

Flying Start Professional Networks – FAQ for partner services

Q. What are the Flying Start Professional Networks?

The Flying Start Professional Network have been established to bring together early childhood education and care, allied health, and community services in geographical areas. Each network's aim is to assist the delivery of high-quality preschool programs and reduce child developmental vulnerability at a community level.

To support the implementation of the Professional Networks, grants (administered by the OECD) were provided to engage facilitators tasked with establishing the new early childhood professional networks.

Networks are offered at no cost and meet 4 times per year (3 hours per quarter).

Q. What is the purpose of the Flying Start Professional Networks?

Professional Networks will create opportunities for early childhood professionals to:

- build relationships 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 within their community
- reflect on practice with other professionals.

Q. Do 3-year-old preschool partner services need to attend the Flying Start Professional Networks?

Yes. Under the Flying Start for Kids Policy and Funding Guide:

- partner services must participate in Flying Start Professional Networks
- partner providers must ensure that a minimum of 1 educator an Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) or educational or service leader per partner service attends each professional network session.

Q. Is backfill funding available?

Yes. Partner services are eligible for a backfill contribution of up to \$420 per service per year (\$35 per hour to a maximum of 3 hours, 4 times a year). Please note that for 2026 preschool partner services, this backfill funding will commence from 1 January 2026, in line with the Flying Start funding agreements.

Q. Who from my 3-year-old preschool partner service should attend the Flying Start Professional Network meetings?

Attendance is flexible, but the networks are primarily designed for ECTs, educational or service leads who play a key role in implementing 3-year-old preschool and designing programs that address developmental vulnerabilities.

Services are encouraged to send the same team member where possible, for continuity of connections within the Professional Network and learnings.

Attendees are expected to share insights and learnings from the meetings with their wider team, helping to translate ideas and discussions into practice across the service.

Support from the service director or leaders is important to enable attendance and action outcomes.

The Leaders Forum, held biannually, is specifically for service directors and leaders, providing a complementary space for leadership-level collaboration and strategic discussion.

We ask network leads to recognise that partner services are focused on preparing for the 2026 rollout of three-year-old preschool. To help avoid adding to your workload, we ask them to please keep this in mind when requesting any follow-up actions from network meetings.

Q. Can more than one person from a 3-year-old preschool partner service attend network meetings?

Attendance by more than one person from a service can be considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on each network's overall capacity.

The priority members of the Flying Start Professional Networks are the allocated preschool partner services, which are contractually obliged to participate. In some networks, Department for Education (DfE) services are also included will be considered where there is capacity.

Each network's core membership currently includes services implementing 3-year-old preschool in 2026. Using this as a foundation, members can identify relevant allied health and community services to participate. Suggestions about allied health and community services membership should be informed by AEDC and local community data and align with the network's forward planning and co-designed goals.

The Professional Network model and funding are designed to support approximately 25–30 members per network. Network leads have discretion to consider requests for additional attendees based on individual circumstances while balancing network capacity and equity of representation.

Q. Can I attend the Flying Start Professional Network meetings virtually?

Yes. As part of their funding agreement, network leads are required to provide virtual attendance options to maximise access to the professional network.

While virtual attendance is available, in-person participation is preferred and strongly encouraged, as it helps build connections and facilitates more effective interaction and contribution during meetings.

Network leads are encouraged to adopt a flexible, place-based approach, designing some meetings for in-person participation and others online, while ensuring virtual options remain available for those who genuinely cannot attend in person. They should also co-design the format, timing, and delivery methods of meetings with network members to balance accessibility, participation, and engagement, while promoting in-person attendance wherever feasible.