



Chairperson
Schools Details
Roll No:

25 November 2009

ICT INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT SCHEME – 2009

Dear Chairperson

On 16 November 2009, the Taoiseach and the Minister for Education and Science, Batt O’Keeffe, T.D., launched the report, ‘*Smart Schools = Smart Economy*’ the new action plan on integrating ICT in schools produced by the joint industry advisory group established by the Minister. This report builds on the earlier strategy group report, ‘*Investing Effectively in ICT in Schools*’.

As a first step in the Government’s commitment to making funding available for ICT in schools, the Minister also announced that grants totalling €2m will issue to primary schools before the end of this year for upgrading their Information & Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure. I now write to inform you that the sum of **(Amount)** has been paid directly into your school’s bank account under this scheme. The payment of this grant is strictly subject to the conditions set out below and in the enclosed Form of Acceptance (Appendix 1). The amount of your grant is based on a minimum amount of €1,700 (which is considered sufficient to purchase the recommended baseline of one fixed digital projector and teaching computer) and a capitation element. Requests for an increase to the amount available to an individual school cannot be considered and any expenditure incurred in excess of the grant amount must be met by the school.

Please note that this funding must be used, in the first instance, towards equipping each classroom with a teaching computer with wireless mouse and keyboard, and a fixed digital projector. Only if this baseline equipment is in place for each classroom, should the funding be used for other equipment listed at Appendix 2. These recommendations are in line with both reports mentioned above.

In relation to Special Schools, funding is calculated on the same basis as that of mainstream schools. However, it is recognised that some of the recommended equipment may not meet the teaching requirements in special schools. Therefore, advice on the equipment to purchase in these specific schools is available at <http://www.ncte.ie/SpecialNeedsICT/>. It should be noted that all funding must be directed towards ICT hardware. 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 order to comply with the terms of the scheme your school must now take the following steps:

1. Return the Form of Acceptance at Appendix 1, signed by the Chairperson of the Board of Management to the ICT Policy Unit of the Department of Education & Science as soon as possible and before any purchases are made.
2. Purchase all required ICT equipment, as set out on page 1 of this letter and/or within the Authorised Category listed in Appendix 2, in compliance with Public Procurement Procedures, using existing Framework Agreements where available. Schools should make every effort to purchase equipment before the end of the year.
3. As soon as the equipment is purchased, return the completed Certification Form (Appendix 3) signed by the Chairperson by post to the ICT Policy Unit, Marlborough Street. In this form, schools must certify to the Department that they have used the money to purchase relevant ICT equipment, indicating type, numbers and costs; that they have used the Framework Agreements where available, and if not available, that they have engaged in competitive procurement processes to obtain value for money.

Public Procurement – rules and assistance

The Department of Finance, in co-operation with the NCTE, has established national Framework agreements for the supply of Personal Computers, Notebook Computers, Monochrome Laser Printers and Colour Laser Printers. Special maximum prices, specific to schools, have been negotiated for supply of certain equipment, under these Frameworks.

Schools **must** use the Frameworks, where available, in the interests of value for money and for administrative convenience. Framework tendering processes are very straightforward and can be conducted relatively quickly (in many cases, by simple email). For the products listed on the Framework, vendors cannot exceed the maximum prices, and may well be able to offer lower prices in response to requests for tender. Further information on the Frameworks, and school-specific maximum prices, are available at: www.ncte.ie/ICTAdviceSupport/Purchasing

In using the Frameworks, schools should be aware of the following important points:

- Schools must use the appropriate framework for the relevant product i.e. the PC framework cannot be used for the purchase of notebooks, printers etc.
- Any “request for quote” must not include references to specific brands or proprietary technologies e.g. Intel processors, Dell etc.
- Schools requiring “associated services” (e.g. installation) or “associated products” (e.g. consumables) in connection with their equipment purchases may tender for these under the Frameworks. *(For further information on how this is done, please see NCTE’s guidance on Framework agreements mentioned above)*

The NCTE is also establishing a Framework for procurement of fixed digital projectors which will be available in the near future. Further advice will issue in regard to this.

Public Procurement – rules and assistance

ICT Procurement Frameworks simplify the process of purchasing ICT equipment for schools. Further information on ICT Frameworks is available at www.ncte.ie/ictpurchasingframeworks/.

When purchasing equipment for which no ICT framework exists, schools are advised to refer to the NCTE's advice sheets and general purchasing guidance at: www.ncte.ie/ICTAdviceSupport, then seek best value for money by sourcing written quotes from a minimum of three suppliers. Information regarding public procurement rules is available at: <http://www.etenders.gov.ie/>.

Freedom of Information

Information provided by schools and colleges to the Department of Education and Skills or to the NCTE may be disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Acts, 1997 and 2003. The Chairperson shall, if requested, provide the Department of Education and Skills or the NCTE with any record relating to any action or service provided under this scheme.

Audits

As outlined above, schools must certify to the Department the equipment which they have purchased using these grants. The Department of Education & Skills will undertake audits and inspections of schools who have been awarded ICT grants under this scheme. In accordance with standard practice, payment of any further grants is conditional on the Department being satisfied that the funding has been applied for the purpose intended, and that the school has followed proper procedures and retained appropriate records for at least seven years.

An FAQ document is attached at [Appendix 4](#). Any queries in relation to this letter should be addressed by email to ictpolicy@education.gov.ie or by telephone to (01) 889 6413. Queries in relation to the use of purchasing Frameworks may be addressed to the NCTE at info@ncte.ie or by telephone to (01) 7008200.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Wall
Principal Officer
ICT Policy Unit

Appendix 1 - Form of Acceptance

ICT INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT SCHEME – 2009

1. I confirm that the Board of Management accepts the Department of Education and Science's offer of grant assistance under the above Scheme to enable my school to upgrade its Information & Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure, and that inclusion of the school in this Scheme has the approval of the Trustees/Patron.
2. I confirm that the Board of Management agrees to use this grant to make purchases (i) as outlined in the letter of offer and (ii) within the Authorised Categories identified in Appendix 2, subject to the conditions outlined. I confirm that the Board accepts that the grant payable by the Department of Education & Science cannot be increased.
3. I confirm that the grant will be used to ensure firstly, that each classroom has a teaching computer with a wireless mouse and wireless keyboard and a fixed digital projector.
4. I confirm that the Board of Management accepts that no additional funding from the Department of Education & Science will be available to cover any additional or ancillary costs which may arise under this scheme.
5. I confirm that the Board of Management also agrees to:
 - a) use the ICT Procurement Frameworks where available;
 - b) where frameworks are not available, obtain tenders on a fixed price basis using a competitive tendering process in compliance with public procurement rules;
 - c) ensure compliance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005;
 - d) safeguard the grant received and ensure that it is only used in accordance with the terms and conditions of this scheme;
 - e) retain all receipts, documentation and any other records relating to the purchase of equipment for a period of at least seven years.

School Name «SCHOOL» _____

Name of Principal _____ (Block Capitals)

Roll No: «RollNumber» _____

Signed: _____ (Chairperson, Board of Management)

Date: _____

Phone no: _____:

Fax no: _____

Email: _____

Signed form of acceptance should be returned by post or fax to:

**The ICT Policy Unit,
Department of Education and Science
Block 1, Floor 3
Marlborough Street
Dublin 1**
Telephone: (01) 889 6413
Fax: (01) 889 2365

APPENDIX 2 - AUTHORISED EQUIPMENT
ICT INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS SCHEME 2009

Authorised Categories

Funding is being provided to schools on the basis, as a priority:

(i) Each classroom must be equipped with a teaching computer with a wireless mouse and keyboard, and a fixed digital projector.

(ii) Only when this baseline is in place, should the funding be used to purchase equipment from the following list:

Classroom computers (schools should work towards an eventual 5:1 pupil to computer ratio)
Speakers
Visualisers
Digital cameras
Digital Video Cameras
Mobile laptop trolley
Laser printer
Mobile multi media station
Server
Scanner
Networking equipment
Interactive Whiteboards (Factors to be considered before purchasing an IWB are available on www.ncte.ie)

School Name: «SCHOOL»
 Roll No: «RollNumber»

APPENDIX 3 – CERTIFICATION FORM

To be completed and signed by the Chairperson of the Board of Management

<i>Equipment</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Unit Cost (ex VAT)</i>	<i>Unit Cost (incl VAT)</i>	<i>Other costs (please include brief description)</i>	<i>Total Cost</i>
Teaching Computer with a Wireless Mouse and Keyboard					
Digital Projector					
Classroom computers (schools should work towards an eventual 5:1 pupil to computer ratio)					
Speakers					
Visualisers					
Digital cameras					
Digital Video Cameras					
Mobile laptop trolley					
Laser Printer					
Mobile multi media station					
Server					
Scanner					
Networking equipment					
Interactive Whiteboards (Factors to be considered before purchasing an IWB are available on www.ncte.ie)					

- I. I confirm that the grant was used in the first instance to purchase teaching computers and digital projectors;
- II. I confirm that only when each classroom was equipped with a teaching computer and digital projector was the other equipment listed above purchased;
- III. I confirm that purchasing frameworks were used, where available;
- IV. I confirm that, where frameworks were not available, other proper public procurement procedures were followed and that the relevant papers are available for inspection.

Signed _____ Chairperson, Board of Management)

Date _____

Appendix 3 - Frequently Asked Questions: ICT Infrastructure Grant 2009 –Primary

This document will be updated as required and can be accessed at www.ncte.ie

1. **Can I submit my Form of Acceptance by email?** *No. For audit trail purposes, signed forms must be sent in by fax or post to the ICT Policy Unit.*
2. **Do I need to provide receipts to the Department of Education & Skills?** *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 must 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/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 all 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 for the standard category products in question.*
 - 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 issues regarding Framework effectiveness with NCTE or the Department*

We would encourage schools to consider working together on a local or regional basis to aggregate their requirements and therefore maximise value for money.

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 the NCTE's website: www.ncte.ie/ictpurchasingframeworks*
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 concurrent quotes from Framework and non-Framework vendors, 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 seeking quotes from non*

framework vendors you must issue a separate RFQ – the Framework RFQ system must not be used for non framework vendors.

- 8. Can I purchase items outside those listed in the letter of offer or on the Authorised Categories list in Appendix 1? 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 a per capita amount. The per capita calculation uses the Department's official record of enrolment figures as at 30th September 2009.**
- 10. My school is getting new accommodation – can I defer spending the grant until this new accommodation is available? Yes.**
- 11. Is the ICT equipment strictly for regular classrooms only? A "classroom" encompasses any key permanent/semi-permanent area in the school where teaching takes place on a regular basis. It can include lab, libraries and other spaces used for learning and teaching.**
- 12. Can I use the grant to buy Software? No.**
- 13. Can a "teaching computer" be either a laptop or a desktop? 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 general classroom (but other configurations may of course be appropriate for specialist teaching spaces).**
- 15. What is a visualiser? A visualiser is a digital camera on the end of an arm (either rigid or flexible) with controls available at the base unit. You can zoom in and out, freeze and capture an image or display it through the digital projector. The camera is mounted 30-50cm directly above a 'display' space or teachers table top onto which documents, diagrams, pages from books or objects can be placed for display purposes. For further information refer to the Visualiser advice sheet at: <http://www.ncte.ie/ICTAdviceSupport/AdviceSheets/>**
- 16. Can I buy Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs) with grant funding instead of Digital Projectors? Yes, however the core requirement remains that the grant funding must be used to kit out all classrooms with the four baseline items before it can be spent on other Authorised Category items (such as IWBs).**
- 17. Can I purchase a Digital Projector with integrated interactive capability? Yes. The Framework for Digital Projectors can be used to purchase this technology. Schools should specify in their quote that they wish to have integrated interactive capability.**
- 18. When do I have to spend the grant? Schools should use the grant to purchase equipment as soon as possible, and are asked to make every effort to purchase equipment before the end of the 2010 calendar year.**
- 19. 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.

- 20. Does the Department maintain a panel of retailers/suppliers?** *No. Where frameworks are not available for products, selection of vendors for competitive tender is a matter for each school. When purchasing ICT equipment for which no ICT Framework exists, schools are advised to refer to NCTE's general purchasing advice and to seek best value for money by seeking quotes from a minimum of three suppliers.*
- 21. The digital projector and teaching computer kit is not appropriate for our school's Special Classes. 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. Schools with Special Classes can get further information in regard to special education needs and ICT at: www.ncse.ie. It should be noted that the equipment purchased for special classes should not replace or supplement the existing Assistive Technology Grants Scheme whereby grants are available to meet the needs of individual pupils.*
- 22. Can schools buy refurbished computers with Department grant funding?** *Refurbished computers are not recommended to schools as generally they are inherently more prone to failure, have shorter lifespans, and have shorter and weaker warranties than the 3 year next business day onsite warranty that is standard on new ICT equipment purchased under ICT frameworks. When buying new computers through the ICT frameworks, schools will get a three-year next-business-day on-site warranty included as standard (no extra charge) and will also have the option to buy extended warranties. However where schools have the technical knowledge required and are in a position to make a fully informed decision regarding the quality of refurbished computers and are aware of the risks, and yet are convinced that they are getting better value for money they may purchase high quality refurbished computers (eg 2GB memory, and up to 3 years warranty) from reliable suppliers.*
- 23. 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, and long-range 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 baseline items before it can be spent on other Authorised Category items.*
- 24. Can the grant be used to cover installation costs associated with purchases of PCs, Notebooks or Digital Projectors?** *Yes.*
- 25. 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. The core requirement remains however that grant funding must be used to kit out all classrooms with the four baseline items before it can be spent on other Authorised Category items (such as IWBs).*
- 26. 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*

- 27. If a school purchases and installs a fixed digital projector can it be used with an Interactive Whiteboard or other projection surface installed at a later date?** *Yes in general, digital projectors purchased under the Frameworks are compatible with IWBs. We would suggest however that to avoid any potential compatibility issues, you should make sure that any IWBs subsequently purchased are compatible with already installed digital projectors. Subject to the above, in general if the surface being projected onto (e.g. ordinary whiteboard, IWB, smooth wall) by a fixed projector changes the projector settings may need to be adjusted to take these changes into account. This is a minor adjustment, to be carried out as per the projector manual, and which should take no more than a few minutes.*
- 28. Is there any additional funding for DEIS schools?** *DEIS schools have each been allocated an extra €850 (50% of the block grant of €1700).*
- 29. Can schools buy ICT equipment for use with different operating systems (for example Microsoft Windows, Apple Mac OS, Linux OS, etc.)?** *Yes. Schools are free to choose ICT equipment which is configured for use with any operating system, or with multiple operating systems. This is a technical choice which should be covered in each school's ICT plan. Public procurement rules must be followed in all cases.*

Contact Details:

For further guidance relating to the **ICT Frameworks specifically**, schools may also contact:

The National Centre for Technology in Education, Dublin City University, Dublin 9

By Phone: (01) 7008200; By Email: info@ncte.ie

Appendix 2 forms must be returned by post or fax to:

ICT Policy Unit, Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough St, Dublin 1

Fax: (01) 889 2365.