

INFORMATION SHEET – CAPITAL GRANT PROGRAM

MASTER PLAN GRANT – APPLICATION INFORMATION SHEET

Overview

Access to Australian Government grant support for capital projects is dependent upon schools being able to demonstrate sound education planning underpinning proposed projects. A comprehensive, well-structured, up-to-date Master Plan represents the consultative process which has been undertaken to guide the future development of quality educational facilities for a school site.

A school site Master Plan is one of the major, school-based planning documents supporting the School's Strategic Plan in the development of appropriate building and grounds. The Master Plan needs to identify an orderly staged development sequence which is financially viable within the school's long-term Business Plan. Together, these documents promote a rational and cohesive approach to decisions influencing the direction and development of a school as a learning environment.

Advice to Applicants

The Block Grant Authority (BGA) has made it mandatory for schools applying for a grant under the Capital Grant Program (CGP) to have a current, costed Master Plan prepared by a professional.

To assist you with the Master Planning process please refer to the following:

- The BGA's website under Resources - [Master Plan Grants](#).
- *Learning Environments Australasia (LEA)* – This Association's main purpose is to improve the design of places where children learn. A list of architect members of the SA Chapter can be supplied on request. Please note that LEA and its members are not endorsed by the BGA, and the list is supplied for your information only.

Master Plan Grants can be funded from the Capital Grant Program. Available funds can vary significantly from year to year and the funding of Master Plan Grants is at the BGA Committee's discretion. Applications for Master Plan Grants are considered at the BGA Committee meetings in February and August each year.

Strategic (Educational) Plan

School leaders will develop a Strategic Plan in consultation with relevant stakeholders such as the school's board, staff, parents, students, and the wider community.

A Strategic Plan will consider varying combinations of the following:

- Mission and vision – the core values, philosophy, and goals for the school
- Desired education outcomes
- Statutory requirements and changes (e.g. National Curriculum)
- Religious beliefs or philosophy to be embraced.
- Teaching and learning pedagogy.
- Year levels to be catered for
- Subdivisional grouping (e.g. early learning, middle school)
- Class sizes
- Integration / separation of subject areas (e.g. specialist faculties to be together or dispersed)
- Desired enrolment growth, maximum enrolment
- Future plans for expansion in year levels, streams etc
- Any unique curriculum offerings or programs (e.g. Montessori, Reggio Emilia, or International Baccalaureate)
- Any specialisation in particular curricular programs.

- Relationships and programs undertaken with the local community (e.g. local business, community groups, church)
- Context within the community that the school exists.
- Implications of any anticipated changes to any of the above over time
- Understanding the difference between educational trends and fads.

This information may already be covered in existing documents such as State Registration requirements, but it is important to have considered them, as the site/facilities planning must be based on the education needs.

The Business Plan

The school's Business Plan for expenditure on capital works also needs to be considered to ensure that any Facilities Plans have a sound financial basis. A Master Plan should be costed by a Quantity Surveyor (QS) as part of the planning process, to allow it to be synchronised with the school's Business Plan. Costing the stages or key components will enhance the annual capital expenditure budgets and make the financial forecasts more meaningful.

The Master Plan

A Master Plan should be undertaken by architectural and/or educational planning design professionals in conjunction with school leaders and others, as required. A meaningful Master Plan will evolve from close collaboration between educators and designers who respect each other's skills and knowledge. It is necessary to collaborate closely with the designers to meet the requirements of the Strategic Plan. It is important for the school to be confident in insisting on an outcome with which it is comfortable.

The simplicity or complexity of a Master Plan will be determined by:

- the size of the school
- its stage of development, and
- the clarity of the Strategic Plan for the future.

It is a requirement that schools provide costing of each stage of their Master Plan to assist with future budgeting and forecasting.

Strategic Plan/Master Plan Relationship

A good Master Plan flows from a clear understanding of the Strategic Plan and an analysis of the site features and constraints.

Often, schools use the finalised Master Plan as a marketing tool as it provides a tangible record of the vision held by the school's governing body for quality educational delivery well into the future. A good Master Plan will flow from a clear understanding of the intentions of the Strategic Plan and an analysis of the site features, including any constraints.

The Master Plan should be an easy to understand, illustrated document outlining key projects with a staging strategy and costings for their implementation. The Master Plan should be regularly reviewed and updated to remain a living document relevant and useful to the school.

Site Planning

Developing a Master Plan will have different considerations for a new (greenfield) site, compared with one that contains existing buildings. Not all elements of the site and its buildings listed below will need a detailed assessment for every school, however, during the master planning process consideration should be given to the need for inclusion of elements such as:

Environmental

- Existing site features – topography, including site slope, soils type, water courses, overland and stormwater flows, together with consideration of on-site detention/treatment of stormwater, as well as potential for flooding and bushfires.
- Orientation and ability to site buildings to maximise environmental performance.
- Significant trees and other plantings, both on the site and on adjoining sites, for retention or with restrictions for use, such as wetlands or koala habitat
- Summer and winter winds (take advantage of desirable and protect from undesirable)
- Landscaping, gardens, and plantings
- Heritage impacts

Government and Services Authority Requirements

- Local Government Development Plan requirements and constraints.
- Any existing site easements.
- Water, sewer, stormwater, electricity, green energy options, gas, communications services (internal and external), their locations and capacities to meet future development needs on the site.
- IT services – copper cabling, optical fibre cabling, wireless coverage

Buildings and other site infrastructure

- Existing buildings and their suitability for inclusion in current and future development such as consideration of condition, flexibility to meet evolving pedagogies and ability to be upgraded to improve environmental performance.
- Other existing site infrastructure.
- Intended building locations, including room for expansion with permanent and/or relocatable/temporary buildings (including their ease of being installed and removed).
- Acoustic considerations such as location of noise generating activities and noise sensitive activities.
- Locations of formal and informal playing areas (grassed and paved), including their desirable orientations (north-south preferred).
- Locations of and relationships between general learning, specialist learning, outdoor learning areas, administration, and recreation buildings.
- Playgrounds, seating / eating areas.
- Playing fields and courts
- Desirable views from buildings.
- Site security and any fencing (need or no need), including line of sight for supervision and safety of students.

Site Access

- Public entrance locations and the image to be created for the school.
- Desired access points for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles.
- Service and emergency vehicle access.
- Car parking access and pick up/set down provisions.
- ELC and OSHC access if part of School
- Bicycle and pedestrian access and paths.
- Separation of pedestrian and vehicle access routes.
- Disability access requirements around the site and to buildings.
- Sheds and shelter locations and requirements.

Community and Neighbours

- Neighbouring properties, their current and potential developments and any impact that may have on the school.
- School noise abatement for neighbouring properties
- Potential for colocation of education facilities with community useable facilities, i.e. halls, sporting fields, open spaces
- Consideration of community access to grounds/facilities

Building Planning

A Master Plan should be used as the basis to determine the scope of work for any proposed building project and to brief the architect accordingly. Projects proposed for Government capital assistance through SAISBGA must be consistent with sound educational facilities planning and include consideration of the following:

- Compliance with Local Government Development Plans, building and construction codes.
- Single and multi-storey options and implications
- Building orientations and proportions for desirable passive environmental design provisions
- Locations of building entrances
- Relationships between buildings
- Relationships between buildings and outdoor areas
- Implications of staging new building and redevelopment projects, including builder's access for future building works
- Assessment of existing buildings for suitability for redevelopment or demolition
- Security and safety issues
- Creation of built and landscape assets of lasting value rather than adherence to trends and fads.
- Compliance with SAIS-BGA building standards.

Acknowledgement and thanks

Material originally prepared by Andrew Tidswell for the SAIS BGA and subsequently updated with information shared with and by the Queensland Block Grant Authority from the document *Master Plans – Sound Educational Planning* document compiled by the.

Originally prepared February 2015

Updated June 2019

Updated July 2022

Reviewed May 2025

Updated June 2025