

Flying Start Early Childhood Teacher Incentives Program - Information for Employers 2025-26

The South Australian government offers financial incentives to attract and retain Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs) to work in services that have partnered with the Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD) to deliver 3-year-old preschool in South Australia (partner services).

Understanding incentives

This information is intended to help early childhood services and providers understand and use incentives to help meet their recruitment needs; it should be read in conjunction with the [OECD Policy and Funding Guide for 2026 delivery](#) and the [Flying Start Early Childhood Teacher Incentives – Guidelines 2025-26](#). Two types of incentives are available.

In addition to general requirements detailed in the guidelines, applicants must also meet incentive-specific requirements:

Individual incentives

Incentive payments of \$10,000 are available for ECTs returning to the SA sector after 12+ months, or relocating from interstate or overseas, who take up a role with any partner service.

Table 1: Individual incentives

To apply for...	applicants MUST...	AND meet at least one of these requirements:		
Individual incentives – \$10,000	accept a teaching role at a partner service delivering or planning to deliver 3-year-old preschool in 2026	be returning to teach in the South Australian early childhood education sector after not being employed in the sector for 12 months or more	OR	currently live or work outside of South Australia

Location incentives

The number of Location Incentives is limited and designed to assist services that have exhausted all other recruitment options, rather than being used as the first step in filling a vacancy.

We encourage partner services to continue using standard recruitment approaches first, with incentives available as an additional tool for when needed most.

Table 2: Location incentives

To apply for...	applicants MUST...	and meet at least one of these requirements:				
Level 1 location incentive – \$10,000	accept a teaching role at a partner service pre-approved for Level 1 location incentive payments	not working in the South Australian early childhood sector	OR	be a graduate early childhood teacher	OR	(if employed in the sector) not employed by the provider offering the new role
Level 2 location incentive – \$50,000	accept a teaching role at a partner service pre-approved for a Level 2 location incentive payments					and not working in <i>any</i> service in a SEIFA 1 or 2* quintile
						and new role must be more than 60 km from applicant’s current place of residence

*Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas

Location incentives may be available to partner services who are at risk of reaching the 60-day limit where an ECT or an Early Childhood Teacher with a Special Authority to Teach (ECT SAT) is unavailable in any 12-month period. OECD Local Teams will work with the service to determine eligibility.

For more information, contact the Local Teams via email at OECD.LocalTeams@sa.gov.au.

All partner services can offer individual incentives

Individual Incentives are available for eligible individuals taking up roles at **any partner service delivering a 3-year-old preschool program**.

Advertising individual incentives

Advertisements should clearly communicate that candidates must meet the programs’ eligibility requirements, as detailed in the Flying Start Early Childhood Teacher Incentives – Guidelines 2025-26 to receive the incentive.

Any partner services offering a 3-year-old pre-school program can include Individual Incentives in their job advertisements. For example:

We are interested in hearing from candidates of all backgrounds. South Australian Government incentives of \$10,000 are available for eligible, qualified early childhood teachers who are either moving from interstate or overseas to take up this role, OR who have not been employed as an early childhood teacher or educator in the sector for the past 12 months. See earlychildhood.sa.gov.au for more information.

See the [partner service obligations](#) section for more information.

Partner services pre-approved to offer location incentives

The OECD pre-approves select partner services to advertise Location Incentives under the Flying Start Early Childhood Teacher Incentives Program.

The process for pre-approving a partner service for incentives usually includes using data and other evidence to identify services for pre-approval, including Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) classification, [Australian Statistical Geography Standard – Remoteness Area classification](#) and information collected from OECD’s Local Teams, about the service including whether they:

- have advertised for an ECT/s and been unable to recruit for 30 days or more
- pay above award wages and/or has opted in to the Australian Government worker retention payment
- are offering a minimum three-year contract for a minimum of 20 hours per week
- have information and supports available for relocating individuals/families to assist them to settle into the community
- provides ongoing retention supports, such as enabling the teacher to attend Flying Start Professional Networks or other professional development opportunities.

The OECD will only contact services where they have been approved. Services will be notified by email:

- that they have been pre-approved to advertise using a Flying Start Early Childhood Teacher Location Incentive.
- specific Location Incentive Level they are approved to offer (e.g. Level 1 or Level 2)
- instructions on the next steps on how to advertise the availability of Location incentives at their service.

Partner services are not required to respond to the OECD to accept pre-approval to advertise using a Location Incentive.



Advertising location incentives

Advertisements should clearly communicate that candidates must meet the programs' eligibility requirements, as detailed in the [Flying Start Early Childhood Teacher Incentives – Guidelines 2025-26](#) to receive the incentive.

Selected, pre-approved partner services can include Location Incentives in their job advertisements. Partner Services **must be pre-approved by the OECD** (via written communication) to offer these incentives. For more information, please contact your Local Team representative. For example:

Candidates may be eligible for a \$[insert value] South Australian 'Location Incentive', plus relocation supplement of up to \$8,000. Eligible candidates may be able to access this Location Incentive, as well as a \$10,000 Individual Incentive. Refer to earlychildhood.sa.gov.au for more information.

Partner service obligations

Partner services must:

- continue to deliver a 3-year-old preschool program (refer to [OECD Policy and Funding Guide for 2026 delivery](#))
- read the [Flying Start Early Childhood Teacher Incentives – Guidelines 2025 -26](#) to understand program settings and eligibility requirements
- clearly communicate to candidates that they must meet eligibility requirements outlined in the guidelines to receive the incentive and provide them with a copy of the guidelines.
- once a candidate has been appointed, advise them to apply online for the incentive within 60 days of accepting the role.

Assisting staff to submit incentive applications

Incentive applications are submitted online by the applicant, **not by the employer**. As part of the application, applicants will require supporting documents from their employer.

Services must complete an [Employer Declaration Form](#) (Appendix 1). This form needs to be completed for all applications, regardless of the type of incentive being applied for.



Supporting incentive recipients

Once a candidate has been appointed and been awarded an incentive, it is essential to support the candidate in their new role to encourage them to stay. This support can include providing mentorship, facilitating professional development opportunities, and ensuring they have the resources needed to succeed. The following strategies may be considered:

- **Start with a strong welcome.** A warm and structured onboarding experience helps new teachers feel valued from day one. They should be introduced to the service's culture, policies, and community, and services should consider pairing them with a mentor or buddy for guidance during the early months.
- **Build a culturally safe and inclusive workplace.** The OECD has resources to help you recruit, retain, and support Aboriginal staff, including [The Practice Guide: Aboriginal Culturally Responsive Recruitment in Early Education](#).
- **Provide ongoing professional support.** Regular check-ins to discuss progress, challenges, and career goals can make a big difference. Offering access to professional development opportunities, especially those aligned with the Flying Start reform, reinforces their sense of growth and purpose.
- **Foster connection and belonging.** Encourage participation in team meetings and decision-making, and create opportunities for social interaction within the team and local community. Building strong relationships helps teachers feel part of something bigger than just a job.
- **Recognise and celebrate contributions.** Acknowledge achievements and milestones, both formally and informally. Sharing positive feedback from families and colleagues, and celebrating successes, helps teachers feel appreciated and motivated to stay.

Incentive payments

Incentives are paid in the form of milestones and incentive recipients must provide evidence to receive each milestone payment.

The specific evidence required to receive milestone payments is detailed in the Incentive Recipient Agreement, which is a legal document that every incentive applicant must sign to be awarded an incentive.

In general, the evidence must show that a recipient is still working in the same role at the same service, as identified in the completed Employer Declaration form that was submitted as part of the application process.

Note: changes to a recipient's role or service can impact their eligibility for an incentive and may even result in them losing the incentive. This is especially important for location incentive recipients because their incentive is tied to a specific service and cannot be transferred between services.



Partner services and providers are strongly encouraged to consider how changes to employment conditions may impact an incentive recipient's eligibility (e.g., reducing hours to be less than 20 per week).

If a change to employment conditions is unavoidable, services and providers are encouraged to give the incentive recipient adequate forewarning and encourage them to contact the program administrator to discuss their options.

Service changes

Services must notify the OECD if there are any changes that may affect the application, in line with the requirements in the [OECD Policy and Funding Guide for 2026 delivery](#) such as:

- change of ownership
- change of service approval details
- service closure.

Pre-approved services that lose their funding status

If a partner service has a teacher who has received any incentive or is pre-approved to offer a location incentive and loses its funding status, it must:

- contact the Local Team at OECD.LocalTeams@sa.gov.au
- stop advertising using the incentive and
- if any teachers are accessing an incentive at the service – advise the ECT that the incentive depends on the service's funding status and ask them to contact the program administrator for further advice.

Further information

For more information about the incentives programs (including individual eligibility requirements, application processes, milestone payments etc.), please read [Flying Start Early Childhood Teacher Incentives – Guidelines 2025 -26](#).

If services and providers need support to plan staffing needs, they should speak with the OECD's Local Team in their area. They can be contacted at OECD.LocalTeams@sa.gov.au.

If staff have any questions about the incentives programs (including eligibility requirements and the application process), the service should encourage them to contact the program administrator at SA Scholarships@busyatwork.com.au or phone 1300 050 509.

The Office of Early Childhood Development acknowledges the support provided by the Victorian Department of Education in the development of these guidelines. This includes content provided under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](#), including some material which is © State of Victoria (Department of Education) 2025.



Appendix 1 – FLYING START EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER INCENTIVES PROGRAM EMPLOYER DECLARATION

EMPLOYER DECLARATION

To be signed by an authorised representative of the early childhood teacher’s employer.
This form can be completed in hard copy or electronically.

Name of teacher	
Service name	
SE-ID	
Service address	

Declaration – authorised representative of employer

I confirm that:

_____ is filling a vacant role as an early childhood teacher in a Flying Start 3-year-old preschool program at the above-mentioned service and has a contract for a minimum of 20 hours per week over 36 months.

Signed

/ /

Name of employer representative	
Position	
Phone number	
Email address	
Approved provider details (if different to service)	

