



Government of
South Australia

Office for Early Childhood Development

February 2025

South Australia's Flying Start Professional Network Grants

Grants to support the expansion of existing, or the establishment of new, early childhood networks across South Australia.



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 Professional Networks Grants. The Office for Early Childhood Development (OECDD) is responsible for administering the program.

Key information

Name of Fund:	Flying Start Professional Network Grants
Grants Opening Date:	Monday 10 February 2025
Grants Closing Date:	Friday 21 March 2025
Outcome notifications:	Tuesday 6 May 2025
Funding available:	Type 1: Metropolitan and inner regional – up to \$37,000 across 2 years with possible 1-year extension Type 2: Outer regional and remote – up to \$57,000 across 2 years with possible 1-year extension Type 3: Aboriginal Professional Network (state-wide) – up to \$185,000 across two years with possible 1-year extension.
Type of funding:	Initial funding for two years with potential 1-year extension
Eligible organisations:	A broad range of organisations including early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, early childhood associations, local government organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), Regional Development Australia committees, community services or other entities that can demonstrate capacity and/or experience in organising, co-designing and delivering facilitated professional networks to support collaboration /professional growth in the sector.

Background

In response to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, the Office for Early Childhood Development (OECDD) 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 Australia's children, reducing vulnerability and improving outcomes.

As part of the South Australian Government's early childhood reform package, 3-year-old children will be eligible to receive up to 15 hours per week of preschool. The program will be rolled out between 2026 and 2032. A strong, valued early childhood workforce is fundamental for success investing which is why a record \$96.6 million over 4 years will be invested to grow and support workforce and provide programs will help develop quality teaching and learning in preparation for universal 3-year-old preschool beginning in our state.

The Flying Start Professional Network grants provide funds to support local community services across early childhood education and care, allied health and community services to collaborate to identify areas where they can unite to deliver high quality preschool services and reduce child developmental vulnerability in their community.

These guidelines provide details for organisations applying for Flying Start Professional Networks Grants to help them work together on these goals by expanding an existing local network or starting a new one.

Purpose of the grants

Flying Start Professional Network Grants will offer support to new and established professional networks across South Australia's early childhood sector. Networks will support early childhood professionals, allied health and community services professionals to:

- build and maintain collaborative partnerships
- promote reflective practice, and
- enable shared learning and problem solving for successful implementation of early childhood reforms including the implementation of 3-year-old preschool.

Strong, connected networks will create high quality preschool programs and a better education and care system for children and families.

Enhancing existing professional networks and establishing new professional networks will be critical for success.

Grant objectives

Flying Start Professional Network Grants will support local professionals across early childhood, allied health and community services to expand an existing professional network or establish a new one. The networks will focus on supporting the implementation of early childhood reforms including implementation of 3-year-old preschool in their community and collaborative action to address child developmental vulnerability. Professional Networks must embed cultural safety and include provisions to welcome and support new members from new 3-year-old preschool providers. Objectives are to:

- support professionals working with preschool children and their families through local professional networks throughout South Australia
- recruit members from a broad range of local services that support pre-school children and their families
- facilitate the development of local professional relationships and collaborative partnerships across disciplines
- provide opportunities to identify and mobilise local expertise and resources, discuss service delivery challenges and explore solutions to common problems
- support professionals to reflect on practice and use knowledge of their local context and community through enhanced data literacy skills to guide their teaching and learning and provide effective learning environments
- codesign an agenda that reflects community needs
- develop shared goals and collective actions relating to the implementation of early childhood reforms including 3-year-old preschool, building better connected systems and, ultimately, supporting the reduction of child developmental vulnerability within their community.

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	Initial contract 1 June 2027 – optional extension if agreed by the parties 1 June 2028

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)
- be an early childhood service provider, early childhood association, a local government organisation, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, a community service or other organisation with experience and capacity to organise, co-design and facilitate professional networks to meet the program objectives and build connection across different early childhood and allied health services and settings
- have appropriate type and level of insurance for the activities that are the subject of this grant.

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

Grant applications can seek funding to facilitate multiple networks in each OECD areas or across areas.

Organisations not currently operating or providing support to organisations within South Australia are *ineligible* for funding.

Funding available

There are three types of grants available. Grant funding will be awarded 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.

Table 1 Funding categories

	2025	2026	Total for 2 years	2027
Type 1 Metropolitan and inner regional grants.	Up to \$20,000 – inclusive of set up grant of \$3,000	Up to \$17,000	Up to \$37,000	Up to \$17,000
Type 2 Outer regional & remote grants	Up to \$30,000 – including start-up support of \$3,000 and loading of up to \$4,000 to support participant travel	Up to \$27,000 – including loading of up to \$4,000 to support participant travel	Up to \$57,000 – including travel support	Up to \$27,000 – including loading of up to \$4,000 to support participant travel
Type 3 Aboriginal Professionals Network (state-wide) grant	Up to \$75,000 – including start-up support of \$5,000 and loading of up to \$30,000 to support participant travel	Up to \$110,00 – including loading of up to \$60,000 to support participant travel	Up to \$185,000 – including travel support	Up to \$110,000 – including loading of up to \$60,000 to support participant travel

*Possible extension if milestones met and mutual agreement to continue

These funding categories are designed to increase collaboration of professionals across communities who work with preschool children and their families. Each category is funded for an initial 2 years with the option to extend for a further year pending reporting and acquittal requirements, and mutual agreement between OECD and the grant awardee.

ACCOs are encouraged to apply for grants across Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3.

Only ACCOs are eligible to apply for the Type 3 grant. An Aboriginal Professionals Network must support *the whole of the South Australia*. One service provider may propose a model with either one network or several networks. Year 1 funds can be used to test and co-design the model with communities.

Initiatives that may be funded

Grants are available for a two-year period with the option to extend for an additional year.

Grant applications will focus on one of two approaches:

1. **Expansion** of an existing Professional Network that is ready to align with the Flying Start Professional Network purpose and membership.
2. **Establishment of new** Professional Networks to be organised, co-designed and delivered in alignment with the Flying Start Professional Network purpose and membership.

To be eligible for funding, a Professional Network must meet the following criteria:

- **Membership:** Is inclusive of professionals engaged with or who will be engaged with 3-year-old preschool children from across early childhood education and care services, allied health, and community services, local government services, playgroup providers etc. Networks should be designed to cater for between 25 – 30 participants and maximise access through providing a mix of in-person and online methods.
- **Purpose:** The network must facilitate a co-design process with local professionals who might not otherwise work together. Networks will create opportunities for professionals to:
 - build relationships with each other and work together through regular network meetings
 - identify local community challenges that contribute to child developmental vulnerability including through exploration of local data (such as the Australian Early Development Census)
 - develop shared goals and actions to support early childhood education and care reforms.
 - mobilise local expertise and resources to support children and families
 - reflect on practice and work with other professionals.
- **Place-based:** A network must have a geographical footprint aligned to one of the [8 OECD 'areas'](#), noting that up to 4 networks may operate within each area.
- **Meeting frequency:** Networks will meet once per school term, for a minimum of 3 hours per meeting, bringing together a range of early learning professionals within the local community. This may include early childhood teachers, leaders and educators from government and non-government early learning services, as well as government and non-government allied health and community services.

Activities that may be funded

Funding will only cover costs directly related to the operation of the Professional Network. Examples of eligible costs include:

- venue and equipment hire (room and audio-visual hire fees) including the provision of necessary IT solutions to enable on-line participation
- hiring a professional to facilitate and chair the meeting
- hiring a professional to support co-design of the forward agenda for the Professional Network
- administration of the network including venue booking, administering travel allowances for members, member engagement, planning, documenting minutes and actions documentation, or developing showcase presentations
- hiring a speaker or content expert for insight and professional advice on a topic aligned with the forward agenda
- design and distribution of marketing materials to promote the network and engage new members
- developing resources for professionals
- food, beverages, and consumables including catering for consumption during meetings
- travel allowances (for Type 2 and Type 3 grants only).

Grant applications must include costings to demonstrate anticipated funding aligned with membership, purpose, and local community needs.

Initiatives and activities not funded

Funding is not available for:

- networks with membership from only one service type, for example, members from the same operator or provider type or only services using the same pedagogical approach
- business-as-usual activities such as information sharing meetings
- backfill of participating members
- projects that replicate existing programs offered by the Department for Education or other service providers. Where the intention is to enhance an existing network, the application will demonstrate how the grant will complement and enhance the existing network
- hiring additional early childhood teachers or educators to work with children
- existing networks that do not provide a plan for how their membership will actively expand to meet the Flying Start Professional Network membership definition
- activities already undertaken (retrospective funding)
- interstate or overseas activities
- capital works or infrastructure including purchase or lease of buildings or land
- purchase of child-related resources such as books, puzzles, games and equipment.

Note that funding cannot be used for activities involving children that require supervision of, or authority over, children.

Funding conditions

Successful applicants must:

- agree to the requirements outlined in any grant guidelines.
- enter into a formal funding agreement with the OECD.
- provide regular progress updates, milestone reports, and an acquittal form with supporting evidence after the project is completed.
- provide an attendee and presentation of Professional Network activities and insights at an annual showcase event.
- return any unspent grant funds, or grant funds not expended in accordance with the funding conditions.
- accept responsibility for any costs exceeding the agreed funding amount or unforeseen expenditure. No additional grant funding will be provided.
- offer professional networks both in person and online so that all members can participate.
- administer the travel reimbursement component (Type 2 and Type 3 grants) and apply a consistent and equitable methodology for reimbursements.
- accept OECD referrals into the professional network from new 3-year-old services as they are onboarded throughout the grant funding period

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

How to apply

Overview

Your application must include:

- all requested documentation
- clear evidence of eligibility
- a proposal outlining the approach to expand an existing professional network or develop a new professional network and the geographical footprint
- a budget proposal outlining how funding will be used to implement the professional network
- suitable responses to the assessment criteria
- evidence of support and initial engagement with proposed members of the professional network.

Submitting your application

Applications must be made online through SmartyGrants [here](#).

Support available

Various resources are available to help you prepare your grant application. These include:

- [frequently asked questions](#)
- [information webinar](#)
- [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 the SmartyGrants support desk (03) 9320 6888 between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday or email service@smartygrants.com.au.

Assessment process

Approach

The Flying Start Professional Network Grants are 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 panel will also assess the totality of the grants to support access across the 8 geographical areas and to ensure new providers of 3-year-old preschool have access to a network.

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 support the early childhood sector through professional networks.

The assessment process ensures that projects are prioritised based on their potential impact, alignment with government objectives, and readiness to deliver.

During the assessment process, OECD may request additional information.

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

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 2 Assessment Criteria Table

Theme	Criteria	Weighting
Connection with community	<p>The application shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a designated local geographic footprint aligned with OECD Areas • evidence of existing relationships in its local community. 	20%
Membership development	<p>The application lists proposed member organisations to be included in the professional network including early childhood services, allied health and community services. It shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence of commitment to participate from the proposed member organisations • where an existing network intends to expand its membership, the application shows evidence of how the network will ‘reset’ to welcome new members and ensure the forward agenda is collaboratively designed and owned • how the network will include and induct new providers of 3-year-old preschool as they sign on as providers later in the funding period. 	20%
Co-design capacity	<p>The application shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence of knowledge and the application of co-design principles, or an approach to how these skills will be acquired through the period of the grant • evidence of how co-design will be applied to support the development of a collaborative agenda and action planning with members of the professional network • how local data will be used to support exploration of strengths and challenges, such as the Australian Early Development Census. 	15%
Professional Network management	<p>The application includes consideration of realistic progress and how it will be achieved over the first 12 months including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • membership recruitment and delivery of 4 meetings per year (1 meeting per school term) • developing a forward plan and collaborative actions using co-design and how the network will be managed such as tracking actions and progress towards goals • explanation of how maturity of the professional network over the 2 years will be achieved, such as how activities will be sustained beyond the funding period or how the network will be closed. • outline of how member participation will be maximised through both in-person and online formats. 	15%

Organisational capacity and capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application demonstrates operational capacity and capability to lead the professional network • It includes evidence of commitment to cultural safety practices and an approach to ensure the meetings will be welcoming and safe for professionals from diverse backgrounds 	15%
Value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application offers value for money and shows that the activities have been realistically costed and that the overall proposed budget is proportionate to the number of organisations involved • It shows the number of services and children who will benefit from the proposed activities of the professional network. • It provides evidence of any financial or in-kind co-contribution from the applicant or other organisations <p>Note: allowances will be made for greater costs incurred by Type 2 applications in Outer regional and remote areas and Type 3 applications where the network is for whole-of-state.</p>	15%

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.

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

Grant reporting requirements

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

- submitting progress reports at 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, 24 months
- presenting at the virtual showcase to be held after 12-month reporting and 24 month reporting is complete
- submitting a final report at the conclusion of the funding period
- submitting a funding acquittal at the conclusion of the funding period, in line with the [TREASURERS INSTRUCTION 15](#).
- participating in evaluation activities such as an online focus group and 'real time' surveys conducted at the end of each network meeting.

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 proposed are to be completed within the 2-year funding agreement, any extension request to the timeframe must be submitted in writing to OECD but are not guaranteed.

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.

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
Co-Contribution	The portion of project funding provided by the applicant, which may include cash, land acquired, in-kind contributions or funding from other sources
Contingency Costs	Funds included in the project budget to cover unexpected expenses or risks during implementation.
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
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
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
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

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