



Australian Government
Department of Education

Community Support Programme Guidelines for Budget Based Funded Services

Preface

The Australian Government Department of Education (the department) has developed this document to provide information relating to the Budget Based Funded Programme (the programme). The Guidelines are in three parts:

- **Part A: Information for Funding Recipients** form the basis for the business relationship between the department and funding recipients, and provide an overview of the programme as well as specific information on activities, performance management and reporting requirements.
- **Part B: Information for Applicants** is the key starting point for parties considering whether to participate in the programme and provides information on the application, assessment, selection and other requirements. The application form used to apply for funding during a selection process will be made available on the department's website when grant opportunities are advertised in accordance with Part B of the guidelines.
- **Part C: Information for Funding Recipients and Applicants** contains information that is relevant to both Parts A and B of the Guidelines.

Parts A, B and C are collectively referred to in this document as the 'Guidelines' where appropriate, and should be read in conjunction with the standard funding agreement terms and conditions and associated Activity Schedule. The funding agreement sets out the eligibility requirements, rights and obligations of the department and the funding recipient.

The department reserves the right to amend the Guidelines from time to time by whatever means it may determine in its absolute discretion, and will provide applicants and funding recipients with reasonable notice of these amendments.

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Part A
Information
for Funding Recipients

1. Programme overview and objective

The programme is part of the Government's agenda for child care and early learning that focuses on providing all Australian families with flexible, affordable and accessible child care and early learning services. Child care and early learning services should be responsive to the needs of today's families, who do not always work the traditional nine-to-five day, five day week to ensure that all Australian children are fully prepared for learning and life.

Funding of the programme

Funding is available to the programme under the Community Support Programme (CSP). The CSP is part of the broader Child Care Services Support Programme and provides a range of payments directly to child care and early learning funding recipients with the aim of improving access¹, especially in areas where the market or services might otherwise be unviable².

Under the programme, funding is provided to support the delivery of a range of quality child care and early learning and school aged care services in a limited number of approved locations where the market would otherwise fail to deliver services to meet the needs of children and families.

The programme provides a contribution to the operational costs of approximately 340 child care and early learning and school age care services in approved locations. These services are predominantly located in regional and remote areas and Indigenous communities where the market or services would otherwise be unviable.

¹ "Access", means that children, parents or carers have the right, the means and the opportunity to participate in and benefit from attending child care and early learning programmes or services that support participation in work, study or training, and meet the social, educational and developmental needs of the children.

² "Unviable", for the purposes of these Guidelines, means that a child care and early learning funding recipient does not have access to sufficient financial revenue and the capacity to operate a service in accordance with all relevant legislative and funding requirements, on a sustainable basis.

2. Programme activities

Service Types

Several types of child care and early learning services are funded under the programme. These include:

Crèches

Crèches provide child care and early learning sessions for less than full-time type hours. This may include occasional care and other services provided for less than full-time hours.

Flexible/Innovative Services

Flexible services provide child care and early learning sessions for full-time type hours (a minimum of five hours per day for four days per week). This may include long day care, overnight care and other services provided for full-time hours or longer.

Outside School Hours Care

Outside School Hours Care services provide After School Care, Before School Care and/or Vacation Care services for primary school-aged children. In addition to providing the Outside School Hours Care service, enrichment programmes such as cultural activities, homework centres, nutrition services or sporting activities may be provided.

Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services

Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) deliver long day care for children not yet attending formal schooling **and** at least one other form of child care and early learning session or activity. This activity may include outside school hours care, playgroups, nutrition programmes or parenting programmes.

Mobile Services

Mobile services are where child care and early learning staff travel to visit areas to provide child care and early learning sessions and support. This may include vacation care, playgroups, on-farm care, parenting support, toy libraries and parent resource libraries.

Mobile services may also provide occasional or regular long day care sessions in community venues where state or territory laws permit.

3. Responsibilities

This section sets out the responsibilities of the department and funding recipients.

Department's responsibilities

The department is committed to working in partnership with funding recipients directly and through representative bodies. The department's responsibilities under the programme include:

- identifying current and future policy issues and developing policy
- administering activities funded under the programme
- working towards:
 - improved information sharing, including the quality and quantity of data
 - reduced red tape and streamlined processes
 - simplified and improved consistency of financial reporting
- working with funding recipients to better measure programme and service effectiveness
- reviewing and updating programme guidelines and associated documentation as needed
- complying with relevant state, territory and Commonwealth legislation and regulations
- complying with funding agreements
- complying with Part A of the Guidelines
- complying with Part B of the Guidelines
- publishing details of grants on the department's website within 14 days
- reporting on the programme by reference to each state and territory, and at a national level
- ensuring a nationally consistent approach to the programme is maintained.

Funding recipients' responsibilities

Funding recipients are responsible for providing services that are effective, efficient and appropriate to the needs of the families and communities who use them. Funding recipients' responsibilities include:

- complying with relevant state, territory and Commonwealth legislation and regulations
- complying with funding agreements
- complying with Part A of the Guidelines
- complying with Part B of the Guidelines
- cooperating with the department
- cooperating with Inclusion Support Agencies, Professional Support Coordinators or Indigenous Professional Support Units, or other relevant agencies.

4. Risk management

The department is committed to a comprehensive and systematic approach to effectively manage potential risk arising under the programme, and funding recipients are expected to efficiently and effectively manage risks in the course of their normal operations.

The department's risk management practices and decisions are made in accordance with the department's Risk Management Policy. The Risk Management Policy provides that risks must be identified, monitored, treated and, if necessary, additional treatments applied to reduce the risk level further.

Funding recipients are subject to risk management assessments in accordance with the department's Risk Management Policy prior to the negotiation of funding agreements. Funding Agreements are then managed according to their level of risk.

The following categories of risk are assessed in accordance with the Risk Management Policy:

- Risk of misuse of funds
- Risk of loss of service delivery
- Risk of ineffective or poor quality service delivery
- Risk of non-compliance with legal, contractual and programme requirements
- Risk of reduced outcomes due to ineffective relationships.

Risks that threaten continued service delivery or indicate fraud or relate to the wellbeing of children attending the service are managed in cooperation with the funding recipient and in accordance with the provisions of the Funding Agreement.

Funding recipients may also be subject to a financial viability assessment in accordance with the department's Financial Viability Policy. Financial Viability Assessments form part of the department's risk mitigation strategy. The Financial Viability Assessment process covers specific issues in regards to the risk associated with the engagement of specific funding recipients.

Financial viability assessments can include:

- verification that entities have a legal existence
- verification of the correct legal names of entities for contracting purposes
- verification of relevant persons in those entities to establish that contract signatories are correct
- verification to establish whether relevant persons have any adverse business history (e.g. current or past bankruptcy)
- possible identification of conflict of interest issues
- assessment of the financial health of an entity.

A financial viability assessment (incorporating a financial assessment and credentials checks) must be conducted on any of the department's expenditure of public monies over \$400,000 (GST inclusive) unless the programme delegate provides an exemption from either a financial assessment or credentials check, or both, giving full consideration to the relevant risk management plan.

5. BBF Performance Framework, research and evaluation, financial reporting and accountability

BBF Performance Framework

The purpose of the BBF Performance Framework (the BBF Framework) is to define a consistent approach for monitoring and reporting performance across the programme, drawing on a common set of high-level outcomes and key performance indicators (KPIs).

A key goal of the BBF Framework is to set clear performance expectations, assess whether required levels of performance have been met under funding agreements and offer feedback to services on their performance. Data collection will be in line with, but not confined to, the BBF Framework.

Each BBF service will be required to work towards or meet the KPIs specified in its Funding Agreement. The KPIs focus on the following outcomes:

- **Quality:** to provide quality child care, early learning and school age care services that promote positive learning and development outcomes for children.
- **Access:** to ensure availability of and access to child care and early learning services in approved locations.
- **Financial Management:** to build the management capability of child care and early learning services through best practice financial management.

The department will determine whether a funding recipient is achieving the KPIs required under the BBF Framework and Funding Agreement by reference to the information provided by the service in the milestone reports required under the funding agreement. The milestone reports require funding recipients to provide details about how their BBF service/s is performing against the seven KPIs that apply to services.

The department will determine that a funding recipient has achieved the KPIs if the milestone reports show that the service is working towards or has met the KPIs required under the Funding Agreement.

If the milestone reports show that the funding recipient is not working towards or has not met the KPIs required under the Funding Agreement, the department will work with the funding recipient to remedy its breach of the Funding Agreement in accordance with the breach processes specified in the Funding Agreement. The department will conduct the breach process in the spirit of supporting the funding recipient to meet the KPIs and by providing additional support, where appropriate and available.

The relationship between the three outcomes and the KPIs and further information on the BBF Framework is shown in the Table below.

BBF PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

OUTCOME	OUTPUT	PROGRAMME KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SERVICE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	DATA COLLECTION METHOD
Quality				
To provide quality child care, early learning and school age care services that promote positive learning and development outcomes for children.	Develop and implement continuous quality improvement practices	% of services that engage in quality improvement activities % of services that have completed a Quality Improvement Plan for BBF services	Service engages in quality improvement activities Service has developed and implemented a Quality Improvement Plan for BBF service	Milestone report
	Support children's learning and development through educational programming and practice	% of services that use an approved learning framework when developing the educational programme for children	Service uses an approved learning framework when developing the educational programme	Milestone report
	Recruit qualified staff	% of services with educators with an early childhood or education related Certificate III or higher qualification	Service employs educators with an early childhood or education related Certificate III or higher qualification	Milestone report
Access				
To ensure availability of and access to child care and early learning services in approved locations.	Deliver services in approved locations	% of services being delivered in locations where there are no child care services approved for CCB purposes	None	Programme data
	Provide families with access to services	Total number of children attending services	Number of children attending the service	Milestone report
	Provide families with flexible support	% of services that provide flexible support to meet the needs of families in the community and so that children can access the service	None	Milestone report
Financial Management				
To build the financial management capability of child care and early learning services through best practice.	Manage programme expenditure efficiently	% of services that report a balanced budget	Service balances its income and expenditure in its budget	Milestone report
	Establish policies to contribute to the cost of operating a BBF service	% of services that charge attendance fees	Service charges an attendance fee, if applicable in accordance with the fee setting and collection policy for the service	Milestone report

Research and evaluation

In addition to the BBF Performance Framework, the department periodically collects data or undertakes or commissions evaluation reviews to contribute to programme and policy development or to ensure that the programme is achieving its objectives. Where the department plans to collect data and this will require cooperation of funding recipients, it will notify funding recipients of:

- the purpose of the evaluation review or data collection
- who is conducting the evaluation review or collecting the data
- the time period in which data is to be collected and the reporting mechanism
- where applicable, the level of involvement required from funding recipients
- other information relevant to the collection of data.

Financial reporting and accountability

The programme requires funding recipients to account for funding as set out in their funding agreements.

In administering the programme, the department will comply with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* on and from 1 July 2014 to, among other things, ensure the proper use (efficient, effective, economical and ethical use) of funding under the programme.

Effective management of the programme is achieved through consistent monitoring and management of funding agreements and building effective relationships with funding recipients.

6. Programme funding

Programme funding

The programme is a discretionary grant programme. The allocation of funding for the programme is capped and, as such, applications for the establishment of additional services in new locations cannot be considered unless otherwise approved by the programme delegate in exceptional circumstances.

Funding opportunities will be advertised in accordance with *Part B: Community Support Programme Information for Applicants Budget Based Funded Services*.

The programme delegate is the Branch Manager in the Department of Education responsible for the BBF programme.

Funding is provided as a contribution to assist with the costs of operating BBF services in approved locations. Funding is not intended to cover the full cost of providing services, or to be at the exclusion of other sources of funding, including parental contributions.

Eligibility

To be considered eligible for funding (and to continue to be eligible for funding) under the programme, refer to the list of eligibility requirements contained in the funding agreement.

Review of eligibility for funding

When funding agreements are due to expire, the department may make funding offers (subject to the BBF funding allocation and in accordance with requirements contained in the Commonwealth Grants Guidelines) to eligible funding recipients around late May or June for commencement on 1 July.

Funding recipients should note that their level of compliance with their previous funding agreement will also be considered when making funding offers. The department will advise funding recipients if there is any change to these arrangements.

Other sources of income

Funding recipients are encouraged to obtain operational funding from other sources, such as fees from families and grants from other government or non-government organisations.

Funding recipients under the BBF programme are **not** eligible to receive other types of payments available under the Community Support Programme for child care services.

Child Care Payments

Child Care Benefit (CCB) and Child Care Rebate (CCR) are payments made by the Australian Government to families to assist with the cost of accessing child care and early childhood learning. CCB is a means-tested payment to assist families in need of additional financial assistance and CCR is a non means-tested payment to eligible families. To receive these payments families must use services approved for the purposes of CCB under the family assistance law.

Services funded under the BBF programme must have prior authorisation from the programme delegate to receive CCB and CCR on behalf of families while also being funded under the BBF programme.

BBF services interested in making the transition to become a CCB approved service are encouraged to discuss this with their funding agreement manager.

Services that are CCB approved must meet certain requirements, including having a license to operate and being open for certain hours. The department will, where appropriate, support services to make a transition to CCB. This could mean that, for a limited period, services may be able to receive some BBF programme funding as well as CCB and CCR. Other support may be tailored to the readiness of the service to become, and continue to be, CCB approved, including operating under the Child Care Management System and operating in accordance with all applicable legislative requirements. The programme delegate will periodically review services simultaneously receiving CCB and CCR and funding under the BBF programme.

Further general information about the requirements applicable to CCB approved services can be found in the [Child Care Service Handbook](#).

The National Quality Framework

Most CCB approved services are covered under the National Quality Framework (NQF). The NQF aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in early childhood education and care services and school age care. Further information about the National Quality Framework can be found at the [ACECQA](#) website.

Fees

Funding recipients are required to establish and implement a fee setting and collection policy and must indicate this in their Compliance and Operations Report. This policy must ensure that those families with the capacity to pay do so. While there is no mandatory fee schedule, services are required to collect fees where possible in order to support their operations.

Any fees received from families for the provision of the funded service is considered funding under the funding agreement and must be treated in the same way as money received under the funding agreement.

Interest

Funding recipients are required to treat interest earned from the investment of BBF programme funds in the same way as money received under the funding agreement.

Interest must be included as anticipated or actual income in the Compliance and Operations Report.

If the funding recipient has entered into a funding agreement with only one Activity Schedule, its interest must be spent only on the BBF service(s) listed in the Activity Schedule.

If the funding recipient has entered into a funding agreement with more than one Activity Schedule, the funding recipient can choose to spend the interest on any of the services listed in the Activity Schedules based on need. This must be reflected in the Compliance and Operations Report which must be submitted by funding recipients in respect of each of the services listed in the Activity Schedules.

Purposes for which funding can be spent

BBF funding can only be spent in accordance with the funding agreement.

Change in service type

From time to time circumstances arise that may warrant changes to the operations of a service, and a change in service type may need to be considered. The department acknowledges that communities and needs may change over time and it is important that the service type specified in the funding agreement with the department accurately reflect the types of services that are provided under the programme.

Funding recipients may request that their service type be changed or the department may initiate this process. The department may consider a range of factors to determine whether a change in service type is required. The following factors may be considered:

- the continuing need for the BBF service in that location
- whether the service type is the most appropriate option for the approved location
- the degree and impact of market failure
- the number of vulnerable children in the relevant age group attending the service
- demand for the service, including current and projected utilisation of the service
- the availability of other suitable child care and early learning services
- the availability of premises from which the service can operate
- the availability of interested, eligible organisations to operate a service
- strategies to improve engagement with the community

- the views of the community.

Where the programme delegate determines that the service type should be changed, the funding recipient will be advised in writing.

Cessation of a service

From time to time, circumstances arise that may result in the closure of a BBF service.

When a service closes, the department may consider a range of factors to determine whether a replacement service is required in the approved location. The following factors may be considered:

- the continuing need for the BBF service
- whether the service type is the most appropriate option for the approved location
- the degree and impact of market failure
- the number of vulnerable children in the relevant age group attending the service
- demand for the service, including current and projected utilisation of the service
- the availability of other suitable child care and early learning services
- the availability of premises from which the service can operate
- the availability of interested, eligible organisations to operate a service
- strategies to improve engagement with the community
- the views of the community.

Where closure is initiated by the funding recipient, the funding recipient must notify the department immediately of its intention to cease operations. The department will then notify the service in writing outlining what is needed to finalise their funding agreement with the department.

Where a service ceases to operate, any funds not used or spent other than in accordance with the funding agreement must be acquitted and returned to the department by the service within the timeframe specified by the department. If the amount owed is not repaid within that time it will become a debt due and payable to the Australian Government.

Where the programme delegate determines that a replacement service in the approved location is required, the process to obtain the replacement will be conducted in accordance with the Commonwealth Grant Guidelines and *Part B – Community Support Programme Information for Applicants Budget Based Funded Services*.

Operational funding adjustments

In exceptional circumstances, and subject to availability of funding, the programme delegate may adjust the funding allocated to funding recipients. The delegate may consider a range of factors, including, but not limited to:

- the availability of other suitable child care and early learning services
- the level of Australian Government investment in infrastructure improvement for early learning or family services in the community concerned
- other possible funding sources, such as fees
- the standard of service delivery
- operational efficiency, organisational capacity and financial position of the service
- the degree and impact of the loss or reduction of service on families, employees, employers, community and children attending, particularly vulnerable children and children under child protection orders
- the extent of disadvantage of the children in the community concerned, including as measured by the relevant Australian Early Development Index³ results
- demand for the service, including current utilisation of the service or strategies to improve engagement with the community.

³ More information can be found at [Australian Early Development Index](#)

Operational funding during temporary service closure

Funding recipients must notify the department immediately of any circumstances where they are unable to deliver the service. Services are not eligible for payments while closed. In exceptional circumstances and, subject to availability of funding, the programme delegate may approve continued payment of BBF funding to funding recipients when the relevant BBF service is temporarily unable to operate. Such circumstances may include natural disasters or major capital works.

The delegate may consider a range of factors including, but not limited to:

- the need to maintain employment of qualified and experienced personnel who would be expected to undertake approved professional development or other approved activities during the period of temporary closure
- alternative arrangements for the care of children attending the service
- the efficiency of retaining staff to undertake activities associated with the temporary closure, such as moving from one premises to another or preparing for reopening of the service/s.

Operational funding during temporary reduction in scope of service

Funding recipients must notify the department immediately of any circumstances where they are unable to deliver parts of the service. Services may not be eligible for full payments while parts of the service are closed. In exceptional circumstances and, subject to availability of funding, the programme delegate may approve continued full payment of BBF funding to funding recipients when parts of the relevant BBF service are temporarily unable to operate. Such circumstances may include natural disasters or major capital works.

The delegate may consider a range of factors including, but not limited to:

- the need to maintain employment of qualified and experienced personnel who would be expected to undertake approved professional development or other approved activities during the period of temporary closure
- alternative arrangements for the care of children attending the service
- the efficiency of retaining staff to undertake activities associated with the temporary closure, such as moving from one premises to another or preparing for reopening of the service/s.

One-off funding to support continued operation of a service

In exceptional circumstances and subject to availability of funding, the programme delegate may approve a one-off BBF grant to an existing funding recipient or to a third party under a contract for services to be provided to the funding recipient to prevent the loss of service delivery.

One-off funding may also be approved for the purpose of, but is not limited to:

- capital works⁴, including repairing and maintaining building/s, landscaping or outdoor play areas where required, to provide a safe environment for children, staff and visitors
- providing intensive service delivery and management support and capacity-building services to funding recipients
- meeting time-limited additional operating costs incurred where there is a need to recruit suitably qualified and experienced employees to ensure the ongoing operation of the service.

The delegate may consider a range of factors including, but not limited to:

- the availability of other suitable child care and early learning services
- the level of Australian Government investment in infrastructure improvement for early learning or family services in the community concerned
- other possible funding sources, such as fees
- the standard of service delivery

⁴ "Capital works" includes any construction or building works, works to refurbish, repair or maintain buildings, landscape works, or outdoor play areas costing over \$10,000 (GST inclusive), as set out under item C of the Activity Schedule.

- operational efficiency, organisational capacity and financial position of the service
- the degree and impact of the loss or reduction of service on families, carers, employers, community and children attending, particularly vulnerable children and children under child protection orders
- the extent of disadvantage of the children in the community concerned, including as measured by the relevant Australian Early Development Index results
- demand for the service, including current utilisation of the service or strategies to improve engagement with the community.

One-off funding for development of the programme

Subject to availability of funding, the programme delegate may approve a one-off grant for activities that support the development of the programme to improve its delivery and outcomes. This includes activities such as:

- undertaking research or other studies to support further development of the programme
- conducting evidence-based interventions or developing sustainable and transferable child care and early learning service delivery models to improve the service delivery outcomes
- developing, modifying or improving assessment models or tools to facilitate improved quality of service delivery
- monitoring and evaluating the programme to provide valuable, current information to the department to be used to inform the continuous improvement of the programme's design and implementation.

Where a grant has been used to create intellectual property, the department will generally not insist on ownership of intellectual property rights, but rather, will consider obtaining a licence to use the intellectual property for Commonwealth purposes.

In the above circumstances, any procurement or grant activity will be conducted in accordance with the [Commonwealth Procurement Rules](#) or the [Commonwealth Grant Guidelines](#).

7. Contact information and support available

Contact information

Internet

- Department of Education - Early Childhood – the department’s website provides contact details for other Australian Government, state and territory agencies related to child care service provision.
- Department of Education - Contact Details – contact details for the department’s state and territory offices.
- MyChild – the MyChild website provides information on different types of child care and how to get assistance with the cost of child care.

Telephone

- National information line – 1300 363 079 or 133397 request to speak to a funding agreement Manager in your state or territory. This includes information about the Remote Indigenous Professional Development for the Early Years Learning Framework project.

Text telephone for the hearing impaired

- Free call – 1800 808 981.

Child Care Access Hotline

- Phone – 1800 670 305 - the Child Care Access Hotline is a telephone service funded by the Australian Government and provides families with information to help them choose a child care service that meets their needs.

Support available

TTY users call 133 677 then ask for 1300 363 079.

Speak and Listen users call 1300 555 727 then ask for 1300 363 079.

Internet relay users go to the [National Relay Service](#) and click:

- Make an internet relay call
- type 1300 363 079
- type the letters you see into the security box
- click ‘Connect’.

Indigenous Professional Support Units and Professional Support Coordinators

- Funding for Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs) and Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs) in each state and territory is provided under the Inclusion and Professional Support Programme (IPSP). The IPSP provides an integrated and consolidated approach to meeting the inclusion and professional support needs of services funded through the programme. The IPSP ensures that all approved services, regardless of geographic location, have access to quality professional development and support.
 - Further information about IPSP can be found at: [Inclusion and Professional Support Programme](#).

Other information

Child Care Service Handbook

- The Child Care Service Handbook was developed as a guide to assist services with the administration of Child Care Benefit and the services funded through the programme.

Part B

Information for Applicants

8. Information about the selection process

Application process

The allocation of funding for the programme is capped and, as such, applications for the establishment of additional services in new locations cannot be considered unless otherwise approved by the programme delegate and only occur in exceptional circumstances. Applications for existing BBF services will only become available when existing funding recipients cannot meet the terms of their funding agreement with the department.

Funding opportunities will be advertised in accordance with these Guidelines.

Applicants must prepare applications in accordance with this Part B of the Guidelines and the application form that will be made available on the department's website when grant opportunities arise. The application form will be tailored to provide specific information for each grant opportunity including:

- grant opportunity details
- whether an selection process is presently open
- the type of selection process
- the closing date and time of the selection process.

The information required in the application form will include:

- organisation details
- financial details
- selection criteria.

Applications can only be submitted when grant opportunities arise and for the grant opportunity specified in the application form.

Type of selection process and advertisement of Selection Process

Selection processes will be either open, restricted or direct at the discretion of the department.

The department will evaluate each grant opportunity as follows to determine the applicable selection process:

Funding Value of grant opportunity (GST inclusive)	Open	Restricted	Direct
Under \$30,000 funding value			X
Over \$30,000 but under \$80,000		X	
Over \$80,000	X	X – where programme delegate determines that the cost of conducting an open selection process does not provide value for money given the limited number of suitable providers operating in this location/s or an open selection process would cause loss of service delivery where service is attended by vulnerable children.	

Open selection

Open selection processes are open to all applicants. Open processes are advertised through the media, the department's website and other sources to attract as much interest as possible. An application form will be available on the department's website during an open selection process.

Restricted selection

Restricted selection processes are used where there are few providers available due to highly specialised services being required, there are geographical considerations, specific expertise requirements or there are time constraints. An application form will be made available to identified providers during a restricted selection process.

Direct selection

Direct selection processes are used to directly approach an existing, high performing provider or a provider with a proven reputation for delivering services in similar locations to expand their current service delivery activities or deliver new services. It involves assessment of a provider's capacity to deliver an expanded service or capability to deliver a new service through use of selection criteria and/or an assessment of a provider's current performance. An application form will be made available to the identified provider during a direct selection process.

Applicant's responsibilities

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that their application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information to the department is a serious offence. Applicants who do so may be prosecuted under section 137.1 of the Criminal Code Act 1995.

Applicants should keep a copy of their application and any supporting papers, either electronically or in hard copy, for their own records.

Only one application per organisation will be assessed. If more than one application is submitted, only the latest application will be considered.

When applying, applicants are responsible for ensuring that they have:

- taken note of the lodgement deadline and the requirement for application forms and supporting documents to be received by the department by the closing date and time
- examined Parts A, B and C of the Guidelines, the standard funding agreement and all associated documents
- examined any other information made available in writing by the department for the purpose of the selection process
- examined all further relevant information which is obtainable by making reasonable inquiries relating to the risks, contingencies and other circumstances having an effect on the application
- satisfied themselves as to the accuracy and completeness of their application
- understood that they are responsible for all costs incurred in the preparation and lodgement of their application and in respect of any discussions, negotiations, enquiries or any work undertaken after the application has been submitted.

Department's responsibilities

The department is responsible for:

- advertising grant opportunities
- developing and providing selection documentation during a selection process
- ensuring that Commonwealth policies and procedures are followed
- conducting a robust assessment process, including developing the selection criteria and associated weightings
- announcing the outcomes of a selection process.

Consortia arrangements

Eligible organisations may include consortia arrangements, subject to suitable consortium lead agency arrangements being agreed between the department, the lead consortium member and all consortium members.

Where two or more organisations seek funding as a consortium, one of those organisations must be appointed as the lead consortium member. The lead member must be identified within and submit the application.

Sub-contractors

If applicants determine that efficient or effective service delivery is best achieved through the use of a network of providers through a sub-contracting arrangement, this must be specified when addressing the selection criteria and in the application form where required. A successful applicant who uses an authorised sub-contracting arrangement will be held liable for all obligations contained in the funding agreement. This includes monitoring, financial management, performance of the services, achieving milestones and maintaining insurance coverage.

Conflicts of interest

Applicants must identify in their application any potential or actual conflicts of interest they believe will, or may, arise during the selection process or in operating the service. This should address their responsibilities to the Australian Government and other parties in the course of undertaking the activity.

A conflict of interest can arise when an applicant's integrity, objectivity or fairness in performing the services is at risk due to a pecuniary interest of a person or organisation associated with the applicant or a conflicting business arrangement.

Applicants must specify in their applications how any actual or perceived conflict of interest will be addressed and monitored to ensure it does not compromise the outcomes desired under the programme.

The department reserves the right to assess the potential impact of the conflict or perceived conflict and what plans, if any, are proposed to address the conflict of interest in relation to the application for funding. Any decision to exclude an application due to concerns regarding a conflict of interest will be final. The department may reject an application if it is not satisfied that there are arrangements in place to appropriately address/manage actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

The department also has mechanisms in place for identifying and managing potential or actual conflicts of interest such as requiring assessment staff to sign conflict of interest declarations prior to undertaking the assessment of applications.

APS staff are bound by the APS Code of Conduct which states that an APS employee must disclose, and take reasonable steps to avoid, any conflict of interest (real or apparent) in connection with APS employment.

What must be included in the application form?

All information and attachments requested in the application form must be provided so the department can fully assess the application.

What should not be included in the application form?

Any attachments to the application form provided by applicants which are not specifically requested will not be considered as part of the assessment process.

What happens if you provide more than the specified number of words in the application form?

The application form specifies a word limit for each selection criterion, and the inclusion of text beyond the word limit will not be considered under the assessment process.

Closing date and time for applications

The application form provides the closing date and time.

Extension to the closing date for applications

The department may, in its absolute discretion, elect to extend the closing date. If the department elects to extend the closing date:

- The duration of the extension will be as determined by the department
- The department will make an announcement of its decision to extend the closing date, and the details of that extension [by](#) email and on its website, as appropriate, no later than 10 days before the closing date lapses
- It is your responsibility to check your email and the website for any announcements
- Any decision by the department to grant an extension to the closing date will be final.

Lodgement of applications

Application forms must be completed and submitted by post, or lodged electronically so that they are received by the department by the closing date and time.

A confirmation of receipt will be sent within 48 hours to the email address specified in Part 2 of the application form.

Late applications

Applications received after the closing date and time will be marked as 'late'. The department may reject any application lodged after the closing date. If an application is late, the department may determine that there were exceptional circumstances beyond the applicant's control that meant the deadline could *not* be met. The applicant will need to supply documentary evidence to support any exceptional circumstances, however the department has no obligation to accept a late application. Any decision by the department to accept or *not* accept a late application will be final.

Checks of applicants

As a part of the selection process, the department may undertake further checks of applicants. The department may also conduct checks for non-disclosure of any relevant information.

In addition, any debts that the applicant owes to the department or other Australian Government agencies may be taken into account when making a decision to offer funding.

When undertaking checks of applicants, the department reserves the right to use information from:

- the department's databases
- other Australian Government agencies, such as the Australian Taxation Office and Australian Securities and Investments Commission
- state or territory agencies
- law enforcement agencies
- credit reference agencies
- courts or tribunals or
- any other appropriate organisation or person relevant to these checks.

Information obtained from checks on applicants described in this section may be taken into account during the assessment of applications, or in making the final decision to offer funding.

The department will assess applicants on the basis of the information provided in applications, and may also use information about an applicant that is known to the department (or becomes known to the department in the course of its business), as well as any publicly available information.

Further information

For information about the selection process and application form please email the contact officer specified in the application form.

9. Eligibility Criteria and Selection Criteria

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible to apply for funding under the programme applicants must:

- be an incorporated organisation or other properly constituted legal entity.
- have an Australian Business Number
- be registered for Goods and Service Tax if required by law to be registered
- have a current bank account
- pass a financial viability assessment in accordance with the department's financial viability policy, if required.

Selection criteria

The selection criteria are:

Item	Selection Criteria	** Weighting	Information to be provided by applicant
1.	Demonstrated capacity to deliver services for children noting in particular, any experience in or around the identified location/s of the grant opportunity	20%	Address the selection criteria in 500 words or less
2.	Applicant's proposed approach to delivering the service/s in the identified location/s including operating days, hours, times and programmes offered to the community	20%	Address the selection criteria in 500 words or less
3.	Demonstrated ability to effectively manage the delivery of services, including financial, human resource management, administrative processes and governance structures	20%	Address the selection criteria in 500 words or less
4.	Demonstrated ability to meet the requirements of the funding agreement, in particular the Key Performance Indicators	20%	Address the selection criteria in 500 words or less
5.	Demonstrated experience in working with a range of stakeholders including government organisations, Indigenous families and Indigenous community members and organisations to deliver positive and effective outcomes	20%	Address the selection criteria in 500 words or less

All applicants will need to respond fully to each selection criterion in the application form and provide the information required in the format and to the extent specified.

Value for money

Applicants will be assessed on the extent to which they offer the Australian Government value for money in delivering the services under the programme. The department considers value for money as an integral part of the assessment and ongoing management of its programmes.

During the selection process, the department achieves value for money by:

- encouraging competitive and non-discriminatory processes
- using Commonwealth resources in an efficient, effective, economical and ethical manner that is consistent with the policies of the Commonwealth
- making decisions in an accountable and transparent manner considering the risks
- conducting either one of an open, restricted or direct selection process commensurate with the particular circumstances of that grant opportunity
- checking applicants' experience, performance history and, if required, financial viability.

Application conditions

A completed application is not an agreement or contract. Meeting the selection criteria does not guarantee your organisation will be selected. Only applications meeting the selection criteria will be considered for selection.

10. Assessment Process

Following the application Closing Date, the department will conduct an assessment of all applications.

Stages in the assessment process

The following assessment process is generally followed:

- Stage 1 – Receipt and registration of applications, including initial screening for compliance
- Stage 2 – Assessment of applications against selection criteria
- Stage 3 – Financial viability assessment, if required
- Stage 4 – Selection of preferred applicant/s
- Stage 5 – Offer of funding/execution of funding agreement.

The department's decisions on the methodology for assessment of applications will be final.

Stage 1 - Receipt and registration of applications, including initial screening for compliance

Following the receipt and registration of applications, there will be an initial screening of applications to determine whether:

- applicants are eligible to apply for funding under the programme
- applicants who are current funding recipients have complied with the funding agreement and the Guidelines
- all required information has been provided in the application form.

Stage 2 - Assessment of applications against selection criteria

Assessment Team/s

The Assessment Team/s will include individuals who collectively provide expertise to the selection panel about:

- the programme
- the site/area or location of the child care or early learning service in respect of which funding is sought
- local issues or issues affecting the programme/activity target group.
- Typically the Assessment Team/s will include Department of Education officials from the State and Territory Office and National Office who will be bound by the confidentiality of the assessment process.

The Assessment Team can be assisted by other departmental officers, but the Assessment Team remains responsible and accountable for the evaluation and for the recommendation made to the Delegate.

Assessment of application

The Assessment Team/s will assess applications primarily on the information provided in the application form.

The department may use information about an applicant that is, or becomes known to the department in the course of the department's business, as well as any publicly available information.

Scoring of selection criteria

The Assessment Team will consider all relevant information for each selection criterion provided in each application form and conduct an objective analysis against each of those criterion.

Each member of the Assessment Team shall score each applicant for each selection criterion. The table below proposes a rating scale with a commentary which provides sufficient detail to assist members of

the Assessment Team to remain objective in applying scoring for the selection criteria. Scoring and comments are to be recorded in writing.

Rating	Score
Excellent quality—excellent claims against the criterion, exceeds expectations, supporting information confirms consistent superior performance	5
Very good quality—very good claims against the criterion, meets all expectations to a high standard with complete and comprehensive supporting information	4
Good quality—good claims against the criterion, meets all expectations with convincing supporting information	3
Satisfactory quality—adequate claims against the criterion, mostly meets expectations, but may be lacking detail and/or supporting information	2
Marginal or poor quality—poor claims against the criterion, does not meet expectations, has deficient supporting information	1
Does not meet criterion at all	0

Discussion and Review

Applications will then be ranked according to the number of points they scored for their responses to the selection criteria. The ranking is the basis for the selection of the successful applicant/s.

Stage 3 – Financial viability assessments

Applicants may be subject to financial viability assessments if required by the department.

Applicants subject to financial viability assessments as specified in Part A: Risk Management will be required to complete the department’s Financial and Credentials Information Form.

The application form will specify if a Financial and Credentials Information Form is required for a particular selection process.

Stage 4 – Selection of successful applicant/s

The Assessment Team/s will prepare a list of recommended applicants following assessment against the selection criteria, including consideration of the outcome of any financial viability assessment, if required.

Any or none of the applications made for this selection process may be accepted.

The department’s decision relating to the successful applicant/s will be finalised when the programme delegate approves the successful applicant/s.

Stage 5 – Offer and entering into funding agreement/s

The successful applicant/s are then invited to enter into funding agreements with the department. The department’s standard funding agreement and associated terms and conditions can be found on the department’s website at [insert a link to the template funding agreement itself]. There are no binding obligations on the funding recipient or the department until the funding agreement is agreed to and signed by the applicant’s authorised representative and the department’s delegate.

Process for advising outcomes

Applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of the assessment process. Information on any funding agreement entered into will be published on the department's website department's website within 14 days of the execution of the funding agreement.

Opportunity for feedback

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be offered feedback on their applications.

11. Terms and conditions applying to applications

Department's rights

The department reserves the right to mark any application 'non-compliant' if it has concerns about the authenticity of the information provided by an applicant.

The department reserves the right in its absolute discretion, at any time during the selection process, to:

- vary any information, requirement terms, process, time period or date set out in the programme guidelines or application form
- seek additional information or clarification from any applicant(s) or other third party
- assess some or all of the applications
- provide additional information or clarification to applicants
- accept any or none of the applications.

Liability

The department is not liable to an applicant in relation to the selection process including, without limitation, where the department:

- varies or terminates all, or any part of, the selection process, or any negotiations with the applicant
- decides not to provide funding in respect of any or all of the services sought through the selection process or
- exercises, or fails to exercise, any of its other rights under (or in relation to) the Guidelines.

Disclaimer

The department and its officers, employees, agents and advisors:

- are not, and will not be, responsible or liable for the accuracy or completeness of any information in (or provided in connection with) the Guidelines
- make no express or implied representation or warranty that any statement as to future matters will prove correct
- disclaim any and all liability arising from any information provided to the applicant, including but not limited to, errors or omissions contained in that information
- accept no responsibility arising in any way from errors or omissions contained in any information in this document and the application forms (except so far as liability under any statute cannot be excluded)
- accept no liability for any loss or damage suffered by any person as a result of that person (or any other person) placing reliance on the contents of these Guidelines, or any other information provided by the department.

Fraud

The department is committed to enforcing and complying with the Commonwealth Fraud Control Policy and Guidelines. Applicants should familiarise themselves with the department's Fraud Control Framework which also underpins their respective fraud and risk minimisation responsibilities when dealing with the department. The Fraud Control Framework can be found at: [insert a link]

Personal information

Any personal information provided by applicants will be used for the purpose of the Child Care Services Support Programme and may be considered as part of any future application or business dealings an applicant may have with the Department of Education.

Part C
**Information for Funding
Recipients and Applicants**

12. Privacy and freedom of information

Personal information and privacy requirements

Any personal information provided by an individual for the purposes of the programme is protected under the *Privacy Act 1988* (the Privacy Act). Personal information can only be disclosed in certain circumstances specified under the Privacy Act (for example, where the individual concerned has consented to the use or disclosure of their personal information).

As contractors for the department under their funding agreements, all funding recipients must comply with the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) set out under Division 2 of Part 3 of the Privacy Act as if they were an agency when dealing with personal information.

Information on the department's privacy policy, including how an individual may access or correct personal information in the department's possession or control, or make a complaint about a breach of privacy obligations, is available at [Privacy Policy](#).

Alternatively, the department's privacy policy may be requested by emailing privacy@education.gov.au.

More information on privacy and the APPs can be found on the [Office of the Australian Information Commissioner's website](#).

Freedom of Information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) provides, among other things, for a right of access to a document in the possession of the department (whether the document was created in the department or received by the department). This right of access is limited only by the exemptions set out under the FOI Act which are necessary, for example, for the protection of essential public interests and the personal and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the document relates.

The FOI Act also applies to documents created or held by the department's funding recipients, contractors or subcontractors who provide services to the public or third parties on behalf of the department. If a request is made for access to a document subject to the FOI Act, that document must be released unless it can be established that a relevant exemption under the FOI Act applies.

Decisions regarding requests for access under the FOI Act will be made by an authorised decision-maker within the department in accordance with the FOI Act. All FOI requests must be referred **immediately** to the Child Care, Corporate and External Review Branch in the department, as strict statutory timeframes apply to the processing of FOI requests.

FOI requests can be sent:

By mail: FOI Team Leader
 Child Care, Corporate and External Review Branch
 Legal and Compliance Group
 C12MT1
 GPO Box 9880
 CANBERRA ACT 2601

By email: foi@education.gov.au

For more information on FOI and how to make a request for access to documents in the possession of the department under the FOI Act, go to [Freedom of Information](#).

Security of information

The department is required to maintain all records (hard copy and electronic) in accordance with the *Archives Act 1983* and the department's Records and Document Management Policy and Guidelines.

Funding recipients are required to store records in a secure place and dispose of them in an appropriate manner. Funding recipients should retain a copy of all reports, records and account books in original form in accordance with the requirements set out in the funding agreement.

13. Complaints

The department has a formal complaints recording system to capture complaints to the department about any of its services. Complaints can be lodged by telephoning 1300 363 079 and speaking to the MyChild team who will lodge the complaint and provide a reference number and request a response from the department to the complainant.

A complaint is defined as:

'Any expression of dissatisfaction with a product or service offered or provided' [Australian Standard AS4269–1995]

For the purposes of the department's complaints recording system, a 'complaint' does not include:

- complaints regarding Ministerial correspondence
- complaints regarding the handling of FOI requests or decisions made under the FOI Act or
- complaints made to funding recipients, as these will be covered by the funding recipient's own complaints mechanisms as required under the funding agreement. [Funding recipients are expected to develop and maintain a Complaints Handling Policy in the course of their normal operations.](#)

If a funding recipient is at any time dissatisfied with the department's handling of a complaint, they can contact the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#) or on 1300 362 072.

[Funding Recipients are expected to develop and maintain a Complaints Handling Policy in the course of their normal operations.](#)

14. Glossary

applicant

An eligible organisation that submits an application for funding under a selection process for the programme as advertised by the department.

application/application form

An application is made when an applicant submits a completed application form and provides any other supporting material as requested in the application form. The department's Financial Viability Questionnaire form is an attachment to the application form. The application form prescribed by the department must be filled out by the applicant in accordance with the requirements in Part B of the Guidelines, and must be submitted by the closing date and time.

information for applicants

The material made available to applicants by the department to ensure applicants understand the requirements for submitting a completed application form by the closing date and time.

application period

The period during which applicants are invited to complete and submit their application. It commences from the time the grant opportunity is advertised by the department and finishes on the closing date and time. During this period the department will only respond to requests for information that seek clarification of issues or material that allow them to better understand the selection process and the requirements of the application.

assessment period

The period during which the department assesses the applications to determine the successful applicant/s.

BBF performance framework

Also known as the BBF Framework. Defines a consistent approach for monitoring and reporting performance across the programme, drawing on a common set of high-level outcomes and key performance indicators.

closing date and time

The date and time that applications must be received by the department in order to be assessed.

programme delegate

The programme delegate is the Branch Manager in the Department of Education responsible for the BBF programme.

department (the)

The Australian Government Department of Education.

Financial Viability Policy

The Department of Education's Financial Viability Policy form part of the department's risk mitigation strategy.

key performance indicators

Also known as KPIs. As specified in BBF Funding Agreement.

Risk Management Policy

The Department of Education's Risk Management Policy. Requires risks must be identified, monitored, treated and, if necessary, additional treatments applied to reduce the risk level further.

selection criteria

The set of criteria used for assessing applications.

selection process

The process for selecting funding recipients as outlined in Part B of the Guidelines.

successful applicant

The selection process will result in recommendation of the successful applicant/s to the programme delegate for decision. The successful applicant/s will be advised of their success. The decision by the department regarding the successful applicant/s is final.

supporting material

Additional material provided by the applicant with their application that clarifies the claims made within the application, but which does not alter the content of the application in any material sense.

unviable

a child care and early learning funding recipient does not have access to sufficient financial revenue and the capacity to operate a service in accordance with all relevant legislative and funding requirements, on a sustainable basis.

vulnerable children

generally refers to children who are more exposed to risks of emotional, physical or cognitive harm due to their individual circumstances.