OFFICIAL

Risk Management Plan

ECEC Workforce Professional Development, Paid Practicum and Practicum Exchange Living Allowance Program

Risk Plan Details

Plan ID:	001850	**Plan Status:**	Approved
Plan Type:	Program	**Last Approved Date:**	05/06/2026
Security Marking:	OFFICIAL	**Next Review Date:**	19/07/2026
Version:	9	**Organisational Hierarchy:**	> Department of Education (EDUCATION)
Last Review Date:	24/05/2026		> Early Childhood Group
Last Type of Review:	Review Plan		> Evidence and Reform Division
			> ECEC Workforce and Reforms Branch

Activity Objectives

Under the Australian Government's package of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) workforce measures, the Department of Education has implemented three key programs - Professional Development subsidy, Paid Practicum subsidy and the Practicum Exchange Network - to strengthen skills and professional experience, improve staff retention of educators and early childhood teachers in the ECEC sector, increase ECEC sector capacity and build supply. It is intended that over 75,000 eligible qualified ECEC employees will benefit from these programs.
Each program's objectives are:

Professional Development program: to build capacity and skills in the early childhood workforce and allow funded ECEC services to maintain educator-to child ratios while participating staff complete training. This program has been refocused in 2026-27 to support ECEC staff complete mandatory child safety training.

Paid Practicum program: to help ECEC services with funds to support staff to complete their qualification required practicums (from diploma-level to post graduate-level). This subsidy is to provide staff with paid leave to undertake practicums.

Practicum Exchange network and Living Allowance program: to provide ECEC educators in training and services with a web-based portal to facilitate practicum exchanges and remove financial barriers to completing a practicum in regional, rural and remote areas. This program closed on 22 September 2025 due to low utilisation.

Departmental Outcomes

Quality early learning and schooling.

Operating Environment

Activity Environment

The Australian Government recognises that ECEC is an essential part of Australia's education system and is integral to Australia's economic prosperity as a powerful lever for increasing workforce participation. Participation in quality ECEC has important developmental, social, and educational benefits for Australian children. It can assist with positive early childhood development and provides a foundation for our children's future well-being and success.

The Australian Government and state and territory governments share responsibility for ECEC across multiple cross-cutting pieces of legislation, with Family Assistance Law as the primary legislation administered by the department. Professional Development and Paid Practicum - are a key part of the ECEC reforms driven by the Government and.
are designed to help build a sustainable, skilled ECEC workforce that delivers high quality early childhood education. The workforce measures package also complements the government's broader ECEC reforms and workforce actions being undertaken across state and territory governments.

The department has worked and is working in collaboration with external agencies for several aspects of the program delivery, including Services Australia (grant payments) and DEWR (initial ICT requirements/implementation). The programs run over four years from 2023-24 to 2026-27. However, the Professional Development program has been extended to 2028/29.

The programs are governed by a Project Board, which meets approximately every six weeks, providing strategic oversight, making critical whole-of-program decisions and leading engagement with critical stakeholders.

In 2024, the department engaged two third-party service providers: Deloitte for all program administration (contract ends 30 Sept 2027), and 101 Web Technology (contract ends 30 April 2026) for the Practicum Exchange network web-based portal (the contract with 101 Web Technology has now ceased as the Practicum Exchange program was closed). The department meets with Deloitte regularly to ensure the program and requirements are delivered on time, within the allocated budget and with high quality to achieve optimal program and policy outcomes.

In November 2025, Dandolo Partners were engaged to evaluate the Workforce Measures. The evaluation is expected to be finalised by end June 2026,

Activity History

The Paid Practicum and Professional Development programs were initially launched on 3 July 2023, with quarterly rounds:

Quarter one payment: applications open until 18 August 2023
Quarter two payment: applications open until 17 November 2023
Quarter three payment: applications open until 16 February 2024
Quarter four payment: applications open until 10 May 2024

In 2023-24, the Paid Practicum and Professional Development programs were open to targeted services and educators in regional, remote or very remote communities and First Nations educators and Services.
In 2023-24 quarterly rounds were undertaken in house by the department. From 2024-25 onwards, the rounds have been administered by Deloitte, with all funding decisions and approvals being made by the department delegate.

In 2024-25, two rounds were called:
Round 1: 23 July 2024 - 20 September 2024 (with payments made to services in November 2024)
Round 2: 13 January 2025 - 14 March 2025 (with payments expected to be made to services in May 2025)

In 2025-26, one round called:
Round 1: 14 July 2025 to 19 September 2025 (with payments made to services in November 2025)
Round 2: the program was oversubscribed and the total allocated funding for FY 25-26 was committed to providers/services for Round 1, Round 2 will not be called. However, additional payments have gone out to 35 providers who applied for grants in Round 1 2025-26 and were eligible but not funded ensuring the full funding allocation was spent.

In 2025-26 round 1 called for the 2026-27 FY.
Round 1: 28 April 2026 (ongoing as at 22/5/26) for PD refocussed to Mandatory Child Safety Training.

Stakeholders

Name	Internal / External	Shared Risk
Assistant Minister	External	No
Australian Child Care Centres	External	No
Department of Education (DE) Executive	Internal	No
DEWR - Information Management and Information Technology Areas	External	No
Minister	External	No
Services Australia (SA)	External	No
Third Party Service Providers	External	No

Plan Members

Member	Roles	
s 22	Owner	Mitigation Owner
	Approver	Mitigation Owner
	Editor	Mitigation Owner
	Mitigation Owner	
	Editor	Mitigation Owner
	Mitigation Owner	
	Mitigation Owner	
	Mitigation Owner	
	Editor	Mitigation Owner

Risks

Risk R054728 - Incorrect or inappropriate payment claims made by organisation(s) supporting delivery of the program or providers claiming funding

Category	Confidence	Velocity	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Rating	Realised Risk
Finance	High	Moderate	Possible	Moderate	Medium	No

Causes

Third party provides false or misleading information
Improper claim against program, contract or grant arrangements
Ineffective communication with contractor

ID	Mitigation Name	Mitigation Type	Control Effectiveness	Assurance Category	Owners
T070512	All staff complete the departmental fraud awareness training	Control	Effective		s 22
T070511	Ensure legals are consulted early regarding funding agreement clauses and compliance with legislation	Control	Effective		
T070510	Establish and maintain a centralised issue register to capture and identifying themes, patterns and recurrent non-compliance	Control	Effective		
T070509	Acquittals process to include random sample and targeted audit of services to help determine any instances of non-compliance	Control	Effective		
T070508	Development and regular updates to strategic Compliance Plan for the program	Control	Effective		

Appetite & Tolerance	Rationale
Yes	

Risk R044179 - Incorrect or inappropriate payment made to program grantees

Category	Confidence	Velocity	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Rating	Realised Risk
Finance	Moderate	Rapid	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	No

Causes

Payment data/information is unreliable
Third party contractors/service provider provides inaccurate, false and/or misleading information
Lack of sufficient time to undertake compliance checks
Grantees make improper claim against program, contract or grant arrangements

ID	Mitigation Name	Mitigation Type	Control Effectiveness	Assurance Category	Owners
T056993	Apply compliance and fraud management mechanisms available within the department of Education, including pre-approvals screening and checking with compliance teams before payment runs	Control	Effective		s 22
T056991	Development and regular updates to strategic compliance plan for programs based off themes and patterns of behaviour identified through issues register and audits	Control	Highly Effective		
T056988	Acquittal process to include random samples and targeted audits to help determine instances of non compliance and appropriation action	Control	Highly Effective		
T056620	Communication with ECEC compliance/intelligence teams to ensure compliance checks are completed before funding agreements are offered to potential grantees.	Control	Highly Effective		
T056619	All departmental staff and service providers are aware of fraud and undergo fraud awareness training	Control	Effective		
T056618	Consult legal areas early to ensure funding agreements and other documentation are in line with relevant laws	Control	Effective		
T056616	Establish and maintain a centralised issue register to capture and identify common theme, patterns of behaviours, and recurrent non-compliance activities	Control	Highly Effective		

Appetite & Tolerance	Rationale
Yes	

Risk R033889 - The implementation of the programs does not meet the intended policy outcomes

Category	Confidence	Velocity	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Rating	Realised Risk
Delivery	High	Moderate	Possible	Moderate	Medium	No

Causes

Lack of required resources
Immature or complex technology
High turnover of staff
Lack of consultation with specialist internal areas

ID	Mitigation Name	Mitigation Type	Control Effectiveness	Assurance Category	Owners
T056995	Clear publication and clarification of guidelines on website and through the Deloitte hotline enquiries	Control	Highly Effective		s 22
T042192	Alerting ministers' offices to backfill shortfalls in remote areas and seeking alternative remedies depending on stakeholder feedback	Control	Effective		
T042191	Seeking information from other Department areas on where most severe ECEC labour shortages are and what alternative options to backfill are	Control	Partially Effective		

Appetite & Tolerance	Rationale
Yes	

Risk R033888 - Program is over-subscribed, delaying the assessment process and payments to successful applicants

Category	Confidence	Velocity	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Rating	Realised Risk
Finance	High	Rapid	Unlikely	Major	Medium	No

Causes

Poor or lack of budget management
Inability to retain, recruit or utilise sufficiently skilled people
Lack suitable skills, knowledge and experience in delivery team/s
Complexity of data management / migrations
Budget allocation does not meet demand

ID	Mitigation Name	Mitigation Type	Control Effectiveness	Assurance Category	Owners
T070397	Grant recipient allocation preferences implemented by third party provider to ensure program intent is met	Control	Highly Effective		s 22
T042333	Budget impacts are assessed prior to approving third party agreements, MoU's, deeds, grants and/or contracts variations	Control	Highly Effective		
T042332	Manual and system based access and payment controls identified, approved and implemented	Control	Highly Effective		
T042303	Provide regular accurate briefing to the Executive, Minister and other government agencies	Control	Highly Effective		
T042299	Data required for monitoring and evaluation identified, captured and tested	Control	Effective		

Appetite & Tolerance	Rationale
Yes	

Risk R033884 - Ineffective program evaluation and/or monitoring

Category	Confidence	Velocity	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Rating	Realised Risk
Information	Moderate	Slow	Possible	Moderate	Medium	No

Causes

Complexity of data management / migrations
Data is unavailable or unreliable
Lack suitable skills, knowledge and experience
Lack of or no monitoring and oversight undertaken
Lack of or poor records management

ID	Mitigation Name	Mitigation Type	Control Effectiveness	Assurance Category	Owners
T070398	Extensive program evaluation undertaken by third party contractor	Control	Highly Effective		s 22
T045114	Provide grant recipients with the opportunity to voluntarily participate each year in an annual survey designed to measure program experience. Further, the survey data that is collected will allow for longitudinal analysis of the program.	Control	Effective		
T042354	Consultation with relevant areas on data and evaluation needs	Control	Highly Effective		

Appetite & Tolerance	Rationale
Yes	

Risk R033880 - Program uptake is significantly lower than expected

Category	Confidence	Velocity	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Rating	Realised Risk
Information	High	Slow	Unlikely	Minor	Low	No

Causes

Inadequate or ineffective stakeholder communication and consultation
Failure to adequately advertise opportunity or utilise available channels
Poor program uptake
Scope and/or desired outcomes are not defined
Inadequate or no market research
Unplanned scope and/or priorities change

ID	Mitigation Name	Mitigation Type	Control Effectiveness	Assurance Category	Owners
T056605	Engage with the Minister's Office to develop and refresh program strategy to achieve program outcomes	Control	Effective		s 22
T056604	Expansion of eligibility criteria to include a broader set of possible grant recipients	Control	Highly Effective		
T042362	Regular and clear communication with relevant stakeholders to ensure optimal take up	Control	Highly Effective		
T042361	Develop and implement a stakeholder communication and consultation plan	Control	Highly Effective		

Appetite & Tolerance	Rationale
Yes	

Risk R033879 - Contractual or other formal arrangements do not adequately support program delivery or policy intent

Category	Confidence	Velocity	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Rating	Realised Risk
Delivery	High	Moderate	Possible	Moderate	Medium	No

Causes

Ineffective communication with contractor
Unclear services, deliverables, quality criteria or key performance measures in Contract/Deed/Agreement/Grant
Third Party provider financial viability
Decisions not finalised in timely manner resulting in condensed timeframes
Operational inefficiencies in Third Party processes and procedures
Poor working relationship with the contractor and/or contract disputes

ID	Mitigation Name	Mitigation Type	Control Effectiveness	Assurance Category	Owners
T070400	Regular meetings with contracted Third Parties to negotiate any delays and issues as soon as possible	Control	Highly Effective		s 22
T056607	Process and procedures to cease contract payment if contractors/third party providers enter administration	Control	Highly Effective		
T047840	Ensure agreed Project Plan provided by the contractor/s are delivered successfully, including adequate infrastructure and resources, probity and governance arrangements and risk management.	Control	Highly Effective		
T047839	Contract Management Plans are in place to effectively manage contract throughout lifecycle and the Contract Management Plans are reviewed regularly.	Control	Highly Effective		
T042364	Contractors to provide status report and advise any discrepancies or incidents as outlined in the terms and conditions of the agreement, MoU, deed, grant and/or contract	Control	Highly Effective		

Appetite & Tolerance	Rationale
Yes	

Risk R033877 - Personal information is not handled in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988

Category	Confidence	Velocity	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Rating	Realised Risk
Integrity	High	Slow	Possible	Moderate	Medium	No

Causes

Lack of or no investment in training and development
Inadequate privacy safeguards, including IT security arrangements or controls
Large volume of work handling sensitive financial information relating to ECEC providers and/or services

ID	Mitigation Name	Mitigation Type	Control Effectiveness	Assurance Category	Owners
T062188	Further information sharing within the team for best practice/process to safeguard sensitive information	Control	Highly Effective		s 22
T062182	Using departmental secured file to transmit sensitive and large documents between the department and the 3rd party service provider	Control	Highly Effective		
T062181	Increased limit to team members' access to sensitive information by reducing size of team (through natural attrition)	Control	Highly Effective		
T056999	Further bespoke privacy training sought when instances of privacy breaches occur	Control	Highly Effective		
T056606	Further enhanced processes and procedures in place for when a privacy breach incident occurs within the department and the 3rd party contractor.	Control	Highly Effective		
T047836	Confidentiality and security clauses in contracts	Control	Highly Effective		
T042391	Staff have completed the department's mandatory privacy training in line with departmental requirements	Control	Highly Effective		
T042390	Privacy Threshold Assessment is undertaken for projects/activities/initiatives where personal information is handled in a new or changed way	Control	Highly Effective		

Appetite & Tolerance	Rationale
Yes	

Risk R033876 - Program Budget is exceeded and/or is not managed in an ethical, effective or efficient way.

Category	Confidence	Velocity	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Rating	Realised Risk
Finance	High	Moderate	Possible	Minimal	Low	No

Causes

Data is unavailable or unreliable
Lack of or poor records management
Poor financial management
Making financial commitments before formal approval

ID	Mitigation Name	Mitigation Type	Control Effectiveness	Assurance Category	Owners
T070403	Regular monitoring of financial position is undertaken and in consultation with Third Party contractor	Control	Highly Effective		s 22
T042400	Implementation of new policy proposal(s) is closely monitored to ensure compliance with whole-of-government requirements e.g. Department of Finance Resource Management Guide 107	Control	Effective		
T042399	Budget options and forecasting is clearly articulated and explored allowing for evidence-based decision making by the delegate	Control	Highly Effective		

Appetite & Tolerance	Rationale
Yes	

Risk R033873 - Our culture, capability and capacity does not adequately support our business requirements

Category	Confidence	Velocity	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Rating	Realised Risk
Integrity	High	Slow	Possible	Minor	Medium	No

Causes

Unclear services, deliverables, quality criteria or key performance measures in Contract/Deed/Agreement/Grant
Poor selection of contractors or skills and expertise required
Lack of or no investment in training and development
Lack of mechanisms to communicate with others
Lack of consultation with specialists internal areas
High turnover and/or reduced team size

ID	Mitigation Name	Mitigation Type	Control Effectiveness	Assurance Category	Owners
T070404	Promote a culture of shared team knowledge	Control	Effective		s 22
T042398	Ensure staff are aware of workplace and personal supports available through Department	Control	Effective		
T042397	Identify opportunities for training and development of new skills	Control	Highly Effective		
T042396	Regular and clear communication with relevant stakeholders to ensure optimum take up	Control	Effective		

Appetite & Tolerance	Rationale
Yes	

Action History

Action	Comment	Actioned By	Actioned On
Approve Risk Plan	Risk plan reviewed and approved	s 22	05/06/2026
Submit Risk Plan	Update in the activity history to reflect the opening of the first round of the Mandatory Child Safety Training.		25/05/2026
Major Edit	Update to reflect new round opening of the Mandatory Child Safety Training.		25/05/2026
Approve Risk Plan	I have reviewed the risk plan, including risks and treatments, and approve. Many thanks s 22 and team.		10/04/2026
Submit Risk Plan	Updated risk plan approved by Project Board 18/3. Changes include the refocussing of PD grants to the new Mandatory Child Safety training, Round 1 additional payments, closing of the Practicum website/program and engagement of Dandolo to conduct programs evaluation. General cleanup including merging R033879 and R033886 as essentially the same.		24/03/2026

Major Edit	Make updates to policy settings for PD and note cessation of PELA.	s 22	15/01/2026
Approve Risk Plan	Approved		28/11/2025
Submit Risk Plan	Revised R033888 to update treatment owners		24/11/2025
Withdraw Plan Submission	Further edits needed		24/11/2025
Submit Risk Plan	Risk Plan updated to reflect currency of programs and staff changes		24/11/2025
Major Edit	Updated to include program changes		24/11/2025
Approve Risk Plan	Risks appropriately identified with mitigations in place		01/08/2025
Submit Risk Plan	For your approval please. This update includes FY25-26 funding rounds, and additional risk treatments to safeguard personal/sensitive information sharing between department and 3rd party service provider.		30/07/2025
Major Edit	Reviewing the plan as it is close to the review due in August 2025.		30/07/2025
Approve Risk Plan	Approved		06/03/2025
Submit Risk Plan	Hi s 22 - For your approval please. This version has been reviewed, and updated extensively to reflect the current status of the three programs and what had taken place in the last six months. The next review will occur in August 2025 (in six months' time). Happy to answer any questions that you might have. Thank you.		26/02/2025
Major Edit	Review plan		14/02/2025
Approve Risk Plan	Approved - thanks		27/09/2024
Submit Risk Plan	Reviewed and updated to reflect relevant staff		19/09/2024
Reject Risk Plan	Approved		18/09/2024
Submit Risk Plan	Plan updated to reflect staffing changes		18/09/2024
Major Edit	Plan requires full review and update		18/09/2024
Minor Edit	To add in new owner		17/09/2024
Approve Risk Plan	Approved		18/08/2024
Submit Risk Plan	Additional treatments added for some risks to cover our engagement of 3rd party grant administrator - presented to project board with no further changes.		01/08/2024
Major Edit	Major edit to ECEC workforce development risk plan to address risk of engaging external 3rd party for grant administration of PD and PP subsidies.		05/07/2024
Minor Edit	Minor change - bring forward next review date one month.		27/06/2024
Approve Risk Plan	Approved - note risks are around privacy are also being managed in parallel		24/06/2024
Submit Risk Plan	As per Project Board Agenda item - Discussion on review of risks and the inclusion of Practicum Exchange website and Living Allowance Subsidy into the Risk Plan, voluntary survey for longitudinal analysis of the program.		17/06/2024

Major Edit	Edits required to: - Add s 22 Child Care Division as the new Approver - Add s 22 and s 22 as additional Editors	01/05/2024
Minor Edit	Adding user s 22	26/03/2024
Approve Risk Plan	Approved	12/02/2024
Submit Risk Plan	This is a revised risk plan for the ECEC workforce budget measures (professional development and paid practicum) of May 2023 Budget. It has been revised in consultation with the Risk branch and notes key areas of risk that were missing from the original plan, as well as treatments for these areas.	12/02/2024