



**THE PERFECT PITCH:
PREPARING THE BUSINESS CASE
FOR CAPITAL BIDS**



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Does your school have an up to date maintenance and improvement plan for premises with costed priorities? Are you in a position to make a bid stand out from the rest for capital maintenance funds, developed formula capital, grants, trust funds and other sources of funding?



THE IMPORTANCE OF A MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

The good practice advice contained in the School's Financial Value Standard guidance states that all schools should have an up-to-date maintenance programme as a component part of their asset management planning. Amongst the key benefits of maintaining school premises and assets to a good standard quoted here

(www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance) is that such a strategy reduces the need for urgent replacement of building components, which is highly likely to be more expensive than when implemented under planned maintenance. Building components such as roofs, windows and boilers all have a life expectancy; the better they are maintained, the longer they last. All school buildings essentially need to be:

- Wind and weather tight
- Safe in use
- Compliant
- Accessible and sustainable with minimal environmental impact
- Fit for purpose

A planned maintenance and improvement strategy for premises ensures:

- The school functions efficiently and disruption is avoided or minimised
- The risk of statutory non-compliance and litigation is avoided
- Property asset values are protected
- Environmental impact is minimised
- Value for money is achieved
- Control of expenditure

Preparing a maintenance strategy will involve:

- Assessing and measuring the physical condition of the buildings
- Prioritising need
- Preparing a budget
- Managing the risks associated with having to cope with a lower budget

Where the school is not able to fund the whole cost of work in a single phase, develop a plan that addresses the work in stages, but ensure that it does not compromise the health and safety of the site.

Good practice in premises management advocates that schools should have a 5 or 10 year maintenance and improvement plan in place. School managers can draw down the planning service from the LEA, receive an outline plan via the National School Property Survey 2013 (conducted by the EFA) or procure one directly or as a group/cluster form the Chartered Building Surveyors (www.rics.org.uk). The costed and prioritised plan is prepared following a comprehensive survey of the building structure, fabric and services. It should incorporate all backlog maintenance. This independent technical assessment forms the cornerstone of the business case for bidding for capital and revenue finance and match funding. VAT, statutory and professional fees have to be added to a realistic estimate of costs for repair, maintenance and improvement work. In the absence of funds set aside in a sinking fund, the school has to bid or tender for funding capital replacement of building components, plant and equipment or to improve the premises where there is insufficient teaching space or inadequate dining and catering facilities.

The maintenance and improvement plan will comprise of a list of specific projects.

PREPARING A PROJECT PROPOSAL

There are three key questions you should ask yourself before preparing a project proposal.

- **Is it deliverable?**
 - Is it technically feasible? Will funds be extended by a due date?
- **Is it winnable?**
 - Do you meet the funder's criteria in the first instance and do you have a strong case that elevates your proposal above others?
- **Is it financially viable?**
 - Can you do all that needs to be done with the funds available?

An example of a typical project where you may find yourself bidding for funds could be renewing defective windows. In putting the case together, carry out a detailed survey of windows and obtain quotations on the basis of an outline specification from specialist suppliers. Bids submitted on the basis of competitive tenders can carry even more weight with the EFA. A specifically commissioned independent technical report can assist in building a case. The Chartered Building Surveyors use pricing sources such as the Building Cost Information Service. Ensure that the technical report and photographic records submitted as evidence refer to all costs and benefits in renewing the windows, including enabling work such as stripping associated asbestos materials and access requirements. The more relevant information you provide, the stronger the case.



Many bids fail simply because they are not as compelling as others submitted during the same competitive round- make sure yours stands out! For your bid to be successful:

- **Your evidence of research needs to be complete and compelling;** provide robust evidence and attention to detail, including statistical data and comprehensive photographic records.
- **State objectives clearly and concisely.** Outcomes must be clear and measurable; EFA will consider the urgency and importance of building condition problems being addressed and/or benefits derived from the investment proposed.
- **Demonstrate how a project is aligned with the objectives of your school or college.**

- **Management and financial models should be shown to be robust;** promote your school as capable, credible and visionary, with definite aims and objectives.
- **Plan your requirements well in advance.**
- **Build relationships for the future.**
- **Do not assume anything;** spell everything out clearly and concisely.
- **Provide clear and accurate costs,** make sure the sums add up and include revenue implications.
- **Show that your project is well planned;** consider engaging an architect or surveyor (but remember this will incur risk fees). An option appraisal helps to justify the project and demonstrates a professional approach.
- **Comply strictly with the terms and conditions** set out in the grant (project) funding applications.
- **Describe exactly how a project meets the defined criteria** set out in the call for funding.
- **Demonstrate that an initial assessment of the project risks has been undertaken** and provide a detailed delivery plan or Gantt chart.
- **Provide a sound initial project plan** and display robust project management arrangements.
- **Synchronise financial years** when bidding from different sources and plan the project in stages. A contribution from your annual budget will look good to bid assessors.
- **When appropriate, comment on sustainability issues** when project funding ceases.
- **Demonstrate value for money** or add significant value to the funding requested.
- **Do not obscure your case** by sending excessive/extraneous/irrelevant information and documentation.
- **The processing of an application takes time.** If your project is time-sensitive, be realistic about how soon any funding may be approved and made available.
- **Double check that you have followed all the rules** and instructions in completing an application form.



For a bid to be successful it must fully meet evaluation criteria. The ETA and others set out in the bidding guidance notes, the weighting given to each of the criteria and provide scores in their feedback. Winning bids always demonstrate that the author has read the invitation to tender thoroughly and carefully. Bids will be evaluated against a set of criteria that are described in the invitation to bid or tender. Read the call for bids or tender thoroughly and carefully and check whether your bid meets these criteria. It can help to have an independent colleague carry out a check for you. Examples of evaluation criteria in invitations to tender include:

- Evidence of understanding of the problem/issues
- Feasibility of approach/appropriateness of the methodology
- Feasibility and detail of the work plan/timetable
- Project management
- Risk assessment and management/contingency plans and risk register
- Relevant experience/track record
- Value for money

Your bid may be assessed by a panel of people. They may not have much knowledge of your school or college and will usually have many such proposals to evaluate. Your proposal must not only stand out as a sound project, it must also be clear, concise and provide all of the information requested in the invitation to tender within the maximum number of pages stated. A well-written, brief summary of the project that sets out the information in an easily understood form will be very helpful. A clear presentation of the information in your proposal is therefore, one key to success.



The content, layout and presentation of your application are important. Structure a report to stand out by using clearly defined titles and subtitles with consistent use of capital letters, bold and underlined text. Select a font that is easy to read and makes the best use of space. Information can often be presented in a more helpful and easy to understand manner in tables, graphics or figures rather than in text.

FURTHER READING AND INFORMATION

www.ncvo.org.uk

www.fundraisingskills.co.uk

www.fundraisingschools.co.uk

www.grantfundingskills.co.uk

www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk

www.mypebble.co.uk