Department for Education

WITHDRAWN

Post-16 and construction skills capacity funding 2026 to 2030 in non-devolved areas

Guidance for applicants

10 February 2026

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1. Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance on the arrangements for Post-16 Capacity Funding for eligible providers with sites in areas of England where this funding is not devolved.

This round of Post-16 Capacity Funding is complemented by additional Construction Skills Capacity Funding, aimed at increasing the number of construction training places.

In line with the Department for Education's (DfE) commitment to simplify funding arrangements and reduce unnecessary administrative burdens on providers, we have decided to run a single, unified exercise covering both funds. By aligning the application, award, reporting and assurance processes across these funding streams, our intention is to enable applicants to plan their estate strategically to deliver greater impact.

This guidance explains the purpose of the two funds, who is eligible to apply, how to apply, and how applications will be assessed and funding awarded.

In total, £570 million will be available to accommodate additional post-16 learners between 2026-27 and 2029-30, comprising:

- £375 million for Post-16 Capacity Funding (announced in the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, published on 23 June 2025)
- £195 million for Construction Skills Capacity Funding, forming part of the £625 million Construction Skills Package announced in March 2025, with an additional £40 million allocated for 2029–30 through the Spending Review.

Of the total funding available, £283 million will be devolved to Strategic Authorities to make investment decisions within their local areas.

The remaining capital funding - £287 million - will be awarded through this national bidding round administered by the DfE, which is open only to eligible providers seeking to increase education and training capacity at sites located outside Strategic Authority areas (i.e. non-devolved areas).

Please note that the areas subject to devolved funding differ between the two funding streams. A full list of non-devolved areas from which eligible providers

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can apply for Post-16 Capacity Funding and/or Construction Skills Capacity Funding is provided in Annex A.

1.1 Expiry date

This guidance is valid for the application window, which runs from **10 February 2026** until **5pm on 17 April 2026**. Any application submissions after this deadline will not be assessed.

1.2 Who this guidance is for

This guidance is intended for use by eligible providers to ensure that adequate considerations are made in preparing an application.

1.3 Contact us

Applicants may raise questions or seek clarification regarding the application process via the Jaggaer application portal. DfE will publish responses to questions on the Jaggaer portal for applicants to view at regular intervals, unless they contain commercially sensitive information.

The deadline to submit questions relating to the application process is **7 April 2026**.

Due to the competitive nature of the process, we are unable to offer advice on individual applications.

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2. Introduction

2.1 About the Post-16 Capacity Fund

The number of 16–18-year-olds has been increasing since 2022, and this number will continue to increase until the national peak in academic year 2028/29.

At the 2025 Spending Review, the Government committed to an additional capital investment of £375 million from FY25-26 to FY29-30 to ensure that post-16 providers can accommodate the expected demographic increase in 16 to 19-year-olds.

The core objectives of the Post-16 Capacity Fund (P16CF) are:

- to provide additional capacity in 16-19 providers, where there is due to be a demographic increase in learners and there is not enough existing capacity to accommodate that increase;
- to ensure that provision to be delivered through the additional capacity created supports the development of skills needed for local and national growth and is reflective of learner demand as set out in the Skills White Paper[1]; and
- to do so in the most efficient and sustainable way possible, to ensure value for money in the investment of public funds, and to support the Education Estates Strategic Aims.

In December 2025, we announced almost half of the capital funding to increase capacity for 16-19 learners (£184 million) will be devolved to Strategic Authorities with Level 2 devolution deals, sufficiency duties and devolved Adult Skills Funding. Strategic Authorities will have until 2029-30 to invest this funding and deliver additional places.

This guidance sets out the arrangements for the award of the remaining £191 million and is for those eligible providers with sites in non-devolved areas listed in Annex A.

These eligible providers are invited to apply to DfE for capital funding to support the above objectives. Applications for capital funding will be assessed and

[1] Post-16 education and skills white paper - GOV.UK

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ranked on a competitive basis. DfE will assess applications and award funding to those projects which score the highest. DfE also reserves the right to reject funding requests with regard to value for money considerations and the availability of funding.

2.2 About the Construction Skills Capacity Fund

In March 2025 the Chancellor announced £625 million worth of investment to train up to 60,000 more skilled construction workers.

£195 million of the total funding will be used to boost capacity in construction courses across England from financial years 2025-2026 to 2029-2030.

The core objectives of the Construction Skills Capacity Fund (CSCF) are:

- to increase construction skills provision to address waiting lists for construction courses, and
- to meet the skills needs of employers and contribute to our goal of 60,000 additional construction workers by the end of the Parliament to support the following Government commitments:
    - Building 1.5 million homes over the course of the Parliament;
    - Retrofitting to meet the 2050 net zero target;
    - Commitment to upgrading 5 million homes over 5 years;
    - Progressing major infrastructure projects set out in the National Infrastructure Strategy.

Securing employer support and contributions (cash and/or in-kind) is a mandatory and scored requirement for all projects, reflecting the critical importance of employer engagement and support in expanding construction provision.

It is also a mandatory requirement for providers receiving CSCF to either be designated as a Construction Technical Excellence College or commit to collaborate with their regional Construction Technical Excellence College as a ‘spoke’. All providers delivering construction training are eligible to become spokes of their regional Construction Technical Excellence College.

£99 million of the available funding will be devolved to the 13 Strategic Authorities that have devolved adult skills powers. The remaining £96 million will

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be awarded to eligible FE providers with sites in non-devolved areas listed in Annex A.

These eligible providers are invited to apply to DfE for funding to support the above objectives. Applications for capital funding will be assessed and ranked on a competitive basis. DfE will assess applications and award funding to those projects which score the highest. DfE also reserves the right to reject funding requests with regard to value for money considerations and the availability of funding.

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3. Eligibility for the Post-16 Capacity Fund and Construction Skills Capacity Fund

3.1 Provider eligibility rules

The provider eligibility rules are the same for both funds. To be eligible to apply for either or both funds, the provider must be one of the following types:

- an FE college established as a further education corporation under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (FHEA 1992).
- a designated institution as per section 28 of FHEA 1992.
- a Sixth Form College as defined by section 91(3) FHEA 1992.
- an academy (established as per Academies Act 2010) **providing sixth form education ONLY**[2]**,** (referred to as 16-19 academies for the remainder of the guidance).

Please note that schools with sixth forms, University Technical Colleges (UTCs), Studio Schools and Maths Schools are not eligible for funding.

Providers may only apply for DfE funding with respect to sites in areas where Post-16 Capacity funding (P16CF) and Construction Skills Capacity funding (CSCF) has not been devolved to Strategic Authorities. A full list of non-devolved areas is provided in Annex A. Please note that the areas subject to devolved funding differ between the two funding streams.

Please note that academies are subject to securing significant change approval (see section 6) and additional evidence will be collected through the application form from academy applicants to meet this mandatory requirement. If you do not provide this information, including evidence of a 3-week consultation, you will not be eligible to receive funding.

3.2 Public contract regulations

Applicants should consider whether the provider for which they are bidding for funding is a contracting authority for the purposes of the Public Contract

[2] Please note that any school sixth forms also providing education to learners under 16 years of age are not eligible for either fund.

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Regulations 2015 and should ensure they comply with these regulations where relevant.

i) College corporations

Where a college corporation has multiple sites, the corporation will need to apply on behalf of the college or site.

ii) FE designated institutions

Applications must be made through the charitable trust, charitable company, or association.

iii) Multi academy trusts

If an academy is part of a multi-academy trust (MAT) then applications must be completed and submitted by the MAT on behalf of the academy. For each academy, you may submit one application per academy.

3.3 Funding available

A grant of up to **£5 million** (including VAT where applicable) per project is available to successful applicants demonstrating need and sufficient project planning.

i) Minimum grant threshold

The minimum value of applications for both funds is £250,000 per project, excluding any ineligible expenditure, such as recoverable VAT. DfE reserves the right to amend the lower limit where there is sufficient evidence of need for capacity.

ii) Maximum grant threshold

The maximum upper threshold for applications for both funds is £5,000,000 (including VAT where applicable) per project and DfE grant awards will be capped at that level. We anticipate that projects that require funding towards the upper limit of this threshold are those delivering technical provision where VAT cannot be recovered. The overall project value may exceed this DfE grant funding threshold through provider contributions and other funding sources or receipts.

DfE reserves the right to amend the upper limit in exceptional circumstances where there is sufficient evidence of need and programme funding allows.

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3.4 Number of projects

Applicants may submit multiple projects per college corporation or MAT as applicable, but only one application for each fund (P16CF and/or CSCF) should be submitted per site.

3.5 Minimum number of additional learners

For all eligible providers, projects must be designed to accommodate a minimum of 31 additional learners.

- For P16CF projects: all 31 additional learners must be 16–19-year-olds.
- For CSCF projects: the 31 additional learners may be 16–19-year-olds, adult learners, or a combination of both.

For 16-19 academies, this aligns with DfE's guidance on making significant changes to academies[3].

3.6 Due diligence check

Assessors will conduct a due diligence check against financial and performance data available from DfE's centrally held sources, alongside information provided by applicants. DfE will also consider the provider's capacity to deliver multiple projects and the scale of any other capital schemes currently underway. Where there are concerns about a provider's capacity to deliver the project in the application, DfE reserves the right not to fund the proposed project regardless of the score allocated against the fund criteria.

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[3] Academies: making significant changes or closure by agreement - GOV.UK

4. When to apply

Applications to both the Post-16 Capacity Fund (P16CF) and Construction Skills Capacity Fund (CSCF) will be managed through the same **application process, detailed below.**

4.1 Important dates

Milestones	Dates
Launch: information for applicants published and online application window opens	10 February 2026
Deadline to register an account on Jaggaer	27 February 2026
Deadline for submitting questions on the application process via Jaggaer	7 April 2026
Deadline for all applicants to submit applications	5pm 17 April 2026
DfE notifies applicants of outcome.	July 2026

4.2 Project completion

Planning, preparation and capital works must be realistic, achievable and deliverable. All projects, whether P16CF or CSCF funded, must be capable of completion by 31 August 2028 at the latest to enable the delivery of learner places from September 2028, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as where there is a later peak in 16-19 numbers in your local area than the national peak year (2028/29) or a long-term need for additional construction training capacity.

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5. Eligible projects

5.1 Post-16 Capacity Fund

Funding is available to support projects that create capacity to accommodate increased 16-19 learner numbers resulting from demographic growth. Applicants must demonstrate that:

- the proposed project is required as a direct result of a demographic increase in learner numbers in their travel to learn area and therefore a forecasted increase in learner numbers from 2026;
- the proposed project is required to accommodate these additional learners from 2026 onwards;
- there are no alternative solutions, including learners attending another local provider, or improving estate utilisation through timetabling or similar, to avoid creating surplus space; and
- the proposed project scores high marks against the criteria for the fund.

The asset must be used for the provision of education to learners between the ages of 16-19. Each project must, as a minimum, increase the capacity of the site to accommodate at least 31 additional learners aged 16–19.

There are likely to be three types of project that are eligible for support:

i) those that improve estate utilisation by reconfiguring the estate within the existing GIFA to accommodate more learners;

ii) those that increase the overall GIFA on a temporary basis, which could include fitting out a leased building or the purchase of temporary classrooms; or

iii) those that increase the overall GIFA of learning space and associated functional areas on a permanent basis which could include, new build space (see below) or building purchase.

5.2 Construction Skills Capacity Fund

Funding is available to support projects that create capacity to accommodate additional construction learners, either aged 16-19 or adult learners. Applicants looking to expand their construction provision must demonstrate that:

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- the proposed project is required to address construction training waiting lists and/or anticipated increases in demand for construction skills training;
- the proposed project is required to accommodate these additional learners from 2026 onwards;
- there are no alternative solutions, including learners attending another local provider, or improving estate utilisation through timetabling or similar, to avoid creating surplus space; and
- the proposed project scores high marks against the criteria for the fund.

Each project must, as a minimum, increase the capacity of the site to accommodate at least 31 additional learners-16–19-year-olds, adult learners, or a combination of both.

There are likely to be three types of project that are eligible for support:

i) those that improve estate utilisation by reconfiguring existing GIFA or external training facilities to accommodate more construction learners;

ii) those that increase the overall site GIFA and/or external training facilities on a temporary basis, which could include fitting out a leased building or the purchase of temporary classrooms.

iii) those that increase the overall site GIFA of learning space and associated functional areas and/or external training facilities on a permanent or basis which could include new build space (see below) or a building purchase.

Applications to increase capacity at sites which are designated Construction Technical Excellence College (CTEC) hubs will receive a 10-point uplift to the overall score, reflecting their focus on driving and growing high-quality construction training.

5.3 New build capital works

Permanent new build projects are unlikely to meet the spend deadlines and value for money requirements of either fund due to longer lead in times and the short-term nature of the demographic pressures; and the need to alleviate waiting lists for construction courses.

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Where there is a later peak in 16-19 numbers in your local area than the national peak year (2028/29) or a long-term need for additional construction training capacity which cannot be met through improving utilisation of existing estate, temporary or refurbishment approaches, and you are able to evidence sufficient delivery confidence in project plans, the DfE may agree grants for permanent new build space. Applicants should note that grants need to be drawn down by March 2030.

All applicants are required to complete the 'Subject mix and space requirement template' template. This information will be scored for new build projects only under criterion 9 to confirm the project is appropriately sized and the additional space is required. All other project types will automatically receive full marks under criterion 9.

Where projects add additional space through a mezzanine floor, this will not be considered as a new build project as the additional capacity is within the existing building footprint and, therefore, will not be subject to the new build scoring set out above. However, when setting out project costs please do include the addition of a mezzanine floor under the new build heading as costs are akin to new build space costs.

With respect to P16CF projects, applicants will need to demonstrate that any new build proposals will realise wider benefits in the longer term beyond the demographic increase in 16-19 year olds, contributing to value for money. For example, a new build to provide required additional capacity in the short term, at a college that can demonstrate the estate is fully utilised, might replace a poor condition building in the longer term beyond the demographic bulge.

Regarding CSCF projects, in most cases, we expect capital funding to be used for reconfiguring, refurbishing, and upgrading existing facilities. However, in exceptional circumstances where a new build is clearly justified, proposals will be considered.

5.4 Non-teaching space

Any grant awarded under either fund is to support the teaching of additional learners. Space for ancillary, communal or administrative purposes should not be included unless it is essential to deliver the teaching to the additional students. In such cases, the provider should demonstrate the need for this space and provide evidence of its value for money.

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Projects that include a large amount of non-teaching space without sufficient associated increases to teaching space are unlikely to meet the cost per learner upper limit. DfE reserves the right to reject applications providing poor value for money and scoring low marks against this criterion.

5.5 Tenure arrangements

i) Property Purchase

Where a freehold or leasehold acquisition is required, DfE will need to be satisfied that the agreed terms represent open market value and secure strong protections for its investment.

You must set out a realistic delivery plan which includes sufficient time for the completion of a property purchase and any internal works required in preparation for delivery of education by the required date.

ii) Commercial leases

Capital investment should usually be made into an asset held on freehold or long lease (of at least 25 years) at a peppercorn or nominal rental. However, due to the temporary nature of the population increase, the tenure arrangements for commercial leases, subject to rental payments, could satisfy DfE's value for money requirements.

Capital grants are available for the refurbishment or refit of estate held on a commercial lease, but ongoing rental payments and running costs are not eligible for funding under this grant and remain the responsibility of the provider.

iii) Other tenure arrangements

We may consider alternative tenure arrangements to freehold or long lease, such as the land being held by charitable trustees for the provision of education by the provider, but only where there is strong justification that it is the best value for money option available to you. In such cases we will consider a range of factors, including how long the works will take, the scope and total value of the works, how confident we are that the premises will remain in educational use, and the amount of grant requested.

Examples of ineligible projects are set out in Annex B, and Annex C sets out the expectations when investment is in permanent assets and the capital recovery period.

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6. How to apply

6.1 Using Jaggaer to apply

Applications to both the Post-16 Capacity Fund (P16CF) and Construction Skills Capacity Fund (CSCF) must be submitted through the online DfE eTendering Portal (Jaggaer).

You will need to register for an account to be able to access the application form; we encourage you to do this as early as possible and you must have registered by **27 February 2026.**

If you have any queries about registering on the Jaggaer portal, please email them to Enquiries.FECAPITAL@education.gov.uk including your provider name and UKPRN in the subject line.

You will only need to enter information concerning your provider once as the portal will pre-populate the information you provide into any further applications you make.

Please make sure you are using the right application form for the fund you are making an application to. Information about the eligibility and objectives for each fund is set out earlier in the guidance.

Applicants should also make sure they are applying for funding with respect to a site in a non-devolved area as set out in Annex A. Applications for sites in devolved areas listed in Annex A will not be accepted. Please note that the areas subject to devolved funding differ between the two funding streams.

Please ensure you complete all relevant elements of each separate application in full so that we understand your project.

Use the following steps to submit your application(s):

i) Register for an account by 27 February 2026

ii) Complete all information about your provider

iii) Select an application form to complete.

iv) To submit more than one application for the Post-16 Capacity Fund click the link to 'add 2nd P16CF application'. Then continue to add further applications as required.

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v) To submit an application to the Construction Skills Capacity Fund click 'add 1st CSCF application'.

vi) To submit more than one application for the Construction Skills Capacity Fund click the link to 'add 2nd CSCF application'. Then continue to add further applications as required.

vii) When all application forms are fully completed you can submit them by clicking 'Submit.'

File name convention to use:

Applicants should use the following naming convention for the files when uploading supporting documentation to their application:

If a Post-16 Capacity Fund application:

File Attachment Title: P16CF [UKPRN number] [Attachment name] Please use an attachment name that relates to a document name as set out in this guidance i.e. 'risk register'.

If a Construction Skills Capacity Fund application:

File Attachment Title: CSCF [UKPRN number] [Attachment name] Please use an attachment name that relates to a document name as set out in this guidance i.e. 'risk register'.

6.2 Supporting evidence

You will also need to upload supporting evidence and templates at the points indicated in the application form, and the documents uploaded should contain all the evidence required.

All templates required to support your application will be available for download from the portal and Annex D provides a checklist to help ensure you have included all the required evidence.

Please do not change the formatting in the application form, as this may mean we are unable to assess your application in full.

Please be aware that for a single file attachment the maximum size is 50MB and for compressed folder attachments the maximum size is 300MB.

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6.3 Submitting applications for multiple projects

Only one application for each fund (P16CF and/or CSCF) should be submitted per site.

To submit more than one application (i.e. for different sites), you should continue to add applications where indicated on the portal.

Please note that if a provider submits multiple applications DfE will consider the provider's capacity to deliver multiple projects as well as the scale of other current capital schemes the applicant is managing, through the due diligence check.

Where multiple applications are received relating to the same local authority or travel to learn area, DfE will consider the implications and reserves the right to only fund applications that will not result in a surplus of capacity in that area. Information obtained from your Local Authority will help inform any decisions made (see section 8.1).

6.4 Allowance for a small number of 16-19 or construction places within a larger project

Applicants must submit separate applications for CSCF and P16CF whenever either of the following applies:

- 31 or more construction places are being created alongside a larger number of 16–19 places; or
- 31 or more 16–19 places are being created alongside a larger number of construction places.

Applicants may include a small number of additional places within a single application where:

- the number of construction places is fewer than 31 and makes up less than one-third of the total places (can be included in a P16CF application); or
- the number of 16–19 places is fewer than 31 and makes up less than one-third of the total places (can be included in a CSCF application).

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Example 1- Separate applications required

Construction places being created: 120
16–19 places being created: 40
16–19 places as a proportion of total: 40 ÷ (120 + 40) = 25%

Two separate applications are required. Although the 16–19 element is less than one third of total places, the number of 16–19 places (40) is above the 31-place threshold.

Example 2 — Single application permitted

16-19 places being created: 100
Construction places being created: 20
Construction places as a proportion of total: 20 ÷ (100 + 20) = 16.7%

A single application is permitted. The construction element is below 31 places and represents less than one third of total places being created.

6.5 Use of technical advisers

Applicants may use technical advisers or representatives to help prepare applications and to deliver the works, but advisers or representatives cannot submit an application on behalf of the applicant.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that technical advisers' work is of a high quality and that their costs are within a reasonable limit.

Applicants who use a technical adviser who may also be working with other applicants, must make sure that any evidence submitted relates to their provider.

Please note that DfE can only deal with the lead contact specified on the application form who must be employed by the provider. The applicant is responsible for the accuracy and relevance of the information submitted. Please ensure the information provided in the application form matches that in the supporting documents.

6.6 Additional processes for all applicants

Your provider may still need approvals beyond those required by this funding, such as permissions to expand premises or change the use of land for example.

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Individual providers are responsible for ensuring that they have all necessary permissions and any approvals (other than significant change, which is set out below). Securing approval for this funding does not grant permissions, even if they involve the Secretary of State for Education.

In your application, you must clearly demonstrate awareness of any statutory approvals required, the timeline for obtaining them and the potential impact on project delivery if they are delayed.

6.7 Significant change process (academy applicants only)

Academies also require significant change approval in line with the making significant changes to an academy guidance. To simplify the process in this funding round academies are not required to apply separately to make significant changes, instead they will be required to answer additional questions on the P16CF application. The significant change element of the application will be assessed as part of the overall assessment of the P16CF application. If you have already submitted a significant change application relating to the same change for which you are now applying for the grant, we will likewise assess it alongside the P16CF application.

As detailed in the making significant changes to an academy guidance you must complete a minimum three-week consultation with key stakeholders (including the diocese or diocesan board of education, where applicable) before submitting your P16CF grant application, and upload a summary of this consultation alongside your grant application (maximum 500 words), including:

- Who was consulted (e.g. parents, staff, local community, diocese)
- The date (from and to) the consultation took place
- A brief overview of the consultation process
- Key outcomes and feedback

Applications to this fund cannot be submitted unless the consultation has been completed in full and the summary of the information detailed above is included.

Late consultation summaries will not be accepted. We will use this information, the details provided in your P16CF grant application, and financial indicators

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available to the DfE to process your significant change request as part of the overall application and assessment process.

Please note, for an academy project to proceed, your application must be successful through the P16CF **and** meet the requirements to be successful through the significant change process. Significant change approval is conditional on your application for P16CF being successful.

6.8 Application outcome

All applicants will be informed in writing via email of the outcome of the assessment process. We are unlikely to be able to support all applications. In previous years of the P16CF, approximately one-third of applications have been successful.

6.9 Successful applications

Successful applicants will be expected to comply with DfE's grant funding terms and conditions.

We reserve the right to request further information from the applicant to help with assessment of applications where required. This could mean we approve applications in principle, subject to the provision of further information or adjustments to the application.

Successful applicants will need to:

(i) complete any specified actions before we can start to release funding.

(ii) report the progress of the project throughout its lifecycle; and inform us of changes to the planned project milestones, project scope or costs since the application.

DfE reserves the right to implement extra monitoring and conditions of funding for approved projects, especially those projects that are considered to have greater complexity and risk.

6.10 Complaints process

If applicants are not content with the way in which the application has been handled by the DfE, then applicants should use the DfE's complaints process.

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7. Overview of assessment process

7.1 Initial eligibility questions

You must complete the initial eligibility questions which include:

- identifying the area in which your **project site** is located. Please use **Find your local council – GOV.UK**[4] to identify the local authority then refer to **Annex A** to determine whether Post-16 Capacity and/or Construction Skills Capacity funding is devolved in that area. We cannot accept applications for projects in devolved areas of the country;
- a project description with confirmation that the project meets the objectives of the relevant fund (P16CF or CSCF), inluding information about the proposed project site including any restrictions on the land;
- confirmation that you have a good grasp of the project timeline and any additional approvals required, such as planning permission, and that the project will deliver places on time;
- the date when additional places will be available.

7.2 Scored criteria

For the scored criteria, each project will be assessed using the information contained within the application. Assessors will make a relative judgement to award an overall project score.

Applications will be subject to the criteria set out in sections 8 to 10 and summarised in the table below. The criteria favour projects demonstrating the greatest need for additional capacity, strong project planning, specifically delivery within the required timescales, and those presenting the best value for money.

Projects which refurbish and/or refit existing space to increase the capacity will be prioritised. As such, projects that add new build floor space to the site will be subject to additional questions and more stringent criteria to evidence the need for additional space and that all other options to maximise use of the existing estate have been exhausted.

It is important that plans are realistic and deliverable, and DfE reserves the right to reject applications where there are concerns that the applicant does not have

[4] Find your local council - GOV.UK

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a good grasp of additional approvals required and how long these might take to secure, such as planning permission.

Points will be awarded in the assessment process, as set out in the relevant sections. Weighting of assessment criteria differs depending on whether the application is for P16CF or CSCF:

Table 1: Weighting of assessment criteria

Criteria category	Post-16 Capacity Fund	Construction Skills Capacity Fund
Project need	60% / 60 points	50% / 50 points
Project planning and delivery	20% / 20 points	20% / 20 points
Project cost	20% / 20 points	30% / 30 points

Please note that certain criteria are designated as *critical requirements*. If any of these are not met, the application will be rejected, regardless of its performance against other criteria. These critical requirements are highlighted in the summary table below.

Table 2: Summary of assessment criteria

Criteria category	Specific criteria	Points available: Post-16 Capacity Fund	Points available: Constructions Skills Capacity Fund
Project need (60 points for P16CF, 50 points for CSCF)	Critical requirement – please note that if an application receives less that 50% of the marks available across the scored project need criteria (criteria 2-7) the application will be unsuccessful regardless of how	-	-

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Criteria category	Specific criteria	Points available: Post-16 Capacity Fund	Points available: Constructions Skills Capacity Fund
	it performs against project cost or project deliverability.		
Project description	1. Project meets the objectives of the fund being applied for.	Application rejected if project judged not to meet the objectives of the fund being applied for. Not scored	Application rejected if project judged not to meet the objectives of the fund being applied for. Not scored.
Learner number growth and demand	2. Local population change 3. Forecasted learners at site and evidence in support of forecasts 4. Historic demand for places at site	10 points, assessed against ONS population projections at project site/ 20 points, critical requirement – rejection if score is 10 or less. 5 points	Not required. 20 points, critical requirement – rejection if score is 10 or less 10 points
Need for additional capacity	5. High utilisation of existing estate 6. Alignment to local and national skills needs 7. Longer term estate planning	10 points 10 points 5 points	5 points 10 points 5 points

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Criteria category	Specific criteria	Points available: Post-16 Capacity Fund	Points available: Constructions Skills Capacity Fund
Project planning and delivery (20 points for both P16CF and CSCF)	8. Project design	5 points	5 points
	9. Additional learners per subject area	5 points (full points automatically awarded for applications for projects delivered within existing GIFA)	5 points (full points automatically awarded for applications for projects delivered within existing GIFA.
	10. When will new training places be available?	5 points	5 points
	11. Delivery plan certainty	5 points	5 points
Project cost (20 points for P16CF, 30 points for CSCF)	12. Overall costs and cost certainty	10 points	10 points
	13. Cost per learner	7 points, critical requirements – DfE deserves the right to reject applications with a cost per learner that is considered excessive.	7 points, critical requirements – DfE reserves the right to reject applications with a cost per learner that is considered excessive.
	14. Financial management and governance	3 points	3 points
	15. Employer commitment and support	Not required	10 points, critical requirements – rejection if no financial support from employers (cash or in-kind).

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Sections 8 to 10 of this guidance set out the basis for judgements under each of the three categories of assessment criteria and the information that applicants must provide to support their applications.

This information is a guide and is not exhaustive. Where a word limit is stated in the application form, we will only assess the information provided up to that word limit. Funding can only be used for the project for which it was awarded.

7.3 Tie break scores

Where multiple applications receive the same score, the following will be used as tie break criteria:

For P16CF applications:

- relative local population change, prioritising applications in areas of higher local population growth; and
- cost per learner where applications that are tied are in the same local authority area.

For CSCF applications:

- sites which are designated CTEC hubs will be prioritised; and
- cost per learner where applications that are tied are in the same local authority area.

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8. Criteria category 1: Project Need

8.1 Post-16 Capacity Fund applications (60 points)

Applicants will need to demonstrate that additional capacity to accommodate the demographic increase in 16-19 learners is needed and justified and that the proposed project will not result in a surplus of post-16 places in both the provider and the local area.

Applications will be reviewed against the Office of National Statistics data on demographic trends to ensure there is evidence of need for additional post-16 places and that the applicant has considered other local providers in their assessment of future learner numbers. The review will consider the availability of places within the applicant's travel to learn area and a need in the area for the type of provision proposed.

Local authorities hold the statutory responsibility for ensuring the sufficiency of 16-19 provision in their areas. Applicants are encouraged to engage with their Local Authorities during the preparation of their application to strengthen evidence of local need for places. As part of the assessment process, the DfE will also engage with Local Authorities to understand the broader context and ensure alignment with local needs.

Please note that if an application receives less than 50% of the marks available across the scored project need criteria (criteria 2-7) the application will be unsuccessful regardless of how it performs against project cost or project deliverability.

8.2 Construction Skills Capacity Fund applications (50 points)

Applicants will need to demonstrate that additional construction capacity for 16-19 and/or adult learners is needed and justified, explaining how the proposed project addresses both local and national skills needs.

Applicants should set out their track record in delivering high-quality construction training and show they have strong, effective partnerships with construction employers and other key stakeholders. They should outline how these relationships- and the feedback gathered through them- have informed the scale, ambition, and focus of the proposed project.

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Applicants should present clear forecasts for the number of additional learners the project will support, accompanied by robust quantitative and qualitative evidence to substantiate these projections.

Unlike P16CF applications, we will not review applications against Office of National Statistics data nor require applicants to consider other local providers in their assessment of future learner numbers. However, if multiple providers in a local area propose expansion of construction training places, DfE reserves the right to reject applications or propose a scaling back of learner numbers where there are concerns that approval would likely result in surplus capacity in an area.

Where an application receives less than 50% of the marks available for the project need criteria, the application will be unsuccessful regardless of how it performs against project cost or project deliverability.

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Table 3: Criteria, evidence and scoring for Project Need

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
1) Project description Applies to P16CF and CSCF	You should describe your project and how it meets the core objectives of the fund being applied for (P16CF or CSCF) as set out in Section 2.	0

You will not receive a score for this criterion; however, you must complete this section as it provides context for the rest of your application. Applications that do not meet the objectives of the relevant fund will be rejected and no further assessment undertaken.

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
2) Learner number growth – local population change (LAD based) Applies to P16CF only.	The postcode where the project will be based. No further information is required from the applicant with respect to this criterion.	10 points for P16CF

To score maximum points the project will be based in a local authority area experiencing the highest population growth in 16- and 17-year-olds.

The population projections file on GOV.UK that accompanies this guidance is a tool for applicants to help determine the projected population growth of 16- and 17-year-olds in each local authority. The data is provided by the Office for National Statistics and will inform DfE's assessment of local area growth. For the assessment, projects will be matched to their Local Authority District (LAD) based on the postcode provided for the site of the proposed project. Each LAD will be given a score (1-10) based on projected population growth by peak year.

Where a local authority area is identified as having low population growth, P16CF applications should not be submitted except in highly exceptional circumstances.

Please note that DfE analysis will not consider population growth among 18-year-olds, as this age group is heavily influenced by internal migration for higher education. As a result, it does not reliably indicate demand for 16–19 places. For example, areas experiencing significant growth in the 18-year-old population may not require additional 16–19 provision if a large proportion of these learners relocate elsewhere to pursue higher education.

If an applicant wishes to demonstrate a wider catchment area than the LAD where the project is based, they should provide supporting evidence under Criterion 3. Applicants are encouraged to use relevant data to strengthen their case, particularly when:

- Forecasting learner numbers by analysing data for their proposed catchment area.
- Showing how the project aligns with local needs.

Further details on the content and how to use the population projection file can be found within the file.

For the next two criteria (criteria 3 and 4) applicants will need to complete the 'Historic and forecast learner numbers- P16CF' template and/or the 'Historic and forecast learner numbers– CSCF' template depending on which fund they are applying to. Applicants should provide **total learner numbers** for the site. With regard to admissions, please record learners on roll on census dates.

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Criterion	Evidence required	Score
3) Learner number growth – forecasted learners at site and evidence in support of forecasts Applies to P16CF and CSCF	You should provide forecasted post-16 learner numbers, broken down by 16-19 full-time learners and 16-19 apprentices, over the next 5 academic years (from September 2026 to September 2031) for the site where the project will be delivered. In the case of CSCF applications, forecasts for post-16 learner numbers should be broken down by 16-19 full time learners, 16-19 apprentices, adult learners and adult apprentices. In no more than 500 words you should fully set out your analysis and evidence base for the forecasted learner numbers. For P16CF applications, applicants should demonstrate that in the development of the project proposals they have taken a holistic view of capacity and demand in the local area, to avoid a surplus of capacity of 16 – 19 places in the future. Evidence should include the provider's market share of 16-19 learners at the site in question and how this has informed the forecasted increases in 16-19 learner numbers in the future due to a demographic growth in the age range. Any supporting evidence obtained from the respective Local Authority should be used to support the applicant's assessment of need.	20 points for P16CF 20 points for CSCF

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Criterion	Evidence required	Score
	For CSCF applications, applicants should set out quantitative and qualitative evidence that have informed forecasts and demonstrate a holistic view of current and future demand for construction training in the area, including but not necessarily limited to courses relating to the construction and built environment sector subject area. Applicants should identify what evidence has been used and outline any risks in your assessment of need (such as data used or assumptions) and mitigations taken to protect against those risks in your assessment of need.	

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Applications will score low points where there is inadequate or poor evidence to support forecasted growth. Applicants will score high points where there is well evidenced growth linked to demographic increases. Please note that omission of accurate growth data and evidence to support your application will cost valuable points in the assessment.

For P16CF applications scoring most points will provide robust evidence behind learner number forecasts based on local demographic growth and demonstrate a good understanding of other local providers to avoid creating surplus places in a local area. See Section 8.3 *'Evidence in support of learner number forecasts (P16CF only)'* below this table for further detail of what we would expect to see in terms of evidence for this section.

For CSCF applications scoring most points will provide robust evidence of:

- unmet current demand (including but not limited to waiting lists for construction courses and employer testimonials);

- future demand for construction training informed by close working and intelligence gleaned from construction employers and other relevant partners (including but not limited to LSIP analysis and local housing and infrastructure development); and
- alignment with wider construction skills provision in the area.

Demographic growth may also form part of the evidence base to support learner number forecasts for CSCF projects.

We reserve the right to reject applications that score 10 or less points against this criterion indicating inadequate or poor evidence of forecasted additional learners regardless of how they perform against other criteria.

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
4) Historic demand for places at site Applies to P16CF and CSCF	The following data on learner demand for each of the previous 4-years for the site where the project will be delivered is required: P16CF: • total 16-19 applications • total 16-19 admissions CSCF: • total 16-19 applications relating to construction and built environment occupations • total 16-19 admissions relating to construction and built environment occupations • adult applications relating to construction and built environment occupations • adult admissions relating to construction and built environment occupations	5 points for P16CF 10 points for CSCF

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Applications demonstrating the greatest demand compared to admissions will score the most points.

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
5) Need for additional capacity – high utilisation of existing estate Applies to P16CF and CSCF	Addition of extra GIFA should only be considered where the existing estate has been utilised to its full capacity. You should set out the measures taken to increase utilisation of your estate in recent years and confirm the extent to which existing estate is operating at capacity. Applicants should include evidence derived from utilisation surveys or audits.	10 points for P16CF 5 points for CSCF

To achieve maximum points, it is essential to demonstrate how the existing estate has been fully utilised. This can include strategies such as adjusting timetables, converting underutilised areas into teaching spaces and consolidating teaching sessions for related subjects and evidence derived from recent utilisation surveys and audits.

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
6) Need for additional capacity – alignment to local and national skills needs Applies to P16CF and CSCF	You should set out how your project aligns with the skills needs both nationally and locally.	10 points for P16CF 10 points for CSCF

Applications scoring the highest points will clearly demonstrate that the proposed project is strongly aligned with both national and local needs.

P16CF applications should set out:

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- the proposed subject mix using the 'Subject mix and space requirement' template provided;
- how the proposed subject mix will support the government's priority sectors set out in the Modern Industrial Strategy[5];
- how the proposed subject mix takes into account local skills needs analyses and action plans. The local skills dashboard showing statistics on local employment and skills in England[6] published by Skills England may be helpful to applicants; and
- how the project will improve the destinations for young people to move into higher education or employment, with reference to local data and plans to re-engage young people who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) as set out in the Skills white paper.

You should refer to the Skills England: skills for growth and opportunity - GOV.UK and other local skills analyses and action plans including, where relevant, your Local Skills Improvement Plan.

CSCF applications should set out:

- additional learner numbers by Sector Subject Area using the 'Subject mix and space requirement' template;
- how the project will address local and/or national construction skills needs, demonstrating its relevance to current and future workforce demands;
- how the project proposal aligns with and supports local skills needs analyses and action plans and the level and nature of engagement with individual construction employers and the wider construction industry during the development of the project proposal;
- how the project will improve the destinations for young people to move into employment within the construction sector, or into further construction-related training, with reference to local data and plans to re-engage young people who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) as set out in the Skills white paper; and
- your institution's track record in delivering high-quality construction training.

[5] The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025 - GOV.UK
[6] Local skills dashboard - GOV.UK

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Criterion	Evidence required	Score
7) Need for additional capacity – longer-term estate planning Applies to P16CF and CSCF	You should provide evidence for how the capacity created by the project will fit into your longer-term estate planning and will not create surplus space after the demographic increase has peaked and declined again, or in the scenario demand for construction training declines. You should state: • if the space will remain in your estate in the long-term or any plans to sell unused space/end leasing of space; and • how the project proposals could provide additional benefits for learners in future beyond the demographic bulge (sustainable use of additional space).	5 points for P16CF 5 points for CSCF

Applications scoring the highest points will demonstrate a strong understanding of the estate strategy and provide clear evidence of how the additional capacity will be used sustainably beyond the temporary demographic peak or in the scenario demand for construction training declines.

Applicants should explain whether the space will remain part of the estate in the long term or outline plans for disposal (e.g. ending leases).

Applications that fail to show how surplus capacity will be avoided or how long-term value for money will be achieved will not receive any points for this criterion.

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8.3 Evidence in support of learner number forecasts (P16CF only)

In support of your learner number forecasts, you should provide sufficient evidence of the capacity need in the area of the site in question linked to demographic growth and that the project is necessary to meet capacity needs. You should:

- demonstrate an understanding of the local provider market and the need for the additional capacity that your project will create.
- explain why the forecast additional learners cannot be accommodated by another local provider, with support and information from your local authority.
- provide assurance that your project will not result in unused capacity in your local area.

You can consider additional data held by your local authority to support the case for additional capacity at your site and any LA data that supports additional population growth including (but not limited to):

- LA NEET data
- Elective home educated learner numbers entering system at 16
- Inward migration and new housing developments
- September guarantee information
- apprenticeship starts
- School Capacity Survey information, where the local sixth form capacity is relevant to the case

If learners are travelling from other Local Authority districts to the one where the project site is located, set out how the demographic increases in those Local Authority districts - as well as those where the project is based will affect the forecast learner numbers. (You can refer to the Population Projections file published with this guidance).

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9. Criteria category 2: Project Planning and Delivery

The criteria set out in this section are equally applicable to both funds, with project planning accounting for 20 points of the total score for both P16CF and CSCF applications.

Applicants must be able to show that projects are designed and planned appropriately and realistically, taking account of potential risks.

Assessors must be able to see that applicants have the ability to deliver the proposed project in time to deliver new places for September 2028 at the latest, unless there are exceptional circumstances as set out in para 4.2.

9.1 Project design

The project must be designed to a standard that gives assurance that the scope of the works will address the increased capacity requirements of the provider. You must develop your project to the point where the costs, benefits, and delivery risks are clear and realistic. This should be to at least Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage 2, or equivalent standard, with supporting costs and designs, including floor plans and elevations, as well as an outline specification of works and materials.

You must be able to commit to a firm budget and delivery plan to start accommodating additional learners by September 2028 or earlier, unless there are exceptional circumstances as set out in the project completion section.

We expect that a summary of the estate strategy will be provided within the application.

9.2 Sustainability and net zero

Projects awarded P16CF or CSCF will support the government's targets on sustainability and net zero carbon emissions. Applicants should consider environmental sustainability and carbon reduction issues and develop projects that are in line with the government's net zero carbon emissions by 2050 target, as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008.

To align with the relevant DfE Design Standards and Guidance, applicants should consider environmental sustainability, carbon reduction and adaption

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measures to develop solutions for projects that are in line with the Government's targets and objectives.

Your estate strategy or plan should reflect the actions you need to take to support net zero carbon in 2050 and your application should demonstrate how the capital project contributes to this strategy. For example, this should be referenced in your summary estate strategy or RIBA Stage 2 design information. In addition, you must provide evidence on how the capital project aligns to the sustainability standards within the relevant DfE Design Standards and Guidance. Where you have not been able to do this, for instance in a refurbishment, you should state this clearly in your application and explain how and why you have had to take a different approach. New build projects will be expected to meet the standards within the DfE Design Standards and Guidance and provide assurance in the application that they have done so.

Applicants should refer to the relevant DfE Design Standards and Guidance[7] for their provider type.

9.3 Demolition of existing buildings

If a project involves demolition of an existing building, a strong justification and supporting evidence of poor condition should be provided to demonstrate that demolishing and rebuilding a block provides the best value for money.

Acceptable evidence of poor condition would be a condition survey carried out by a person suitably qualified to undertake a condition survey. Without sufficient evidence of the need for and value for money of demolishing a building, the applicant would score low or no points under criterion 9, Project Design.

9.4 Planning permission

It is the responsibility of the applicant to consult the local planning authority to check if planning permission is required before applying to the funds. The application should indicate clearly whether planning permission is required and whether it has been confirmed with the local planning authority.

If planning permission has not been secured at the time of application, the applicant must ensure their delivery plan takes this into account. You must set

[7] School and Further Education College Design and Construction - GOV.UK

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out realistic timescales for obtaining planning permission and include evidence of early engagement with your local planning authority.

You must also set out any restrictions on your land/site which will impact upon obtaining planning permission such as, but not restricted to:

- covenants
- Restrictions on the use of land
- If your project contains adjustments to a listed building

The examples above will be used to assess if your delivery plan is reasonable and if the spend deadlines can be met. Where the DfE has concerns about the delivery plan you have provided it reserves the right to reject your application or to request additional assurances.

Table 4: Criteria, evidence and scoring for Project Planning and Delivery

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
8) Project design Applies to P16CF and CSCF	You must complete the **project summary template** to give an overview of the floorspace provided by your project, the costs and funding and key milestones for project delivery. In addition, you should provide a RIBA stage 2 report and, if not already included in the report, existing and proposed floor plans, elevations (if appropriate) and an outline design specification. We would expect more detail to be provided for a new build project than for a refurbishment within existing GIFA. Where applicable, applicants should provide strong reasoning for the demolition of an existing building, including evidence that the building is in poor condition.	5 points for P16CF 5 points for CSCF

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Criterion	Evidence required	Score
	Applicants should provide evidence on how the project contributes to environmental sustainability and carbon reduction and adaption measures in the relevant DfE Design Standards and Guidance. For refurbishment projects, applicants should state clearly if a different approach is taken and provide evidence to support this. For new build projects, the applicant must demonstrate how the project aligns with sustainability design standards within the relevant DfE Design Standards and Guidance.	

To score maximum points, the application will demonstrate that the project design has been developed to the level of RIBA Stage 2 to the appropriate level of detail for either a new build or a refurbishment project (as appropriate to the project), with existing and proposed floor plans, (elevations if appropriate), outline specifications of materials, or other standard appropriate for the project provided. The information provided will demonstrate sufficient thought, coherence, relevance, and clarity. An applicant will score low points where the application does not demonstrate that the project design has been developed to the level of RIBA Stage 2.

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
9) Additional learners per subject area and the space provided by the project	Applicants must complete and submit the 'Subject mix and space requirement' template for all projects. This template will support the requirement for any additional space due to the forecasted learner numbers provided.	5 points for P16CF 5 points for CSCF

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Criterion	Evidence required	Score
Applies to P16CF and CSCF	Data provided will be used to assess that any additional new build capacity is well-spaced for the number of additional learners to be accommodated.	

To score the maximum points in this section, the additional space created will be reasonable for the forecasted additional learners.

Where projects are reconfiguring/refurbishing estate within the existing footprint (including the addition of mezzanine floors) full marks against this criteria will be automatically awarded.

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
10) Availability of training places Applies to P16CF and CSCF	Applicant should set out the rationale for the date by which additional capacity will be made available on site.	5 points for P16CF 5 points for CSCF

Maximum scores will be awarded to projects that set out a deliverable and realistic solution to create additional capacity for new learners by September 2027 (or later if the demographic peak in the area or forecast growth in construction skills need is later).

Applicants will score low points where training places will be available after September 2028, unless there are exceptional circumstances for this, as per para 4.2 in this guidance.

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
11) Delivery plan Applies to P16CF and CSCF	You must provide a realistic delivery plan (Gantt chart or similar) that clearly sets out the critical path for your project. This should include key milestones for the project size and clearly demonstrate	5 points for P16CF 5 points for CSCF

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Criterion	Evidence required	Score
	that the project is deliverable within the required time frame. Applicants must be able to show that projects are resourced and have appropriate governance (please supply diagram showing your management structure) in place to ensure the delivery of the project. The plan must appropriately and realistically, take account of potential risks. This should include: • a comprehensive risk assessment with mitigations • confirmation that plans are in line with the provider's estate strategy • OR all of the above in a feasibility study, if this has already been developed. You must also complete the **Project expenditure profile template**.	

To score maximum points, a realistic and credible delivery plan for the project size supported by appropriate evidence should be submitted.

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

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10. Criteria category 3: Project cost

The cost section contributes 20 points of the total score for P16CF applications and 30 points of the total score for CSCF applications.

The greater number of points available for Construction Skills Capacity projects under this section reflects the additional criterion concerning applicants securing employer commitment to their projects, either through cash contributions or in-kind investment.

For DfE to make a realistic assessment of the value for money for each project, applicants must set out the full amount of funding required for each proposed project in a cost plan. DfE expects all projects to show they are costed appropriately and respond to the project need.

We will compare your proposed costs against DfE benchmarks to determine whether or not they are reasonable, taking into account abnormal factors.

Costs must be sufficiently detailed and certain. You should provide evidence to support your costs and confirm that your costs have been assured by a qualified surveyor.

We reserve the right to reject applications that score very low marks in the Overall Costs and Cost Certainty criterion (see below), regardless of how they perform against other criteria. When entering figures onto the application form, please round up to the nearest £. Do not enter pence.

We also reserve the right to reject applications where the cost per learner is considered excessive regardless of how the applicant scores on the rest of the criteria.

10.1 Abnormal costs

All cost elements should appear reasonable. Where local conditions may lead to costs outside of industry benchmarks, applicants must justify these ‘abnormals’ or high costs and provide supporting evidence.

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 cost consequence. Examples include asbestos removal, demolition costs, temporary accommodation and specialist substructures works.

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10.2 Contingency

Any cost overruns will be at the expense of the provider, although an appropriate level of contingency funding is permitted. 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. Applicants should provide an explanation for the level of contingency included. The applicants' explanation 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.

10.3 Ineligible costs

The following items of miscellaneous expenditure (not exhaustive) should not be included:

i) works being funded through other grant funding streams;

ii) works that are not directly linked to the provision of facilities for 16-19 year old learners (P16CF projects only);

iii) works that are not directly linked to the provision of facilities for 16-19 and/or adult learners (CSCF projects only);

iv) costs incurred before the launch of this funding round on 10 February 2026;

v) revenue funded items e.g., software, laptops and other devices for staff or learners, annual software licences;

vi) rent service charges;

vii) internal staffing costs;

viii) recoverable VAT costs incurred;

ix) supply of loose furniture, unless a CSCF project where supply of workbenches is eligible. All other loose furniture remains ineligible; and

x) supply of loose equipment, unless a CSCF project where technical equipment, IT devices and software that are directly related to and required for delivering the construction curriculum - and can be capitalised- are eligible. Please note that general IT devices and software required by all learners and teachers are not eligible expenditure.

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If an application is successful, we will monitor spend on the project during delivery including regular reviews to ensure ineligible costs are not being included in claims for grant funding or as part of the match funding contribution.

10.4 Match funding

All applicants are invited to contribute match funding towards the cost of their project proposals. Match funding means your contribution to the funded project plus any contribution from third-party sources, which are listed as eligible match funding below.

All funding and its source must be detailed to enable a thorough application assessment by DfE. Please check your application and confirm that the total grant requested from DfE and any match funding contribution is equal to the total project costs.

Sources of match funding could include:

- applicant's own reserves
- employer donations – cash or in kind – please note this is a mandatory requirement for CSCF projects
- buildings or land acquired for the project at market value
- buildings or land donated by a third party subject to market value being supported by an independent valuation
- works that have been undertaken to prepare the site for the project proposed in the application; and
- grant funding provided by schemes outside of central government.

i) Provider contributions

The level of financial or in-kind contribution from your provider is at your discretion and should reflect what is affordable within your budget. Please note that no points will be awarded based on the scale of contribution from the applicant provider to the project for either fund.

ii) Employer Contributions (mandatory requirement for CSCF only)

For CSCF projects, contributions (cash and/or in-kind) from employers are mandatory and scored. This reflects the critical importance of employer

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engagement and support in expanding construction provision. The expectation is that employers will be actively involved and contribute to the resourcing and successful delivery of these projects, given that the construction industry will directly benefit from an improved supply of skilled workers.

Examples of employer contributions may include (but are not limited to):

- Provision of specialist equipment or materials
- Access to facilities for training purposes
- Financial support for curriculum development
- Staff time for mentoring, training, or guest lectures

Such contributions demonstrate strong industry buy-in and help ensure that the project delivers tangible benefits aligned with sector needs. The table below provides a framework outlining the range of possible contributions employers could make.

Table 5: Employer Contributions Framework

Activity	Examples	Establishing £ value
Strategic commitment **(employer time)**	Employer commits to making a strategic contribution by sitting on a board or providing advice on their training needs (and that of their supply chain, and potentially the industry more generally)	Amount of time spent x employer hourly/ daily rate
Contribution to college-based teaching and learning **(employer time)**	Employer commits to contribute to college-based teaching and learning e.g. • Teach certain classes/ topics (typically masterclasses, but	Amount of time spent x employer hourly/ daily rate

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Activity	Examples	Establishing £ value
	could go further, e.g. dual professionals) • Set/ mark assignments/ projects	
Enrichment **(employer time)**	Providing placements for learners Workplace visits (traineeships and apprenticeships out of scope)	Amount of time spent x employer hourly/ daily rate
Premises (running costs)	Providing training facilities	Duration x commercial rental rate
Donations **(cash/ asset)**	Donating equipment Donating materials/ consumables Land or real estate	Published price list Independent valuation Receipt
Cash contribution **(cash)**	Cash donation to provider	£ value

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10.5 Procurement

Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider using procurement frameworks available to them from DfE[8] or locally to procure work to assure they are getting the best value for money and the best quality. DfE provides a list of quality checked approved buying frameworks for education providers that can help responsible bodies get value for money and comply with buying procedures and procurement law.

All applicants must ensure their compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) where relevant.

[8] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-for-schools

10.6 VAT

You should obtain appropriate advice on your VAT liability as this will depend on the type of provider you are and the nature of the project works. If you are not liable for VAT, you should exclude VAT from your project costs, however, if you are liable to pay VAT and you are unable to recover this, then you should ensure that the project costs presented include this. If you are successful in your application and have included VAT in your project costs, we may ask for supporting evidence to confirm your VAT status before confirming the grant award.

10.7 Professional fees

Applicants may choose to appoint technical advisers to help with the development and delivery of the project.

The professional fees must only relate to the project for which you are applying for funding (P16CF or CSCF), and which have been incurred from the launch of this funding round on 10 February 2026.

Any technical adviser fees you include in your application must be appropriate to the type and scale of the project and should deliver value for money. We expect you to challenge technical advisers on fees where appropriate. We do not normally expect these to be above 10% of the total project value, however, for larger projects, the technical complexity of the works may justify higher fees. You must justify these costs in your application.

Any costs you incur ahead of approval are entirely at your risk as we are unable to give any assurances that your project will be approved. Only spend of this nature incurred after the launch of the application round can be claimed as eligible spending if you can demonstrate that these costs are essential to the delivery of the project.

10.8 Financial management and governance

DfE wants to ensure that funding goes to applicants that can evidence robust financial management and governance. This is because we want funding to be used effectively and for projects to be value for money. We reserve the right not to award funding where there is a reasonable doubt to an applicant's long-term financial viability. We also reserve the right to request additional financial information as required. This is regardless of how the project performs against

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the criteria. There are 3 points available, and the requirements are specific to the type of provider applying for funding.

i) Financial management and governance – general FE colleges, sixth form colleges, and designated institutions

FE Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges and Designated Institutions are required to comply with the obligations set out in the College Accounts Direction (CAD). Failure to comply with those obligations will be taken into account during the assessment of applications as indicated below. Compliance with the CAD will result in points as follows:

- Applicants will receive 2 points where they have met the 31 December 2025 deadline to file audited accounts, or any extended deadline agreed with DfE to file audited accounts.
- Applicants will receive 1 point if they have not received a qualified audit, adverse audit opinion or auditor's disclaimer of opinion in relation to their accounts.

ii) Financial management and governance – academies

Academies are required by the Academies Accounts Direction (AAD) to submit their accounts to the DfE by the given deadline. Failure to comply with those obligations will be taken into account during the assessment of applications as indicated below. Compliance with the AAD will result in points as follows:

- Applicants will receive 1 point where they have not been late submitting the following financial returns to DfE on one or more occasion. Such returns include:
  - Land and buildings collection tool (LBCT) 16 December 2025.
  - Accounts return (AR) 31 December 2025.
  - Audited Financial statements 31 December 2025.
- Applicants will receive 1 point where they have not missed the deadline to file audited accounts by more than 14 days.
- Applicants will receive 1 point where they have not had a qualified audit, adverse audit opinion or auditor's disclaimer of opinion in relation to their accounts.

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Table 6: Criteria, evidence and scoring for Project Cost

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
12) Overall costs and cost certainty Applies to P16CF and CSCF	Evidence should include (appropriate to the size and scale of the project): • **Cost breakdown template** – mandatory • copies of at least 3 quotes/estimates and/or a summary of any tender exercise attached as part of evidence cash flow forecast details of procurement route • We will assess the / cost per m2 and assessors will refer to industry standards and experience to consider whether the levels of costs are appropriate.	10 points for P16CF 10 points for CSCF

To score maximum points there should be:

- a clear scope and tenders/quotes should be thorough and well evidenced, with fixed prices and in line with the expectations relative to the size of the project.
- market testing to demonstrate abnormal costs, where appropriate
- letters of funding commitment from other sources (if applicable).

An applicant will score low points where the level of costs are above expectations with no clear justification e.g. excessive professional fees, allowances and contingency.

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
13) Cost per learner Applies to P16CF and CSCF	The total capital cost per additional learner 2028 (weighted for location and type of provision)	7 points for P16CF

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Criterion	Evidence required	Score
		7 points for CSCF

Applications will be scored relative to other applications. Cost per learner will be compared on the basis of costs without VAT to ensure equitable treatment of all applicants irrespective of their VAT status. Projects with the lowest cost per learner will receive maximum points (25% of applications will score maximum points).

We reserve the right to reject applications with a cost per learner that is considered excessive in comparison to industry and DfE benchmarks and in comparison to cost per learner in previous rounds of funding (adjusted for inflation).

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
14) Financial management and governance Applies to P16CF and CSCF	Financial data held by DfE.	3 points for P16CF 3 points for CSCF

See section 9.8 above for guidance on scoring.

Criterion	Evidence required	Score
15) Employer contribution (in kind or cash) Applies to CSCF only	State any cash or in-kind contributions to the project from employers, and what the match funding will enable. For in-kind contributions set out the estimated financial value.	10 points for CSCF

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Criterion	Evidence required	Score
	Please state the basis on which value of in-kind contributions have been assessed. Please note that discounted sales of equipment and discounted provisions of services or advice are ineligible.	

Please note employer contributions are mandatory. Any applications which do not include employer contributions will be rejected.

See section 9.4 above for examples of potential employer contributions. Projects will secure maximum points where the contributions from employers are:

- explained in detail
- are realistic and deliverable, with evidence confirming this
- assessed as significant and fundamental to the successful delivery of the project
- where the value of contributions are clearly evidenced, with an explanation of the methodology used to calculate this.

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Annex A Devolved and non-devolved funding arrangements by area

The table below outlines the funding arrangements for each area of England. Providers planning to apply for Post-16 Capacity Funding (P16CF) or Construction Skills Capacity Funding (CSCF) should:

- applicants should identify the area in which the **project site** is located. Please use **Find your local council – GOV.UK**[9] to identify the local authority; then
- refer to the table to determine whether:
  - Funding should be requested from the Strategic Authority for that area, or
  - an application should be made through the national bidding exercise run by DfE.
- note that DfE cannot accept applications for projects in devolved areas of the country.

English region	Local authority/ strategic authority	P16CF	CSCF
East of England	Bedford	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East of England	Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority
East of England	Central Bedfordshire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East of England	Essex	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East of England	Hertfordshire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round

[9] Find your local council - GOV.UK

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English region	Local authority/ strategic authority	P16CF	CSCF
East of England	Luton	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East of England	Norfolk	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East of England	Southend on Sea	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East of England	Suffolk	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East of England	Thurrock	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East Midlands	East Midlands Combined County Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority
East Midlands	Greater Lincolnshire Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East Midlands	Leicester	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East Midlands	Leicestershire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East Midlands	North Northamptonshire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East Midlands	Rutland	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
East Midlands	West Northamptonshire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
London	Greater London Authority	No Post-16 Capacity Funding available	Funding devolved to GLA

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English region	Local authority/ strategic authority	P16CF	CSCF
North East	North East Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority
North East	Tees Valley Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority
North West	Cheshire East	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
North West	Cheshire West and Chester	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
North West	Cumberland	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
North West	Greater Manchester Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority
North West	Lancashire Combined County Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Apply to DfE national bidding round
North West	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority
North West	Warrington	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
North West	Westmorland and Furness	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Bracknell Forest	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round

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English region	Local authority/ strategic authority	P16CF	CSCF
South East	Brighton and Hove	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Buckinghamshire	Funding Devolved to Buckinghamshire Council	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	East Sussex	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Hampshire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Isle of Wight	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Kent	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Medway	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Milton Keynes	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Oxfordshire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Portsmouth	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Reading	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Slough	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Southampton	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Surrey	Funding devolved to Surrey County Council	Apply to DfE national bidding round

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English region	Local authority/ strategic authority	P16CF	CSCF
South East	West Berkshire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	West Sussex	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Windsor and Maidenhead	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South East	Wokingham	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South West	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South West	Cornwall	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority
South West	Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South West	Dorset	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South West	Gloucestershire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South West	Isles of Scilly	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South West	North Somerset	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South West	Plymouth	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South West	Somerset	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
South West	Swindon	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round

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English region	Local authority/ strategic authority	P16CF	CSCF
South West	West of England Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority
South West	Wiltshire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
Yorkshire and the Humber	Hull and East Yorkshire Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Apply to DfE national bidding round
Yorkshire and the Humber	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority
Yorkshire and the Humber	West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority
Yorkshire and the Humber	York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority
West Midlands	Herefordshire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
West Midlands	Shropshire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
West Midlands	Stoke-on-Trent	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
West Midlands	Telford and Wrekin	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round

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English region	Local authority/ strategic authority	P16CF	CSCF
West Midlands	Warwickshire	Funding devolved to Warwickshire County Council	Apply to DfE national bidding round
West Midlands	Worcestershire	Apply to DfE national bidding round	Apply to DfE national bidding round
West Midlands	West Midlands Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority	Funding devolved to Combined Authority

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Annex B Ineligible projects

Projects or elements of projects that are not eligible for funding include the following, but this is not an exhaustive list:

- With respect to P16CF, projects which are not primarily concerned with provision for additional learners as a direct result of the demographic increase in 16 – 19 learners. This includes increasing your market share within the travel to learn area (i.e. cohort growth due to popularity of provision and learner choice rather than demographic increases). This is to avoid creating a surplus of places in a local area.

- It is highly unlikely that land purchases will meet the requirements of either fund in terms of cost or timing. For all applicants, where the project includes the purchase of land this should be supported by open-market valuations, or for land transactions that have not yet completed, agreed heads of terms. Academies should seek Secretary of State approval for any land transactions including the buying and selling of a freehold or leasehold interest in land or buildings.

- Estate created that is not demonstrably intended for the provision of 16– 19-year-old further and technical education in the case of P16CF projects and/or for adults in the case of CSCF projects. Examples include large atria, accommodation of non-16-19 further and technical education activities, and commercial activities not related to government funded provision or where the estate is being let to tenants.

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Annex C Long term investment in assets and recovery of funding

Where funding is agreed for a new asset or refurbishment of an existing asset in your estate, DfE will set out in a Capital Funding Agreement (CFA) with the provider, including the length of time each funded asset needs to be used for education purposes. This is known as the Capital Recovery Period and allows DfE to recover its investment if the asset is not used for its intended purpose or it is disposed of during this period without DfE's consent.

The Capital Recovery Period will depend upon the use and scale of the capital investment. DfE's standard expectations for each type of project are as follows:

(i) **New build**: where capital is used for new build projects the recovery period would be at least 60 years. For up to 30 years after the date of the CFA, the investment should be used for further and technical education. From years 30 to 60, it is expected that the building could be used for education purposes.

(ii) **Refurbishment:** for refurbishment within existing estate GIFA, we will not impose a capital recovery period recognising the temporary nature of the learner growth as a result of the demographic bulge.

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Annex D Supporting evidence checklist

Please ensure you upload the following evidence in relation to each section of the criteria. It is the applicants' responsibility to check their applications and ensure that all required information and documents have been submitted.

Project need

- Evidence of estate utilisation, for example, an audit or survey.
- TEMPLATE PROVIDED: Historic and forecast learner numbers template-P16CF; OR
- TEMPLATE PROVIDED: Historic and forecast learner numbers template-CSCF

Project planning

- TEMPLATE PROVIDED: Project summary template
- TEMPLATE PROVIDED: Project expenditure profile template
- TEMPLATE PROVIDED: Subject mix and space requirement template
- A detailed Gantt chart / project plan.
- RIBA Stage 2 report and, if not already included in the report, existing and proposed floor plans, elevations (if appropriate) and an outline design specification.
- Governance structure for the project.
- A comprehensive risk assessment for the proposed project.
- Summary of the estate strategy.

Project cost

- TEMPLATE PROVIDED: Cost breakdown template
- Contractor quotations and cost estimates
- Breakdown of abnormal cost and contingency, where applicable

Other (16-19 academies only)

- Summary of outcome from 3-week consultation required for significant change approval

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Freedom of information and data protection

Please note that the information provided may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the relevant legislation (Freedom of information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 and the Data Protection Act 2018) and will be stored in accordance with DfE's retention policy and procedures.

If a request for disclosure of the information applicants have provided is received, DfE would consider any request for release very carefully. Such requests will be considered under the relevant legislation. Therefore, DfE cannot give an absolute guarantee of confidentiality to applicants.

An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by applicants' IT system will not, in itself, be regarded as binding on DfE.

Public sector equalities duty

It is for applicants to judge whether or not an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is needed for applications in order to comply with their public sector equality duty in line with section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

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Department for Education

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