

Ministry of Education

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2016: B17

MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Senior Business Officials

FROM: Gabriel F. Sékaly
Assistant Deputy Minister
Financial Policy and Business Division

DATE: **October 12, 2016**

SUBJECT: **Joint-Use Schools Seed Funding Program**

I am pleased to announce details of the ministry's new program to encourage the development of joint-use schools between two or more school boards. This memorandum is further to **Memorandum 2016: B04 - Capital Planning Capacity Program 2015-16 and 2016-17** (dated March 4, 2016), which announced two years of funding allocations to school boards as part of the Capital Planning Capacity (CPC) Program, including \$600,000 to support the development of joint-use schools. Of this, \$200,000 will be used for the new Joint-Use Schools Seed Funding Program.

Program Highlights

1. The Joint-Use Schools Seed Funding Program is available to school boards over the next two years, on a first-come, first-served basis.
2. To apply for this seed funding two or more school boards must jointly submit an application form.
3. Successful applicants will receive \$20,000 in operating funding, per school board, to support the development of a joint-use school project.
4. Participating school boards require trustee-level approval to apply for this funding.
5. The ministry will accept applications any time during the 2016-17 school year.

Program Intent

In recent years, the Ministry has introduced a variety of initiatives to encourage boards to consider the most efficient use of school space and to right size their schools where necessary. In 2013, the ministry released **Memorandum 2013: B18 - Initiative to Encourage Joint Use in Collaboration between School Boards on Capital Projects**, which introduced the priority review of any joint-use capital funding application. Note that this initiative remains active through the ministry's Capital Priorities and School Condition Capital programs. Additionally, the School Board Efficiencies and Modernization (SBEM) initiative was introduced in 2014 to further encourage the efficient use of school space.

To meet the needs of their students, some school boards have established joint-use school arrangements (where two or more school boards operate their schools in one building) to help with pupil accommodations in those locations where there may not be enough pupils of one board to support a stand-alone school. Joint-use school arrangements can provide opportunities for students to gain access to specialized classrooms, gymnasias, playing fields and library facilities to which they may not have had access in a smaller, stand-alone school.

The Ministry of Education is aware that significant board-to-board negotiations and planning are required to support the development of joint-use school projects and that under certain circumstances, some of these tasks may act as a barrier to the establishment of such projects. The ministry is also aware that effective planning leading to the development of formalized agreements can significantly increase the long-term success of joint-use school arrangements. For these reasons, the ministry has established this Joint-Use Schools Seed Funding Program to encourage the creation of more joint-use schools.

We note that a variety of collaborative arrangements established between school boards may be termed "joint-use." For the purposes of this Joint-Use Schools Seed Funding Program, a joint-use school is defined as ***an agreement between two or more school boards operating their respective schools in a single facility in response to a demonstrated need for pupil accommodations.***

Examples of joint-use arrangements may include:

- Two school boards both operating elementary or secondary programs in the same building and sharing the gymnasium, playing fields and/or specialty classrooms such as science and shop labs.
- Two school boards operating in different wings and attached through common areas such as a shared school library or public library.

The ministry encourages school boards to strive to achieve the greatest benefit to students in potential joint-use school arrangements. As such, the ministry urges school boards to consider the most appropriate means to broaden the range of educational spaces available to students through the sharing of standard and specialty rooms in their joint-use school.

Examples of what would **not** be considered a joint-use school, for the purposes of this program, include arrangements where:

- Schools of two distinct school boards are situated on one campus, but are not located in one building.
- Two schools of two distinct school boards are situated in different buildings, but schedule access to the same sport field, sport facility or any other education-related facility (e.g. outdoor learning centres, etc.).

Program Details

Through this program, partnering schools may consider establishing a joint-use school in existing school space, in a new build or by way of an addition. This program is intended to provide partnering school boards exploring the opportunity to undertake joint-use school projects with \$20,000 each, to support costs associated with the project planning and development process.

Ministry Priorities under this Program

While joint-use schools may be established under a variety of circumstances, the ministry will prioritize this seed funding for potential joint-use schools in those locations where one or two stand-alone school facilities are not, or would not be, a highly viable option. As a result, the ministry has identified the following priority areas for this program.

Accommodation need:

- **Isolation:** Projects where at least one of the boards has limited accommodation options due to the isolation of the proposed school from other schools of the board.
- **School size:** At least one elementary or secondary school with total ADE below the provincial average (elementary – approximately 350 or secondary approximately 700)

and, broader facility options for students:

- **Shared space:** Projects which include plans for shared or common spaces within the same facility (e.g., specialty classrooms, gymnasias, libraries)

A range of joint-use school arrangements is possible and will be considered, however, applications to this program will be reviewed according to the above-listed priorities.

Eligible Expenses

Under the Joint-Use Schools Seed Funding Program, school boards can apply funding toward expenses they incur in through the development of a joint-use project. Eligible expenses may include:

- Legal, design, architectural, planning;
- Consulting services (costing, program review, enrolment and demographic projections); and
- Facilitation services.

Please note, this funding is not to be applied for communication materials, promotional events, and community meetings or toward any function that could be classified as an eligible capital cost (e.g. site assessments, site remediation costs, real property appraisals and construction-related assessments, etc.). Expenses incurred prior to receiving approval for this funding are also ineligible.

Application Process

Two or more school boards must jointly apply for funding under this program. The application template and associated instructions are provided as an attachment in Appendix A.

To be eligible for consideration, the ministry requires evidence of trustee-level approval of this application for the Joint-Use Seed Funding Program. Please note, this approval is to acknowledge that an application for this Joint-Use Seed Funding Program with the identified partner school board will be submitted to the Ministry of Education, and that if successful, steps will be taken to further develop the joint-use school project.

The ministry will accept applications any time throughout the year. This funding will be available to school boards over the next two years, on a first-come, first-served basis. Successful applicants (partnering boards) will be awarded \$20,000 each, independent of the size of the schools involved or the relative number of students from each board that may be included in the proposal.

The ministry will decline those applications which do not meet the stipulated eligibility requirements and which do not have a clear business case for the student accommodation need.

Please note that being declined for funding under the Joint-Use Seed Funding Program should not prevent partnering school boards from continuing to pursue their joint-use school proposals or from applying for funding under the ministry's capital funding programs (if required).

The ministry will provide a written acknowledgement when applications are received. Along with the final decision notice, comments about the application and funding details will be provided.

Other Considerations

Funding approvals under the Joint-Use Seed Funding program do not guarantee any related approvals under the ministry's current capital funding programs: Capital Priorities Program (CPP) / School Consolidation Capital (SCC).

While this program is intended to support the creation of more joint-use schools across Ontario, school boards that are awarded funding under this program may also conclude that they are unable to develop a sustainable joint-use school arrangement. Detailed information and the rationale behind this decision not to pursue a joint-use school arrangement will be required by the Ministry of Education.

Reporting and Accountability

The ministry intends to maintain streamlined reporting requirements for this seed funding program, similar to the rest of the CPC program funding. Awarded funds will be added to school boards' School Board Governance and Administration Grant and boards will be required to report Joint-Use Seed Funding Program expenditures as part of their Financial Statements in the applicable school year.

Once the awarded funds are fully expensed, successful applicants will also be required to provide the ministry with a formal statement of outcomes and rationale associated with the use of the funds (a template will be provided at that time). This will help inform the ministry on future support for joint use initiatives.

Ministry Contact

Ministry staff are available to review and discuss school boards' joint-use school proposals or any associated issues, at any point before, during or after applying for this Joint-Use Seed Funding Program. If you have questions or require additional information regarding this program, please contact Sabina Bredin, Senior Policy Analyst, at (416) 325-2024 or sabina.bredin@ontario.ca.

Original signed by:

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cc. Managers of Planning

Appendix A - Joint-Use Schools Seed Funding Program Application Template