

Category Guidelines

Child Focused Activities and Groups



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1. Child Focused Activities and Groups Funding Category

The Child Focused Activities and Groups Funding Category provides funding to deliver activities that aim to support child learning and development.

The quality of a child's earliest environments and the availability of appropriate experiences at the right stages of development are crucial determinants in building the brain's architecture. Supporting environments that promote optimal early childhood development greatly increases a child's chances of successful transition to school; achieving better learning outcomes while at school; and, better education, employment and health after school.¹

The Child Focused Activities and Groups Funding Category aims to achieve the following outcomes, including:

- Increased parents'/carers' awareness of and engagement with their child/children's learning and development;
- Increased secure attachment between children and their parents/carers;
- Increased parental capabilities and confidence in parenting and parent self-efficacy; and
- Increased community connection and families, parents and children are connected to and accessing the right services at the right time.

Funding is provided to deliver and/or support activities grounded in evidence-based practice. Child Focused Activities and Groups can be delivered through a variety of models such as:

- child development initiatives (e.g. supported playgroups, reading programs, and transition to kindy and/or school programs);
- parenting initiatives (e.g. home visits, literacy and numeracy support, children's health and parenting support services); and
- referral services and partnerships (e.g. child and maternal health checks, advice and advocacy, speech therapy).

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

- Integrated Service Delivery;
- Family Support;
- Sector Support;
- Early Childhood Education and Care; and
- Child Focused Activities and Groups.

¹ A Snapshot of Early Childhood Development in Australia Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) National Report 2009 Re-issue - March 2011

2. Management and governance requirements

To ensure services delivered are aligned to community need, and services are managed appropriately and funding is used effectively, efficiently and economically, the organisation must have:

- clearly defined governance and management arrangements which are appropriate to the size of the organisation and the amount of funding being provided;
- financial management systems which are appropriate to the size and complexity of the organisation;
- reporting systems to be able to track expenditure of funding, and performance requirements to ensure compliance with reporting requirements;
- a management committee or board of management with members having appropriate professional qualifications or relevant skills;
- clearly articulated and documented, child safety, privacy and human resource management systems and associated policies and procedures covering issues such as delegations, reporting and conflicts of interest within the organisation; and
- mechanisms for user participation in planning, delivery and evaluation of services received.

3. Record keeping

The organisation must:

- have and use information and record management systems (or standard ways of operating) to support records being created, stored, maintained, accessed, and ultimately destroyed (in accordance with appropriate policies and procedures); and
- ensure that any personal information is collected, kept and used in a way that meets the requirements of privacy legislation.

4. Partnerships

The organisation must develop the service profile as an integral component of the local early childhood service system. This will require a collaborative and cooperative approach aimed at developing ongoing partnerships with existing and new service providers.

Staff employed will develop strong partnerships with parents, community organisations and health and early childhood education and care services. Staff must develop a comprehensive understanding of the local early years' service system and be able to establish effective networks and linkages with relevant service providers.

Community development activities should be adopted to focus on developing collaborative and cooperative approaches to enhance service delivery and create more child and family friendly communities to meet specific community needs.

Relevant practice standards and service delivery requirements include:

- encouraging parents/carers and community members to take an active role in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the services they receive;
- developing, maintaining and implementing active engagement policies, strategies and practices for families and children, including culturally specific strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, culturally and linguistically diverse families and parents/carers and children with disability.

Staff will work with relevant agencies and organisations to establish, maintain and streamline referral protocols and procedures to ensure clients are able to access required services in an effective and efficient manner. The Department may be able to assist the develop formal mechanisms to support relationships between other early years service providers to ensure efficient and seamless service delivery.

5. Information sharing

Child Focused Activities and Groups requires the sharing of information at a number of levels. Staff at the service, will at times, need to share families' personal information and demographic data to determine service eligibility and types of services required. Sharing of information about referrals and service delivery is also required to ensure service continuity.

Protocols and procedures relating to information sharing between service partners must be developed. Informed parental consent must be obtained and documented prior to information being exchanged.

At times, more general information will also be shared between service providers (for example, information relating to organisational capacity, staffing, goals and philosophy). This type of information exchange is important in building relationships and partnerships with other service providers and developing a shared understanding to support a holistic service delivery across the early childhood service system.

6. Risk management

The organisation is required to develop risk management plans and to be vigilant in implementing the identified risk mitigation strategies. This includes strategies to ensure worker and client safety and relationships/partnerships across the early childhood system in the local area as well as:

- a statement of commitment outlining the organisation's commitment to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of children and young people;
- a code of conduct which outlines the organisation's values and provides clear expectations for all stakeholders;
- key policies and procedures for the employment, education, training, and management of volunteers, employees and trainees;
- policies and procedures for the organisation's general compliance with Working with Children requirements including the Blue Card System, including maintaining a staff register and review of the risk management strategy;
- effective fraud and corruption controls to prevent, detect and respond to actual or perceived issues; and
- a detailed plan for managing breaches of the risk management strategy and which sets out the consequences if policies and procedures are not followed.

Organisations should also be proactive in business continuity planning related to disruptive events which may be natural or caused by human acts or omissions. Business continuity management includes planning and activities that assist in preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from the impacts of events that disrupt the service.

7. Working with children and creating child safe environments

Organisations funded under the Child Focused Activities and Groups Funding category will create and maintain child safe environments using the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, 2019* which are designed to

build capacity and deliver child safety and wellbeing in organisations, families and communities and prevent future harm.

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

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

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

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

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

8. Staff

Organisations must ensure services are delivered by staff with training and/or experience in working with children, families and communities. Staff working directly with parents/carers and children must be able to:

- work within an ethical framework, for example the Early Childhood Australia (ECA) *Code of Ethics*;
- recognise the uniqueness of each family and their particular circumstances;
- treat children and families with respect and dignity, provide choices and enable participatory decision making;
- work with children up to eight years of age and have a sound understanding of early childhood development and practice;
- engage appropriately with children and parents/carers from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and be willing to undertake cultural capability training;
- develop partnerships, provide universal and targeted support, to parents/carers and children;
- share skills and lessons learned that can improve performance and service delivery; and
- work from a strengths-based perspective.

9. Reporting on Outcomes

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

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

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

9.1 Quantitative reporting

Type of measure	Measure	Counting Rules
Quantity i.e. how much?	<p>Total number of children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number of all children. • Total number of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. • Total number of children who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. • Total number of children with disability. • Total number of children aged 4 years. • Total number of children aged 4 years who are enrolled in Kindergarten. • Total number of children aged 3 years. • Total number of children aged 3 years whose parents/carers intend to enrol them in Kindergarten. 	<p>Count each child who participated in activities during the reporting period once only.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> Do not count attendee at an “event” e.g. fun day in the park (this information should be included in the Narrative Report).</p> <p><u>For example:</u> a child participated in an activity (such as a playgroup) twice a week during the reporting period. Count = 1</p> <p>Count each child in the following demographics who participated in activities during the reporting period once only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ count each child identified as from a culturally and linguistically diverse background who participated in activities during the reporting period once only. ○ count each child who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participated in activities during the reporting period once only. ○ count each child with disability who participated in activities during the reporting period once only. <p><u>For example:</u> a child with disability participated in an activity (such as a playgroup) twice a week during the reporting period. Count = 1</p> <p>Count each child in the following age range who participated in activities during the reporting period once only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Count each child who participated in targeted activities*, and who will be 4 years old by 30 June of this year, once only. ○ Count each 4-year-old child who participated in targeted activities, who is enrolled in kindergarten, once only ○ Count each child who participated in targeted activities*, and who will be 3 years old by 30 June of this year, once only. ○ Count each 3-year-old child who participated in targeted activities*, whose parents/carers intend to enrol them in kindergarten, once only.

Type of measure	Measure	Counting Rules
		<p><u>Note:</u> *Targeted activities may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Facilitated or supported Playgroups attended by 3-year-old children ✓ Pre-kindy / pre-prep / kindy readiness programs such as ‘Get Set for Kindy’ ✓ Family and parenting support activities which require registration or enrolment with regular attendance (e.g. weekly or fortnightly) <p><u>For example:</u> a child whose 4th birthday is on 29 June participated in a targeted activity (such as a 3-year-old playgroup) twice a week during the reporting period. Count = 1</p>
	<p>Total number of parents/carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number of all parents/carers • Total number that are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds • Total number that identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander • Total number with disability 	<p>Count each parent/carer who participated in activities during the reporting period once only.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> Do not count attendee at an “event” e.g. fun day in the park (this information should be included in the Narrative Report).</p> <p><u>For example:</u> a parent/carer participated in an activity (such as a playgroup) twice a week during the reporting period. Count = 1</p> <p>Count each individual parent/carer in the following demographics who participated in activities during the reporting period once only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ count each parent/carer who identified as from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and participated in activities during the reporting period once only. ○ count each parent/carer who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and participated in activities during the reporting period once only. ○ count each parent/carer with disability who participated in activities during the reporting period once only. <p><u>For example:</u> a parent/carer participated in an activity twice a week (such as a parenting group) during the reporting period. Count = 1 parent/carer</p>
Quantity i.e. how much?	Total number of children for past 12 month period.	Count each child who participated in activities during the past 12 months only once.

Type of measure	Measure	Counting Rules
		<p><i>Note: this is an annual measure; only to be completed if you report every 6 months</i></p> <p><i>If you report 6-monthly, please do not combine the total of two six month reporting periods this may result in duplication and individuals must be counted once only.</i></p>
Quality i.e. how well?	Total number of parents/carers for past 12 month period.	<p>Count each parent/carer who participated in activities during the past 12 months only once.</p> <p><i>Note: this is an annual measure; only to be completed if you report every 6 months</i></p> <p><i>If you report 6-monthly, please do not combine the total of two six month reporting periods this may result in duplication and individuals must be counted once only.</i></p>
	Total number of parents/carers surveyed .	<p>Count the total number of parents/carers surveyed during the reporting period only once.</p> <p><i>Note: this number must be at least 30% of total number of parents/carers reported</i></p> <p><i>Survey definition: Includes collecting written feedback, observations by CFAG workers, documented conversations with parent/carers and specific program evaluation.</i></p>
	Number of parents/carers who report they are satisfied with the activity	<p>Count the total number of parents/carers surveyed who are satisfied with the activities of the Child Focused Activities and Groups and would recommend the service to a friend.</p> <p><u>For example:</u> Were parents/carers satisfied with the following aspects of the activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timeliness (e.g. delivered on time and within expected time frames); • accessibility (e.g. easily accessible for everyone, a welcoming and safe environment); • quality (e.g. delivered by well trained staff); • meeting their expectations; • helping them to achieve desired outcomes; and • all the above (overall satisfaction). <p><u>Note:</u> This information may be collected by staff through surveys, documented conversations, and specific program/activity evaluations.</p>

Type of measure	Measure	Counting Rules
	Number of parents/carers who feel supported in their parenting role	<p>Count the total number of parents/carers surveyed who report that they feel supported in their parenting role through their participation in the activity and group</p> <p><i>Note: a parent/carer may demonstrate that they have felt more supported and capable from an activity when they show an improvement in any of the following areas (BACKS):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B – behaviour (e.g. sense of self, self-efficacy, self-image, sense of belonging, wellbeing) • A - attitude/opinion • C - circumstances • KS - knowledge/skills <p><u>For example:</u> the parent/carer may demonstrate any of the following improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased confidence in their parenting skills; • improved ability to positively guide children’s behaviour; • home circumstances have changed – established regular routines / stable housing / financial stability; • Increased knowledge, access and capacity to engage with local services and supports they need, when they need them; or • taking an active role in their child’s development and increased knowledge about child development milestones <p><u>Note:</u> The improvements may be observed by staff (documented during activities or in reflection afterwards), confirmed by parents during discussion with staff, or reported by parents in a survey.</p>
	Number of children reported by worker/facilitator who are participating and engaged.	<p>Count the number of children aged between birth and 8 years who are participating and engaged.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> Children interact and learn in diverse ways due to culture, ability, environment etc. Indicators, actions/behaviours to assist in determining if a child is participating and engaged include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the child is passively, by watching or conversing with other children, engaged in play activities; ○ the child shares materials and talks to others; ○ the child responds positively to the facilitator/parent’s interest in their activity; ○ the child is curious and persists to get things right (e.g. counting);

Type of measure	Measure	Counting Rules
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the child is cooperative and can organise themselves into a role with specific goals (e.g. patient/doctor); and ○ the child is solitary, independent and looks content to play by themselves.
Effectiveness i.e. is anyone better off?	Total number of parents/carers surveyed.	<p>Count the total number of parents/carers surveyed during the reporting period only once.</p> <p><i>Note: this number must be at least 30% of total number of parents/carers reported.</i></p> <p><i>Survey definition includes collecting written feedback, observations by ECEC workers, documented conversations with parent/carers and specific program evaluation</i></p>
	Number of parents/carers surveyed that report (or are observed) improving engagement with their child/children.	<p>Count the total number of parents/carers who surveyed who reported or were observed to demonstrate improved, positive engagement with their child.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Positive parental engagement between a parent/carer and their child can be demonstrated through secure attachment. <u>For example</u>, engagement in one or more of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the parent/carer is sensitive, attuned and responsive to the child; ● the child is distressed when separated from the carer and joyful when the parent/carer returns; ● the child uses the parent /carer as a safe place base to explore the environment from. <p>Parents/carers may also demonstrate engagement with their children through increased knowledge and awareness about the child’s development, and increased confidence in their parenting skills. <u>For example</u>, the parent/carer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● is aware of age-appropriate child development; ● has interaction with child that enhances age-appropriate development and reinforces cultural values; ● has a feeling of competence and confidence in parenting practices; ● is involved in the child’s care and education; and ● has a stable home environment (e.g. established regular routines, hygiene practices, healthy eating, sleeping patterns) <p><i>Note:</i> This information may be collected by workers in the Child Focused Activities and Groups, through</p>

Type of measure	Measure	Counting Rules
	<p>Number of parents/carers whose child/children was/were identified or demonstrated a positive change in behaviour, attitude, skills, knowledge and/or circumstances are benefiting from participating in the activity.</p>	<p>observation, surveys, documented conversations with parents/carers, and specific program and activity evaluations.</p> <p>Count the total number of parents/carers surveyed who report that their child/children benefitted from participating in the activity.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> A child may demonstrate that they have benefitted from an activity when they show an improvement in any of the following areas (BACKS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B – behaviour (e.g. sense of self, self-efficacy, self-image, sense of belonging, wellbeing) • A – attitude/opinion • C – circumstance • KS – knowledge/skills <p><u>For example:</u> the child may demonstrate any of the following improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing as expected across 5 developmental domains (AEDC - Physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; communications skills and general knowledge); • demonstrating improved secure attachment with parent/carer; • developing a sense of identity; • more resilient, confident to explore their environment, developing effective social skills, building trusting relationships; or • communicating needs, wants and feelings to others. <p><u>Note:</u> The improvements may be observed by staff (documented during activities or in reflection afterwards), confirmed by parents during discussion with staff, or reported by parents in a survey.</p>

9.2. Qualitative (Narrative) reporting

9.2.1 Story behind the data

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

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

9.2.2 Summary Report

EYS providers should focus on the following when telling their story in the summary report:

- service delivery performance;
- activities delivered and future activities planned;
- evidence based practice principles;
- partners and partnerships in the community;
- benefits and challenges during the reporting period
- areas and strategies for improvement; and
- staff qualifications/training undertaken by staff during the reporting period.

9.2.3 Case studies

EYS providers will submit two case studies (at least one focused on a group or program). Information provided should be non-identifying and include consideration of the following:

- background;
- support activities provided to improve the clients circumstances;
- how the activities contributed to achieving the expected outcomes; and
- barriers or activities which did not work in the specific circumstances.

10. Grants Management System – QGrants

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

10.1 Applying through QGrants

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

10.2 Submitting claims through QGrants

Organisations with an executed funding agreement will lodge a QGrants 'claim' on or by the due date named in the funding agreement, to submit required performance and financial reporting.

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

Following a completed assessment of the claim/report by Departmental staff, payments will be released in accordance with the funding agreement. Further information is available at

<https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/funding-and-support/grants-tenders-and-funding/grants-management/grants-management>

11. Resource Links

All Early Years Services Funding Category Resources

<https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/funding-and-support/grants-tenders-and-funding/early-years-services-funding/category-resources>

Child Focused Activities and Groups Funding Category Resources

<https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/funding-and-support/grants-tenders-and-funding/early-years-services-funding/category-resources/child-focused-activities-groups>

Glossary of terms

<https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/fundingAndSupport/Documents/eysf-glossary.docx>