

Flying Start

Workforce Grants
Round 3



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 Round 3 of the Flying Start Workforce Grants program. The Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD) is responsible for administering the program.

Key information

Program name:	Flying Start Workforce Grants
Round 3 grant opening date:	Friday 27 February 2025
Round 3 grant closing date:	Once funding is expended or the grant guidelines are rescinded
Funding available:	Up to \$150,000
Type of funding:	One-off funding
Eligible organisations:	A broad range, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early childhood education and care (ECEC) services • local government authorities • regional development area committees • community support organisations • ECEC training providers and businesses • registered training organisations (RTOs).

Key dates and timeframes

Activity	Indicative timeframes
Applications open	27 February 2026
Applications close	Once funding is expended or the grant guidelines are rescinded
Applications can be submitted at any time the grant round remains open. The following timeframes are indicative of the expected timeframes	
Applications assessed	Approximately 4 weeks after being submitted
Funding recommendations approved	Approximately 6 weeks after being submitted
Notification of outcomes	Approximately 8 weeks after being submitted
Contract execution and Initial payment made	From 4 weeks from notification
End of grant funding	12 months from contract execution

*Anticipated dates listed in the table above may change.

Background

In response to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, the 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. Availability of face-to-face ECEC training is limited in regional, remote and very remote locations and there is often a shortage of trained ECEC educators and teachers in these areas.

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.

Building the ECEC workforce in South Australia is critical to support the successful implementation of 3-year-old preschool across the state.

Purpose of the grants

The Flying Start Workforce Grants program, now in its third round, offers early childhood workforce attraction and retention grants for regional, rural, and hard-to-staff communities in South Australia.

Applications for round 3 of this program should demonstrate how the applying organisation will meet the 3 key elements detailed below:

- workforce attraction
- local need
- partnerships and collaboration.

Workforce attraction and retention

Workforce **attraction** defines efforts taken to entice skilled workers to apply for and accept jobs within a sector, area or organisation.

Workforce **retention** is the ability of organisations and the sector to retain and value skilled early childhood teachers and educators.

Workforce attraction and retention in our state's ECEC sector is critical to support the rollout of 3-year-old preschool. ECEC workforce attraction and retention is particularly important in regional, remote and hard to staff areas.

In your application, you will need to detail how your proposed initiative will support ECEC workforce attraction and/or retention in your local area.



Local need

Local need refers to the specific ECEC needs of a community, such as a town or a region. These needs may be unique and may differ between communities.

In your grant application, include detail about the unique ECEC needs of your local community, and how grant funding could be used to attract and retain the community's early childhood workforce.

Partnerships and collaboration

Collaboration between organisations involves working together towards common goals, and leveraging each other's strengths and resources. This allows organisations to achieve outcomes that might be unattainable individually.

These grants are about *benefiting a whole community* and not just one service or organisation, so partnership is critical. Applications that will only support a single ECEC service or a single ECEC approved provider will only be funded where there are substantial local needs or in extenuating circumstances. Applicants should plan to partner with local ECEC services regardless of ownership.

Your application needs to outline how multiple organisations will come together to partner and collaborate under the grant. Partnerships *could be* (but are not limited to being) across ECEC service providers, community groups, local government agencies or training organisations.

If your ECEC service is intending to support your Aboriginal staff to professionally develop skills or to embed Aboriginal cultural safety into your service, please see the [guidelines for the Flying Start Aboriginal Workforce Grants program](#). These grants are being offered in parallel.

Grant objectives

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



Available funding

Under round 3 of the Flying Start Workforce Grants program, one-off 12-month grants up to the value of \$150,000 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. Some successful applications may be only partially funded.

Applications must include costings to demonstrate anticipated grant spending that aligns with the program's purpose and objectives.

Who can apply

To be eligible for funding under this program, your application must meet each of conditions 1 to 8, as listed below.

Applicants that are RTOs must meet conditions 1-7, along with conditions 9 and 10.

- 1) Applications must have a single organisation listed as the primary applicant.
- 2) The applicant must have an Australian Business Number (ABN).
- 3) The applicant must have at least \$1 million in public liability insurance.
- 4) Applications must include at least one partner organisation that is different from the applicant organisation.
- 5) The applicant or a listed partner organisation must be currently operating within South Australia.
- 6) The applicant or a partner organisation must be an approved ECEC provider under the:
 - a. [Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Act 2011](#) (and maintain this approval)OR
 - b. Early childhood education and care services funded under the [Community Child Care Fund Restricted \(CCCFR\) Grant](#)
- 7) The applicant or a listed partner organisation must employ or seek to employ a degree-qualified early childhood teacher or person with a Special Authority to Teach (SAT)
- 8) 50% or more of the services listed in the application must be located in or planned to provide support in:
 - a. an outer-regional, remote or very-remote area according to [ARIA+ classification](#)OR
 - b. a geographic area (Statistical Area Level 2) with a [SEIFA Decile of 1 or 2 on the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage 2021](#).



Note that applications that include only a single ECEC service or where all ECEC services to be supported have the same Approved Provider will only be funded where there is evidence of significant local need or under extenuating circumstances.

Applicable only to RTO applicants

- 9) RTO applicants must be established as an RTO with a Funded Activities Agreement with Skills SA that has provision for:
- a. delivery of CHC30121/CHC30125 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, and
 - b. CHC50121/CHC50125 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, in line with conditions outlined for these qualifications on the South Australian Subsidised Training List.
- 10) RTO applicants must be *currently* or *planning to offer* face-to-face ECEC training in outer-regional, remote or very-remote locations of South Australia according to [ARIA+ classification](#).

Successful RTO proposals that will increase the delivery of diploma courses in outer-regional, remote or very-remote locations will have access to [QualifySA](#) for students participating in the funded proposal.

Types of initiatives that may be funded

Below are examples of the kinds of initiatives that can be funded but note that funding is not limited to these examples. The OECD encourages innovative proposals, and proposals that address more than one type of activity.

- **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 or professional development for the ECEC workforce that reflects the specific needs of your local community. This may include cultural safety, induction programs, educator pedagogy/practice, leadership capability or community connections. Where possible onsite and in-service professional development should be prioritised.
- **Attraction campaigns and community connections** that may include initiatives, workshops or seminars to attract and recruit prospective educators and/or teachers, including those from diverse cohorts. This could include addressing barriers to support teachers or educators when settling into your local area and building community connections.
- **Attracting and retaining staff from diverse cohorts** such as Aboriginal, neurodiverse or multicultural backgrounds to transition to employment in ECEC services. Supports to attract and retain staff from diverse cohorts may include flexible recruitment strategies, induction protocols, cultural safety policies, creating an inclusive team environment, or professional support.
- **Establishing or 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 or teachers to connect and engage in professional development and support collaboration between services.
- **Establishing or expanding a RTO presence in regional, remote or outer-remote areas of South Australia** to provide face-to-face ECEC training.
- **Supporting local educators or teachers to become trainers or 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 application's proposed initiative(s). 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 or teacher to become a trainer/assessor
- Contribution to salary and on-costs for staff responsible for implementing the initiative
- Costs associated with establishing and running face-to-face ECEC training.

Initiatives and activities that will *not* be funded

- 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
- Activities or initiatives that could be funded or accessed through an alternative OECD program (such as QualifySA in early childhood, Preschool Boost or the Flying Start Pathways program)
- 1:1 allied health sessions within services
- Mandatory professional learning
- Purchase of prizes, gifts, individual relocation costs or incentive payments
- Capital works or infrastructure spending
- Initiatives that have been started/completed at time of assessment (retrospective funding)
- Projects with ongoing costs beyond the life of the grant that cannot be funded autonomously.

Funding conditions for applicants

1. You must agree to the requirements outlined in these guidelines.
2. Only apply if you intend to accept a grant.
3. If your application is selected for a grant, you must enter into a formal funding agreement.



4. If your application is selected for a grant, the organisation listed as the applicant will be responsible for receiving and managing the grant funds and all grant reporting and acquittal obligations.
5. Grant recipients must provide progress updates, milestone reports, and an acquittal form with supporting evidence, as per the funding agreement, after the project is completed.
6. You must return any unspent grant funds, or grant funds not expended in accordance with the funding conditions.
7. You must accept responsibility for any costs exceeding the agreed funding amount or unforeseen expenditure. No additional grant funding will be provided.

How to apply

What all applications must include

- Clear evidence of your *eligibility*
- A proposal that describes the *initiatives* planned to be undertaken over the grant period
- A list of key activities, including anticipated timeframes.
- A *budget* proposal outlining how the funding will be used to implement the proposed initiatives
- Succinct and suitable *responses* to the assessment criteria
- Evidence of *partnership*
- All requested documentation.

Applications can be submitted at any time the grant round remains open. Applicants should not delay submitting their proposal as the grant round will close once funding is expended or the grant guidelines are rescinded

How to submit your application

Please submit via an online form through [SmartyGrants](#)

Support available

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

- answers to [frequently asked questions](#)
- the [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](tel:0393206888) between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday
- email service@smartygrants.com.au.



The assessment process

The Flying Start Workforce Grants program is competitive.

The OECD will review applications as they are received 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 using the assessment criteria listed in the table 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
Local need	The application provides evidence of local need for place-based workforce and attraction strategies, and how the proposal will support this need.	20%
Workforce attraction and retention	The application details proposed approaches to attract, retain/sustain an early childhood workforce in the local community.	20%
Partnership and collaboration	The application describes how knowledge, skills and expertise between collaborating/partner organisations will be shared to improve ECEC sector workforce attraction and retention needs across a community.	20%
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%
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%
Innovation	The application proposes innovative solutions that will be tested to reduce current and emerging skills and capability gaps and strengthen community resilience.	10%

Note that applications that include only a single ECEC service or where all ECEC services to be supported have the same Approved Provider will only be funded where there is significant local need or under extenuating circumstances as assessed by the panel.

Additional consideration will be given where applications include:

- Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs), 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.

Additional information or clarifications may be sought from applicants during the assessment process.

We will notify all applicants in writing via email about your application's outcome. Please note the key timeframes at the start of these guidelines.

Successful applications

What we expect

Funding agreement

- Successful applicants will enter into a funding agreement with the OECD.
- Be prepared to provide all required information for a funding agreement to be arranged shortly after we communicate outcomes notifications.

Payment information

- Payments will be provided at the times and in the manner specified in the funding agreement.
- Payments will be subject to meeting all conditions of the funding agreement, including reporting requirements.

Grant reporting requirements

- Grant recipients must meet ongoing program monitoring and reporting obligations, including:
 - submitting a *progress report* at a specified point during the grant
 - submitting a *final report* at the conclusion of the funding period
 - submitting a *funding acquittal* document at the conclusion of the funding period
 - participating in *progress meetings* with the program team
 - participating in *evaluation activities* or requests from the program team.

Reports must detail key activities you have conducted, along with summaries of outputs delivered and outcomes achieved.



Grant and activity timeframes

Any activities that you proposed in your application must be completed within the 12-month grant duration. If you would like to extend the timeframe, you must submit a request in writing to OECD but we cannot guarantee any extensions.

Confidential information

If you believe that any information in your application should remain confidential or be regarded as commercial-in-confidence, you must clearly identify which information and the reason for its confidentiality.

Please be aware that the OECD must meet certain legislative, parliamentary and administrative accountability, as well as the transparency requirements of the Australian Government and the Government of South Australia. These responsibilities include public disclosure in accordance with state 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 that you identify as confidential, may be disclosed by us:

- to our 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 OECD's legitimate interest
- 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. The project team aims to continuously improve this program so that we meet the needs of applicants and support successful project outcomes.

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
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
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
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

