



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



pobal

government supporting communities

Building Blocks – Improvement Grant

2023

Application Guidelines



Closing date for applications will be announced in due course



**Rialtas na
hÉireann**
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Building Blocks – Improvement Grant	3
1.2 The Role of Pobal	4
2. Eligibility Criteria	5
2.1 Who is eligible to apply?	5
3. Application Process.....	6
3.1 What does the application process involve?	6
3.2 Can applications be amended once submitted?.....	6
3.3 How can applicants prepare to apply?	7
3.4 What should applicants consider when deciding what to apply	7
3.5 What supporting documents are needed?	10
3.5.1 Professional Report.....	10
3.5.2 Planning Permission	11
3.6 What additional supports are available for applicants?	11
4. Eligible and Ineligible Expenditure	12
4.1 Professional Fees	14
5. Decision Making.....	17
a. What are the selection criteria?	17
5.2 Can applicants appeal the outcome of an appraisal?	18
5.3 What happens after a successful appraisal?.....	18
6. Payments.....	20
6.1 How do pre-payment conditions work?	20
6.2 Do I need to submit an annual financial statement?.....	21
7. Checklist of Documents	22
8. Key Dates	22
9. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).....	23

1. Introduction

1.1 Building Blocks – Improvement Grant

The purpose of the Building Blocks – Improvement Grant is to improve the energy efficiency standards of facilities and to support the continuous improvement of the physical environment in services. The programme supports the Government’s ambitions as laid out in the National Development Plan.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has allocated a budget of €10m for the Building Blocks – Improvement Grant, split between two strands. A minimum of €35,000 and a maximum of €75,000 will be awarded.

Strand A – Green/Energy: For costs associated with improving the energy efficiency of a building.

Strand B - Retrofit: For costs associated with retrofit and accessibility of an existing building.

Services may apply for either Strand A or Strand B. The application form will open and close on the same dates for Strand A and Strand B.

Successful applicants will be required to complete their projects before **31st December 2023**.

Grantees will receive 90% of their approved funding on completion of the contracting process which includes agreeing to their Grant Agreement. Once the project is completed, and 100% of funding is spent, the service should submit their financial return, including documentary evidence and proof of work undertaken (i.e. bank statements) to Pobal.

Upon receipt and review of the financial return the service will be reimbursed the balance of funding spent on their project costs. If on submission of your financial return you did not spend 100% of the grant award, the unspent balance will be decommitted, with underspend being recouped from the final payment due. We recommend service providers submit their financial returns once the project is completed or by **30th November 2023**, which ever is sooner.

Applicants can commence where applicable, seeking planning permission, obtaining professional advice and e-tendering from the date of the first notification of the programme. Professional fees will only be reimbursed for successful applications and to a maximum of 10% of the capital costs awarded. Maximum overall costs awarded (capital costs + professional fees) will not exceed €75,000 (inclusive of VAT).

Table 1. Strand Introduction

	Strand A Green/Energy	Strand B Retrofit
Priorities	To improve the energy efficiency of ELC and SAC facilities.	To support the continuous improvement of the physical environment of the service for children and staff attending ELC and SAC services. To upgrade the existing ELC and SAC infrastructure, which may or may not have previously been funded by large scale capital programmes and is now in need of upgrading and modernisation.

Project Examples	Improving the Building Energy Rating (BER), utilising renewables, solar panels, heat pumps, water conservation, insulation, solar thermal collectors etc. Works requiring planning permission are only permitted where required for solar panels. Proof that a planning application has been applied for must be submitted as part of the application if required. Applicants should contact their local planning authority for information on planning permission requirements.	Works on electrical, plumbing, gas and heating appliances; the installation, replacement and upgrade on areas which form an integral part of the building; static wheelchair ramps, stairways, automatic doors, installation of lifts etc. Works requiring planning permission are not permitted.
Grant Amount	€35,000 to €75,000	€35,000 to €75,000

1.2 The Role of Pobal

Pobal has been appointed to administer Building Blocks – Improvement Grant 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 the programme: *Building Blocks – Improvement Grant* and selecting the relevant sub-category or by calling EYPC on 01 511 7222.

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?

The scheme is open to all Early Learning and Care Services (ELC) and School Age Childcare Services (SAC) that meet the following basic eligibility criteria:

- Have a Service Reference Number for the premises for which the proposed works will apply.
- Be registered with Tusla for the premises for which the proposed works will apply.
- Have an active NCS 2022/2023 or ECCE 2022/2023 contract with at least one child registered. For NCS, applicants must ensure that all steps of the registration have been completed (i.e. the claim has been confirmed by the Parent).
- Where an owner has **multiple services**, the maximum number of applications that can be submitted is 3.

Applicants are only permitted to apply for either Strand A or Strand B.

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

If applicants do not meet the basic eligibility criteria, the application form will not be available on Hive to the facility. If applicants believe they are eligible to apply, they are logged on to Hive as the PAU or PAU delegate and the application form is not available on their Hive account, the applicant can contact the Early Years Provider Centre (EYPC) by raising a service request on Hive under the programme: *Building Blocks – Improvement Grant* and selecting the relevant sub-category or by calling EYPC on 01 511 7222.



Please
note:

Successful applicants must be in contract with Core Funding in advance of accepting the Grant Agreement for Building Blocks – Improvement Grant

3. Application Process

3.1 What does the application process involve?

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

Some information on the application form will be pre-populated from your records on 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 – Improvement Grant* and selecting the relevant sub-category or by calling EYPC on 01 511 7222.

The call for applications is a competitive application process. Your application will be in direct competition with all other applications received. Only applications 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.

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.

Before application submission, when an application is still in Draft status, applicants will be able to cancel the application and start again as long as they still submit the application before the closing date.

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 Hive.

After application submission, if applicants no longer wish to apply for the grant, the Service will be able to Withdraw the application. They will need to contact Pobal to withdraw their application by raising a service request on Hive under the programme: *Building Blocks – Improvement Grant* and selecting the relevant sub-category or by calling EYPC on 01 511 7222.

It will not be possible to withdraw a submitted application in order to submit an alternative application.

We strongly advise applicants to review the application form in advance of submission.

For multi service organisations, the first three applications **submitted** are final, it will **not** be possible to withdraw an application in order to submit an alternative application.

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 successfully submitted by the application closing date.

Pobal will not request 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?

Applicants are encouraged to:

- Have 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 Hive when the application process opens.
- Ensure the proposed works are eligible for the grant. Please see section 4 below for more details on eligible and ineligible items.
- Have any supporting documents and additional information ready. Please see section 3.5 below for more details on supporting documents.
- Have a Solar Panel planning permission reference number ready (if required).
- Seek quotations, ensure the quotations are directly related to the proposed works. Please see: [Public Procurement](#) Guidelines.
- For Strand A, seek a professional report that outlines the need for the proposed works, the impact the works will have on users of the facility and how the works meet the strand priorities. Please see section 3.5.1 for more information on the professional report.
- 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.
- Have considered disruption of service and continuity of service whilst renovations are in progress.
- Evidence of dedicated own funding if required and indicative quotes for works applied.

3.4 What should applicants consider when deciding what to apply

Table 2 below outlines some of the considerations that should be taken into account when submitting an application for Building Blocks – Improvement Grant.

Table 2. Considerations for Application

	Consideration	Notes
1.	Choose which strand best fits the proposed project.	Applicants can apply for Strand A or Strand B, not both .
2.	Apply for funding for a project which must be completed by 31 st December 2023.	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.
3.	Have the permission of the owner of the premises to complete the proposed works.	An Owner Permission template document will be provided.

		Where the premises is owned by a Board of Management, the template should be completed by two members of the Board, one to be the Chairperson or Director.
4.	Have a rental/lease/licence agreement in place for 5 years from the date of first payment.	Any exit from a rental/lease agreement before the end of 5 years from the date of first payment, will result in a pro-rata decommittal of funding.
5.	Consider Universal Design Guidelines	All ELC services and SAC services should consider the Universal Design Guidelines in the refurbishment, renovation and building of facilities. Applicants are required to confirm that they have read the guidelines and will commit take account of these in their projects.
6.	Have the ability to co-fund any difference between total project costs and the grant amount applied for.	Acceptable evidence includes one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank statement: where the total cost of the project exceeds the grant amount awarded the applicant must provide a bank statement demonstrating that the additional funding required to complete the project is in place. Applicants must confirm that this money is ring fenced to complete the project. • 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 – Improvement Grant project. • Letter of offer/contract from another funder. • Loan agreement from a financial institution e.g. bank or credit union. Other public funding cannot be used to co-fund the project.
7.	For Strand A only , have planning permission in place for solar panels (if required)	It is a requirement that if planning permission is required to install solar panels, that a planning application number is submitted with this application. Applicants should contact their local planning authority for information on planning permission requirements. Where planning permission is required, please note the application process could take a number of weeks to conclude and may include

		<p>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.</p> <p>Any other works requiring planning permission are not eligible for this grant.</p>
8.	Have a professional report	<p>Professional reports are mandatory for Strand A. The report should clearly outline the need for the works and the benefits that the proposed works will have on the energy efficiency/ carbon footprint of the building.</p> <p>Professional fees will only be reimbursed to successful applicants, to a maximum of 10% of the capital costs (including VAT).</p> <p>Maximum overall costs awarded (capital costs + professional fees) will not exceed €75,000</p> <p>Professional reports are not mandatory for Strand B, but may be included as part of supporting documentation.</p> <p>Please see section 3.5.1 below for more information on professional reports.</p>
9.	Follow Public Procurement Guidelines and submit quotes for any items applied for under the grant	<p>All applicants are required to comply with Public Procurement Guidelines.</p> <p>Please pay particular attention to the number of quotes that are required for different funding amounts. This will be relevant if you are successful in your application.</p>
10.	Ensure that quotes submitted relate directly to the works outlined in the application and professional report.	<p>Applicants must obtain and retain quotations from independent suppliers for each eligible item.</p> <p>Applicants may begin the process for e-tendering from the date of the first announcement of this grant scheme.</p> <p>Expenditure is only eligible from the date of notification of the successful outcome of the application for funding, with the exception of professional fees which are eligible from the date of first announcement of this grant.</p>

3.5 What supporting documents are needed?

This table summarises the key documents required as part of the application process with further explanation below.

Table 3. Documents required

	Strand A Green Energy	Strand B Retrofit
Mandatory documents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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 for 5 years after the date of first payment of this grant 2. Letter from the owner of the building granting permission to complete the proposed works (template will be provided). 3. Professional report-please see 3.5.1 below 4. Quotes which correspond to the professional report 5. Evidence of own funding if required and indicative quotes for works applied. 6. Planning Permission Number (for solar panels only if required). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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 for 5 years after the date of first payment of this grant 2. Letter from the owner of the building granting permission to complete the proposed works (template will be provided). 3. Evidence of own funding if required and indicative quotes for works applied.
Examples of supporting documents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tusla Report 2. Photographs 3. Other relevant supporting documents 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tusla Report 2. Photographs 3. Professional Report 4. Other relevant supporting documents

3.5.1 Professional Report

A professional report is mandatory for Strand A only, however Strand B applicants may wish to include one to strengthen their application. This report can be completed by a competent person including but not limited to architect, engineer, quantity surveyor, builder, plumber, electrician, energy specialist etc. The professional report must be dated on or after the 1st September 2022, the date of the first announcement of this grant.

All proposed works must be itemised as part of the professional report and quotations need to be supplied in support of the professional report. Only works identified in the professional report will be considered for approval and works must align with the quotes submitted.

Examples of other items applicants should wish to consider including in a professional report:

- Professional report should be on headed paper, outlining the qualifications, accreditation or professional membership of the person compiling the report.

- The rationale for the proposed works and how they meet strand priorities. The impact that the proposed works will have on the facility users should be clear. All relevant supporting evidence should be contained in the report, including photographs.
- 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).
- Clearly defined schedule of work, the contractors required and the start/finish dates. Where possible, contingencies should be identified.
- Contractors identified and where possible, references in respect of each, detailing the quality of their work, and expertise.
- How the works incorporate the Universal Design Guidelines.
- For Strand A, how the works will improve the energy rating of the building, reduce carbon footprint, improve sustainability, or reduce waste (e.g., lower Building Energy Rating etc.).
- That planning permission is not necessary (except in the case of solar panels if required).

3.5.2 Planning Permission

Solar panels are the **only** items eligible under this grant that may require planning permission. It is recommended that consideration for planning permission has been demonstrated as part of the professional report. Time to seek planning should be factored into the project planning and timelines.

If 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. As with all pre-payment conditions, at the time of contracting, if planning permission has not been approved within 20 working days after the date of confirmation of a successful award, the offer of funding will be withdrawn.

3.6 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 Hive under the programme: *Building Blocks – Improvement Grant* and selecting the relevant sub-category or by calling EYPC on 01 511 7222.

Applicants may also contact their local City/County Childcare Committee for additional support and advice.

4. 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.

Table 2. Eligible and Ineligible Expenditure

	<u>Eligible Expenditure</u>	<u>Ineligible Expenditure</u> This is not an exhaustive list
Strand A Green Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional fees – see below. • 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. • Solar Panels. Planning permission, if required, for the installation of solar panels only. • Heat pumps (e.g. air, ground or water source pumps), zoning of heating system. • Water conservation (e.g. 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. • Any other relevant green energy system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any costs not directly related to the project. • Indirect costs of the project e.g., administration, overheads. • Any works requiring planning permission, except for the installation of solar panels. • Consumables. • Toys/ Play equipment. • Art Supplies. • Outdoor Play equipment. • Upgrades/Repairs of Outdoor Play Areas. • Outdoor areas or services. • Porta Cabins. • Small kitchen items/ Kitchen equipment. • ICT equipment including Tablets, PC, Software, Printers, TV, monitoring, etc. • Purchase/service/maintenance of a vehicle used by the ELC/SAC service. • Retrospective costs – activity or work that has already been undertaken prior to date of project approval. • VAT where registered. • Insurance. • Charges such as bank interest costs, financial penalties, legal dispute costs etc. • Notional costs e.g. lost opportunity. • Sponsorship and donations. • In-kind contributions. • Items paid in cash.

	<u>Eligible Expenditure</u>	<u>Ineligible Expenditure</u> This is not an exhaustive list
Strand B Retrofit	<p>Works on electrical, plumbing, gas and heating appliances to ensure they meet regulations and standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrical wiring. • Electrical switches. • Electrical distribution boards. • Fixtures. <p>Retrofit costs associated with installation, replacement and upgrade of areas which form an integral part of the building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kitchen works and refurbishment. • Upgrade of Sanitary facilities for children and adults. • Roof repairs/replacements. • Insulation of roof, walls (internal or external), floors, attic and dry lining. • Window Repairs/replacements. • External/Internal Door repair/replacement. • Upgrade of Flooring. <p>Direct costs associated with improving accessibility for those with mobility issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Static wheelchair ramps. • Stairways. • Automatic doors. • Installation of a lift. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any costs not directly related to the project. • Indirect costs of the project e.g. administration, overheads. • Any works requiring planning permission. • Consumables. • Toys/Play equipment. • Art Supplies. • Outdoor Play equipment. • Upgrades/Repairs of Outdoor Play Areas. • Outdoor areas or services. • Porta Cabins. • Small kitchen items/kitchen equipment. • ICT equipment including Tablets, PC, Software, Printers, TV, monitoring, etc. • Purchase/service/maintenance of a vehicle used by the ELC/SAC service. • Retrospective costs – activity that has already been undertaken prior to date of project approval. • VAT where registered. • Insurance. • Charges such as bank interest costs, financial penalties, legal dispute costs. • Sponsorship and donations. • In-kind contributions. • Notional costs e.g. lost opportunity. • Items paid in cash.

4.1 Professional Fees

An allowance within the grant amount towards professional fees may be covered by the grant where such inputs are required to deliver the proposed project. A maximum of 10% (including VAT) **of the capital costs (including VAT)** awarded up to a maximum of €75,000 for can be allocated towards professional fees. **Professional fees will only be reimbursed to successful applicants, to a maximum of 10% of the capital costs (including VAT).**

- Professional fees can be incurred from the date of first announcement of this grant.
- 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 occurred to complete this project can be included in the budget section of the Application. However, the “Applied for” section will stop once this reaches the maximum accumulated total of €75,000. If Professional fees were not already included in the €75,000, no extra allowance towards Professional fees can be applied for.

To calculate Professional fees, please see below examples:

Example 1 Strand (A)

Project Details:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Net €</i>	<i>VAT €</i>	<i>Total €</i>
Electrical	Electrical Charging points	8,000	1,100	9,100
Insulation	Pipe Insulation	6,000	575	6,575
BER Improvement Works	New Windows	15,670	3,400	19,070
BER Improvement Works	New floors	10,450	2,200	12,650
Total Capital Costs <u>excluding</u> Professional fees				47,395
Max. amount prof fees @10%				4,739.50
Professional fees spent	Engineer	3,500	300	3,800
Total grant Service has applied for				51,195

Workings below:

1. Total excluding any Professional fees = €47,395 (Including VAT)
2. Total including professional fees = €51,195 (Including VAT)
3. For this figure – the maximum a Service could have obtained in Professional fees is €4,739.50 which is 10% of the capital costs. However, the Service has only spent €3,800 which is below the maximum.

Example 2 Strand (B)

Project Details:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Net €</i>	<i>VAT €</i>	<i>Total €</i>
Accessibility	Wheelchair Ramp	5,000	900	5900
Retrofit	Sanitary facilities	16,000	3,200	19,200
Retrofit	Roof Repairs	7,150	1,300	8,450
Retrofit	Window repair	3,000	500	3,500
Retrofit	Upgrade of flooring	15,900	3,100	19,000
Total Excluding Professional fees				56,050
Max. amount prof fees @10%				5,605
Professional fees spent	Builder	6,000	605	6,605
Total grant Service can apply for				61,655

Workings below:

1. Total excluding any Professional fees = €56,050 (Including VAT)
2. Professional fees spent by Service €6,605 (including VAT).
3. The maximum amount this Service is allowed to allocate towards professional fees is €5,605
4. In this case, the Professional fees are higher than the maximum allowed, which is 10% of the Capital costs. Therefore, the total amount this Service can apply for their professional fees is €5,605. The grant amount they will be able to apply for is €61,655.

Examples 3 Strand (A)

Project Details:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Net €</i>	<i>VAT €</i>	<i>Total €</i>
Solar/Thermal	Solar Panels	35,000	6,800	41,800
Solar/Thermal	Fixtures	10,000	2,000	12,000
Solar/Thermal	Hot water collector	14,370	2600	16,970
Water conservation	Grey water system	4000	230	4230
Total Excluding Professional fees				75,000
Max. amount prof fees @10%				0
Professional fees spent	Architect	3000	1000	4,000
Total grant Service can apply for				75,000

Workings below:

1. Total excluding any Professional fees = €75,000 (Including VAT)
2. For this figure – the maximum has been reached. This Service will only be able to apply for €75,000. Additional funds for Professional fees will not be covered under this grant.

Example 4 Strand (A)

Project Details:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Net €</i>	<i>VAT €</i>	<i>Total €</i>
BER Improvement Works	New windows	15,000	3,500	18,500
Insulation	Insulation of heat generators	12,000	2,750	14,750
Total excluding Professional fees				33,250
Max. amount prof fees @10%				3,325
Professional fees spent	Architect	2,800	500	3,300
Total grant Service can apply for				36,550

Workings below:

1. Total excluding any Professional fees = €33,250 (Including VAT)
2. Total including professional fees = €36,550 (Including VAT)
3. For this figure –the 10% maximum of the overall total is 3,325. Therefore, the Professional fees spent does not exceed the max allowed.

5. Decision Making

Pobal will appraise all applications and make recommendations to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). All Pobal recommendations will be presented to the Minister for approval and final decision.

Section 5.1 outlines the criteria used to appraise each application. All decisions will be communicated via 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 need to 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 that criteria.

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

a. What are the selection criteria?

All applications will be assessed using the following criteria:

	Notes
1. Demonstration of need (40%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of why the works are required. The quality of the evidence, type of information, professional reports, Tusla reports, photographs etc., analysis and data provided. Other relevant information relating to the facility, e.g. age of the building
2. Value for money (20%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The justification and reasonableness of each cost applied for. If the costs applied for clearly correlate to the professional report, the quotes submitted and the project description The eligibility of the works applied for. If the benefits of the proposed works and the application are deemed value for money.
3. Meeting strand priorities (20%)	<p>Strand A: Energy Improvement Impact that the proposed works will have on improving the energy efficiency of the building (e.g. BER rating, carbon footprint, reduced energy usage, reduced water consumption etc.)</p> <p>Strand B: Impact on Users of the Childcare Facility (Children/Staff/Parents etc.) Funding under Strand B is being allocated to support the improvement of the physical environment of the building for children attending ELC and SAC services and to ensure standards are being met. This may include the upgrade, refurbishment or renovation of facilities to ensure that they are fully fit for purpose and provide the optimal setting for children and staff.</p>

<p>4. Achievability (20%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall readiness and achievability of the proposed works (e.g. solar planning permission in place if required, achievable timelines etc.) • How well the applicant has been able to address the requirements of the programme. • Evidence of owner's permission, duration of rental/lease/licence agreements. • How potential risks are identified and mitigated against i.e. planning permission delay or refusal. • If overall project costs are greater than the grant applied for, how the service provider has demonstrated the ability to cover any shortfall.
-----------------------------------	---

5.2 Can applicants appeal the outcome of an appraisal?

All unsuccessful applicants including those deemed ineligible will have the opportunity to seek an appeal of the original decision. They must do so within **5 working days** of the date of 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.

If additional funding becomes available, or the threshold for consideration lowered on instruction from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) Pobal will review unsuccessful applications again. Applications with higher weighting scores on questions such as achievability will be given priority.

5.3 What happens after a successful appraisal?

- Pobal will notify all successful applicants of the outcome of the process via notification of offer on Hive.
- Pobal will issue a grant agreement to all successful applicants via 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 to Pobal within 20 working days from the date that the notification of offer was issued on 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.
- All successful applicants are required to enter into contract with Core Funding, in advance of accepting the terms and conditions of the Building Blocks – Improvement Grant.
- 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
- Where applicants are registered for Value Added Tax (VAT), the grant awarded will be net of VAT

- All applicants must report to Pobal on the total project costs by way of financial return. All monies must be spent and reported to Pobal before 30th November, 2023.
- 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.
- Building Blocks – Improvement Grants are subject to verification visits.
- **Retain all documentation** in relation to the grant awarded under Strand A and Strand B for a period of 5 **years** from the date of first payment. This will be included as a programme condition within the contract

6. Payments

All of the grant monies awarded must be spent and reported to Pobal no later than 30th November, 2023.

Payment of the grant will be as follows

- 90% of the grant awarded on receipt of the signed grant agreement and fulfilment of any prepayment conditions outlined in the notification of offer.
- 10% of the grant awarded will be paid retrospectively on receipt of the final online financial return detailing how the grant was actually spent. Only when all the correct information is received with the online return will the final payment be released. The final payment will match the total accepted spend.
- Any unspent or ineligible funding will be subject to decommitment of funds. If you cannot demonstrate that you have spent 90% of the funding on receipt of your financial return, both the underspend will be recouped from the 90% funded, as well as the final 10% of funding being withheld.
- If on submission of your financial return you 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 Decommittal of your full award, which will result in full recoupment of any funding paid to date.
- Works, payments, or carry-over of funding will not be permitted into 2024.

6.1 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 decommitment of this Grant Agreement.

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

- In contract with Core Funding
- Where the applicant is not the owner of the building, they must submit the permission of the owner of the premises to complete the proposed works
- 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 after the date of first payment.**

- Where the total project costs exceed the amount of funding applied for the applicant must provide proof that balance of funding is ringfenced for the completion of this project.
- Strand A only – If planning permission is required for solar panels, approved planning permission must be in place.
- Hold valid Tax Clearance. Payments against any existing contracts must not be on hold.

6.2 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. Checklist of Documents

Strand A Green Energy		
1.	Mandatory Professional Report	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Planning Permission Number for Solar Panels, if required.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Rental/lease/licence agreement, if required	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Owner's Permission template if required	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Indicative quote documentation	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Evidence of own funding, if required	<input type="checkbox"/>

Strand B Retrofit		
1.	Professional Report (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Rental/lease/licence agreement if required	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Owners Permission template if required	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Indicative quote documentation	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Evidence of own funding, if required	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Key Dates

Table 3. Key Dates

Activity	Date
Scheme Announcement	1st September 2022
Online Applications Go Live	Q4 2022
Online Applications Close	TBA
Notifications to all applicants on the outcome of their application	TBA
Grant payments	After the contracting process is completed
Financial returns	30 th November 2023 (recommendation)
Projects complete and grants utilised	31 st December 2023
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.

9. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

- The DECEDIY is the Data Controller for personal data processed for the Early Years Capital Programme 2023.
- 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 DECEDIY.
- External appraisers may be contracted as part of the appraisal process, but this will be in accordance with DECEDIY 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 which are in place for 5 years after date of first payment of the grant.
- Permission from the owner of the premises to carry out the works.
- Information provided in quotations and in professional reports.