



Your Everything Building Consultants

Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) Guide

2025

FAQs & Application Checklist

What is the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF)

For academies not in large trusts, the annual Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) is the most important capital funding round. It is also one of the most competitive funding streams for education and one of the most difficult to bid for. The amount and level of detail required for CIF bid applications can be daunting for schools and colleges. Typically, only around 25% of schools received funding for their projects, so it's crucial to ensure your bid is ticking all the right boxes.

Our dedicated bid writing team at OMNIA have put together this CIF Guide and FAQs to help you secure the funding you need.

What are the timescales?

CIF dates are different every year, but typically, the CIF guidance is published, and the application window opens in October every year. The submission deadline is mid-December. Outcomes are announced in Spring the following year, typically May/June. There is then a period for appeals for unsuccessful bids.

It is never too early to start preparing. From our experience, schools should look to prepare well in advance for a strong, evidence-based bid.

Who can bid for CIF? What are the eligibility criteria?

The Condition Improvement Fund is for single academies and academies in small trusts that are not eligible for the School Condition Allocation.

What type of projects does CIF cover?

Most CIF funding is directed towards resolving health & safety and compliance non-conformities or urgent condition issues that threaten to close some or all of a schools' facilities. The most successful CIF project types are:

1. Fire Safety
2. Heating/Boiler Systems
3. Roofs
4. Safeguarding
5. Compliance, i.e. Asbestos
6. Electrical Safety
7. Windows
8. Ware Safety/Compliance

Applications can be made under three different project categories:

1. **Condition** – dealing with building condition, or compliance requirements.
2. **Condition with Expansion** – as above but incorporating an element of increased space provision.
3. **Expansion** – dealing with overcrowding against Net Capacity Assessments.

To learn more about these project categories and their assessment criteria, you can read the [DfE's Condition Improvement Fund Information for Applicants](#).

What should we be doing next?

It is never too early to start preparing. From our experience, schools should look to prepare well in advance for a strong, evidence-based bid.

Assess your site to identify and prioritise your bid as soon as possible.

Register on the DfE application portal and start collecting evidence for your application. Further guidance is given below, but this could include commissioning an independent condition survey or report.

Set aside time to write your bid or select a consultant partner to assist you.

How should we select what to bid for?

Your bid should address an issue that fits into the “highest” or “high” categories within the DfE guidance document (see *What types of projects does CIF cover?*). Any applications outside of these categories are unlikely to be funded.

At OMNIA, we can discuss your known issues, independently assess your estate and help you to identify the best projects to bid for. Our experience puts us in the best position to offer tailored advice based on what we see during a site visit. We can guide you through the application process and create the best strategy.

What makes a bid successful?

The Condition Improvement Fund is highly competitive. Only the most urgent and well-evidenced applications will receive funding.

It is critical to demonstrate the need for your project, whether it’s a condition, a condition with expansion or an expansion project. CIF is highly competitive, and thousands of other schools, colleges and academies will also be bidding for funding. Be realistic and objective and only bid for works that are urgent and of high priority.

For a successful CIF bid, you will also need to undertake independent surveys. Building condition surveys and energy efficient surveys, for instance, we will help you to determine which projects are most essential for your estate. A specialist survey for the specific work you are applying for can help to demonstrate the need for the funding as well as the value for money.

Alongside a well-evidenced bid, you must provide thorough technical due diligence to demonstrate the deliverability and value for money of your proposed project.

What technical information is required?

When completing an application, you need to ensure that you meet all the core requirements of the bid process. Be sure to read the applicant guidance and criteria fully, so you aren’t missing anything crucial to the success of your bid.

To tick all of the boxes of a good application, it’s essential to satisfy the assessors that your project is well-developed and low risk. Evidence of cost planning, value for money, risk management and deliverability will enhance your bid. You should also present different options, including a “do nothing” options, to further support your need for funding.

Barker's team of surveyors and bid writers can help you prepare and submit the technical due diligence required.

What if our issue cannot wait for the next CIF round?

If your building compliance or condition issue is so urgent that you cannot wait for the next CIF round, you may be able to apply to the [DfE's Urgent Capital Support Programme](#).

What help is available to prepare our CIF bid?

The DfE issues detailed guidance every year to help organisations prepare their CIF bids. It is essential that you read and understand this guidance in full before submitting your application or enlisting specialist professional support.

It's often beneficial to enlist the help of experienced bid writers, like the OMNIA team, to help you ensure you have everything you need for your funding application. At OMNIA, we can put together the applications for CIF bids for you, so you can concentrate on other important tasks. We will provide your application with the attention it needs to ensure it follows the guidelines set out by the DfE and that nothing important is being overlooked.

CIF Bid Checklist

To assist you with your application, we have prepared a checklist for condition bids to make sure you are covering the core components. This checklist isn't exhaustive, but it will help you stay on track. Expansion bids are more complex and require specific evidence. There is also a 'checklist' within the DfE's CIF Information for Applicants document, in addition to a list of documents you need to upload for your application.

General	
The necessary people have access to the CIF portal	
The application and supporting documents relate to the correct/same school	
The supporting documents comply with size and format requirements	
The information submitted is accurate, and the portal and supporting documents match	
The bid meets eligibility criteria in the CIF guidance documents	
The bid has formal approval to be submitted from the appropriate person in the organisation	
Project Outputs	
Clear statement of need and evidence or urgency for the project	
Appropriate, relevant and qualified third-party evidence for the project needs (i.e. condition survey)	
Clear, annotated photographic evidence for the project needs	
Condition Data Collection 2 (CDC2) report showing the needs	
Statements/evidence from relevant stakeholders/authorities	

Statement covering the impact on school operations and the financial impact of the issue	
Floor plans/site plans showing the location of the issue	
Feasibility study and options appraisal justifying the chosen solutions with budget costs	
Evidence of prioritisation and alignment with the school estates strategy	
Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS) Self-Assessment	
Reference of DfE Design Standards and Output Specifications	
Evidence of environmental sustainability considerations	
Cost Criteria	
Project cost summary, including project costs, professional fees and school contribution	
Financial statements	
Detailed specification of proposed works	
Project costs (ideally competitively tendered) and procurement strategy	
Tender report	
Cost benchmarking and value for money statement	
Energy savings calculations (where relevant)	
Project Planning	
Project Execution Plan or delivery/method statement	
Impact mitigation and safeguarding statement	
Overall project programme including bidding, procurement and delivery	
Detailed construction programme	
Risk assessment/risk register	

How OMNIA can help

If you would like assistance preparing your CIF bid, we can guide you through the whole process and submit carefully designed bids that target all the required DfE guidelines. Our funding experts go above and beyond to ensure the best possible outcomes for schools, colleges and academies in need of financial support. Not to mention, we work mostly on a 'no win no fee' basis, offering a low-risk solution to schools that need assistance.

Contact us on **07355 602070** or enquiries@omniaconsult.co.uk to book a FREE consultation.