

Information for Providers/Suppliers about IDF Innovative Solutions Support

This fact sheet is for potential providers/suppliers of services to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services under the Inclusion Support Program.

The Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (the department) funds the Inclusion Support Program (ISP). The IDF Innovative Solutions Support stream is available through the program to assist eligible ECEC services to fund innovative, flexible and responsive solutions to barriers to inclusion and embed inclusive practices.

Innovative Solutions Support provides flexible funding to empower services to carefully consider their inclusion challenges and take on an active role in finding solutions and build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs.

The department may also directly fund relevant organisations (such as ECEC peak bodies and inclusion specialists) to deliver strategic and collaborative projects across a region or state/territory to promote innovation and support for inclusive practices within ECEC services.

What can Innovative Solutions Support be used for?

Innovative Solutions Support funding can be used to fund solutions to barriers to inclusion, other than subsidising the employment of an Additional Educator (another funding support available under ISP), support that is provided by Inclusion Agencies (provide tailored support to services through the ISP, including helping services to apply for funding) or available through other sources. Projects can focus on a particular care environment, the whole service or a group of services.

Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Cultural advice and mentoring including services from cultural experts, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and bilingual support including translating and interpreting services and bilingual workers.
- Mentoring and coaching from specialists, including educators learning new practices and approaches and collaboration with specialists to determine and implement strategies to include a particular child or children.
- Specialised training essential to a child's enrolment, such as specific instruction to support the inclusion of a child with complex support needs.
- Facilitating networking and community engagement, such as opportunities for professional conversations, and visits to services and agencies.

How does the ECEC service apply?

The service, with support from the Inclusion Agency/Professional, progresses through the following steps:

- Identifies the barriers to inclusion.
- Designs a project to address the barriers.
- Sources a provider/supplier to assist the service in implementing the project.
- Completes and submits an application to the Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM), including a project proposal and a financial quote from one or more providers/suppliers, through the online IS Portal.

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What information does the provider/supplier need to give to the ECEC service?

ECEC services are responsible for sourcing financial quotes from appropriate providers/suppliers to support the delivery of the Innovative Solutions Support project. Steps may include:

- The service discusses the Innovative Solutions Support project with potential providers/suppliers.
- The provider/supplier decides if they are able to deliver what the service requires to implement the project and achieve the intended outcomes.
- The provider/supplier gives the service a financial quote, based on their discussions and agreement reached with the service.

How much funding can a service apply for?

There is no specified limit for an Innovative Solutions Support application. Applications requesting over \$10,000 are referred to the department by the IDFM for approval.

Financial quotes should be provided on the provider's/supplier's letterhead and include the following:

- The provider's/supplier's registered business name
- The provider's/supplier's ABN number (there can be limited exceptions to this requirement for providers/suppliers who do not have an ABN).
- Date of quote
- An itemised list which outlines the cost for each component of the support being provided, including hourly rate/s and any travel costs.
- Project duration, including number of hours, number of weeks and hours per week.
- The quote outlines the total cost, exclusive of GST, plus list the GST component.

The financial quotes must be consistent with and support the information in the service's project proposal. Financial quotes will be assessed based in terms of the *quality of service provision* and the *value for money* provided.

What will the ECEC service consider when selecting a preferred provider/supplier?

- What is the provider's/supplier's experience with providing the type of support they are requesting for their project? Does the provider/supplier have the skill and knowledge required?
- Will the support enable the service to achieve the intended outcomes of the project?
- Does the quote, including the costs and services being offered, align with the project proposal?
- Does the quote represent value for money? Are all costs outlined in the quote necessary? Can any costs be reduced?

When an ECEC service is submitting their application, they are required to provide reason/s for why they have selected the preferred provider/supplier.

What happens after the service submits the application?

Once the application is submitted, it usually takes between 5 and 15 business days for the service to know the outcome of their application. Please note that part of the application process may involve the application being returned to the service for further information and clarification, which will impact on this timeframe. Once the service's Letter of Offer is signed and returned to the IDFM, the service will typically receive full payment within 4-6 business days.

What happens once an application is approved?

The service and provider/supplier should then confirm their agreement, including payment schedule and project timeframe. The payment schedule to the provider/supplier should be adjusted to reflect any payment conditions in the approval provided by the IDFM. Payments are made by the service to the provider/supplier. Please note, the service is able to change providers/suppliers, if needed, to ensure the project is implemented as per the approval given.

What happens at the end of the project?

At the end of the project services are required to complete an online declaration advising if whether the project was delivered, and outcomes of the project achieved.

It is expected that services will be able to use the skills, knowledge and confidence gained through the implementation of the project to include children with additional needs at the service, now and into the future.

For more information about Innovative Solutions Support and ISP go to

<https://www.education.gov.au/inclusion-support-program-isp> and
<https://www.idfm.org.au/innovative-solutions>