

# Flying Start

Aboriginal Workforce Grants - Round 2



# 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.

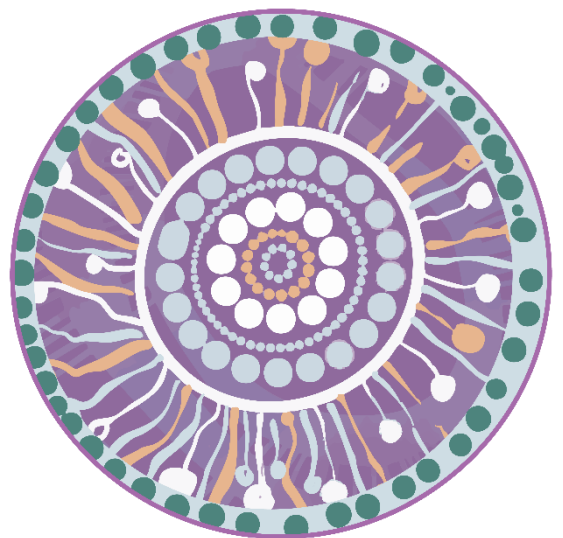
Aboriginal peoples, working with and for children, are central in shaping our work. Their wisdom, advice, and guidance enriches our practices, creating a more inclusive and culturally safe environment for children and families.

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

## Key information

Name of the program:	Flying Start Aboriginal Workforce Grants
Round 2 grant opening date:	27 February 2026
Round 2 grant closing date:	Once funding is expended or the grant guidelines are rescinded
Funding available:	Up to \$20,000
Type of funding:	One-off funding
Eligible organisations:	Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services

## Key dates and timeframes

Activity	Anticipated dates
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Applications close	Once funding is expended or the grant guidelines are rescinded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
Notification of outcomes	Approximately 8 weeks after being submitted
Contract execution	4 weeks from notification (if successful)
End of grant funding	12 months from contract execution

*\*Anticipated dates listed in the table above may change.*

# Background

The Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD) was formed with a clear mandate: to create a fairer and better future for all children in South Australia. We'll do this by responding to recommendations of the [Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care](#).

Aboriginal children, families and Communities have unique cultural strengths, knowledge and aspirations that are not always reflected in mainstream ECEC services.

Evidence and recent co-design consultations undertaken by the OECD indicate that when ECEC services are culturally responsive and safe, Aboriginal children, families and Communities are more likely to engage, and children experience stronger developmental outcomes.

Strengthening cultural responsiveness and cultural safety within ECEC services therefore presents a significant opportunity to improve participation, trust and outcomes for Aboriginal children and families.

In response to this and other barriers experienced by Aboriginal children, families and Communities, the South Australian Aboriginal Early Childhood Workforce Strategy (the Strategy) (2025 to 2027) was launched on 26 September 2025. The Strategy is focused on growing and supporting the Aboriginal workforce, including building Aboriginal cultural responsiveness and safety within the sector and its services.

# Grant Objectives

The Flying Start Aboriginal Workforce Grants program, now in its second round, is established under the Strategy to help services to enhance their cultural knowledge. It also supports services to:

- engage with local Aboriginal Communities to plan and undertake localised, centre-based activities to strengthen application of cultural knowledge.
- build and develop their library and toolkits of Aboriginal educational resources that help to embed Aboriginal cultural safety within services.
- design and deliver initiatives that support the professional growth and development within a service of its Aboriginal workforce.
- support connections with Aboriginal families and Communities.

# Available funding

Under round 2 of the Flying Start Aboriginal Workforce Grants program, one-off 12-month grants of up to \$20,000 are available.

Each application will be assessed by an OECD panel that includes Aboriginal representation. Funding is not guaranteed and will depend on the quality and merit of the application, in line with these guidelines. Some successful applications may be only partially funded.

Applications must include costings to demonstrate anticipated grant spending that aligns with these guidelines, including the Grant Objectives.



# Who can apply

To be eligible for funding under this program, applications must meet all conditions listed below.

- 1) The applicant must have an Australian Business Number (ABN).
- 2) The applicant must have at least \$1 million in public liability insurance.
- 3) The applicant must be currently operating within South Australia.
- 4) The applicant 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](#), including those run by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).
- 5) The applicant must:
  - a. employ Aboriginal staff within their service; and/or
  - b. have Aboriginal children enrolled at their service; and/or
  - c. have a high proportion of Aboriginal people within their Community.

## Types of initiatives that may be funded

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

- Support services to **strengthen application of cultural knowledge**
- **Engaging local Aboriginal Community-led groups** to share stories and Aboriginal perspectives to grow the cultural knowledge of non-Aboriginal staff. This may involve, but is not limited to, working with local Community groups and Elders to support the service to develop:
  - culturally safe spaces (such as the entry space of the service where people first engage)
  - Aboriginal-centred, play-based learning activities (such as 'bush tucker' play kitchens where children and educators 'pretend play' with traditional cooking tools and ingredients).
  - develop strategies to engage the Aboriginal families within the local Community of the service.
  - Facilitate 'yarning circles' to share knowledge and wisdom.
- **Engaging Aboriginal organisations** to support the development of your service's Reconciliation Action Plan.
- **Funding service-led professional development** for your Aboriginal staff to expand their skillsets and/or ECEC knowledge. This could include induction programs, educator pedagogy/practice, leadership capability or community connections.



## Activities that may be funded

Funding is available to cover various costs related to your application's proposed initiative(s). Here are some examples:

- Remuneration of Aboriginal people's engagement and time for sharing their lived experience and wisdom.
- Purchasing of resources and equipment to support Aboriginal cultural safety for staff and families in your service (such as Aboriginal artwork, flags, posters and other resources that would help your service to develop and apply Aboriginal cultural knowledge).
- Development of, or purchase of, a training/professional development program, facilitator and backfill costs for staff accessing the professional development.
- 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

- Capital works or infrastructure spending
- 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 are already funded through an OECD program (such as QualifySA\*, Preschool Boost or the Flying Start Pathways program).
- Mandatory professional learning
- Purchase of prizes, gifts, individual relocation costs or incentive payments
- 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.

*\*Qualify SA provides financial support for applicants seeking to undertake a qualification to become an early childhood educator or teacher. More information can be found [here](#).*

## 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 with the OECD.
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 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 *eligibility*
- A proposal 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
- Succinct and suitable *responses* to the assessment criteria
- All requested documentation.

Applications can be submitted at any time the grant round remains open. Applicants should not delay submitting their proposals 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](mailto: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](mailto:service@smartygrants.com.au).



# The assessment process

## Approach

An OECD Aboriginal-led panel 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 by the panel using the assessment criteria listed in the table below.

The Aboriginal-led panel consists of at least one member of the OECD’s Aboriginal Leadership Committee and/or Aboriginal Co-design Governance Group, and other OECD staff with relevant experience and expertise in the early childhood sector, workforce reform and/or program evaluation/implementation.

Applications will be assessed on the extent to which the proposed initiative/s will build and support the Aboriginal early childhood workforce in South Australia.

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
Alignment with intent	The extent to which the proposal clearly addresses the program objectives through service-led professional development; and/or helping improve worker retention; and/or improving cultural safety in the service.	40%
Expected Impact	The extent to which the initiative will create meaningful, lasting benefits for Aboriginal staff and/or improve retention and/or cultural safety within the service.	30%
Innovation	The extent to which the proposal introduces new, creative, or locally tailored approaches that go beyond business-as-usual to strengthen Aboriginal staff development; and/or improve retention; and/or cultural safety.	20%
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.	10%

During the assessment process, the panel may reach out to applicants to clarify elements of their application. All applicants will be notified of their application outcome in writing via email. Please note the key dates and 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:
  - *meeting with the program team* at the mid-point of the program to provide an update
  - submitting a *funding acquittal document* at the conclusion of the funding period
  - participating in *evaluation activities* or requests from the program team.
- Key activities undertaken, along with summaries of outputs delivered and outcomes achieved, may be requested by the program team.

## 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 an extension cannot be guaranteed.

## 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](mailto: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
Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR)	The <a href="#">Community Child Care Fund Restricted</a> (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