# Innovative Solutions Support

## Inclusion Support Program

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with Section 9 of the Inclusion Support Program (ISP) Guidelines, which provides information on approved purposes, funding conditions and application requirements for the Innovative Solutions Support stream.

## What is Innovative Solutions Support?

The Inclusion Development Fund (IDF) Innovative Solutions Support element of the ISP assists early childhood education and care (ECEC) services to build their **capacity** and **capability** to include children with additional needs.

Innovative Solutions Support provides flexible funding to empower services to carefully consider their inclusion challenges and take an active role in finding solutions, beyond the support that is provided by Inclusion Agencies.

The IDF Manager (IDFM) is responsible for assessing and determining an outcome for Innovative Solutions applications. The Department of Education (the department) is responsible for assessing and determine an outcome for Collaborative and Strategic projects.

## What are some examples of approved funding purposes?

- Cultural advice and mentoring including services from cultural experts, specialist advice on how to include a particular child or children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentoring, cultural advice in respect of children and families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities.
- Bilingual support such as translating and interpreting services.
- Collaboration with specialists to obtain specialist advice on how to include a child or children with a disability or additional needs, such a speech therapists.
- Networking and community engagement such as visits to other ECEC services to view quality inclusive practices or hosting networking meetings focused on inclusion with other services.
- Specialised inclusion training essential to a child's inclusion. That is, the child could not attend the service without educators having this specific knowledge and skill, for example, trauma-informed practice, or facilitating inclusive practice through specific adjustment for Autism Spectrum Disorders. If this training is above the requirements set out in the National Regulations, services

can apply to access Innovative Solutions Support to enable the service to provide this essential training for educators.

# Applications for Innovative Solutions Support

Applications for funding for Innovative Solutions Support can be made at any time to support services to respond to barriers to the inclusion of children with additional needs.

ISP has an annual capped funding allocation, which is set each financial year. In the event that demand exceeds available funding allocated within the capped program, funding will be prioritised to support children with a diagnosed disability and children awaiting a disability diagnosis.

## Timeframes for assessing applications for Innovative Solutions Support

Applications will typically be processed by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM) within 5 business days where it is marked as urgent, or within 15 business days for all other applications.

## Arranging for an application to be processed as 'urgent'

Section 9.2.5 of the ISP Guidelines allows for applications that are considered urgent to be marked accordingly by the Inclusion Agency and processed by the IDFM within 5 business days. If an application for funding is urgent, the Inclusion Professional is required to email idfminnovative@ku.com.au, noting the Case ID and the reason why the application is urgent.

## Is there a limit on the funding or number of times a service can apply?

There is no specified limit for an application for Innovative Solutions Support. Applications over $10,000 will be referred to the department by the IDFM for approval.

There is no limit on the amount of funding that can be applied for or the number of applications a service can make for Innovative Solutions Support. However, as the annual IDF funding allocation is capped, the IDFM will prioritise support to services that have not yet accessed the Innovative Solutions Support.

## If approved, when will my service receive payment?

If the IDFM approves the Innovative Solutions case, the service will receive a Letter of Offer. This letter must be signed by the service and returned to the IDFM at idfminnovative@ku.com.au. Once the signed letter has been received, the IDFM will execute the case and payment will be made.

# Collaborative and Strategic Projects

The department may consider flexible funding under the Innovative Solutions Support stream to relevant organisations (including ECEC peak bodies, inclusion specialists, disability organisations and other inclusion entities) for the purposes of developing and implementing collaborative and strategic projects that promote high-level innovation and support for inclusive practice (within eligible ECEC services).

Relevant organisations may approach the department with project proposals including a budget that is supported by quotes and a project plan. The department may engage directly with relevant organisations to solicit proposals in response to identified needs. The department will consult with Inclusion Agencies regarding project proposals. When considering proposals the department will use the Assessment criteria for Innovative Solutions Support (outlined below and in Section 9.2.4 of the ISP Guidelines).

# Assessment Criteria

Assessment of the Innovative Solutions Support proposals will take into consideration quality, risk and value for money and the extent that the proposal:

- leads to genuine inclusion of a child or children with additional needs
- leads to enhanced inclusion capacity and capability of the service and educators
- can be realistically implemented
- can be delivered within the current capacity of the service and/or eligible applicant
- cannot be provided by alternative or more appropriate funding sources.

**Table 1: Type of support, funding limits and how to apply**

| Type of Innovative Solutions Support | Funding limits/funding approver | How to apply |
|---|---|---|
| Innovative (flexible and responsive) projects | No specified limit<br><br>IDFM can approve applications for funding up to $10,000<br><br>Application for funding above $10,000 are considered by the IDFM before being referred to the department | 1. Obtain support from relevant Inclusion Agency<br><br>2. Application made through Inclusion Support Portal<br><br>3. IDFM consideration/approval |
| Collaborative and Strategic Projects | No specified limit<br><br>Applications for funding considered and approved by the department | 1. Department of Education<br><br>2. Inclusion Agencies will be consulted and endorsement may be sought. The IDFM may also be consulted. |

# Group applications

A group application is where a number of services identify the same or similar inclusion barrier, and develop a proposal collectively for the Innovative Solutions Support, which would lead to the genuine inclusion of children with additional needs across multiple services. The IDFM will consider how the application will lead to better inclusion outcomes for services and how cost effective the approach is.

A group application must nominate one service as the lead and this service will be responsible for the project. This includes taking responsibility for complying with the Conditions of Funding and ensuring other services in the group understand their obligations as per the Conditions of Funding.

The funding proposal for a group application is required to note that all services have identified the same or similar barrier to inclusion and the extent to which this impacts on each service. The SIP and CCS IDs for each service in the group must be included on the funding proposal.

The Inclusion Professional for the lead service will have responsibility for endorsing the application and is required, where applicable, to liaise internally with other relevant Inclusion Professionals for the other services in the group. Where services are cross-jurisdictional (e.g. Albury, NSW and Wodonga, Victoria), the above liaison is required to be conducted with all relevant Inclusion Agencies in the different jurisdictions.

# Requirements regarding funding proposals

A service's application/funding proposal is required to outline how the funding will be used to address the barrier to inclusion which cannot be addressed through support provided by its Inclusion Agency or other IDF funding streams and should cover the following (in line with the ISP Guidelines Section 9.2.2):

- the inclusion barrier, including a description of the child (or children) the barrier is associated with and why funding is needed noting this inclusion barrier must be identified in the Strategic Inclusion Plan
- evidence that a Strategic Inclusion Plan has been developed and reviewed by the Inclusion Agency, and the service has considered its internal capacity to address the inclusion barrier including relevant requirements under the National Quality Framework and support available from its Inclusion Agency
- evidence that funding for the required purpose is not available elsewhere
- an overview of the intended outcome of funding, including estimated timeframes and milestones
- financial quotes for the total value of funding being sought, inclusive of Goods and Services Tax (GST)
- the total duration of the project, the value of funding sought and budget breakdown for goods and services to be funded.

# Financial quotes to support funding proposals and application of GST

Financial quotes to support the total value of funding being sought (GST inclusive) must represent value for money for the expenditure of government funding. The financial quotes and budget items must be consistent with and support the information provided in the funding proposal.

- Financial quotes must be GST inclusive and include:

    a. GST exclusive amount, and
    b. GST component (including specifying nil if a GST free supply).

- The Budget Item on the IS Portal needs to be entered as the GST exclusive amount, due to system requirements that will automatically add GST to payments.
- Financial quotes must have an ABN for the supplier. There are limited exceptions to this requirement (e.g. a service may provide a quote which will enable them to make a direct payment to a cultural expert, such as an Indigenous community elder, who may not have an ABN).
- In exceptional circumstances, such as where a service is not registered for GST, the IDFM may make manual payments.
- If the project relates to support delivered on a per hour basis, the hours of support being requested need to be specified in the quote as per the project proposal, for example 2 hours of bicultural support per day, 2 days per week for 6 weeks, total 24 hours of bicultural support. This should also be itemised in the list of budget items.

Innovative Solutions Support Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. Grant recipients are recommended to seek independent professional advice on taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office.

# Preferred suppliers

Services are responsible for sourcing appropriate providers and quotes to support the funding proposal for their Innovative Solutions Support applications. Inclusion Agencies will be able to provide advice on the types of solutions and potential providers that can meet the needs identified.

To ensure value for money, services may seek to obtain quotes from several providers, but should provide a justification if seeking to proceed with a higher priced quote. The IDFM may ask the service to seek additional quotes to confirm the value for money assessment.

# Unspent project funds from Innovative Solutions Support cases

If your service does not spend the full amount of funding on the project as approved by the IDFM, you must inform your Inclusion Agency. If your Inclusion Agency agrees in writing, your service may spend the remaining funds on other inclusion related activities to overcome the same or similar inclusion barriers outlined in your initial application. Any additional or adjusted activity undertaken in line with the agreed change must be declared at the completion of the project.

At the completion of the project, which may be during or after the Approval Period, your service must complete an online declaration through the IS Portal on the Acquittal tile. The online declaration must be completed no later than 10 business days from the end date of the Approval Period. This should indicate "Project Complete with Agreed Change". The total amount spent should include the amount spent on the original project and the agreed change.

# Examples of approved Innovative Solutions Support cases

To support best practice, the IDFM have published case studies and stories from services on their website.

# Further information

Services are encouraged to contact their Inclusion Agency in the first instance to discuss support available through the ISP. More information is available in the ISP Guidelines.