



Australian Government

**Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations**

NATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL COMPUTER FUND

Round One Guidelines

2008-2011

February 2008

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1. Purpose, audience and scope of the guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide information about the National Secondary School Computer Fund (the Fund) and in particular guidance for applications in round one.

These guidelines describe the aims and objectives of the Fund, the amount of money available to schools and the application process. They also aim to assist schools¹ in developing their applications.

The principles outlined in this document are consistent with the government's policy objectives for its Digital Education Revolution and provide the basis for implementation of the Fund.

All secondary schools will benefit from the Fund over the four year period (2008 – 2011) through increased access to information and communications technologies (ICT) and the wider elements of the Digital Education Revolution policy which include the provision of high speed fibre connections to schools and access to on-line nationally consistent on-line curriculum content.

The first round of funding will be targeted to those secondary schools with the greatest need for ICT investment.

The guidelines may be updated prior to future funding rounds, taking into account consultations with stakeholders and the experience gained from the initial implementation.

The guidelines can be accessed at www.digitaleducationrevolution.gov.au.

2. Background and objective

As part of the *Digital Education Revolution*, the Australian Government is committing new funding of \$1 billion over four years (2008-2011) to provide:

- The National Secondary School Computer Fund consisting of grants of up to \$1 million for each eligible school, depending on need and enrolment, to assist them to provide for new or upgraded ICT for secondary students in years 9 to 12; and
- a contribution of up to \$100 million to support the deployment of Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) broadband connections to deliver faster internet speeds to all Australian schools.

There are three other elements to the Policy to be developed:

- online curriculum content that will support the national curriculum and conferencing facilities for specialist subjects such as languages;

¹ In the Guidelines schools refers to secondary schools unless otherwise specified.

- working with states and territories and the Deans of Education to ensure that new and continuing teachers have access to training in the use of ICT that enables them to enrich student learning; and
- web portals which will enable parents to participate in their child's education.

The objective of the Fund is to ensure every school in Australia is a digital school, equipped with the education tools of the 21st Century. The Fund will allow every Australian student in years 9 to 12 to have access to ICT and has the potential to make a significant difference to the nature of education. Individual school communities² will have a say in determining the new or upgraded digital equipment which best suits the needs of their school.

3. Funding

The Australian Government is investing a total of \$1 billion over four years for the Digital Education Revolution. \$900 million of this investment will be delivered through the National Secondary School Computer Fund. \$100 million of this is to be targeted to those schools with the greatest need for ICT resources by 30 June 2008. Round one aims to meet this objective.

This funding is additional to existing Australian Government funding and funding provided by non government school authorities and state and territory governments.

The Fund will commence in 2008, continue until 2011 and will be implemented by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). This funding will provide grants to schools to purchase new or upgrade existing ICT. The guidelines identify eligible items that can be purchased by schools as outlined in section 3.1.

The Australian Government has asked state, territory, Associations of Independent Schools and Catholic education authorities (as appropriate) to commit to a range of initiatives to complement the rollout of the Fund, including technical and maintenance support, infrastructure, power supply, accommodation, security and purchasing support at the local level.

The remaining \$100 million will contribute to the provision of high-speed FTTP broadband connections to schools.

A detailed plan for the delivery of fibre connections to Australian schools will be developed by DEEWR in consultation with the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and its National Broadband Network (NBN) program.

Formal consultation mechanisms will be established to ensure state and territory school jurisdictions, independent and Catholic school systems and other stakeholders are engaged in the implementation of broadband in schools.

² This includes Parents and Citizen's groups, Education Authorities and school staff.

3.1 What can the funding be used for?

Every school providing senior secondary education will benefit from the Fund and the total funding available to each school is dependent on student enrolment numbers and the identified needs of the school in relation to existing ICT capacity at the school.

Each secondary school may apply for funding in any of the future funding rounds and if eligible, receive up to a total of \$1 million over the life of the Fund (2008-2011), including funding to update existing technology every three years. Further advice and guidelines will be issued prior to calls for applications for this purpose.

The first priority for funding under the program is to ensure every secondary school student in years 9-12 has access to:

- desktop computers; and/or
- laptop computers; and/or
- thin clients with virtual desktops (computer terminals that have their data and applications stored on a hard drive in a remote server).

Having addressed the need for computers, applicants can also use the funds for ICT equipment such as:

- interactive whiteboards;
- digital cameras;
- printers/scanners; and
- data projectors.

The unit cost used to calculate funding needed to improve the computer to student ratio is \$1,000. This figure is an average and takes into account the range of equipment which can be acquired under this program.

3.2. Who is eligible?

To identify schools in greatest need of ICT investment, and therefore eligible for the first round of funding, the Australian Government is working with state and territory government education departments, Associations of Independent Schools and Catholic education authorities to conduct a preliminary survey of current and planned ICT investment.

This preliminary survey will provide a national benchmark based on a computer to student ratio. Those schools having the lowest computer to student ratio and therefore identified as being most in need, will be advised to apply in writing in the first round which will open on 3 March 2008.

Schools which are advised to apply for first round funding will not be precluded from applying for future rounds over the life of the Fund. All secondary schools will have the opportunity to make one application in each year of the life of the Fund.

Schools which believe they should be able to apply in round one but have not received notification should contact DEEWR. See section 13 *Enquiries* below.

Only one application from each school will be considered in the first round. First round schools will be able to apply in future funding rounds providing the total fund received does not exceed \$1 million over the life of the Fund (four years). However, funding will be prioritised on the basis of need and no school can assume that they will receive \$1 million over the life of the program.

To assist schools in their application for round one funding, the table below provides an indication of likely funding outcomes based on student enrolments. These ranges are to be used as a **guide** and are **indicative** only, particularly as they do not take into account relative need and existing capacity within each school.

Total number of students in years 9 - 12	Range of funds available over the four year period
1 - 100	\$1,000 - \$100,000
101 - 350	\$100,000 - \$350,000
351 - 600	\$350,000 - \$600,000
601 - 850	\$600,000 - \$850,000
851 - 950	\$850,000 - \$950,000
951+	\$950,000 - \$1,000,000

Grants are to be expended on approved ICT equipment only as described in the grant offer and the Guidelines.

4. Application process for round one

First round schools will be required to complete an application form which will be accessible from 3 March to 4 April 2008 at www.digitaleducationrevolution.gov.au. Applications received after 4 April 2008 may not be assessed for round one funding.

Applications are to be prepared in accordance with these Guidelines. Schools need to determine their priorities for ICT with their school communities (including parents) and ensure they are consistent with their jurisdictional/education authorities ICT plans (as appropriate).

Applicants must also consider the ongoing costs associated with purchasing ICT equipment under the Fund and are encouraged to discuss ongoing cost arrangements with their education governing body (where applicable).

All applicants (or their school system, where appropriate) will be required to commit, through the application form, to providing the necessary complementary investment and teaching effort required to make full use of the ICT resources provided. This includes software applications, costs associated with the installation of hardware (such as upgraded power supply or cooling) and ongoing costs (such as maintenance of equipment, technical training or a technician to provide ongoing equipment support).

In providing any information or data to DEEWR pursuant of the requirements of this Fund, giving false or misleading information is a serious offence.

5. Assessment

In the first round assessment will be based on:

- the computer to student ratio;
- evidence of an existing, or the development of a school ICT Strategic Plan;
- the quality of the school's proposed ICT plan, its consistency with state, territory or (where appropriate) non government education jurisdictions' ICT plans, including the school's ability to ensure that equipment purchased can be operational in a timely fashion;
- the school's capability to support and implement the proposed procurement (such as adequate power and cooling arrangements, network cabling and desktop space); and
- evidence that the application is supported by the school community on ICT issues (e.g. Parents and Citizens Associations).

An ICT Strategic Plan should include:

- a vision for the school relating to ICT;
- assessment of the current ICT environment including:
 - audit of ICT infrastructure including age of computers;
 - capacity of air-conditioning, electrical components and cabling;
 - security;
 - technical support;
 - computer to student ratio across grade levels;
 - physical capacity of the school;
 - ICT capabilities of students;
 - ICT capabilities of staff and provision of professional development;
 - internet access;
 - use of digital equipment in class; and
- an implementation plan of expected outcomes, strategies to deliver these outcomes, a timeline for key milestones and the associated budget.

The detail required in this plan should be appropriate to the level of funding sought.

Further application requirements and instructions will accompany the application.

DEEWR will check applications for compliance and completeness. Applications will then be forwarded to the relevant state and territory education departments for

government schools and block grant authorities (BGAs³) for non-government schools for assessment against the selection criteria as listed above. These authorities will provide advice to DEEWR to ensure that the schools identified with the greatest need are funded first and that they are able to implement and deploy the proposed procurement. The Fund is a competitive model and not all schools will necessarily be successful in this round.

DEEWR will make recommendations to the Minister for Education.

6. Results

Successful and unsuccessful first round applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application in writing.

The Minister will announce the results and DEEWR will then publicise successful schools and their projects on the DEEWR website at www.digitaleducationrevolution.gov.au.

Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with feedback to support development of an application in a future round of the Fund.

7. Payments

Payments will be made to and administered by the state and territory departments of education for government schools and in the case of non-government schools through the relevant block grant authority (BGA). The state and territory governments and the BGAs will manage the funding and will acquit these funds on behalf of schools to the Australian Government.

8. Funding Agreements

Payment of funding to state and territory education departments for government schools and BGAs for non-government schools will be conditional upon the relevant state, territory or BGA entering into funding agreement with the Australian Government.

The funding agreement will set out details of deployment and support for the new ICT equipment in schools.

9. Cooperation with the state, territory and non-government education authorities

Effective implementation of the Digital Education Revolution will be achieved through cooperation with all states and territories. In particular, the Australian Government will work with state and territory governments, Catholic and independent school systems to make a sustainable and meaningful change in the way teaching and learning are delivered in Australian schools.

³ Block Grant Authorities operated by state Associations of Independent Schools and Catholic education authorities.

To realise economies of scale and administrative efficiencies, it is preferred that purchasing of ICT through the Fund take place at a state or sectoral level. The Australian Government is encouraging independent schools to consider taking part in purchasing arrangements managed by government and non-government authorities.

The Australian Government will be discussing with states, territory and non-government education authorities how they will support the Australian Government's \$1 billion investment, including such measures as:

- ensuring the maintenance of existing and planned expenditure on ICT for their sector;
- maintaining and supporting their existing and planned infrastructure in the school (including security);
- providing accurate and timely information regarding a school's need and readiness to apply for funding including evidence of ongoing support for the additional equipment provided under the Fund;
- ensuring the roll-out of school computers and faster broadband is sustainable at the school level through technical training and infrastructure support;
- ensuring all teachers have access to professional development to ensure a increased capabilities to use ICT effectively;
- undertaking centralised purchasing processes for their schools as appropriate to ensure value for money; and
- agreeing on assessment and reporting criteria for the success of the investment to be measured.

Education authorities and schools, as appropriate, will also need to take into account costs associated with connecting ICT equipment to the internet (eg, ISP costs) including costs of internet filtering.

10. Standards

To guide their applications, schools intending to apply for funding should refer to the national ICT standards as developed by the Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee (AICTEC). The standards can be found at www.standards.edna.edu.au.

The Australian Government will be convening an expert advisory group with representation from the education authorities to deliver best practice standards and guidelines for the deployment of ICT in schools. These guidelines will be available in June 2008.

Guidance for schools in considering the minimum specifications for ICT equipment is at Attachment A.

All schools will be expected to ensure appropriate content and safety mechanisms for students are in place and are consistent with the Australian Government cyber safety policy. More information is available at www.netalert.gov.au

11. Recognition of Australian Government Funding

Grant recipients must comply with Australian Government requirements for recognition of Australian Government assistance for the National Secondary Schools Computer Fund.

Successful applicants must recognise the assistance received from the Australian Government under this Fund in the form to be set out in the funding agreement.

12. Freedom of Information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (“FOI Act”) extends as far as possible the right of the Australian community to access information in the possession of Australian Government departments. All documents created or held by the Department with regard to the Digital Education Revolution program are subject to the FOI Act (including any documents of contractors where DEEWR has a right to immediate possession of documents held those contractors). Unless a document falls under an exemption provision, it will be made available to the general public if requested under the FOI Act.

All FOI requests received by the Department must be referred immediately to the Freedom of Information Coordinator in the Department's National Office. Decisions regarding requests for access will be made by the Department's authorised FOI decision-maker in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act.

13. Enquiries

All enquiries concerning the Fund and the associated Guidelines can be addressed to:

Branch Manager
Digital Education Revolution Taskforce
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
GPO Box 9880
CANBERRA ACT 2601

For further information:

- contact The Digital Education Revolution Hotline on 1300 363 079; or
- visit www.digitaleducationrevolution.gov.au.

Guidance for Schools in considering the minimum specifications for ICT Equipment

Vision & Culture

A schools vision and preparedness for ICT pedagogical engagement will have a direct impact upon the decisions that a school will make when determining the appropriate digital devices to be funded through the Fund.

Purpose

Schools need to consider a number of key criteria when assessing the fit for purpose of the digital device both today and in three to four years time including:

Applications

- Email, web surfing, basic desktop publishing
- Desktop publishing, basic multi media, CAD
- High end CAD, High end multimedia

Device form factor:

Purpose, value for money and available infrastructure are key elements in determining form factor, such as, -UMPC, Laptop, Tablet, Desktop.

When determining form factor, schools need to look forward for the life of the chosen device:

- What Operating System will be used in 3 years time?
- How much RAM will be required for applications today and in the future? (2Gb minimum for Vista and Office 2007)
- How big a hard drive? (Digital portfolios, Multi-media files can consume large disk space)
- What will we be expecting the student to do with these devices in 3 years?
- Do some or all students need to be mobile?
- Warranty and support available for the expected life of the digital device

These factors will assist in determining the minimum specifications which will in turn impact the cost of the digital device.

Infrastructure

To support large scale deployments of digital devices into senior secondary education will have a significant impact and cost on the supporting infrastructure required. Schools need to carefully assess the preferred digital device to determine the impact on:

- power
- network accessibility
- space, furniture, and
- teaching, and learning application.