Australian Government

Department of Social Services

Community Support Programme

July 2015 Guidelines

**For Eligible
Child Care Service Operators**

Introduction

The Australian Government's agenda for early childhood education and child care focuses on providing all Australian families with high-quality, accessible and affordable integrated early childhood education and child care. The agenda has a strong emphasis on connecting with schools to ensure that all Australian children are fully prepared for learning and life.

Investing in children's health, education, development and care benefits children and their families, our communities and the economy, and is critical to lifting workforce participation and delivering the Australian Government's productivity agenda.

The Australian Government is committed to improving access to quality services that support early childhood learning and care for children through a national quality framework, agreed national standards, investment in infrastructure, and support for parents, educators and the workforce. High quality early childhood learning and care services will ensure the best opportunities for all children.

Part of the Australian Government's commitment to supporting the child care sector is delivered through the Child Care Services Support Programme. This programme includes a number of components, one of which is the Community Support Programme (CSP).

The CSP assists child care operators to establish or maintain viable Services in parts of the country where they might not otherwise be viable or able to meet the unique requirements of the community, such as in disadvantaged or regional and remote areas.

The CSP incorporates a number of components and payment types which are tailored to support different types of child care in different circumstances. The CSP is an integral part of the Australian Government's National Quality Agenda and supports Services to be inclusive of all children.

ABOUT THE GUIDELINES

Content of the Guidelines

The *Community Support Programme July 2015 Guidelines* (the Guidelines*)* detail:

- how to apply for funding and eligibility criteria;
- how the Department runs the Community Support Programme (CSP) including how it:
  - assesses applications and calculates the funding Services may receive;
  - determines how long Services can receive a payment and monitors ongoing eligibility for funding; and
- other important information about how the CSP is managed.

Supporting information attached to the Guidelines

The following documents are attachments to the Guidelines and can be viewed and downloaded on the Department of Social Services website at www.dss.gov.au/csp :

- the funding agreement for the CSP (the Funding Agreement); and
- application forms for the CSP (the Application Form).

Audience

- These Guidelines provide information on the CSP to eligible Services.
- These Guidelines do not relate to the Non-Mainstream (Budget Based Funding) sub-programme.

When considering whether they are eligible for funding under the CSP, Services should read these Guidelines and the Funding Agreement in order to fully understand the rules governing the CSP.

Amendments

The Department reserves the right to amend these Guidelines from time to time by whatever means it may determine in its absolute discretion. The Department may need to make such amendments to reflect Australian Government priorities. The Department will publish any changes to the Guidelines online at the Department of Social Services website at www.dss.gov.au/csp .

Defined Terms

Throughout these Guidelines, You will often see words or phrases in quotation marks,**'bold'**and capitalised. These are *Defined Terms* and their definition can be found in clause 1 of the Funding Agreement and throughout the Funding Agreement and the Guidelines.

Version History

Version	Published	Comment
2	May 2013	First edition publication
2.2	June 2013	Minor corrections
2.3	March 2015	Second edition publication

Notice

The information contained these Guidelines is provided for guidance only and does not constitute legal advice, nor should it be treated as a substitute for legal or professional advice. You may wish to seek appropriate independent legal advice if You have any questions or concerns about the Guidelines or the Funding Agreement.

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1. About the CSP

1.1. Introduction

The Australian Government understands that establishing and operating a Service can present many challenges. The CSP has been designed to strengthen a Service operator's ability to set up and run a child care Service in areas of the country where Services might otherwise be unviable.

The CSP is part of the broader Child Care Services Support Programme (CCSSP) and provides a range of payments directly to Service operators with the aim of improving access to child care, especially in areas where the market or Services might otherwise be unviable.

The CSP comprises three sub-programmes:

• Mainstream Establishment sub-programme – support payments under this sub-programme are designed to help operators meet the costs associated with establishing a new mainstream child care Service.

• Mainstream Sustainability sub-programme – support payments under this sub-programme are designed to help operators of mainstream Services maintain the delivery of child care in circumstances where it may otherwise not be viable to do so.

• Non-Mainstream sub-programme – support payments for non-mainstream Services through 'Budget Based Funding'.

The CSP is a range of payments dependent on the type of child care Service, its size and location.

These Guidelines only relate to the first two sub-programmes. Separate guidelines for the Non Mainstream sub-programme can be found in the Budget Based Funding Guidelines available at www.dss.gov.au

2. Eligibility

2.1. Introduction to eligibility

Eligibility for funding under the CSP has two elements.

The first element is that the Service must be approved for the purposes of the family assistance law[1], unless the Service is one of a small number of existing non-formula funded occasional care services – the eligibility of these services is determined separately by the Department.

The second element of eligibility is specific to each payment type, and is detailed below.

2.2. Specific eligibility for particular payment types – general

Each payment targets a particular stage of a child care Service's operational life and therefore the specific eligibility requirements for each payment type are different.

Specific eligibility for one type of payment does not necessarily mean that a Service is eligible for any other payment type. In some cases, eligibility for a particular payment type may preclude a Service from accessing other payment types. For example, applicants for the Funding detailed below must not be in receipt of any other ongoing CSP Funding, such as Budget Based Funding.

The Department uses geographic, demographic and socio-economic data produced by the ABS and the Australian Population and Migration Research Centre (APMRC) to assist it in assessing specific eligibility of a Service and its entitlement to payment of Funding. Please see part 5.1 for further information.

3. Specific eligibility criteria for particular payment types – details by payment type

3.1. Eligibility for Set Up Assistance – Outside School Hours Care, Family Day Care, In-Home Care Services

Set Up Assistance is a one-off payment to contribute to an approved OSHC or FDC or IHC Service's set-up costs when establishing the new OSHC or FDC or IHC child care Service.

3.1.1. Specific Eligibility Criteria for Set Up Assistance

Your Service must be:

a. either a:

   i.   'Not-For-Profit Organisation', or

   ii. 'For-Profit Organisation' that is also a 'Small Service Operator'; and

b. a 'New Service'; and

c. eligible for:

   i.   Operational Support (if the applicant is providing a FDC or IHC Service), or

   ii. Sustainability Assistance (if the applicant is providing a OSHC Service),

   as set out in section 3.3 (OSHC), 3.4 (FDC) or 3.6 (IHC) of these Guidelines, whichever applies.

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[1] The service must be approved under section 195 of the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999*. Services which are not approved and wish to apply for approval should do so in accordance with section 194 of the Act before seeking to apply for CSP Funding. Further information can be found at www.dss.gov.au

3.2. Eligibility for Sustainability Assistance - LDC

LDC Sustainability Assistance is funding to support LDC Services with the ongoing, day to day costs of delivering quality, affordable child care. This payment is targeted primarily towards Services:

a) with low utilisation;

b) providing places for 0-2 year olds; or

c) operating in the most disadvantaged communities, and in regional and remote locations.

3.2.1. Specific eligibility criteria for LDC Sustainability Assistance

Your LDC Service must:

a) be the sole approved centre-based LDC Service operating in an area (sole provider status determined by the Department); and

b) at the time of assessment by the Department, score **46** or more in the following Eligibility Matrix:

A) SA2[2] Classification	Score
Major City	0
Inner Regional	10
Outer Regional	20
Remote	30
Very Remote	40

C) EFT utilisation Rate (see below)*	Score
Greater than 50.0	0
Equal to or greater than 36.0 and less than or equal to 50.0	15
Equal to or greater than 26.0 and less than 36.0	30
Equal to or greater than 1.0 and less than 26.0	40
Less than 1.0	0

B) SEIFA classification	Score
SA2 not in lowest decile	0
SA2 in lowest decile (10%)	46

D) Proportion of places for 0-2 year old	Score
No places	0
Greater than 0% and less than or equal to 10.0%	5
Greater than 10.0% and less than or equal to 25.0%	10
Greater than 25.0% and less than or equal to 50.0%	15
Greater than 50.0%	20

Required Score (A+B+C+D) =	**46 or more**

* The Department calculates the EFT Utilisation Rate by examining your Service's attendance data for a period, which Your Service must submit using CCMS in accordance with Your obligations under the family assistance law, as follows:

Formula for EFT Utilisation Rate	Description of components used in formula
(A ÷ B) ÷ C	A = total hours of care charged by the Service during the applicable period; B = number of weeks Service is open during the applicable period; and C = the normal weekly operating hours of the Service

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[2] Further Information on Statistical Area Two (SA2) can be found in Additional Information

3.3. Eligibility for Sustainability Assistance – OSHC

OSHC Sustainability Assistance is Funding to support approved OSHC child care Services with the ongoing, day to day costs of delivering quality, affordable child care and is targeted primarily towards Services in disadvantaged communities - as determined by SEIFA, and regional and remote locations – as determined by ARIA+.

3.3.1. Specific eligibility criteria for OSHC Sustainability Assistance

If your OSHC Service:

a)   is a New Service, or an existing Service that has been in operation for less than 12 months from the Service Commencement Date, then your OSHC Service:

(i)   can be either a For-Profit or Not-For-Profit organisation; and

(ii)   must score 26 or more in the following OSHC Eligibility Matrix at the time the Department assesses the application for funding or carries out a CSP Review.

NOTE: for 3.3.1(a)(ii), if your Service is situated in a location with an ARIA+ classification of 'major city', then it receives a credit of 26 when calculating its Eligibility Matrix score;

b)   is an existing Service that has been in operation for longer than 12 months from the Service Commencement Date, then Your OSHC Service:

(i)   must be run by a Not-For-Profit organisation; and

(ii)   score 26 or more in the following Eligibility Matrix at the time the Department either assesses the application for Funding or carries out a CSP Review.

OSHC Eligibility Matrix:

A) SA2[3] classification	Score
Major City	-10
Inner Regional	16
Outer Regional	20
Remote/Very Remote	25

C) EFT Utilisation Rate (see below)*	Score
Less than 1.0	0
Equal to or greater than 1.0 and less than 11.0	30
Equal to or greater than 11.0 and less than 21.0	20
Equal to or greater than 21.0 and less than or equal to 31.0	10
Greater than 31.0	0

B) SEIFA classification	Score
SA2 not in lowest decile	0
SA2 in lowest decile (10%)	26

Required Score (A+B+C) =	26 or more

* The Department calculates the EFT Utilisation Rate by examining your Service's attendance data for a period, which your Service must submit using CCMS in accordance with your obligations under the family assistance law, as follows:

EFT Formula	Description of components used in formula
(A ÷ B) ÷ C	A = total hours of care charged by the Service during the applicable period; B = number of weeks Service is open during the applicable period; and C = the normal weekly operating hours of the Service

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[3] Further Information on Statistical Area Two (SA2) can be found in Additional Information

3.4. Eligibility for Operational Support – FDC

FDC Operational Support is Funding to support FDC Services with the ongoing, day to day costs of delivering quality, affordable child care. This payment is targeted primarily towards Services:

a)   operating in the most disadvantaged communities, and

b)   in regional and remote locations.

3.4.1.   Specific eligibility criteria for FDC Operational Support

To be eligible for Operational Support Your FDC Service must:

i.   not be in receipt of any other ongoing CSP funding, such as Budget Based Funding;

ii.   demonstrate to the Department's satisfaction that there is unmet child care demand in the area(s) Your Service proposes to operate in; and

iii.   meet the location based eligibility criteria that apply to Your FDC Service as set out below:

(1) for Services providing the majority (51 per cent or more) of their child care in a 'Major City' ARIA+ :

Your Service must be the sole FDC service operator located in the SA3 in which Your Service is located and the SEIFA index applying to the majority of the SA2 within the SA3 must be the lowest SEIFA decile;

(2) for Services providing the majority (51 per cent or more) of their child care in an 'Inner Regional', 'Outer Regional', 'Remote' or 'Very Remote' ARIA+ location:

your Service must be the sole FDC service operator located in the SA2 in which your Service is located,

where, for the purposes of the location based eligibility criteria above, the ARIA+, SA2 or SA3 in which Your Service is located is as determined by the Department, taking into account where Your coordination unit and the majority of Your educators are located to ensure that the objectives of the CSP are met.

Note: for the definition of 'SA2', 'SA3', SEIFA and 'ARIA+', please see clause 1: Definitions of the Funding Agreement.

3.5. Eligibility for Operational Support – IHC

IHC Operational Support is Funding to support approved IHC Services with the ongoing, day to day costs of delivering quality, affordable child care.

3.5.1.   Specific Eligibility Criteria for IHC Operational Support

Your IHC Service must not be in receipt of any other ongoing CSP funding, such as Budget Based Funding.

3.6. Eligibility for Regional Travel Assistance Grant (RTAG) – FDC and IHC

The RTAG is a support payment designed to assist FDC Services and IHC Services with the travel costs incurred by coordination staff. RTAG can only be claimed for journeys undertaken in order to support the Service's network of FDC educators.

3.6.1.   Specific Eligibility Criteria for RTAG

a)   Your FDC Service must have 51.0 per cent or more of its educators located, as determined by the Department, in SA2s with remoteness classifications of Outer Regional, Remote or Very Remote.

b)   Your IHC Service must have 51.0 per cent or more of its educators located, as determined by the Department, in SA2s with Remoteness classifications of Outer Regional, Remote or Very Remote; or must have 21.0 per cent or more of its educators located, as determined by the Department, in SA2s with Remoteness classifications of Remote or Very Remote.

3.7. Eligibility for Operational Support – Occasional Care (OCC)

Operational Support for approved Occasional Care Services is Funding to support these child care Services with the ongoing, day to day costs of delivering quality, affordable child care.

3.7.1. Specific Eligibility Criteria for Operational Support for Occasional Care

Your OCC Service must not be in receipt of any other ongoing CSP funding, such as Budget Based Funding.

3.8. Eligibility for Non-Formula Funding – Non-Formula Funded Occasional Care

Non-Formula Funded Occasional Care Operational Support is an older model of child care service funding that is not available to new applicants. It is designed to support child care services with the ongoing, day to day costs of delivering quality, affordable child care and is targeted primarily towards a specific group of services.

3.8.1. Specific Eligibility Criteria for Operational Support for Non-Formula Funded Occasional Care

Your NFF-OCC Service must be in receipt of a current Funding Agreement for this particular payment type.

4. How to Apply

4.1. Download the Application Form

Go to the <u>Department of Social Services</u> website at www.dss.gov.au/csp and download **CSP1: Community Support Programme (CSP): Application for Funding.** Wherever possible, the Department has designed CSP forms to be completed and submitted electronically but, if You cannot complete it this way, You can print it and complete it by hand using a ballpoint pen. The Department recommends that You **read the form fully before you start to complete it.**

4.2. Completing the Form

To complete the form successfully, You should:

a) answer all of the relevant questions and provide as much additional information (including any additional attachments) – and in the format(s) shown;

b) read the Guidelines and Funding Agreement as You complete the form;

c) indicate your understanding of the terms and conditions by typing the word "yes" next to the part that states **"I have read and understood the Guidelines and the Funding Agreement"**;

d) if You are submitting electronically and do not have the ability to scan the form, type Your full name in **BOLD CAPITAL LETTERS**, in the signature box; and

e) email the completed form to the CSP team in Your State. Details of these addresses are available on the form.

When completing the application form:

a) You must complete a new and separate form for each LDC, FDC, OCC or IHC Service you wish to be assessed for Funding; and

b) You may use a single application form when applying for an OSHC Service if that Service has a combination of BSC, ASC or VAC at the same location.

The Department is under no obligation to accept or assess applications that are incomplete or have not been completed in accordance with these instructions.

4.3. Asking Questions

If there is anything on the form that You do not understand, You can get more information by checking these Guidelines and the Funding Agreement online.

4.4. Next Steps

a) Once the Department has received a completed application form, the Department will assess it against the eligibility criteria shown in the Guidelines and, where necessary, the relevant aspects of the Funding Agreement.

b) If requested by the Department You must supply any additional documents or information required to assess eligibility. This includes evidence of Provider Approval and Service Approval (for the child care Regulatory Authority in your state or territory) and Child Care Benefit approval – if any of these documents are not provided within 28 days of the receipt of Your application for Funding, the application will be rejected.

c) The Department will notify You of the outcome and, if You are successful, provide You with an offer of Funding by sending You a **Letter of Offer** as soon as possible, but generally within 28 days of receipt of Your <u>completed</u> application form.

d) You will have 30 days in which to respond and confirm Your acceptance of offer in the Letter of Offer. If You accept the offer, an agreement will be formed between You and the Commonwealth on the terms set out in the Funding Agreement.

e) If You are unable to respond within this timeframe, You should contact the Child Care officer in Your state of territory to seek an extension of the offer. If a Service does not accept the offer within 30 days or within such extension of time the Department agrees to, the offer will lapse.
    IMPORTANT: Once a Service operator accepts the offer of Funding, a legally binding agreement will exist between the Service operator and the Department.

5. Additional Information

5.1. Use of Demography and Geography

5.1.1. Use of latest Census Information

The Department uses the latest data available from the ABS wherever possible and will automatically update to the most recent census information as soon as practicable, but will generally coincide with the start of a new financial year (1 July).

5.1.2. Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS)

From 1 July 2011, the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) is the ABS's geographical framework. The ASGS has been utilised for release of data from the 2011 Census of Population and Housing.

The ASGS splits Australia up into over 350,000 discreet areas, called Mesh Blocks. These combine into larger and larger blocks (SA1 to SA4). The Department uses the SA2 level of Mesh Blocks for the purposes of specific eligibility criteria in these Guidelines. This is described[4] as:

Statistical Area 2 (SA2):

SA2 are a medium-sized general purpose area built from whole Statistical Areas Level Ones (SA1s). They replace the Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) defined by the ASGS. Their aim is to represent a community that interacts together socially and economically. There are 2214 SA2s covering the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps.

Statistical Area 3 (SA3):

SA3 are a region-sized general purpose area built from whole Statistical Areas Level Twos (SA2s). Their aim is to represent a community that interacts together socially and economically. There are 351 SA3s covering the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps.

5.1.3. Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)

These indexes rank geographic areas across Australia in terms of their socio-economic characteristics and are created by combining information collected in the five-yearly Census . There are four different indexes, each representing a slightly different concept.

Socio-economic characteristics are sometimes abstract and difficult to measure, so the indexes aim to capture these abstract concepts by combining information that is related to the concept. The indexes are rankings; with each index ranking different geographic areas of Australia according to a 'score' that is created for the area based on characteristics of people, families and dwellings within that area.

The Department uses the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD), a general socio-economic index that summarises a range of information about the economic and social resources of people and households within an area, for the purposes of specific eligibility criteria in these Guidelines.

5.1.4. Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia Plus (ARIA+)

ARIA+ measures remoteness in terms of access along the road network from populated localities to each of five categories of service centre. Localities that are more remote have less access to Service Centres; those that are less remote have greater access to Service Centres.

ARIA+ is a continuous varying index with values ranging from 0 (high accessibility) to 15 (high remoteness), based on road distance measurements from over 12,000 populated localities to the

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[4] Taken from the ABS website.

nearest Service Centres in five categories based on population size – Major Cities of Australia, Inner Regional Australia, Outer Regional Australia, Remote Australia and Very Remote Australia.

6. Further Information

You can find further information on the ABS, ARIA+, ASGS and SEIFA at http://abs.gov.au.

6.1. Payment Rate Review

The Department undertakes a review of the various payment rates used by the CSP annually. Rates are published every year in time for the start of a new financial year and can be found at the Department of Social Services website at www.dss.gov.au/csp.

6.2. Special Circumstances funding

The Department may waive or amend the CSP's eligibility and assessment criteria and provide Funding under the CSP if the Department, in its sole discretion, determines that:

(a)   the ongoing viability of a child care Service or Service(s); or

(b)   a community's access to child care;

is being significantly affected by special circumstances to such an extent that a Service or Service operator may be unable to continue to deliver suitable child care unless the Department provides Funding, in an amount and for purposes determined in the Department's sole discretion, to the Service(s), outside the eligibility and assessment criteria set out elsewhere in these Guidelines.

Funding that is provided for special circumstances as described above will be provided under a funding agreement which may be entered into either with a Service(s) or with a third party organisation.