by both the landlord and the grantee. Failure to submit these documents will deem the application ineligible. Payment will not be released until the rental/ lease / licence agreement is in place and submitted to Pobal.</p>	<p>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</p> <p>If this is not available at the time of application, 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. The letter of intent should be signed and dated by both the landlord and the grantee. Failure to submit these documents will deem the application ineligible. Payment will not be released until the rental/ lease / licence agreement is in place and submitted to Pobal.</p>
Owner's Permission Template	<p>Letter from the owner of the building granting permission to complete the proposed works. A template can be found here. This permission template will confirm that if approved for funding, the facility will remain a childcare facility for 5 years from the date of final payment of this grant.</p>	<p>Letter from the owner of the building granting permission to complete the proposed works. A template can be found here. This permission template will confirm that if approved for funding, the facility will remain a childcare facility for 5 years from the date of final payment of this grant.</p>
Professional Report	<p>Professional report. See Section 3.6 for more details.</p>	<p>Professional report. See Section 3.6 for more details.</p>

<p>Indicative Quotes</p>	<p>Indicative quotes which correspond to the professional report. Quotes need to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be submitted on headed paper, dated, and have itemised costing, separating VAT from the total amount. 2. Confirm if VAT is included and the VAT rate. 3. Cannot predate the professional report. <p>This document should not be in word format.</p>	<p>Indicative quotes which correspond to the professional report. Quotes need to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be submitted on headed paper, and have itemised costing, separating VAT from the total amount. 2. Confirm if VAT is included and the VAT rate 3. Cannot predate the professional report). <p>This document should not be in word format.</p>
<p>Planning Permission (if applicable)</p>	<p>Planning Permission Number / or confirmation from the planning authority that a planning application has been submitted - if applicable. If planning permission is required and a valid planning application number/ proof of planning application is not submitted, then the application will be deemed ineligible.</p>	<p>Planning Permission Number /or confirmation from the planning authority that a planning application has been submitted – if applicable. If planning permission is required and a valid planning application number/ proof of planning application is not submitted, then the application will be deemed ineligible.</p>
<p>Evidence of Match Funding (Private Providers only)</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Private providers <u>must</u> contribute 50% of total project costs applied for. As part of the application, you must provide evidence that match funding is currently in place and confirm that the match funding is ringfenced for the purposes of this project and will not be used for any other purpose.</p> <p>If evidence of match funding is not provided the application will be deemed ineligible.</p>

Supporting Documentation: Please provide any additional supporting documents you feel will strengthen your application, e.g., photos of areas of proposed works, floor plans, waiting lists, reports etc., if relevant, as they may impact the overall scoring of your application.

3.6 Professional Report

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.

The professional report must relate directly to the entire project which is the subject of the application.

The professional report should include the following:

- It must relate directly to the entire project which is the subject of the application.
- It must be on company headed paper which outlines the qualifications, accreditations or professional membership of the person completing the report.
- It must be dated on or after 7 December 2023 – the date of first announcement of this grant.
- An estimated timeframe for the project from start to completion, a clearly defined schedule of work, the contractors required and the start/finish dates.
- Known risks to the project should also be included (risks to timeline, financial risks, operational risks), as well as the planned contingencies to address risks.
- The funding amount requested through the submitted application is final and so any unforeseen additional expenses encountered during the project must to be funded by the applicant.
- An outline of the impact that the proposed works will have on continuity of business in the Early Learning and Care or School Age Childcare facility, and how this will be managed.
- A description of how the works will allow for an increase in capacity of the premises.
- Include floor plans of existing rooms and new plans with proposed works, highlighting areas for renovation.
- An itemised project summary of proposed works to be completed e.g., Renovations, professional fees, plumbing, demolition, building, ancillary works required etc. It should also note total project costs. **Note:** only works/ equipment identified in the professional report will be considered for approval as part of the appraisal process i.e. the quotes submitted in the application must directly relate to works outlined in the professional report.
- The budget for the works, including VAT and any incidental costs, broken down into component works (e.g., kitchen and toilet costings should be presented separately).
- Confirmation if planning permission is required.
- Confirmation of how the works incorporate the [Universal Design Guidelines](#).
- An assurance that a certificate of completion by a professional person/company of the works will be provided when the project has been completed and fully spent. It will be necessary to include this certificate of completion with the final drawdown request. Failure to submit the certificate of completion may result in full or partial decommitment of this grant.

Applications submitted without a professional report will be deemed ineligible.

Applicants will be asked to confirm in a declaration that there are **no conflicts of interest** between the applicant and person/ organisation who will perform works for this project, this will include the professional who completes the report. All successful applicants must adhere to the [Public Procurement Guidelines](#).

Up to a maximum of 15% (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations) of the capital costs awarded can be

allocated towards professional fees as part of this project. Professional fees do not relate to any labour costs or works.

Total project costs for either community or private providers cannot exceed €100,000. If total project costs or total value of quotes exceed €100,000 (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations), the application will be deemed ineligible.

3.7 Professional Fees

An allowance within the grant amount towards professional fees may be covered by the grant to deliver the proposed project. Up to a maximum of 15% (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations) **of the capital costs** awarded can be allocated towards professional fees. **Professional fees will only be reimbursed to successful applicants.**

- Professional fees can be incurred from the date of first announcement of this grant. (7 December 2023)
- Professional fees will only be reimbursed for approved applicants funded under this grant and will not be reimbursed for unsuccessful applicants.
- Professional fees do not relate to any labour costs or works.
- All funding incurred to complete this project must be included in the budget section of the Application. However, total project costs including professional fees cannot exceed €100,000 (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations).

3.8 Planning Permission

Projects which require planning permission are eligible under this scheme. If planning permission is not required, this must be stated on the professional report. Time to seek planning should be factored into the project planning and timelines.

If planning permission is required, a planning permission reference number must be provided as part of the application for this grant. Therefore, where planning permission is required, applicants must submit a planning permission application to the relevant authority in advance of applying for this grant. Applications that require planning permission, but do not provide a valid planning application number or proof from the planning authority that a planning application has been submitted will be deemed ineligible.

As with all pre-payment conditions, at the time of contracting, if planning permission has not been approved within 20 working days from the notification date of the offer, the offer of funding will be withdrawn.

3.9 What additional supports are available for applicants?

- Applicants can contact the Early Years Provider Centre (EYPC) with any queries by raising a service request on the Early Years Hive under the programme: *Building Blocks – Expansion Grant Scheme*
- Applicants may also contact their local City/County Childcare Committee for additional support and advice.
- Applicants should consult the Office of Government Procurement for further guidance on adherence to [Public Procurement Guidelines](#)

4. Eligible and Ineligible Expenditure

4.1 Table of Eligible and Ineligible Expenditure

Applicants must ensure that no ineligible items have been included in the application. Ineligible items will not be funded by DCEDIY and may deem the overall application ineligible. Expenses (other than professional fees) cannot be incurred post approval and prior to contracting.

	<u>Eligible Expenditure</u>	<u>Ineligible Expenditure</u> This is not an exhaustive list
Expansion Grant Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional fees up to a maximum of 15% (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations) of the project. • Only eligible works outlined in the professional report. • Direct costs associated with the alterations and refurbishment with the creation of additional full time and part time places for the 1-3-year-old (pre-ECCE) cohort. • Fit out costs e.g. tables, chairs etc to facilitate additional full time and part time places for the 1-3-year-old (pre-ECCE) cohort. • Additional equipment needed to facilitate the increase of full time and part time places for the 1-3 year old (pre-ECCE) cohort. • Kitchen fitout and large kitchen appliances as required to facilitate the additional places • Sanitary ware/ toilet fit out required to facilitate the additional places. • Painting of the additional/ reconfigured space. • Works undertaken to improve Accessibility e.g. ramp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrospective costs i.e. costs incurred prior to approval of the grant (with the exception of professional fees). • Any costs not outlined in the professional report or not directly related to the project. • Any costs which do not meet the requirements of the Expansion Grant Scheme • Consumables. • Toys and sensory items. • Outdoor play area and outdoor play equipment. • Costs for general maintenance and repairs which do not clearly demonstrate how they contribute to creating additional capacity for 1-3-year-old (pre-ECCE) age cohort. • Insurance. • Vehicle purchase or vehicle maintenance costs. • Equipment maintenance costs. • Prefabricated/modular buildings. • Indirect costs of the project e.g., administration, overheads, salary. • Art Supplies. • ICT equipment including Tablets, PC, Software, Printers, TV, monitoring, etc. • VAT where registered. • Charges such as bank interest costs, financial penalties, legal dispute costs etc. • Sponsorship and donations. • In-kind contributions. • Items paid for in cash. • Notional costs e.g. lost opportunity.

5. Decision Making

5.1 Overview

Pobal will appraise all applications and make recommendations and provide a score. This will be shared with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Verification of compliance with the maximum fee threshold rules will be checked against the published fee table (on the Early Years Hive on 3 April 2024) for each service. A list of applicant services recommended for funding will be presented to the Minister for approval and final decision.

Section 5.2 outlines the criteria used to appraise each application. All decisions will be communicated via Early Years Hive notifications to applicants. Any results relating to this grant, including the final decision, will be only visible to the PAU (Primary Authorised User) or PAU Delegate.

Pobal must be satisfied that any documents that are submitted in support of the application are relevant, in date and clearly demonstrate the information required for appraisal. It remains Pobal's sole discretion to decide whether the documents supplied meet the criteria.

The call for applications is a competitive application process. It is expected that Pobal will receive high volumes of applications under this strand. Not all applicants who submit an application will be awarded funding.

5.2 What are the selection criteria?

All applications will be assessed using the following criteria:

	Notes
<p>1. Meeting Strand Priorities – Need/Impact (30%)</p> <p>Assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Question 3 - Question 4 - Question 5 - Question 6 <p>Assessment of Professional Report to ensure it is complete with all requested information and directly relates to and supports the proposed project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the project description meets the objectives of the programme to increase provision of full and part time places in line with identified local need, as evidenced by supporting documentation • The quality of the evidence (information, reports, analysis and data) in the application form to demonstrate local need, including why the existing building is not currently sufficient to meet the capacity requirements in the area. • Assessment of the professional report to ensure that all required information as per the professional report checklist has been included. • Clear description through the application form and professional report of how the works support the provision of the additional places as outlined in the service provision table. <p>If a professional report is not submitted the application will be deemed ineligible.</p> <p>If all the requested information is not clearly provided in the professional report, and/or sufficient project</p>

	<p>descriptions are not provided it will result in a lower score under this criterion.</p> <p>Where detailed project descriptions clearly outlining the need for the project, and a high quality (includes all information, and substantiates the need) professional report, and other relevant supporting documentation is provided the application will be awarded a higher score under this criterion.</p>
<p>2. Geographical Area of need (20%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pobal and DCEDIY have developed a Relative Demand Model using the latest census data and information on existing provision and enrolments, as well as CSO data on commuting patterns, to generate insights into the extent to which existing levels of supply meet local demand across the country. • The model balances both absolute levels of need (number of children in excess of places) as well as relative need (places as a proportion of children) to determine priority areas for increases in places. • A relative score for each applicant to this scheme will be allocated once all applications have been submitted. • The analysis will be used in the appraisal of applications to enable the funding to be targeted to where it is most needed.
<p>3. Value for money (20%)</p> <p>Assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Question 8 - Question 9 - Quotations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the eligibility and justification for each of the costs applied for. Applicants are required to provide quotations or tender for each cost as evidence of the costs outlined. • Assessment that the quotes provided equal the total of the budget items. • Assessment that a quote has been provided for all budget items. • Confirmation that the quotes and budget items included in the total project costs do not exceed €100k. • Assessment that the quotes are on headed paper, itemised, and dated. The quotes should name the service provider and provide the address of the service provider which is the subject of this application. • Assessment information provided to support required match funding. (Private Providers Only) • Assessment of how professional fees relate directly to the professional report. • Assessment that all other costs applied for relate directly to the project description and professional report. <p>Applications will be deemed in eligible where:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects which have demonstrated (through quotations or professional report) that the total project costs are in excess of €100,000 - No relevant or incomplete quotations have been submitted. <p>Lower scores will be awarded under this criterion where some/ all costs are deemed ineligible, quotes are not complete, there is no/ insufficient breakdown of costs, some/all costs do not relate directly to the professional report.</p> <p>In the instance where some quotations for listed works or budget items have not been provided, the application may be deemed ineligible, or will be awarded a lower score under this criteria as the appraiser cannot complete the assessment.</p> <p>Higher scoring will be awarded under this criterion to applications that provide a comprehensive breakdown of eligible costs which have been clearly explained and justified within the project description and professional report.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">4. Capacity (20%)</p> <p>Assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Question 2 - Question 7 	<p>Consideration will be given to the table of current and proposed service provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment that the hours/days per week/ weeks per year under full and part time provision meets the minimum criteria. • Assessment that the service is committing to creating the minimum number of additional places required. • If any of the above criteria are not met the application will be deemed ineligible. • Where an application demonstrates that the service provision will increase by only the minimum requirements an average score will be achieved under this criterion, if there is no displacement* of existing services, or if solid justification is provided to explain the displacement of any existing services. • Where an application demonstrates that the provider is increasing service provision more than the minimum requirements** in at least one of the above areas the application will achieve a higher score under this criterion, if there is no displacement of existing services, or if solid justification is provided, to explain the displacement of any existing services. • Where an application demonstrates that the provider is increasing service provision to more than the minimum requirements** in two or more of the above areas the maximum score will be achieved under this criterion, if there is

	<p>no displacement of existing services, or solid justification is provided to explain the displacement of any existing services. **</p> <p>*Displacement of services – Where an existing service provision type will be discontinued in order to facilitate the additional places under the Expansion Grant Scheme e.g. discontinuation of 0-1 year old service provision to facilitate additional 1-2 year old places</p> <p>** Applications must demonstrate that part time service provision is for 4 hours or more and/ or full time service provision is for 7 hours or more for it to be considered an increase above the minimum requirements</p>
<p>5. Quality and Achievability of the project (10%)</p> <p>Assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Question 10 (Private providers only) - Question 11 - Question 12 - Question 13 - Question 14 - Question 15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the overall quality of the proposal such as, the quality, coherence, level and relevance of the information provided in the application form. • Assessment of the readiness and achievability of the proposed project through assessment of any planning applications, owner's permission, lease/ licence/ rental agreements • Assessment of project timeframes provided within the professional report. <p>Applications will be deemed ineligible where mandatory requirements are not provided (planning permission, owner's permission, Lease/Licence/ Rental Agreement and for private providers only confirmation of ringfenced own funds).</p> <p>Lower scores will be awarded under this criterion where the overall quality of the application is poor with minimal project descriptions and supporting documentation. Lower scores will also be considered where the application demonstrates that it will be challenging to complete the project by December 2024.</p> <p>Scoring will be awarded on a scaled basis dependent on the overall quality of the information provided, and where all required information has been received, and the project timelines are clearly achievable.</p>

In the event that there is an oversubscription to Building Blocks – Expansion Grant Scheme, the cost per place may be used as a scoring metric to determine the cost effectiveness and value for money in the grant funding allocation.

5.3 Can applicants appeal the outcome of an appraisal?

All unsuccessful applicants will have the opportunity to seek an appeal of the original decision made based on the application submitted. This must be done within the timeframe that will be communicated in the notification of decision arising from application appraisal process. Guidelines for the appeal process will be provided to unsuccessful applicants with the notification of the decision.

In an instance where an appeal is upheld, an award of funding will be dependent on both government funding being available, and the application meeting the relevant threshold for funding, including the achievability of the overall project. To note, there is no guarantee that successful appellants will be awarded funding.

Applicants will **not** be permitted to appeal the score awarded under Geographical Area of Need,

Applicants will **not** be permitted to appeal the decision of the DCEDIY on eligibility for funding based on the maximum fee threshold. The onus is on the service provider to ensure that they have an up to date fee table submitted on Hive on 3 April, 2024. A review of listed fee in the fee tables will be conducted in advance of any offers of funding being issued. Before submitting the application, applicants must agree to a declaration that on 3 April 2024 they do not charge fees above the maximum threshold as outlined in the fee threshold rules document. Non-compliance with this rule will result in ineligibility for funding.

5.4 What happens after a successful appraisal?

- Pobal will notify all successful applicants of the outcome of the process via notification of offer on the Early Years Hive.
- Pobal will issue a grant agreement to all successful applicants via the Early Years Hive. Applicants will be required to agree to the terms and conditions and submit this to Pobal within 20 working days from the date of the notification of offer. Failure to do so will result in withdrawal of grant offer.
- Some applicants may have pre-payment conditions that they will have to fulfil and submit proof of adherence to these within 20 working days from the date that the notification of offer was issued on the Early Years Hive. Please be aware of all timeframes for planning permission if required. Demonstration of approval of same may be a pre-payment condition and will have to be met within this timeframe.
- Failure to fulfil/submit valid requested prepayment conditions within 20 working days from the date of notification of offer will result in the contract offer being decommitted.
- All applicants are required to comply with [Public Procurement guidelines](#), and ensure that there are no conflicts of interest in the procurement of goods and services. A Conflict of Interest is any form of personal interest, which may impinge, or might reasonably be deemed by others to impinge, on your impartiality in making decisions about your project or your spending of the Grant. For example, a “Registrable Interest” as defined in Section 2 of the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995 includes an interest such as a relative or connected person. (Unrelated or unaffiliated to the Service Provider, property or staff)
- All applicants must submit financial returns to Pobal in order for the next instalment of funding to be released. Each return will require clear confirmation of the percentage of total costs spent and meet a minimum criteria in line with the rules. All monies must be spent before **31 December 2024**.
- Building Blocks – Expansion Grant Scheme is subject to verification visits.
- **Retain all documentation** in relation to the grant awarded for a period of **5 years** from the date of final payment. This will be included as a programme condition within the contract.

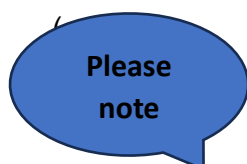
6. Payments and Payment Schedule

6.1 Overview

All of the grant monies awarded must be spent no later than 31 December 2024.

Applicants can commence where applicable, seeking planning permission, obtaining professional advice and e-tendering from the date of the first notification of the programme, 7 December 2023. No other costs can be incurred before a notification of funding has been received from Pobal, and all contracting requirements have been met.

Total project costs cannot exceed €100,000 (capital costs + professional fees + VAT if not VAT registered), inclusive of professional fees and VAT if not VAT registered. Professional fees will only be reimbursed to successful applicants, up to a maximum of 15% (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations) of the total capital costs. **If total project costs or total value of quotes exceed €100,000 (including VAT for non-VAT registered organisations and excluding VAT for VAT registered organisations), the application will be deemed ineligible.** Professional fees will only be reimbursed for successful applications.



- If on submission of the final financial return, the applicant did not spend 100% of the grant award, the unspent balance will be decommitted, with underspend being recouped from the final payment due.
- Failure to submit a financial return within the required timeframe with relevant supporting documentation will result in a decommitment of your full award, which will result in full recoupment of any funding paid to date.
- Unspent or reported expenditure which is deemed ineligible will be subject to decommitment.
- Works, payments, or carry-over of funding will not be permitted.
- Expenditure is deemed to be ineligible if items are purchased with cash outside the purpose of the grant agreement and application submitted.

What is a decommitment?

A decommitment is a formal reduction of your grant approval, which may result in reduced payments, or full recoupment of grant funding.

6.2 How will Private Providers payments and reporting work?

Private Providers will be required to report on 50% grant funding expenditure plus the full 50% match funding expenditure.

This grant will be paid across 4 instalments, which must be matched with applicants own spending as the project progresses. Instalments will be based on the value of 100% reported expenditure, split 50/50 between grant and applicants own matching funding.

Payments will be made in instalments of 40%, 30%, 20%, and the final 10% will be paid once the applicant has fully reported all expenditure relating to the project.

1. **Instalment 1:** 40% on agreeing to the terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement and fulfilling all prepayment obligations.
2. **Instalment 2:** 30% will be paid once a financial return is submitted reporting on grant expenditure of 75% or more of the first payment of grant funding and also report 75% expenditure (or the same value) from own funds.
3. **Instalment 3:** 20% will be paid once a financial return is submitted showing expenditure of 100% or more of the first instalment, and 75% or more of the second instalment, and also report 75% expenditure (or the same value) from own funds.
4. **Instalment 4:** The final 10% will be paid retrospectively on receipt, and approval by Pobal, of the last financial return and supporting evidence of expenditure against 100% of the approved value (grant funding and own funds) via the Early Years Hive, and 100% of the required own funding element. **Applicants must submit a certificate of completion of works which has been completed by the organisation who prepared the professional report. See Section 3.6 for further details on the Professional Report.**

Example:

Private Service Provider has been awarded €50,000 on confirming they have ringfenced their match funding of €50,000.

Project total costs: €100,000

1. To access the 1st instalment of funding:

1st instalment of funding = €20,000 (40% of €50,000)

Paid on receipt of the Grant Agreement

2. To access the 2nd instalment of funding:

2nd instalment of funding = €15,000 (30% of €50,000)

Once 75% of the 1st instalment of €20,000 (€15,000) has been spent, and **the same amount of own funding has been spent**, a financial return should be submitted detailing a minimum of €30,000 expenditure.

3. To access the 3rd instalment of funding:

3rd instalment of funding = €10,000 (20% of €50,000)

Once 100% of the 1st payment of €20,000 **and** 75% of the 2nd payment of €15,000 (€11,250) has been spent, and **the same amount of own funding has been spent**, a financial return should be submitted detailing a minimum of €31,250 expenditure.

4. To access the 4th and final instalment of funding:

4th instalment of funding = €5,000 (10% of €50,000)

The final 10% will be paid retrospectively on receipt, and approval by Pobal, of the last financial return and supporting evidence of expenditure against 100% of the approved value via the Early Years Hive, and **100% of the required own funding element.**

6.3 How will Community Providers payments and reporting work?

This grant will be paid across four instalments.

Each instalment will be paid at different stages of the applicant's project, dependent on the level of expenditure reported.

Payments will be made in instalments of 40%, 30%, 20%, the final 10% paid once the applicant has fully reported all expenditure relating to the project.

- The initial instalment of 40% will be paid on receipt of the applicants confirmed and accepted Grant Agreement.
- The second instalment of 30%, will be paid once the applicant has spent and reported 75% or more of the first payment. See chart below for an example.
- The third instalment of 20% will be paid once the applicant has spent and reported 100% of the first instalment, and 75% or more of the second instalment.
- The final 10% will be paid retrospectively on receipt, and approval by Pobal, of the applicant's last financial return and supporting evidence of expenditure against 100% of the approved value via the Early Years Hive. **Applicants must submit a certificate of completion of works which has been completed by the organisation who prepared the professional report. See Section 3.6 for further details on the Professional Report**

Example:

Community Service Provider has been awarded €100,000.

To access the first instalment of funding:

First instalment of funding = €40,000 (40% of €100,000)

Paid on receipt of the Grant Agreement.

5. To access the second instalment of funding:

Second instalment of funding = €30,000 (30% of €100,000)

Once 75% of the first instalment of €40,000 (€30,000) has been spent, a financial return should be submitted detailing a minimum of €30,000 expenditure.

6. To access the third instalment of funding:

Third instalment of funding = €20,000 (20% of €100,000)

Once 100% of the first instalment of €40,000 **and** 75% of the second payment of €30,000 (€22,500) has been spent, a financial return should be submitted detailing a minimum of €62,500 expenditure.

7. To access the fourth and final instalment of funding:

Fourth instalment of funding = €10,000 (10% of €100,000)

The final 10% will be paid retrospectively on receipt, and approval by Pobal, of the last financial return and supporting evidence of expenditure against 100% of the approved.

6.4 How do pre-payment conditions work?

Pre-payment conditions are criteria specific to successful applicants that must be fulfilled before payments can be made.

All project proposals must be realistic, achievable and time bound. If successful, applicants must be ready to start their project as soon as they have received a notification of offer from Pobal, and fulfilled any pre-payment conditions, and accepted the terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement.

Where pre-payment conditions apply, applicants will be required to submit proof that they have been fulfilled to Pobal. It is the responsibility of the successful applicant to read the applicant guidelines and any communications issued to them and to fulfil all pre-payment conditions by submitting all documents required to release payment. Failure to provide all valid and correct documents within **20 working days** of the date of the notification of offer will result in a decommittal of this Grant Agreement.

Examples of pre-payments conditions that may apply are as follows:

- If the owner's permission [template](#) submitted at time of application was not signed by all parties, a fully executed document must be provided
- Where the applicant is not the owner of the building they must have, and submit to Pobal, a rental/lease/licence agreement in place for **5 years from the date of final payment**.
- If planning permission is required, approved planning permission must be in place.
- Hold valid Tax Clearance. Payments against any existing contracts must not be on hold.

6.5 Do I need to submit an annual financial statement?

- Yes, it is the requirement of this application that audited financial statements are prepared to adhere to the rules set out in Circular 13/2014 Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds.
- These accounts must be approved and submitted to Pobal six months after the financial year end of your organisation for the timeframe of the contract.

7. Application Checklist

	Documents	Tick
1.	Professional Report (Mandatory)	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Planning Permission included (if required)	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Owner's Permission template (if required)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Rental/Lease/Licence Agreement/Letter of Intent (If required)	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Indicative quote documentation	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Evidence of match funding (Private Providers only)	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Any further supporting documentation	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Please ensure that no blank documents, password protected documents or email links of any sort are enclosed within the application.

8.Key Dates

Activity	Date
Scheme Announcement	Q4 2023
Online Applications Go Live	22 February
Online Applications Close	3 April
Notifications to all applicants on the outcome of their application	Q2 2024
Grant payments commence	Q2 2024
Financial returns	Q2, Q3, Q4
Projects complete and grants utilised	31 December 2024

These dates are provisional and subject to change

Applicants can commence where applicable, seeking planning permission, obtaining professional advice and e-tendering from the date of the first notification of the grant scheme, 7 December 2023.

9.General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

- The DCEDIY is the Data Controller for personal data processed for the Early Years Capital Programme 2024.
- The DCEDIY has a Data Privacy Statement in place.
- Pobal, as a Data Processor, will process and appraise the applications under the instructions of the DCEDIY.
- External appraisers may be contracted as part of the appraisal process, but this will be in accordance with DCEDIY approval and an appropriate binding contract.
- Organisation/owner details are obtained from the Early Years Platform (EYP) system and applicants can access the application form using their Service Reference Number.
- A list of successful applications will be published.
- Applicants are legally required to have their own internal systems and procedures in place in compliance with data protection legislation. Please refer to the [Data Protection Commission](#) for additional information in relation to GDPR obligations.

The personal information that will be requested as part of the application form and process includes:

- Primary contact name and e-mail address for the application.
- Lease or rental or licence agreement details for the early learning and care service and or school age childcare service premises.
- Permission from the owner of the premises to carry out the works.
- Information provided in quotations.

Appendix 1

Building Blocks Capacity Grant: Expansion Scheme

Maximum Fee Threshold Rules

Introduction

The Building Blocks Capacity Grant: Expansion Scheme is part of a wider Building Blocks Capital Programme for Early Learning and Childcare under the revised National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP).

The aim of this Capacity Grant: Expansion Scheme is to support Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare Services (SAC) to expand their existing facilities by creating additional quality early learning and care spaces and tackle the estimated undersupply of full time and part time places, particularly within the 1-3 year old (pre-ECCE) age cohort.

Together for Better the funding model for early learning and childcare supports the delivery of accessible, affordable and quality ELC and SAC provision. In line with the Department’s policy to improve access to quality and affordable early learning and care, grant funding under this strand has been designed to support only places for which do not have excessively high fees.

In order to achieve this, DCEDIY have set a weekly maximum fee threshold for eligibility for Building Blocks Capacity Grant: Expansion Scheme funding. The maximum fee threshold has been determined using data on fees from the Pobal Early Years Sector Profile and applying a statistical technique, Tukey’s Fence, to identify outliers from the normal range of fees. Accounting for variation in the range of fees charged, a ‘fence’ is established. Any fee values above the fence are classified as outliers. The method was applied to the data for the country as a whole for both full and part time fees. The method uses the following equation:

$$\text{upper fence} = Q3 + 1.5 * |Q3 - Q1|$$

Therefore, maximum weekly fee was set using the upper quartile plus 1.5 times the interquartile range of weekly fees from the Sector Profile. The maximum fee thresholds by service type are outlined in the table below with the following pages providing detail on how these maximum fee thresholds will be applied.

Maximum all-inclusive weekly fee threshold for full time places	Maximum all-inclusive weekly fee threshold for part time places
€295	€190

The following rules will apply:

1.0 Maximum weekly charge

- 1.1 Applicants are required to confirm that the fees that are listed in the fee table published for your service on the Early Years Hive on 3 April, 2024, for full or part time places, do not exceed the maximum weekly fee threshold as stated above. All fees’ tables must indicate weekly fees for all session types.
- 1.2 The maximum fee threshold is intended to cover all aspects of the service provided, in particular in respect of food and other incorporated services. The fee for the care type including food, even if charged for separately, should be that which is required to be at or

below the maximum fee threshold in order to be eligible to apply for Building Blocks Capacity Grant: Expansion Scheme.

- 1.3 Where there is more than one full time fee charged for the relevant care category related to different numbers of days per week it is the highest fee that will be used to assess against the maximum fee threshold.
- 1.4 Where there is more than one full time fee charged for the relevant care category related to different age groups of children, it is the fee related to 1-3 year olds that will be used to assess against the maximum fee threshold. If there is more than one fee charged in the relevant fee category for different age groups within the 1-3 year old age group, it is the highest fee that will be used to assess against the maximum fee threshold.

2.0 Determining compliance with maximum fee thresholds for care types not currently provided by service.

- 2.1 Where full or part time places are not currently provided by the service, but will be provided as a result of this Building Blocks funding, the comparative fee used to determine compliance with the maximum fee threshold rule will be a proportion of the closest equivalent fee which is currently listed on the service's fees table published on the Early Years Hive on 3 April, 2024, all other things being equal.

For example, if a service currently offers (non-ECCE) sessional place for €70 for 3.5 hours per day, 5 days per week a part time place in the same service for 4 hours per day, 5 days per week will be assumed to have a proportionate fee of €80 per week.

- 2.2 Where full or part time places are currently provided by the service but not to the 1-3 age group and will be provided as a result of this Building Blocks funding, the comparative fee used to determine compliance with the maximum fee threshold rule will be the closest equivalent fee for the closest age range currently available.

3.0 Verification

- 3.1 The Fees Table which is published on the Early Years Hive on the on 3 April, 2024, will be the source of information used to determine whether services adhere to the maximum fee threshold rule. It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure that their fee table on the Early Years Hive is up to date and accurate before this date.
- 3.2 Once all applications are appraised by Pobal, verification in relation to the maximum fee threshold will be checked against the fees table which is published on the Early Years Hive on 3 April, for each service before an offer of funding is made.
- 3.3 Services which breach the maximum fees threshold for the relevant care types will be deemed ineligible and will not be presented to the Minister for approval of funding. The decision of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's (DCEDIY) decision is final in relation to maximum fee thresholds and this eligibility for funding criteria is not grounds for appeal.
- 3.4 As with all other conditions of the Building Blocks Capacity Grant: Expansion Scheme, any verification which was undertaken at the pre-approval stage, including compliance with the

fee threshold, may be subject to compliance checks at a later point. Non-compliance with this condition may result in decommitment and/or recoupment of funding.

Appendix 2

Building Blocks Disclaimers and Declarations.

A. DISCLOSURE UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2014, the information in this document and its attachments may be released on request to third parties.

If you believe that any of the information in this document is sensitive and should not be disclosed to a third party, you must identify the sensitive information and provide the reason(s) for its sensitivity.

You will be consulted about the sensitive information before any decision is made to release the information to a third party.

If you do not identify any of the information supplied in this document and supporting documentation as being sensitive you are acknowledging that any, or all of the information supplied, may be released in response to a Freedom of Information request.

Please raise a service request on Hive if you wish to highlight sensitive information. Note that the sensitive information must fit one of the legal exemptions for it to not be released under the Freedom of Information Act.

B. DATA PROTECTION

Pobal is responsible for the administration and delivery of the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare Capital National Development Plan Building Blocks Expansion Grant Scheme on behalf of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). We are committed to protecting and respecting your privacy. We respect your trust in us. To fulfil our regulatory and statutory obligations, we will collect some personal information from you, such as your contact information; details of your board members and where required, lease, licence or rental approval information from your landlord. We may share your information with the DCEDIY. We use information about you to:

- Process a grant application.
- Carry out our obligations arising from Building Blocks Expansion Grant Scheme.
- Notify you of any changes relevant to your contract.
- Send you communications relevant to your contract.
- Collect and analyse programme data and demographic information to enhance service delivery and support government policy.
- Seek your views or comments on the supports we provide.

In compliance with GDPR, all application forms and personal information submitted to Pobal will be kept only for purposes relating to the administration of the funding. We will hold your personal information on our systems for as long as is necessary for the relevant activity, or for as long as is set out in any relevant contract you hold with us. This is subject to legislation and regulatory rules we must follow as set out by the DCEDIY. Pobal takes our security responsibilities seriously, employing the most appropriate administrative, physical and technical measures to safeguard your personal data, and regularly review these measures.

Personal data should not be disclosed within this application form for any reason incompatible with the purpose for which funding is sought. Furthermore, any individual whose personal data is submitted within this form must be informed of the use of their personal data. By submitting this application form you are confirming individuals whose personal data is disclosed have been clearly informed of this purpose and have been informed of their rights under data protection legislation.

For more information on your privacy rights, please see our full [Privacy Statement](#) on our website.

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION

Please read carefully:

By submitting the application, the Owner/Board of Directors/Management Board declare that the information provided in relation to the Early Learning and Care Services and School Age Childcare Service as described in this application is true and complete to the best of their knowledge and belief.

The Owner/ Board of Directors/Management Board acknowledges that any funds awarded must be used for the purpose stated and not used to replace existing funding. The Board also understands that information supplied in, or accompanying, this application may be made available on request under the Freedom of Information Acts 2014.

The Board accepts, as a condition of the award of a grant, that it involves no commitment to any other grants from The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth or Pobal for the proposed works in this project. The Owner/Board are agreeable to having the project monitored by Pobal and The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and to allow access to premises and records, as necessary, for that purpose.

The applicant/Owner/Board of Directors/Management Board also accepts that Pobal may contact the City/County Childcare Committees and other Government Departments to discuss this application and previous funding awarded, as part of the appraisal process.

- 1. It will be a condition of any application for funding under the terms and conditions of the Building Blocks Expansion Grant Scheme 2024, that the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and Pobal shall not be liable to the applicant or any*

other party in respect of any loss, damage or costs of any nature arising directly or indirectly from:

- The application or the subject matter of the application.
 - The rejection for any reason of any application.
- II. *The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), its servants or agents shall not at any time in any circumstances be held responsible or liable in relation to any matter whatsoever arising in connection with the development, planning, construction, operation, management and/or administration of individual projects.*

By submitting this application, the Owner/ Board of Directors/Management Board:

- Confirms that they have no outstanding debt to DCEDIY, or there is an agreement in place with DCEDIY /Pobal to repay this debt (if applicable).
- Confirms that they have planning permission or applied for planning permission to carry out any applicable works included in this application.
- Confirms that they have the consent of the legal owner of the premises to carry out any refurbishment (if applicable).
- Confirms that no costs, or part thereof, for the proposal outlined in this application have already been spent nor goods or services purchased.
- Confirms that the funding will be fully spent and reported to Pobal by the dates outlined in the applicant guidelines.
- Confirms the invoices used to support this grant are in line with the grant application guidelines.
- Confirms the invoices and receipts used have not and will not be used in support of another claim for reimbursement from any other public funds or grants.
- Confirms that they will follow the public procurement guidelines when purchasing the goods and services in respect of this grant.
- Confirms that own funds are available and ringfenced for the purpose of this project and will not be used for any other purpose.
- Confirms there are no conflicts of interest between the applicant and the organisation who have performed works for this project, this will include the professional who completes the report.
- Confirms that the suppliers of goods and services for costs of greater than or equal to €10,000 inclusive of VAT (Value Added Tax), will have a valid Tax Clearance Access Number (TCAN) and Tax Registration Number (TRN).
- Confirms that the property will remain as an early learning and care and or school age childcare service for 5 years after the date of last payment of this grant.
- Confirms to provide the service model (weeks/hours) as applied for in the application for 5 years after the date of last payment of this grant.
- Confirms that they have read, accepted, and understand that all works under this grant should be in compliance with the Universal Design Guidelines.
- Confirms that they understand that all works under this grant should be compliant with childcare regulations.
- Confirms that they understand that as a result of an audit/verification visit, desk check, or request for information by Pobal or DCEDIY or agent of the department, if expenditure is not spent in accordance with the contract conditions, for example, if some or all of this grant is found to have been unspent, or ineligible as specified within the programme

rules, your award may be subject to de-committal, with recoupment, or withholding of some or all of the final balance due by DCEDIY/Pobal.

- Confirms that this service is in compliance with the Maximum Fee Threshold rules as described in detail in the applicant guidelines. In particular, I confirm that full time incorporated fees for 1-3 year olds do not exceed €295 per week and that part time incorporated fees for 1-3 year olds do not exceed €190 per week.