NSW Department of Education 

ECEC Flexible Initiatives Trial – Grant writing application workshop handout

Contents

[How to use the handout 2](#_Toc169862797)

[Activity 1 – Addressing assessment criteria 3](#_Toc169862798)

[Step 1 3](#_Toc169862799)

[Step 2 3](#_Toc169862800)

[Step 3 3](#_Toc169862801)

[Activity 2 – Preparing your budget 4](#_Toc169862802)

[Step 1 4](#_Toc169862803)

[Step 2 5](#_Toc169862804)

[Minor capital works elements 6](#_Toc169862805)

[Items that cannot be funded 7](#_Toc169862806)

[Step 3 8](#_Toc169862807)

[Step 4 8](#_Toc169862808)

[Activity 3 – Map out your proposal timeframes 9](#_Toc169862809)

[Step 1 9](#_Toc169862810)

[Step 2 10](#_Toc169862811)

[Support and resources 11](#_Toc169862812)

[Resources 11](#_Toc169862813)

[Getting help 11](#_Toc169862814)

[Key dates 11](#_Toc169862815)

## How to use the handout

This document provides practical advice, activities and templates that were used during the Flexible Initiatives (FIT) grant writing workshops.

Follow the instructions provided for each activity and use the templates to assist you to develop and draft your FIT application.

This application workshop handout should be used with the [Application Checklist](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/FIT_application_checklist_Round_2.pdf) and the [Grant writing workshop slide deck](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/Flexible_Initiatives_Trial_grant_writing_workshop_presentation.pdf)

## Activity 1 – Addressing assessment criteria

### Step 1

Ensure you have read and understand the ECEC Flexible Initiatives Trial Round 2 Program Guidelines, paying particular attention to the [assessment criteria](https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/program-guidelines-round-2#Assessment_10).

Eligible applications will be evaluated by the assessment panel against the following key criteria:

* Alignment with one or more objectives of the ECEC Flexible Initiatives Trial. Proposals that are aligned with more objectives will receive a higher score in the assessment process.
* Provision of quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a local need for more flexible ECEC, and a clear explanation of how the proposed activities will meet this need.
* Demonstration that the initiative is innovative in testing and trialling a flexible model of delivering an ECEC service.
* Demonstration that the needs of the child, maintenance of quality care and staff wellbeing have been considered in delivery of proposed activities.
* Clear explanation as to how services intend to sustain or cease their program activities beyond the funded period, with consideration to participating children and families.
* The extent to which the application demonstrates that the proposed activities will be accessible to all children and families of the service’s local community.
* Demonstration that the proposed initiative represents value for money, including reasonable costs to families. Allowances will be made for the greater costs incurred by services located in rural and remote areas.
* Clear explanation of how services will evaluate or determine the success of their trial program.

These assessment criteria are listed in order of importance and reflective of the weighting applied by the [assessment methodology](https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/program-guidelines-round-2#Glossary).

### Step 2

Review the Thinking section of the Grant writing workshop slide deck [link] by:

* working through the suggested ‘questions to consider’ when drafting your responses to the assessment criteria
* reviewing the Menti responses on ways you could provide evidence that your proposal addresses the assessment criteria
* ensuring your proposal is strongly linked to at least one of the [program objectives](https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/program-guidelines-round-2#Objectives_2)

Remember that the more program objectives your proposal is aligned with the higher your assessment score can be.

### Step 3

Download the [Application Checklist](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/FIT_application_checklist_Round_2.pdf).

Use the checklists to:

* see all the assessment criteria questions and the response word limits, these provide a guide on how much information the assessment panel is expecting
* draft your descriptive responses
* prepare and confirm you have all the required information to fill the application form in SmartyGrants

## Activity 2 – Preparing your budget

### Step 1

Brainstorm the all the possible costs associated with your proposed initiative. Ask for what you need, if you don’t ask for enough funding, you may not be able to implement your proposal.

It might be helpful to think of the different phases of implementing your proposed initiative. The costs in the example table below will not be relevant to all proposals, use them as a guide to potential costs. You can also review the collated potential costs from the budget brainstorm activity in the [Grant writing workshop slide deck](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/Flexible_Initiatives_Trial_grant_writing_workshop_presentation.pdf).

| **Design and approvals** | **Initial costs** | **Implementation** | **Post trial costs** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *
 | *
 | *
 | *
 |

Below is an example of the possible costs associated with your proposed initiative.

| **Design and approvals** | **Initial costs** | **Implementation** | **Post trial costs** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| * Council development fees
* Design or architect costs
 | * New or upgraded software or hardware
* Minor capital works
* Recruitment costs
* Regulator fees
* Furniture or equipment
* Staff training
 | * Staff wages
* Additional operational costs (rent, utilities)
* Bus hire
* Educational resources
* Fee subsidies
 | * Backfill for evaluation activities
* Sustainability research and planning
 |

### Step 2

Review the identified costs against the ‘What can and can not be funded’ rules. The tables below will help you to decide which costs should be included in your application. You can also review the [What can and can not be funded](https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/program-guidelines-round-2#What_13) section in the Program guidelines.

Table 1 - Activities that can and cannot be funded – all streams

| What can be funded – all streams  | What cannot be funded – all streams |
| --- | --- |
| **Staffing and recruitment costs:*** Staffing and recruitment costs for activities directly related to the proposed initiative (educator and/or administrative and program-related; new or existing staff).
* Staff learning and development costs directly related to the proposed initiative (for example, to train staff in the use of digital software to manage enrolments or rostering).

**Operating expenses:*** Operating expenses directly related to the proposed initiative (for example, additional rent for opening longer hours or increased utility costs if required).
* Software costs required to support the proposed initiative (for example subscription or upgrade costs)

**Resources and equipment:*** Resources or equipment required for the proposed initiative, where these items are not currently available at the service (for example purchasing additional educational materials, arts/crafts, furniture or fittings required)
* purchase of tablets or computers to support the proposed initiative where these items are not currently available at the service.

**Regulatory authority or local council fees:*** Fees payable to the [regulatory authority or local council](#_Fees_payable_to) directly related to the proposed initiative

**Transportation costs:*** Transportation costs (driver, additional educator for supervision, as well as vehicle hire and fuel costs) related to the proposed initiative.
 | **Staffing and recruitment costs:*** Recruitment and staffing costs not directly related to the proposed initiative (that is, costs relating to core service delivery).
* Staff learning and developments costs not related to the proposed initiative (for example, trauma awareness, stress management counselling)
* Costs related to allied health professionals

**Operating expenses:*** Routine day-to-day operating expenses, such as maintenance, insurances, utility bills and consumable supplies not directly related to the proposed initiative.
* Other one-off costs (for example, research proposals)

**Resources and equipment:*** Resources, equipment not directly related to the proposed initiative.
* Resources, equipment that are currently available at the service will not be funded for an upgrade.

**Regulatory authority or local council fees:*** Any regulatory and/or local council fees that have already been paid or are in process prior to the funding agreement being executed

**Transportation costs:*** Any costs associated with purchase of a vehicle for transportation.
 |

Please note:

* Applicants will need to provide a budget breakdown listing items, resources and/or activities to support their application.
* Applications must include quotes/evidence for all budget line items exceeding $10,000.00.

### Minor capital works elements

Funding for minor capital works may be considered where it is demonstrated that the primary purpose of your proposed initiative aligns with the objectives of the program **and** the minor capital works are essential to the implementation of your proposed initiative.

Table 2 – Minor capital works elements that can and cannot be funded in Streams 1A and Stream 2

| **What can be funded** | **What cannot be funded** |
| --- | --- |
| **Minor capital works:*** Minor capital works, that are directly linked to the proposed initiative, limited to essential infrastructure, and facility improvements aimed at:
* ensuring compliance with any changes required for regulatory and/or council approvals.
* ensuring a safe and conducive learning environment for children accessing the proposed initiative
* Minor capital works, that are directly linked to the proposed initiative, may be considered up to a maximum of $100,000 for all eligible service types, excluding an existing family day care service.
* Minor capital works, that are directly linked to the proposed initiative, may be considered up to a maximum of $20,000 for an existing family day care service.
 | **Capital works:*** Major capital works cannot be funded.
* Minor capital works that are not directly linked to the proposed initiative.
* Minor capital work costs over $100,000 for all eligible service types, excluding existing family day care services.
* Minor capital work costs over $20,000 for existing family day care services
* Minor capital works associated with the major construction or extensive renovations that substantially change the structure cannot be funded.
* Minor capital works that cannot be reasonably expected to be completed within the funding period
* Minor capital works also associated with the following cannot be funded:
* landscaping projects un-related to safety
* non-essential decorative enhancements and aesthetic improvements
* expenses related to the purchase of land or property
* items with high risk, such as trampolines.
 |

Table 3- Minor capital works elements that can and cannot be funded - Stream 1B for establishing a new family day care

| **What can be funded** | **What cannot be funded** |
| --- | --- |
| **Minor capital works:**Minor capital works in Stream 1B is limited to essential infrastructure and facility improvements required to meet regulatory standards ensuring a safe and quality learning environment for children.**Essential repairs and maintenance to comply with regulatory standards:*** **minor structural repairs and fixing safety hazards**
* **fixing plumbing and electrical issues**
* **repairing or replacing unsafe playground equipment.**

**Safety enhancements:*** **installation or repair of security systems or shade sails**
* **upgrading fire safety equipment, childproofing and safety improvements, first aid supplies and equipment.**

**Equipment:*** **acquiring or upgrading furniture and fixtures for children's comfort and safety**
* **acquiring age-appropriate play equipment.**

**Accessibility improvements:*** **repairing, upgrading**, or installing ramps and handrails for accessibility.
 | **Capital works:*** Major capital works cannot be funded.
* Minor capital works associated with the following cannot be funded:
* major construction, or extensive renovations, that substantially change the residential structure.
* landscaping projects unrelated to safety or accessibility improvements.
* non-essential decorative enhancements and aesthetic improvements to the premises or property.
* expenses related to the purchase of land or property, including rent for private properties.
	+ - In limited circumstances, consideration may be given to the use of public properties, such as vacant halls, for family day care services in outer regional, remote or very remote areas.
* items with high risk, such as trampolines.
 |
| **Note all proposed minor capital works must:*** align with the overall objectives of the ECEC Flexible Initiatives Trial
* provide relevant quotes and/or invoices
* be carried out by a qualified builder/licenced repairer.
 |  |

### Items that cannot be funded

If your proposal includes costs which cannot be funded through the FIT program, you will need to consider:

* Can the service cover the ineligible costs?
* Can the proposal be changed so that it does not include any ineligible costs?
* Is the proposal suitable for a FIT grant, does it meet the program objectives?

Applications that include ineligible costs will still be considered. With the assessment panel making recommendations for funding with any Ineligible costs removed.

### Step 3

Applicants must provide a budget breakdown listing the items, resources and/or activities they are seeking funding for. You need to provide the amount needed for each budget item.

Applications must include quotes/evidence for all budget line items exceeding $10,000 and all budget items related to minor capital works.

The application form will ask you to include your budget in the following format. Use the template below to gather and record all the information you will need for each budget item.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Budget Item | $ Amount (excl. GST) | Justification for each item and how it links to the initiative (100 words maximum) | Upload evidence  |
|       | $       |       |       |
|       | $       |       |       |
|       | $       |       |       |
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|       | $       |       |       |
|       | $       |       |       |

Below is an example of an itemised budget for a proposal to offer casualised care.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Budget Item  | $ Amount (excl. GST) | Justification for each item and how it links to the initiative | Upload evidence  |
| Software subscription upgrade | $ 620 | Upgrade software to offer the casualised booking system | Software pricing quote |
| Recruitment advertising costs | $ 700 | Advertise to recruit 1 new Cert III educators |  |
| Staff wages – Cert III educator | $ 32,040 | Salary: 4 hours a day required to cover breaks and maintain ratio | Evidence of award wages |
| Staff training | $ 2,200  | Training on new casualised booking system |  |
| Staff training | $ 750  | Wages to cover additional hours to undertake training |  |
| Daily consumables | $ 25,200 | Consumables for 5 additional children per day accessing casualised care | Evidence of how cost was calculated |

### Step 4

Consider value for money. Value for money will be different for each proposal depending on the local context. The key to value for money is being reasonable – don’t over or under inflate your costs.

You will need to provide information in your application how your proposal represents value for money.

If you are charging fees to families to access your proposal, you will need to provide information on what those fees will be and how they represent value for money for families.

See the [application checklist](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/FIT_application_checklist_Round_2.pdf) for specifics on the questions that will be asked.

## Activity 3 – Map out your proposal timeframes

### Step 1

Applicants must map out their proposal to show what milestones they will meet and when they intend to meet them. Use the following template to map out the milestones of your proposals. The same across all proposals. Not all proposals will have key milestones (light blue highlight) in every month.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pre trial (Nov 24) | * Outcome letter
 |
| Pre trial (Dec 24) | * Meet with FIT team
 |
| Trial begins | *
 |
| Month 1 | *
 |
| Month 2 | *
 |
| Month 3 | *
 |
| Month 4 | *
 |
| Month 5 | *
 |
| Month 6 | *
 |
| Month 7 | *
 |
| Month 8 | *
 |
| Month 9 | *
 |
| Month 10 | *
 |
| Month 11 | *
 |
| Month 12 | *
 |
| Post trial | * Evaluation and Acquittal
 |

Below is an example of a timeline for a stream 1a proposal.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pre trial (Nov 24) | * Outcome letter
 |
| Pre trial (Dec 24) | * Meet with FIT team
 |
| Trial begins | * Sign Funding Agreement
 |
| Month 1 | * staff recruitment
* software changes
 |
| Month 2 | * Staff onboard, purchase resources
* promote proposal to families
 |
| Month 3 | * Enrol children and begin proposal
 |
| Month 5 | * Planned check-in w families and staff
 |
| Month 9 | * Sustainability planning
 |
| Month 10 | * Planned check-in w families and staff
* Confirm if proposal will continue
 |
| Month 11 | * Communicate to families if proposal will continue
 |
| Month 12 | * Planned check-in with families and staff
* End of funding
 |
| Post trial | * Evaluation and Acquittal
 |

### Step 2

Using the key budget items, proposal milestones and your timeline provide an understanding of when your project will be implemented by completing the projected milestones timeline table.

This information will be able to be copy and pasted directly into the application form.

| Projected timeline | Milestone | $ Amount (excl. GST)  | Add any other comments |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|       |       | $       |       |
|       |       | $       |       |
|       |       | $       |       |
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|       |       | $       |       |

Below is an example of a projected milestones timeline for a proposal to offer casualised care.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Projected timeline | Milestone | $ Amount (excl. GST)  | Add any other comments |
| Month 1 | Recruit staff Software changes  | $ 700$ 620 |  |
| Month 2 | Staff training  | $ 2,200$ 750 | Includes training and backfill costs  |
| Month 3 | Children enrolled  | $ 0 | Non budget milestone  |
| Month 7 | Consumables Staff wages | $ 12,600$ 16,020 | Halfway through implementation. Consumables and staff wages are ongoing, cost shown is 6 months |
| Month 11 | Trial continuation communication | $ 0  | Non budget milestone. Confirm with families if changes will continue next year  |
| Month 12 | Consumables Staff wages | $ 12,600$ 16,020 | Trial ends. Consumables and staff wages are ongoing, cost shown is for final 6 months |

## Support and resources

### Resources

* Watch the [video recording of our information session](https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial#information-session)
* Read the detailed [program guidelines](https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/program-guidelines-round-2) to understand everything you need to know before applying
* Have a look at the [example scenarios](https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/scenarios) to get some ideas about what your service might do with a FIT grant
* Familiarise yourself with [how to apply](https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/program-guidelines-round-2#how-to-apply) and download the [Application Checklist](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/flexible-initiatives-trial/FIT_application_checklist_Round_2.pdf) to look at the application questions.

### Getting help

For questions relating to the ECEC Flexible Initiative Trial, contact the Early Childhood Education Funding team:

* 1800 619 113
* ecec.funding@det.nsw.edu.au

For assistance with the online application system, contact the Smarty Grants Support Desk:

* (03) 9320 6888 (9am–5pm Monday to Friday)
* service@smartygrants.com.au

### Key dates

Applications open 30 April 2024

Applications close 2 July 2024, 7 pm

Notification of outcome 30 November 2024

Grant delivery From January 2025 (12 months)