

Flying Start

Aboriginal Career Development Scholarship Guidelines



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.

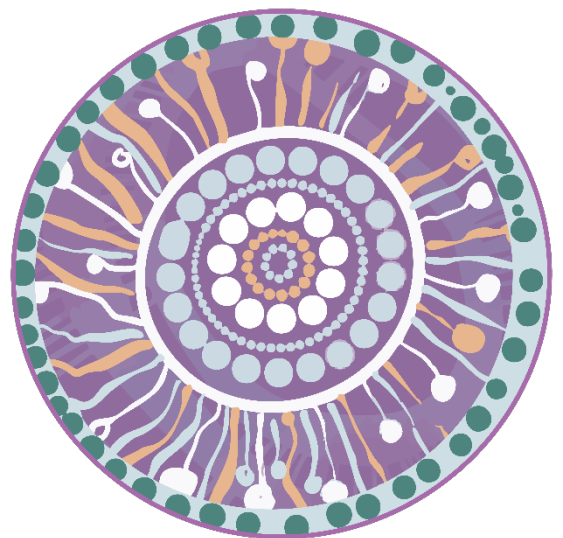
Aboriginal peoples, working with and for children, are central in shaping our work. Their wisdom, advice, and guidance enriches our practices, creating a more inclusive and culturally safe environment for children and families.

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 Aboriginal Career Development Grants program. The Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD) is responsible for administering the program.

Key information

Name of the program:	Flying Start Aboriginal Career Development Scholarship
Grant opening date:	Monday 2 March 2026
Grant closing date:	Until 30 June 2027, unless funding is exhausted prior.
Funding available:	Up to \$15,000 per recipient
Type of funding:	One-off grant funding
Eligibility:	Aboriginal staff employed within early childhood education and care (ECEC) services

Key dates

Activity	Anticipated dates
Applications assessed	approximately 2 weeks after being submitted
Notification of application outcome	approximately 4 weeks after being submitted
Grant agreement executed	approximately 6 weeks after being submitted
Grant payment made	approximately 2 weeks from grant agreement execution <i>Some applicants may receive staggered payments depending on the grant value.</i>

**Anticipated dates listed in the table above may be subject to change.*

Questions or feedback

If you have suggestions or comments, we would like to hear them. The Aboriginal Workforce team aims to continuously improve this program and meet the needs of Aboriginal workers in the ECEC sector.

Please contact us at OECD.ECWorkforceSupport@sa.gov.au.

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.

Purpose of the grants

The Flying Start Aboriginal Career Development Scholarship provide one-off grant funding of up to \$15,000 to support Aboriginal people working in South Australia's ECEC sector to pursue self-identified professional development opportunities.

The grants aim to strengthen Aboriginal leadership, capability, and career progression in the ECEC sector by supporting individuals to access culturally responsive learning, qualifications, mentoring, and other opportunities aligned to their professional development goals.

These grants recognise the importance of Aboriginal self-determination in workforce and career development and place Aboriginal staff at the centre of identifying what learning and support they need.

The Flying Start Aboriginal Career Development Scholarship program is established under the Strategy to help Aboriginal staff to professionally develop in the areas individually relevant to their career.

Scholarship Grant objectives

- To support Aboriginal ECEC staff to pursue professional development aligned to their career aspirations within their service or the broader ECEC sector.
- To strengthen retention and progression of Aboriginal workers in the sector
- To build Aboriginal leadership capability in early childhood settings
- To enable culturally responsive and safe, strengths-based workforce development
- To contribute to improved outcomes for Aboriginal children, families, and Communities



Available funding

Under the Flying Start Aboriginal Career Development Scholarship program, one-off grants of up to \$15,000 are available, per recipient.

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 the program objectives.

Grant funding is subject to available funding.

Who can apply

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

- 1) Identify as Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander with the following information:
 - a confirmation of Aboriginality; or
 - a letter of support from an Aboriginal Community member; or
 - a statutory declaration signed and confirmed by an Aboriginal Community member.

These requirements are in place to ensure the integrity of the Aboriginal-specific funding and to support its appropriate distribution to Aboriginal peoples.
- 2) Have worked in the ECEC sector for a minimum of six months.
- 3) Be currently employed in an ECEC service in South Australia, with confirmation of employment.
- 4) Be willing to participate in light-touch reporting and evaluation

Activities that may be funded (eligible)

Funding may be used for self-identified professional development activities that support an Aboriginal person's career development within their ECEC place of employment or the broader ECEC sector.

Below are examples of activities that can be funded but note that funding is not limited to these examples. Applicants can apply for more than one activity, as long as the total is up to \$15,000.

Training and Qualifications	Career Development	Support Costs (where directly related to learning)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited courses or micro-credentials • Short courses or workshops • Leadership or management training • Cultural education or language learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching or mentoring • Conference attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course fees • Travel and accommodation • Childcare costs while attending training

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|--|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology required for participation (e.g. laptop, software) |
|--|--|---|

Activities that will *not* be funded (ineligible)

Funding cannot be used for:

- Financial support for applicants seeking to undertake a qualification to become an early childhood educator or teacher. Please note that the OECD already provides financial support programs for these qualifications, which can be found [here](#).
- Mandatory ECEC professional learning and development requirements required by regulation (e.g. first aid, RRHAN-EC, Child Safety training)
- Equipment purchases unrelated to the proposed professional development activity
- Retrospective expenses

How to apply

All applications must include

- Clear evidence of eligibility
- A proposal that describes the professional development to be undertaken over the grant period
- A budget proposal outlining how the funding will be used, including a quote, invoice or other evidence of the associated costs / fees.
- 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 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

For help and advice in completing an application, please contact the OECD Aboriginal Workforce Team: 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

Approach

An OECD Aboriginal-led assessment panel will review applications to ensure they are complete, meet the eligibility criteria, and comply with program guidelines until budget has been expended. Eligible and compliant applications will then proceed to the assessment stage.

All eligible applications will be assessed on the extent to which the proposed activities will support the professional development of the applicant. Applications will be assessed on a rolling basis as they are submitted, using the assessment criteria listed in the table below.

The Executive Director, Government Relations, Quality and Workforce, 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
Alignment with intent	The extent to which the proposal clearly addresses the grant objectives by supporting the applicant's professional development goals.
Expected Impact	The extent to which the activity will create meaningful, lasting professional development support for the Aboriginal applicant that will further their career within the ECEC sector and support retention.
Value for money	The application represents value for money. Allowances will be made for the greater costs incurred by individuals located in rural and remote areas.

During the assessment process, an OECD representative may reach out to applicants to clarify elements of their application. All applicants will be notified of their application outcome in writing via email.

Successful applications

- Successful applicants will enter into a funding agreement with the OECD.
- Payments will be provided to applicants at the times and in the manner specified in the funding agreement. Depending on the value of the grant and duration of the agreement, successful applicants may receive the full grant amount upfront or in milestone payments.
- Approved applicants will be responsible for receiving and managing the grant funds and all grant reporting and acquittal requirements.
- Any professional development activity that is funded must be completed within the timeframe specified in the grant agreement.

- Any requests to extend the timeframe of completion must be submitted in writing to the OECD, an extension is not guaranteed.
- Any unspent grant funds or grant funds not expended in accordance with the funding conditions, must be returned to the OECD.
- Approved applicants must accept responsibility for any costs exceeding the agreed funding amount or unforeseen expenditure. No additional grant funding will be provided.
- Successful applicants may be invited to participate in evaluation activities or in the development of case studies or promotions for the program.

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 applying for funding
Application	Documents used to apply for funding
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
Grant funding	Government financial support to eligible applicants for approved professional development activities, subject to specific conditions
Minister	Minister for Education, Training and Skills

