Department of Education

Category Guidelines

Early Childhood Education and Care

Contents

1. Early Childhood Education and Care Funding Category

The Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Funding Category supports a range of child-centred education and care services delivered in accordance with the *Education and Care Services National Law (Queensland) Act 2011* and the *Education and Care Services Act 2013* (Qld), as required, for children aged from birth to 13 years. It provides improved access to high quality activities supporting child learning and development through a quality environment.

The ECEC Funding Category aims to achieve the following outcomes, including:
- improvement in the rate of children developmentally on track;
- children prepared to transition to kindergarten/school and early childhood services; and
- parents/carers supported in their parenting and able to participate in employment, training and family related support activities.

Funding is provided to deliver and/or support services and activities grounded in evidence-based practice. Early Childhood Education and Care services can be delivered through a variety of models such as:
- limited hours care;
- vacation care (for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with disability); and
- long day care.

The ECEC Funding Category is prioritised for geographic locations where access to funded ECEC activities as limited.

Funding for this category relates to grant expenditure only and excludes subsidy expenditure such as the Queensland Kindergarten Funding.

The ECEC funding category is one of five funding categories delivered under the Department of Education (the Department) Early Years Services (EYS) program. The Department provides grants to both small local and state-wide organisations to deliver services offering a range of early years programs and activities. The Queensland Government funding supports services in rural, remote and high growth communities across Queensland. The five funding categories are:
- Child Focused Activities and Groups;
- Family Support;
- Sector Support;
- Integrated Service Delivery; and
- Early Childhood Education and Care.

2. Working with children and creating child safe environments

Organisations funded under this funding category will create and maintain child safe environments using the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, 2019* which are designed to build capacity and deliver child safety and wellbeing in organisations, families and communities, and prevent future harm.

The National Principles collectively show that a child safe organisation is one that creates a culture, adopts strategies and takes action to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children. A child safe organisation consciously and systematically:

- creates an environment where children's safety and wellbeing is the centre of thought, values and actions;
- places emphasis on genuine engagement with, and valuing of children;
- creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people;
- creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm; and
- responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions.

The National Principles are available from the Child Safe Organisations website at
https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/

Organisations will also ensure that staff who are mandatory reporters are aware of their reporting obligations under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, which includes the requirement to notify the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs if they have formed a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection.

Organisations that work with children must also ensure they have the appropriate blue card requirements in place. Information about the blue card system requirements is available at the Queensland Government's Blue Card Services website at https://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au

3. Partnerships

Proactive partnerships, referral pathways, and active participation in local service networks is considered critical to the success of EYS in being responsive and adaptive to local populations and identified community need. All services funded under this category are expected to proactively connect with suitable local networks wherever practical, including local kindergarten services and Early Years Places.

Where the funded EYS is located in one of the Department's priority locations, it is expected that the service will actively contribute to the local network and work toward implementing the identified priorities and objectives agreed through the partnership arrangements.

4. Reporting on Outcomes

An outcomes framework including performance measures, is used to assist the Department and EYS providers to focus on positive outcomes for children and parents/carers.

Monitoring is undertaken through data collection requirements as listed here, and financial accountability requirements as specified in the service agreement. The data is also supported by a qualitative or narrative report provided through the 'story behind the data' and case studies.

Funded services are required to seek feedback from a cross section of participating children's parents/carers to inform reporting and continuous improvement strategies. Throughout the qualitative reporting template, this feedback is identified as 'parents/carers surveyed'. This term is inclusive of written, documented conversations, focus groups or any method appropriate to seek specific feedback which represents the voice of families and service users.

4.1 Quantitative reporting

Type of measure	Measures	Counting Rules
Quantity; How much?	Total number of children attending the service in this reporting period: • Total number of all children • Total number of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds • Total number of children who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander • Total number of children with disability	Count each child who participated in activities during the reporting period **once only**. • **Do not count** attendee at an "event" e.g. fun day in the park (this information should be included in the Narrative Report. For example: a child participated in an activity (limited hours care) twice a week during the reporting period. **Count = 1** • Count each child in the following demographics who participated in activities during the reporting period **once only**: 　○ count each child who participated in activities during the reporting period who identified as from a culturally and linguistically diverse background **once only**. 　○ count each child who participated in activities during the reporting period who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander **once only**. 　○ count each child who participated in activities during the reporting period who identified with disability **once only**. For example: a child with disability who participated in activities in the centre every week during the reporting period. **Count = 1 child**
	Total number of children for past 12 month period.	Count each child **only once** who participated in activities during the past 12 months. *Note: this is an annual measure; only to be completed if you report every 6 months* *If you report 6-monthly, please do not combine the total of two six month reporting periods this may result in duplication and individuals must be counted once only.*
Quality; How well?	Total number of children participating in activities at the service on a weekly basis.	Count the total number of children who participated in activities every week (when service is available) during the reporting period. For example: a child participated in an activity **every week** during the 20 weeks that the service operated during this reporting period. **Count = 1**

Type of measure	Measures	Counting Rules
	Total number of children who are participating and engaged.	Count the number of children aged between birth and 13 years who are participating and engaged in the reporting period. Note: Children interact and learn in diverse ways due to culture, disability, environment etc. Indicators or actions/behaviours **to assist in determining if a child is participating and engaged** include: • the child is passively, by watching or conversing with other children, engaged in play activities; • the child shares materials and talks to others; • the child responds positively to the facilitator/parent's interest in their activity; • the child is curious and persists to get things right (e.g. counting); • the child is cooperative and can organise themselves into a role with specific goals (e.g. patient/doctor); and • the child is solitary, independent and looks content to play by themselves.
Effectiveness; Is anyone better off?	Total number of parents/carers **surveyed**.	Count the total number of parents/carers **surveyed** during the **reporting period only once.** Note: this number must be at least 30% of total number of children reported at Q1 Survey definition includes collecting written feedback, observations by ECEC workers, documented conversations with parent/carers and specific program evaluation.
	Total number of children benefiting from participating in the activity.	Count the total number of parents/carers surveyed who report their child/children are benefiting from participating in the activity. Note: A child may demonstrate that they have benefited from an activity when they show an improvement in any of the following areas (BACKS): • B – behaviour (e.g. sense of self, self-efficacy, self-image, sense of belonging, wellbeing) • A – attitude • C – circumstances • KS – knowledge/skills

Early Childhood Education and Care funding category

Type of measure	Measures	Counting Rules
		For example, the child may demonstrate any of the following improvements: • Developing as expected across 5 developmental domains (AEDC - Physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; communications skills and general knowledge); • demonstrating improved secure attachment with parent/carer; • developing a sense of identity; • more resilient, confident to explore their environment, developing effective social skills, building trusting relationships • communicating needs, wants and feelings to others. These improvements may be observed by staff (documented during activities or in reflection afterwards), confirmed by parents/carers during discussion with staff, or reported by parents in a survey.
	Total number of parents/carers surveyed who report being supported in their parenting and able to participate in employment, training and support activities because their child/children can attend the activity.	Count the total number of parents/carers surveyed who report being supported in their parenting and participation or increased participation in employment, training and support activities because their child/children can attend the activity. For example: Parent/carers may report • They have been able to undertake or increase hours of employment/training since connecting to the service. • They find the service's help with homework and reading has alleviated stress at home • They have been able to access support services/health appointments with a sibling child.

4.2 Qualitative (Narrative) reporting

4.2.1 Story behind the data

The Department values the narrative information from EYS providers as well as the performance data and will collect this information through case studies (minimum of two for each reporting period) and a summary report (minimum of two pages each reporting period).

To continuously improve the service delivery and achievement of outcomes through early years funding it is important for services to analyse the data and identify issues that impact or influence client outcomes through the summary report and case studies.

4.2.2 Summary Report

EYS providers should focus on the following when telling their story:
- service delivery performance;
- activities delivered and future activities planned;
- evidence based practice principals
- partners and partnerships in the community;
- benefits and challenges during the reporting period;
- areas and strategies for improvement; and
- staff qualifications/training undertaken by staff during the reporting period.

4.2.3 Case studies

EYS providers will submit two case studies (at least one focused on a group or program). Information provided should be non-identifying and include consideration of the following:
- background;
- support activities provided to improve the client's circumstances;
- how the activities contributed to achieving the expected outcomes; and
- barriers or activities which did not work in the specific circumstances.

5. Grants Management System – QGrants

QGrants is the Department's grants management system that operates as one portal for you to apply for and manage Early Years Service grants.

5.1 Applying through QGrants

To apply for Queensland Government funding and submit claims/reports, access the QGrants portal (https://qgrants.osr.qld.gov.au/portal).

5.2 Submitting claims through QGrants

Organisations with an executed Service Agreement will lodge a QGrants 'claim' on or before the due date identified in the funding agreement. A claim will include required performance and financial reports.

Direct data entry into a QGrants survey, will be required for the quantitative performance measures. The completed Financial Accountability Form and the Periodic Performance Report containing the summary report and the case studies are submitted as attachments within the QGrants claims process.

Following a completed assessment of the claim/report by Department of Education staff, payments will be released in accordance with the funding agreement. Further information is available at https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/funding-and-support/grants-tenders-and-funding/grants-management/grants-management

6.   Resource Links

All Early Years Services Funding Category Resources
https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/funding-and-support/grants-tenders-and-funding/early-years-services-funding/category-resources

Early Childhood Education and Care Funding Category Resources
https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/funding-and-support/grants-tenders-and-funding/early-years-services-funding/category-resources/ECEC

Glossary of terms
https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/fundingAndSupport/Documents/eysf-glossary.docx