Community Child Care Fund Program

Feedback for applicants

The Department of Social Services Community Grants Hub (the Hub), in partnership with the Department of Education and Training, recently completed the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) open competitive grant round. As part of our commitment to sharing information with the sector to help inform future applications, and as an acknowledgement of the time and effort that applicants put into developing their applications, the Hub is pleased to share this feedback with applicants.

Overview

As a key component of the new Child Care Safety Net, the CCCF will provide grants to child care services to reduce barriers to accessing child care, particularly in disadvantaged, regional and remote communities. Grants provided under the CCCF are intended to supplement the fee income received from families including Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy payments.

There are three categories of funding available under the CCCF open competitive grant opportunity, called program 'elements'. Each CCCF element is intended to fund a specific type of activity. The elements are:

- **Sustainability Support:** helping eligible child care services operating in areas of limited supply improve the viability and sustainability of their service.

- **Community Support:** helping eligible child care services to work with other organisations and families to identify and address community level barriers to child care participation - the engagement must ultimately result in increased child care participation.

- **Capital Support:** helping eligible child care services by contributing towards the cost of modifying, renovating, extending or building child care facilities ('capital works') these capital works must result in more child care places in areas where there is unmet demand.

Eligibility

To be eligible under this grant opportunity, applicants were required to be:

1. An approved provider of an approved child care service; **_AND_**

2. An organisation which is either:

   a. Seeking funding for an approved child care service operating in a priority area; **_OR_**
   b. Seeking funding for an approved child care service currently in receipt of funding under the department's Community Support Program.

Other eligibility requirements also applied where applicants were seeking funding under either the Sustainability Support or the Capital Support element.

Applications for Sustainability Support

Applicants for Sustainability Support funding were required to be operating in an area of limited supply, that is, they must be the only service provider in the area or the only service provider within reasonable proximity, or the only suitable service, and/or providing an essential service that meets the specific needs of the community.

Applications for Capital Support

Applicants for Capital Support funding were required to be operating in an area of high unmet demand, that is, an area where there is a shortage of child care places because of higher demand/need for child care places than supply. Proposed activities under this element must result in more child care places in areas where there is unmet demand.

Selection Process

This funding round used an open competitive selection process which was open to all eligible child care providers. The Hub administered the selection process on behalf of the Department of Education and Training.

The Hub received 1321 applications for the CCCF open competitive grant round. Eligible organisations were able to apply for one or more elements per service, with a limit of one application per element per service. 1058 applications were found to be compliant and eligible to apply, and were progressed to assessment. These applications were assessed against equally-weighted selection criteria (see below). The Hub's assessments were subsequently reviewed by an Expert Panel comprising officers of the Department of Education and Training.

Selection Results

The CCCF program delegate approved 790 activities under the CCCF Grant Round. A total of $114.6 million worth of grants was awarded through this round.

The successful applications included strong responses to the selection criteria. The proposed activities represented value for money and demonstrated the organisation's potential to meet the grant requirements as outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

General Applicant Feedback

The following is general feedback that is relevant to all applications.

- demonstrating the need – the case for funding would have been strengthened if the applicant had provided more specific details of the need their project would address, including providing evidence of the need.

- demonstrating effectiveness – the case for funding would have been strengthened if the applicant had provided evidence that the proposed approach would be effective and contribute to the CCCF program outcomes as set out in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

- alignment to the CCCF grant objectives – the activities proposed in some applications did not align with the grant objectives as set out in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines and/or were not eligible activities. To avoid this happening in future, applicants are encouraged to closely read the Grant Opportunity Guidelines to determine if the proposed activity is eligible for funding.

- several applicants appeared to have applied for funding under the wrong element, meaning that their responses did not align with the relevant criteria and hence they rated poorly.
- the case for funding would have been strengthened if the applicant had addressed all sub-criteria in their responses and utilised the majority of the allowable word count.
- value for money could have been better addressed and supported with relevant evidence.
- capital applications could have contained all the relevant attachments required.
- the determination of whether or not applicants for Sustainability Support funding met the 'limited supply' eligibility criteria was undertaken as part of the Expert Panel process. The Expert Panel found that many applicants were unable to provide evidence of operating in an area of limited supply when asked, and hence these applications were not recommended for funding.

Criterion-Specific Feedback

The following feedback outlines how individual responses to specific assessment criteria could have been strengthened, and includes examples of what constituted a strong response.

Sustainability Support

Criterion 1: Describe the particular barrier/s to child care viability or sustainability that your service is experiencing and describe how your proposal will address these.

Your response should include:
- any evidence or information that supports your application such as evidence of low population and/or fluctuating demand, and costs or disadvantage specific to location and client base.
- how improvements to sustainability and viability will be achieved and measured.
- how the proposal will deliver value for money (see section 8.3).

Strong responses to Criterion 1 demonstrated the following:

Strength	Example
Preferred applicants provided a clear explanation of the barriers to childcare viability and/or sustainability experienced by their community.	Responses included: • a detailed understanding of the population base, location and issues around socioeconomic disadvantage in their community. Applicants used recognised statistics and quantitative evidence to support their claims. • clearly articulated links between the identified issues and how they prevent the applicant from operating under a sustainable/viable business model. • recognised statistics, studies and/or the results of surveys that demonstrate the need for their service to remain open and viable.
Preferred applicants explained how they intended to improve sustainability and viability, and how this delivered value for money.	Responses included: • evidence of the barriers experienced by the community in accessing appropriate child care, and how their service plans to address these barriers. • evidence of the broader community benefit provided by the applicant. • advice of the applicant's current or intended engagement with a business expert to obtain advice on streamlining processes and reducing costs to improve sustainability and viability.

Criterion 2: Demonstrate the capacity and capability of your staff and organisation to deliver the proposed activity.

Your response should include:
- how the people in your organisation will be involved in the proposed activity, including their role and any relevant experience and qualifications they will bring to the activity.

- any similar or other relevant activities your organisation is currently delivering or has previously delivered and their outcomes.

- organisational processes, procedures and systems that are in place to monitor and manage the proposed activity, and report on progress and support its evaluation.

Strong responses to Criterion 2 demonstrated the following:

Strength	Example
Preferred applicants explained how the staff in their organisation would be involved in the implementation of the activity	Responses included: • clearly articulated roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to the activity.

Strength	Example
and listed their strengths/qualifications relevant to the activity.	- staff qualifications and their previous experience. - where it was identified external staff would be needed, the applicant outlined the necessary qualifications and experience required.
Preferred applicants outlined other relevant activities either they or their staff have undertaken in the past, or are currently undertaking.	Responses included: previous experience in running similar/relevant programs and a demonstrated history of success.
Preferred applicants outlined their project management framework, including how any risks will be identified and managed.	Responses included: - organisational policies, processes and/or systems to manage risk, monitor progress, evaluate service delivery and continuously improve service delivery. - why the organisation's approach is appropriate given the scale of the proposed activity.
Preferred applicants outlined the development and implementation of effective governance structures.	Responses included: the development and implementation of governance structures such as steering committees, advisory boards or project reference groups that consist of relevant stakeholders who will guide and oversee the delivery of the proposed activity.

Community Support

Criterion 1: Describe the particular barrier/s to child care participation and how your proposal intends to address these.

Your response should include:
- any supporting evidence such as population/disadvantage data, research or reports relevant to your child care service and community.

- how you will build and maintain relationships with relevant stakeholders to help you achieve intended outcomes.

- how the proposal will deliver value for money (see section 8.3).

Strong responses to Criterion 1 demonstrated the following:

Strength	Example
Preferred applicants provided a clear explanation of the barriers	Responses included: a detailed understanding of the population base, location and issues around socioeconomic

Strength	Example
to childcare participation experienced by their community.	disadvantage in their community. Applicants used recognised statistics and quantitative evidence to support their claims. • clearly articulated links between the identified barriers to childcare participation and the applicant's proposed solution.
Preferred applicants explained how they intended to improve childcare participation, and how this delivered value for money.	Responses included: • evidence of the barriers experienced by the community in accessing appropriate child care, and how their service plans to address these barriers. • evidence of the broader community benefit provided by the applicant. • proposed activity to be conducted by the applicant to increase childcare participation.
Preferred applicants explained how they intended to build and maintain relationships with relevant stakeholders.	Responses included: • a strong understanding of who the relevant stakeholders are for the proposed activity. • consultation, or a plan for engaging with relevant stakeholders to inform the design and/or delivery of the proposed activity. • a clear indication of how support from relevant stakeholders would be leveraged to achieve increased child care participation.

Criterion 2: Demonstrate the capacity and capability of your staff and organisation to deliver the proposed activity.

Your response should include:

- how the people in your organisation will be involved in the proposed activity, including their roles, and any relevant experience and qualifications they will bring to the activity.

- any similar or other relevant activities your organisation is currently delivering or has previously delivered and their outcomes.

- organisational processes, procedures and systems that are in place to monitor and manage the proposed activity, report on progress and support its evaluation.

Strong responses to Criterion 2 demonstrated the following:

Strength	Example
Preferred applicants explained how the staff in their organisation would be involved in the implementation of the activity and listed their strengths/qualifications relevant to the activity.	Responses included: • clearly articulated roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to the activity. • staff qualifications and their previous experience. • where it was identified external staff would be needed, the applicant outlined the necessary qualifications and experience required.
Preferred applicants outlined other relevant activities either they or their staff have undertaken in the past, or are currently undertaking.	Responses included: • previous experience in running similar/relevant programs and a demonstrated history of success.
Preferred applicants outlined their project management framework, including how any risks will be identified and managed.	Responses included: • organisational policies, processes and/or systems to manage risk, monitor progress, evaluate service delivery and continuously improve service delivery. • why the organisation's approach is appropriate given the scale of the proposed activity.
Preferred applicants outlined the development and implementation of effective governance structures.	Responses included: • the development and implementation of governance structures such as steering committees, advisory boards or project reference groups that consist of relevant stakeholders who will guide and oversee the delivery of the proposed activity.

Capital Support

Criterion 1: Describe the need for additional child care places in your community and how your proposal will contribute to meeting this need.

Your response should include:

• any supporting evidence such as population/disadvantage data, research or reports relevant to your child care service and community.

• how you will build and maintain relationships with relevant stakeholders to help you achieve intended outcomes.

• how the proposal will deliver value for money (see section 8.3).

Strong responses to Criterion 1 demonstrated the following:

Strength	Example
Preferred applicants provided a clear explanation of the barriers to childcare availability experienced by their community.	Responses included: • a detailed understanding of the population base, location and issues around socioeconomic disadvantage in their community. Applicants used recognised statistics and quantitative evidence to support their claims. • clearly articulated links between the identified issues and how capital work will address these issues.
Preferred applicants explained how they intended to address the need for additional child care places, and how this delivered value for money.	Responses included: • evidence of the barriers experienced by the community in accessing appropriate child care and how their service plans to address these barriers through capital works. • evidence of the broader community benefit provided by the applicant undertaking capital works.
Preferred applicants explained how the activity will involve stakeholder engagement.	Responses included: • a strong understanding of who the relevant stakeholders are for the proposed activity. • consultation, or a plan for engaging with relevant stakeholders to inform the design and/or delivery of the proposed activity. • a clear indication of how support from relevant stakeholders would be leveraged to achieve increased child care participation.

Criterion 2: Demonstrate the capacity and capability of your staff and organisation to deliver the proposed activity.

Your response should include:
• how the people in your organisation will be involved in the proposed activity, including their roles, and any relevant experience and qualifications they will bring to the activity.

• any similar or other relevant activities your organisation is currently delivering or has previously delivered and their outcomes.

• organisational processes, procedures and systems that are in place to monitor and manage the proposed activity, report on progress and support its evaluation.

• how your organisation will ensure that the capital construction will be completed as planned.

Strong responses to Criterion 2 demonstrated the following:

Strength	Example
Preferred applicants explained how the staff in their organisation would be involved in the implementation of the activity and listed their strengths/qualifications relevant to the activity.	Responses included: • clearly articulated roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to the activity. • staff qualifications and their previous experience. • where it was identified external staff would be needed, the applicant outlined the necessary qualifications and experience required.
Preferred applicants outlined other relevant activities either they or their staff have undertaken in the past, or are currently undertaking.	Responses included: • previous experience in running similar/relevant programs and a demonstrated history of success.
Preferred applicants outlined their project management framework, including how any risks will be identified and managed.	Responses included: • organisational policies, processes and/or systems to manage risk, monitor progress, evaluate service delivery and continuously improve service delivery. • why the organisation's approach is appropriate given the scale of the proposed activity.
Preferred applicants outlined the development and implementation of effective governance structures.	Responses included: • the development and implementation of governance structures such as steering committees, advisory boards or project reference groups that consist of relevant stakeholders who will guide and oversee the delivery of the proposed activity.
Preferred applicants explained how they will undertake budget management.	Responses included: • organisational policies, processes and/or systems that enable the organisation to manage resources and effectively deliver projects on time, within budget and in accordance with audit and compliance requirements.