

Long Day Care Professional Development Programme

Funding Guidelines



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1. Overview

1.1 Introduction

In December 2013, the Australian Government announced that it will make the single biggest investment ever in professional development for child care and early learning educators in long day care (LDC) by redirecting available funding from the Early Years Quality Fund to a new professional development programme.

The new **Long Day Care Professional Development Programme (LDCPDP)** will provide LDC educators with assistance to meet the qualification requirements under the National Quality Framework (NQF) and to improve practice to deliver quality outcomes for children. The key objectives are quality and equity. The Government wants all LDC services and all LDC educators to benefit from high quality training and development opportunities that contribute to improved early learning experiences and outcomes for children in the years before they commence formal schooling.

The Government also announced that it would allocate \$30 million towards additional training and support for LDC early childhood educators working with vulnerable and disadvantaged children. This funding will be allocated in the 2014-15 financial year and separate funding guidelines will apply with a separate application process.

1.2 The Long Day Care Professional Development Programme (LDCPDP)

The LDCPDP has been established to provide support to approved Child Care Benefit (CCB) LDC services in providing access to professional development for their paid educators. The programme responds to concerns in the sector that quality and tailored professional development activities can be difficult to access for a variety of reasons, including:

- difficulties associated with releasing staff to attend professional development activities (backfilling)
- the costs of training
- the costs of travel to attend activities, particularly from rural and remote locations
- training available not matching the needs of staff.

To address these issues, the LDCPDP will have sufficient flexibility to meet educators' needs and will provide additional support for known workforce challenges, for example, early childhood teachers and qualified LDC educators working in rural and remote areas.

1.3 Objective of LDCPDP

The Government supports the quality outcomes for children that are the central goal of the NQF. The objective of the programme is to provide funding for professional development to support educators and providers to meet these quality goals.

The programme will allow providers to identify and address the specific professional development needs of their staff to support the NQF and the National Quality Standard (NQS), and deliver the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) or other approved learning frameworks under the NQF.

Specifically, the objectives of the LDCPDP are to assist providers to better meet the NQS through:

- identifying gaps in professional skills and practice, and addressing these through targeted professional development, including support for study and formal qualifications
- ensuring a qualified and capable workforce through support for professional development and provision of training
- supporting continuous improvement for educators through professional development activities, conversations with other educators
- providing additional support to early childhood teachers and educators in regional and remote locations to be involved in professional development activities
- building educator's professional skills in practice.

2. Funding allocation

Funding of approximately \$200 million will be provided to LDC providers over a three year period. Providers will be able to spend funding until 30 June 2017. This is to enable providers to plan longer term professional development goals (eg 4 year degrees or part time study).

Providers will receive funding for LDC services on the basis of their full time equivalent (FTE) staffing profile and location. In order to receive funding, providers will be required to complete a simple online application and provide information about the number of staff, including the number of early childhood teachers, they have at their service.

Funding under this programme will be provided to CCB approved LDC services. In these **Guidelines**, the term “provider” is used to refer to the legal entity with which the Commonwealth will enter into a funding agreement, which is the legal entity that operates the “service”, which refers to the approved child care service itself.

Eligible providers will be provided with an allocation that recognises the:

- need for professional development of educators working for the provider
- additional needs of early childhood teachers who are frequently professionally isolated in the LDC context
- extra challenges of access to professional development for services located in regional, rural and remote areas.

2.1 Purpose of the Funding Guidelines

The Guidelines (‘Guidelines’) set out the range of processes that the Department of Education (‘the Department’) will undertake to determine the funding amount for each service, how providers can access the funding, the purposes for which the funding can be used, and the accountability requirements to ensure the most effective use of tax payers’ money.

The following documents are attachments to the Guidelines and can be viewed and downloaded on the Department’s website at www.education.gov.au/ldcpdp:

- the funding agreement for the LDCPDP
- pro forma letters of offer to enter into a funding agreement.

2.2 Purpose of the Funding Agreement

The funding agreements are made between the Australian Government and each successful provider. The agreement will set out:

- the rights and obligations of the Commonwealth and the funding recipient (the provider)
- timetable for payments, including completion of reporting requirements
- how funds are to be acquitted
- reporting and accountability obligations.

Successful applicants will be required to meet all of the agreements made as part of the application process as well as all obligations and reporting requirements outlined in the funding agreement.

If there is any inconsistency between the funding agreement and these Guidelines, the funding agreement prevails to the extent of the inconsistency.

2.3 Responsibilities under the Programme

This subsection summarises the responsibilities of all parties involved in the programme.

2.3.1 Minister

The Assistant Minister for Education responsible for child care and early learning will be informed of the application process and the status of applications. The Assistant Minister may announce the release of the Guidelines, the commencement of the application process, grants and awarded payments to services.

2.3.2 The Department of Education

The Department will be responsible for:

- ensuring the announcement and advertisement of the application process, responding to queries in relation to the process, and resolving any uncertainties that may arise in relation to application requirements
- assessing and approving applications for funding, and ensuring all eligibility criteria are met
- ensuring that applicants are notified of the outcomes of this application process
- determining the amount a provider will receive based on the information provided by the provider and the service's physical location (postcode)
- the ongoing management and monitoring requirements of providers in receipt of funding under the LDCPDP, including:
 - entering into funding agreements with providers
 - monitoring the requirements and obligations of providers to ensure the conditions of the funding agreement are met including reporting and acquittals
 - undertaking follow up activity as necessary
 - processing payments in a timely, transparent, effective, efficient and accountable manner
 - evaluating programme outcomes.

2.3.3 Providers, services and multi-service providers

Providers applying for funding under the LDCPDP are responsible for the development and submission of their application online. Providers must ensure that all information provided in an application is accurate and in accordance with requirements set out in the online application documentation and these Guidelines. It is the responsibility of providers to provide all the information required to enable their application to be processed

appropriately. Providers must retain copies of all documentation. Incomplete applications will not be processed.

Providers must ensure that a person authorised to commit the provider to ongoing obligations under a funding agreement completes the online application form, including the provision of current contact details.

The contact person nominated on the online application form must be a person who has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the provider.

The information required on the online application form is on a per service level.

Multi-service provider

Providers with 10 or more services may complete an application for each service. Alternatively, to make the application easier to complete, such services can provide the information required in a single template supplied by the Department. Further information is provided about this in Section 4.1.3.

2.3.4 Funding Recipients

Upon receipt of advice from the Department that all required information has been provided, and confirmation that the provider is eligible for funding, the provider is responsible for:

- ensuring that funds are spent on activities as outlined in the LDCPDP Guidelines and the funding agreement
- ensuring it meets all the obligations set out in any LDCPDP funding agreement, including all reporting and acquittal requirements
- maintaining contact with the Department and advising of any emerging issues that may impact on the provider's ability to meet the obligations set out in the funding agreement
- participating in quality and evaluation activities as necessary
- returning any unspent funding to the Department, as required.

2.4 Risk Management

The Department is committed to the effective management of the programme. Any obligations, including those in funding agreements, may be managed according to their level of risk to the Commonwealth. Applicants and providers may be subject to a risk management assessment prior to the negotiation of any funding agreement and periodically thereafter.

In determining a potential risk, the Department will use information provided by applicants, information from systems available within the Department, and external sources to assess the risk to the Commonwealth. Measures to address these risks, such as requiring evidence of ongoing financial viability or altering the funding agreement to increase the reporting component, will be considered.

3 Making an Application for Funding

In line with the Government's commitment to reduce regulatory burden on providers applying for funding, the Department has endeavoured to keep the application process as simple as possible by using the information that the provider has already supplied to the Department.

3.1 Eligibility for the LDCPDP

3.1.1 Eligible providers

All CCB approved LDC providers are eligible to apply for this programme, with the exception of providers who entered into a written funding agreement with the Commonwealth under the former Early Years Quality Fund (EYQF) programme.

3.1.2 Eligible staff

Staff that are eligible to benefit from this programme are all educators who have a direct contact role with children, including the director of the service. Contact staff must have or be working towards a relevant early childhood education and care qualification under the National Education and Care Services Legislation.

For educators who work in a LDC service as well as in other service types (such as outside school hours care, preschool or vacation care), only those hours in which the educators work in the LDC service can be included when calculating the FTE for the LDC service. Hours worked in other service types cannot be included.

3.2 Funding Amounts

Funding of approximately \$200 million over three years will be available for the LDCPDP. This will be allocated in the following way:

- a base amount per FTE educator (up to \$170 million)
- plus a loading for each early childhood teacher (up to \$15 million)
- plus a loading for geographic isolation (up to \$15 million).

Eligible services/providers will be provided with an allocation that recognises:

- the number of FTE paid contact educators at the time of application - base amount per FTE educator is \$3750
- in addition to the base amount, the number of FTE early childhood teachers they employ at the time of application – the loading for each early childhood teacher is \$2300
- geographic isolation - in addition to the base amount, the loading for geographic isolation is:
 - \$4100 per FTE in outer regional areas
 - \$4400 per FTE in remote and very remote areas.

Examples of funding amounts

A small service in a rural area (outer regional):

4.8 FTE x base loading (\$3750) =	\$18,000
1 ECT x ECT loading (\$2300) =	\$2,300
4.8 FTE x Geographic isolation loading (\$4100) =	\$19,680
Total funding amount for the service =	\$39,980

A large metropolitan service

15 FTE x base loading (\$3750) =	\$56,250
5 ECT x ECT loading (\$2300) =	\$11,500
Total funding amount for the service =	\$67,750

3.2.1 Full time equivalent staff

Each service will be provided with a base amount for each of its eligible FTE employees.

The FTE is 38 hours per week on average as per the Modern Award. For example, where a staff member works 30 hours per week, the provider of the service will be eligible for 79% of the full amount of \$3750(30/38 x 100) for that employee.

The application requires the provider to advise the Department of the total number of FTE contact staff employed at each service at the time of application.

Support staff, such as cooks or gardeners, should not be included in the staff count unless a proportion of their time is spent looking after children and the relevant individual has or is actively working towards a relevant early childhood education and care qualification under the National Education and Care Services Legislation. In these cases, the proportion of time spent looking after children can be included in the calculation of the total number of FTE.

Staff who move between services need to be counted on the basis of the number of hours that they work at each service.

Calculating your FTE staff

Programme funding is only available to educators for the hours spent working in LDC services even where the service is a multi-care type service. Staff employed in the LDC service but working in other service types, such as preschool or outside school hours care, must have their hours spent in these other services excluded from the calculation.

FTE is a standard unit for counting employees based on hours worked. FTE is widely used in government, education and other institutions to convert hours worked by part-time or temporary employees into an equivalent number of full-time employees. For example, an employee working for the full year but half of the 38 hour full-time week (19 hours per week), will amount to 0.5 FTE. Converting hourly figures into FTEs is a straightforward calculation.

How to calculate

To calculate employee FTEs, divide the number of hours that an employee is scheduled to work by the number of hours for a full-time work week (38 hours). An FTE is equal to one person working full time on a standard full-time schedule of 38 hours a week, 52 weeks a year and 1,976 hours per year. To calculate FTEs for one year, divide the total number of labour hours for the year by 1,976.

For example, if the service's total labour hours for the last financial year are 22,000, use the following equation:

$$22,000 \div 1976 = 11.1 \text{ FTEs}$$

An alternate method is to calculate the number of hours each employee works on average in a week. To determine FTEs for a week, divide a week's total number of hours for the employee by 38. For example, if the provider's total hours of work for the week involved six people working 30 hours, plus five people working 38 hours, use the following equation:

$$(6 \text{ people} \times 30 \text{ hours}) + (5 \text{ person} \times 38 \text{ hours}) = 370 \text{ hours}$$

$$370 \div 38 = 9.7 \text{ FTEs}$$

Note: Overtime should not be included in total contact hours.

3.2.2 Early childhood teachers

Services with early childhood teachers (ECT) will receive an additional loading per FTE ECT over the funding period. This loading recognises that ECTs need to maintain networks and connections in the evolving teaching field; that professional development activities can be more expensive for university qualified staff; and the particular professional isolation that is experienced by many ECTs working in LDC settings.

The Education and Care Services National Regulations define an ECT as a person with an approved early childhood teaching qualification.

An approved early childhood teaching qualification means a qualification approved by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority and included in the list of approved early childhood teaching qualifications published under Regulation 137 (see www.acecqa.gov.au/educators-and-providers/1/qualifications).

For the purposes of these Guidelines, an ECT can be working towards their qualification.

3.2.3 Geographic isolation

Childcare and early learning services in rural and remote areas face similar challenges in meeting the NQF qualification requirements to metropolitan early childhood and learning services. However, the challenges are more acute in rural and remote areas. Services in these areas particularly struggle to provide ongoing professional development and to replace these qualified staff when they are on leave. Educators in rural and remote areas also face a range of challenges in gaining qualifications such as: travelling long distances; accessing recognition of prior learning (RPL); and needing to study for qualifications through online delivery mechanisms.

As a result, providers of services located in outer regional, remote and very remote locations (as classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Accessibility Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) scale) will receive a loading in recognition of the additional costs faced by educators located in these areas. Those services in remote and very remote locations will receive a slightly higher loading in recognition of the higher costs in remote and very remote areas. The total amount received for being geographically isolated will be based on the number of FTE paid contact employees at the service. The Department will calculate this loading based on the postcode for the service.

3.3 What can funding be used for?

Providers will be able to use the grant funding flexibly to purchase external training, enable staff to undertake internal training or provide assistance with accessing training that is related to the implementation of the NQF. This includes costs associated with backfilling an employee who has gone to training.

While the Government expects that all educators working in a service will benefit from the LDCPDP, the amount provided to the service per FTE employee is a notional amount and the provider can apply this funding flexibly across their workforce in a service in order to meet the needs and circumstances of that service. The provider may decide that some employees receive more training than others, or that one group of employees require additional support in comparison to others. The provider will have the flexibility to make these assessments and decide on the most appropriate use of the funding in line with the professional development needs of their educators.

Under the NQF, all LDC services are required to have a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and to consider the workforce development needs of their educators. This funding represents a significant investment in professional development that may be considerably greater than the current allocation made within an organisation. We recommend that providers review their QIP and update the professional development plans

for educators to ensure that this funding is used for maximum benefit to improve professional practice and to support continuous improvement against the NQS. The QIP will also be a valuable tool when providers are reporting on their use of this funding to the Department.

The programme period is over three years to ensure that providers can plan for longer term professional development for their staff.

Providers need to consider that funding may quickly be used on one item, such as backfilling, and may wish to ensure that they balance expenditure across different professional development activities.

Examples of purposes for which the funding can be used include:

- assisting staff to meet the costs of gaining approved/relevant qualifications
- costs associated with backfilling staff who are absent to attend a professional development activity which is part of the educator's professional development plan
- provision of specific training, such as an on-site course
- purchase of minor capital equipment up to a total of \$3,000 per service, such as information technology equipment for the service that will assist staff to upgrade qualifications or that can be demonstrated as an essential requirement for professional development purposes and/or facilitates access to online courses or training
- purchasing of materials such as academic journals, teaching packs, or minor resources
- transport/accommodation costs related to attendance at professional development training/activities
- attendance at industry conferences with a professional development focus
- any other activities that the Department deems appropriate but is not listed above (services will need to request approval from the Department in writing).

Services may collaborate together to organise activities in order to get the best value for money.

3.3.1 Types of professional development

Providers should consider each training opportunity closely and ensure the training provided is relevant and robust. The Department will provide further information through factsheets and FAQs on its website www.education.gov.au/lcdpdp to assist services in making a decision about choosing training packages and training providers.

In choosing and purchasing professional development for educators, providers should ensure that the professional development purchased using the LDCPDP:

- is commensurate with the needs of the educator
- represents value for money
- can withstand public scrutiny, and will not bring the service or the Commonwealth into disrepute
- complies with existing legislation and requirements in relation to Occupational Health and Safety.

The following are examples of the types of training that providers could use.

Formal training

- nationally recognised training packages endorsed by the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (CSHISC)
- early childhood education undergraduate or postgraduate courses through a registered higher education provider
- recognition of prior learning (RPL).

Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)

- nationally recognised training packages delivered by RTOs
- accredited training as well as short courses and workshops provided by RTOs. These may include the study of individual modules that make up the aforementioned training packages.

Informal training

The delivery of informal training may include:

- events, conferences and forums
- mentoring and coaching
- informal sessions and networking.

In-house, external or online courses pertaining to the improvement of the service or in the field of child care and early learning, including:

- Indigenous education programmes, including cultural awareness
- cultural competency
- inclusion of children with additional needs
- supporting families and children at risk
- educational practice
- leadership or mentoring.

Resources

Providers may use funds for the purchase of minor equipment or resources, which may include the purchase of:

- textbooks
- digital resources (CD, DVD Software, including online resource subscription)
- information technology equipment that facilitate access to online learning for staff (up to a total of \$3000 per service)
- magazine, journal or newspaper subscriptions.

Travel

All travel funded under this programme must be in line with the travel conditions specified in Remuneration Tribunal, Determination 2004/03, Official Travel by Office Holders, Tier 3 Rates, available from <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2011C00716>.

3.4 What the LDCPDP cannot be used for

The funding cannot be used for:

- wage increases and over time payments
- purchase of major capital equipment (a physical item that is over \$3000) or undertaking capital works or renovations
- training undertaken before the funding period commences or after the funding period ends
- an activity already funded by another entity, e.g. a state or territory government
- overseas conferences, study tours or workshops
- training that is not related to the EYLF or the NQF.

3.5 Funding period

The funding period is the period from the date when a funding agreement is signed until the end date of the funding agreement. No funding can be used after 30 June 2017.

3.5.1 Structure of payments

Providers will receive three payments. The first will be paid on commencement of the funding agreement. The remaining milestone payments will be paid in June 2015 and June 2016.

Reporting and acquittal will be required during the funding period. Milestone payments are conditional on acceptance of progress reports by the Department. Final acquittal will be required three months after all the funds have been spent or three months after 30 June 2017, whichever is earlier.

3.6 Evidence to demonstrate that funds have been spent on professional development

As with all Government programmes, evidence of the proper use of taxpayers' money will be required.

Providers will be required to demonstrate how the funds have been spent, through the provision of four reports to the Department:

1. *Progress Report One* is due on 30 April 2015, and must:
 - provide details of the provider's expenditure of the funding covering the period from the Project Period Start date to 31 March 2015
 - describe how the funding has assisted the provider to implement the NQF objectives and the outcomes for educators and children to date
 - provide details as to the provider's plans for the total funding.
2. *Progress Report Two* is due on 30 April 2016, and must:
 - provide details of the provider's expenditure of the funding covering the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016
 - describe how the funding has assisted the provider to implement the NQF objectives and the outcomes for educators and children to date
 - provide details as to the provider's plans for the total funding.
3. *Final Report* is due three months after the end of June 2017, and must:
 - describe in detail the outcomes for educators and children
 - describe how the funding was used and acquit the funds
 - provide evidence that the obligations under the funding agreement have been completed
 - describe how the funding has assisted the provider to implement the NQF objectives e.g. supporting educators to complete necessary qualifications and improved outcomes for children.
4. *Financial Report* is due three months after the funds have been fully spent or three months after 30 June 2017, whichever is earlier, and must comply with the applicable requirements of the funding agreement.

In order to facilitate this process, providers should consider updating their QIP and Workforce Development Plans to reflect the extra investment by the Government in professional development. Providers may then use the plan to acquit against at the end of the funding period rather than develop a separate document.

After the programme has commenced, the Department will provide a reporting template that should be used by providers. This will be available on the Department's website at www.education.gov.au/ldcpdp

Providers must keep evidence of purchase, for example fee payment from the training provider, and produce the evidence on the Department's request.

Funds that have not been spent in the funding period must be returned to the Department.

4 Making an Application for Funding

To apply for funding, the provider must lodge a completed online application form with the Department in accordance with these Guidelines at: www.mychild.gov.au/pages/LDCPDP.aspx

The online application form draws on information already held by the Department.

Eligible providers will be required, in relation to their service(s), to:

- identify/describe the total number of FTE staff as at the date of their application
- declare the FTE number of ECT staff they are currently employing
- provide the number of licensed places
- provide contact information for an official representative of the provider.

Providers will need to input this information by 5pm (AEST) on 13 June 2014 on the MyChild website at www.mychild.gov.au/pages/LDCPDP.aspx

Applications received after this date may not be accepted or processed. Providers should be aware that information may be extracted from sources such as the National Quality Agenda Information Technology System (NQA ITS) and the Child Care Management System (CCMS) to verify claims.

Providers should not forecast additional employees not yet employed, even if they are planning to expand or increase their occupancy. The calculation of funding will be based on the current FTE number of educator staff required to run the service at the time of application.

The Department may request further clarification on the total claim for FTE.

The contact person nominated on the online application form must be a person who has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the provider.

4.1 How to Apply

4.1.1 Advertisement of an application process

The Department will advertise the application process on the Department's website at www.education.gov.au, the Programme's website at www.education.gov.au/ldcpdp and on the Government grants website at www.grantslink.gov.au. Notification of posting of programme information will also be emailed to all CCB approved LDC providers through the usual CCMS email channels.

CCB approved LDC providers will be advised of the opening date for applications.

4.1.2 Completing your online application

The Online Application will be available on the MyChild website at www.mychild.gov.au/pages/LDCPDP.aspx

The Department recommends that you (the contact person for the provider) read the form fully before you start to complete it.

To complete the form successfully, you must:

- read the Guidelines and the funding agreement before you complete the form
- answer all of the relevant questions in the format(s) shown
- read the requirements that you will declare you are complying with, including the requirement “that you have read and understood the Guidelines and the funding agreement”
- acknowledge that it is a serious offence to provide false and misleading information
- submit the completed form.

The Department is under no obligation to accept or assess applications that are incomplete or have not been completed in accordance with these instructions.

The following is a set of step by step instructions for completing the application form, directed at ‘you’, being the contact person for the provider.

Step One

The online application form will require two identifiers that are unique to each service.

- Child Care Benefit ID – This is the ID the service received when the provider applied for approval of the service for the purposes of the family assistance law (for Child Care Benefit) . The ID commences with a number then followed by a combination of letters and numbers eg. 1-AAA111 or 1-1A1A1A
- Service Approval ID – This is the ID the service received from the local state or territory regulatory authority when the service began operating under the NQF. This ID commences with the letters SE then followed by eight numbers eg SE-00000000

The IDs used are unique to individual services and will enable a service to be verified through a data matching process by sourcing the information in the NQA ITS and CCMS.

Please note if the data matching is unsuccessful, the system will alert you with an error message and you will not be able to proceed any further. In this event, please check the IDs you are using prior to contacting the Department on 1800 020 212.

Step Two

The online form will then prepopulate fields derived from CCMS. These fields will include

- Trading name/Business name
- Location/address.

Step Three

You will be required to fill in a number of additional fields and confirm them:

- Official contact person that represents the service
- Contact details
- How many FTE contact educators are at your service?
- How many of your FTE contact staff are Early Childhood Teachers?
- Number of licensed places.

Step Four

Once you complete the additional fields, you will be required to declare that you, the contact person for the provider:

- are an official representative of the child care service
- are authorised to provide information on behalf of the service
- authorise the Department to verify any information provided in the application form
- declare that the information given on the form is true and correct
- declare that the contact person has read and understood the Guidelines and the funding agreement
- understand that providing false or misleading information is a serious offence
- understand that the data collected on this application form may be used for the purposes of research and the development of national policy with respect to childcare and early learning services.

Press “continue” to proceed to the next page.

Step Five

The system will then provide a summary of the information provided by you. You will then have the option to press “Submit” to complete the application.

Step Six

The system will auto generate a response confirming that your application has been lodged and a Reference Number will be issued.

4.1.3 Multi-service providers

Providers with ten or more services may complete an application for each service or, alternatively, provide the information required in a single template provided by the Department. The template application is offered as a simpler application for multi-service providers. Providers that would like to take up the option of providing the information for each of their services in a single template application may contact the Department on 1800 020 212 or via email on ldcpdp@education.gov.au and provide their legal name and ABN.

Once the template has been filled in, the provider may send their completed template to ldcpdp@education.gov.au by 5pm (AEST) on 13 June 2014.

Please note that multi-service providers will also be required to declare that:

- the contact person is an official representative of the child care service
- the contact person is authorised to provide information on behalf of the service
- they authorise the Department to verify any information provided in this application form
- the information given on the form is true and correct
- they have read and understood the Guidelines and the funding agreement
- they note that it is a serious offence to provide false and misleading information
- they understand that the data collected on this application form may be used for the purposes of research and the development of national policy with respect to childcare and early learning services.

This declaration can be done in an email when the completed spreadsheet is returned to the Department.

4.1.4 Special circumstances

Providers that are unable to submit an online application due to special circumstances must make alternative arrangements with the Department regarding their application. Providers that have difficulty accessing online services should call the Hotline on 1800 020 212 to make alternative arrangements.

Providers that buy or sell a service(s) during the funding period will be required to advise the Department so that any appropriate funding agreement variations can be actioned.

4.1.5 Application acknowledgement

An online application acknowledgement will be issued by the system instantly. Please contact the Department on phone 1800 020 212 or email to ldcpdp@education.gov.au if you do not receive an acknowledgement within 24 hours.

Information provided by you will need to be confirmed and verified by the Department. The Department reserves the right to contact you to request evidence substantiating your claim.

4.1.6 Changing a submitted application

A provider wishing to alter details in their application at any time will need the Reference Number issued as a result of applying for the programme and will need to contact the Department. Providers cannot apply more than once.

4.1.7 Assistance with the application form

Providers requiring assistance with the online application can contact the Department on 1800 020 212 or email the Department on ldcpdp@education.gov.au.

5 The assessment process

Funding has been determined on the basis that all eligible providers will be provided with funding. All CCB approved LDC providers are able to apply for funding under the LDCPDP with the exception of providers with a funding agreement that have received funding under the EYQF (see section 3.1.1). The assessment process is not competitive and is not first in/first served. Applications will be assessed as they are received throughout the period that the application process is open. The assessment process has three steps:

1. Eligibility/validation of application

Information provided by applicants will be reviewed by the Department using information and systems available within the Department as well as from external sources. If an anomaly has been identified, the Department will contact the applicant directly to request further information. Information obtained from checks on applicants described in this section, may be taken into account in making the final decision to offer funding.

2. Calculation of funding amount based on information received and verified. The Department will calculate the loading amounts based on the information provided in the application form. The postcode of the service will be used to determine the eligibility for the loading for geographic isolation and the amount of funding for the service.
3. Approval of funding amount by the delegate in the Department.

6 Process for entering into a funding agreement

Once the Department receives a completed application form, the Department will verify the information and calculate the funding amount for each service.

The Department will notify the applicant of the outcome of the application and, if successful, provide an offer of funding by sending a Letter of Offer as soon as possible, but generally within 30 days from receipt of the application.

Providers will have 30 days in which to respond and confirm acceptance of the offer in the Letter of Offer. If the offer is accepted, a contract will be formed between the provider and the Commonwealth substantially on the terms set out in the funding agreement available online at www.education.gov.au/lcdpdp.

If you are unable to respond within this timeframe, you should contact the Department to request an extension of the offer. If a provider does not accept the offer within 30 days or within such extension of time to which the Department agrees, the offer will lapse.

Applicants who use the multi-service provider template will be offered one funding agreement for all their services. The funding agreement will list all the services for which the agreement applies, including the funding amount for each service. If a provider owns more than one service, the Department will enter into a funding agreement with the provider that can cover all the services, provided that the provider uses the same Australian Business Number (ABN) for each service.

Providers that received a letter of conditional offer from the Commonwealth in relation to the EYQF programme, but were not offered a written funding agreement, will be required to release the Commonwealth from any claim in relation to the EYQF programme as a condition for receiving funding under the LDCPDP.

These matters will be dealt with by an appropriate clause in the LDCPDP funding agreement.

7 Acquittal Process

Providers will need to acquit the funds three months after the funds have been fully spent or three months after 30 June 2017, whichever is earlier, and must comply with the applicable requirements of the funding agreement.

Reports will also be required to be provided during the course of the funding period. The format of these reports are outlined in Section 3.6 of these Guidelines.

8 Taxation matters

Any taxation issues that arise as result of receiving this grant are the responsibility of the provider. Providers may wish to consult the Australian Taxation Office.

9 Evaluation

The Department may undertake evaluations to determine how the LDCPDP contributed to the professional development of the staff at the service to improve performance against the NQF. Providers may be required to provide information to assist in this evaluation for a period of time after funding has been provided.

10 Freedom of Information

All documents in the possession of Department, including those in relation to the Programme, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act).

The FOI Act creates a general right of access to documents in the Department's possession. Unless a document falls under an exemption provision, it will be made available to the public if requested under the FOI Act.

All FOI requests are to be referred to the Corporate and External Review Team of the Legal and Compliance Group, in the Department's National Office:

By email: foi@education.gov.au
By mail: Corporate & External Review Team
Legal and Compliance Group
Department of Education
GPO Box 9880
CANBERRA ACT 2601

11 Confidential Information

All applicants must identify any information contained within their applications or in any other documentation that they consider should be treated as confidential and provide reasons for the request. The Department reserves the right to accept or refuse a request to treat information as confidential.

Information provided to the Department that has not been accepted as confidential by the Department may be shared or published, as determined by the Department.

Confidential information may be released if authorised or required by or under law.

12 Contact

Further information regarding the programme is available on the Department's website at www.education.gov.au/lcdpdp.

Or you may contact the Department as outlined below:

Email: lcdpdp@education.gov.au

Phone: 1800 020212

Mail: GPO Box 9880, Canberra City, ACT 2601

The Department has responsibility for managing complaints in relation to funding and/or administration of the LDCPDP. Any complaints regarding the Programme should be lodged using the contact details outlined above. Complaints will be handled in accordance with the Department's complaint handling policy.

13 Glossary of Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ABN	Australian Business Number
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
ARIA	Accessibility Remoteness Index of Australia
CCB	Child Care Benefit
CCR	Child Care Rebate
EA	Enterprise Agreement
ECT	Early Childhood Teacher
LDCPDP	Long Day Care Professional Development Programme
FWA	Fair Work Act 2009
LDC	Long Day Care
NQS	National Quality Standard
NQA	National Quality Agenda
NQF	National Quality Framework
PD	Professional Development
RTO	'Registered Training Organisation' means a training organisation which meets the Australian Qualifications Framework Essential Standards for Registrations and is registered through the Australian Skills Quality Authority