Australian Government

Department of Education, Skills and Employment

Inclusion Support Program

Guidelines

Version 2.3 July 2021

Version Control

Date	Version	Description
February 2016	1.0	First release of the 2016-17 to 2018-19 ISP Guidelines
May 2016	1.1	Update prior to commencement of the Inclusion Support Programme (ISP, the Program) on 1 July 2016 including addition of transition arrangements for In Home Care services (clause 7.2), changes to reflect the delay of the *Jobs for Families Child Care Package* from 2017 to 2018 and minor corrections.
March 2017	1.2	Update following the commencement of the ISP on 1 July 2016 including clarifications to confirm policy intent for C4.3 (shared care arrangements) and D1 (Eligibility for IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support) and other minor corrections including 'programme' to 'program'.
June 2017	1.3	Minor correction to: Conditions of Funding at Appendix 2, wording, formatting, and update of item E4.3 Rates and Limits for Family Day Care (FDC) Top Up funding.
October - November 2019	2.0 Consultation draft	Consultation draft ISP Guidelines with a number of key proposed changes for sector feedback.
March 2020	2.1	This version of the ISP guidelines has a date of effect of 30 March 2020 (for children in care from that date onwards) and replace the previous version 1.3. Changes to eligibility requirements to include a targeted cohort of children with additional needs in the early years (under six years of age at time of application) and expanding eligibility to children participating in a preschool program in a Centre-Based Day Care service where the child attracts Child Care Subsidy. Increased timeframe for IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited from 8 to 12 weeks. Provide capacity for grant funding under the IDF Innovative Solutions Support stream to engage large organisations for collaborative and strategic projects.
August 2020	2.2	Update to the IDF FDC Top Up rate for 2020-21 (Section 8.4) and clarifying GST arrangements for IDF Innovative Solutions Support (Section 11.2).
July 2021	2.3	Update to the IDF FDC Top Up rate for 2020-21 (Section 8.4)

Contents

1. Introduction and program overview

1.1. What is inclusion?

Inclusion, as stipulated in the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) involves:

taking into account all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes. The intent is to ensure that:

- all children's experiences are recognised and valued
- all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference.[1]

This occurs when Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services work in partnership with families and other professionals to make informed and thoughtful decisions relating to curriculum, care and support. It involves changes and modifications in policy, pedagogy, planning, experiences and the physical environment to overcome barriers, with a vision that covers all children and a belief that it is the responsibility of services and educators to support all children's learning[2] and care.

Research shows that inclusion benefits all. Children with additional needs as well as children without additional needs benefit academically and socially from interacting and participating in inclusive settings.[3] Inclusion can lead to stronger skills in literacy and numeracy as well as positive changes in children's confidence, self-esteem and understanding of diversity (through respecting the uniqueness of others).[4] Inclusion also supports all children's rights, consistent with the United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and other international conventions, including the UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and UN *Declaration on the Rights of* Indigenous Peoples.[5]

Inclusion must be viewed as being 'proactive in identifying the barriers[6] and obstacles learners encounter in attempting to access opportunities for quality education, as well as removing those barriers and obstacles that lead to exclusion.'[7] Educators who have the highest expectations for all children's learning and development are committed to equity and believe in children's agency, competence and capacities to succeed, regardless of diverse circumstances and abilities (reflected in the EYLF principles).

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[1] Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2009). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Canberra, ACT: DEEWR (p.45). www.education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework-0

[2] UNESCO (2009). Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education. Paris: UNESCO (p.9).

[3] Early Childhood Intervention Australia (2016). National Guidelines- Best Practice in Early Childhood. Sydney: ECIA (p.11).

[4] Hehir, T.; Grindal, T.; Freeman, B.; Lamoreau, R.; Borquaye, T. and Burke, S. (2016). *A summary of the evidence on inclusive education (online)*. alana.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/A_Summary_of_the_evidence_on_inclusive_education.pdf [accessed 29 May 2019].

[5] Early Childhood Australia. *Statement on the inclusion of every child in early childhood education and care* (online) www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Statement-of-Inclusion-2016.pdf [accessed 29 May 2019].

[6] A range of factors are considered as 'barriers'. They can be child specific such as behaviour or physical and social limitations; related to educator skills and training; issues with parents, including their expectations or difficulties in communication; related to the physical environment, or the program structure, or challenges in the supervision of all children (ISP User Guide).

[7] UNESCO (2012). Cited in Forlin, C.; Chambers, D.; Loreman, T.; Deppeler, J. & Sharma, U. (online) www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/246/filename/Inclusive_education_for_students_with_disability-A_review_of_the_best_evidence_in_relation_to_theory_and_practice.pdf [accessed 29 may 2019].
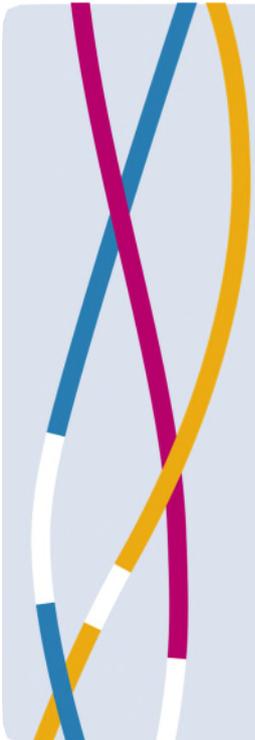
Children with additional needs

While there is no national definition of 'additional needs', there are children who may need or require specific considerations or adaptations to participate fully in ECEC services (although not all children with additional needs will
require support).

Additional needs may arise for children who:

- have a disability or developmental delay
- are presenting with challenging behaviours
- have a serious medical or health condition, including mental health
- are presenting with trauma-related behaviours.

Meeting the needs and requirements of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children from refugee or humanitarian backgrounds
- may also require specific considerations, such as cultural support, to ensure that these children are able to participate fully in ECEC services and experience positive outcomes.

1.2. About the program

The Inclusion Support Program (the program, ISP) is a key component of the Government's Child Care Safety Net, which commenced in July 2016, as an early element of the Child Care Package, introduced in 2018. The Child Care Safety Net aims to give the most vulnerable children a strong start, while supporting parents or carers to increase their activity including work, study and training.

The program provides support for eligible mainstream ECEC services (Section 3.1) to build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs, alongside their typically developing peers, so all children have genuine opportunities to access, participate and achieve positive learning outcomes as per the Approved Learning Frameworks (EYLF, Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and My Time, Our Place - Framework for School Age Care in Australia).

The program also assists services to implement a quality, inclusive and equitable practice under the National Quality Framework (NQF) and in accordance with the National Quality Standard (NQS) and Approved Learning Frameworks.

Program and policy intent

The focus of the program is on supporting children with additional needs to participate in ECEC alongside their typically developing peers. It is not a disability program but an inclusion program, which prioritises support for children with additional needs, particularly those with a disability. Primary support is from Inclusion Agencies to build the capacity and capability of services to include children with additional needs. The IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator funding element of the program is prioritised to supporting children with a diagnosed disability.

The program acknowledges that younger children, in particular, face delays seeking and obtaining disability diagnosis. As such, the program may provide Immediate/Time-Limited support for all children with additional needs (regardless of diagnosis) and ongoing Additional Educator support for children under six years of age in Centre-Based Day Care (excluding Outside School Hours Care), without a diagnosed disability or awaiting a disability diagnosis. This aligns with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) approach, which provides support for children under six who have a developmental delay or disability.

Services with older children with additional needs are encouraged to discuss the types of support available with their Inclusion Agency and consider flexible and responsive solutions to inclusion barriers through Innovative Solutions Support.

1.3. Legislative authority

The program's legislative authority has been established through its inclusion in Schedule 1AB of the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Regulations 1997 (Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Amendment (2015 Measures No. 9) Regulation 2015* refers).

1.4. Purpose of the guidelines

These guidelines contain information for eligible ECEC services about the program, including:

- program objectives, guiding principles and desired outcomes
- types of inclusion support available
- eligibility criteria and requirements
- how to access inclusion support.

The guidelines first came into effect on 1 July 2016 and are updated periodically by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment ('the department') and published on its website. Services and ISP contractors will be advised in writing of any changes to these guidelines (through existing departmental communication methods).

1.5. Program objectives, guiding principles and desired outcomes

The program's objectives are to:

- support eligible mainstream ECEC services to improve their capacity and capability to provide quality inclusive practices for all children, to address access and participation barriers and to support the inclusion of children with additional needs, with their *typically developing peers*[8]
- provide parents or carers of children with additional needs with access to appropriate and inclusive ECEC services that assist those parents or carers to increase their activity including work, study and training.

The guiding principles that underpin ongoing program delivery are:

- <u>Access</u> - eligible services, regardless of their geographic location or service type, have equitable access to support from the program to include children with additional needs.
- <u>Participation</u> - the program supports the active and meaningful participation of all children, including children with additional needs, in eligible mainstream services.
- <u>Strengths-based approach</u> - the existing capacity and capability of eligible services as well as children's strengths, skills and knowledge will be the starting point for determining the type and intensity of inclusion assistance and support required.
- <u>Child-centric</u> - the program first and foremost focuses on the inclusion of children with additional needs. The goal is to provide opportunities for children to learn and develop alongside their typically developing peers (acknowledging the context of the child's development, the service's emerging capacity and capability and that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children9*).
- <u>National consistency</u> - across the nation, the program is delivered in an efficient, flexible, culturally appropriate and timely manner and is tailored to meet the inclusion needs of eligible services and the children participating in those services (outlined in the NQF and elements of the NQS).[10]
- <u>Integrated approach</u> - ISP contractors will work collaboratively with each other, State Regulators, the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) and other community and service providers, for example National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) Partners, In Home Care Support Agencies and Settlement Service providers (see Links to relevant programs Appendix 3) to support an integrated approach to service delivery that respects diversity and inclusion.
- <u>Continuous capability development and resilience</u> - services receiving support through the program will endeavour to work towards high quality and responsive practices and commit to continuously improving their inclusive practice by encouraging and adopting innovative, tailored, flexible and creative solutions to inclusive practice in their service and sharing best practice inclusion information with other services in the sector.
- <u>Workforce participation</u> - the program recognises and supports parents or carers of children with additional needs to participate in the workforce and/or recognised activities (including study and training).

The desired outcomes of the program include:

- services have embedded inclusive practices in their service delivery model and, over time, have increased their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs and have reduced reliance on support from the program

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[8] Note: there is scope for flexibility in the interpretation and application of typically developing peers which may take into account similar-age peers.
[9] Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
[10] The Strategic Inclusion Plan fits within the Quality Improvement Plan under the National Quality Framework.

- children with additional needs have an increased representation in mainstream services, commensurate with their representation in the overall population
- parents or carers of children with additional needs have better access to, and are aware of appropriate and inclusive services that support their workforce, study or training choices.

1.6. Evaluation of the program

The program will be evaluated as part of the broader evaluation of the Child Care Package. The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of the program and the extent to which the objectives and desired outcomes (Section 1.5) have been achieved. All ISP contractors will be required to participate, and ECEC services may elect to participate in evaluation activities.

The measures of success in relation to children with additional needs and their families include:

- an increased number and participation of children with additional needs accessing services
- increased awareness of inclusion support services available for families of children with additional needs
- increased usage (hours) of care as a measure for parents' or carers' increased engagement with the workforce, study or training.

The measures of success in relation to services include:

- an increased number of services embedding inclusion strategies and practices (i.e., an increased number of services with a Strategic Inclusion Plan)
- an increase in knowledge, skills and confidence of educators in implementing inclusive strategies and practices (i.e., an increased capacity and capability to include children with additional needs)
- greater awareness among services about support provided by Inclusion Agencies
- an increased number of services receiving support from Inclusion Agencies
- improved assessment and rating for the elements relating to inclusion in the NQS.

In addition, the performance of ISP contractors, including Inclusion Agencies (Section 2.1) and the Inclusion Development Fund Manager (Section 2.2) will also be monitored and evaluated in relation to the measures of success.

Data to support the evaluation of the program will be obtained from a range of sources including management information and other administered data from a web-based application called the Inclusion Support Portal (which includes relevant Inclusion Support Program data entered through the child care software and Provider Entry Point (PEP)), and data sets from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Early Development Census.

1.7. Alignment with the NDIS Early Childhood Early Intervention approach

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funds a range of supports and services for eligible participants, which may include education, social participation, independence, living arrangements and health and wellbeing. The types of supports that the NDIS may fund for an individual child include:

- therapeutic supports for all areas of developmental need
- help by skilled personnel in aids or equipment assessment, set up and training
- mobility equipment.

The NDIS and ISP, although separate programs, are both directed at the inclusion of children with additional needs but do not replace the support provided by services under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Disability Standards for Education (2005).*

The NDIS Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) approach supports children in the early years (from birth to six years of age) who have a developmental delay or disability and their families or carers. ECEI Partners around Australia deliver the ECEI approach and connect children and their families or carers to the most appropriate supports and services in their area to help achieve goals and to build skills and independence. ECEI Partners provide short-term early intervention and, if necessary, will request NDIS access for longer-term supports.

It is beneficial for services and ISP contractors to have an understanding of the NDIS ECEI approach and the different supports available to children and their families or carers and to work collaboratively to achieve quality inclusive practices for children. It is important to note that while the ISP supports services and educators to focus on the inclusion needs of all children and address barriers that lead to exclusion, the NDIS ECEI funds reasonable and necessary supports that are related to an individual's support needs.

Further information about NDIS ECEI support can be accessed through the NDIS website.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1. Inclusion Agencies

2.1.1. Who are they?

The department currently funds seven Inclusion Agencies across eight states and territories ('jurisdictions') to work with eligible ECEC services in their jurisdiction to build their capacity and capability to provide and embed inclusive practice and address barriers to inclusion experienced by children with additional needs.

2.1.2. What do they do?

Inclusion Agencies establish a network of inclusion professionals to provide tailored support to services in their jurisdiction, to ensure the inclusion of children with additional needs through capacity and capability building. Inclusion Agencies work with services to create solutions that address barriers to inclusion. This support must be appropriate (responsive and timely) and reflect the demographics and needs of the services and children within the service and may include (but is not limited to):

- site visits to services to consider, examine and review care environments and existing inclusion capability and assist with reflective practice to support children's learning consistent with the EYLF and other Approved Learning Frameworks
- practical advice and strategies on effective and quality inclusive practice, including techniques for improvement and solutions to address particular barriers
- assistance to develop and/or review a Strategic Inclusion Plan (Section 5.1)
- support to access the Inclusion Support Portal to complete a Strategic Inclusion Plan (Section 5.2)
- facilitating access to the Specialist Equipment Library (Sections 2.1.3 and 5.4)
- reviewing and endorsing (or non-endorsement of) applications for support under the Inclusion Development Fund (Section 4).

Where feasible and appropriate Inclusion Agencies may also use technologies such as teleconferencing, email, social networking and other developments in information technology to deliver inclusion support to services. For example, technology such as Skype may be appropriate to facilitate communication in remote areas or across jurisdictions.

2.1.3. Management of the Specialist Equipment Library

Each Inclusion Agency manages a Specialist Equipment Library for services in their jurisdiction to loan items of specialist equipment that facilitate and support the inclusion of a child (or children) with additional needs.

Equipment available from the Specialist Equipment Library may include (but is not limited to):

- portable ramps to create access to the care environment
- standing frames and full support swings to allow a child (or children) with high physical needs to participate in the daily program and activities
- hoists, slings, harnesses, change tables, toilet sets or steps, potty chairs, mobile stools and seating or posture aids for educators to assist them to lift and transfer children safely when carrying out basic care functions such as changing or going to the toilet
- specialised inclusion toys such as sensory or switch toys
- specialised furniture such as chairs, tables, desk and positioning equipment

- communication cards or charts, and Auslan dictionaries to enable the child (or children) and educators to communicate effectively
- resources to support the inclusion of Indigenous children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, such as books in languages other than English.

Equipment not available from the Specialist Equipment Library includes (but is not limited to):

- therapeutic equipment (for example, hearing aids and therapist tables)
- equipment that the service would reasonably be expected to supply as part of the provision of a quality early learning environment
- equipment that the parent or carer would reasonably be expected to supply for their child (for example, wheelchairs, walking frames and body suits)
- equipment for which there are hygiene issues (for example, padded cots)
- equipment provided under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

2.1.4. How to access support from Inclusion Agencies

Services seeking Inclusion Agency support may self-refer directly via telephone or email. Inclusion Agencies are also expected to engage with services directly to offer inclusion support (especially those services that have not been aware of the assistance available under the program and those communities that have higher concentrations of additional needs). Following initial support from an Inclusion Agency through face-to-face visits or other communication methods (for example, via online/email), the specific arrangements for accessing support from an Inclusion Agency are outlined on the relevant Inclusion Agency website.

Contact details for the Inclusion Agency in each jurisdiction are available on the department's website.

2.2. Inclusion Development Fund Manager

2.2.1. Who are they and what do they do?

The Inclusion Development Fund Manager is contracted to the department to provide nationally consistent and equitable management of the Inclusion Development Fund (IDF) (Section 4.1). It is the single national organisation that is responsible for:

- ensuring a nationally consistent application of these guidelines, and any other information provided by the department, when assessing, managing and administering the Inclusion Development Fund
- facilitating equitable access to Inclusion Development Fund assistance for all eligible ECEC services
- assessing all Inclusion Development Fund applications from services (Section 10)
- determining an outcome for all applications (Section 10.2) made to the Inclusion Development Fund against the eligibility criteria contained in these guidelines and where appropriate approves (or declines) Inclusion Development Fund applications.

- processing and notifying services of the outcome of their (approved or declined) application (Section 10.2) according to the following timeframes:
  o within 5 business days of application receipt, for applications for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support and urgent IDF Innovative Solutions Support
  o within 15 business days of receipt, for applications for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator, the IDF Family Day Care (FDC) Top Up and routine IDF Innovative Solutions Support applications.
- notifying services and the relevant Inclusion Agency within 5 business days if the application is incomplete and seeking further information necessary to process the application
- responding to all enquiries within 5 business days
- maintaining an up-to-date website with information on the Inclusion Development Fund, and a 1800 phone number to respond to enquiries and provide guidance on applying for the Inclusion Development Fund.

While the Inclusion Development Fund Manager is responsible for approving or rejecting applications for funding (Section 10), payment is made directly to the service by the department and occurs retrospectively following a claims process, or after acceptance of a Letter of Offer for Innovative Solutions Support (Section 11).

2.2.2. Communication, appeals and complaints

The Inclusion Development Fund Manager must engage with services, Inclusion Agencies and families about the Inclusion Development Fund, including providing information about, and support to meet eligibility requirements, application processes, funding levels and responding to queries and complaints. Information about communication processes, including complaints mechanisms and appeals processes is available on the Inclusion Development Fund Manager's website, which can be accessed through the department's website.

2.2.3. Compliance monitoring

The Inclusion Development Fund Manager and the department undertake regular compliance checks on services accessing Inclusion Development Fund support to confirm the Inclusion Development Fund is being used in accordance with the service's approved application. Services must meet all reasonable requests from the Inclusion Development Fund Manager or the department in a timely way (Appendix 2 A2.3).

3. Who is eligible to apply?

3.1. Services eligible for support through the program

ECEC services eligible for support through the program are services that have been approved by the department for the provision of the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) under the Family Assistance Law. The Family Assistance Law is the basis for Commonwealth child care fee assistance, which includes the Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS). The Family Assistance Law also provides for the approval of services to administer the Child Care Subsidy on behalf of families.
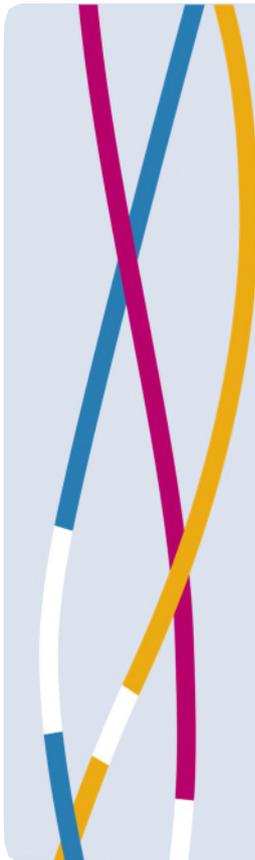
Eligible services and available support

Centre-Based Day Care; Long Day Care and Occasional Care (except Specialist Services):

- Inclusion Agency support
- IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator, for children with diagnosed disability and children with additional needs (under six years of age)
- IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support, for children with diagnosed disability and children with additional needs
- IDF Subsidy for Innovative Solutions Support

Outside School Hours Care; before school, after school, and vacation care:

- Inclusion Agency support
- IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator, for children with diagnosed disability and children with additional needs (under six years of age in Centre-Based Day Care, excluding children in Outside School Hours Care)
- IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support, for children with diagnosed disability and children with additional needs
- IDF Subsidy for Innovative Solutions Support

Family Day Care:

- Inclusion Agency support
- IDF Family Day Care Top Up
- IDF Subsidy for Innovative Solutions Support

The child (or children) the service is seeking to include through support from the program must meet the eligibility requirements for the Child Care Subsidy.

3.1.1. Centre-Based Day Care services providing a kindergarten/preschool program

Centre-Based Day Care services that provide state or territory government funded kindergarten/preschool programs are eligible to apply to access Inclusion Agency support and Inclusion Development Fund support for the hours of care that attract Child Care Subsidy funding.
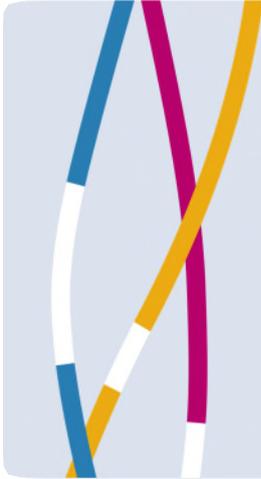
Accessing Inclusion Development Fund support for a child participating in a kindergarten/preschool program in a Centre-Based Day Care service

Where a state or territory government provides funding to support a kindergarten/preschool program in a Centre-Based Day Care, the service may apply for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator for all the hours in which a child receives Child Care Subsidy.

For example, if the child attends a total of 30 hours per week, of which 15 hours are a kindergarten/preschool program that receives funding from the state government, the service is still entitled to IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator for those hours, up to the maximum of 25 hours per week.

3.1.2. Other relevant organisations

The department, at its discretion, may provide grant funding under the IDF Innovative Solutions Support stream to relevant organisations (including ECEC peak bodies, inclusion specialists, disability organisations and other inclusion entities) for the purposes of developing and implementing collaborative and strategic projects that promote high level innovation and support for inclusive practice (Section 9.3).

3.2. Services not eligible for support through the program

Services not listed in Section 3.1 (above) are not eligible for support from the program.
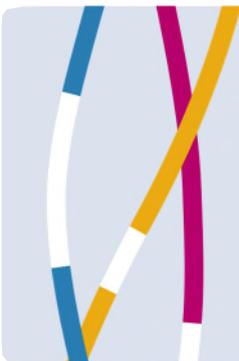
Services not eligible for support from the program, include (but are not limited to)

- In Home Care services (note: IDF Innovative Solutions Support funding can be provided for projects to support the transition of children from In Home Care to other service types)
- Specialist ECEC services
- State and territory government occasional care, preschools, kindergartens and early intervention services.

3.2.1. Specialist services

Services specifically designed to meet the needs of children with ongoing high support needs are considered specialist services. By their nature, specialist services have inherent capacity and capability to include children with ongoing high support needs. Additionally, as generally all of the children enrolled at a specialist service have ongoing high support needs, the environment does not provide an opportunity for the inclusion of children with additional needs in a mainstream care environment with their typically developing peers, which is a key objective of the program. Given this, specialist services are not eligible for assistance under the program.

4. Funding support under the program

4.1. Inclusion Development Fund

4.1.1. Description

The Inclusion Development Fund (IDF) provides funding to assist eligible ECEC services (Section 3.1) to address barriers to inclusion that cannot be resolved by support provided by an Inclusion Agency (Section 2.1) or the Specialist Equipment Library (Sections 2.1.3 and 5.4). There are four discrete streams of Inclusion Development Funding support which have the same broad application process, although there are slight variations to eligibility criteria, assessment and approved funding purposes.
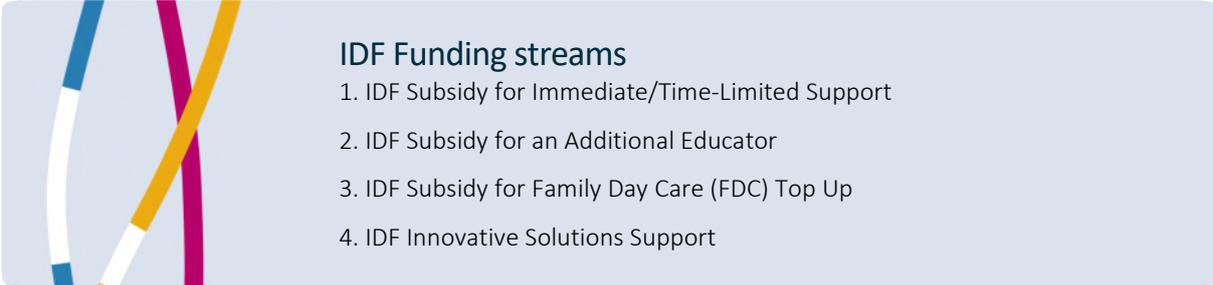
IDF Funding streams
1. IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support

2. IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator

3. IDF Subsidy for Family Day Care (FDC) Top Up

4. IDF Innovative Solutions Support

Sections 6 - 9 of these guidelines provide further detail about how to apply for funding under each of these four Inclusion Development Fund streams.

4.1.2. Available funding

Applications for funding can be made at any time during the program to provide responsive support to services as they enrol children with additional needs. Applications will be considered on their merits, and the approval of any application made under any stream of the Inclusion Development Fund is contingent on the availability of funding.

The Inclusion Development Fund has an annual capped funding allocation, which is set each financial year. In the event that demand exceeds available funding allocated within the capped program, funding will be prioritised to support children with a diagnosed disability and children awaiting a disability diagnosis. The Inclusion Development Fund Manager can advise Inclusion Agencies and services about the availability of funding.

The program does not prescribe an explicit list of additional needs, disabilities or vulnerabilities (including medical conditions) that determines whether or not the service is eligible to access funding under the Inclusion Development Fund. The service seeking funding is responsible for demonstrating that due to the needs of the child (or children), and the inclusion barriers within the care environment, funding support is required to meet the needs of all children. This is done through the development of a Strategic Inclusion Plan (Section 5.1), in collaboration with its Inclusion Agency (Section 2.1) and supported by information provided in the application.

4.1.3. Conditions of funding

The Conditions of Funding outline the requirements the service must adhere to if approved for funding. By agreeing to the Conditions of Funding the service declares it has prepared the application in accordance with these guidelines and will use funding only for the approved purposes and as detailed in the application and approval given. An Inclusion Development Fund application can only be submitted and considered for approval by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager if the service agrees to the Conditions of Funding (Appendix 1). The service must notify the Inclusion Development Fund Manager of any changes to the circumstances in the original application if applicable.

4.1.4. Non-approved purposes for funding

Services are required to meet the requirements of National Law and Regulations and the Inclusion Development Fund cannot be used by services to meet these obligations or to fund services for support that is appropriately provided by another entity.

Inclusion Development Fund support cannot be approved for the following purposes:

- one-to-one support for a specific child for the majority of time they are in the care environment or the majority of time Inclusion Development Fund support is requested
- assistance to meet licensing requirements outlined in the National Regulations (or relevant state or territory legislation) including educator to child ratios and adequate supervision
- to subsidise an additional educator to solely administer medical/nursing assistance[11] or backfill an existing staff member to do so. Medical/nursing assistance is defined as anything that is not covered by general first aid procedures and that requires specific training. Examples of medical/nursing assistance include:

  o administration of insulin and monitoring of glucose levels
  o oxygen administration and monitoring
  o percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) feeding

- assistance for which funding is the responsibility of a state or territory government, other Australian Government programs or other bodies (including school education)
- to provide assistance to access other services, such as one-to-one early intervention or therapy sessions
- the provision of transportation of a child to/from the service, on transport not operated by the educator or service. (Note: the department may consider and grant approval for exceptional cases such as transitioning a child (or children) from an In Home Care service to an eligible ECEC service.)

The IDF FDC Top Up cannot be approved to engage an additional educator in a Family Day Care environment.

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[11] The Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 set out regulations around services for managing medical conditions of children (Regulations 90, 91 and 92 refer). In summary, approved services must have a policy and appropriate processes for managing medical conditions.
For further details see the Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.

In addition, the IDF Innovative Solutions Support cannot be used for the following purposes:

- purchasing specialist equipment or resources
- medical and therapeutic interventions
- settlement services for migrants where funding is available through other programs
- support where more appropriate funding is available through an alternative Inclusion Development Funding stream
- support where more appropriate funding is provided by state/territory governments or other agencies or through other Australian Government programs.

Note: if services would like to seek clarification regarding non-approved purposes they should talk to the Inclusion Development Fund Manager in the first instance or contact the ISP inbox (InclusionSupportProgram@dese.gov.au).

4.1.5. Assessment and approval of Inclusion Development Fund applications

Inclusion Agencies work with the Inclusion Development Fund Manager and in adherence with these guidelines to initially screen funding applications. Inclusion Agencies will not endorse a funding application that does not meet these guidelines and application requirements.

The Inclusion Development Fund Manager (Section 2.2) assesses, and where appropriate approves or declines Inclusion Development Fund applications (Section 10) for all streams of funding from services to ensure a nationally consistent and equitable application of the Inclusion Development Fund eligibility requirements contained in these guidelines.

4.1.6. Exemptions

Where it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist, additional support may be considered on a case-by-case basis and approved by the department.

5. Framework for accessing support

5.1. Development and review of a Strategic Inclusion Plan

A Strategic Inclusion Plan is an inclusion assessment and planning tool for eligible ECEC services that includes short and longer-term strategies for improving and embedding inclusive practice. The development of a Strategic Inclusion Plan, guided by the Inclusion Agency, recognises current inclusive capacity and capability and outlines objectives for quality inclusion practices. The Strategic Inclusion Plan will include an inclusion profile for each care environment in which the service is seeking support.

The Strategic Inclusion Plan should be regarded as a 'living' document, implemented, updated on a continual basis and reviewed within a 12-month period. A Strategic Inclusion Plan should reflect any changes and record the progress made. The 12-month review provides an opportunity to evaluate all barriers and strategies including specialist equipment item/s that are on loan through the Specialist Equipment Library.

Following initial support from an Inclusion Agency (Section 2.1.4) through face-to-face visits or other communication methods (e.g. via online/email), all services receiving support through the program must develop a Strategic Inclusion Plan. The Inclusion Agency can provide assistance to services to develop their Strategic Inclusion Plan through initial meetings. The development of a Strategic Inclusion Plan is the mechanism for accessing ongoing support from the program and is necessary to obtain funding through the Inclusion Development Fund. Once completed, a Strategic Inclusion Plan must be reviewed by the Inclusion Agency.

A Strategic Inclusion Plan must identify the:

- barriers that impact on the service's capacity to include children with additional needs
- proposed strategies to address barriers to inclusion, which may include (but are not limited to):
  o changes to educator practices, planning, policy, physical environment and experiences to increase the participation of children with additional needs and embed inclusive practice in the care environment
  o specialised inclusion training, mentoring or coaching, or specific inclusion resources required by educators
  o developing policies and practices the service may use to support future inclusion
  o identifying resources and support services available in the local community to assist with the inclusion of children with additional needs
  o developing a project to support the inclusion of a child (or children) and build educator skills, knowledge and confidence
  o accessing an Additional Educator to increase educator to child ratios above the minimum requirements mandated in the National Regulations (or relevant state or territory legislation).

5.2. Completion of a Strategic Inclusion Plan through the Inclusion Support Portal

The Inclusion Support Portal is the avenue through which services interact with the program to complete their Strategic Inclusion Plan online and apply for funding through any of the four streams of the Inclusion Development Fund.

The service will need to ensure they have access to the Inclusion Support Portal. Once the service has made initial contact with its Inclusion Agency to seek support (Section 2.1.4), the Inclusion Agency may generate a shell Strategic Inclusion Plan. The service may commence developing a Strategic Inclusion Plan immediately or wait to develop it in collaboration with their Inclusion Agency during a site visit.

Where the service does not have the necessary infrastructure to support the Inclusion Support Portal, a paper-based Strategic Inclusion Plan is available through the Inclusion Agency. A paper-based Strategic Inclusion Plan may also be completed by a Family Day Care Coordination Unit to engage in service-wide inclusion planning.

5.3. Identification of additional support

Through the development of a Strategic Inclusion Plan, an inclusion barrier (or barriers) may be identified that cannot be resolved by support from an Inclusion Agency alone, which may require additional intervention to address. In these circumstances, the program provides further support to services through the Specialist Equipment Library (Sections 2.1.3 and 5.4) and the Inclusion Development Fund (Section 4).

5.4. Accessing specialist equipment through the Specialist Equipment Library

The service's need for specialist equipment (Section 2.1.3) must be identified through the development of its Strategic Inclusion Plan, or recommended by a relevant professional, such as an occupational therapist or physiotherapist, with knowledge of the child's biomechanical functional needs. If equipment is recommended by a relevant professional, the Inclusion Agency must endorse and agree to the recommendation before an application is submitted.

A Strategic Inclusion Plan must be completed by the service in receipt of equipment through the Specialist Equipment Library within a set timeframe, as agreed by the Inclusion Agency. This means that specialist equipment may be delivered to the service before a Strategic Inclusion Plan is completed, and this consideration will form part of the loan agreement with the Specialist Equipment Library, as determined by the Inclusion Agency.

It is the responsibility of each service accessing equipment from the Specialist Equipment Library to ensure it is fitted by an appropriate professional. In some cases, an occupational therapist or physiotherapist who has knowledge of the child's biomechanical functioning and needs may be required.

Before accessing equipment from the Specialist Equipment Library, the service must sign a Loan Agreement Form with its Inclusion Agency, which sets out the Terms and Conditions associated with borrowing equipment from the Specialist Equipment Library. The process for accessing equipment from the Specialist Equipment Library, including expected timeframes, transportation arrangements,

return arrangements and the Terms and Conditions associated with borrowing the equipment are determined by each Inclusion Agency. The Inclusion Agency or inclusion professional will follow-up with the service after receiving the equipment to ensure that the equipment meets the desired needs of the service (i.e., addresses the barriers identified in the Strategic Inclusion Plan) and the equipment is being used appropriately and correctly by educators within the service.

The service can access information about the Specialist Equipment Library directly from its Inclusion Agency. Contact details for the Inclusion Agency in each jurisdiction are available on the department's website.

5.5. Provision of documentary evidence

The service seeking to apply for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator or IDF FDC Top Up must provide current (dated within 12 months if not a permanent disability), signed, or otherwise validated documentation, by relevant professionals that confirms the child has ongoing high support needs. This may include children with a diagnosed disability[12] (including developmental delay), or a current and ongoing assessment for disability, or other additional needs.

Documentary evidence can be provided by a range of relevant professionals including (but not limited to):

- registered psychologists
- allied health professionals (for example, speech pathologists, physiotherapists and audiologists) or social workers and family counsellors
- qualified medical practitioners
- registered nurses or nurse practitioners, including Maternal and Child Health nurses.

Documentary evidence may include (but is not limited to):

- the child's health care card stating the disability code
- evidence that the child is a NDIS participant under Section 28 of the NDIS Act 2013
- diagnosis by a qualified medical/health practitioner or registered psychologist
- a report or supporting documentation signed by an allied health professional, registered nurse or nurse practitioner, Maternal and Child Health nurses, social worker/family counsellor of the current and ongoing assessment of a child
- an appointment letter or referral for an assessment by a qualified medical/health practitioner or registered psychologist
- supporting documentation, such as a diagnostic report, signed by a qualified medical/health practitioner, registered psychologist or social worker
- documentation stating a child's eligibility for Child Disability Allowance or parent or carer eligibility for Carers Allowance with respect to the child.

Services that experience difficulty obtaining sufficient documentary evidence should discuss those issues with their Inclusion Agency. The Inclusion Development Fund Manager and/or the department may consider alternative documentary evidence on a case-by-case basis.

Documentary evidence that has been supplied by the parent or carer to their child's service can be shared with a different service following a change in their child's enrolment, if the service requires

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[12] If the additional need is disability, the service should be guided by the 'Guide to Social Security Law, 1.1.R.90 Recognised disability CA (child)' in considering the impact of the child's disability.

support from the Inclusion Development Fund. The parent or carer must provide their consent that the service is able to view documentary evidence previously provided for the purposes of the Inclusion Development Fund. The parent or carer may also elect to provide the documentary evidence themselves, or update the documentary evidence provided.

5.5.1. Evidence of permanent disability

Documentary evidence that supports permanent disability will not be required to be submitted with future applications while the child is enrolled at the same service (see provision of permission to share personal information Section 5.6).

5.6. Provision of permission to share personal information

The documentary evidence requirements outlined above require parents or carers to share personal information about their child's additional needs with their service, and to disclose the information to the Inclusion Agency, Inclusion Development Fund Manager and the department, to use for the purpose of administering Inclusion Development Fund support.

To ensure adherence to the requirements of the Australian Privacy Principles contained within the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* (Appendix 2), parents or carers are required to sign a Permission to Share Personal Information Form between the service and the parent or carer. The form is provided by the Inclusion Agency and the signed form must be attached in the Inclusion Support Portal with the documentary evidence to support the application for funding.

Where a parent or carer has previously provided documentary evidence for the purposes of the program, they can consent to this information being provided to the service that has subsequently enrolled their child. This will be supported through the Inclusion Support Portal.

5.7. Conditions of funding

The service must agree to the Conditions of Funding (Section 4.1.3 and Appendix 1) before an Inclusion Development Fund application can be submitted and considered for approval by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager.

5.8. Submitting an application for funding

Inclusion Development Fund applications must be completed adhering to specific requirements (see relevant sections under each Inclusion Development Fund support stream) and submitted through the Inclusion Support Portal after endorsement by the Inclusion Agency.

6. Applying for IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support

Eligible services are

1. Centre-Based Day Care

2. Outside School Hours Care

6.1. Description

The IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support provides a significant Commonwealth funding contribution to subsidise the short-term employment of an Additional Educator to support the inclusion of a child with high support needs, while an alternative and more stable solution is being determined.

The IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support is available to support the inclusion of children with additional needs, including children with or without a disability diagnosis.

Note: Additional Educators do not provide individual (one-to-one) support for a child who has additional needs, as they work as a team with other educators to include all children within the care environment.

Funding support may be approved to address an immediate barrier or barriers to a child's inclusion, such as helping the service ensure a successful and safe transition for a child into the most appropriate care environment, while enabling the service to cater for the needs of all children.

Refer to Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.4 for approved and non-approved purposes of funding.

6.2. Application requirements for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support

6.2.1. Development of a Strategic Inclusion Plan

As the intention of funding is to be highly responsive, the service seeking the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited support is not required to complete a Strategic Inclusion Plan at the time of application. The service is however required to develop a short project outline in the Inclusion Support Portal, identifying the barriers to inclusion and strategies the service intends to implement with an increased educator to child ratio for a time-limited period and have its application endorsed by its Inclusion Agency, prior to applying for funding. The service is required to complete the Strategic Inclusion Plan (Sections 5.1 and 5.2) following the assessment and outcome of the application.

6.2.2. Documentary evidence

Documentary evidence is not required for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support.

6.2.3. Conditions of Funding

The service must agree to the Conditions of Funding (Section 4.1.3 and Appendix 1).

6.3. Submitting an application for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support

An application for the IDF Subsidy for an Immediate/Time-Limited Support applies to the care environment where an inclusion barrier is present. If the service is seeking the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support for children across different care environments, separate applications are required. An application can be approved for up to 12 weeks.

An application for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited support requires the following information from the service:

- enrolment details of the eligible child
- the days and hours of attendance of the eligible child
- the total number of hours the service requires access to an Additional Educator each week
- the length of the approval period required
- the total number of Additional Educators the service requires; if more than one in the same care environment
- details of whether the service requires access to an Additional Educator for pupil free days the child may attend the service
- the context of the care environment, including the number and ages of children and the number of educators in the environment
- the project outline, including the immediate barriers to inclusion and the strategies to address the barriers while an alternate and more stable solution is being determined to support the child's longer term inclusion.

The Inclusion Development Fund application is submitted through the Inclusion Support Portal for consideration by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager, once the application requirements (Section 6.2) have been completed and the application has been reviewed by the Inclusion Agency.

6.4. Rates and limits

Care Type	Subsidy rate ($/hour)	Hourly limit	Approval period	Weekly hourly limit
Centre-Based Day Care, Out of School Hours Care	$23.00	Up to 150 hours per child	Up to 12 weeks per year, from the approval date	Up to 25 hours per week
Vacation Care	$23.00	Up to 150 hours per child	Up to 12 weeks per year, from the approval date	Up to 40 hours per week

Section 6.4 outlines the maximum hourly limits and approval periods that apply to a single educator subsidised by the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support.

6.4.1. Pupil free days

The service is eligible to apply for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited support where a child (or children) on a pre-existing Inclusion Development Fund case attends the service on a pupil free day. A maximum of 1 pupil free day, at 8 hours per day, can be approved over a 12 week approval period of an Inclusion Development Fund case.

7. Applying for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator

Eligible services are

1. Centre-Based Day Care

2. Outside School Hours Care

7.1. Description

The IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator provides a significant Commonwealth funding contribution to subsidise the longer-term employment of an Additional Educator to support the inclusion of a child (or children) with high ongoing support needs.

The IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator is available to support the inclusion of children:

- with a disability diagnosis, in Centre-Based Day Care and Outside School Hours Care services
- with additional needs, including those awaiting a disability diagnosis, in Centre-Based Day Care services
- with a current and ongoing assessment for disability diagnosis, in Outside School Hours Care services.

As a capped program, in the event demand exceeds the available annual budget, funding will be prioritised in the following order:

- children with a diagnosed disability
- children awaiting a disability diagnosis
- other children with additional needs.

Note: Additional Educators do not provide individual (one-to-one) support for a child who has additional needs, as they work as a team with other educators to meet the needs of all children within the care environment.

Refer to Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.4 for approved and non-approved purposes of funding.

7.2. Application requirements for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator

7.2.1. Development of a Strategic Inclusion Plan

The service must complete a Strategic Inclusion Plan in the Inclusion Support Portal, in collaboration with its Inclusion Agency (Sections 5.1 and 5.2), before applying for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator. If the development of a Strategic Inclusion Plan identifies a barrier to inclusion for which an Additional Educator is the most appropriate solution, the Inclusion Agency will support the service by reviewing their application for funding.

7.2.2. Provision of documentary evidence

The service must attach the documentary evidence (Section 5.5), provided by the parent or carer, in the Inclusion Support Portal.

7.2.3. Provision of Permission to Share Personal Information Form

The service must attach the permission to share personal information (Section 5.6), provided by the parent or carer, in the Inclusion Support Portal.

7.2.4. Conditions of Funding

The service must agree to the Conditions of Funding (Section 4.1.3 and Appendix 1).

7.3. Submitting an application for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator

An application for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator applies to the care environment where an inclusion barrier (or barriers) is present. If the service is seeking the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator for children across different care environments, separate applications are required. An application can be approved for up to 52 weeks. An application for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator requires the following information from the service:

- documentary evidence and enrolment details of the eligible child (or children)
- the days and hours of attendance of the eligible child (or children)
- the total number of hours the service requires access to an Additional Educator each week
- the total number of Additional Educators the service requires; if more than one in the same care environment
- details of whether the service requires access to an Additional Educator for pupil free days the child (or children) may attend the service
- the context of the care environment, including the number and ages of children and the number of educators in the environment
- the inclusion profile and inclusion planning, including the current barriers to inclusion and the strategies and actions to address the barriers for the care environment (provided in the Strategic Inclusion Plan).

The Inclusion Development Fund application is submitted through the Inclusion Support Portal for consideration by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager, once the application requirements (outlined at Section 7.2) have been completed and the application has been reviewed by the Inclusion Agency.

7.4. Rates and Limits

Care Type	Care Arrangement	Subsidy rate ($/hour)	Hourly limit	Approval period
Centre-Based Day Care, Outside School Hours Care (before and after school)	Single child	$23.00	Up to 25 hours per week	Up to 52 weeks
	Shared care (more than one child)	$23.00	Up to 40 hours per week	Up to 52 weeks
Vacation Care	Single child	$23.00	Up to 40 hours per week	Up to 12 weeks
	Shared care (more than one child)	$23.00	Up to 50 hours per week	Up to 12 weeks

Section 7.4 outlines the maximum hourly limits and approval periods that apply to a single educator subsidised by the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator.

7.4.1. Pupil free days

The service is eligible to apply for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator where a child (or children) on a pre-existing Inclusion Development Fund case attends the service on a pupil free day. A maximum of 6 pupil free days, at 8 hours per day, can be approved over a 52 week approval period of an Inclusion Development Fund case.

7.5. Shared care arrangements

Where more than one child with additional needs is in attendance in the same care environment, the service can explore the use of a shared care arrangement. A shared care arrangement occurs where one Additional Educator is employed to increase the educator to child ratio to enable all educators to support the inclusion of more than one child with additional needs in the care environment.

When completing the Inclusion Development Fund application, the service (in collaboration with its Inclusion Agency) will determine if a shared care arrangement could meet the service's needs. Where a shared care arrangement occurs, the service is eligible for an increased number of subsidised hours for an Additional Educator (Section 7.4).

7.6. Changes to the care environment

Changes to the care environment may include situations where:

- the child on an approved Inclusion Development Fund case increases or decreases their hours of attendance in the care environment
- more support from an Additional Educator is required due to the enrolment of an additional child with additional and ongoing high support needs
- significant staffing changes, which may result in a loss of inclusion capabilities in the care environment.

The service, in collaboration with its Inclusion Agency, must review:

- the Strategic Inclusion Plan and care environment
- whether additional support of an Additional Educator is required

If the care environment requires a different level of support than the existing Inclusion Development Fund approval, the service must submit a change of circumstances application, following the processes outlined in Sections 7.2 - 7.3 of these guidelines.

When a child on an approved IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator case, moves into a different care environment within the service; the service, in collaboration with its Inclusion Agency, must review the Strategic Inclusion Plan and inclusion profile of the different care environment to determine the level of support required.

Where support for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator is required for the different care environment, a new application, or change of circumstances application for the new care environment must be submitted following the processes outlined in Sections 7.2 - 7.3 of these guidelines. Where an extension is required the service can apply to extend the case (see Section 11.3).

8. Applying for the IDF FDC Top Up

Eligible services are
1. Family Day Care

8.1. Description

The IDF FDC Top Up is available to support eligible Family Day Care services to include children with additional needs, with ongoing high support needs, by providing a top up payment where including the child results in the educator being unable to enrol the maximum number of children as allowed under the National Law. To access funding, the Family Day Care service must be seeking to include a child (or children) with additional needs, i.e., the child requires significant additional support from the educator, which is over and above what would be expected for children of a similar age in the care environment.

Refer to Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.4. for approved and non-approved purposes of funding.

8.2. Application requirements for the IDF FDC Top Up

8.2.1. Development of a Strategic Inclusion Plan

The Family Day Care service must complete a Strategic Inclusion Plan in the Inclusion Support Portal, in collaboration with its Inclusion Agency, before applying for the IDF FDC Top Up (Sections 5.1 and 5.2). If through the development of a Strategic Inclusion Plan, it can be demonstrated that including a child with additional needs results in the Family Day Care educator being unable to enrol the maximum number of children allowed under the National Law, the Strategic Inclusion Plan will support the service's application for funding.

8.2.2. Provision of documentary evidence

The service must attach the documentary evidence (Section 5.5), provided by the parent or carer, in the Inclusion Support Portal.

8.2.3. Provision of Permission to Share Personal Information Form

The service must attach the permission to share personal information (Section 5.6), provided by the parent or carer, in the Inclusion Support Portal.

8.2.4. Conditions of Funding

The service must agree to the Conditions of Funding (Section 4.1.3 and Appendix 1).

8.3. Submitting an application for the IDF FDC Top Up

An application for the IDF FDC Top Up applies to the Family Day Care educator where the inclusion of a child results in the educator being unable to enrol the maximum number of children as allowed under the National Law. If the Family Day Care service is seeking the IDF FDC Top Up for children across different Family Day Care educators, separate applications are required. An application can be approved for up to 52 weeks.

An application for the IDF FDC Top Up is in the context of the Family Day Care educator. An application for the IDF FDC Top Up requires the following information from the service:

- documentary evidence and enrolment details of the eligible child (or children)
- the days and hours of attendance of the eligible child (or children)
- the total number of hours the service requires the IDF FDC Top Up
- details of whether the service will require support for pupil free days the child (or children) may attend the service
- the context of the care environment, including the number and ages of children in the care environment
- the inclusion profile and inclusion planning, including the current barriers to inclusion and the strategies and actions to address the barriers for the care environment (provided in the Strategic Inclusion Plan).

The IDF FDC Top Up application is submitted through the Inclusion Support Portal for consideration by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager, once the application requirements (outlined at Section 8.2) have been completed and the application has been reviewed by the Inclusion Agency.

8.4. Rates and limits

Care Type	Subsidy rate ($/hour)	Hourly limit	Approval period
Family Day Care	$11.40/hour (2021-22)	Up to 50 hours per week	Up to 52 weeks per year

8.4.1. Pupil free days

The Family Day Care service is eligible to apply for the IDF FDC Top Up where a child (or children) on a pre-existing Inclusion Development Fund case attends the service on a pupil free day. A maximum of 6 pupil free days, at 8 hours per day, can be approved over a 52 week approval period of an Inclusion Development Fund case.

9. Applying for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support
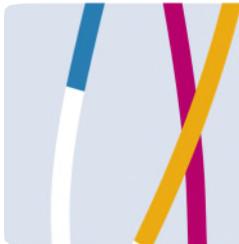
Eligible services are

1. Centre-Based Day Care

2. Outside School Hours Care

3. Family Day Care

9.1. Description

The IDF Innovative Solutions Support is available for eligible ECEC services to fund innovative, flexible and responsive solutions to inclusion where barriers have been identified and cannot be addressed by the support provided by the service's Inclusion Agency. This support is available for solutions to inclusion barriers other than subsidising the employment of an Additional Educator.

The department may also provide the IDF Innovative Solutions Support to relevant organisations (including ECEC peak bodies, inclusion specialists, disability organisations and other inclusion entities) for collaborative and strategic projects that promote high level innovation and support for inclusive practice.

The IDF Innovative Solutions Support aims to provide flexible funding to empower services to carefully consider their inclusion challenges and take an active role in finding solutions, which intrinsically builds inclusion capacity and capability. Examples of approved purposes for which this funding may be used include:

- cultural advice and mentoring including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentoring and community engagement (for example, services from cultural experts such as Indigenous community elders, bicultural support workers, consultants)
- bilingual support (for example, translating and interpreting services and/or bilingual workers to engage with parents or carers and/or work with educators to help settle a child (or children) from a culturally and linguistically diverse, refugee or humanitarian background)
- collaboration with specialists to obtain specialist advice on how to include a child (or children) with additional needs (including developmental delays, challenging behaviours or severe allergies) beyond the expertise of the Inclusion Agency for example, trauma specialised advice or advice from early childhood intervention specialists or dieticians which may include travel and accommodation costs for the specialist
- specialised inclusion training to ensure and optimise the inclusion of children with additional needs, including those with disabilities and high or complex support needs (such as specific inclusion training support sessions on trauma-informed practice for educators; facilitating inclusion and participation for children with Autism communicating with and supporting parents or carers of children with additional needs)
- networking and community engagement (for example, service visits to view quality inclusive practices and engage in professional dialogue/conversations or engagement with other agencies to collaboratively manage the successful transition of a child or children with additional needs, for example, In Home Care to mainstream ECEC services).

For non-approved purposes for funding refer to Section 4.1.4.

The IDF Innovative Solutions Support also provides a valuable opportunity to collect new data and inform best practice for including children with additional needs in mainstream ECEC services.

9.2. The service's application for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support

9.2.1. Development of a Strategic Inclusion Plan

Prior to applying for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support, the eligible ECEC service must complete a Strategic Inclusion Plan (Sections 5.1 and 5.2) in collaboration with its Inclusion Agency.

If through the development of a Strategic Inclusion Plan, a barrier (or barriers) to inclusion are identified, for which additional funding support would assist in addressing the identified inclusion barrier, the service may consider making an application under the IDF Innovative Solutions Support. The Strategic Inclusion Plan will form a component of the application for funding. Further requirements for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support are outlined in Sections 9.2.2, 9.2.3, 9.2.4 and 9.3 below.

9.2.2. The IDF Innovative Solutions Support application

To access the IDF Innovative Solutions Support, the service must submit an application (proposal) for funding which has been reviewed by its Inclusion Agency, to the Inclusion Development Fund Manager outlining:

- the inclusion barrier, including a description of the child (or children) the barrier is associated with, and why funding is needed to address it noting this inclusion barrier must be identified in the Strategic Inclusion Plan
- evidence that a Strategic Inclusion Plan has been developed and reviewed by the Inclusion Agency, and the service has considered its internal capacity to address the inclusion barrier including relevant requirements under the NQF and support available from its Inclusion Agency:

  o   where the IDF Innovative Solutions Support application is not endorsed by the Inclusion Agency, the service is still entitled to submit its application to the Inclusion Development Fund Manager for assessment and decision.

- evidence that funding for the required purpose is not available elsewhere
- an overview of the intended outcome of funding, including estimated timeframes and milestones
- financial quotes to support the total value of funding being sought, inclusive of GST
- the total duration and value of funding sought and budget breakdown for goods and services to be funded.

9.2.3. Conditions of Funding

The service must agree to the Conditions of Funding (Section 4.1.3 and Appendix 1).

9.2.4. Assessment criteria for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support

All proposals will be assessed by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager against the following essential criteria with equal weighting:

- the extent to which the proposal would lead to the genuine inclusion of a child (or children) with additional needs
- the extent to which the proposal would lead to enhanced inclusion capacity and capability of the service and educators
- the extent to which the proposal can be realistically implemented
- the capacity of the service and/or eligible applicant to deliver the proposal
- the extent to which no alternative or more appropriate funding sources have been identified or sourced.

All proposals will be assessed against the above essential criteria, but will also take into consideration:

- value for money
- level of risk involved
- quality of deliverables.

The Inclusion Development Fund Manager may seek further information from the service as deemed necessary to determine the merit and likely success of the proposal. Proposals and any attachments lodged with the Inclusion Development Fund Manager become the property of the Australian Government from the date received and will not be returned to the applicant.

9.2.5. Submitting an application for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support

An application for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support may relate to the care environment where an inclusion barrier or barriers are identified. The IDF Innovative Solutions Support may also provide funding for innovative and flexible solutions that are in the context of the whole service. The Inclusion Development Fund application is submitted through the Inclusion Support Portal for consideration by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager once the application requirements (Section 9.2) have been completed and the application has been signed off by the Inclusion Agency. Where an application is considered as urgent, the Inclusion Agency will also mark the application accordingly.

9.3. Collaborative and Strategic Projects

As specified in the eligibility requirements (Section 3.1.2), the department may consider flexible funding under the IDF Innovative Solutions Support stream to relevant organisations (including ECEC peak bodies, service delivery specialists, disability organisations and other inclusion entities) for the purposes of developing and implementing collaborative and strategic projects that promote high level innovation and support for inclusive practice.

Relevant organisations may approach the department with project proposals including a budget that is supported by quotes and a project plan.

The department may engage directly with relevant organisations to solicit proposals in response to identified needs.

When considering proposals the department will use the Assessment criteria for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support as outlined in Section 9.2.4.

9.4. Rates and limits

There is no specific range or limit for a single application for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support. The Inclusion Development Fund Manager can approve applications for funding up to $10,000. Applications seeking more than $10,000 will initially be considered by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager, who will provide a recommendation to the department, based on the value for money assessment of the proposed application against the criteria outlined in Section 9.2.4.

10. Assessment and outcome of applications

10.1. Assessment of application

The Inclusion Development Fund Manager (Section 2.2) will assess the service's application for funding under each Inclusion Development Fund stream against the eligibility requirements as per these guidelines and notify the service of the outcome of the application.

Before a funding application for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support or the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator is considered, the Inclusion Development Fund Manager will determine whether the service meets the educator to child ratios as required under the National Regulations (or relevant state or territory legislation) to ensure the adequate supervision of children within the particular care environment for which Inclusion Development Fund support is requested.

The Inclusion Development Fund Manager will consider the following in their assessment of the application for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support, the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator and the IDF FDC Top Up:

- the additional needs of the child (or children) at this time (including requirements for ongoing high support for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator and the IDF FDC Top Up)
- the details of the barrier (or barriers) to inclusion presented in the care environment, identified (through the project outline or Strategic Inclusion Plan)
- the degree to which an Additional Educator is the most appropriate solution to the identified inclusion barrier/s (applicable only to the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support and the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator)
- how the requested Additional Educator will be used to implement strategies to address inclusion barriers and facilitate inclusion of all children (applicable only to the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited and the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator)
- whether the impact on the educator of including the child with ongoing high support needs results in the educator being unable to enrol the maximum number of children as allowed under National Law (applicable only to the IDF FDC Top Up)
- any other inclusion support provided to the service for the same care environment
- whether the application has been endorsed by the Inclusion Agency.

The IDF Innovative Solutions Support stream has its own distinct assessment criteria. The Inclusion Development Fund Manager will consider the assessment criteria (Section 9.2.4) in their assessment of the service's application.

Applications for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support and urgent IDF Innovative Solutions Support will be processed and the service notified of the outcome within 5 business days of application receipt.

The service will be advised of the outcome of their application for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator, the IDF FDC Top Up and routine IDF Innovative Solutions Support applications, by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager, within 15 business days.

10.2. Outcome of application

10.2.1. Application Declined

If an application is not approved, the Inclusion Development Fund Manager will send the service an Application Declined Letter via email advising that the application has been declined and the rationale for which it was declined. Information about communication processes, including complaints mechanisms and appeals processes is available on the Inclusion Development Fund Manager's website, which can be accessed through the department's website.

10.2.2. Application Approved

If an application for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support, the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator or the IDF FDC Top Up is approved, the Inclusion Development Fund Manager will send the service an Approval Letter via email outlining the:

- start and end date of the approval period
- approved number of subsidised hours that can be claimed each week
- maximum number of subsidised hours over the approval period
- approved number of non-face-to-face hours
- date by which the service should apply for a renewal of funding (applicable only for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator and the IDF FDC Top Up).

The service is not required to formally accept the Approval Letter, however submitting claims consistent with the Approval Letter indicates acceptance of funding and the Conditions of Funding (Section 4.1.3 and Appendix 1).

If an application for the IDF Innovative Solutions Support is approved, the Inclusion Development Fund Manager will send the service a Letter of Offer via email outlining:

- description of the project
- total funding approved
- expected end date of the project
- expected deliverables of the project
- any additional terms and conditions.

The service must accept and sign the Letter of Offer, returning it to the Inclusion Development Fund Manager via email before funding can be provided.

11. Program payments

11.1. Claiming the Inclusion Development Fund

Services receive payment for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support and the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator by submitting claims for the number of hours the Additional Educator was employed, up to the maximum weekly approved hours on the approved Inclusion Development Fund case. Claims are also based on the number of hours the child (or children) attended, except where non face-to-face hours (Section 11.1.1) are claimed.

Claims for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support and the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator require services to:

- identify the Additional Educator
- outline the hours the Additional Educator attended the care environment
- provide details of the eligible child (or children) in the care environment, including their enrolment and attendance records.

Claims for the IDF FDC Top Up are based on the child's attendance. Claims require services to identify the number of hours they are claiming the IDF FDC Top Up payment each week.

Claims are made retrospectively via the service's child care software or through the Inclusion Support Portal.

Services must also adhere to the Conditions of Funding (Section 4.1.3 and Appendix 1) in relation to claims. The service must submit claims within 60 days of the fortnight the child listed on the approved case attended the service. If the service does not submit any claims for more than 60 days during the approved period, the Inclusion Development Fund case will automatically be deactivated and new claims cannot be submitted. Cases can be reactivated by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager. The service must also retain relevant evidence of the eligible child (or children) on the Inclusion Development Fund case and the Additional Educator.

11.1.1. Non face-to-face hours

Where a child is absent from the service, the educator funded by the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited support or the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator should receive appropriate notice in line with award (or Enterprise Agreement) provisions. The service is able to claim the subsidy for a limited number of hours during its approval period, where the child is absent but the Additional Educator attends the care environment as set out in the table overleaf (evidence may be required or requested to validate).

For the IDF FDC Top Up, a capped number of non-face-to face hours will be available per Inclusion Development Fund case. This will allow the service to claim the IDF FDC Top Up where the child has not attended.

The maximum number of hours for which the subsidy is payable where a child is absent is a percentage of the total number of approved hours in the service's approved period, as set out in the table overleaf. Once the service has exceeded this number of hours in its approval period, it will not receive any further subsidy for further hours that the child is absent from the service (and where applicable the educator funded by the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator attends).

Application	Care type	Non face-to-face hours limit (of total IDF case hours)
IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited	All service types	10%[13]
IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator	Centre-Based Day Care	4%[14]
	Outside School Hours Care	5%
	Vacation Care	17%
IDF Family Day Care Top Up	Family Day Care	10%[15]

11.2. Payment of the Inclusion Development Fund

The Inclusion Development Fund payment is paid directly to the service, from the department, to the same payee details it has nominated to receive its Child Care Subsidy payments on behalf of families.

For the IDF FDC Top Up, the Family Day Care service is required to pass the payment directly on to the relevant Family Day Care educator.

For the IDF Innovation Solutions Support, payment is paid up front, inclusive of Goods and Services Tax (GST), after the Letter of Offer has been formally executed and retrospective claiming is not required unless otherwise stated in the Letter of Offer.

This GST inclusive payment is irrespective of whether the goods and/or services supplied to the ECEC service is inclusive of GST or not. If there is a GST exclusive component, the ECEC service would need to remit that amount back to ATO through their usual Business Activity Statement arrangements. For ECEC services not registered for GST, manual payments may be made by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager.

Following a successfully executed claim, the service will typically receive payment within 4-6 business days, depending on the banking institution to which it is affiliated.

11.2.1. Acquittal of the IDF Innovative Solutions Support

At the completion of the project, determined as the end date outlined in the Letter of Offer, the service must complete a declaration, declaring that funding was expended for the purposes for which it was approved. Any funds not acquitted must be returned to the department. If the service is unable to acquit the total funding allocated to the specific project, the service may propose alternate or additional inclusion activities for the remaining funds. The service must also provide details of the

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[13] Example - A Centre-Based Day Care service is approved for the IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support for 100 hours. The maximum number of hours it can claim the subsidy for in the approval period, where the child is absent but the Additional Educator attends is 10% of the total approved hours (100 hours x 0.10 Non Face-to-Face hours limit = 10 hours)

[14] Example - A Centre-Based Day Care service is approved for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator for 18 hours per week for 52 weeks. The maximum number of hours it can claim the subsidy for in the approval period, where the child is absent but the Additional Educator attends is 4% of the total approval period (18 hours x 52 weeks x 0.04 Non Face-to-Face hours limit = 37.4 hours)

[15] Example - A FDC service is approved for the IDF FDC Top Up Payment for 18 hours per week for 52 weeks. The maximum number of hours it can claim the subsidy for in the approval period, where the child is absent is 10% of the total approval period (18 hours x 52 weeks x 0.10 Non Face-to-Face hours limit = 93.6 hours)

outcomes of the project, including confirmation that intended deliverables were achieved, and if necessary, an explanation for why they were not achieved.

11.3. Review, extension and/or renewal of funding

The IDF Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support can only be approved once for the service for the same child. If the service requires ongoing support from an Additional Educator to include the child with additional needs, as identified by its Strategic Inclusion Plan, it should apply for the IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator (Section 7).

Where an extension would be the most practical or expedient option (for example, if a child with additional needs is changing care environments or transitioning to school), the service can apply to extend the case for a maximum period of 12 weeks for the current care environment using the existing current approved IDF Subsidy case.

The service can apply for a renewal of their approved IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator or IDF FDC Top Up case. This should occur on or after the renewal date as outlined in the original approval letter which, if approved, will enable continuity. The service, in collaboration with its Inclusion Agency, must review:

- the Strategic Inclusion Plan and care environment
- whether ongoing IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator is required
- whether there is a change in the number of hours an Additional Educator is needed.

A new application, which indicates it is for renewal of funding on a previously approved case, must be submitted following the processes outlined in Sections 7.2 - 7.3 or 8.2- 8.3 of these guidelines. The service must notify the Inclusion Development Fund Manager if the approved amount of Inclusion Development Fund Subsidy is no longer required.

There is no explicit limit on the number of applications the service can make to the IDF Innovative Solutions Support, however the Inclusion Development Fund Manager will use discretion when assessing applications and may prioritise support to services that have not yet accessed the IDF Innovative Solutions Support over the service that has received previous support.

Appendix 1. Conditions of Funding

A1.1. IDF Subsidy and IDF FDC Top Up

You must comply with the guidelines. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Use of the funding for the purposes as stated in the Approval Letter sent by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager.
- Implementing the Strategic Inclusion Plan with regular review (within a 12 month period) and updates to address the barriers to inclusion and assist in embedding inclusive practices at the service.
- Submitting online claims for Inclusion Development Fund payments within 60 days of the fortnight that the child (or children) on the approved Inclusion Development Fund case attended the service. If the service does not submit and claims for more than 60 days during the approval period, the Inclusion Development Fund case will automatically be deactivated and new claims cannot be submitted. Cases can be reactivated by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager.
- Retaining relevant evidence pertaining to the use of the funding, including sign in and sign out sheets of the eligible child (or children) on the approved Inclusion Development Fund Case, Additional Educator attendance or record of payment to the Family Day Care educator.
- Complying with the *Privacy Act* 1988 and the Australian Privacy Principles when handling personal information for the purposes of the ISP (Appendix 2 A2.1).
- Advising the Inclusion Development Fund Manager via the Inclusion Support Portal within 15 business days if the child (or children) on the approved Inclusion Development Fund case no longer attends the service.
- Advising the Inclusion Development Fund Manager in writing within 30 days of any intention of the service to change owner and/or operator. Both the existing operator and the new operator are required to advise the Inclusion Development Fund Manager of the change (within 30 days) and take the necessary actions required to ensure service continuity, if Inclusion Development Funding support is needed.
- Meeting all reasonable requests from the Inclusion Development Fund Manager or department to undertake compliance activity where appropriate, including reasonable assistance to provide access to your employees, premises occupied by you and materials relevant to the Inclusion Development Fund Subsidy. Reasonable notice will be provided prior to requiring access to premises and records.
- Meeting all reasonable requests from the Inclusion Development Fund Manager or department to participate in reporting and evaluation activities for the program.
- Complying with all relevant statutes, regulations, by-laws and requirements of any Commonwealth, State, Territory or local authority, and any of the department's policies notified in writing (Appendix 2).

If you are found to be in breach of any of the conditions, your approved Inclusion Development Fund case may be terminated, future claims may not be able to be submitted and payments may be withheld. You may also be required to repay any amounts you have received whilst in breach.

A1.2. The IDF Innovative Solutions Support

You must comply with the guidelines. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Using the funding for the purposes as stated in the Letter of Offer sent by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager.
- Retaining all relevant documentation to support the spending of approved funds.
- Advising the Inclusion Development Fund Manager if duplicate funding has been received for the same or similar purpose within 5 business days.
- Complying with the Privacy Act 1988 and Australian Privacy Principles when handling personal information for the purposes of the program (Appendix 2 A2.1).
- For service projects, completing an online declaration of funding expenditure on completion of the project, and report on outcomes of the project in the Inclusion Support Portal.
- For non-service projects, completion of acquittal requirements as set out in the funding agreement.
- Advising the Inclusion Development Fund Manager in writing within 30 days of any intention of the service to change owner and/or operator. Both the existing operator and the new operator are required to advise the Inclusion Development Fund Manager of the change (within 30 days) and take the necessary actions required to ensure service continuity, if Inclusion Development Funding support is needed.
- Meeting all reasonable requests from the Inclusion Development Fund Manager or department to undertake compliance activity where appropriate, including reasonable assistance to provide access to your employees, premises occupied by you and materials relevant to the IDF Innovative Solutions Support.
- Meeting all reasonable requests from the Inclusion Development Fund Manager or department to participate in reporting and evaluation activities for the program.
- Complying with all relevant statutes, regulations, by-laws and requirements of any Commonwealth, State, Territory or local authority, and any of the department's policies notified in writing (Appendix 2).

If you are found to be in breach of any of these conditions, you may be required to repay any amounts of funding you have received whilst in breach.

Appendix 2. Other legislative requirements

A2.1. Privacy

All parties involved in delivering the program are bound by the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988* ("the *Privacy Act*"). The *Privacy Act* contains the Australian Information Privacy Principles (APPs) which regulate the handling of personal information of individuals by government agencies and certain private sector organisations, including the collection, storage, use and disclosure of that information.

Persons, bodies and organisations involved in the program must comply with the APPs when handling personal information collected for the purposes of that program. In brief, persons, bodies and organisations must ensure that:

- personal information is managed in an open and transparent way including by having a clearly expressed and up to date APP privacy policy;
- individuals are given the option, where practicable, of not identifying themselves, or of using a pseudonym;
- personal information, both solicited and unsolicited, is collected in accordance with APPs 3 and 4, and sensitive information is afforded a higher degree of protection;
- individuals are appropriately notified of certain matters at the time their personal information is collected;
- personal information is only used and disclosed for the purposes for which it was collected or for other purposes in accordance with APP 6, and only disclosed outside Australia in accordance with APP 8;
- records containing personal information are accurate, relevant, up-to-date, complete and not misleading;
- suitable security arrangements exist for all records containing personal information;
- access to a person's own personal information held by the organisation is made available in accordance with APP 12; and
- requests for correction of an individual's personal information is dealt with in accordance with APP 13.

For further information about the department's privacy policy, including how to access or correct personal information held by the department or how to make a privacy complaint, please go to our website: www.dese.gov.au/privacy.

Or write to:

Privacy Officer
Legal Services
Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Location Code: C50MA10 - LEGAL
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601
Or email: privacy@dese.gov.au

Privacy complaints may be made directly to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, but will only be actioned where the complaint was made to the department in the first instance but was not dealt with to the complainant's satisfaction.

A2.2. Freedom of Information (FOI)

All documents created or held by the department in relation to the program are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* ("the *FOI Act*").

If a request is made under the FOI Act for access to a document subject to the *FOI Act*, then that document will be made publicly available unless it can be demonstrated that the document falls under an exemption provision, or a conditional exemption provision and disclosure would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest, as specified in the FOI Act.

Please note, the *FOI Act* also applies to some documents created or held by the department's contractors or subcontractors who provide services to the public or third parties on behalf of the department. Therefore, if the department receives a request for access to a document held by a contractor or a subcontractor, the department is required to take action to obtain a copy of the document from its contractor or subcontractor (as applicable), and then decide whether access is to be given to the document under the *FOI Act*.

All FOI requests must be referred, immediately via email at FOI@dese.gov.au or write to:

The FOI Coordinator
Legal Services
Location Code: C50MA10 – LEGAL
GPO BOX 9880
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Any decision regarding an FOI request must be made by an authorised FOI decision-maker within the department and in accordance with the requirements of the *FOI Act*.

Note: The FOI Act defines the term 'document' broadly and includes, amongst other things, any paper or other material on which there is writing, maps, plans, drawings, photographs, electronic records, sound recordings, images, records of information and copies.

A2.3. Compliance with Laws and Policies

People who do business with the department are required to comply with all relevant laws and policies and failure to do so will breach their contract or funding agreement (as the case may be) with the department and may be a breach of the law.

A2.4. Discrimination

The program must be administered in a way that supports the principle of non-discrimination. Under the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020, barriers which prevent people with disabilities having access to programs and services must be removed. ISP contractors or recipients may be subject to the provisions of the following Acts, which are designed to prevent discriminatory practices:

- Racial Discrimination Act 1975;
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984;
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986; and
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

A2.5. Unlawful Disclosure of Information – Crimes Act 1914

ISP contractors should be aware of section 122.4 of the *Criminal Code*, which relates to the unauthorised disclosure of information by current and former Commonwealth officers and makes such unauthorized disclosure an offence punishable by 2 years imprisonment. Section 122.4 applies to persons who are, or were Commonwealth officers, or who are or were engaged to perform work for a Commonwealth entity.

A2.6. False and misleading information – Criminal Code

Individuals and services applying for program support should be familiar with Part 7.4 of the *Criminal Code*, and in particular with section 136.1, which makes it an offence to make a false or misleading statement as part of an application. This is an offence punishable by 12 months imprisonment.

A2.7. Working with Children

Contractors and recipients, who, as part of the program, come into contact with children are required to undergo a relevant police and/or working with children check and comply with any relevant state and territory law relating to working with children and vulnerable people[16].

A2.8. Fraud

The department is committed to preventing fraud in all aspects of its business. ISP contractors or recipients are required to promptly notify the department's Fraud Control and Intelligence Team, at email: fraud@dese.gov.au, of any suspected fraud and provide details. ISP contractors or recipients and their staff must not engage in fraudulent activity in relation to their contract. They must take all reasonable steps to prevent fraud upon the Commonwealth in relation to the services or funding, including the implementation of an appropriate fraud-control plan, a copy of which must be provided to the department if requested.

A2.9. Information Technology Security

ISP contractors and recipients who have access to departmental IT systems must have a unique log-on ID and password, which must be kept secure and must not be shared under any circumstances. During the application process for access to departmental IT systems, all potential users will be required to provide sufficient personal information to allow them to be identified. This is to ensure that applicants who have been found to have fraudulently used the department's IT systems in the past can be identified and denied access.

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[16] Such laws include the Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012 (NSW), Working With Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld), Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 (WA), Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic), Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA), Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011 (ACT), Care and Protection of Children Act (NT), Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 (Tas) and other, laws of a similar nature protecting children and vulnerable people.

A2.10. Recordkeeping

In accordance with the *Archives Act 1983,* ISP contractors and ECEC services are required to:

- store all Commonwealth records in a secure location which is not accessible by unauthorized persons; and
- retain all Commonwealth records for a minimum period of seven years from the date the last action was completed.

In addition, financial records must be kept in accordance with accounting standards.

Contracts and agreements formed under the ISP will contain more detailed information about these requirements.

Appendix 3. Links to relevant programs

A3.1. Australian Government Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

The Australian Government has implemented a Child Care Package which includes a Child Care Subsidy, Additional Child Care Subsidy and Community Child Care Fund. Information on the package can be found at:

- Child Care Package (www.dese.gov.au/new-child-care-package-families)
- Child Care Subsidy (www.dese.gov.au/child-care-subsidy)
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (www.dese.gov.au/child-care-safety-net)
- Family Child Care Subsidy Estimator (www.dese.gov.au/family-child-care-subsidy-estimator)
- Community Child Care Fund (www.dese.gov.au/community-child-care-fund)
- Information about the requirements and responsibilities of ECEC providers and services that are approved under family assistance law can be found in the Child Care Provider Handbook (www.dese.gov.au/child-care-provider-handbook).

A3.2. National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

The NDIS provides support to eligible people with intellectual, physical, sensory, cognitive and psychosocial disability. Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) supports can also be provided for children (aged 0-6 years) with disability or developmental delay. ECEI Partners and Local Area Coordinators (LAC) help people understand and access the NDIS and can connect people with disability to supports, services, activities in their community and other government services (www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/what-ndis/whos-rolling-out-ndis).

A3.3. In Home Care (IHC)

In Home Care supports families' workforce participation and ECEC requirements where other approved services are not available or appropriate, particularly for families with complex and challenging needs as well as families who are geographically isolated from child care or work non-standard hours. Families unable to access Centre-based Day Care, Family Day Care or Outside School Hours Care services due to their unique circumstances may be able to access ECEC provided in the family home through In Home Care (www.dese.gov.au/in-home-care).

Positive outcomes for families have been observed when there is engagement of the Inclusion Agency and In Home Care Support Agency working collaboratively and utilising networks of both agencies.

A3.4. Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

ACECQA is an independent national body which manages the National Quality Framework (NQF) and works with all governments to provide guidance, resources and services to support the ECEC sector to improve outcomes for children (www.acecqa.gov.au).

A3.5. Other relevant programs may include

- Settlement Service Providers
- Adult Migrant English Program Providers
- Migrant Resource Centres
- Indigenous Organisations.

Glossary

Word/Phrase	Definition
Approved Service (under National Law)	An approved service (under National Law) is the service that has been assessed as satisfying the eligibility rules under the Family Assistance Law and has been approved to administer Australian Government child care payments on behalf of families.
Barriers	A barrier is something that is impacting the service's ability to include children with additional needs alongside their typically developing peers. Barriers can be child specific such as physical or social limitations; related to educator skills, knowledge and confidence or team work, family related such as expectations or difficulties with engagement; related to the physical environment or the program structure, including experiences offered and routines.
Centre-Based Day Care	Early childhood education and care that is provided in licensed or registered centres. It can include any pattern or arrangement or care in this setting.
Child Care Subsidy System	The technical platform through which providers and families interact with government in relation to child care subsidies.
Care Environment	A specific setting, room or grouping of children in early childhood education and care services (for example, an educator's home in FDC or a 0-2 year old room in Centre-Based Day Care)
Early Years Learning Framework	Belonging Being and Becoming- The Early Years Learning Framework describes the principles, practices and outcomes that support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school. It is a key component of the National Quality Framework.
Educator	Early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood education and care settings.
Family Assistance Law	The legal basis for the Australian Government to provide child care fee assistance, and for the approval of early childhood education and care providers to administer child care fee assistance on behalf of families. The primary legislation is: A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999 and A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999.
Family Day Care	A type of early childhood education and care that is usually provided in the home of an educator. Family Day Care is a service type distinct from other in-home care arrangements, Family Day Care operators are required to be approved under the National Law.
Inclusion Agency	Agencies contracted by the Australian Government to help early childhood education and care providers make their services more inclusive for children with additional needs.

Word/Phrase	Definition
Inclusion Development Fund	Funding available to assist eligible early childhood education and care services to address a barrier to inclusion that cannot be addressed through the support of an Inclusion Agency.
Inclusion Development Fund Manager	The single national organisation that assesses all applications for all Inclusion Development Fund streams from eligible early childhood education and care services, and other eligible applicants.
Inclusion Support (IS) Portal	The Inclusion Support (IS) Portal is an online system for lodging Inclusion Development Fund applications and claims for payment.
ISP Contractor	Organisation in receipt of funding from the Australian Government for the delivery of the Inclusion Support Program: Inclusion Agencies (IAs) Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM)
National Law and National Regulations	Refers to the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, which set a national standard for children's education and care across Australia. In effect, the same law is applied in each state and territory, but with some variation for the needs of each state or territory. References to the National Law includes the Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012. See www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations
National Quality Framework	A jointly governed uniform national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of education and care services including: a national legislative framework that consists of the National Law and National Regulations; a National Quality Standard; and an assessment and rating system. See www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about
National Quality Standard	The National Quality Standard (NQS) sets a national benchmark for ECEC service provision in Australia. The NQS includes 7 quality areas that are important outcomes for children. Services are assessed and rated by their regulatory authority against the NQS, and given a rating for each of the 7 quality areas and an overall rating based on these results.
Pupil-free day	A day set by an educational institution where students do not attend school due to teacher training. Also known as multi-purpose day, curriculum day or professional development day.
Specialist Equipment	Equipment recommended as necessary for the inclusion of the eligible child with ongoing high support needs.
Strategic Inclusion Plan	The Strategic Inclusion Plan is an inclusion assessment and planning tool developed by early childhood education and care services with support of an Inclusion Agency. It includes strategies and actions for improving and embedding inclusive practice for all children including children with additional needs.

Acronyms

Acronym	Description
ACCS	Additional Child Care Subsidy
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CBDC	Centre-Based Day Care
CCS	Child Care Subsidy
CCSS	Child Care Subsidy System
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
FAL	Family Assistance Law
FDC	Family Day Care
IA	Inclusion Agency
IDF	Inclusion Development Fund
IDFM	Inclusion Development Fund Manager
ISP	Inclusion Support Program
NGO	Non-government Organisation
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NQF	National Quality Framework
NQS	National Quality Standard
OSHC	Outside School Hours Care
SEL	Specialist Equipment Library
SIP	Strategic Inclusion Plan