

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

GUIDELINES and CRITERIA

for a Hub School Model to Guide the Use of School Space

Purpose

This document contains criteria and guidelines for school boards and communities in preparing and evaluating proposals for use of available space in public school buildings.

The main function of public school buildings is to deliver the public school program, however the department supports the use of available space in public school buildings in a way that is appropriate, transparent, operationally and financially viable, sustainable, and most importantly, supportive of student learning and an appropriate school climate.

It is expected that this document will be used when opportunities for use of available space in public school buildings are identified through such processes as long-range planning and family of schools reviews undertaken by school boards.

The Hub School Model

The term *Hub School* is used in a variety of ways across the province and in jurisdictions outside Nova Scotia. For the purposes of these guidelines and criteria when the term Hub School is used it means:

The reasonable and sustainable use of public school space that does not impede the delivery of the public school program, is financially and operationally viable, and is supported through a strong business case from the community.

The primary purpose of a public school building is to provide the public school program to students. Any proposal for use of available space in a public school building must align with this purpose and ensure that the public school program will continue to be offered in a safe and secure learning environment. Within that context, any proposal brought forward by an organization, business or individual must demonstrate how it can support the following:

- An environment that is in the best interests of students;
- An environment that does not negatively impact student learning and engagement;
- A strong relationship between schools boards and, as applicable, community partners, business partners, municipalities, and the public;
- Improved service delivery for families and communities; and
- Reasonable and appropriate use of public infrastructure through increased flexibility, accessibility and utilization.

Any proposal for use of available space in a public school must also clearly demonstrate how it will:

- Result in no increase to capital or operational costs for the school board or the province, as compared to the board's plans regarding that school facility;
- Allow school boards to achieve cost savings; and
- Not create additional, unreasonable management responsibilities for the school board.

There may be cases where a board has determined that a potential school closure would make available resources (e.g. financial, human resources) that will better allow it to meet the educational needs of students across the board as a whole (not limited to that one school). A proposal for use of the available space in the public school must demonstrate how the proposed use of the space in the public school building will permit the board to meet the educational needs of students across the board as a whole.

School boards will ensure that use of available space in a public school is consistent with supporting student learning and is aligned with the culture and climate of the school and the school community. Proposals for use of available space in a public school that would not be acceptable include, but are not limited to, those that:

- infringe on the delivery of the public school program and services to students
- provide competing education services or services that target public school students
- infringe unduly on the economic viability of local business enterprise
- could bring the school reputation into disrepute
- are likely to cause damage or risk to students, staff, school buildings or property
- create excessive noise or pose a nuisance to nearby residents
- are illegal.

Eligible Partners/Groups

The success of a hub school model requires strong community leadership and a willingness by all partners to work toward an effective model for students, families, and the community. Although not intended to be a comprehensive list, the following is an initial list of potential partners, groups (for-profit and not-for-profit), businesses, or individuals from which a proposal for use of available school space could be generally acceptable:

- Federal, provincial or municipal government departments and agencies
- Wrap-around education services (e.g. Early Years, Adult Learning, EAL)
- Community organizations
- Organizations supporting culture and the arts

- Local businesses providing services to families, students and children
- Sport and recreation providers
- Other groups as determined by the school board

Evaluation Criteria for a Hub School Proposal

This section outlines the criteria upon which proposals will be evaluated by a school board. The primary responsibility of school boards is to deliver the public school program in a safe and secure learning environment. School boards should only consider proposals submitted to them if the proposal meets the minimum requirements as outlined in this document.

The proposal must be complete before it is submitted to the school board. Further, if more than one group, business or individual is proposing use of available space in the school building, those proposals should be coordinated such that the proposal outlines a comprehensive approach with one primary applicant. It is not the responsibility of the school board to create proposals or attempt to integrate individual proposals into a comprehensive whole regarding alternate use of available space in a school building. A municipality or some other official body may serve as a coordinating body where more than one group, business or individual is proposing uses of the available school space.

General Eligibility Criteria

School boards will evaluate and determine if a proposal for use of available school space in a public school is suitable. In addition to the primary consideration of value to support student learning, the following criteria will be applied to guide the decision to accept or reject the proposal:

- The health and safety of students and staff is not at risk.
- The proposal will not compromise the school's ability to deliver the public school program.
- The proposal is appropriate for the school setting and respects the mission and vision of the school board.
- The proposal aligns with the policies and long-range planning of the school board.
- The proposal does not interfere with the school board's strategy for student achievement.

All proposed uses of available space in a public school building must be in accordance with the Education Act and Regulations, ministerial and school board policies, any other relevant legislation, and relevant processes and policies respecting the construction and management of school facilities.

Financial Viability and Sustainability Criteria

Proposals must demonstrate financial viability, and the ability of the group/business/individual submitting the proposal to meet any related financial obligations in a sustainable way over the proposed term of use.

The proposal must clearly demonstrate:

- The source of funding for the proposal;
- Evidence that the funding for the proposal has been secured or will be secured prior to any finalized agreement; and
- Evidence of the financial viability and sustainability of the proposal, including sufficient cash flow to support the operation of the alternate use.

Boards are not expected to incur additional operating or capital costs to support the proposed use of available space in the school building beyond the costs required to deliver the public school program. School boards may use some discretion in supporting proposals based on their strategies and budgets to support student achievement. Costs will be recovered by school boards from the applicants to cover all incremental costs to the board for both capital and operating expenditures. This may include costs such as administrative costs, legal costs, construction/engineering costs, and property taxes (if applicable).

Additional costs required for things such as renovations to protect student safety (arising due to the proposal), provision of appropriate washrooms and other amenities, entrance and egress requirements, and any other changes required to make the space suitable for the proposed use shall be borne by the group, business, or individual submitting the proposal.

Building Use Criteria

Proposals must outline anticipated facility requirements. This would include things such as the location, the size and type of space required, methods of access to the school building (entrance and egress), and required facility amenities.

Facility requirements as outlined in the proposal will be considered based on the following criteria:

- How student and school staff safety will be maintained, including confirmation of criminal reference and child abuse registry checks for any employee or volunteer associated with the alternate use
- Condition of the facility
- Configuration of space
- Separation of space between educational and non-educational uses of the facility

- Zoning and site use restrictions
- Anticipated vehicle and pedestrian traffic, including required parking
- Accessibility

Proposals must outline any anticipated modifications required to the school building in order to implement the proposed use. Proposals must also include a costing of these modifications based on estimates that the school board would normally apply based on past practice. School boards and those developing the proposal should work together to reach agreement on what a reasonable cost estimate would be for anticipated modifications for the purposes of proposal development, ensuring adherence to current codes and standards for school facilities. School boards and the province will continue to determine design and construction standards for modifications to public school buildings. School board assessments of costs will prevail in the case of disagreement.

Roles and Responsibilities

School Boards

School boards have authority to make a variety of decisions regarding the use of school facilities. These Guidelines and Criteria are intended to support boards in considering proposals for use of available space in public school buildings, within the authority provided to them under the Education Act and applicable regulations.

In following these Criteria and Guidelines, school boards are required to evaluate proposals received to ensure they are aligned with legislation and regulations governing the operations of school boards and public school buildings, as well as any other school board policies or processes related to school facilities. Furthermore, school boards must review and evaluate proposals to ensure that they complement (or enhance) school culture and climate and are cohesive with the Board's strategic plan and business plan.

School boards will provide clarity on how they are implementing these Guidelines and Criteria, including the administrative procedures, processes, timelines for applications, and contact information, on board websites.

Proposal Applicant

An applicant may be:

- A group, business, public service, or individual; or
- A coordinating body officially representing group(s), businesses, public service(s) or individual(s)

In either case, the applicant may only proceed with a proposal where they believe they meet all of the eligibility requirements outlined in this document.

It is the responsibility of communities, in collaboration or consultation with their local municipality as appropriate, to fully develop their proposals within the timelines provided, before advancing them to the school board for consideration.

Minimum Proposal Requirements

An applicant wishing to propose a Hub model for available space in a public school building must submit a detailed proposal to the school board that explicitly references and demonstrates conformity with these Guidelines and Criteria. Applicants must provide all supporting materials necessary to meet this requirement, such as business plans and/or proof of all financial and funding considerations (e.g. line of credit at bank, grants).

A comprehensive proposal would include, at a minimum, the following elements:

- an executive summary
- a background section providing context and the rationale for the application, as well as an overview of the applicant (e.g. group, business, individual)
- a project description: how will the space be used, by whom and for what purpose or activity, for how long, and during what hours
- a cost/benefit analysis – quantitative (financial cost and benefit) and qualitative (non-financial benefits and cost)
- a financial plan, with evidence of financial viability and sustainability over the term of the agreement
- an analysis of financial risks
- an analysis of non-financial risks (e.g. health and safety, security)
- an analysis of impacts on stakeholders (including the school and the school community)
- an acknowledgement that the proposed use would occur with the appropriate insurance requirements, as determined by the board (i.e. School Insurance Program)
- an implementation strategy
- an operating model

Note that the cost/benefit analysis referenced above will assist the board in understanding the applicant's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, and why the applicant deemed this approach to be the most appropriate. It will also assist the school board in their assessment as to why this proposal is a sound investment, and will support its understanding of the range of alternative approaches the applicant considered.

Timelines

School boards must provide adequate time for communities to prepare a proposal for submission to a school board and for the board to review the proposal. In general, the following timeframes would be appropriate:

- Development of comprehensive and complete proposal by group/business/individual and presentation at a public board meeting – At least 8 months
- School Board’s consideration of the proposal – At least 2 months

Boards may choose to extend these timeframes depending on the associated processes. Boards will identify if there is a potential for space to become available. This notification from the board will serve to initiate the timeframes noted above.

Individuals or groups who are preparing a proposal should notify the school board that a proposal is under development. A school board may request periodic updates from a proposal applicant prior to receiving the formal proposal.

Agreement for Building Use

Once a proposal has been accepted by the school board, the school board will be responsible for ensuring that the approved proposal is outlined in an appropriate agreement that:

- Is in accordance with the provisions contained in the Education Act and Regulations
- Protects the rights and responsibilities of the school board
- Provides clear terms and conditions to the party or parties entering into the agreement regarding their rights and responsibilities as tenants, including financial obligations (rents, construction, etc.)
- Outlines maintenance standards and responsibilities for the duration of the agreement
- Ensure the applicability of school board policies and procedures (e.g. criminal records checks, child abuse registry checks, conflict of interest) and other relevant matters (e.g. insurance requirements)
- Outlines provisions for termination of the agreement by either party
- Includes any other terms and conditions which are necessary to the fulfilment of the proposal.

Depending on the proposed relationship and use of the facility school boards must ensure that any appropriate approvals of the Minister or any other party as required by legislation, regulations, or policies are acquired before entering into an agreement.