FAQ: IDF Innovative Solutions Support

Inclusion Support Programme

This FAQ clarifies the intent in the Inclusion Support Programme (ISP) Guidelines around the Inclusion Development Fund (IDF) Innovative Solutions Support and seeks to assist early childhood and child care services ('services') in applying for this stream of funding.

This FAQ should be read in conjunction with the Section F of the ISP Guidelines which provides information on eligibility, funding conditions and application requirements for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support stream.

This FAQ provides general guidance about the Innovative Solutions Support stream and deliberately seeks to be flexible and non-prescriptive (except for matters of Government policy and where there are regulatory, operational and other administrative requirements) to encourage creative and new ideas for addressing inclusion barriers. This flexibility includes bicultural support which provides services with access to an interpreter or other bilingual/bicultural person to support the service to include children from culturally and linguistically diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, or refugee or humanitarian intervention backgrounds.

Note this FAQ may be amended at any time during the program period.

Contents

1. What is the IDF – Innovative Solutions Support?

The IDF Innovative Solutions Support assists eligible ECCC services to fund innovative and flexible solutions to inclusion, where an identified barrier has been identified and it cannot be addressed by the support provided by an Inclusion Agency (IA).

IDF Innovative Solutions Support is available to address barriers to inclusion where subsidising the employment of an Additional Educator or accessing the IDF Family Day Care Top Up is not the most appropriate solution.

Allowing eligible services to propose innovative and flexible solutions to inclusion aims to empower services to carefully consider their inclusion challenge/s and take an active role in finding solutions; which builds inclusion capacity and capability.

2. Is bicultural support available through the IDF Innovative Solutions Support?

Yes, bicultural support is available through the IDF Innovative Solutions Support. This may include but is not limited to funding to purchase translating and interpreting services, services from cultural experts or specialist advice on how to include a particular child.

3. What other activities can be funded through the IDF Innovative Solutions Support?

Approved purposes are outlined in Section F1.3 of the ISP Guidelines. Examples may include (but are not limited to) funding for activities which facilitates outreach and connections to community support, and funding to purchase translating and interpreting services, services from cultural experts or specialist advice on how to include a particular child or children. Where a service is applying for specialist advice, the IDFM will take in to consideration the needs of the child or children and the requirements set out in the National Quality Framework.

The IDF Innovative Solutions Support can also be used to provide intensive inclusion support for eligible services unable to recruit additional educators due to workforce shortages. Questions 15-21 in this FAQ provide further information on such support.

4. When can applications be made?

Applications for funding for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support can be made at any time during the program so services can respond to barriers as they are identified for the inclusion of children with additional needs.

The IDF has an annual capped funding allocation, and the approval of any application made to the IDF is contingent on the availability of funding.

Where necessary, applications for IDF Innovative Solutions Support will be prioritised for the following cohorts of children with additional needs where a barrier to inclusion can be demonstrated (see Section F.1.1 of the ISP Guidelines):

- Children with disability including those undergoing assessment for disability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Children from a refugee or humanitarian background, and

- Children with serious medical condition/s.
- Children presenting with language and speech delays
- Children presenting with disruptive behaviours

5. How long does it take to assess applications for IDF Innovative Solutions Support?

Applications will be processed by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM) within 5 business days where it is marked as urgent, or within 15 business days for all other applications. Further information regarding applications for IDF –Innovative Solutions Support is available in Section F of the ISP Guidelines.

6. How does my service arrange for an application to be processed as 'urgent'?

Section F3 of the ISP Guidelines allows for applications that are considered urgent to be marked accordingly by the IA and processed by the IDFM within 5 business days.

If an application for funding is urgent, your service's IP is required to email idfminnovative@ku.com.au, noting the Case ID and the reason why the application is considered urgent.

7. Is there a limit on the number of times a service can apply?

There is no limit on the number of times a service can apply for support from the IDF Innovative Solutions Support. However, the annual IDF funding allocation is capped so the IDFM will use discretion when assessing applications and prioritise support to services based on value for money. This may mean that services which have not yet accessed this funding stream are funded over a service that has received previous support.

8. Can a group application be submitted and how will this work?

A group application is where a number of services identify the same or similar inclusion barrier, and develop a proposal collectively for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support which would lead to the genuine inclusion of children with additional needs across multiple services. The IDFM will consider how the application will lead to better inclusion outcomes for services and how cost effective the approach is.

A group application must nominate one service as the lead and this service will be responsible for the project and have the relationship with the IDFM and Department. This includes referencing their SIP ID, CCB approval details, taking responsibility for complying with the Conditions of Funding and ensuring other services in the group understand their obligations as per the Conditions of Funding.

The Business Case for a group application is required to note that all services have identified the same or similar barrier to inclusion and the extent to which this impacts on each service. The SIP and CCB IDs for each service in the group must be included on the Business Case.

The Inclusion Professional for the lead service will have responsibility for endorsing the application and is required, where applicable, to liaise internally with other relevant Inclusion Professionals for the other services in the group. Where services are cross-jurisdictional (e.g. Albury, NSW and Wodonga, Victoria), the above liaison is required to be conducted with all relevant IAs in the different jurisdictions.

Note the allowed range for an application for IDF Innovative Solutions support is $300-$3,000. Applications over $3,000 will be referred to the department by the IDFM for approval to consider the application expenditure above the $3,000 limit. Further information is available in section F4.4 of the ISP Guidelines.

9. Are there quality preferred suppliers services should seek quotes from?

Services are responsible for sourcing appropriate providers and quotes to support the business case for their Innovative Solutions Support applications. IAs will be able to provide advice on the types of solutions and potential providers that can meet the needs identified in the SIP.

The IDFM has developed Fact Sheet 4 – Key points to consider when sourcing providers which is available on its website.

10. Can the IDF Innovative Solutions Support funding be used for professional development opportunities for ECCC service staff?

The cost of attendance at and/or conduct of professional development courses and sessions is the responsibility of ECCC services. Professional development, including support to services to assist them to understand and meet the requirements of the National Quality Standard, and to implement approved learning frameworks, is not supported by the ISP. This is a Government decision and recognises that the professional development and quality of the sector has improved through significant investment in professional development since the introduction of the National Quality Framework in 2009. It also supports the Australian Government's response to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning, which recommended that professional development including mainstream advice and training for ECCC workers, is the responsibility of the employer.

11. What do I need to include in my Business Case?

A service's Business Case is required to demonstrate how the funding will be used to address the barrier to inclusion which cannot be addressed through support provided by its IA or other IDF funding streams.

In line with the ISP Guidelines (including Section F2) the Business Case should cover the following:

- The inclusion barrier, including a description of the child or children the barrier is associated with and why funding is needed
- How the proposed solution will address the barrier/s identified in the service's (or services') SIP and lead to the genuine inclusion of children with additional needs
- How the project will build educator capacity, support continuous improvement in their inclusive practice and lead the service towards self-reliance
- Evidence that funding is not available elsewhere and a statement from the service which reflects other options have been explored with support from the IA
- An overview of the intended outcomes of funding, including estimated duration of the project with proposed start and end dates and project stages
- Any other relevant information to allow the IDFM to assess the application.

The 'Notes' section available on an Innovative Solutions Support application may also be used to assist communication between the service, IA and IDFM.

The IDFM has developed Fact Sheet 3 – What is a business case which is available on its website.

12. What do I need to include in the financial quotes to support my business case?

Financial quotes to support the total value of funding being sought (GST inclusive) must represent value for money for the expenditure of government funding. The financial quotes and budget items must be consistent with and support the information provided in the Business Case.

- Note that the financial quotes must be GST inclusive. It must also include:
  - (a) the GST exclusive amount, and
  - (b) the GST component
- The Budget Item on the IS Portal needs to be entered as the GST exclusive amount, due to system requirements.
- Financial quotes must have an ABN for the supplier. There are limited exceptions to this requirement (e.g. a service may provide a quote which will enable them to make a direct payment to a cultural expert such as an Indigenous community elder who may not have an ABN).
- If the project relates to support delivered on a per hour basis, the hours of support being requested need to be specified in the quote, for example 2 hours of bicultural support per day, 2 days per week for 6 weeks, total 24 hours of bicultural support. This should also be itemised in the list of budget items.

13. My service has an approved Innovative Solutions Support case but won't spend the entire amount on the approved project. What does my service do?

If your service does not spend the full amount of funding on the Project as approved by the IDFM, you must speak to your IA. If your IA agrees in writing, your service may spend the remaining funds on inclusion related activities to overcome the same or similar inclusion barriers outlined in your initial application. Any additional activity undertaken in line with the agreed change must be declared at the completion of the project.

At the completion of the project, which may be during or after the Approval Period, your service must complete an online declaration through the IS Portal. The online declaration must be completed online no later than 10 business days from the end date of the Approval Period. This should indicate "Project Complete with Agreed Change". The total amount spent should include the amount spent on the original project and the agreed change.

For assistance completing the online declaration, please contact your IA.

14. My service is interested in examples of approved Innovative Solutions Support cases. How does my service find out more about these?

To support best practice, the IDFM have published Stories from Services on their website.

15. If approved, when will my service receive payment?

If the IDFM approves the Innovative Solutions case, the service will receive a Letter of Offer. This letter must be signed by the service and returned to the IDFM at idfminnovative@ku.com.au. Once the signed letter has been received by the IDFM, the IDFM will execute the case and payment will be made to the service.

16. Can the IDF Innovative Solutions Support be used to undertake changes to buildings, surfaces or playgrounds?

No. Proposals to make modifications or improvements to the existing service environment, such as changes to buildings, surfaces or playgrounds, are not eligible to be funded through the IDF Innovative Solutions Support stream. Section F1.4 of the ISP Guidelines provides more information on non-approved purposes.

17. What is 'intensive inclusion support'?

Intensive inclusion support is a type of support available under the IDF Innovative Solutions Support funding stream and is intended to support services who are unable to recruit an additional educator due to skill shortages in their location.

Intensive inclusion support will vary according to factors including the needs of the service, the inclusion challenges presented within the service, the child or children with high support needs and the ECCC workforce market in the local area.

18. What services are eligible for intensive inclusion support?

In addition to the eligibility criteria for Innovative Solutions outlined in section F1.1 of the ISP Guidelines, many of the services eligible for this support are expected to be located in rural, regional and remote areas that, while likely to be eligible for funding from the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator, are unable to recruit suitably qualified educators to access this stream of funding.

19. What is an example of intensive inclusion support?

An example may include a service engaging an expert in their field to work intensively in the service for a set period of time. The intensive support during this time may be two-fold – an extra set of hands to provide practical support to the service's educators to include a particular child (or children) with high ongoing support needs, whilst building capacity of all educators through demonstrating, coaching and advising on strategies and approaches based on best practice inclusion principles. This option offers the opportunity for services unable to recruit an additional educator, as an alternative, to receive intensive support – albeit not ongoing or long term – to include a child or children with disability with ongoing high support needs.

20. Who can deliver intensive inclusion support?

Organisations or individuals providing intensive inclusion support must:
- have the expertise to deliver such support within the parameters set in the ISP Guidelines
- provide tailored inclusion advice beyond the capacity of what an IP can reasonably be expected to deliver in supporting services in their jurisdiction
- aim to build the educator's skills and knowledge by providing practical advice and assistance to support the inclusion of children with high support needs in a mainstream service alongside their typically developing peers.

Intensive inclusion support cannot to be provided by Inclusion Professionals (IPs) (employed by an IA) due to potential conflicts of interests as these organisations are already funded by the Australian Government to deliver services. Organisations and individuals providing intensive inclusion support should collaborate with the IA to ensure consistent approaches to inclusion service delivery.

21. What costs can the funding for intensive inclusion support cover?

Funding for intensive inclusion support could include (but is not limited to) covering the costs of service delivery, travel and accommodation for the individual or organisation providing the support.

22. What do I need to include in my service's Business Case for intensive inclusion support?

In addition to the requirements set out in Sections F2.2 and F2.3 in the ISP Guidelines, the Business Case for intensive inclusion support should demonstrate:

- The service is located in an area where the ECCC educator workforce market is in shortage (for example, the service has had difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified educators within the last 12 months)
- The specific element or activity is the most appropriate solution to the barrier to inclusion and is greater than the support available from the IA
- Value for money based on the quote provided and the location of the service
- The organisation or individual has the necessary expertise to provide the intensive inclusion support
- Any other relevant information to allow the IDFM to assess the application.

23. Who should my service contact if I have further questions about intensive inclusion support?

Services interested in submitting a Business Case for this solution are encouraged to discuss further with their IA and IDFM.