

SuDS in Schools Market Engagement Event Q&A

1) Is previous flood history required to apply?

Whilst previous flood history can support your application for a SuDS grant, this is not a mandatory requirement to apply. We use national flood risk data as part of our application assessment, so even schools that haven't flooded before can benefit if they are at risk. [Where do you want to check? - Check your long term flood risk - GOV.UK](#)

2) Does the funding cover staff project managing the Schemes?

Funding arrangements vary depending on the type of organisation receiving the grant and the delivery model being used.

In some cases, project management costs may be eligible for funding, while in others they may need to be met by the organisation itself. This is because funding is designed to support the delivery of projects in a way that reflects different organisational structures and responsibilities.

As a general rule, in-house project management costs are not eligible for grant funding.

3) Are there any changes from last year?

*Since last year's application round, the only change to note is that applicant organisations will now be required to send, as part of their supporting evidence submission, email/s from any schools included in the application, to confirm the school/s may be interested in the project. This does **not** constitute a formal commitment from the school/s, or a requirement for works to proceed at the school if accepted.*

This change has been introduced to ensure school/s are aware of applications being made for their sites and ensure a smoother onboarding process at the Grant Offer Letter (GOL) stage.

The eligibility criteria, funding approach and delivery expectations remain unchanged.

4) Can 'in kind' Project Management costs from LPAs be attributed to match funding?

We recognise that some projects may benefit from 'in-kind' project management support provided by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs). The treatment of these contributions as match funding will depend on the nature of the support being provided. As a general rule, in-house project management costs are not eligible for match funding. Any exceptions would be considered on a case-by-case basis and any arrangements would be agreed as part of the onboarding process.

5) If we work with our local water company, will they project manage this for us? (Is this included in the bid?)

In most cases, the local water company will lead the development of the designs and oversee the delivery of the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) features.

This typically includes project management of the construction works required to implement the agreed SuDS solution. However, arrangements can vary depending on the delivery model, the roles agreed between partners, and the specific requirements of the project.

Applicants should discuss responsibilities with their local water company at an early stage to ensure there is a clear understanding of project management, delivery arrangements and any associated costs.

6) We are awaiting an update from our water company on their application. What can we do about this?

DfE are unable to speak with organisations on behalf of schools.

If you are awaiting a response from your local water company, you should follow up with them directly to clarify whether they intend to apply for SuDS funding and whether your school or project forms part of their proposal. This will help avoid duplication and provide clarity on the most appropriate route forward. If this information is not available before the application deadline you may wish to proceed

with your own application to avoid missing the funding opportunity, subject to match funding availability.

7) Where it is not possible to set up a shared SharePoint site to aid reporting and document sharing, what will the process be? Many recipients will have IT restrictions that will not allow this.

We understand that many of our Grant Recipients do not have the ability to share access to SharePoint systems. Documentation and evidence submissions can therefore be shared with us via email throughout the lifecycle of the project. This is standard practice for many of our ongoing projects, and we continue to explore more effective ways of document sharing, including future changes that may streamline this process. We will always work with Grant Recipients on an individual basis to determine the best approach for their project.

8) Would green roofs or rainwater harvesting schemes be considered to be eligible projects covered by the grant?

Green roofs are considered an eligible type of project and can form part of a funding application where they support the programme objectives.

The eligibility of rainwater harvesting schemes is currently being reviewed. We recognise the potential benefits these measures can provide, but further consideration is needed to confirm whether they fall within the scope of the grant.

We will provide an update on rainwater harvesting through the programme FAQs once this review has been completed. Applicants considering this type of intervention are encouraged to monitor future guidance for further information.

9) In relation to designs:

- a) What does 'Consulting with DfE on final design' entail?**
- b) Is this a decision step – so the DfE may refuse the design?**
- c) Will there be guidance on what the designs are expected to include?**

d) Will there be agreed timelines in place for feedback being received when designs are submitted?

Every school site will have a different set of requirements for the final design, with each design being based on the most effective way to reduce the risk of surface water flooding. Your designs should be developed and signed off by a suitably qualified professional, such as a landscape architect or engineer. More information on what constitutes a suitably qualified professional will be provided during the onboarding stage for all grant projects.

- a) Each year, a select number of final designs (with a focus on those for larger or more complex projects) are selected for a technical design review by DfE's technical advisors. If your design is selected for a review, our technical advisors will work with you to ensure it can be signed off successfully. Guidance will be provided on the information and evidence expected to support the final design submission. Where a design review is required, clear timescales for submission and feedback will be agreed with the applicant in advance.*
- b) In the majority of cases, designs already signed off by a suitably qualified designer will pass our technical reviews with no, or only minor adjustments as a result of the DfE's technical review. If our advisors do not believe a design will deliver the intended level of flood protection, and that there are no adjustments that would be suitable to make the design viable, then the feasibility of the project may be discussed. However, please be reassured that this is a collaborative process, intended to provide assurance that schemes are technically robust and aligned with programme objectives, rather than acting as a separate approval gateway for all projects.*
- c) DfE does not provide guidance on designs. As your designs should be carried out by a suitably qualified professional, it is their responsibility to design the SuDS solution/s in a way that provides an adequate level of flood protection. If you have questions about the funding eligibility of any elements of the design, we can discuss this on a case by case basis throughout the lifecycle of the grant.*

Our expectation is that projects will meet the relevant programme Key Performance Indicator (KPI) and that the final design will have been approved by the school before being submitted to DfE.

- d) *If your design is selected for a technical review, clear timings for the review and subsequent feedback will be agreed in advance. This will be a collaborative discussion between the DfE and the Grant Recipient to ensure adequate time is provided for any feedback to be responded to, and construction delays to be avoided.*

10) Does 'Eligible SuDS project costs' include educational engagement? If not, can the reason behind this exclusion be explained when educational engagement forms part of the mandatory criteria.

Whilst the primary focus of the grant funding offer is the direct implementation and delivery of SuDS features, and this is where we expect the majority of project costs to be incurred, educational engagement is an eligible SuDS project cost. We ask that educational engagement is delivered in a reasonable and proportionate manner. For example, educational engagement may include:

- Signage added to the outside of SuDS planters to teach children more about the feature*
- A hands-on session where children help to design elements of the project, like which plants will be included in a raingarden*
- An outdoor learning session or workshop delivered to teach children about how the features work*
- Please note, educational engagement should be factored into the planned portfolio of the design and construction team/s working on the project. We are not able to match fund separate organisations being hired to deliver **only** the educational elements of the project.*

11) Costs account for 17.5% of the score: Is the assessment based on cost per school, cubic metre managed, property protected, or another metric?

The assessment will consider the cost per school, enabling value for money to be evaluated by comparing the funding requested against the number of schools that will directly benefit from the proposed intervention.

12) *Some pipes at our school have corroded and there is surface flooding due to insufficient flood water drainage, can we apply for this funding?*

Unfortunately, as pipework is not a SuDS feature (such as planters, rain gardens, swales etc), we are unable to provide grant funding for pipework repairs only. We recommend speaking with your insurance, or the RPA if you are a member, to discuss issues like this.

13) *When does the work have to be completed by?*

We can offer grant funding for projects between 1 and 3 financial years. This means that we expect:

- 1 year grants to start in FY 27/28 and complete within that financial year.
- 2 year grants to start in FY 27/28 and complete in FY 28/29.
- 3 year grants to start in FY 27/28 and complete in FY 29/30.

We do however appreciate that sometimes unexpected issues can cause delays to construction projects, so we will always work with grant recipients to ensure their projects can be delivered within their declared timeframe. Extensions can be considered on an as needed basis.

14) *What would happen if one of the schools on an application from an LLFA was to drop out, or no longer want to be involved in the SuDS Scheme? This is prior to the school giving formal commitment to the SuDS Scheme.*

Would the whole of the rest of the funding/application be penalised for this? Or would the amount applied for be changed/redistributed according to the new number of schools?

If, after an award is made, one of the schools in your application no longer wishes to go ahead, this is absolutely fine. In this instance we would either:

- a) Reduce the grant funding amount to reflect the new number of schools and their expected total project cost, **or**

- b) Work with you to swap the school for an alternative school that wishes to be included in the project, subject to this school meeting our flood risk/flood history and benefits requirements

15) Are green or blue-green roofs eligible for grant funding?

Blue-green or **blue** roofs are not eligible for grant funding. Converting an existing roof into a blue roof presents a number of challenges, including increased structural loading and the intentional storage of water at roof level. As water ingress can have significant consequences for school buildings, the preferred approach is typically to direct water away from buildings as quickly as possible.

New requirements have been included to address this the department's new [technical and design standards](#), improving the robustness of roof coverings and increasing the size of gutters, downpipes, and outlets to handle heavier, more extreme rainfall experienced due to climate change. In addition, retrofitting a blue roof is generally more costly than many other SuDS measures.

Green roof solutions may be considered for grant funding, but only where these solutions are planned for non-inhabitable buildings (e.g. bike sheds). However, where possible we encourage applicants to consider alternative SuDS features to mitigate the flood risk of their site/s first. If your application is successful and you plan to install a green roof feature, your final designs will go through a Technical Design review, to confirm whether any changes are required before construction can begin.