

Fair Education Program Funding Guidelines

Please check the Schools Plus website to see when the next grant application round will open

Thank you for your interest in applying to our Fair Education program. These guidelines are designed to assist you in submitting a quality application to seek project funding to support the learning in your school.

Australian Schools Plus (Schools Plus) is a national education charity that supports schools to improve the learning outcomes of students facing disadvantage by increasing philanthropic support to schools and school communities. More information about Schools Plus is available at www.schoolsplus.org.au.

About the Fair Education Program

Since 2015, the partnership between Schools Plus and the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF) has provided learning opportunities through the Fair Education Program in NSW. With 34 projects involving 104 primary and secondary schools across NSW in low socio-economic regions, the Fair Education Program has significantly developed the confidence and capacity of school leaders and teachers to engage meaningfully with their families and wider communities to improve learning for students. In 2018, with funding support from the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation and The Bryan Foundation, the Fair Education Program expanded to 34 schools in Queensland. Victoria Fair Education commenced in 2019 with the support of Ross Trust to four schools and in 2020 in partnership with the Foundation of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies and the Ian Potter Foundation a further five schools will be part of the Fair Education community of practice.

The Fair Education Program provides schools with opportunities to generate new understandings through thoughtful inquiry, creative design and strategic delivery of innovative projects which explore progressive approaches to leading family and community engagement to bring about cultural transformation in schools.

Participation in the Program is ideally suited to schools who have identified significant room for improving student outcomes and have prioritised strengthening family and community engagement as a key strategy to address this.

The Program will build the capacity of School Leadership teams to design and implement evidence-based projects that aim to improve family and community engagement in student learning through:

1. Provision of leadership coaching for Project Leadership teams throughout the life of the project. Coaching will focus on building strategic leadership capacity through a distributed leadership model and providing support to schools to successfully deliver and evaluate long-term, strategic projects that aim to strengthen family and community engagement in student learning.
2. Three-year project funding for individual schools or school clusters, via a competitive application process, to facilitate the delivery of an approved project focused on improving family and community engagement in student learning.

Key Program Principles

The five key principles that underpin the Fair Education Program are:

1. **Disadvantage** – Supporting schools facing disadvantage with a score that sits below 1000 on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) scale. Schools with no (zero) ICSEA values need to contact Fair Education to determine their eligibility, with the exception of special education needs schools which are eligible to submit projects. See the My Schools website <https://www.myschool.edu.au/> for ICSEA values.
2. **Strategic fit** – Projects fit within schools’ strategic priorities, specifically, in strengthening family and community engagement in student learning.
3. **Collaboration** – Projects encourage rapport, networking and establishing partnerships with families and communities in student learning.
4. **Evidence** – Projects use research, data and evidence to identify the need and inform the design of the project, and schools agree to gather and share evidence of project impact during and upon completion.
5. **Sustainability** – Projects demonstrate a sustainable benefit to the school beyond the funding period, either because the learnings are integrated into school practices or future funding can be secured to continue delivery.

Funding Priorities

The Fair Education Program will prioritise funding to individual schools, or clusters of three or more schools, facing disadvantage for strategic projects aiming to strengthen family and community engagement in student learning. Please note, schools may form clusters across educational sectors. If your cluster is less than three schools, please contact the Schools Plus Education team on (02) 8318 1412 to discuss further.

The types of projects the Fair Education Program may support include:

- Projects that seek to contribute new thinking and learning to the wider educational discourse.
- Extension of existing whole-of-school initiatives that are having a proven impact.
- Replication projects where existing strategies are being tried in a new location or with a new target group.
- New projects that support the delivery of a strategy based on sound school-based evidence, data analysis or research.
- Innovative projects that trial new designs or strategies that have a sound research base and potential for significant improvement.

A strategic project is considered one which is:

- Identified in a school’s broader strategic plan and endorsed by the School Leadership (i.e. does not rest with the Principal or one teacher).
- Has a clear need identified through analysis of school-based evidence and/or data.
- Designed as a solution to a defined opportunity or challenge in terms of planning, proposed activities, budget, measures of success and expected outcomes.
- Clearly articulates specific, measurable and achievable changes for improved family and community engagement in student learning.

Information for Clusters

School clusters must submit one joint project application. However, the project must be under the auspices of a lead school which will take responsibility for managing the project. The lead school will be required to submit one project application on behalf of the cluster and include the school name and project contact details for each participating school in the cluster.

Based on learnings to date, clusters that are already working together tend to make better progress within the program. While cluster size is not prescriptive, clusters of three to six schools have worked well previously.

Eligibility & Selection

Schools or school clusters wishing to submit project applications for consideration must meet the following eligibility criteria:

A school located in NSW.

Schools must have a value below 1000 on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) or be a special school, as defined by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). For current ICSEA values, see your school’s profile on MySchool at: <http://www.myschool.edu.au>

If you are unsure, please contact Schools Plus.

Supporting you to submit a quality application

To help you submit a great application, we are offering the following:



Project design support – if you would like to speak to an education expert prior to submitting your application to help guide project design, please email faireducation@schoolsplus.org.au to arrange a time to connect.

Available Funding

Size and complexity of schools and clusters will be taken into consideration by the assessors, but as a guide:

Individual schools are invited to apply for funding up to \$70,000 over a three-year period; school clusters may apply for funding up to \$250,000 over a three-year period. **Applications from provincial city, rural and remote schools are strongly encouraged.** Project funding will be distributed in annual instalments by electronic transfer following receipt and approval of the annual Project Report and updated Project Plan for the following year.

Funding instalments will be broken down into the following annual payments:

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Individual Schools	Up to \$30,000	Up to \$20,000	Up to \$20,000
School Clusters	Up to \$100,000	Up to \$75,000	Up to \$75,000

Please use the amounts above as a guide when developing your project plan and budget.

Funding Exclusions

There are a range of activities and projects the Fair Education Program is unable to support including:

- Academic research.
- Retrospective funding - Schools Plus will not cover expenditure incurred before the funding has been distributed.
- Projects for which funding would normally be sought from government and system sources. Examples of these would be additional classroom teachers, school buildings and office equipment.
- Only one project per school or school cluster will be considered under this round.
- Any funding for equipment, resources or technology should be minimal and must strongly relate to the project activities.

Selection

An Independent Assessment Panel will evaluate and select projects using the Selection Criteria outlined in the table below. Please refer to these criteria for further guidance when developing responses in your application.

Selection Criteria	Indicators and Supporting Evidence
<i>A demonstration of commitment to strengthening family and community engagement through the project.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly describes what engagement looks like now and what it will look like by the end of the project. • Is able to provide clear links between transforming family and community engagement and the impact this will have on improving learning opportunities and outcomes for students. • Desire to generate new and rigorous thinking and understandings in the area of family and community engagement.
<i>Demonstration of strong project rationale.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows a wide perspective on learning. • Articulates clear and realistic student learning outcomes through the project. • Clearly identifies the intended changes sought through the project and is able to describe why these changes are important to the school and community. • Clearly describes what the school/cluster will focus on within the project to bring about change. • Is able to identify the key stakeholder groups who will benefit from the project and describe the benefits realised for each stakeholder group as a result of the project.
<i>Demonstration of readiness for transformation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an inquiry and evidence seeking mindset. • Is able to demonstrate a reasonable level of readiness, through steps taken prior to submitting the application, to undertake the project and drive change. <i>(**Information for this criterion will be sought during short-listed interviewing stage**)</i> • Is able to demonstrate a desire for and understanding of collaboration beyond their school community through the Fair Education Community of Practice. <i>(**Information for this criterion will be sought during short-listed interviewing stage**)</i>
<i>Demonstration of effective monitoring and evaluation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly describes what processes will be used to reflect against progress and what information will be collected to judge the success and impact of the project.
<i>Demonstration of project sustainability.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a clear and realistic outline for how any positive changes achieved through the project will be sustained and leveraged beyond the three-year funding period

Requirements for the Fair Education Program

1. The application form includes the Terms and Conditions that apply to projects submitted under the Fair Education Program – please read these and tick the box to indicate your acceptance.
2. Successful applicants will be required to sign an Agreement with Schools Plus, which will set out conditions including reporting requirements and evaluation activities so that achievements and lessons learned can be captured and shared with key project stakeholders.
3. The signed Agreement must be submitted with the three-year Project Plan. A Project Plan template will be provided by Fair Education during the co-design period.
4. As part of the Fair Education Program, School Leadership teams will be expected to participate in one coaching session per term throughout the life of their project. These sessions will be delivered face-to-face initially in the first year, with future sessions delivered via a mix of face-to-face, video and teleconferencing as required.
5. Participating in the annual Fair Education Program Forum, held in Sydney each year, to share experiences, success stories, and learnings to date with peers, as well as hear from subject matter experts in the sector on the latest research evidence and practices. Travel and accommodation expenses for this annual event will be the responsibility of program participants; and participation in a Community of Practice.
6. A commitment to working in partnership with Schools Plus and the external evaluation team to contribute to ongoing program evaluation.
7. Successful applicants will be required to provide a 6-month Reflection and Annual Acquittal report at the end of each year. Information provided in these reports will be shared with key project stakeholders for the purposes of review and approval of annual payments as well as ongoing program evaluation. Templates will be made available by Fair Education to successful applicants during the coaching and sessions. Reports will briefly cover key project areas including progress and achievements to date, early results and how they were measured, spending of funds to date and lessons learned.

Submitting your application (when grant rounds are open)

Schools Plus uses Smarty Grants, an online grant management system, to receive applications.



- Register with SmartyGrants via the link provided below. This enables you to create, save and modify an application form over a period of time before submitting it by the due date.
- Please note, all applications must be supported by a copy of the School Plan, or relevant extract.
- Contact the Schools Plus Fair Education Team on (02) 8318 1412, or via email to faireducation@schoolsplus.org.au if you wish to discuss your project before applying.

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