



Department  
for Education

# **Condition Improvement Fund 2024-25**

**Information for applicants**

**November 2023**

# Contents

Summary	6
Expiry date	6
Who is this publication for?	6
New information for CIF 2024-25	6
Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC)	6
Expansion project disqualification	6
Removal of point deductions under financial viability, governance & school estate management	7
Introduction	8
About the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF)	8
The role of responsible bodies in CIF applications and project delivery	9
Key dates for CIF 2024-25	10
Urgent Capital Support	11
Applying for CIF	12
Who can apply for CIF?	12
Schools with academy orders	13
Voluntary aided schools	14
Private Finance Initiative and Priority School Building Programme schools	14
School Rebuilding Programme	14
Free schools	15
Projects	16
Condition projects	16
Condition with expansion projects	16
Expansion projects	17
High value projects	18
Project thresholds for CIF 2024-25	19
Primary and special schools	19
Secondary schools, all-through schools and sixth-form colleges	19
Applying for two projects	20
Preparing a good CIF application	20
Clear and focused application	20

Independent evidence and support	20
Well-considered options	21
Detailed costings	21
Rigorous planning	22
Applicant checklist	23
Documents to upload for your application	24
All projects	24
VA schools	24
Supporting evidence for condition projects	24
Condition survey	25
Condition Data Collection (CDC)	26
Other evidence of condition	26
Good Estate Management for Schools	26
Sustainability	27
Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)	27
Block replacement/refurbishment	28
Boiler and heating systems	29
Safeguarding	29
Access and specialist facilities for pupils with special education needs and disabilities (SEND)	30
Changes to the Gross Internal Floor Area (GIFA)	30
Emergency asbestos issues	30
Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC)	31
Supporting evidence for expansion projects	32
Basic Need	32
Overcrowding	32
Significant change	32
Eligible VA schools	33
Post-16 expansion	33
Growth data	33
Demand data	34
Net capacity	34

Net Capacity Assessment (NCA) programme	34
Feasibility study – all projects	36
What to include in a feasibility study	36
Applying to CIF	37
CIF portal	37
CIF portal account access	37
Use of technical advisers	38
Professional fees	39
CIF loans	39
VAT	40
How we assess your application	41
Introduction	41
Assessment criteria	41
Assessment of project need for condition projects	42
Project type – project priority and specification	42
Highest priority level	42
High priority level	43
Medium priority level	43
Low priority level	43
Lowest priority level	44
Will not be funded by CIF 2024-25	44
Urgency of need	44
Strength of evidence for extent of need	45
Nature and extent of impact	45
Evidence of GEMS process and strategy	45
Assessment of project need for expansion projects	46
Popularity/demand	46
Performance	46
Capacity constraints	47
Deprivation	47
Project planning – all projects	48
Appropriateness of solution	49

Timescales	49
Delivery plan	49
Project cost – all projects	51
Overall costs	52
Cost certainty	52
Funding sources	53
Environmental sustainability in the project	53
Annex A – CIF loans	55
Affordability tests	56
Affordability tests for academies	56
Affordability tests for sixth-form colleges	56
Affordability tests for Voluntary Aided schools	56
Repayments	57
Annex B – Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA)	58
Where the cover provided by the RPA is not sufficient	58
Annex C – School Resource Management Advisers (SRMA)	60
Annex D – DfE Construction Framework	61

## Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It has been produced to help eligible academies, sixth-form colleges and voluntary aided (VA) schools that wish to apply to the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) for the 2024-25 financial year (April 2024 to March 2025).

It explains what CIF is, who is eligible to apply for CIF funding, what types of projects are eligible and how bids for funding will be assessed for the 2024-25 round.

If you wish to apply for funding, you should familiarise yourself with this guidance. Only applications that demonstrate a high project need, supported with evidence, and which align with the priorities of CIF are likely to be successful.

## Expiry date

This guidance is valid for the CIF 2024-25 funding round.

## Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- School leaders, school staff and governing bodies in CIF eligible academies, sixth-form colleges and voluntary aided (VA) schools.

## New information for CIF 2024-25

### Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC)

CIF applications for RAAC mitigations and/or RAAC roof replacements are not required. We have been clear that the DfE will fund both the immediate and long-term costs relating to the mitigation and removal of RAAC. We set out how we will support educational settings where RAAC has been confirmed in early September 2023, which is a separate and additional form of funding and support to the CIF programme. Please see the [Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete \(RAAC\)](#) section of the guidance for more information.

### Expansion project disqualification

The purpose of expansion projects is to create additional places or address existing overcrowding in schools where the existing number of pupils on roll is greater than capacity. Therefore, expansion applications that increase capacity by less than 10% for an added places project, or where the existing number on roll is less than 10% over the capacity for an overcrowding project, will be disqualified. Please see the [Capacity](#)

[constraints](#) section of the guidance for more information on how this element is assessed.

## **Removal of point deductions under financial viability, governance & school estate management**

We will no longer be deducting points for late returns under financial viability, governance & school estate management.

# Introduction

## About the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF)

CIF's core priority is to support condition projects and the focus of the fund is to keep school and college buildings safe and in good working order. Most CIF funding aims to address building issues with significant consequences that revenue or [Devolved Formula Capital \(DFC\)](#) funding cannot meet. These include issues with poor building condition, building compliance, energy efficiency or health and safety.

We give the highest priority to condition projects that address compliance and health and safety issues. These include structural safety, fire protection systems, gas safety, electrical safety or emergency asbestos removal. We also give priority to critical replacements of coal and oil-fired boilers with low carbon heating alternatives where there is a risk of school closure. We then give priority to projects that ensure weather tightness of buildings and other projects for continuous heating and water supply.

CIF also supports a small proportion of expansion projects where Ofsted has rated the school or sixth-form college either good or outstanding and where the school needs to expand their existing facilities and/or floor space to either increase admissions or address overcrowding.

All CIF projects, both condition and expansion, must aim to improve a capital asset currently used for educational provision for pupils between the ages of 2 and 19 years. These will be assets held freehold by the school or college concerned, held by the school on a long lease – usually from the relevant local authority, or held by charitable site trustees for the school's purposes. You cannot use CIF funds to purchase land.

Please remember not everyone will be successful even if you provide a high-quality bid. On average only around a third of applications are successful each year.



## The role of responsible bodies in CIF applications and project delivery

Accounting Officers, School Business Managers and any other designated Responsible Officials specified on the application form are solely responsible for the CIF application.

You are responsible for the accuracy and relevance of the information in your application, as well as the submission of the application on the portal, not your consultant or technical adviser. This includes ensuring that the information provided in the application form matches that in the supporting documentation and you must ensure that your application includes bespoke, third-party evidence that is unique to your school. If an error is made in the information provided in your application, including the supporting evidence, then this could disqualify your application, reduce your final score, or affect the amount of funding awarded, should you be successful.

Should your application be successful, you will be responsible for the management of the project as well as meeting the requirements of the post approval guidance and the terms and conditions.

Responsible Officials, Accounting Officers and School Business Managers should note the following:

- Your CIF application will either be fully funded or unsuccessful; we will not fund part of the proposed works within an application.
- The project must address condition issues on buildings owned or leased by the responsible body.
- You must not commence work on any CIF project prior to the outcome being announced by the department. The department will not fund projects which have already commenced before the announcement is made and funding may be withheld or recovered in these circumstances.
- We strongly recommend that you familiarise yourself with the terms and conditions and post-approval guidance before submitting your application for CIF funding. You can find copies of these for previous CIF funding years on the [CIF portal](#).
- Activity that breaches the terms and conditions, such as using CIF funding for any work other than what has been specifically approved, may result in you have to repay some, or all, of the funding. The Accounting Officer is responsible for this, not your consultant or contractor.

Please note: if the project documents uploaded do not correspond with the school/college on the portal form, the application will be disqualified. Please ensure all the correct documents have been uploaded by 12pm 14 December.

## Key dates for CIF 2024-25

Milestone	Date
Launch of CIF 2024-25: Information for applicants published and online application window opens.	19 October 2023
Deadline for new applicants to register for an account.	12 noon, 7 December 2023
Deadline for applicants to submit applications with all supporting documents.	12 noon, 14 December 2023
Applicants notified of outcome.	May 2024 (subject to change)

## Urgent Capital Support

Urgent Capital Support (UCS) is for academies, sixth-form colleges and eligible VA schools whose responsible body does not have access to School Condition Allocations and requires funding assistance to address urgent building condition issues that either put the safety of pupils and staff at risk, or threaten the closure of the whole school, or a significant part of it.

UCS applications can be submitted at any time where there is a genuine and immediate need for urgent support.

Where UCS applications are received between October 2023 and April 2024 that are duplicates of any CIF 2024-25 application, then the CIF application may be withdrawn if the UCS application is successful.

UCS funding is offered primarily as a loan, subject to an assessment of finances. Trusts may also be required to contribute. Grant funding will be provided only in exceptional circumstances.

You can access more information about Urgent Capital Support using this link: [Urgent Capital Support \(UCS\) - How to apply \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

# Applying for CIF

## Who can apply for CIF?

In any given financial year, an eligible school will either attract direct School Condition Allocations (SCA) for its responsible body, or be eligible for CIF, but not both. SCA is a formulaic allocation paid directly to responsible bodies to invest in their schools according to their own assessment of condition need. Further detail about SCA is available here: [School capital funding guidance](#).

To be eligible to apply for CIF funding, you must have been one of the following at the start of September 2023:

- Stand-alone academy
- School in a multi-academy trust (MAT) with fewer than 5 schools or fewer than 3,000 pupils as counted in the Spring 2023 census or 2022/23 Individualised Learner Record (ILR) (details of how pupils are counted for eligibility purposes are provided below)
- Voluntary Aided (VA) school in a VA body or VA group with fewer than 5 schools or fewer than 3,000 pupils as counted in the Spring 2023 census or 2022/23 ILR
- Sixth-form college
- School with a signed academy order as of 1 September 2023 that the department expects will convert to a CIF-eligible responsible body by 1 April 2024.

MATs and VA bodies or groups with 5 or more schools at the start of September 2023 and at least 3,000 pupils in those schools or their predecessors (as counted in the Spring 2023 census, or 2022/23 Individualised Learner Record (ILR)) will be eligible for SCA in 2024-25. Local authorities with maintained schools will also be eligible for SCA in 2024-25. Eligible non-maintained special schools and special post-16 institutions will receive a direct allocation in respect of their state funded pupils. See [School capital funding](#) for further details.

For special and alternative-provision schools (including pupil referral units), we multiply the pupil count by 4.5 for the purposes of determining either CIF or SCA eligibility. For example, we would count a MAT with 1,000 pupils in special schools as having 4,500 pupils. If pupils are registered at more than one institution, we divide the count by the number of institutions that the pupil is registered at. For example, pupils dual registered at a mainstream school and a PRU would have their count divided by two at both institutions. For nursery schools and sixth forms, we use the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) pupils rather than headcount. For nursery schools this is calculated as part-time equivalent (PTE)  $\times 0.6$ .

If a school is invited to bid for CIF for the 2024-25 financial year, their responsible body will not receive any SCA funding on their behalf. The school should therefore apply for funding from CIF if they have condition investment requirements. We encourage schools

to speak to their responsible bodies to make sure that they are aware that the school has been invited to bid for CIF.

PFI (Private Finance Initiative) and schools which have received PSBP (Priority Schools Building Programme) funding that meet the eligibility criteria set out above can apply for CIF. However, CIF funding is only awarded to schools with priority issues as summarised in the [About the Condition Improvement Fund \(CIF\)](#) section above.

More information about PFI and PSBP can be found below.

If you are unable to register and/or create an account but think that you are eligible to apply for CIF, please contact us as soon as possible via the [ESFA enquiry form](#).

If your application is successful, you will be expected to comply with our grant funding terms and conditions. Failure to comply with the terms and conditions will affect payment of the grant.

You will need to:

- Complete various actions before we can start to release funding to you.
- Report the progress of your application throughout its lifecycle.
- Inform us of changes to your planned project milestones.

## Schools with academy orders

If you are a school with a signed academy order that has been invited to bid into CIF and are unable to log onto the CIF portal, please contact the CIF team as soon as possible via the [ESFA enquiry form](#). Once you have obtained the agreement of your academy lead, we can give you access to the CIF portal if eligible so that you can make an application.

Schools with an academy order at the start of September 2023 that are expected to convert into a CIF eligible trust by 1 April 2024 have also been invited to apply.

If a school eligible for CIF in 2024-25 transfers to an SCA eligible responsible body, or if a planned transfer to a CIF eligible trust is significantly delayed or cancelled, we will not normally change its eligibility for that year. This is to avoid schools wasting time on CIF bids that are not then considered. We will fund successful CIF bids, even if a school does not transfer to a CIF eligible trust. Funding will be paid to the relevant responsible body.

## Voluntary aided schools

Voluntary aided (VA) schools who meet the CIF eligibility requirements will be invited to apply for CIF 2024-25. The governing bodies of VA schools will continue to pay at least 10% of the costs of any successful CIF project and cannot use a CIF loan to cover this. Applications must be submitted with the full amount of funding included to show value for money. VA schools can include VAT in the project cost as (unlike academies) they cannot reclaim it.

Please note: VA schools must reference the 10% contribution towards the project cost within the application form and supporting documents. Failure to do so will result in the project being disqualified.

## Private Finance Initiative and Priority School Building Programme schools

PFI and PSBP schools can still apply for CIF funding where a need can be demonstrated and provided the condition issue is not already covered by warranties, insurance or contractual agreements.

If you are an applicant with a PSBP project, you should contact your PSBP Project Director before you apply to make sure that you do not duplicate works covered by this project in your CIF application. If an urgent issue arises, you should also let your Project Director know as this might affect the PSBP works.

If you are an applicant with a PFI school, you must declare this in your CIF application and provide a strong rationale to explain why the work is not covered by the PFI contract.

## School Rebuilding Programme

The School Rebuilding Programme (SRP) carries out major rebuilding and refurbishment projects at school and sixth-form college buildings across England, with buildings prioritised according to their condition. If you are one of the schools selected for SRP, we do not expect you to routinely be applying for CIF funding. However, where there are specific blocks and areas of the school that are not within scope of the SRP project, you may apply for CIF funding in the usual way. Please note that until your project has reached the end of feasibility in SRP, the scope of the project remains uncertain. All buildings at the school site are considered as part of feasibility and could be in scope of the SRP project, even if not nominated as part of the original SRP nomination.

In all other cases, we only expect to see CIF applications that fall into the following categories:

- i. Projects that fall under the CIF policy priority type 'Legal Compliance and Health and Safety – where there is a high risk of school closure'.

- ii. Temporary solution projects up to the value of £250,000.00 where urgency of need and a high risk of school closure can be demonstrated. We would expect these projects to be restricted to roofing and heating projects.

These applications will only be considered where the CIF assessor has determined the project falls into these categories.

We will also consider other types of CIF project that fall under the category of 'Life expired condition with a high risk of school closure'. These projects must demonstrate an immediate urgent need to address the condition issue and that this is having a high impact overall on the school or resulting in closure of key facilities. These projects will be subject to an internal review, which will take into account whether an SRP feasibility study has been carried out at the school, whether the SRP project has been scoped, and the expected timescale for on-site delivery. As with the other categories, these applications will only be considered where the CIF assessor has determined the project falls into this category.

In all cases, we reserve the right to disqualify CIF applications from SRP schools where the CIF project:

- falls within the scope of the SRP project – this includes where the SRP scope has been determined after the CIF application has been submitted.
- does not demonstrate an immediate urgent need for the condition issue to be addressed.
- does not demonstrate the condition issue is having a high impact overall on the school or resulting in the closure of key facilities.

We also reserve the right to reduce the scope of successful CIF projects to ensure value for money in light of the SRP investment.

Whilst we aim to avoid withholding the funding of any successful CIF project, this may happen if your successful project needs to be re-scoped, or further consideration is required.

## **Free schools**

If your trust includes a free school, you must confirm that your proposed CIF project was not part of the original free school project scope. You should review contracts and the relevant warranties before applying to CIF and confirm that there are no recall opportunities from the original contractor, subcontractor or on products or materials used.

If the review of contracts and warranties produces a recall opportunity from the contractor, there will be no need to apply for CIF.

## Projects

There are three categories of CIF project: condition, condition with expansion, and expansion. Projects may be re-categorised by the DfE if they do not meet the qualification criteria for the selected criteria.

There is more information about how applications are assessed in the [Assessment of project need for condition projects](#) and the [Assessment of project need for expansion projects](#) sections of the guidance. Condition with expansion projects are scored using the same criteria as condition projects.

### Condition projects

These are projects to improve the condition of buildings, with no expansion of the gross internal floor area (GIFA).

We expect the majority of projects supported through CIF to involve the replacement of high priority components such as structural elements, boilers and electrics, fire doors and alarms, roof coverings and windows, and asbestos removal.

Applicants should seek professional advice on the condition of their buildings through an independent survey. They should provide a realistic options appraisal which provides genuine options for consideration. This should set out a clear scope and demonstrate value for money.

### Condition with expansion projects

These are projects to improve the condition where the GIFA of the new block is up to 10% larger than the previous block. The aim of the project must primarily be to address significant condition need.

We will accept projects in this category where the GIFA of the new block is larger than 10% of the existing GIFA that is being replaced, if you provide clear evidence that there is no other alternative to meeting area standards as defined by [Building Bulletin 103 or 104](#).

You must design to the area standards as defined by [Building Bulletin 103 or 104](#) to determine what increase in GIFA, if any, is required and apply accordingly.

Important: if a condition with expansion project does not meet these criteria, it will be disqualified. The evidence for the project need section of a condition with expansion project must focus on, and demonstrate, the condition need. Projects that add new functional areas or facilities to address overcrowding or wish to increase their planned admittance number (PAN), must be submitted as expansion applications.



## Expansion projects

Expansion projects create additional places or address overcrowding. Applicants looking to expand must demonstrate that they are high performing, as per the criteria in the [Assessment of project need for expansion projects](#) section, and the GIFA of the new block must be more than 10% larger than the previous block or add functional areas or facilities. You should submit evidence that there is no other alternative to meeting area standards across the whole site, as defined by [Building Bulletin 103 or 104](#). If an expansion project involves provision of a new building, please also ensure you are meeting the requirements in [Building Bulletin 100: design for fire safety in schools](#).

Only a small proportion of CIF will be allocated to address expansion issues across high performing applicants and will be restricted to academies with fewer than 2,000 pupils. All CIF expansion projects should refer to the [Output Specification 2022](#). As for past CIF application rounds, we expect the funding for this category of application to be heavily oversubscribed.

Fully and partially selective schools that select on the basis of general academic ability will be eligible to apply to CIF for an expansion project.

All successful expansion projects will initially be approved in principle. Release of CIF funding will be subject to further DfE review of proposals, where we may require applicants to submit further information e.g., tender returns, planning evidence, updated project programmes or detailed cost plans, for scrutiny prior to final approval. This is to ensure that overall costs and delivery timelines are realistic and robust.

## Added places projects

Expansion projects that lead to an increase in the number of pupils on roll will be defined as added places projects.

## Overcrowding projects

Expansion projects that address existing overcrowding (in schools where the existing number of pupils on roll is greater than capacity) but do not result in an increase to the number of pupils on roll, will be defined as overcrowding projects.

We recognise that in some cases, value for money can be achieved by adding places in projects that are primarily to address overcrowding. We will define and assess these projects as overcrowding if you provide clear evidence that overcrowding is the primary focus of the expansion, and adding places offers good value for money.

Where the type of expansion is re-categorised, and the supplementary data is not available, the application may be penalised and is unlikely to be successful.

For more information about expansion projects, please refer to the [Assessment of project need for expansion projects](#) section of the guidance.

Important: your expansion application will be disqualified if your capacity will increase by less than 10% for an added places project or your existing number on roll is less than 10% over your capacity for an overcrowding project.

## High value projects

Successful projects with a total project value of £1m or more may initially be approved in principle, if sufficient evidence, as referred to in the paragraph below, is not provided with the application. Applicants for these projects should apply for CIF as normal and projects will be assessed using the same criteria published in this document.

Release of CIF funding will be subject to a further DfE review of proposals, where we may require applicants to submit further information e.g., tender returns, planning evidence, updated project programmes or detailed cost plans, for scrutiny prior to final approval. This is to ensure that overall costs and delivery timelines are realistic and robust.

## **Project thresholds for CIF 2024-25**

All CIF projects, both condition and expansion, must aim to improve a capital asset currently used for educational provision for pupils between the ages of 2 and 19 years. These will be assets held freehold by the school or college concerned, held by the school on a long lease – usually from the relevant local authority, or held by charitable site trustees for the school’s purposes. The applicant must be responsible for capital investment in the buildings. You cannot use CIF funds to purchase land.

Responsible bodies wishing to apply for CIF should ensure that they have fully engaged the freehold landowner and have their consent for any works before applying. This will be particularly relevant where land is held by charitable site trustees. For church schools on trustee-held land, this engagement should be with the relevant diocese, and Church of England Schools are also required to seek consent from the Diocesan Board of Education.

We expect applicants to use their revenue and DFC funding for capital works below the minimum funding threshold shown below.

You can apply for a CIF loan at Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) interest rates for all or part of the project funding for any CIF project.

The planning and preparation, as well as the construction programme must be realistic and achievable. The majority of funds will be allocated for projects that complete by 31 March 2025. Larger projects may last up to 2 years, but all projects must complete by 31 March 2026.

Information and communication technology (ICT) software, loose furniture and equipment are ineligible. ICT hardware will not be eligible unless there is clear evidence that it is an integral part of the project. ICT infrastructure (cabling, wireless and switching) is only eligible when it is an integral part of a larger project.

### **Primary and special schools**

The minimum project funding threshold for primary and special schools is £20,000.00. The maximum project funding threshold is £4,000,000.00.

### **Secondary schools, all-through schools and sixth-form colleges**

The minimum project funding threshold for secondary schools, all-through schools and sixth-form colleges is £50,000.00. The maximum project threshold is £4,000,000.00.

## Applying for two projects

You may submit up to two projects per academy, sixth-form college or VA school on the CIF portal, but only one of these may be an expansion project. You cannot apply for two expansion projects.

Projects will be assessed separately and independently from each other. If the two projects are linked, then please refer to this in the application form. There is no guarantee that if one project is successful, the other one will be too. You should consider whether a single, combined application would be more appropriate, however, you should avoid including lower priority items and only focus on the areas of highest need and urgency.

## Preparing a good CIF application

The application should communicate clearly to someone who is not able to see the building for themselves and give a clear understanding of the issues the school is facing, and the resultant impact on teaching and learning.

The need and urgency for the work to be undertaken must be supported by strong evidence in the form of detailed technical reports and surveys.

## Clear and focused application

- Read and understand this applicant guidance and criteria in detail and make sure any consultant(s) you use does the same.
- Be clear and specific about every aspect of your application.
- Make it easy for the assessors to understand your bid.
- We need to understand why your project is a priority for funding and cannot wait for future rounds of CIF.
- Focus rigorously on the areas of highest need and urgency.
- Do not include lower priority items unless absolutely necessary. Explain their inclusion where appropriate.
- Please include block references in the same format as set out in your CDC report, i.e., Block EFAA, EFAB etc. If your school is on multiple sites, please include the site reference, i.e., EFA1, EFA2 etc.

## Independent evidence and support

- Support your proposal with independent, expert technical advice, e.g., surveys, engineer reports, site layout plans etc. Cross reference the application to the surveys where applicable.
- Make sure any surveys were completed within the last three years.

- If you have a whole school survey that is older than three years but are applying for a specific area of the school i.e., the heating system, or part of the roof, you should obtain a more recent specialist survey for the work you are applying for.
- Make sure your surveys are independent. Your proposal is not likely to be successful if a survey is not considered independent, so this is a critical successful factor. Examples of surveys not considered independent are surveys from firms that also provide a quote or a tender or surveys from manufacturers. These will not be accepted, regardless of the findings. If you are unsure about this, please contact us ahead of submitting your application.
- Photographic evidence of condition need helps assessors understand your bid, but they must show the full extent of the condition not just localised issues.
- If you need external approvals, it helps to get them in advance, e.g., LA planning approval, Regional Director (RD) significant change approvals, Section 77 assessment (disposal of playing fields), external sources of funding.

## Well-considered options

- Consider all your options with an open mind, and don't present a preferred option as a fait accompli.
- Quantify the alternatives and show the costs and tangible differences in your options appraisal.
- Always present a "do nothing" option, i.e., show us why and prove what the negative impact would be, particularly when trying to demonstrate urgent need.

## Detailed costings

- Show your costings clearly and in as much detail as possible. A clear and detailed specification of work will help you get clear and detailed costings.
- The more certain your costs, the lower the financial risk to the project, i.e., multiple tenders or formal quotes are more certain than estimates. Quotes should be consistent, i.e., for the same scope of works.
- Be realistic, i.e., try to keep costs down, but be realistic about the funding the project needs, including contingencies. Underestimating costs puts you at greater risk of going over budget and additional funding will not be provided after project approval.
- Make sure you can afford any financial contributions put forward. If you determine you cannot afford your contribution after the project is approved, additional funding will not be provided, and your project may either need to be value engineered or cancelled.
- Ensure that the repayments on any CIF loans for which you intend to apply are affordable.

## Rigorous planning

- Have a clear and detailed delivery plan, showing how, when, and by whom the project will be delivered.
- Minimise disruption through project phasing i.e., plan how the project will be delivered around the school terms.
- Manage risk effectively, i.e., building projects have a wide range of risks associated with them, from health and safety, to scope changes, to delays, and many more. Plan in detail for all risks that could affect your project and make the risk register task based.

## Applicant checklist

This list is not exhaustive but provides some important things to consider.

Action	Complete
Check that you have access to the CIF portal in advance and make sure that at least one other person can access this account in case a contingency is needed.	
Check that you are submitting the application against the correct school.	
Check that the information you have provided on the portal form matches the information in the project documents.	
Check that the project documents relate to the school which you are applying for.	
Ensure that your document uploads comply with the document size (1MB per document).	
Ensure that your evidence includes an appropriate, relevant and qualified third-party opinion for specific issues e.g., fire, asbestos, legionella or safeguarding issues.	
Make sure any photographic evidence is clear and relevant and provides the extent and context of the condition issue.	
Check that your evidence clearly identifies the project need, the extent of that need and the urgency of need.	
Check that you prioritised the worst condition element for the school and your evidence doesn't include a mix of condition priorities.	
Check that all your documents are clear and readable – especially scanned documents which can appear too dark to show detail, or documents which have been shrunk so much that they are illegible.	
Ensure that the information included in your application is accurate.	
When you are ready to submit your application, make sure you save first and then remember to press submit. We will not accept an application that is saved but not submitted after the application window closes.	

## Documents to upload for your application

For each application you apply for, you should upload one document for each section to support your application. Each document can be up to a maximum of 1MB and must not contain links to further documents.

### All projects

- 1 uploaded document for project need
- 1 uploaded document for project planning
- 1 uploaded document for project cost

For both condition and expansion projects, you will need to include detailed photographs within the document size limit of 1MB. Files will need to be compressed. The file size depends on its pixel dimensions. You may want to notify anyone taking photographs to reduce the dimensions of the image prior to taking the photos. This does not mean reducing the resolution.

You should use the following naming convention when uploading your documents: URN\_SchoolName\_Need/Planning/CostDocument. Please ensure that you use your current URN, and not a previous URN.

Please ensure you do not exceed the upload limits shown above, as we will not consider any evidence above the upload limit.

### VA schools

Eligible VA schools are required to upload further documents via the CIF portal.

Each document can be up to a maximum of 1MB and must not contain links to further documents.

- 1 uploaded document to show your latest financial statement and budget forecast report for review.
- 1 uploaded document to provide your financial improvement plan if your accounts show that you meet the criteria for financial concern.

Do not include any other information in these additional uploads relating to other sections as this will not be considered as part of your application.

## Supporting evidence for condition projects

We expect applicants to provide appropriate building condition survey data to show proof of project need. An up-to-date independent condition survey will assist you in identifying and prioritising the worst condition areas of your site. Most projects will need to provide



additional survey data or appropriate professional evidence so there is more detailed evidence of condition need.

Surveys need to be dated no older than 1 October 2020. Anything older than this will be discounted and not considered as part of your application.

## Condition survey

A condition survey provides an assessment of the physical condition of the building. The survey should identify the building's deficiencies and maintenance issues. For all projects, the condition survey should provide a clear understanding of the current condition of the building both internally and externally. This should also include a detailed assessment of the consequence of any delay or failure to undertake the proposed work.

To increase the likelihood of success, applicants should provide further supporting specialist evidence of the specific condition issue; the evidence should include, but is not limited to, the following areas:

- structural frame
- building fabric
- mechanical and electrical (M&E)
- asbestos
- utilities
- sewage & drainage
- fire safety & security
- health & safety issues
- site layout

The condition survey should be no older than 1 October 2020 and needs to be independent and impartial.

The condition survey will need to be undertaken by an independent suitably qualified person and should contain specific condition grading and prioritisation ratings; condition grade A to D (from 'good' through to 'bad' condition) and priority rating 1 to 4 (from 'immediate action required' through to 'work required in 5+ years'). The evidence must include the name and qualification of the surveyor. We expect surveys to have been conducted within the last three years and to demonstrate D1 to C2 condition issues. A survey will not be considered independent if, for example, it is conducted by a firm that has also quoted or tendered for the work or is a manufacturer of any proposed solution.

If you have surveys that are not graded as described above, you should ensure the condition grading and prioritisation rating are clearly explained so the assessor can interpret the information correctly.

## Condition Data Collection (CDC)

A CDC report presents data collected following a visual, non-intrusive data collection exercise and can be used to prompt further investigation.

The CDC report is not a condition survey and so the data presented is high-level. A CDC2 report can be used to support a CIF application, but on its own, it will not be sufficient to make a full assessment of a CIF application. We will expect to see additional evidence, e.g., a full condition survey, when assessing applications.

Please note that CDC1 reports no longer meet the requirement of being dated within 3 years and should not be submitted with applications. If CDC1 reports are included, they will be discounted and not considered as part of your application.

You should continue to include block references in the same format as set out in your CDC report.

## Other evidence of condition

Evidence should also include:

- relevant photographs that are clear and sufficiently detailed. For example, if you are applying for a roofing project, provide photographs of multiple sections of the roof(s).
- letters about compliance from appropriately qualified professionals relevant to the specific issue e.g., from a fire safety inspection, police reports or electrical engineers. Please provide an explanation if you have not been able to obtain a letter.
- Ofsted or other reports on the impact of facilities on teaching and learning.

## Good Estate Management for Schools

We expect applicants to manage their estate effectively and strategically, to maintain it in a safe working condition. [Good estate management for schools \(GEMS\)](#) provides guidance on how to do this, including information on:

- Strategic estate management – having an estate vision, strategy and asset management plan.
- Information you need to know about your estate.
- Planning and prioritising maintenance.
- Health and safety.

The GEMS self-assessment tool enables you to check if you have the things you need in place and provides an action plan with links to the relevant guidance. GEMS also contains a range of tools and checklists to help schools and responsible bodies manage their school buildings and land.

As part of your application, you will be required to confirm that you have reviewed this guidance and that your condition project is consistent with your estate strategy and asset management plan. Your score will be enhanced where you can provide relevant evidence from your self-assessment, asset management plan and estate strategy.

## Sustainability

We expect applicants to consider energy efficient and environmentally sustainable options when replacing components in and around buildings in the move towards reducing carbon emissions and future proofing estates. All applications will need to demonstrate that these factors have been taken into consideration through a net zero transition plan/sustainable estate strategy, including:

- Examples of current or near future green installation works on the school estate (related or unrelated to the CIF project).
- Evidence to demonstrate sustainability, energy savings or carbon reductions.
- Where applicable, reference to any sustainable options considered in the options appraisal.

Further details on the information required and how we will score this criterion is set out in the [Project cost – all projects](#) section.

Works to improve energy efficiency, such as lighting projects, that do not involve works to address high need condition issues, are unlikely to be successful in receiving CIF funding as they have a lower priority.

You should not apply for these energy efficiency works unless they form part of a larger proposal where the primary purpose is to address poor condition.

You should refer to the sustainability and design standards within the [Output Specification 2022 \(OS\)](#) when preparing your project. The OS sets out the quality standards and performance requirements for school buildings and grounds.

## Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)

PSDS provides grants for public sector bodies to fund heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures. More information is available at [Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme](#).

Applicants should consider whether the PSDS could suit their project needs, such as for low-carbon heating systems. You should not include any decarbonisation works that are part of a PSDS application within a CIF application.

The guidance for the next application window, Phase 3c, can be found [here](#), with the application window now open.

PSDS applicants are expected to contribute to the costs of like for like replacement of their existing heating system within the PSDS project and applicants can use CIF funding for this contribution. However, you must still demonstrate an urgent condition need and meet the requirements of CIF.

Applicants that plan to submit a PSDS application for low carbon heating but need CIF funding to meet the PSDS's like for like replacement criteria should submit a 'planning year' PSDS application in parallel to applying to CIF for the like for like replacement of their fossil fuel heating system. If approved via CIF, the funding can be used as the contribution towards the PSDS project and the CIF project would effectively be upgraded to a heat pump project to be delivered as part of the PSDS project. If the CIF application is not successful, the applicant will be able to withdraw their PSDS application, provided they do so before the deadline of 14 June 2024.

Contributions to PSDS must cover at least 12% of the PSDS project costs. If the CIF funding does not meet this threshold, a further contribution from the trust will be required to meet the 12% minimum.

If both the CIF and PSDS projects are approved, the CIF funding that forms the trust's contribution to the PSDS project can be used to begin the enabling works on the building fabric if necessary.

Please mention in your application if you are planning to use CIF funding as your contribution for a PSDS project.

## **Block replacement/refurbishment**

We will consider a block replacement in the context of the overall area standards set out in [Building Bulletin 103 or 104](#) as appropriate. You will need to justify it against those standards and refer to the Generic Design Brief within the [Output Specification 2022](#). A project that over-specifies the space required compared to current area standards or performance will not score highly.

We would normally expect the replacement build to be no larger than the current block. However, we will allow small increases in the replacement block if that is required to meet [Building Bulletin 103 or 104](#) space standards and/or Health & Safety, Equality Act and DDA compliance, or child safeguarding considerations. If the proposed new build is larger than the existing block and larger than current area guidelines, then the application will be disqualified.

If a block is being replaced, please ensure you are also meeting the standards set out in Building Bulletin 100.

Block replacement is a timely opportunity to consider the environmental impact of the building. Your score will be enhanced where you can evidence how the project aligns with sustainability design standards within the [Output Specification 2022](#).

## Boiler and heating systems

As set out in the [Heat and building strategy](#), there is regulation planned to phase out the installation of new fossil fuel heating systems for both off-gas-grid non-domestic buildings and on-gas-grid buildings.

Therefore, it is important to consider different types of boilers and heating systems when replacing old systems, depending on the building fabric and location.

Try to consider heating systems as a whole and be mindful of the impact of any changes that improvements to component parts make; this may help avoid situations such as new boilers not working because of leaking pipework or incompatible control systems.

We will consider sustainable replacement options in addition to like for like. However, you must consider the wider implications of the project like pipework and electrics etc. Ensuring that the building is sufficiently insulated will improve the efficiency of any replacement heating system.

You should model energy usage and likely savings to support any application for such projects.

For specific requirements for replacement heat generating systems please refer to the DfE's Generic Design Brief Technical Annex 2F: clause 4.3.3. heat Generating Systems and Main Plant. This sets out clearly the DfE's preferred methods of heat generating systems in order of preference.

If the operation costs are adversely impacted by the selection of low carbon heat sources, you could explore the use of hybrid systems to support an interim position, until the necessary upgrades are available, which may then support a full electric system. This should be clearly demonstrated within a net zero transition plan submitted as part of the application.

If you apply for a low carbon heating project, you must ensure that it can be supported and delivered. You should consider things like operational costs, existing building fabric, insulation and whether substation upgrades may be required. This is not an exhaustive list and you should complete a full feasibility study to determine whether your school is feasible for a low carbon heating solution. If you determine that you cannot deliver the project after it is approved, your project may either need to be value engineered or cancelled. No additional funding will be provided after project approval.

## Safeguarding

Safeguarding projects often involve provision of additional security measures or remodelling of pedestrian/vehicle access points. If access improvements are required, you should work with your local authority highways department to tackle the identified

issues in the most appropriate way and look to negotiate contributions for such works from other interested parties where possible.

If your condition project addresses safeguarding issues, you need to provide robust evidence to support urgency of need such as incident reports or police reports. We will not consider statements of unqualified opinion that there may be a risk of safeguarding issues as sufficient evidence.

We may accept projects that provide photographic evidence that their existing circumstances do not meet the minimum for security.

## **Access and specialist facilities for pupils with special education needs and disabilities (SEND)**

Schools and local authorities should work together to decide which sources of funding may be appropriate for making adaptations. However, you may apply to CIF for works to improve the accessibility of school buildings for those with disabilities or special educational needs including those with Education Health and Care (EHC) plans (for example through the provision of lifts, accessible toilets, showers and other hygiene facilities), where the urgent condition requirements of CIF can be demonstrated.

## **Changes to the Gross Internal Floor Area (GIFA)**

You should clearly identify the changes in the GIFA as part of any application. This should include the GIFA being renewed or refurbished as well as the GIFA being removed or demolished and any new build.

## **Emergency asbestos issues**

DfE takes the issue of asbestos in schools and colleges seriously and expects schools, local authorities, academy trusts and other responsible bodies to fulfil their duty to manage asbestos effectively and safely. The responsible body is the main employer of staff in a school, for example the local authority or academy trust. Responsible bodies have a duty to [manage asbestos](#) in their schools and provide assurance that their schools are compliant with the asbestos management regulations ([Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012](#)). The DfE published updated [managing asbestos in your school or college guidance](#) in October 2020 to assist with this responsibility. Where there is any potential for asbestos to be present, it is a statutory requirement for schools to have an asbestos register and management plan.

The DfE follows expert advice from the [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#), the regulator, which states, if asbestos containing materials are undamaged, and not in locations where they are vulnerable to damage, they should be left undisturbed, and their condition monitored. We are clear, however, that when asbestos does pose a risk to safety and cannot be effectively managed in situ, it should be removed.

Where asbestos has been disturbed or damaged, unless the incident is minor and dealt with immediately, you should notify HSE of the incident. This is a legal requirement under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR).

Applicants with significant asbestos that is proving difficult to manage effectively (e.g., making access difficult to carry out repairs) may apply to CIF for support to remove it and should plan works around holiday periods.

## **Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC)**

CIF applications for RAAC mitigations and/or RAAC roof replacements are not required. We have been clear that the DfE will fund both the immediate and long-term costs relating to the mitigation and removal of RAAC. We set out how we will support educational settings where RAAC has been confirmed in early September 2023, which is a separate and additional form of funding and support to the CIF programme.

To implement mitigations where RAAC has been confirmed, there is no need to apply for CIF funding. The government will separately fund the emergency mitigation work needed to make buildings safe and support high quality education, including installing alternative classroom space where necessary. Where schools and colleges need additional help with revenue costs, like transport to locations or temporarily renting a local hall, this should be discussed with their departmental caseworker, and we expect all reasonable requests will be approved.

For projects to remove RAAC, there is no need to apply for CIF funding – the government will separately fund longer-term refurbishment or rebuilding projects to rectify the RAAC issue. Schools and colleges will either be offered capital grants to fund refurbishment work to permanently remove RAAC, or rebuilding projects where these are needed, including through the School Rebuilding Programme. We will set out further details in due course. We will work closely with responsible bodies to understand and assess what the right solution is for each case.

If you have had RAAC confirmed within your buildings, you may wish to discuss your intention to apply for CIF with your appointed departmental caseworker in advance of submitting any CIF applications to address non-RAAC related condition issues in a building where RAAC is present. If you wish to still apply for CIF funding in the usual way to address these other non-RAAC condition issues, you should highlight in your CIF application if the project may be impacted by the presence of RAAC and the work that will be planned to permanently remove it.

Guidance for schools on identifying RAAC can be found at: [Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete: identification guidance](#).



## Supporting evidence for expansion projects

### Basic Need

We do not intend CIF expansion funding to replace Basic Need funding. Academies wishing to expand to meet basic need demand will not receive any additional credit under the project need criteria.

We do not expect to receive applications for expansion that [basic need allocations](#) should fund. Any additional places funded through this programme will be reflected in future basic need allocations to avoid double funding.

Academies in areas of high basic need should consider working together with their local authority to maximise the impact of the available funding and demonstrating the benefits that can be accrued.

If your project is to expand admissions due to demographic growth in the population for years reception to 11 in mainstream settings, you should contact your local authority to seek Basic Need funding rather than CIF.

### Overcrowding

Overcrowding expansion projects are those that address existing overcrowding in schools where the existing number of pupils on roll is greater than capacity.

You should outline whether you have had any interaction with your local authority to discuss basic need funding. We don't expect schools to admit pupils over and above their Pupil Admission Number (PAN) without having a long-term strategy in place to deliver the additional building capacity.

### Significant change

Academy trusts may be required to submit a significant change application to their Regional Director (RD) where the proposal involves an expansion. The significant change process applies to both added place and overcrowding projects and you should refer to, and follow, the [making significant changes or closure by agreement](#).

The approval of any CIF funding for an expansion project that does not have the necessary significant change approval at the time of the CIF outcome announcement will be conditional. Conditional funding approval of a CIF expansion application does not guarantee that the significant change application will be successful. Likewise, significant change approval granted prior to the CIF outcome announcement does not guarantee that a CIF expansion application will be successful.

We do not consider any aspect of a significant change application as part of the CIF process.



If the significant change application is approved, you should make any required changes to your PAN and admissions policies in time for the completion of your capital project so that your full increase in capacity is promptly available to pupils in your area. You will also need to ensure your funding agreement is adjusted to reflect the increase in capacity.

Establishments that are not academy trusts are not required to follow the same significant change guidance, and the additional pupil threshold does not apply.

## **Eligible VA schools**

Eligible VA schools must go through the relevant process to gain approval for the proposed increase in capacity/enlargement of premises. LAs are responsible for proposing and making decisions on proposals to expand LA maintained schools that meet the statutory threshold, subject to following the statutory process set out in the Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools' guidance.

## **Post-16 expansion**

Other establishments that are not academy trusts who are applying for CIF funding to expand their post-16 provision will need to demonstrate that their project is not creating a surplus of post-16 capacity in the local area. These applications will be reviewed to ensure there is evidence of need for additional post-16 places in the local area, as well as the availability and need for the type of provision proposed.

Academies wishing to expand their sixth-forms, and sixth-form colleges looking to expand will be assessed in a similar way to ensure fairness between the two groups of institutions. In both cases, we expect there to be a revenue benefit from expanding the number of sixth-form places, so we would expect academies and sixth-form colleges to contribute towards the cost of the development. Such projects must be submitted as projects increasing the number of admissions (irrespective for whether it is the main year of entry).

## **Growth data**

You should provide growth data for the current year only. There is no need to complete for all five years as set out in the application form. Please ensure that it is only input within the relevant existing fields in the CIF portal.

You need to provide the following information, to demonstrate its anticipated benefits:

- number(s) of places specified in your funding agreement (on occasion, funding agreements will include more than one number e.g., if separate numbers of places are included for sixth-form or SEN unit places). For post-16 establishments this is the published number of places.

Both with and without the proposed project:

- gross internal floor area (GIFA) of the whole school (m<sup>2</sup>) and how this relates to the recommended area contained with Building Bulletin 103 or 104 as appropriate. Make sure you explain significant differences in the application.
- number of pupils on roll (NOR), as applicable for the age range of the education establishment

## Demand data

We only require demand data from post-16 establishments. There is no need for other establishments to provide this as it is already collected by the department. The following data on demand over a four-year period is required for post-16 establishments:

- Applications in year 12.
- Year 12 admittances in main year of application.

## Net capacity

You should complete the table on existing and forecast capacity and refer in your application to the change in the net capacity because of the proposed project by confirming the number of additional places that will be created by the project over and above the number(s) in your current funding agreement. You can provide a further explanation of changes in capacity in the text box 'general comments about demand'.

This also applies if the project is to address overcrowding and where you do not expect there to be an increase in the number on roll (NOR). The only circumstances where the net capacity is unlikely to change is if the project is to provide additional non-teaching support space such as dining facilities.

Please clearly set out within the supporting documentation the proposed changes in the GIFA as a result of the project. This should include a summary of the GIFA for the existing and proposed buildings, as well as new build, refurbished and demolished space.

If your project is solely expansion, you will be required to provide a [Schedule of Accommodation](#). The Schedule of Accommodation tool is for mainstream primary and secondary schools only. Other school types will need to provide a list of accommodation.

## Net Capacity Assessment (NCA) programme

The [Net Capacity Assessment \(NCA\) programme](#) is running for 2 years from 2023. Acting as the Data Collection Organisation, the Valuation Office Agency will visit all secondary and middle schools (including academies), and all special schools in England, using the NCA tool to calculate the number of pupils a school can accommodate, based

on the size and use of spaces available. Assessment of expansion projects in future CIF rounds may take account of capacity figures that have been verified through use of the NCA tool, therefore, we encourage applicants to use the results of the NCA programme to provide evidence of their capacity. Trusts interested in finding out more about the NCA programme and tool should contact: [dfencaprogramme@education.gov.uk](mailto:dfencaprogramme@education.gov.uk).

## Feasibility study – all projects

A feasibility study looks at whether a project is viable and helps identify the best option for delivery.

For all CIF projects the feasibility study should include an evaluation and analysis of the proposed project. This should be based on a detailed scope of works and in some cases an extensive investigation of the current site and property. It should confirm that all aspects of the project have been effectively considered and that the preferred option will provide the best chance of success and value for money.

The aim of the feasibility study is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed project objectively and rationally. You should provide information on opportunities, issues and threats that could be present and could either support your project or create problems. You also need to confirm the resources required to deliver the project on time and on budget.

### What to include in a feasibility study

The feasibility study for the project on the proposed site should include, but not be limited to:

- project description and evaluation.
- demonstration of need and scope of works proposed to address the need.
- full details of surveys undertaken or planned.
- what is the design solution and why will it work.
- details of energy efficiency or sustainability features.
- detailed professional and robust cost management plan or a contractor's cost estimate.
- an outline of planning requirements and evidence of planning permission (if appropriate).
- benefits/constraints of the project.
- site issues affecting the project, site entrances, disturbance on local residence.
- knowledge of location of utilities or the location and extent of asbestos and any cost savings as a result of the project.
- how is this project affordable and able to demonstrate value for money.
- risk analysis and mitigation in a comprehensive risk register for the entire project and specifically deliverability of the works in a teaching and learning environment.
- what will happen if an emergency occurs, fire, flood etc.
- who are the professional Project Management team and what is their track record.
- capacity and capability of the academy's Project Team.
- a detailed plan of the required resources and where they will come from.
- what will the procurement route be and why is this the best value for money.

# Applying to CIF

## CIF portal

All applications for CIF funding are made on the [CIF portal](#). We do not accept applications made through other routes.

Applicants should refer to the user guide on the portal for help. For tips on preparing a good CIF bid, please see the [Preparing a good CIF application](#) section.

The application form is designed for you to summarise the most important features and rationale behind a project. You should attach project documentation as evidence to support the case being made, please see the [Supporting evidence for condition projects](#) or [Supporting evidence for expansion projects](#) section. You should not include the school or college's history or the history of the condition issue; this is not required and may reduce the amount of more relevant information you can include.

The evidence you submit should be proportionate to the scale of the project. For example, we would expect more robust and detailed information for a project requesting significantly more than a project which requests an amount nearer the minimum project threshold.

## CIF portal account access

If your trust or school are applying to CIF for the first time you will need to send a request for access via the [ESFA enquiry form](#). You will have an account created and will be sent an invitation to register to the portal.

When you create an account, please use your trust's Companies House number as the username. If you do not have a Companies House number, please use your URN with the first two digits being 00 e.g., 00123456. We do not recommend that you change your username once it has been set.

Please check with other colleagues in your trust/school to ensure that they haven't already created an account before contacting us.

You should make sure that all of the contact details are kept up to date as this will be our main way to communicate with you about your application.

If you have forgotten your username, please submit your details via the [ESFA enquiry form](#) and we will provide you with the information. If you have forgotten your password, you can use the 'forgotten password' option on the portal sign-in page to reset it.

You should not share your CIF portal log-in details with any third-party organisation as this presents an increased risk of fraud. However, we recognise that for practical reasons you may choose to share these details for applications.

Nevertheless, if you share your account log-in details with others, the Accounting Officer remains accountable for all action taken and information submitted in your account.

We will not accept requests for school/trust portal account information, including username requests, from technical advisers or consultants. We will only accept requests from the designated portal account holder from the school/trust.

If you are unable to register and/or create an account but think that you are eligible to apply for CIF, please contact us as soon as possible via the [ESFA enquiry form](#).

It is recommended that you log in to the CIF portal and begin submitting your application at least 3 working days before the deadline. This will allow sufficient time for the team to assist you through the ESFA enquiry form should you experience any technical difficulties. Please do not submit multiple requests for the same issue.

Please be aware that the CIF portal may run slower in the last 24 hours before the deadline due to a high volume of use.

## Use of technical advisers

You can use technical advisers or representatives to help prepare your application and to deliver the works, but they cannot apply on your behalf.

We are required to deal with the responsible official at the institution with whom the Secretary of State has signed a funding agreement, or in the case of a sixth-form college or VA school, a member of the senior management team.

You need to ensure that technical advisers are of high quality and that their costs represent good value for money. As with the rest of your project, you should have a competitive procurement process in place for these services and be able to demonstrate how they were procured.

It is recommended that you research the company beforehand and select a technical adviser who has experience in CIF applications. We would also recommend that you select an adviser who is registered with an appropriate professional body, such as the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). Some companies may publish information on the types of successful CIF projects they have worked with schools on. You should also consider any conflicts of interest that the technical adviser may have with others involved in your application, such as those undertaking the condition reports or tendering for the works. You should notify us of any conflicts of interest so that these can be considered as part of the assessment. A conflict of interest could lead to your application being disqualified, your final score being reduced or approved in principle if successful.

If you use a technical adviser who may also be working with other applicants, make sure that the evidence and information you submit applies to your school or sixth-form college.

If an error is made in the evidence or information provided in your application, then this could disqualify your application, reduce your final score or affect the amount of funding awarded, should you be successful.

Be aware that some technical advisers duplicate information across multiple applications. CIF applications are scored based on bespoke third-party evidence that is unique to the school. Duplicated risk registers, surveys and other such information will not assist schools in competing for funding with other applicants and could, in some circumstances, lead to an application being disqualified.

## Professional fees

You may choose to appoint technical advisers to help you develop and deliver the project. The fees charged by advisers must be appropriate to the type and scale of the project and we expect you to challenge technical advisers on fees where appropriate.

The majority of CIF projects are for straightforward, single issue, lower value works. Percentage fees are not necessarily appropriate for this type of work and if used, we do not expect these to be above 10% of the total project value. For larger projects, the technical complexity of the works may justify slightly higher fees to cover additional surveys required to ensure that all the risks and ground conditions have been considered, but this must be justified in the application.

Like every part of your CIF project, any technical advice must be procured in line with your school's procurement policy, and the regulations set out in the [Academy Trust Handbook](#). Depending on the value of the project, technical advice may need to be competitively tendered. You should ensure that the fees charged represent good value for money and should not assume that fees below 10%, or any 'no-win-no-fee' arrangements automatically offer good value for money.

You should be aware that if your project is approved in principle only, you cannot accept the Terms and Conditions and the department is under no obligation to make payments in those circumstances. Any expenses you, or a third party, have incurred prior to the acceptance of the Terms and Conditions will only be paid where approved for payment by the department.

If the fees are disproportionate to the work involved, your application is likely to be unsuccessful.

## CIF loans

You can take out a CIF loan for all or part of the project costs to demonstrate commitment to the proposed scheme and can choose the size of loan, and the timescale over which you want to repay it (between 2 years and 10 years). Additional points are available in the assessment for taking out a loan or making a financial contribution,

however, it is the overall score that is the deciding factor as to whether a bid is successful and not the level of contribution provided.

Applications for CIF loans are made within the CIF application form. Further information, including interest rates, are in Annex A.

There is no obligation to take out a loan as part of the overall funding package. Applicants should consider carefully what is most appropriate for their school or college. Any loan should be realistic and affordable for the applicant and the information provided will be checked.

## **VAT**

We expect academies to exclude VAT from all project costs in their CIF application. However, the trust may seek advice on if VAT is payable on their project (for example, where community use of a sports facility creates a liability), then they must include the VAT on the application form.

Sixth-form colleges and VA schools must include VAT in the project cost, regardless of project type, as they cannot usually reclaim it. However, if there is a VAT element which can be reclaimed, then it should not be included within the project costs.



# How we assess your application

## Introduction

Applications are assessed solely on the information provided in the application for the CIF 2024-25 round. We do not take past bids into consideration. Each application is assessed by two different assessors from two different assessor companies with around a third undergoing moderation. Each application is given a final overall score and all applications are then ranked highest to lowest. The success threshold is identified based on available funding. Applications scoring lower than the threshold will be unsuccessful. However, we reserve the right to fund projects in the highest policy priority project types immediately below the threshold. This is to ensure that we maximise the number of projects funded within the available funding. On average, only a third of applications are successful each year and many quality projects are rejected due to the limited funding available, so applications are robustly prioritised against the published criteria.

## Assessment criteria

Assessors will evaluate each project using information contained within the application, and make a relative judgement, to award an overall project score. Expansion projects are assessed using school performance and data generated by the DfE, and not just information provided by applicants.

Applications can receive a total of 100 points, with 60 points available under project need, 15 points under project planning and 25 points under project cost.

Our intention is to fund applicants with the highest priority and most pressing need, but only where the proposed project is appropriately planned and presents best value for money.

The following sections set out the basis for judgements under each set of assessment criteria and sets out the information you might consider providing to support applications. The information is a guide and is not exhaustive.

## Assessment of project need for condition projects

Project need accounts for 60 points from a total of 100 for condition projects and consists of five sub-criteria: project type, urgency of need, strength of evidence, nature and extent of impact and GEMS.

### Project type – project priority and specification

We expect only applications that closely align with the CIF policy priorities will be successful. We are unlikely to fund projects that fall into the lowest categories. Assessors will make a final judgement under which category each project falls. The CIF project priorities are set out below.

All applicants should refer to the [generic design brief \(GDB\)](#) which is within the [Output Specification 2022](#) when preparing their CIF project.

The GDB sets out the quality standards and performance requirements for school buildings and grounds. It comprises of GDB and Technical Annexes.

Where new buildings are being provided, full compliance with the GDB is required. Applicants should provide sufficient evidence to support this, including outline specifications.

Where refurbishment works are proposed in existing buildings, any elements of non-compliance with the performance requirements of the GDB should be clearly identified in the application, including supporting evidence and outline specifications.

### Highest priority level

Projects addressing legislation compliance, health & safety and critical replacement of fossil fuel heating systems with low-carbon alternatives – where there is a risk of school closure, including:

- Building safety matters, including, but not limited to, dangerous structures, Laingspan and Intergrid system builds.
- Emergency & managed asbestos removal to facilitate essential works.
- Gas safety. Where fossil fuel boilers and heating systems are proposed to be replaced with zero carbon options, these will score the highest mark, but the legal compliance and health & safety requirement with risk of school closure must still be demonstrated.
- Electrical safety.
- Water services (hot and cold) and drainage.
- Ventilation/air quality and thermal comfort. Ventilation projects need to evidence how the issue may close parts of the school unless rectified. It is unlikely that a project to replace windows will be classed as ventilation.

- Fire safety.
- Security and safeguarding. Security fencing projects are unlikely to be successful unless a significant health & safety or safeguarding issue can be demonstrated and backed up by third party evidence, such as police reports.

## High priority level

Life expired condition replacement – where there is a risk of complete or partial school closure (complete closure will score higher marks), including:

- Building structure – e.g., structural and weather tightness.
- Mechanical systems. Where fossil fuel boilers and heating systems are proposed to be replaced with zero carbon options, these will score higher marks within the range, but the need for life expired condition replacement with the risk of school closure must still be demonstrated.
- Electrical systems
- Utility capacity and connections

## Medium priority level

Life expired condition replacement, including:

- Building fabric – internal or external.
- Structural defects.
- Mechanical systems. Where fossil fuel boilers and heating systems are proposed to be replaced with zero carbon options, these will score higher marks within the range, but the need for life expired condition replacement must still be demonstrated.
- Electrical systems.

## Low priority level

Special functional areas of the school below current standards, including:

- Whole block.
- Basic teaching.
- Large spaces, studios, dining and social.
- Kitchen. Kitchen refurbishments are not likely to be successful unless a health & safety issue can be demonstrated and backed up by third party evidence such as a legionella risk assessment.
- Plant.
- Learning resources areas.
- Staff and admin.
- Storage.

- Changing.
- Toilets. Toilet refurbishments are not likely to be successful unless a health & safety issue can be demonstrated and backed up by third party evidence, such as a legionella risk assessment.
- Circulation.

## Lowest priority level

Other works: evidence must provide a clear condition and value for money case. This might include:

- Accessibility improvements (teaching and non-teaching)
- Building fabric (non-teaching, e.g., external sports equipment stores etc.). Sports hall and swimming pool projects need to demonstrate the teaching and learning implications and the impact the condition issue is having on the school. The proposal also needs to demonstrate how much availability is utilised by the school and how much through leasing arrangements.
- Mechanical and electrical systems (non-teaching)

## Will not be funded by CIF 2024-25

Other works: all other works, where there is either weak or no evidence of significant compliance, health & safety concerns or condition/value for money.

We will not consider these cases a priority for CIF 2024-25 and will reject them on that basis. Examples include resurfacing car parks or small teaching environment refurbishments.

## Urgency of need

The more urgent the need that is evidenced, the more marks will be given in this sub-criterion. You will score low marks if:

- The level of urgency is low.
- The urgency of need is not apparent.
- You include low priority issues alongside urgent works with no justification.

You will score high marks if:

- The level of urgency is immediate (i.e., issue must be dealt with over the summer holidays, otherwise likely closure in September 2024 or addressing an area which is already out of use, impacting significantly on the operation of the school).
- You only include works of the highest need.
- Any non-essential items included are fully justified as part of the project.

If the proposed works are not required to be carried out within the next two years, it is unlikely that the application will be successful.

## **Strength of evidence for extent of need**

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, there needs to be strong evidence of significant need providing justification for all works. Zero carbon heating replacement projects must justify the need to replace the existing fossil fuel boiler. Sustainability and energy efficiency must not be the sole justification for replacement.

You will score low marks if there is insufficient or no evidence of significant need.

You need to show clearly, through the supporting evidence, the poor condition of the building(s) or element of the building(s) which the proposed works will address.

## **Nature and extent of impact**

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, there needs to be an impact overall on the school or closure of key facilities. You will score low marks where there is solely localised impact.

## **Evidence of GEMS process and strategy**

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, you need to demonstrate/evidence the GEMS approach to the trust's or school's estate management:

- GEMS self-assessment.
- A developed estate strategy/asset management plan.
- How the project fits into the wider estate strategy.
- If applicable to the project, how it will improve energy efficiency or sustainability.

## Assessment of project need for expansion projects

Project need accounts for 60 points from a total of 100 for expansion projects and consists of four sub-criteria for academies and post-16 establishments: popularity/demand, performance, capacity constraints and deprivation, and three sub-criteria for special schools: performance, capacity constraints and deprivation. The project need score is based on data held by the department, Get Information about Schools (GIAS) and the application form, where applicable.

We will take into account the proportion of the school's pupils who are from a disadvantaged background when we assess the need for expansion that create additional places. This is to support the creation of new places in high performing schools with a high relative proportion of disadvantaged pupils. For added places projects, we also consider cost per place.

Evidence should include:

- Subject to the size and scale of the project; an extract of CDC survey / Property Data Survey (PDS), an independent condition survey/consultant report or detailed survey and specialist reports.
- Photographs.
- Letters about compliance e.g., from fire officers or electrical engineers.

### Popularity/demand

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, there needs to be a very high demand.

For academies, demand is based on % 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> preferences of PAN.

For post-16 establishments, demand is based on the applications in year 12 and year 12 admittances in the main year of application for the previous year, current year and future year data provided in your application form. If you do not provide this information in your application form, you will be scored 0 for this sub-criterion.

You will score 0 if there is low demand (preferences less than 110% of PAN).

Special schools are not scored on this sub-criterion and scores for the remaining three sub-criteria are weighted to account for this.

### Performance

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, the school or college needs to be Ofsted outstanding and have attainment or progress at, or above, the national average.

Special schools will be assessed on Ofsted outcomes only.

For post-16 establishments, Ofsted outcomes plus the relevant performance data.

## Capacity constraints

To score maximum marks under this sub-criterion, there needs to be a severe shortage of capacity.

For overcrowding projects:

- For academies and special schools, this will be based on Get Information about Schools (GIAS) data, including the capacity figure and current number on roll (NOR). Your GIAS data should be accurate and up to date.
- For post-16 establishments, this will be based on Independent Learning Record (ILR) Full Time Education (FTE) data and the capacity figure from your application form. If you do not include a capacity figure on your application form, you will score 0.

You will score 0 if you are less than 10% over your capacity figure, and your application will be disqualified.

For added places projects:

- For academies and special schools: current capacity figure from GIAS plus number of added places when the project is complete.
- For post-16: ILR FTE plus growth figure.

You will score 0 if your capacity will increase by less than 10%, and your application will be disqualified.

## Deprivation

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, you will have a high relative proportion of pupils from disadvantaged background as defined by IDACI measure.

You will score low marks where you have a low relative proportion of pupils from a disadvantaged background.

## Project planning – all projects

Project planning accounts for 15 points from a total of 100 for all projects and consists of three sub-criteria: appropriateness of solution, timescales and delivery plan.

Assessors must be able to see that the proposed solution appropriately addresses the nature, extent and urgency of the need evidenced, and that applicants have the ability to deliver the solution. You must be able to show that projects are planned appropriately and realistically, taking account of potential risks.

Evidence should ideally include (subject to the size and scale of the project):

- quantification of other options / options appraisal.
- milestone chart / detailed programme plan or Gantt chart.
- quantification of benefits.
- a comprehensive risk assessment with mitigations.
- evidence of prioritisation.
- master planning for the site and a business plan.
- project context for the wider site.
- pre-planning advice or any planning evidence.
- or all of the above in a feasibility study.

We expect to see greater levels of detail for large, high value projects. Please see the [Feasibility study – all projects](#) section for further information on conducting a feasibility study.

It is your responsibility to consult your local planning authority to check if planning permission is required before applying to CIF. The application should indicate clearly whether or not planning permission is required and whether it has been confirmed with the local planning authority.

If you are an academy with a CIF project that impacts on school land, it is likely to require a separate consent of the Secretary of State via a land transaction application. For example, the acquisition or sale of a freehold or leasehold interest in land or buildings; change in use of playing field land when expanding the school building footprint; or if you are relocating utilities that involves the grant of easements over school land and/or the grant of a new lease or variation of an existing lease will all require a separate application for Secretary of State consent.

Approval of a CIF application does not provide or imply Secretary of State approval for any land transaction required to deliver the approved project. The [land transaction guidance](#) will assist you in determining whether a separate approval is required. Please access the [application form\(s\) and associated property information notes](#) to enable your land transaction application to be made. The CIF approved project cannot proceed until the separate consent of the Secretary of State is obtained to any land transaction.



If the application relates to a proposed expansion that would increase the school's capacity, you will need to seek separate DfE approval by following the [significant change](#) process. This ensures that sufficient consultation of interested parties has taken place. Please note that the approval of any CIF funding for an expansion project that does not have the necessary significant change approval at the time of the CIF outcome announcement will be conditional.

## Appropriateness of solution

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, the highest need should be prioritised and a costed options appraisal with quantified benefits that supports the solution provided.

Where the project is a small project, there should be an appropriately scaled options appraisal to support the solution.

For all projects, where applicable, the options appraisal should include a sustainable and/or net zero-carbon solution.

You will score low marks where low priority issues are included and if there is no options appraisal.

## Timescales

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, readiness milestones (e.g., planning approval) need to be complete by May 2024 and the project delivery timescale must be appropriate to the scale of the project.

We expect smaller projects to be delivered within the 2024-25 financial year and larger projects, by the end of the 2025-26 financial year.

Projects should not begin before June 2024.

You will score low marks if there are concerns with deliverability to the timescale, given the scale and nature of the project, or where it is clear that readiness milestones would not be complete until after January 2025.

We expect low carbon/sustainable heating projects will take longer to deliver and applicants will not be penalised for including an appropriate timescale for these types of projects.

## Delivery plan

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, a realistic delivery plan for the project size supported by appropriate evidence should be submitted and there needs to be good consideration and mitigation of risk.

For urgent works, we expect contingent plans to be considered to perform the works during term time if there is a delay to the start date.

You will score low marks where there are concerns over the ability to deliver the project and/or it lacks a sufficiently detailed delivery plan or risk register for the size of project.

## Project cost – all projects

Project cost accounts for 25 points from a total of 100 for all projects and consists of four sub-criteria: overall costs, cost certainty, funding sources and environmental sustainability.

We expect all projects to show they are costed appropriately and that all project costs are within an appropriate cost range for the type of works proposed. For new build projects, we will check that the cost per square metre is within an acceptable range, taking into account abnormal factors.

There is a score for how your project demonstrates an environmentally sustainable approach, or where this is not possible, examples of other green technology installations unrelated to the project. When approaching refurbishment projects, it is important that applicants consider using products and technologies to future proof school estates, having regard for climate change resilience and environmental sustainability.

Your application will be disqualified if you score very low marks in the overall costs sub-criteria (see below), regardless of how you score against other criteria.

Your evidence should include (subject to the size and scale of the project):

- cost plan (breakdown of costs) appropriate to the size and scale of the project.
- copies of quotes/estimates/tenders/summary of any procurement exercise.
- cash flow forecast (where appropriate).
- details of procurement routes.
- market testing to demonstrate additional/abnormal costs, where appropriate.
- details or evidence of any savings being made, including any environmental savings the project will provide.
- letters of funding commitment from other sources (if applicable).

Costs of works will vary significantly from site to site due to local economic variances, site features (e.g., presence of asbestos), planning constraints and project specification/scope. Assessors will refer to industry standards and experience to consider whether the levels of costs are appropriate.

Any cost overruns will be at the expense of the applicant, although an appropriate level of contingency funding is permitted. Where local conditions may lead to costs outside of industry benchmarks, you must clearly explain in your application why and provide supporting evidence.

Cost plans should take account of the proposed risk of price increases and local economic conditions. Cost plans should also be realistic about the level of professional fees, allowances and contingency. The amount of contingency should be clearly identified in the application, and you should provide an explanation for the level of

contingency included. This should demonstrate that it is appropriate to the scale and type of the project, and the level of work already undertaken to establish price certainty and reduce residual risks.

When entering figures onto the application form, please round up to the nearest GBP (£). Do not enter pence.

## Overall costs

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, there should be a clear scope with overall cost below expectations/industry benchmarks.

All cost elements should appear reasonable and where there are 'abnormals' or high costs, they are clearly justified.

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) defines abnormal costs as those which might be considered as project specific (i.e., they are not a 'typical' construction cost) and are classified as such because they tend to have a notable consequence. Examples include asbestos removal, demolition costs, temporary accommodation and specialist substructures works. Abnormal costs must be clearly identified and justified. This will assist in the benchmarking of the overall costs.

If your project will contribute towards longer term sustainability goals, such as achieving net zero carbon estate emissions, we will take this into account when assessing the costs of your project. If you wish to set out how you have incurred additional costs in order to achieve or make significant steps towards net zero, please evidence this in the cost document upload.

You will score low marks where the level of costs are above expectations with no clear justification e.g., excessive professional fees, unjustified additional allowances and contingency.

DfE will look at the cost per place for added place expansion projects and will expect these to meet industry benchmarks unless you provide clear justification.

Project costs should only include capital costs and not any recurrent costs, such as maintenance plans, insurance, staff costs etc.

## Cost certainty

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, multiple tenders/quotes should be thorough and well evidenced, with fixed prices and in line with expectations relative to the size of the project and a firm commitment evidenced from contractors to stick to the tender price if appointed.

You will score low marks where there is no evidence of tenders/quotes attached to the application or they are inadequate for the size of the project.

## **Funding sources**

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, there will be a significant (and affordable) contribution from other sources or via a CIF loan.

Please note that VA schools will only score in this sub-criterion if they provide more than 10% of the project value.

The funding sources score is calculated by first adding the value of any CIF loan requested to the value of any contribution. The combined value as a percentage against the total project cost will generate a score as follows:

- 0 points for a 0% to 4.99% contribution
- 1 point for a 5% to 9.99% contribution
- 2 points for a 10% to 14.99% contribution
- 3 points for a 15% to 19.99% contribution
- 4 points for a 20% to 24.99% contribution
- 5 points for a 25% to 29.99% contribution
- 6 points for a 30% (or over) contribution

This score contributes to the overall score for the bid. It is the overall score that is the deciding factor as to whether a bid is successful and not the level of contribution provided.

## **Environmental sustainability in the project**

To score maximum marks in this sub-criterion, there will be evidence that applicants are committed to reducing carbon emissions across the school estate with installation of green technologies, and the project delivers one or more of the following as a result of replacing components:

- An increase in energy efficiency and reduction in energy use and carbon emissions.
- Supports environmental sustainability and climate change resilience.

Applicants can evidence this through one or more of the following:

- Data supplied to evidence increase in energy efficiency or reduction in energy use, or environmental sustainability is clear and strongly supports the project.
- Explain how the project proposal fully demonstrates alignment to the sustainability design standards within the Output Specification 2022.

Where this is not possible, or applicable to the project type to demonstrate an environmentally sustainable/energy efficient approach, other examples of green technology installations unrelated to the CIF application can be provided. These can be existing facilities or works due to be done in the near future. This should be accompanied with data where possible, highlighting reduced carbon emissions across the school estate.

The statement does not have to be exhaustive, and we expect it to be no more than 1-2 pages in length. When setting out the approach or plan to reduce carbon emissions across the school estate, responses that describe physical changes to buildings/ components and landscape around buildings that will result in carbon emission reductions or support environmental sustainability and climate change resilience will be required to achieve full marks. These options can be recently installed or due to be installed in the near future.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- solar panel installation.
- rainwater recycling facilities.
- smart lighting / heating systems.
- heat pump installation.

If your project cannot evidence a positive environmental impact, you must provide a narrative as to why this is not achievable. Where an option identified in the options appraisal for a green project was not used, a clear justification as to why this was not possible must be provided.

## Annex A – CIF loans

Applications for CIF loans are made within the CIF application form on the CIF portal.

Academies, sixth-form colleges and VA schools who choose to apply for a loan will be eligible for additional points under the project cost criterion rather than if they had applied for their project to be funded through grant alone. However, the overriding element of any application is project need.

Assessment under this section will be based on the ratio of loan to grant. For example, a project funded 30% by a loan will see a greater increase in score than a project funded 5% by a loan.

In keeping with our principles of equality for academies with the maintained sector, we provide CIF loans at Public Works Loan Board rates of interest. These rates are the same that local authorities can access to invest in their schools. The interest rates that will be used for the programme are set out below and a loan calculator is available.

The minimum loan duration is 2 years, and the maximum is 10 years.

Duration of loan (years)	Interest rate (%)
2	5.85%
3	5.74%
4	5.65%
5	5.58%
6	5.51%
7	5.46%
8	5.42%
9	5.38%
10	5.36%

## Affordability tests

Before deciding on whether to apply for a loan, you must consider the affordability of repayments. We will apply a number of tests to assess the affordability of proposals and your funding sources score will be adjusted accordingly where the affordability tests are not met.

Applicants failing to pass these tests will not be eligible to receive a loan but may still be considered for grant funding if scored highly enough in the other assessment criteria.

We do not expect you to submit additional documents, such as financial statements, to support affordability testing. We will obtain the data from the relevant sources.

Please do not apply for a loan if you do not meet the loan tests.

### Affordability tests for academies

1. The total of the annual loan repayment for the academy, all existing loans (including any previous Salix loans) plus future loans (including the loan being applied for), must be less than 3% of the revenue grant ('GAG') that the academy was allocated in 2023-24.
2. The academy trust must not be under a Financial Notice to Improve (FNti) or where the DfE/ESFA have serious financial management or governance concerns.
3. The academy trust's external auditor must not have modified their report on regularity of the financial statements.
4. The trust's last audited financial statements must show that the trust was in cumulative revenue surplus.
5. The trust's latest budget forecast return must show a forecast revenue surplus, at August 2023, equivalent to 3% or more of the GAG allocation.
6. The trust's last audited financial statements must show that the trust has a current ratio of at least 1:1 (the 'current ratio' is the ratio of an organisation's current assets to its current liabilities).

### Affordability tests for sixth-form colleges

1. The annual repayment must be less than 4% of the revenue grant that the sixth-form college received from the DfE in academic year 2023-24.
2. The sixth-form college has a financial health assessment of satisfactory, good or outstanding.

### Affordability tests for Voluntary Aided schools

1. The total of the annual loan repayment for the requested loan, plus the annual loan repayment for any existing CIF loans approved in previous funding rounds, must be less than 4% of the revenue funding the school was allocated in 2023-24.



2. The school must confirm it is under no financial notice from the relevant local authority.
3. The school's own budget forecast must show a forecast cumulative revenue surplus to the end of the forecast period.

## Repayments

Repayments are made through a reduction in the general annual grants (GAG) payments made by the DfE. Repayments taken from GAG payments as the savings generated from carrying out the work are revenue savings rather than capital, resulting in lower running costs.

You can repay your loan early without early repayment charges. You can use the [loan calculator](#) to show the impact of early repayment.

## Annex B – Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA)

The DfE's Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) is a voluntary arrangement for schools. It is an alternative to insurance through which the cost of risks that materialise will be covered by Government funds.

RPA automatically provides cover for damage to any existing structure owned by an RPA member or which the member is responsible, up to the full reinstatement value of the existing structure.

The RPA does not need to be notified when works are being undertaken and the school's existing structures will continue to be covered for the duration of the works. The RPA also provides automatic cover for damage to contract works; cover is limited to £250,000 for any single claim.

### Where the cover provided by the RPA is not sufficient

RPA members cannot agree to insure either the existing structure or contract works in 'joint names' with the contractor, nor can it agree to obtain a waiver of subrogation from its insurer. RPA is not insurance and is unable to provide 'joint names' cover or waive subrogation rights against any party including the contractor.

The considerations set out above need to be addressed prior to a school putting a project out to tender. Failure to do so may result in uninsured losses, the school being in breach of contract and very high additional insurance costs later in the project.

The options available to the RPA member are as follows:

#### 1. Existing structures

RPA member to cover the existing structures under the RPA, the contractor to retain any responsibility for any damage that it causes to the existing structure. The contractor can cover this risk by way of a third-party public liability insurance policy.

#### 2. Contract works – either the:

- a) RPA member may rely on the cover provided by the RPA (limited to £250,000 for any single claim) and the contractor to retain any responsibility for any damage that is caused to the works. The contractor can cover this risk by way of a third-party public liability insurance policy; or
- b) RPA member may take out separate insurance for the works in the joint names with the contractor to cover the full value of the works for the duration of the works; or

- c) RPA member may require that the contractor take out insurance for the works in joint names with the RPA member to cover the full value of the works and for the duration of the works.

Members should think about and build these costs into their overall project costings to ensure the overall costs remain transparent and are fully budgeted for.

Further information can be accessed via the [RPA welcome pack](#). To discuss the cover provided by RPA, you can contact the RPA advice line on 0117 9769 361 or email [RPAAdvice@willistowerswatsonsecure.com](mailto:RPAAdvice@willistowerswatsonsecure.com).

It should be noted that the issues highlighted above are by no means a comprehensive list of insurance matters to consider during a CIF project. Your legal advisors should be consulted on a general basis at an early stage to ensure you have appropriate insurance for your CIF project.

## **Annex C – School Resource Management Advisers (SRMA)**

Any successful CIF applicants who have not previously had an SRMA visit in the last two academic years, or those trusts that are either already in a deficit position or that are predicting to be in a future deficit position, will be required to agree to an SRMA visit as a condition of funding.

## Annex D – DfE Construction Framework

The [DfE Construction Framework](#) offers a compliant procurement vehicle which may be suitable for your project needs. There is no fee to use our framework. The DfE Construction Framework Team provide free training to framework users, as well as grant access to framework documents.

The DfE construction framework contains pre-selected contractors across 22 regional lots. It is aimed at individual school projects, both new build and refurbishment, and has the capacity to deliver elemental works. This framework may also be appropriate for a number of different types of projects, particularly projects with a cost in excess of £500,000.

The key characteristics and benefits of using the DfE construction framework are that it is efficient, flexible and consistent.

- Efficient – we have established contractors on our framework and we can ensure quick framework access for our users. We have price certainty in terms of capped rates for overhead and profit, project fees and risk. We ensure full disclosure of project information (including cost plan) to our contractors at expression of interest stage.
- Flexible – works can be procured either via direct award or via mini-competition. There is also the option to procure a Construct Only project. Framework user-specific requirements can be incorporated into framework documents to reflect your priorities.
- Consistent – we have an agreed form of contract which eliminates the risk of protracted negotiations. Our contractors work in accordance with DfE rules, regulations and expectations. There are also consistent approaches to dealing with contractual changes e.g., Covid-19. We have a dedicated Framework Management Team to support framework users, but framework users have ultimate control.

While there is no requirement for you to use our framework, we recommend that all applicants explore this procurement route as part of their project development.

Projects that have tenders in place if successful will score higher in the project cost criterion. We generally expect larger, more complex projects to have undertaken a tender process.

If you are interested in discussing the possibilities for your project or if you would like to know more information, then please email the DfE Construction Framework Team on [dfeconstructionframework.2021@education.gov.uk](mailto:dfeconstructionframework.2021@education.gov.uk).

We also encourage the use of other construction frameworks and ask applicants to consider this procurement route. The benefits to this approach often include the pre-vetting of contractors across various criteria, including health and safety, delivery track record, and financial viability.

Contractor selection can be a key factor in ensuring project success and may also mitigate some of the inherent risks of contracting. The [Construction Playbook](#), published by HM Government, offers practical advice on both contractor selection and the appropriate mitigating steps to take in the event of contractor insolvency.



Department  
for Education

© Crown copyright 2023

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3).

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

About this publication:

enquiries [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](https://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)

download [www.gov.uk/government/publications](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications)



Follow us on Twitter:  
[@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)



Like us on Facebook:  
[facebook.com/educationgovuk](https://facebook.com/educationgovuk)