

Innovation Grants to support Early Career Teacher Retention (Innovation Grants)

Program Guidelines

Introduction

The roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will require the Victorian early childhood workforce to approximately double over the next ten years. The retention and development of the existing workforce will play a critical role in ensuring that every child has access to a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program led by a qualified early childhood teacher (ECT).

Recent research and feedback from the sector indicate that a significant portion of ECTs leave the profession within five years.

In this period of massive growth and reform, new and innovative approaches to keeping our early career ECTs in the profession are needed to deliver on the workforce needed to meet the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten commitments for Victorian children.

The Early Career Teacher Retention Innovation Grants

The Innovation Grants to support Early Career Teacher Retention (Innovation Grants) seek to strengthen the Department's partnership with the early childhood sector in delivering the workforce solutions required to meet the demand of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten.

Through the Innovation Grants, early childhood services that deliver a Victorian-funded kindergarten program will be able to apply for grants to implement innovative place-based solutions for improving early career ECT retention rates in their organisations.

Grants from \$5,000 up to \$30,000* are available for initiatives and/or projects designed to improve the retention of ECTs in the first five years of their careers.

The Department will review successful projects to assess if any can be replicated in other early childhood services across Victoria.

* see Funding Available section below for more information

What is Innovation?

For the purposes of the Innovation Grants 'innovation' is defined as '*new ideas, projects and initiatives that advance ECT retention practices in the early childhood sector*'.

Examples of possible projects include:

- Collaboration between early childhood services and/or organisations to make better use of resources and technology that support ECT retention
- Improve current practices to articulate career pathways and progression for ECTs
- Early childhood services coming together to implement a shared 'deep dive' induction program for early career teachers
- Set up a trial of ECT rotation across early childhood services in a local area, including between long day care and sessional services
- Piloting an ECT career pathway program through a partnership of early childhood services providing different career development opportunities

Projects and initiatives that do not meet the Innovation Grant's definition of innovation include:

- ‘Business as usual’ and compliance activities and costs (e.g. payroll support, regular performance management and induction activities)
- Additional teachers or educators to work with children
- Fundraising activities
- Initiatives, projects, or proposed activities that are financially supported through other means (including other forms of Government funding)
- Funding to supplement other Department initiatives such as but not limited to School Readiness Funding, Early Childhood Scholarships and Incentives, and the Effective Mentoring Program.

Funding available

Grants from \$5,000 up to \$30,000 are available for initiatives and/or projects designed to improve the retention of early childhood teachers in the first five years of their careers. If your initiative and/or project requires funding above \$30,000 please contact the Innovation Grants team on early.years.workforce.grants@education.vic.gov.au to discuss this further.

Eligibility

Organisations are eligible to apply for Innovation Grants if they:

- provide an approved early childhood education and care service operating in Victoria
- deliver a Victorian-funded kindergarten program
- have at least one ECT in the first five years of their career employed in a teaching role at the service (not including casual relief teachers)
- do not owe any money to the Department as a result of previous funding or grants
- have the appropriate type and level of insurance for the activities that are the subject of this grant
- are not receiving funding by other means (including Victorian State Government funding) for the proposed initiative or project.

Consortiums can apply

Consortium applications will be considered, including partnerships with non-early childhood organisations, provided an approved Victorian early childhood service that meets all the eligibility criteria is nominated as the lead organisation. This will allow applicants to combine their capacity, specialist capability and expertise to deliver the Innovation Grant’s desired outcomes.

Out of scope

The following organisations are considered outside of the scope of the Innovation Grants and are not eligible to apply:

- Family day care providers
- Outside School Hours Care services
- Early childhood education and care services not receiving Victorian kindergarten funding

Application process

The application process will require services to respond to six selection criteria that will be scored. See the table below for criteria weighting. Applications can only be submitted online via the Smartygrants platform <https://detearlyyears.smartygrants.com.au/InnovationGrantsR1>.

As noted above organisations may apply as part of a consortium. These applications must clearly identify a lead organisation. The lead organisation must be an early childhood education and care service that meets the eligibility criteria defined in [Eligibility section](#) of this document.

Any queries about the Innovation Grants or the application process, can be directed to early.years.workforce.grants@education.vic.gov.au.

Selection Criteria

Innovation Grant applications that meet the eligibility requirements will be assessed against their responses to the criteria listed below.

The Department will consider the geographic spread and mix of project types and sizes in the assessment process.

Selection Criteria	Weighting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation – the proposal outlines an innovative response to early childhood teacher retention for teachers in the first five years of their career 	40%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention outcomes / benefits – the proposal clearly outlines the expected benefits and outcomes of the project in retaining early childhood teachers in the first five years of their careers 	40%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability / scalability potential –The proposal outlines how the project will be sustained beyond the grant funding and could be introduced in other early childhood services should it be successful 	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project management / evaluation – the proposal details the organisation’s capacity to manage the project to completion and provide evidence of success back to the Department 	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of early career ECTs supported – the number of early career ECTs that would be supported by the initiative 	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socioeconomic disadvantage of the service/s – the level of socioeconomic disadvantage as measured by Student Family Occupation Education (SFOE) data. <p>Update 17/06/21: The SFOE indexed data of the service/s will be accessed internally by the Department and will be used in the assessment of your application with the 5% weighting allocated as described in the guidelines. You do not need to supply this data yourself. You are welcome to provide a response that addresses the criterion without the SFOE data.</p>	5%
TOTAL	100%

Notification of grant outcome

Applicants will be informed in writing of the outcome of their grant application following the completion of the assessment process. See the [Key Dates](#) section for more information.

Successful applications will be required to confirm their acceptance of offers for funding in writing and will need to be signed by the accepting organisation and uploaded onto the Smartygrants website at <https://detearlyyears.smartygrants.com.au/InnovationGrantsR1>.

Contracting and payment

Funding to successful organisations will be distributed through existing agreements in the Kindergarten Information Management System.

In the case of consortiums, funding will be allocated to the lead organisation that is already delivering a Victorian-funded kindergarten program. The lead organisation will be responsible for dispersing funding to other partner organisations.

Project reporting and financial acquittal

A mid-point and final project report that includes an acquittal of Innovation Grant funding will be required in a format as agreed with the Department.

The information included in reports may be published or promoted by the Department with the agreement of Innovation Grant recipients.

Key Dates

Activity	Date
Applications open	12 May 2021
Applications close	21 June 2021 (2:00pm) Closing date has been extended to 5pm 2 July 2021
Notification of outcome	Mid-late July 2021
Grant payment and project commencement	Mid-late July 2021
Project mid-point reporting	Half-way through funded project
Final Project Report due	One month following project end date
Latest date for project completion	12 months from commencement unless otherwise agreed

Applications must be submitted by **5:00pm Friday 2 July 2021**. Late applications will not be accepted.

Other conditions

Promotion

Successful projects may be promoted and featured in relevant communications. As a condition of accepting grants organisations must agree to provide information as requested for ongoing promotions and communications unless otherwise agreed with the Department.

Acknowledgement

All successful applicants are required to acknowledge the Innovation Grant in speeches and presentations regarding the funded project, and if applicable on the organisation's website.

Successful applicants may be required to host an event with the Minister or representative to showcase the Innovation Grants.

Evaluation

As a condition of accepting funding organisations must agree to provide information and/or provide appropriate staff for interview to assist in the evaluation of the Innovation Grants.

Further information

For further information please contact your local Early Childhood Improvement Branch or the Innovation Grants team via early.years.workforce.grants@education.vic.gov.au.