Government of South Australia

Office for Early Childhood Development

February 2025

South Australia's Flying Start Workforce Grants

Early childhood workforce attraction and retention grants for regional, rural, and hard-to-staff communities.

Acknowledgement of Country

From the heart:

We acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples as the First peoples of South Australia and as custodians of the lands, waters, skies and communities where we live, learn and raise children.

We recognise Aboriginal peoples as having the longest living culture, raising children safe and strong in their identity, Community, Culture, and Connection to Country.

We pay our deep respects to Elders past and present, and their role as the first knowledge sharers for children. We follow in their footsteps.

Aboriginal peoples, working with and for children, are central in shaping our work. Their wisdom, advice, and guidance enriches our practices, creating a more inclusive and culturally safe environment for children and families.

We respect Aboriginal peoples' ways of being, doing and wise practices guiding our continual learning.

Together we walk and build stronger, more supportive communities for all children.

Terminology

In South Australia, we acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which the staff of the Government of South Australia works. We respect preference to use the term 'Aboriginal peoples' to acknowledge in written and spoken language both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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These guidelines set out the funding requirements for the Flying Start Workforce Grants program. The Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD) is responsible for administering the program.

Key information

Name of grant:	Flying Start Workforce Grants
Grants opening date:	Monday 10 February 2025
Grants closing date:	Friday 21 March 2025
Outcome notifications:	Tuesday 6 May 2025
Funding available:	Up to $100,000
Type of funding:	One-off funding
Eligible organisations:	A broad range, including early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, local government authorities, regional development area committees, community support organisations, ECEC training providers and businesses.

Background

In response to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, the Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD) was created as the system steward. Its task is to elevate South Australia as a national leader in the early childhood development sector and improve the lives of South Australian children, reducing vulnerability and improving outcomes.

Regional, rural and hard-to-staff communities face multiple, complex barriers in building a diverse workforce in ECEC services. These complexities vary from location to location. OECD's past workforce strategy consultations found that local communities play a crucial role in attracting and retaining early childhood professionals.

New approaches are needed to develop a more diverse workforce, including consideration of age, gender, culture and abilities of educators, teachers and trainers.

These guidelines provide details about the Innovation and Local Action Fund to support regional, rural and hard-to-staff ECEC services, so they can build and retain their early childhood workforce.

Purpose of the grants

Flying Start Workforce Grants will offer South Australian regional, rural and hard-to-staff communities support to attract, retain and sustain their early childhood workforce.

The grant is available to support South Australian ECEC services prepare for and meet workforce requirements to successfully implement 3-year-old preschool program.

As an applicant, your proposal must demonstrate how your organisation will meet the following 3 key elements:

Innovative responses to local needs

- Innovation is the process of bringing about new ideas, methods, services and solutions that have a significant positive impact and value.

- Develop your grant application by considering the unique needs of your local community, and how best the funding can support new initiatives to attract and retain the early childhood workforce.

Collaboration through partnerships and consortiums

- Collaboration between organisations involves working together towards common goals, leveraging each other's strengths and resources – a synergy that allows organisations to achieve outcomes that might be unattainable individually. Effective collaboration fosters innovation, enhances efficiency and builds stronger relationships.

- Collaborating with others may help you to conceive, develop, design and implement new initiatives.

- Your application should outline collaboration, across (but not limited to) ECEC service providers, community groups, local government agencies or training organisations. Consider forming partnerships and/or consortiums to share knowledge, skills and expertise, to address complex challenges more effectively, drive growth and create value for all stakeholders.

Cultural safety, wellbeing and mental health

- Your application should identify and include initiatives that support the workforce and enable cultural safety, wellbeing and mental health to overcome barriers.

- Barriers may include isolation, high levels of vulnerability in families and communities, and limited access to services.

Grant objectives

Flying Start Workforce Grants must drive local action and innovative approaches to attract and retain a diverse early childhood workforce in regional, rural and hard to staff locations. Grant initiatives must embed cultural safety, wellbeing and mental health in the local workforce. Objectives are to:

- design and deliver initiatives in partnership to benefit broader ECEC sector workforce attraction and retention needs, beyond one ECEC service
- enable communities to determine and implement initiatives that align with their specific workforce contexts and needs
- develop strategies to maintain and support a stable ECEC workforce in regional, rural, and hard to staff communities
- promote initiatives to enhance workplace flexibility and ability to work across multiple ECEC sites to maximise services' access to skilled labour
- implement programs to increase the number of qualified, professional educators, teachers and trainers in regional, rural, and hard to staff communities
- embed cultural safety, wellbeing, and mental health through the ECEC workforce growth initiatives.

Key dates

Activity	Dates
Applications open	Monday 10 February 2025
Applications close	Friday 21 March 2025
Applications assessed	Friday 11 April 2025
Approval	Thursday 17 April 2025
Notification of outcome	By Tuesday 6 May 2025
Contract execution	From Tuesday 20 May 2025
Grant delivery	From Tuesday 3 June 2025
End of grant funding	Tuesday 30 June 2026

Who can apply

To be eligible for funding, organisations must:

- be currently operating or providing support to organisations within South Australia
- have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- have the appropriate type and level of insurance for the activities that are the subject of this grant
- be located in or currently providing or planning to provide support to ECEC organisations in:
    - an outer regional, remote or very remote area according to ARIA+ classification
      AND / OR
    - a geographic area (Statistical Area Level 2) with a SEIFA Decile of 1 or 2 on the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage 2021
- involve ECEC services providing (or eligible to provide) preschool in a regional, rural, or hard to staff location. ECEC services involved in the application *must be an approved provider* under the:
    - Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011 incorporating the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Regulations 2011, and maintain approval
      OR
    - Early childhood education and care services funded under the Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR) Grant
      AND
    - employ (or seek to employ) a degree-qualified early childhood teacher (ECT) or person with a Special Authority to Teach.

Applications from consortiums and partnerships are encouraged as they allow organisations to combine their capacity, specialist capability, and expertise. However, a single organisation must be nominated as the lead organisation in the application form to take responsibility for receiving and managing funds and the grant reporting and acquittal process.

Funding available

One-off grants up to the value of $100,000 are available. Grant funding will be awarded based on a competitive assessment process. Funding is not guaranteed and will depend on the quality and merit of applications received.

Your application must include costings to demonstrate anticipated funding spend that aligns with the purpose and objectives of the program.

The amount of funding approved for applicants will be based on the eligible budget items included in the application.

Initiatives that may be funded

The following are examples of initiatives that can be funded – but funding is not limited to these examples:

- **Collaboration between ECEC services** to make better use of workforce staffing capability and capacity across a region. For example, developing a shared educator/teacher model where staff can be shared across multiple sites

- **Increasing retention** through designing and delivering training/professional development for the ECEC workforce that reflects the needs of your local community, which may include cultural safety, induction programs, educator pedagogy/practice, leadership capability, and community connections

- **Attraction campaigns** that may include workshops, seminars and initiatives to attract/recruit prospective educators and/or teachers including those from diverse cohorts. This could include addressing barriers to support teachers/educators when settling into the local area, and building community connections

- **Attracting/retaining staff from diverse cohorts** such as Aboriginal, neurodiverse or multicultural backgrounds to transition to employment in ECEC services by assisting individuals and/or service providers. Supports may include flexible recruitment strategies, induction, cultural safety, creating an inclusive team environment, or professional support

- **Establishing/expanding regional study and learning** hubs to host students for study days or online learning, provide spaces for regional trainers to work with students, provide space for educators/teachers to connect and engage in professional development, and support collaboration between services

- **Supporting local educators/teachers to become trainers/assessors** to build sustainable solutions to training challenges where there are no RTOs in the region.

Activities that may be funded

Funding is available to cover various costs related to your proposed initiative – here are some examples:

- venue hire, guest speaker fees, catering and reimbursement of travel costs for participants attending attraction activities
- development of, or purchase of a training/professional development program, facilitator and backfill costs for participants accessing the professional development
- rostering software costs and travel allowance for staff working across multiple services as part of shared workforce capacity trials
- fees and backfill related to upskilling a local educator/teacher to become a trainer/assessor
- contribution to salary and on-costs for staff responsible for implementing the initiative.

Initiatives and activities not funded

Funding is not available for:

- business-as-usual and compliance activities and costs (including operational staff wages/salaries payroll, performance management, rent, insurance or power)
- activities already funded through other sources
- purchase of prizes, gifts, individual relocation costs or incentive payments
- capital works or infrastructure
- initiatives that have been started/completed at time of assessment (retrospective funding)
- projects that have ongoing costs beyond the life of the grant that cannot be funded autonomously.

Funding conditions

- Applicants must agree to the requirements outlined in these guidelines.
- Applicants must enter into a formal funding agreement.
- Applicants must provide regular progress updates, milestone reports, and an acquittal form with supporting evidence after the project is completed.
- Applicants must return any unspent grant funds, or grant funds not expended in accordance with the funding conditions.
- Applicants must accept responsibility for any costs exceeding the agreed funding amount or unforeseen expenditure. No additional grant funding will be provided.

How to apply

Overview

Your application must include:

- clear evidence of eligibility
- a project plan that describes the initiatives to be undertaken over the grant period
- a budget proposal outlining how the funding will be used to implement the proposed initiatives
- suitable responses to the assessment criteria
- evidence of support and initial engagement with your local community and early childhood services
- all requested documentation.

See information about what to include in your application in the Workforce grants application checklist .

Late applications will not be accepted.

Submitting your application

Applications will be submitted via an online form, through SmartyGrants

Support available

Various resources are available to help you prepare your grant application including:

- frequently asked questions
- information webinar
- Workforce grants application checklist.

For help and advice please contact: OECD.ECWorkforceSupport@sa.gov.au.

For assistance with the SmartyGrants online application system, please:

- review the SmartyGrants Help Guide and Applicant Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- contact SmartyGrants Support Desk (03) 9320 6888 between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday
- email service@smartygrants.com.au.

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Assessment process

Approach

The Flying Start Workforce Grant is competitive.

We will review applications to ensure they are complete, meet the eligibility criteria, and comply with program guidelines. Eligible and compliant applications will then proceed to the assessment stage.

All eligible applications will be assessed and ranked using the assessment criteria below.

The assessment panel consists of OECD employees with relevant experience and expertise in the early childhood sector, workforce reform and program evaluation/implementation.

Applications will be assessed on the extent to which the proposed initiative/s will increase the ECEC workforce to support the roll-out of 3-year-old preschool programs.

The Chief Executive, OECD will be advised of the panel's recommendations and will make the final decision on grant funding. All decisions relating to the allocation of funding will be final and may not be challenged.

Table 1 Assessment criteria table

Theme	Criteria	Weighting
Workforce attraction	The extent to which the proposal will attract, retain/sustain an early childhood workforce in the local community.	20%
Collaboration, partnership and consortium	The application details how knowledge, skills and expertise between collaborating/partner organisations will be shared to improve ECEC sector workforce attraction and retention needs across a community.	15%
Cultural safety, wellbeing and mental health	The application explains how cultural safety, wellbeing and mental health aspects of the ECEC workforce will be embedded in the proposal.	15%
Innovation	The proposal is an innovative way to respond to ECEC workforce challenges in the local community.	15%
Local need	The application provides evidence of local need for place-based workforce and attraction strategies, and how the proposal will support this need.	15%
Value for money	The application represents value for money. Allowances will be made for the greater costs incurred by services located in rural and remote areas.	15%
Sustainability	The application explains how participating organisations will sustain or cease the activities beyond the funding period.	5%

Additional weighting will be applied where applications include:

- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO), Aboriginal-owned business suppliers or ECEC services
- ECEC services with underutilised approved places due to workforce barriers
- ECEC services operating with consecutive Early Childhood Teacher waivers
- details of initiatives and actions that support multiple ECEC services.

During the assessment process, we may request additional information.

All applicants will be notified of their application outcome in writing via email. Please note the key dates for timeframes.

Successful applications

What we expect

Funding agreement

You will be asked to enter into a funding agreement.

Payments

Payments will be provided at the times and in the manner specified in the funding agreement.

Your payment schedule will be determined based on the proposed project milestones.

Payments will be subject to meeting all conditions outlined in program guidelines and the individual funding agreement, including reporting requirements and evidence of milestones being completed.

Grant reporting requirements

You must meet ongoing project monitoring and reporting obligations, including:

- submitting a progress report at 3, 6 and 9 months after receiving the first payment
- submitting a final report at the conclusion of the funding period
- submitting a funding acquittal document at the conclusion of the funding period, in line with treasurer's instruction 15
- participating in evaluation activities or requests from the program team.

Your reports must demonstrate and detail your key activities, progress stage (not started/started/complete), include a summary of your main progress or outcomes, and information about factors impacting your progress and forward priorities.

Timeframes

Any activities that you propose in your application must be completed within the 12-month funding agreement. Any request to extend the timeframe must be submitted in writing to OECD. We cannot guarantee any extensions.

Treatment of confidential information

If an applicant believes that any information provided in their application is confidential or commercial-in-confidence, the applicant must clearly identify such information and the reason for its confidentiality.

Applicants should be aware that the OECD is subject to certain legislative, Parliamentary and administrative accountability and transparency requirements of the Australian Government and Government of South Australia, including public disclosure in accordance with Department of the Premier and Cabinet policy.

The OECD will treat all information provided by applicants sensitively. Any information contained in, or relating to, an application, including information identified by an applicant as confidential, may be disclosed by the OECD:

- to its employees, advisers or third parties in order to evaluate and assess an application
- within the Government of South Australia or other entities where this serves the legitimate interest of the OECD
- in response to a request by a House or Committee of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia or South Australia
- if the application is successful, for promotion of project activities and outcomes
- where information is authorised or permitted by law to be disclosed
- where the information is already in the public domain.

Questions or feedback

If you have suggestions or comments, we would like to hear them. We aim to continuously improve this program to better meet your needs and to support successful project outcomes towards high-quality preschool delivery.

Please contact us at OECD.ECWorkforceSupport@sa.gov.au.

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Glossary

Acquittal	The process of reporting on and verifying the use of grant funds, including providing evidence of expenditure and project completion
Applicant	The individual or organisation applying for funding
Application	Documents used to apply for funding
ACCO	Aboriginal community-controlled organisation
AEDC	<u>Australian Early Development Census</u>
Approved provider	A person or entity who holds a provider approval (National Law), which authorises a person to apply for one or more service approvals and is valid in all Australian jurisdictions
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+) | The Australian Centre for Housing Research | University of Adelaide
Collaboration, partnerships and consortiums	Where a collective of stakeholders work together to bring their unique skills and experience and share equally to help achieve their combined goals more efficiently through resources, expertise and networks
Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR)	The [Community Child Care Fund Restricted](#) (CCCFR) Grant supports ECEC services to address barriers in child care participation, particularly targeting disadvantaged and vulnerable families and communities.
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
Innovation	A new idea, design or product or the development of new ideas, design, and products
Grant funding	Government financial support to eligible applicants for approved projects, subject to specific conditions
Grant program	This initiative designed to provide funding to eligible applicants for projects that align with program objectives
Milestones	A key event in a proposed initiative used to monitor progress, which must be met before planned payments are received and the project moves to the next stage
Minister	Minister for Education, Training and Skills, the Hon Blair Boyer MP

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OECD	Office for Early Childhood Development – the organisation that manages this grants program, responsible for assessing applications, distributing funds and supporting successful projects
Organisations	Examples are service providers, local government areas, registered training organisations, community groups
SIEFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2021	Australian Bureau of Statistics
Special Authority to Teach	Services that are unable to secure a registered teacher as required by the Teachers Registration and Standards Act 2004 can apply to the Teachers Registration Board for a Special Authority for an Unregistered Person to teach (Special Authority).
Value for money	The extent to which the project delivers the maximum return on investment to meet program objectives
Weighted criteria	Specific factors considered when assessing applications, with varying levels of importance assigned to each criterion
Workforce	Early childhood education and care workforce including Certificate III, diploma-qualified individuals as well as early childhood teachers