Category Guidelines

Family Support

Contents

1. Family Support Funding Category

The Family Support Funding Category refers to the range of child-centred family services that support parents/carers to achieve better developmental outcomes for their child/children from birth to eight years of age. Funded services work with families, particularly those who are experiencing complex needs, vulnerability and/or disadvantage, to understand child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development. Family Support services promote and protect the health, wellbeing and rights of all children and their families in their homes and communities, with a particular focus on those who may be experiencing complex needs, vulnerability and/or risk.

The Family Support Funding Category aims to achieve the following outcomes, including:
- Increased parents'/carers' awareness of and engagement with their child/children's learning, wellbeing and development;
- Increased secure attachment between children and their parents/carers;
- Increased parental capabilities and confidence in parenting and parenting self-efficacy;
- Improvement in the rate of children developmentally on track;
- Increased community connection and families, parents and children accessing the right services at the right time, including playgroup and kindergarten; and
- Increased local access to a range of family and early years programs that reflect the current contexts of Queensland families and are available in a range of formats to support differing needs and requirements.

Funding is provided to deliver and/or support services and activities grounded in evidence-based practice. Family support services can be delivered through a variety of models to assist families to develop strengths through practical support, focusing on communication, relationships, attachment, child development and play interactions including:
- Family support activities focused on supporting better developmental outcomes for their child/children from birth to eight years of age, such as:
  - programs that support parenting skills and confidence;
  - resources for information, practical and or therapeutic support; practical and or therapeutic support for children and parents/carers as individuals;
- Home visiting/outreach services targeted to specific client groups and with a focus on improving child learning, development and wellbeing;
- Case management;
- Parent/carer and child engagement programs;
- Facilitated engagement with early years learning and development programs including kindergarten providers.
- Screening and assessment (appropriate to the family's individual culture, unique needs and community context); and
- Referrals to existing programs/service networks and linking parents/carers with early childhood education and care, and/or specialist health and wellbeing services.

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

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

Family Support service delivery requires the sharing of information at a number of levels. Staff, 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 manage casework effectively and 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 Family Support Funding Category will create and maintain child safe environments using the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* (2019) which are designed to build capacity and deliver child safety and wellbeing in organisations, families and communities and prevent future harm.

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

- creates an environment where children's safety and wellbeing is the centre of thought, values and actions;

- places emphasis on genuine engagement with, and valuing of children;
- creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people;
- creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm; and
- responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions.

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

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

Organisations that work with children must also ensure they have 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. Family Support 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 parent/carers to inform reporting and continuous improvement strategies. Throughout the quantitative reporting template, this feedback is identified as 'parents/carers surveyed'. This term is inclusive of written, conversational, 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	Measures	Counting Rules
Quantity How much?	Total number of all children for this reporting period: • Total number of all children. • Total number of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. • Total number of children who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. • Total number of children with disability. • 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.	Count each child who participated in activities during the reporting period **once only**. **Do not count** attendees at an 'event' e.g. Family Fun Day in the park or Prep open day (this information should be included in the Additional Information section of the Service Delivery – Story Behind the data narrative report). For example: a child participated in an activity (such as a playgroup) twice a week during the reporting period. **Count = 1** Count each child in the **following demographics** who participated in activities during the reporting period **once only**: • Count each child who identified as being from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and participated in activities during the reporting period **once only.** • Count each child who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and participated in activities during the reporting period **once only**. • Count each child with disability who participated in activities during the reporting period **once only.** For example: a child who identified as being from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and participated in an activity (such as a playgroup) twice a week during the reporting period. **Count = 1 culturally and linguistically diverse** Count each child in the following **age range** who participated in activities during the reporting period once only: • 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**.

Type of measure	Measures	Counting Rules
		• Count each 3-year-old child who participated in targeted activities*, whose parents/carers intend to enrol them in kindergarten, **once only.** Note: ***Targeted activities** may include the following: ✓ 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) For example: 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**
	Total number of all parents/carers for this reporting period: • Total number of all parents/carers. • Total number that are from culturally diverse backgrounds. • Total number that identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. • Total number with disability.	Count each individual parent/carer who participated in activities during the **reporting period once only.** • **Do not count** attendees at an 'event' e.g. Family Fun Day in the park (this information should be included in the Additional Information section of the Service Delivery- Story Behind the Data). For example: a parent participated in an activity (such as a playgroup) twice a week during the reporting period. **Count = 1** Count each individual parent/carer in the **following demographics** who participated in activities during the reporting period **once only**. • 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**. For example: a parent/carer participated in an activity once a week (such as a parenting group) during the reporting period. Count = 1 parent/carer
	Total number of children for past 12-month period.	Count each child only once who participated in activities during the past 12 months.

Type of measure	Measures	Counting Rules
		Please do not join the total of two 6-month reporting periods as this may result in duplication and individuals must be counted **once only.**
	Total number of parents/carers for past 12-month period.	Count each parent/carer only once who participated in activities during the past 12 months. Please do not join the total of two 6-month reporting periods as this may result in duplication and individuals must be counted **once only.**
Quality How well?	Total number of parents/carers surveyed.	Count the total number of parents/carers **surveyed** during the **reporting period only once**.
	Total number of parents/carers who are satisfied with the activities and would recommend the funded service.	Count the total number of parents/carers surveyed who are satisfied with the activities of the Family Support Service and would recommend the service to a friend. For example: Were parents/carers satisfied with the following aspects of the activities: • 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). This information may be collected by staff through surveys, conversations, and specific program evaluations.
	Total number of individual parents/carers who have completed the relevant/agreed activity.	Count the total number of individual parents/carers who have completed the relevant/agreed activity during the **reporting period.** For example: the parent/carer and child consistently participated in and completed a 10-week parenting program including home visits. Note: the key issue is that parent/carer agreed to undertake and actively worked to complete an activity.

Type of measure	Measures	Counting Rules
		Children may be included in the family groups but are not included in the count above.
	Number of individual parents/carers who received intensive support.	Count the total number of individual parents/carers who received intensive support activities **during the reporting period only once**.
		Note: **Intensive support** means activities and/or support to assist in addressing the multiple and/or complex needs of parents/carers and their children presenting with behaviours or circumstances that are having negative consequences. Examples of activities include case management plans, home visits, counselling and referral to address complex issues or needs such as: • domestic and family violence; • mental illness; • substance misuse; • homelessness and poverty; and • developmental delays.
		Children may be included in the family groups but are not included in the count above.
Effectiveness Is anyone better off?	Number of parents/carers surveyed that report an improvement in their parenting practice and engagement with their child.	Count the total number of parents/carers who demonstrated improved, positive engagement with their child and improvement in their parenting capabilities and confidence.
		For example: **Positive parental engagement** between parent and child can be demonstrated through **secure attachment**, for example: • 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 base to explore the environment. The parent/carer may also demonstrate improvement in parenting practice through increased knowledge and awareness about their child's development and increased confidence in their parenting skills. For example, the parent/carer: • is aware of age appropriate child development in cognitive, language, literacy, social, emotional and motor domains; • has interactions with their child that enhances age-appropriate development and reinforces cultural values;

Type of measure	Measures	Counting Rules
		• 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). This information may be collected by staff through observation, surveys, conversations with parents/carers, and specific program evaluation.
	Number of parents/carers surveyed that report the funded service assists them in accessing the support services they require.	Count the total number of parents/carers who were assisted by the funded service to connect to and access the support services they needed, when they needed it. The Funded Service identifies parents/carers who need to be referred to specialist services or community support networks and helps them access these services, for example: • parents/carers were provided referral to specialist support services such as domestic violence support services, financial support and emergency relief; • a parent/carer was able to access a child and maternal health nurse for a developmental check-up for their child, following an observation of the child during playgroup or results of a developmental assessment; or • a child with speech and developmental delays was referred to a speech therapist who worked with the child over a number of sessions and provided feedback to the funded service about the child's progress.
	Number of parents/carers surveyed that report their child/children made progress towards achieving their agreed goals.	Count the total number of parents/carers who report that their child/children made progress towards achieving their agreed developmental goals from participating in the activity. Note: A child may demonstrate that they have developmentally benefited from an activity when they show an improvement in any of the following areas (BACKS): • B – behaviour (e.g. sense of self, self-efficacy, self-image, sense of belonging, wellbeing) • A – attitude • C – circumstances • KS – knowledge and skills.

Type of measure	Measures	Counting Rules
		For example: the child may demonstrate the following improvements: • development across the 5 developmental domains (AEDC - Physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; communications skills and general knowledge); • demonstrating secure attachment with the parent/carer; • developing a sense of identity; • more resilient, confidant to explore their environment, developing effective social skills, building trusting relationships; and • communicating needs, wants and feelings with others. These improvements may be observed by staff (documented during activities or reflection afterwards), confirmed by parents/carers during discussions with staff, or reported by parents through survey.

9.2   Qualitative (Narrative) reporting

9.2.1 Story behind the data

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

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;
- Action plan; and
- Staff qualifications/training undertaken during the reporting period.

9.2.2 Case studies

EYS providers will submit two case studies (at least one focused on a group or program) in the format of the case study template available at https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/fundingAndSupport/Documents/family-support-periodic-performance-report.docx   Information provided should be non-identifying and include consideration of the following:
- background;
- support activities provided to improve the client's circumstances;
- how the activities contributed to achieving the expected outcomes; and
- Critical success factors as well as barriers to success in their specific practice context.

10. Grants Management System – QGrants

QGrants is the Department's grants management system that operates as a single online portal for organisations to apply for and manage Early Years Service grants.

10.1 Applying through QGrants

To apply for Queensland Government funding and submit claims/reporting, please access the online QGrants Portal via https://qgrants.osr.qld.gov.au/portal.

10.2 Submitting claims through QGrants

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

Direct data entry into QGrants survey, will be required for the quantitative performance measures. The completed template of both the Financial Accountability Form and the Periodic Performance Report containing the summary report and case study is submitted as two attachments through the QGrants claims process.

Following completed assessment of the reports by Department of Education Officers, 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

Family Support Funding Category Resources
https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/funding-and-support/grants-tenders-and-funding/early-years-services-funding/category-resources/family-support

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