

Appendix 4 - Frequently Asked Questions: (updated)

Note this updated version of Appendix 4 relates to the 'ICT infrastructure Grant Scheme 2009' letter that was issued by the ICT Policy Unit of the Department of Education and Science on 25th November 2009. This document along with the grant letter, and NCTE advice can be accessed and downloaded from www.ncte.ie/ictgrant2009primary

- 1. Can I submit my Appendix 1 or Appendix 3 by email?** *No. For audit trail purposes, signed submissions must be made by fax or post to the ICT Policy Unit.*
- 2. Do I need to enclose receipts with my Appendix 3?** *No. However, you must retain receipts for all expenditure for at least seven years. Random audits will be carried out.*
- 3. What if the cost of my purchases is higher than the grant allocated?** *Where total cost exceeds grant allocated, no additional funding is available. Schools will have to make up the difference from their own resources.*
- 4. Where can I get more information on how to use ICT Framework arrangements for Procurement?** *Please see the NCTE's website: www.ncte.ie/ICTAdviceSupport/Purchasing for guidance. The school price lists (maximum prices for standard category products) are available at the following subsection of that site: www.ncte.ie/ictpurchasingframeworks*
- 5. What are the benefits of using the Frameworks?** *For those items covered by the Frameworks, it is expected that the prices obtained will be very competitive. Furthermore, use of the Frameworks should offer significant administrative advantages, in terms of simplifying the tendering process – for example, a single email to a central email address can be used to obtain competitive tenders from the five PC Framework vendors. More specifically, advantages include the following:*
 - a. Schools are spared the need to research the market, develop detailed once-off tender processes, and so on
 - b. Prices include 3-year next-business-day on-site warranties
 - c. Standard products supplied must meet specification requirements set with schools in mind
 - d. Option to seek non-standard specifications
 - e. Vendors have committed to pricing equal to or lower than the 'ceiling price' published in the framework documents.
 - f. National delivery at a single fixed price (or in some cases, free).
 - g. Flexibility for schools to come together and pool their demand for greater discounts
 - h. Option to seek quotes for "associated products" (such as wireless mice/keyboards) and "associated services" (say installation/configuration) under the Frameworks.
 - i. Schools can raise any practical concerns regarding Framework effectiveness with framework management (ie NCTE or CMOD)

Further guidance on Framework tendering procedures is available at the NCTE links above.

- 6. What if I want associated services under the Frameworks (for example installation services) or associated products (for example, consumables)?** *Tenders under the Frameworks can be specified to include certain "associated services" or "associated products". For further information on this, please see NCTE's guidance on Framework agreements mentioned above.*

7. **Having reviewed the market and considered specifications in depth, I believe I can get better value for money from non-Framework vendors – can I seek quotes from non-Framework vendors?** *In these circumstances, you can seek quotes from Framework and non-Framework vendors **simultaneously**, and for an **identical specification of your minimum requirements**. Please remember that your request for quotes (RFQ) must not refer to specific brand/manufacturer names, processor names and speeds, etc.*

*When submitting your Annex 3 to the Department of Education and Science, please complete and enclose the **Pricing Summary Form** – which can be downloaded from the following link www.ncte.ie/ictgrant2009primary. This information will contribute to ongoing evaluation of the performance of the ICT Frameworks. Other documents (e.g. RFQ, responses, etc.) do not need to be enclosed, but should be retained in your school's files, available for audit, in line with standard practice for retention of financial records. Schools remain responsible for ensuring that their procurement processes comply with public procurement rules, and should familiarise themselves with the guidance provided on the e-tenders website. For further details, see: http://www.e-tenders.gov.ie/guides/guides_list.aspx?Type=2*

8. **Can I purchase items outside those listed in the letter of offer or on the Authorised list?** *No.*
9. **How was my school's grant calculated?** *Your school's grant is composed of €1,700 (which is considered sufficient to purchase the recommended baseline of one fixed digital projector and teaching computer) **plus €34.59 per capita**. The per capita calculation uses the Department's official record of enrolment figures as at 30th September 2008.*
10. **As a result of reduction in teaching posts, my school will have unoccupied classrooms from next year – do I have to buy digital projectors for these classrooms?** *No.*
11. **My school is getting new accommodation – can I defer spending the grant until this new accommodation is available?** *Yes.*
12. **Can I use the grant to buy Software?** *No.*
13. **Can a “teaching computer” be a laptop?** *Yes*
14. **What is a “teaching computer”?** *The expression "teaching computer" refers to the computer which the teacher uses for presentation of digital content (including interactive content) through the Digital Projector (or interactive whiteboard, if one happens to be in place already), for integration of ICT into teaching and learning. The teaching computer should be connected to the school's network and have broadband internet access (e.g. through Schools Broadband). It should be the host for the wireless mouse and keyboard which schools are also required to purchase under this grant scheme. The teaching computer would typically be at the front of a mainstream class.*
15. **Some of our classes already have a desktop PC for Teachers use, is the grant for an additional laptop or are existing desktop PCs suitable?**

*The grant conditions allow the **teaching computer** to be either a desktop or laptop. In so far as desktop **teaching computers** are already in place in your school's classrooms, you can replace these if you wish but you are not obliged to do so.*

- 16. I am in a Developing Area School, and my school's enrolment has increased since September 2008 – is extra funding available?** *No. The allocation of €22.3m is fully outlaid, as a single 2009 grant, based on the latest official statistics available i.e. those of 30th September 2008.*
- 17. Are Digital Projector Frameworks available?** *Yes, the Digital Projector Frameworks have been available since mid January 2010. Schools were allowed (but not obliged) to await the conclusion of these Frameworks before buying Digital Projectors. Since the Frameworks have become available, schools are required to use them (except in the circumstances outlined in FAQ 7).*
- 18. Can I buy IWBs instead of Digital Projectors?** *No. Except in so far as funding remains after all classrooms have been equipped with digital projector, teaching computer, wireless keyboard and mouse.*
- 19. Did I have to spend the money by the end of the Calendar year 2009, or school year 2009/10?** *Schools should use the Grant to purchase equipment as soon as possible, and were asked to make every effort to purchase equipment before the end of the 2009 Calendar year. Delays are however acceptable where arising from tendering processes, or where schools were awaiting the conclusion of the Digital Projector Frameworks.*
- 20. Can I use the grant as reimbursement for equipment bought previously, or to pay off loans outstanding in relation to previous purchases?** *Where schools have already purchased equipment that conforms to the requirements of the grants package, (teaching computer, digital projector, wireless mouse and wireless keyboard for each classroom) and in compliance with public procurement rules, the grant may be used to offset loans outstanding - at the time the grant issued - in respect of these purchases.*
- 21. Does the Department maintain a panel of retailers/suppliers?** *No, however insofar as your school is buying equipment covered by the current ICT Procurement Frameworks - i.e. PCs, Notebooks, A4 Laser Printers and Digital Projectors - the Frameworks must be used (see also FAQ 7). These are competitive mechanisms rather than supplier panels – in other words, your RFQ is addressed to all vendors on each Framework rather than to a single vendor.*

Where frameworks are not available for products, selection of vendors for competitive tender is a matter for each school. Procurement must be undertaken in compliance with the public procurement rules – see Appendix 5 to the grant letter, and also the e-tenders website: http://www.e-tenders.gov.ie/guides/guides_list.aspx?Type=2.

- 22. The anticipated value of one of my contracts is less than €5,000 – how many quotes do I have to get?** *Where a Framework is being used, the Framework email automatically distributes your RFQ to all vendors on the Framework. You do not have to get any additional quotes outside the Frameworks (but may do so in the circumstances given in FAQ 7).*
- Where Frameworks are not available, please refer to the public procurement rules in Appendix 5 to the grant letter, and on the e-tenders website (http://www.e-tenders.gov.ie/guides/guides_list.aspx?Type=2).*

tenders.gov.ie/guides/guides_list.aspx?Type=2). While the public procurement rules do not require you get more than one quote for contracts with an anticipated value of less than €5,000, we would anticipate that it would be in the best interests of your school to seek at least three competitive quotes in any event.

- 23. The digital projector and Teaching Computer kit is not appropriate for our school's Special Classes [or: our school is categorised as a Special School]. Can we use the grant to buy alternative ICT equipment.** *Yes, you can use the grant to buy classroom ICT equipment which is more appropriate to the Special Classes in question, provided that your school's ICT plan has clearly identified how the ICT equipment in question is used to support pupils with special educational needs.*

Purchases of equipment for use in Special Schools must not replace or supplement the existing Assistive Technology Grants Scheme, whereby grants are available to meet the needs of individual pupils. Special Schools can get further information in regard to SEN and ICT at:

<http://www.ncte.ie/SpecialNeedsICT/ResourcesAdvice/MatchingTechnology/>

[In so far as the request relates to IWBs:] *We would add however that your school should consider the NCTE's advice on IWBs and on Data Projectors on www.ncte.ie/ictadvice, and satisfy yourself that you are achieving best value for money in the use of the grant. If your teachers can achieve equivalent outcomes with use of a Data Projector without IWB, a value-for-money assessment is not likely to recommend purchase of IWBs.*

- 24. Can I buy refurbished PCs?**

No. There are concerns in relation to warranties and life span for this type of equipment. The Department's recommendation and that of the NCTE is that generally when upgrading equipment that new equipment is purchased

- 25. What is the definition of a "classroom"?**

As indicated in paragraph 4.4 of the Primary School Design Guidelines, Classrooms are used for whole-class, group and individualised teaching and learning in general across the subjects of the curriculum.

The objective of the grant scheme is to place the four priority items (digital projector, teaching computer, wireless keyboard and wireless mouse) at the disposal of teachers in general classrooms, for use in integrating ICT into teaching and learning in a curricular context.

This equipment configuration may not be appropriate for resource areas. It should not in any event be purchased for other areas which are not general classrooms - for example, library rooms, staff rooms, offices or other general/multi-purposes rooms.

The above position applies to Ordinary schools. As indicated in your grant letter, different rules apply in relation to Special Schools.

- 26. When will post-primary funding be available, and how much?**

While it is intended to proceed with ICT funding at post-primary level this year, the scope, scale and form of this funding are currently under consideration. We hope to be able to confirm the position in the coming weeks.

- 27. Do I have to buy computers before buying projectors – e.g. if the grant is just enough to cover equipping 5 more classrooms with computers OR two more classrooms with Digital Projectors, do I have to buy the computers first?** *No. Once the fund is being spent on equipping classrooms with the four prioritised items (teaching computers, digital projectors, wireless mice and keyboards), there is no requirement to buy those items in any particular order. The core requirement remains, i.e. the fund must be used to kit out all classrooms with the four items before it can be spent on other Authorised items.*
- 28. Can the grant be used to cover installation costs associated with purchases of PCs, Notebooks or Digital Projectors?** *Yes.*
- 29. If I am purchasing an Interactive Whiteboard which includes a digital projector – do I have to split the purchase and buy the Projector from the Framework?** *No. We would remind you however of the core requirement that the grant must be used to kit out all classrooms with the four priority items before it can be spent on other Authorised items (such as IWBs).*
- 30. Does the grant cover situations where a school wants to acquire teaching computers for learning support teachers and language teachers in a mainstream school setting?** *Yes*
- 31. If a school purchases and installs a fixed digital projector can it be used with a Interactive Whiteboard or other projection surface installed at a later date?**
Yes. If the surface being projected onto (eg ordinary whiteboard, IWB, smooth wall) by a fixed projector changes the projector settings will need to be modified to take these changes into account. This is a minor modification, to be carried out as per the projector manual, and which should take no more than a few minutes.

Contact Details:

Additional information on the **general public procurement rules**, and on the process for specifying requirements for ICT products in particular, is available at www.e-tenders.gov.ie. For further guidance relating to the **ICT Frameworks specifically**, schools may also contact:

*National Centre for Technology in Education, Dublin City University, Dublin 9
Phone: (01) 7008200 Email: info@ncte.ie*

*Frameworks Team, CMOD, Department of Finance, Lansdowne House, Lansdowne Road, Dublin 4.
Phone: (01) 604 5106 Email: ictframeworks@gov.ie*

Annex 1 and Annex 3 **forms** (accompanied by pricing summary per FAQ7 where applicable) **should be returned to:**

*ICT Policy Unit, Department of Education and Science, Marlborough St, Dublin 1
Phone: (01) 889 6413 Email: ictpolicy@education.gov.ie*