



Department
for Education

Trust Capacity Fund 2022-2023 window 2

Information for applicants

October 2022

Contents

Summary	3
Expiry date	3
Who is this publication for?	3
Main points	3
What is the Trust Capacity Fund and what will it fund?	4
Eligible projects	5
Eligible activities	6
Who can apply?	7
How and when can I apply?	8
Writing your application	8
Questions and clarifications	8
Submitting your application	8
Application deadlines	9
How will my bid be assessed?	10
Assessment process	10
Assessment criteria	10
Geographical need	10
Contextual need	11
Deliverability	11
Value for money	11
Sustainability	12
Penalties and deductions	12
Excessive executive pay	12
Failure to provide information about key individuals in the trust	12
Failure to return internal audit reports	13
Failure to comply with previous grant assurance procedures	13
What happens next?	14
Annex A: Education investment areas	15

Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). It has been produced to help schools and trusts apply for the Trust Capacity Fund (TCaF) 2022-2023 window 2.

Expiry date

This guidance will expire on 31 March 2023, which is the date by which all activities funded by TCaF 2022-2023 window 2 must be completed.

Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- academy trusts
- local authority-maintained schools forming a multi-academy trust (MAT)

Main points

This guidance explains:

- what TCaF is and what it will fund
- who can apply
- how and when to apply
- how we will assess applications

You should read the guidance in full before applying for funding. If you have any questions, please contact the grant team at TCAF.GRANT@education.gov.uk

What is the Trust Capacity Fund and what will it fund?

The Trust Capacity Fund (TCaF) is a competitive grant fund available to help trusts develop their capacity to grow. It has a particular focus on supporting strong trusts, and strong schools forming trusts, to take on underperforming schools in [education investment areas](#) (EIAs).

TCaF 2022-2023 window 2 is organised into three strands, each with its own minimum and maximum grant values. Applications that involve taking on underperforming schools in EIAs will be prioritised. You should be mindful of this when considering an application. It is up to you to decide which strand to apply for, based on the details of your [linked growth project](#):

Strand	Minimum grant value	Maximum grant value
A - For projects in which your trust will take on at least one inadequate or requires improvement school in an EIA (listed in Annex A).	£50,000	£300,000
B - For projects in which a trust takes on either at least one inadequate or requires improvement school outside of an EIA or any school within an EIA (listed in Annex A).	£50,000	£200,000
C - For trusts taking on good or outstanding schools outside of an EIA.	£50,000	£100,000

Bids above the maximum grant value are permitted and will be supported in exceptional circumstances. For instance, if your trust is taking on a long-standing dAO or an inadequate academy that has not been able to transfer for a considerable time or where your growth proposal involves taking on multiple schools, we would consider the grounds for approving a bid above the grant maxima. We will assess your application in the same way as any other, but with additional scrutiny of value for money and consideration of the impact on other potential applicants. If you are considering applying above the maximum grant value, you should contact the [RD office](#) for the area in which you are proposing to work to discuss this.

Eligible projects

Your TCaF application must be linked to a clearly defined growth project that will be approved by a [regional director](#) (RD) between 1 July 2022 and 16 December 2022. This must commit you to either:

- taking at least one new school into your trust by 31 March 2024¹
- or converting to academy status and taking on at least two new schools (with all schools to be taken into your trust by 31 March 2024)

The following types of growth project are eligible for TCaF:

- applications from schools to convert to academy status and form a multi-academy trust (MAT)
- sponsor matches for schools with directive Academy Orders (dAOs)
- trust mergers, including a single academy trust (SAT) joining a larger MAT and SATs joining together to create new trusts
- academy transfers from one trust to another
- local authority established MATs
- approved free school bid proposals²

One application may be made for each growth project approved by an RD - this usually means an approval at an advisory board (AB) on a particular date so that a decision made by an RD on multiple schools joining a trust on that date, is equivalent to one 'growth project' and therefore one application may be made on that basis.

Growth projects that are not eligible for TCaF include, but are not limited to, [significant change](#) applications (for example, changes to age ranges, published admission numbers or the addition of a SEN resource base); physically expanding an existing school within your trust and a school joining your trust as an associate member only.

You should contact the [RD Office](#) for the area in which you are proposing to work to confirm the eligibility of your project and relevant details.

¹ If the new school is a free school, in certain circumstances we may be able to extend this deadline. You should contact the [RD Office](#) for the area in which you are proposing to work to discuss this.

² Approval for the free school must be received between 1 July 2022 and 16 December 2022 to be eligible.

Eligible activities

All activities funded by TCaF must start no earlier than 1 July 2022 and be completed by 31 March 2023. They must be focused on strengthening your trusts' central capacity and not improving individual schools.

Examples of activities for which you can seek TCaF funding include:

- establishing new central processes such as IT, finance and HR
- training and continuing professional development for staff
- new staffing posts within the central trust team
- new (or extending) staffing posts relating to trust wide school improvement
- reasonable relocation costs for moving staff to new regions
- specialist advice – such as IT, finance or HR advice – to build permanent capacity for growth

Examples of activities for which you cannot seek TCaF funding include:

- capital expenditure, such as the purchase of assets (for example, buildings, furniture, fittings, IT equipment or refurbishment)
- activities that are already funded from other sources, such as legal fees that are covered by the sponsorship/conversion grant
- time for pre-existing staff to undertake work that is already in progress as part of their current responsibilities
- consultancy costs for delivering and managing the whole TCaF project
- due diligence activities

Neither of these lists are exhaustive. If you are uncertain whether any of your proposed activities are suitable for TCaF, please seek guidance from the grant team at TCAF.GRANT@education.gov.uk.

Who can apply?

If you are an academy trust or local authority-maintained school in England, to apply to TCaF 2022-2023 window 2 you must:

- be considered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency to be of sound financial health. As a minimum requirement, you must not have an open [financial notice to improve](#).
- have an [eligible growth project](#) that is approved by an RD between 1 July 2022 and 16 December 2022.

If your application is successful and you do not already meet the standards of 90% phonics and 50% English Baccalaureate entries (as relevant to your phase(s) of education), you will need to commit to improving your performance. In general, this will mean aiming to reach that level of performance after three years.

Please remember that TCaF is a competitive grant: meeting these eligibility criteria is not a guarantee of funding.

Initial teacher training (ITT)

Trusts receiving funding will be expected, where capacity and context allow, to engage with ITT initiatives promoted by the department. Many trusts will be an accredited provider of ITT or a delivery partner to an accredited provider. We would expect all trusts receiving funding to host placements for trainees if you do not already do so or increase the number of placements already offered if you have the available capacity. From September 2024, this may include hosting trainees undertaking the new intensive training and practice element. Trusts receiving funding should provide the department with information as requested on the number of placements offered across your trust during the previous academic year in June 2023.

How and when can I apply?

Writing your application

To apply for TCaF 2022-2023 window 2, you must download and complete the [application form](#). You will need to fill out three sections, which ask for the following information (further guidance can be found in the form):

- organisation details – basic information about your organisation, such as its name, location, group ID and contact details.
- project outline – the strand to which you are applying, the details of the school(s) that you are proposing will join your trust, when your growth project was or will be discussed at AB, or approved by the RD.
- project details – an overview and plan for the project, including how you will ensure it is deliverable, how it offers value for money, and is sustainable; and your compliance, governance and resource management arrangements.

Please remember that TCaF is a competitive grant: your application is not an agreement of funding. You should submit your strongest project relative to the [assessment criteria](#), against which all applications will be scored and prioritised.

Before submitting your completed application form, you must ensure that your accounting officer has ratified the application. This individual will be accountable for delivery, ensuring funding is used correctly and in compliance with the department's [grant funding agreement: terms and conditions](#).

You are not entitled to claim from the department any costs or expenses that you may incur in preparing your bid, regardless of whether it is successful.

Questions and clarifications

You may query and seek clarification on any aspect of TCaF or this guidance prior to submitting your application. Questions must be submitted to the grant team at TCaF.GRANT@education.gov.uk. However, we will not review or give specific advice on any part of your application before submission.

Submitting your application

Please email your completed application form to the grant team at TCaF.GRANT@education.gov.uk. Please include your organisation's name, 'Trust Capacity Fund Application' and the region in which your growth project will be located in the email subject field.

On receipt of applications, the delivery team will check to ensure you have completed all required details in the relevant fields of the application form and that you meet all the

eligibility criteria. They may contact you to clarify elements of your application: this is not an opportunity to provide additional detail beyond that already within the application.

Application deadlines

The application window runs from 20 October to 16 December 2022. Please submit your application by the end of 16 December 2022.

There will be a [national moderation exercise](#) following the application window. Decisions will be communicated to trusts as quickly as possible after this exercise.

To help us manage the volume of applications we expect to receive, we ask you make your application as early as possible. Where this is not possible, we ask that you keep the grant team informed of your plans.

As explained in [eligible growth projects](#), your application must be linked to a clearly defined growth project that has been approved by an RD between 1 July 2022 and 16 December 2022. You can submit your TCaF application ahead of RD approval, but it will not be assessed until and unless the RD makes a positive decision on the growth project.

You can only submit one TCaF application per growth project. You may withdraw and resubmit your application if it has not yet been to [national moderation](#), but we will not provide feedback on the initial submission. You cannot submit a revised application for the same project after a decision has been made.

As explained in [eligible activities](#), all activities funded by TCaF must be completed by 31 March 2023.

How will my bid be assessed?

Assessment process

Provided their linked growth project has been approved, all applications received will be subject to a two-stage assessment process: regional assessment and national moderation.

1. Regional assessment: the relevant RD will assess the merit of the application against the [assessment criteria](#) and apply any [relevant penalties](#), treating all applications fairly. They will use the information contained within the application, as well as information generated from DfE-held sources, to make a relative judgment about whether it should be approved.
2. National moderation: to ensure applications are assessed consistently and to maximise value for money against the aims of TCaF, all regional assessments will be subject to a national moderation exercise involving senior officials from across the regions. Where the number and value of strong bids exceeds the available funding, this exercise will prioritise applications according to the extent to which they meet the [assessment criteria](#). Any bids that are above the maximum grant value will be reviewed by the Director General and receive wider financial scrutiny to assess value for money and consider the impact on other applicants.

Assessment criteria

The following sections set out how we will judge applications against specific assessment criteria. You should ensure your application shows clearly how you meet these criteria, but please remember that TCaF is a competitive grant: even applications that meet all the criteria and support priority projects are not guaranteed funding.

Applications that support the scheme's specific geographical and contextual priorities will receive higher scores and be prioritised accordingly during moderation. Applications that do not involve taking on underperforming schools in EIAs are still eligible but will be prioritised according to the strand criteria.

Geographical need

If you are applying to strand A, your trust must be taking on or be created from at least one additional inadequate or requires improvement school from one of the areas listed in the [Annex A](#) table. If you are applying for strand B, your project must involve your trust taking on either at least one inadequate or requires improvement school in an area **not** listed in Annex A **or** any good or outstanding school **in** one of the areas listed in Annex A. If you are applying under strand C, your project does not have to include a school from one of these areas and is less likely to be prioritised and less likely to receive funding.

Within these parameters, geographical need will be assessed by comparing the number of at-risk schools in a local authority district with the supply of effective trusts in the same area. RDs will also refer to local intelligence (for example, to ensure that boundary issues and anomalous cases do not unduly influence decisions) and consider their key strategic priorities for their areas to inform decision-making.

Contextual need

Contextual need will be assessed by considering the relative level of priority of the schools attached to the project.

Projects involving special educational needs provision or alternative provision will be considered higher priority and, across both strands, applications in which the trust will take on underperforming schools (as measured by Ofsted ratings) will receive the greatest priority. For example, a project involving an inadequate school will be prioritised over a project involving a school with multiple requires improvement ratings, and so on.

Applications will also be considered stronger under this criterion if, in the judgement of the RD, there are factors that significantly escalate the level of risk to any trust taking on the project. For example, the current and historical educational and financial performance of the school, or the condition of school estates.

Deliverability

Deliverability will be assessed by considering the extent to which plans are realistic and provide suitable assurance that all funded activity will be completed and paid for by 31 March 2023 (having started no earlier than 1 July 2022).

A strong application will provide clear evidence of the following:

- a well-conceived, realistic plan and detailed understanding of the impact of the additional capacity.
- a thorough risk assessment and effective procedures to mitigate risks at both school and trust level, including a scheme of delegation that makes clear at what level risks are managed.

Value for money

Value for money will be assessed based on whether the funding requested seems proportionate to the size and risk of the project. This will include considering the number of schools proposed to join the trust.

A strong application will provide clear evidence of the following:

- a comprehensive spending plan with itemised costings that are appropriate for funding. This will include a clear understanding of why the money is required and how it will be spent and show how costs have been minimised.
- specialist financial expertise within the organisation to scrutinise expenditure, maximise efficiency and ensure propriety with public money. For example, an accredited school business manager and/or financial expertise at trustee and member level.

Applications will also be deemed stronger under this criterion if there is clear evidence the activity could not take place without TCaF funding (for example, if it cannot be funded through other sources).

Sustainability

Sustainability will be assessed by considering the extent to which there is evidence that activities will be sustainable beyond 31 March 2023 (the deadline for completion).

A strong application will provide clear evidence of the following:

- how the organisation will pay for any new capabilities that are likely to be required after the completion of their TCaF activities.
- that the organisation will be financially sustainable without additional revenue support from DfE.

Penalties and deductions

Where applicants are not adhering to departmental guidance or best practice, applications will be subject to point deductions from their overall application. This may lead to extra conditions being attached to the award of funding, should the application still be successful.

Where deductions have been applied, these will be made clear in the feedback to applicants.

Excessive executive pay

Any applicant to which DfE has written about excessive executive pay from September 2020 onwards may be subject to a points deduction. If applicable, they will be informed of this in writing.

Failure to provide information about key individuals in the trust

As part of the application form, applicants must provide details of the trust's (or the proposed trust's) chair of trustees, accounting officer, chief financial officer, trustees and

members, including their individual email address and the date they were appointed. This information must also be updated on the [Get Information About Schools](#) register. Failure to do so will result in a points deduction.

Failure to return internal audit reports

If trusts have failed to submit their internal audit reports alongside their annual accounts return, there will be a points deduction from their application.

Failure to comply with previous grant assurance procedures

If the applicant received a previous grant award from the DfE but did not comply effectively with the financial reporting requirements outlined in the grant funding agreement (especially if they did not submit a satisfactory Annex G certificate of expenditure), a point will be deducted from their application.

What happens next?

Whether it is successful or not, we will inform you via email about the outcome of your application as soon as possible following the moderation panel.

As explained in [submitting your application](#), your application to TCaF confirms that you have read, understood and will comply with the [DfE grant funding agreement: terms and conditions](#).

If your application is successful, you will be required to sign a grant funding agreement. This will set out our expectations of you, including the specific grant conditions, monitoring arrangements and payment details and you will be required to accept it in full.

Grant funding will be paid in arrears throughout the funding period once your agreed activity has been completed and evidenced.

Annex A: Education investment areas

To apply for strand A of TCaF, your proposal must involve taking on an underperforming school from one of the following local authority districts in EIAs. If you are applying for strand B, your project does not have to include a school from one of these areas but will be considered higher priority if it does.

Amber Valley	Great Yarmouth	Portsmouth
Ashfield	Halton	Richmondshire
Babergh	Hambleton	Rochdale
Bassetlaw	Harrogate	Rother
Bedford	Hartlepool	Rotherham
Blackpool	Hastings	Rushcliffe
Bolsover	High Peak	Ryedale
Bolton	Huntingdonshire	Salford
Boston	Ipswich	Sandwell
Bradford	Isle of Wight	Scarborough
Breckland	King's Lynn and West Norfolk	Sedgemoor
Broadland	Kirklees	Sefton
Broxtowe	Knowsley	Selby
Bury	Leeds	Somerset West and Taunton
Cambridge	Lewes	South Cambridgeshire
Central Bedfordshire	Lincoln	South Derbyshire
Chesterfield	Liverpool	South Gloucestershire
Cornwall	Luton	South Holland
County Durham	Manchester	South Kesteven
Coventry	Mansfield	South Norfolk
Craven	Mendip	South Somerset
Darlington	Mid Suffolk	South Tyneside
Derby	Middlesbrough	St. Helens
Derbyshire Dales	Newark and Sherwood	Stoke-on-Trent
Doncaster	North East Derbyshire	Sunderland

Dorset	North Kesteven	Swindon
Dudley	North Norfolk	Tameside
East Cambridgeshire	North Northamptonshire	Wakefield
East Lindsey	North Somerset	Walsall
East Suffolk	Norwich	Wealden
Eastbourne	Nottingham	West Lindsey
Erewash	Oldham	West Suffolk
Fenland	Peterborough	Wirral
Gedling	Plymouth	



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