KINDERGARTEN FUNDING

How do I apply?

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Purpose of this guide

This step-by-step guide has been developed to assist you to answer the questions on the 'Expression of Interest for kindergarten funding' form. This form is a requirement of the Department of Education (the Department) for all service providers who wish to apply for kindergarten funding.

This booklet has been designed with the Department of Education to be used in conjunction with the following additional ACA Victoria publications, available on our website at: https://vic.childcarealliance.org.au/services/kinder-funding-support.

● *Kindergarten Funding: Why Should I Apply?*
● *Kindergarten Funding: What Happens Next?*

For up-to-date information, refer to the Department's page on kindergarten funding requirements.

For questions and ongoing support about funding requirements, call ACAV on (03) 9532 2017.

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Step 1 – Get ready to apply!

Applying for kindergarten funding is a positive step for your service. Kindergarten funding enhances your capacity to provide high quality kindergarten programs to the children in your care. There are quite a few steps to follow and some preliminary work to do.

Firstly, contact the Early Childhood Improvement Branch (ECIB) in your region to discuss your intention to apply for funding (*some services may be asked to attend a face-to-face meeting).*

Then, download and the form 'Expression of Interest for Kindergarten Funding' from the Department website. Complete the form and submit along with all of the required documentation.

It is also expected that you are familiar with the Kindergarten Funding Guide (KFG) prior to completing the form, including this table of core requirements for services:

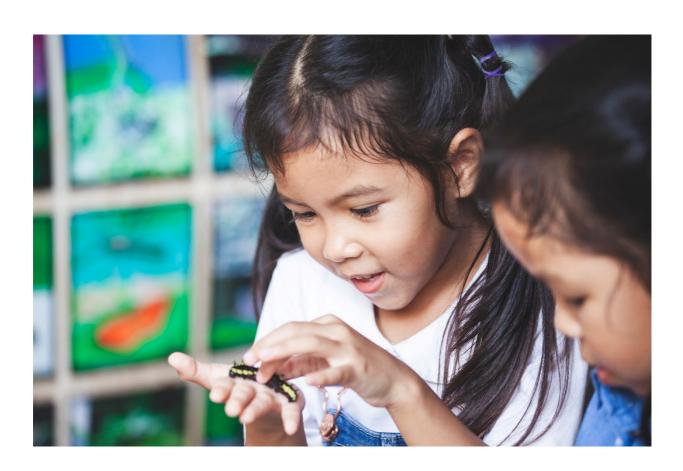| |
|---|
| *Must have an ABN.* |
| *The kindergarten program must be located in Victoria.* |
| *Must be compliant with all regulatory requirements.* |
| *Must have a business plan and budget showing ongoing finacial viability.* |
| *Must have strong links with local government.* |
| *Must provide a kindergarten program that is planned and delivered by a qualified teacher and offers at least:*

• *15 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year or*
• *600 hours a year.*

(Note that the KFG has not been updated to include 3 year old kindergarten, but the same criteria applies for 5 – 15 hours per week) |
| *Early Childhood Teachers must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT).* |

Must sign and comply with the Department's service agreement and operate in accordance with stipulated standards and guidelines.
Must declare to the Department any previous legal or financial misconduct.
Must deliver a program that adheres to the Victorian Early Years Development Framework.
Must operate in accordance with Child Safe Standards.
Must operate a ratio of 1 educator: 11 children or less.

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Step 2: Demonstrate financial viability of your service

Business plan

To demonstrate that your early learning service is a viable operation, you must submit a **business plan.**

A business plan needs to include the following about your business:

- Market
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis
- Risk Management
- Goals
- Finances
- Organisational structure

You can submit an existing business plan or create a new one.

Financial Statements

Established services
You must submit audited financial statements over the last two years, including:

- Profit and loss statements
- Balance sheet

You will need to contact your accountant about this information.

New services
You can submit a two-year budget forecast, as you will not be able to submit financial statements. The budget forecast needs to confirm ongoing financial viability of the service. You can also submit draft financial statements or monthly actuals/forecasts.

You will need to contact your accountant about this information.

Trust deeds
If your organisation is set up as a Trust, a copy of the Trust Deed is required.

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Some services will need to also submit a copy of their Provider and Service Approval Certificates.

Step 3: Update your fees policy

Review your fee policy and ensure it includes the following information as set out in the
[*Kindergarten Funding Guide*](#):

- Fee schedule – including, daily, weekly fees and all other inclusions.

- Payment options and procedures.

- Statement outlining the procedure for families if they are having difficulties paying fees.

- Action that will be taken for non-payment of fees.

- How parents will be notified of any fee changes throughout the year.

- Any deposits required to secure a place or to accept an offered place (note that deposits should **not** act as a barrier to enrolment of vulnerable children).

- How [Early Start Kindergarten](#) will be applied and how eligible families can apply.

- How Kindergarten Fee Subsidy would be applied if applicable – (this would **only** be relevant if the kindergarten program and fees were run independently of the LDC program and fees. For more information refer to the [Kindergarten Funding Guide](#)).

- Exempting children from priority groups from enrolment or waiting list deposits *(refer to priority of access guidelines on page 10 of this document).*

- Operating hours including term dates, planned closures and child-free days.

- Statement regarding privacy and confidentiality in correspondence regarding fees and financial information.

Step 4: Update your enrolment policy and form

Before reviewing your enrolment policy and procedures, you must ensure that your enrolment processes:

- Promote fair and equitable access to the kindergarten program, complying with Victorian and national legislation.

- Support all eligible children to access the kindergarten program, including those who face barriers to participation.

- Do not inadvertently present barriers to participation, especially for vulnerable children.

- Ensure early entry applicants (children younger than 4 years old on 30 April in the year they will attend kindergarten) are given equal access to enrolment.

- Adhere to the Department's priority of access requirements for both 3- and 4-year-old kindergarten access *(refer to page 10 of this document).*

- Are developed on the basis of local need, determined through consultation with the local community.

- Outline how waiting lists will be prioritised.

Enrolment policy

Review your enrolment policy and ensure it includes the following information as set out in the **_Kindergarten Funding Guide_**:

- Type of model and hours for the kindergarten program (i.e., the number of hours that the Early Childhood Teacher will be in the program) and how these fit in with the LDC hours.

- Priority of access guidelines – ensuring that the criteria from both the CCS and the kindergarten guide is followed *(see page 10 of this document).*

- Age of eligible children, including the cohort of children born between January and April. How you will discuss when children will start school with parents.

- Early and later entry to kindergarten and school exemption requirements (relating to date of birth).

- Minimum number of days children need to attend in order to ensure they meet the 15 hour per week / 600 hours per year (e.g.,2 x 7.5-hour days or 3 x 5 hour days).

- An outline of Early Start Kindergarten and Early Start Kindergarten extension grants and how they will reduce fees for families.

- Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS) if applicable (this would **only** be relevant if the kindergarten program and fees were run independently of the LDC program and fees. Refer to page 25 of the Kindergarten Funding Guide for further information. Please note, that in most cases, this would not be applicable in a long day care service).

- No Jab, No Play information.

- Requirement for written confirmation from parents regarding accessing one funded kindergarten place at one service. There is a template available that you can adapt with your own wording and letterhead and remove any information that is not relevant.

- Requirement to let families with a Health Care Card (and therefore eligible for KFS) know that they can access 15 hours of kindergarten for free if they attend a sessional kindergarten.

- Second year eligibility and requirements.

- Notification of the collection of the Student Family Occupation Education data (that is used for School Readiness Funding).

- Information about the provision of a Transition and Learning Development Statement for each funded child before they start school.

- Information relating to access and inclusion, in particular children with disabilities (this can be a separate policy).

- A privacy statement and acknowledgement of compliance with the Victorian Protective Data Security Standards.

You may also need to include your Child Safe Standards Policy and your Inclusion and Access Policy.

Priority of Access guidelines

Please refer to these guidelines when revising your fee and enrolment policies:

HIGH PRIORITY CHILDREN
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children who: - are in Out of Home Care - are eligible for ESK or AEL
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children
Asylum seeker and refugee children
Children eligible for Kindergarten Fee Subsidy, including: - a parent or child who holds a Health Care Card - multiple birth children (triplets or more)
Children with additional needs, defined as children who: - require additional assistance to fully participate in the kindergarten program - require a combination of services which are individually planned - have a specific disability or developmental delay

Enrolment form

Review your enrolment form to check that it has the following information as set out in the *Kindergarten Funding Guide* :

- Opportunity for families to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- Opportunity for families to indicate if they have had contact with Child Protection.
- Identifying if the child is in Out of Home Care, including kinship care.
- Identifying if the child has refugee or asylum seeker status

This is not referred to on the EOI, but it needs to be included in the application.

Step 5: Add your program information

Teacher information

The early childhood teacher you employ must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching and have a recognized teaching qualification. A copy of the **Teacher's VIT card** and **qualification** (and letter of equivalency if required) needs to be included in the EOI.

The registration can be verified on the VIT website, and the qualification can be checked on the ACECQA website. If the teacher is a graduate teacher, they may have a provisional registration until their full registration is approved.

Program Model

Indicate whether you will be offering a 3-year-old or a 4-year-old program or both. (*Some services will need to indicate how many hours you are eligible for in the 3-year-old kindergarten rollout*).

The program needs to ensure that children are accessing the kindergarten program with the Early Childhood Teacher for a minimum of 15 hours per week (and 600 hours over the year) for 4-year-old children and 5-15 hours per week for 3-year-old children (depending on the location of your service). This would also include the number of children that the program could accommodate.

Also include if the program is a 3–5-year-old program or there is a 3–4-year-old program and a 4-5 year old program. If there is a 3–4-year-old program and there is an Early Childhood Teacher employed in that program, the service can also access kindergarten funding for eligible 3 year olds in this program from 2022.

Here is an example of a table you could use to present this information:

PROGRAM	DAYS	HOURS
3 YO	Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐	
4 YO	Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐	

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Number/Ages of Children

The number of children you anticipate will attend the program (if a new program) needs to be included and/or include the list of children who will be enrolled in the program and their dates of birth.

The children need to be turning 3 years old or 4 years old (depending on the program) by 30 April of the year of their kindergarten year. You may also have children eligible for Early Start Kindergarten, in which case, they need to turn 3 by 30 April of their year of kindergarten.

Step 6: Contact your local council

It is expected that you will contact the Child and Family Services area of your local council about your funded kindergarten program EOI and that the discussion will be reflected in your response to the following questions:

● How will the new service meet a community need and be reflected in municipal early years plan or council plan?

All local governments have a strategic plan that they work towards and part of that includes the early years. It would be helpful to go onto your local government website and find the plan. This information could be used to help answer this question fully.

● How will the new service impact on existing services in the area?

Become familiar with the services in your area. You can use startingblocks.gov.au to find both LDC's and Kindergartens near you.

After the discussion, you will need to ask your local government for a letter or email confirming that you have contacted them. Alternatively, you can provide emails of your contact with any early years officers in your council about kindergarten service provision or networking.

Step 7: Check your insurance policy

You may need to include all or a combination of the following types of documentation:

- Policy of insurance
- Policy schedule
- Certificate of Currency
- Letter from your insurance company.

Betrayal of trust clause

You need to check with your insurance company to confirm that you have a betrayal of trust clause. Some companies offer it automatically, for example Guild Insurance (an ACA partner), whereas others may not. The documentation should include:

- Evidence that the policy includes appropriate coverage against child abuse
- The period of insurance
- Any exclusions to the policy
- Any excess or restrictions to the policy.

Here is a fact sheet with more information about this requirement.

This is not on the EOI but needs to be included in the application.

Step 8: Submit your completed form

Submit your completed form and relevant documentation to your local Early Childhood Improvement Branch.

There may be significant delays to the assessment process if this form is incomplete or the required documentation is not provided.

You can contact ACAV for support with your EOI and supporting documentation on (03) 9532 2017.

Connecting you with Victoria's Early Childhood Education & Care sector.

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