



Australian Government
Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations



Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP)

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING TO DELIVER IPSP ACTIVITIES IN 2013-2016

Closing Time: 2:00pm Canberra Time, Friday, 24 February 2012

IMPORTANT INFORMATION



NOTE!

Please read all parts of this Request for Applications (RFA) carefully. Any Applications that are not submitted according to this RFA may be excluded from the selection process.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is seeking Applications from Eligible Organisations to provide Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) activities Australia wide.

Closing Time

Applications must be received by **2:00pm Canberra time, on Friday, 24 February 2012 ('the Closing Time')**.

Submitting an Application

The Request for Applications (RFA) Pack will be available from Friday, 9 December 2011. It can be downloaded from the internet at: www.deewr.gov.au/IPSPapplications

Applicants are expected to familiarise themselves with the RFA Pack in its entirety (as is relevant to the Program Element for which they are applying), and are required to complete all parts of the Application Form. Applications that are not submitted according to these guidelines, or that are incomplete or do not conform to the requirements set out in this RFA, may not be accepted.

- **All Applications must be submitted by email and received by the Closing Time.**
- **Applications received after the Closing Time may not be accepted.**
- **DEEWR reserves the right to terminate this RFA process at any time.**

Applicants must submit the signed Application Form, and any documentation required to support the Application, to: IPSPapplications@deewr.gov.au.

Request for Applications (RFA) Pack

The RFA Pack consists of:

1. This 'Request for Applications for funding to deliver IPSP Activities in 2013-2016'
2. The IPSP Guidelines 2013-2016
3. An Application Form for each of the IPSP Program Elements:
 - Inclusion Support Agency Application Form
 - National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider Application Form
 - Professional Support Coordinator Application Form
 - Indigenous Professional Support Unit Application Form
4. A Financial Viability and Credentials Form and a Credentials Information Form for Subcontractors
5. Region Profiles for each of the IPSP Program Elements
6. A draft Funding Agreement for each of the IPSP Program Elements including:
 - Standard Letter of Offer
 - Inclusion Support Agency Draft Funding Agreement
 - National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider Draft Funding Agreement
 - Professional Support Coordinator Draft Funding Agreement
 - Indigenous Professional Support Unit Draft Funding Agreement
7. Referee Report template

How to find out more

To find out more about the IPSP and the grant application process you can:

- **Visit** the IPSP website at: www.deewr.gov.au/IPSPapplications
- **Email** questions to the IPSP email inbox at: IPSPapplications@deewr.gov.au
- **Phone** the IPSP Helpline on (02) 6240 8867 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm Canberra time)
- **Participate** in the information sessions consisting of web conferences and/or forums in capital cities (depending on the level of interest) to be held in the week commencing 9 January 2012. Email the IPSP email inbox to register your interest in participating and to be advised of proposed dates. Please include your preference to attend a forum or web conference and include your capital city.

Questions and answers

Questions may be directed to the IPSP Helpline or the IPSP email inbox. Questions about the IPSP grant application process, including this RFA, will be answered directly to the enquirer.

DEEWR's officers can help by referring you to relevant parts of the RFA, the Application Forms and the IPSP Guidelines. However, to ensure a fair, open and competitive selection process, they cannot give you:

- their own views or interpretation on what parts of the RFA, the Application Forms or the IPSP Guidelines mean;
- advice on how to respond in your Application; or
- any more information, other than that included in the RFA, the Application Forms and IPSP Guidelines or otherwise publicly available.

Where, in DEEWR's opinion, information that has been provided to one potential Applicant should be made available to all potential Applicants, that information will be published on the IPSP website on a non-attributable basis. Questions and answers will be posted on the website on a regular basis with all personal information removed.

To ensure that consistent information about the RFA process goes to all Applicants, DEEWR is using a central point of contact for all communications. **Do not contact DEEWR's state and territory offices** for information.

Note: DEEWR will not respond to any questions received after 5:00pm Canberra time on Tuesday, 21 February 2012.

Technical difficulties

If you experience difficulties sending an email to the IPSPapplications@deewr.gov.au email inbox, please call the IPSP Helpline on (02) 6240 8867 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm Canberra time).

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP)

- 1.1.1 The IPSP is a component of the Australian Government's Child Care Services Support Program. It is integral to implementing and supporting the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed National Quality Framework. The IPSP has four Program Elements that operate in an integrated way to support Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services to provide quality inclusive environments.
- 1.1.2 This chapter provides an overview of the IPSP. For a detailed description, you should refer to the IPSP Guidelines 2013–2016 (IPSP Guidelines), which form part of the RFA Pack.
- 1.1.3 The IPSP Guidelines reflect the outcomes of recent reviews and evaluations of the program, which DEEWR has undertaken over the last 2 years and that have involved a range of research, survey and consultation processes. This included input from a working group of IPSP providers, research activities by KPMG, a survey of child care services, and the release of a discussion paper on the *Future of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program* in June 2011¹. The feedback from these processes has helped shape the IPSP for 2013–2016.

1.2 IPSP objectives

- 1.2.1 The objectives of the IPSP are to promote and maintain high quality, inclusive education and care for all children in eligible early childhood education and care settings². This is achieved by increasing the knowledge and skills of educators, and the capacity of education and care services, through providing professional development, advice and access to additional resources and support.
- 1.2.2 This includes:
- professional development and workforce development that enhances the quality of ECEC services;
 - access to a range of resources that educators need to provide care for all children;
 - support to access additional educators or carers when required;
 - flexible programs that support eligible ECEC services to be responsive to the needs of all children;
 - good practice and continuous improvement in service delivery; and
 - the readiness of ECEC services to become more inclusive.

1.3 IPSP model

- 1.3.1 IPSP grant recipients are required to deliver IPSP activities in an integrated and collaborative way to support the needs of eligible ECEC services within specific regions (see Region Profiles).

¹ See copy of the discussion paper at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Programs/ChildCareforServices/SupportFamilyCCS/Documents>

² See IPSP Guidelines, section A8 'IPSP Eligibility', for a list of services that are eligible for support through the IPSP. For the purposes of brevity, in this RFA, both early childhood and school aged education and care services (including Long Day Care, Family Day Care, Outside School Hours Care, Occasional Care, In-Home Care and Budget Based Funded services) may be referred to as 'early childhood education and care services' (ECEC services).

1.3.2 The IPSP comprises two main types of support – inclusion support and professional support:

- **Inclusion Support** improves access and inclusion for children with additional needs. This support is provided:
 - by Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs);
 - by the National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider (NISSP); and
 - through access to the Inclusion Support Subsidy and Flexible Support Funding.
- **Professional Support** raises the quality of the education and care provided in ECEC settings. This support is provided by:
 - Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs); and
 - Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs).

1.3.3 For clarity in this RFA, the types of activities undertaken by the PSCs, ISAs, IPSUs and the NISSP are referred to as the Program Elements. Each Program Element is delivered by an IPSP grant recipient within a specific geographic region.

- For the ISAs, there are 67 ISA Regions across Australia:
 - New South Wales - 18 ISA Regions
 - Victoria - 17 ISA Regions
 - Queensland - 13 ISA Regions
 - Western Australia - 8 ISA Regions
 - South Australia - 5 ISA Regions
 - Tasmania - 3 ISA Regions;
 - Australian Capital Territory - 1 ISA Region
 - Northern Territory - 2 ISA Regions
- For the PSCs, there are eight Regions and each Region encompasses an entire state or territory.
- For the IPSUs, there are also eight Regions, one Region for each state, and two Regions in the NT. IPSU activities in the ACT are undertaken by the NSW IPSU.
- The NISSP is a single national provider and has a single national Region - Australia wide.

2. STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Introduction

This section describes briefly the activities that grant recipients will be required to deliver if awarded an IPSP 2013-2016 Funding Agreement. IPSP activities are more fully described in the schedules to the draft Funding Agreement and the IPSP Guidelines that form part of the Request for Applications (RFA) Pack.

2.2 Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs)

2.2.1 The Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs) are funded across 67 regions to provide eligible ECEC services with practical support that will help services to build their capacity to provide a quality inclusive environment for children with additional needs. This includes working with eligible ECEC services to remove barriers to participation for children with additional needs, and promote and maintain high quality care that is free from discrimination, segregation and prejudice.

2.2.2 The objective for the ISAs is to assist eligible ECEC services to build the knowledge and confidence they need to be able to offer quality inclusive ECEC environments to children with additional needs. In particular, ISAs aim to:

- promote and support access to quality ECEC services;
- help build the capacity of eligible ECEC services to successfully include children with additional needs;
- ensure inclusion support is delivered in a flexible manner, and is responsive to the needs and priorities of eligible ECEC services; and
- ensure inclusion support is delivered in an efficient and cost effective manner, and in accordance with these Guidelines and the Funding Agreements.

2.2.3 The roles and responsibilities of ISAs include:

- within the region, widely promoting the support and resources available through the IPSP;
- assisting eligible ECEC services to access IPSP support and resources as appropriate;
- engaging suitably skilled and experienced staff to work directly with eligible ECEC services to provide support, information and guidance that assists them to provide inclusive quality ECEC environments.
- assessing and, where approved, facilitating Flexible Support Funding to eligible ECEC services;
- assisting eligible services to apply for Bicultural Support and to access Specialist Equipment;
- assisting eligible ECEC services to link with relevant community groups, services and organisations;
- supporting eligible ECEC services to work in partnership with families and local support networks;
- identifying policies and practices that facilitate inclusion of children with additional needs in ECEC settings, and sharing these with eligible ECEC services and with other IPSP Grant Recipients;
- adopting a 'no wrong door' approach to requests for IPSP assistance from the ECEC sector, and making referrals, as appropriate, to other ISAs or the relevant PSC or IPSU;
- assisting eligible ECEC services to identify their professional development needs and opportunities, and make referrals, as appropriate, to the PSC, IPSU or providers of other services and programs;
- supporting eligible ECEC services to engage in ongoing reflective practices and continuous improvement related to inclusive practices;
- responding in a timely manner to requests and referrals for inclusion support from eligible ECEC services and other IPSP Grant Recipients; and

- assisting, as appropriate, eligible ECEC services to apply to receive the Inclusion Support Subsidy.

2.2.4 ISAs must carry out required activities to DEEWR's satisfaction in accordance with, and by the due dates for, the milestones as specified in the IPSP Guidelines and the draft Funding Agreement.

2.3 National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider (NISSP)

2.3.1 The NISSP is responsible for assessment and approval of applications for the Inclusion Support Subsidy. The Inclusion Support Subsidy assists eligible ECEC services to include children with ongoing high support needs so that they can be cared for in environments with typically developing peers. The Inclusion Support Subsidy is a contribution towards the costs associated with employing an additional carer or educator.

2.3.2 The objective of the NISSP is to assess Inclusion Support Subsidy applications in a way that ensures eligible ECEC services have equitable access to the Inclusion Support Subsidy, and that applications are assessed consistently within timeframes that support services to provide quality inclusive environments.

2.3.3 The roles and responsibilities of the NISSP are to:

- ensure nationally consistent application of the Guidelines, and any other information provided by DEEWR, when assessing, managing and administering the Inclusion Support Subsidy;
- facilitate equitable access to Inclusion Support Subsidy assistance across all eligible service types;
- assist ISAs and services to complete Inclusion Support Subsidy applications;
- notify applicants and the relevant ISA within 5 business days if the application is incomplete;
- process all completed Inclusion Support Subsidy applications within 15 business days of receipt;
- ensure the Inclusion Support Subsidy commitment remains within allocated funding;
- pay claims for the Inclusion Support Subsidy on a fortnightly basis for any services that are not yet using the IS Portal;
- respond to all inquiries within 5 business days;
- collect, analyse and monitor Inclusion Support Subsidy data, and identify demographic usage trends in the Inclusion Support Subsidy;
- participate in National and State/Territory IPSP Forums and provide reports on trends;
- maintain an up-to-date website with information on the Inclusion Support Subsidy, and a 1800 phone number to respond to inquiries and provide guidance on applying for the Inclusion Support Subsidy;
- develop an annual work plan for NISSP activities; and
- in consultation with DEEWR, investigate ways of streamlining the Inclusion Support Subsidy application and approval process to improve outcomes for eligible services and children.

2.3.4 The NISSP must carry out required activities to DEEWR'S satisfaction in accordance with, and by the due dates for, the milestones as specified in the IPSP Guidelines and the draft Funding Agreement.

2.4 Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs)

2.4.1 PSCs deliver and/or facilitate professional development to eligible ECEC services to assist them to understand and meet the requirements of the National Quality Standard, and to implement approved learning frameworks, including the Early Years Learning Framework; Belonging, Being, Becoming, and, if appropriate, the Framework for School Age Care; My Time Our Place. PSCs also manage Bicultural Support, the IPSP Resource Library, and Specialist Equipment.

2.4.2 The objective of the PSCs is to provide professional development that meets the needs of eligible ECEC services, and that is based on evidence and good practice, in order to:

- drive continuous improvement;
- support services to meet the National Quality Standard, in particular with self assessment and development of Quality Improvement Plans, and to understand and implement approved learning frameworks, including the Early Years Learning Framework , and the Framework for School Age Care;
- prepare and support ECEC educators for their changing roles under the National Quality Framework, and enhance their knowledge and skills in existing and new areas of practice; and
- support the inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous children, children with disability and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

2.4.3 The roles and responsibilities of PSCs are to:

- provide eligible ECEC services with nationally consistent professional development, support and training to assist them in meeting the requirements under the National Quality Framework, and to implement the Early Years Learning Framework and, if appropriate, the Framework for School Age Care;
- develop calendars of training and courses, in consultation with DEEWR, and widely promote these to ECEC services in the state or territory;
- provide tailored professional development, support and training to individual eligible ECEC services when they are referred through approved referral channels advised by DEEWR;
- in consultation with DEEWR and other relevant stakeholders, develop and regularly review a plan for the delivery of PSC services across the state/territory for the funding period, which includes face-to-face delivery and the use of emerging technologies to ensure eligible ECEC services, including those in remote areas, are able to access IPSP services and resources;
- adopt a 'no wrong door' approach to all requests for IPSP services, and link eligible ECEC services needing additional support to make their environment more inclusive to the local ISA or IPSU as appropriate;
- provide ECEC services with free access to a range of up-to-date online resources and materials that will assist them to provide high quality inclusive environments. These resources will be available from the IPSP Resource Library;
- manage the provision of Bicultural Support, and make available from the IPSP Resource Library resources developed to assist with the enrolment and inclusion of children from culturally and linguistically diverse and/or Indigenous backgrounds;
- manage IPSP Specialist Equipment;
- attend and participate in IPSP Forums and the PSC Alliance;
- establish and maintain effective partnerships with ACECQA, State and Territory Regulatory Authorities and other key stakeholders to ensure the professional development delivered through the IPSP is meeting current and emerging needs;
- in consultation with DEEWR, establish effective referral pathways with State and Territory Regulatory Authorities, ISAs and IPSUs for PSC services;
- in consultation with DEEWR, establish efficient, effective and consistent referral and approval processes to enable eligible ECEC services to access Bicultural Support and Specialist Equipment; and
- in consultation with DEEWR, establish a fee structure for the delivery of IPSP professional development and support for eligible and non-eligible ECEC services.

2.4.4 PSCs must carry out required activities to DEEWR's satisfaction in accordance with, and by the due dates for, the milestones as specified in the IPSP Guidelines and the draft Funding Agreement.

2.5 Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs)

- 2.5.1 IPSUs provide or facilitate professional development and other support to assist Indigenous focused Budget Based Funded (BBF) services and their managing bodies to provide high quality education and care environments. IPSUs also provide advice to other IPSP Grant Recipients on culturally appropriate support and resources to assist mainstream services to include and support Indigenous children and educators and to become more culturally competent.
- 2.5.2 The objectives of the IPSUs are to provide support that meets the needs of the managing bodies and staff in Indigenous focused BBF services, which is based on evidence and good practice, in order to:
- improve the quality of their environments;
 - implement approved learning frameworks, including the Early Years Learning Framework; and
 - improve governance, and build the capacity of the service and its managing body.
- 2.5.3 The roles and responsibilities of IPSUs are to:
- provide and/or facilitate professional development, support and training to management and employees in Indigenous focused BBF services, in relation to minimum standards and high quality service provision in regulated and non-regulated BBF services, with reference to the relevant state and territory licensing requirements and the National Quality Standard;
 - provide support and advice to Indigenous focused BBF services experiencing difficulties, or that are identified as being at risk of failing to meet requirements under their funding agreements, and refer them to other relevant service providers, including the PSCs for tailored intensive support;
 - provide tailored intensive support to Indigenous focused BBF services at the direction of DEEWR and/or a PSC;
 - refer Indigenous focused BBF services to relevant service providers, including the PSC, where necessary, to assist them to improve the quality of their services;
 - where appropriate, facilitate partnering and mentoring between Indigenous focused BBF services and non-Indigenous services;
 - assist Indigenous focused BBF services to access other IPSP support and resources as appropriate;
 - foster relationships between Indigenous focused BBF services and DEEWR to support the development of the services' workforce and their governance;
 - assist Indigenous focused BBF services in linking with relevant community groups, services and organisations;
 - assist Indigenous focused BBF services to identify their professional development needs and opportunities, and support them to access relevant resources that cannot be provided by the IPSU;
 - provide pathways for Indigenous focused BBF services to access information that promotes high quality programs for children;
 - in consultation with DEEWR and other relevant stakeholders, develop a 3-year plan for the delivery of IPSU services across the state/territory; and
 - adopt a 'no wrong door' approach to all requests for IPSP services, and link eligible ECEC services needing additional support to make their environment more inclusive to the local ISA or PSC as appropriate.
- 2.5.4 IPSUs must carry out required activities to DEEWR's satisfaction in accordance with, and by the due dates for, the milestones as specified in the IPSP Guidelines and the draft Funding Agreement.

3. REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

3.1 Applications

- 3.1.1 Applicants may apply for any number of IPSP Program Elements and for any number of Regions (see Region Profiles included in the RFA pack). However, a separate Application Form must be completed for each Program Element and for each Region within a Program Element. Preference will not be given to Applicants applying for more than one Program Element or more than one Region within a Program Element.
- 3.1.2 DEEWR has identified an indicative funding amount for the first year of activities for each Program Element and region (see Region Profiles included in the RFA pack). Applicants are required to provide a 12 month budget in their Application for each Program Element and region for which they are applying within the indicative funding amount specified. The Applicant should identify, in the budget set out in the table in the Application Form, the amount sought (GST exclusive) to deliver the activities. The budget in the Funding Agreement for successful Applicants will be based on the Applicant's budget in the Application, subject to any negotiation between DEEWR and the Applicant. DEEWR may elect not to consider Applications with proposed budgets above the indicative funding amount.
- 3.1.3 Applicants need to refer to the Region Profiles for the Program Elements, which form part of the RFA Pack. The profiles have been developed to assist Applicants to frame their Applications. They include information on the number of ECEC services and children from the priority groups within the region.
- 3.1.4 Applicants should also familiarise themselves with the draft Funding Agreements for each Program Element, which form part of the RFA Pack. The draft Funding Agreements set out the successful Applicant's legal obligations in the event of their application for IPSP funding being successful. Successful Applicants for IPSP funding will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement for the relevant Program Element substantially in the form set out in the draft Funding Agreements in the RFA Pack.

3.2 Eligible Organisations and capacity to contract

- 3.2.1 DEEWR will only contract with entities that have legal personality and have full legal capacity to contract to provide IPSP activities. Potential Applicants should make their own enquiries and obtain their own professional advice in this regard if necessary. DEEWR reserves the right to make its own enquiries and assessments of whether the proposed contracting entity has full legal capacity to deliver IPSP activities, including, but not limited to, interpretation of the statute under which a body corporate is incorporated and assessment of the content of the constitution or other governing instrument of the body corporate. DEEWR's assessment of whether a proposed contracting entity has the full legal capacity to contract to deliver IPSP activities will be final.
- 3.2.2 Commonwealth Government agencies, including any 'Commonwealth authority' or 'Commonwealth company' within the meaning of those terms in the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*, and state and territory government agencies are not eligible to apply in their own right or as members of a Group. However, local government authorities may apply.
- 3.2.3 The Applicant must have an Australian Business Number (ABN) and be registered for GST.

3.3 Group Applications

- 3.3.1 A Group of legal entities can lodge an Application as a Consortium, Joint Venture, Partnership or Other Alliance, in order to deliver the required activities. The Group must appoint a Lead Member Entity to act as agent for the other member entities. The Lead Member Entity must be authorised to negotiate, act on behalf of, and contractually bind each member of the Group. The Lead Member Entity only will complete and submit the application for each Program Element and Region on behalf of all members of the Group.
- 3.3.2 A Financial Viability and Credentials Form must be completed by each member of a Group and included with the application submitted by the Lead Member Entity.
- 3.3.3 If successful in this process, each member of a Group will be jointly and severally liable to the Commonwealth for all obligations under the Funding Agreement.
- 3.3.4 Unless DEEWR agrees in writing to any changes to the members of a Group, the membership must remain as specified in the Application through assessment and any Funding Agreement negotiations.

3.4 Subcontracting

- 3.4.1 Applicants may wish to deliver some activities through subcontractors. Successful Applicants can only subcontract activities with DEEWR's permission. It is not necessary to nominate proposed subcontractors in the Application and no subcontracting arrangements will be approved as part of the Application evaluation process. Subcontracting arrangements will be approved as part of the Funding Agreement negotiation process with Applicants that have received a funding offer.
- 3.4.2 If an Applicant wishes to nominate one or more subcontractors to deliver part of the activities of a Program Element within a Region for which they are seeking funding, they should indicate this in their response to the selection criteria, provide details of the subcontractor(s) in the Application Form and complete a Credentials Information Form with respect to each subcontractor.

3.5 Funding

- 3.5.1 Commonwealth Government funding for the IPSP is in the order of \$100 million per year for each year of the Funding Agreement Period.
- 3.5.2 DEEWR has identified an indicative funding amount for each Program Element and Region for 2013 (see Region Profiles that form part of the RFA pack).
- 3.5.3 The indicative funding amount identified is for the first 12 months of the Funding Agreement for the period 1 January to 31 December 2013 (that is, across two financial years). As funding for the IPSP is indexed each financial year in line with any increase in the Commonwealth annual budget appropriation, the actual maximum funding available in 2013 will be increased by the rate of indexation for the period 1 July – 31 December 2013.
- 3.5.4 DEEWR reserves the right at any stage to negotiate the level of funding offered to successful Applicants and alter the funding amounts for individual regions.
- 3.5.5 The IPSP Guidelines and the Funding Agreements describe the purposes for the funding and purposes for which the funding must not be used.

3.6 Funding Agreement

- 3.6.1 Successful Applicants will be required to enter into a separate Funding Agreement for each Program Element for which they are successful. Successful Applicants will deliver the Program Element under the Funding Agreement for an initial term of three and a half years from 1 January 2013 to 30 June 2016. The term of the Funding Agreement may be extended for one or more further periods of time in accordance with the terms of the Funding Agreement. Draft Funding Agreements form part of the RFA Pack.
- 3.6.2 Where an Applicant is selected to provide activities in several regions within the same Program Element, all regions will be included within the one Funding Agreement.
- 3.6.3 Applicants must complete and sign the Statement of Compliance with the draft Funding Agreement contained in the Application Form to acknowledge that they are willing to contract on the basis of the draft Funding Agreement.
- 3.6.4 An Applicant must not release any information or make any statement about receipt of any offer of funding without DEEWR's prior approval.

3.7 Transition period

- 3.7.1 The activity period for current IPSP Funding Agreements will expire on 30 June 2012. DEEWR is in the process of negotiating 6-month extensions to the current 2008-2012 IPSP Funding Agreements (that is, to 31 December 2012). In the event that a current grant recipient does not wish to extend their 2008-2012 Funding Agreement, DEEWR will conduct a direct filling process to put in place a grant recipient to provide IPSP activities for the six months to 31 December 2012. In the first instance, DEEWR may approach other current providers but reserves the right to approach directly any other entity that may be capable of providing the required services. If the direct filling process is required, this will be an interim arrangement and will not affect or impact the outcome of the competitive selection process being conducted in accordance with this RFA.
- 3.7.2 To ensure continuity of activities and a smooth transition for 2013-2016, successful Applicants will work with a relinquishing grant recipient where there is a change in grant recipients. DEEWR will consult with all relevant stakeholders in order to develop and implement an efficient and effective transition strategy.

3.8 Indicative timeline

Date	Action
9 December 2011	➤ Release of Request for Applications on website
10 December 2011	➤ National advertising for Applications
24 February 2012, 2:00pm Canberra time	➤ Closing Time
April/May 2012	➤ Advice to Applicants on the selection process outcomes ➤ Funding Agreement negotiations commence
1 January 2013	➤ Funding Agreements commence

3.9 Addenda

- 3.9.1 If DEEWR varies the terms or structure of this RFA, or the requirements or processes referred to in the RFA, before the Closing Time, DEEWR will issue a formal addendum to the RFA on the IPSP website at: www.deewr.gov.au/IPSPapplications
- 3.9.2 Applicants should monitor the website for any advice as to changes to the RFA. DEEWR will not accept any responsibility if an Applicant fails to become aware of any alteration, correction or notice that would have been apparent via the IPSP website. Responses to general questions received through the IPSP Helpline or raised in information sessions will also be published, at DEEWR's discretion, on the IPSP website.
- 3.9.3 DEEWR may extend the Closing Time by issuing an addendum on the IPSP website at: www.deewr.gov.au/IPSPapplications

3.10 Gap filling

- 3.10.1 If there is no suitable Applicant for a Region, having regard to value for money and the public interest, DEEWR retains the right to pursue alternative arrangements, which may include negotiating with Applicants, successful or otherwise, or other entities, after the selection process is completed. Successful Applicants may be required to provide additional gap filling services from time to time, as and when agreed with DEEWR.

3.11 Probity

- 3.11.1 DEEWR is committed to ensuring that competition for grants of funding under the IPSP is fair and transparent. To do this, it is important that the grant application process is transparent and subject to appropriate scrutiny, and that all grant application processes published by DEEWR are followed.
- 3.11.2 A Probity Advisor from DEEWR's Legal and Investigations Group has been appointed. This is a separate administrative part of DEEWR, and independent from the area responsible for administering the grant application process.
- 3.11.3 If you have any probity concerns, please email the IPSP email inbox at: IPSPapplications@deewr.gov.au or telephone the IPSP Helpline on (02) 6240 8867.

4. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

4.1 Overview of the process

- 4.1.1 Applicants must complete and submit to DEEWR by email a separate Application Form for each of the Program Elements and for each Region, if applying for more than one Region.
- 4.1.2 Applications must be signed and witnessed, and must be submitted to the IPSP email inbox: IPSPapplications@deewr.gov.au.
- 4.1.3 All Applications must be received by DEEWR by the Closing Time.
- 4.1.4 Applicants should complete all relevant parts of the Application Form. Incomplete or non-conforming Applications may not be accepted. Applicants should note that incomplete Applications may adversely affect DEEWR's ability to make a full assessment of the merits of the Applicant's claims, and that DEEWR is under no obligation to seek any clarifications.
- 4.1.5 The Application Form should remain formatted as a MS Word compatible file. The following are the only file formats permitted to be attached to an email Application:
- Adobe Acrobat files (.pdf)
 - Text files (.txt)
 - Common language (.gif, .jpg, .tif)
 - MS Word compatible files (.doc, .rtf, .docx)
 - MS Excel compatible spreadsheets (.xls, .xlsx)
- Note: no reference to hyperlinked or other material may be incorporated.
- 4.1.6 Applicants will receive an automated reply when DEEWR has received the Application. If you do not receive an automated response, you should:
- check the email address and resend your Application to the IPSP email inbox: IPSPapplications@deewr.gov.au; or
 - call the IPSP Helpline on (02) 6240 8867 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm Canberra time).
- 4.1.7 Applicants must provide sufficient information in their Application, including in their responses to the selection criteria, to enable DEEWR to assess the Application. Applicants should **not** submit to DEEWR any supporting documentation other than up to two written referee reports covering each Program Element and Region for which they are applying, and any documentation requested in the Financial Viability and Credentials Form. Supporting documentation, such as annual reports or audio or video files, will not be assessed.
- 4.1.8 DEEWR, including any external assessors and professional advisors it may elect to use, will then assess each compliant Application against the Selection Criteria (see Section 5) and other relevant factors to determine the preferred Applicants.
- 4.1.9 DEEWR is proposing to select one Applicant for each ISA, PSC and IPSU Region, and one national provider for the NISSP. It will send a Letter of Offer with an accompanying Funding Agreement to successful Applicants. The decision-maker for determining successful Applicants will be the Program Delegate, who will make the final decision having regard to value for money.

- 4.1.10 *Value for money* is defined as the optimum combination of quality of services proposed by the Applicant (incorporating the service strategies and experience of the Applicant in delivering IPSP or similar activities), the proposed budget, and the relative risk of the proposal.
- 4.1.11 The Program Delegate is the Group Manager, Early Childhood Quality and Workforce Group, DEEWR.

4.2 Financial Viability and Credentials

- 4.2.1 Applicants, including all members of a Group, must also complete a Financial Viability and Credentials Form, and submit it with their Application by the Closing Time. In addition, a Subcontractor Credentials Information Form must be completed for each subcontractor that has been nominated in the Application Form.
- 4.2.2 The purpose of this form is to obtain information in order to assess, in DEEWR's opinion, an organisation's financial viability and/or credentials to meet its obligations if DEEWR enters into a contract with the organisation.
- 4.2.3 Note that DEEWR only requires one Financial Viability and Credentials Form to be submitted for each Applicant organisation (or each member of a Group), irrespective of the number of Program Elements or Regions for which the Applicant organisation is applying.

4.3 Referee reports

- 4.3.1 Applicants may provide with their Applications up to two written signed referee reports for each Region within each Program Element for which the Applicant is applying. Referee reports should use the template contained in the RFA Pack. Referee reports are used by DEEWR to verify an Applicant's claims.
- 4.3.2 In exceptional circumstances where an Applicant is unable to obtain written referee reports from a desired source and they are considered by the Applicant as important to their Application, the Applicant may provide contact details for referees in the application form and a compelling explanation as to why a report has not been submitted. DEEWR may contact this nominated referee to clarify or seek additional information on the Applicant's claims against the selection criteria. Referee reports should address the specified criteria, be from current and relevant referees, and include the referees' contact details.
- 4.3.3 Referee reports should clearly specify the name of the Applicant, the Program Element and Region and be signed by the referee. The reports should be provided in a PDF format and should accompany the email Application submitted by the Applicant in order to be received by the Closing Time.
- 4.3.4 Current employees of DEEWR and people employed by the Applicant cannot provide a referee report.
- 4.3.5 DEEWR may contact nominated referees to seek clarification of information provided in a written referee report, information on the Applicant's claims against the selection criteria, or information concerning the Applicant (including its past performance) generally. If an Applicant has provided related services to another organisation, but does not nominate that organisation as a referee, DEEWR reserves the right to contact that organisation and seek information relevant to the assessment.
- 4.3.6 DEEWR reserves the right to contact or not contact referees.

4.4 Applicant responsibilities

4.4.1 Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they have:

- fully examined this RFA, and the RFA pack in its entirety;
- fully examined any additional information DEEWR may see fit to provide on the website at: www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood, including Questions and Answers;
- examined any further information by making reasonable enquiries relevant to the risks, contingencies, and other circumstances having an effect on their Application;
- taken note of the Closing Time for DEEWR's receipt of the Application and the requirement for the Application to be received by the Closing Time;
- satisfied themselves of the completeness, accuracy and sufficiency of their Application (including providing details of any Group members, subcontractors, referee reports and financial viability and credentials information); and
- kept a copy of their Application and any supporting documentation, either electronically or in hard copy, for their own records.

4.5 Legibility, language and currency

4.5.1 Applications must be legible and in English.

4.5.2 All references to currency must be expressed in Australian dollars.

4.6 Amendments and unintentional errors of form

4.6.1 Once an Application has been submitted, it cannot be changed. If an Applicant wishes to change any information in an Application that has been submitted before the Closing Time, the Applicant should submit a new Application and must advise DEEWR through the IPSP email inbox that it has done so. Applications that the Applicant has advised have been superseded will not be considered further. In the event that duplicate entries appear to have been submitted³, and there is no specific advice from an Applicant, DEEWR will use the most recently received Application.

4.6.2 If DEEWR considers that there are unintentional administrative errors contained in an Application, DEEWR may request the Applicant to correct or clarify the error, but will not permit any material alteration or addition to the Application.

4.7 Requests from DEEWR for further information from Applicants

4.7.1 DEEWR may seek further information from Applicants at any stage during the grant application process, including during the application evaluation phase and as part of negotiation of Funding Agreements.

4.7.2 Each Applicant should nominate on the Application Form a Contact Person to answer queries that may arise during the evaluation of Applications.

4.7.3 DEEWR is under no obligation to request further information from an Applicant should its Application be incomplete.

4.7.4 Any contact from DEEWR will be on a strictly confidential basis.

³ That is, one Application in its entirety relates to the same Program Element and Region as another Application from the same Applicant.

4.8 Closing Time

- 4.8.1 Applications must be submitted by the Closing Time, 2.00pm Canberra time, Friday, 24 February 2012.
- 4.8.2 Applicants with any questions about the lodgement of their Applications or any problems submitting their Application, should contact DEEWR before the Closing Time by:
- emailing the IPSP email inbox at: IPSPapplications@deewr.gov.au
 - telephoning the IPSP Helpline on (02) 6240 8867 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm Canberra time)

4.9 Late Applications

- 4.9.1 DEEWR has no obligation to accept Applications received after the Closing Time, except where the delay was solely due to an act or omission by DEEWR.
- 4.9.2 If an Application is late due to technical difficulties or unforeseen circumstances beyond the Applicant's control, such as a natural disaster, and the Applicant supplies documentary evidence to DEEWR's satisfaction to support its claim, DEEWR, at its sole discretion, may consider, in such an instance, accepting the Application.
- 4.9.3 Any decision by DEEWR to accept or not to accept a late Application will be final.
- 4.9.4 Applications that are incomplete or clearly non competitive may be excluded from consideration at any time during the evaluation process at DEEWR's sole discretion. Alternatively, DEEWR may at its sole discretion still consider such applications and seek clarification from applicants.

4.10 Withdrawing an Application

- 4.10.1 Applicants can withdraw their Application at any time after submission or approval and before entering into a Funding Agreement. Applicants need to advise the Program Delegate, in writing, by sending an email to the IPSP email inbox: IPSPapplications@deewr.gov.au if they intend to withdraw their Application.

4.11 Confidential information

- 4.11.1 The Applicant is required to identify to DEEWR any information provided by the Applicant, including the Application and any supporting documentation, that it considers confidential.
- 4.11.2 DEEWR's obligation to keep information confidential will not be breached if the information is:
- disclosed by the Commonwealth to its advisors or employees for the purpose of considering the Applications;
 - disclosed by the Commonwealth to the relevant state or territory government and its advisors or employees for the purpose of considering the Applications;
 - disclosed by the Commonwealth to the responsible Minister;
 - disclosed by the Commonwealth in response to a request by a House or a Committee of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia;
 - authorised or required by law to be disclosed; or
 - already in the public domain.

4.12 Privacy

- 4.12.1 It is possible that personal information about individuals may be collected during the RFA process. For example, in obtaining contact details for the Application and referee details.
- 4.12.2 DEEWR will, when dealing with any personal information, comply with the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).
- 4.12.3 Complaints about breaches of privacy, and requests for advice about privacy, should be referred to the Privacy Officer, Legal and Investigations Group, in DEEWR's National Office. Privacy complaints can also be made direct to the Federal Privacy Commissioner. However, the Federal Privacy Commissioner prefers that agencies be given an opportunity to deal with the complaint in the first instance.

4.13 Freedom of Information

- 4.13.1 All documents created or held by DEEWR with regard to the IPSP grant application process are subject to the obligations set out in the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act). Unless a document (or part of a document) falls under an exemption provision (such as material obtained in confidence, personal information, or other exemptions as set out in the FOI Act), it will be made available to the general public, if requested, under the FOI Act.
- 4.13.2 All FOI requests are to be referred to the FOI Coordinator, Legal and Investigations Group, in DEEWR's National Office. Decisions regarding requests for access will be made by DEEWR's authorised FOI decision-maker in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act.

4.14 Conflict of interest

- 4.14.1 Applicants must identify in their Application any potential or actual conflicts of interest that they believe will or may arise if they are provided with funding for the delivery of a Program Element. A conflict of interest can arise, for example, when an Applicant's integrity, objectivity or fairness in performing the services is at risk due to a personal interest or conflicting business arrangements.
- 4.14.2 Applicants must specify how the actual or potential conflict of interest will be addressed and monitored to ensure that it does not conflict with the delivery of the Program Element in a fair and objective manner.

4.15 Ownership of Applications for funding

- 4.15.1 All Applications become the property of DEEWR once received. By submitting an Application the Applicant agrees that DEEWR may copy, amend, extract or otherwise deal with all or any part of an Application for the purposes of conducting the RFA process (including briefing the relevant Ministers and their advisers, or others with a right to know), or negotiating a Funding Agreement.

4.16 Costs of preparing Applications

- 4.16.1 Applicants are responsible for all costs of preparing and lodging their Applications, and for the costs of answering any of DEEWR's requests for more information or clarification.

4.17 Amendment, suspension and termination

4.17.1 Notwithstanding any other provisions of this RFA, DEEWR reserves the right, in its absolute discretion, at any time to:

- terminate this RFA process;
- vary any information, requirement, terms, process, time period, time or date set out in this document;
- seek additional information or clarification from any Applicant(s) or from any other party;
- negotiate, suspend negotiations or not negotiate with any Applicant(s);
- evaluate some, all, or none of the Applications;
- provide additional information or clarification to Applicants; and
- accept any or none of the Applications.

4.18 Further information before the Application Closing Time

4.18.1 Any clarifications or amendments will appear at: www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood.

4.18.2 It is the responsibility of Applicants to check this website regularly for any amendments. DEEWR does not undertake to inform any party when additional information is posted on this website.

4.19 Debriefing

4.19.1 All Applicants will be entitled to a verbal debriefing provided that the Applicant makes a request to DEEWR within one month after the final announcement of the grant application process. DEEWR may conduct the debriefing by telephone.

4.19.2 All costs incurred by the Applicant to attend a debriefing will be at the Applicant's expense.

4.19.3 Applicants will not be provided with information concerning Applications submitted by other Applicants, except for information that is publicly available and except in so far as comparative statements can be made without breaching confidentiality.

5. SELECTION CRITERIA

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Applicants should address all the selection criteria for the Program Element and Region for which they are applying. Applications will be assessed against the selection criteria, all of which are weighted equally.
- 5.1.2 There is a limit of 1000 words for responses to each selection criterion. DEEWR reserves the right not to read beyond the word limit for each criterion.
- 5.1.3 For the avoidance of doubt, Applicants will also be assessed on financial viability and on their response to the statement of compliance against the terms of the draft funding agreement. These two factors do not constitute 'selection criteria' as set out in this section 5.
- 5.1.4 The selection criteria for each of the Program Elements are as follows.

5.2 Inclusion Support Agency (ISA)

Selection Criterion 1 – Demonstrated experience and understanding of inclusion principles, including cultural awareness and commitment to access and equity principles

- 5.2.1 The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, discussion of the Applicant's:
- aims and philosophy, and how these align with the IPSP philosophy, objectives and key principles;
 - demonstrated understanding of inclusion principles and their relationship to quality practice;
 - understanding of inclusion issues, and commitment to principles and obligations under relevant access and equity legislation;
 - understanding of Indigenous, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and disability issues, and their impact on access to ECEC services; and
 - demonstrated ability and experience in engaging diverse communities, peak bodies, Indigenous groups and special needs advocacy organisations in developing policies and procedures that deliver inclusive services.

Selection Criterion 2 – Demonstrated relevant knowledge and service delivery experience in the nominated Region

- 5.2.2 The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, a discussion of the Applicant's:
- demonstrated understanding of the region for which the Applicant is seeking to apply, including local needs and relevant community and service delivery networks, and how they relate to the delivery of ISA activities;
 - understanding of issues that impact on the delivery of inclusion support to ECEC services;
 - demonstrated understanding of issues in the early childhood education and care sector, including relevant legislative and regulatory requirements and the implementation of the National Quality Framework; and
 - successful delivery of any relevant programs and/or services and how this would relate to effectively carrying out the roles and responsibilities of an ISA.

Selection Criterion 3 - Ability to plan for and deliver ISA activities in the nominated Region

- 5.2.3 Applicants should outline a comprehensive service delivery framework for the region that identifies the strategies or mechanisms that will be used to deliver ISA roles and responsibilities. Responses should align with the indicative 12-month budget set out in the Application Form. The total budget should be no more than the indicative funding amount specified in the ISA Region Profiles that form part of the RFA Pack. The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, the following:
- an outline of the intended number and location of equivalent full-time staff, including Inclusion Support Facilitators, administration staff and management, and the strategy for ensuring that appropriately skilled staff are engaged and provided with ongoing management support and professional development opportunities;
 - an outline of the strategies planned to ensure that eligible ECEC services in the region have access to inclusion support that is relevant, appropriate and timely, including approaches to ensure coverage for all service types and inclusion priority groups; and
 - the proposed strategy for managing IPSP funding, including the administration and monitoring of a Flexible Support Funding allocation.

Selection Criterion 4 – Capacity and infrastructure to deliver ISA activities

- 5.2.4 The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, a discussion of the Applicant's:
- capacity to deliver inclusion support services to eligible ECEC services;
 - quality assurance and complaints handling mechanisms;
 - demonstrated sound human resource management capability, including:
 - employment and people management practices; and
 - recruitment and support of staff with diverse backgrounds and abilities;
 - demonstrated sound financial management capability, including budget management and reporting practices;
 - practices for reporting on outputs and outcomes; and
 - the systems and processes that will be used for reporting to DEEWR.

5.3 National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider (NISSP)

Selection Criterion 1 - Demonstrated experience and understanding of inclusion principles, including cultural awareness and commitment to social inclusion principles

- 5.3.1 The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, a discussion of the Applicant's:
- aims and philosophy, and how these align with the IPSP philosophy, objectives and key principles;
 - demonstrated understanding of inclusion principles and their relationship to quality practice;
 - understanding of inclusion issues, and commitment to principles and obligations under relevant access and equity legislation;
 - understanding of Indigenous, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and disability issues, and their impact on access to ECEC services; and
 - demonstrated ability and experience in engaging diverse communities, peak bodies, Indigenous groups and special needs advocacy organisations in developing policies and procedures that deliver inclusive services.

Selection Criterion 2 - Demonstrated relevant knowledge and service delivery experience

- 5.3.2 The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, a discussion of the Applicant's:
- understanding of issues that impact on the delivery of inclusion support to ECEC services;
 - demonstrated understanding of issues in the early childhood education and care sector, including relevant legislative and regulatory requirements and the implementation of the National Quality Framework; and
 - successful delivery of any relevant programs and/or services and how this would relate to effectively carrying out the roles and responsibilities of the NISSP.

Selection Criterion 3 - Ability to plan for and deliver NISSP activities

- 5.3.3 Applicants must outline a comprehensive service delivery framework that identifies the strategies or mechanisms that will be used to deliver NISSP roles and responsibilities. Responses should align with the indicative 12-month budget set out in the Application Form. The total budget should be no more than the indicative funding amount specified in the Region Profiles in the RFA Pack. The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, the following:
- an outline of the intended number and location of equivalent full-time staff, including administration staff and management, and the strategy for ensuring that appropriately skilled staff are engaged and provided with ongoing management support and professional development opportunities; and
 - a description of proposed strategies to ensure that the Inclusion Support Subsidy is managed in line with the IPSP Guidelines, and that administrative processes are continually reviewed, improved and streamlined.

Selection Criterion 4 – Capacity and infrastructure to deliver the NISSP's activities

- 5.3.4 The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, discussion of the Applicant's:
- capacity to assess, administer and manage the Inclusion Support Subsidy across the 67 Inclusion Support Agency (ISA) Regions;
 - quality assurance and complaints handling mechanisms ;
 - demonstrated sound human resource management capability, including:
 - employment and people management practices; and
 - recruitment and support of staff with diverse backgrounds and abilities;
 - demonstrated sound financial management capability, including budget management and reporting practices;
 - practices for reporting on outputs and outcomes; and
 - the systems and processes for reporting to DEEWR.

5.4 Professional Support Coordinator (PSC)

Selection criterion 1 – Demonstrated experience and understanding of the professional development and support needs of ECEC services

- 5.4.1 The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, a discussion of the Applicant's:
- aims and philosophy, and how these align with the IPSP philosophy, objectives and key principles;
 - demonstrated understanding of the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) agreed National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, and its relationship to ECEC service delivery;
 - understanding of inclusion issues, and commitment to principles and obligations under relevant access and equity legislation;
 - understanding of Indigenous, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and disability issues, and their impact on access to ECEC services; and
 - demonstrated ability and experience in engaging diverse communities, peak bodies, Indigenous groups and special needs advocacy organisations to deliver PSC activities.

Selection Criterion 2 - Demonstrated relevant knowledge and service delivery experience in the nominated Region

- 5.4.2 The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, discussion of the Applicant's:
- demonstrated understanding of the region for which the Applicant is seeking to apply, including local needs and relevant community and service delivery networks and how they relate to the delivery of PSC activities;
 - understanding of issues that impact on the delivery of PSC activities to ECEC services;
 - demonstrated understanding of issues in the early childhood education and care sector, including relevant legislative and regulatory requirements, and the implementation of the National Quality Framework; and
 - successful delivery of any relevant programs and/or services and how this would relate to effectively carrying out the roles and responsibilities of a PSC.

Selection Criterion 3 – Ability to plan for and deliver PSC activities in the nominated Region

- 5.4.3 Applicants should outline a comprehensive service delivery framework for the region that identifies the strategies or mechanisms that will be used to deliver PSC roles and responsibilities. Responses should align with the indicative 12-month budget set out in the Application Form. The total budget should be no more than the indicative funding amount specified in the PSC Region Profiles in the RFA Pack. The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, the following:
- an outline of the intended number and location of equivalent full-time staff, administration staff and management, and the strategy for ensuring that appropriately skilled staff are engaged and provided with ongoing management support and professional development opportunities;
 - an outline of any plans to engage subcontractors to deliver some PSC activities in the region;
 - an outline of the strategies planned to ensure that eligible ECEC services in the region have access to professional development that is relevant, appropriate and timely, including approaches to ensure coverage for all service types across the region;
 - an outline of the strategies planned to ensure eligible ECEC services in the region have timely access to Bicultural Support and Specialist Equipment; and
 - the proposed strategy for managing IPSP funding, including the administration and monitoring of Bicultural Support funding and Specialist Equipment, including storage, distribution and maintenance.

Selection Criterion 4 - Capacity and infrastructure to deliver PSC activities

- 5.4.4 The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, discussion of the Applicant's:
- capacity to deliver professional development and training to the ECEC workforce that is effective, sustainable and suitable, and is based on evidence and good practice;
 - quality assurance and complaints handling mechanisms;
 - demonstrated sound human resource management capability, including:
 - employment and people management practices; and
 - recruitment and support of staff with diverse backgrounds and abilities;
 - demonstrated sound financial management capability, including budget management and reporting practices;
 - practices for reporting on outputs and outcomes; and
 - the systems and processes that will be used for reporting to DEEWR.

5.5 Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU)

Selection Criterion 1 – Demonstrated experience and understanding of the professional development and support needs of ECEC services

- 5.5.1 The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, discussion of the Applicant's:
- aims and philosophy, and how these align with the IPSP philosophy, objectives and key principles;
 - understanding of Indigenous issues and the diversity of Indigenous children's needs, and the impact of these on early childhood education and care service delivery;
 - demonstrated understanding of inclusion principles and their relationship to quality practice; and
 - demonstrated ability and experience in engaging diverse communities, peak bodies, Indigenous groups and advocacy organisations in developing policies and procedures that deliver inclusive services.

Selection Criterion 2 – Demonstrated relevant knowledge and service delivery experience in the nominated Region

- 5.5.2 The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, discussion of the Applicant's:
- demonstrated understanding of the region for which the Applicant is seeking to apply, including local needs, cultural considerations and relevant community and service delivery networks, and how they relate to the delivery of IPSU activities;
 - demonstrated understanding of professional development issues in an Indigenous community service context, including cultural safety/competence, adult education principles, and relevant industry training standards;
 - demonstrated understanding of the relevant legislative and regulatory requirements that apply to the operation of Indigenous focused Budget Based Funded services;
 - demonstrated knowledge of contemporary issues and policy developments in the Australian early childhood education and care sector, including awareness of key initiatives, such as the introduction of the National Quality Framework and the Early Years Learning Framework; and
 - successful delivery of any relevant programs and/or services and how this would relate to effectively carrying out the roles and responsibilities of an IPSU.

Selection Criterion 3 – Ability to plan for and deliver IPSU activities in the nominated Region

- 5.5.3 Applicants should outline a comprehensive service delivery framework for the region that identifies the strategies or mechanisms that will be used to deliver IPSU roles and responsibilities. Responses should align with the indicative 12-month budget set out in the Application Form. The total budget should be no more than the indicative funding amount specified in the IPSU Region Profiles in the RFA Pack. The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, the following:
- an outline of the intended number and location of equivalent full-time staff, administration staff and management, and the strategy for ensuring that appropriately skilled staff are engaged and provided with ongoing management support and professional development opportunities;
 - an outline of the strategies planned to ensure that Indigenous focused Budget Based Funded ECEC services in the region have access to professional and inclusion support that is relevant, appropriate and timely, including approaches to ensure coverage for all service types and inclusion priority groups; and
 - the proposed strategy for managing IPSP funding.

Selection Criterion 4 – Capacity and infrastructure to perform the IPSU role

- 5.5.4 The response to this criterion should include, but not be limited to, discussion of the Applicant's:
- capacity to deliver professional support and training to Indigenous focused Budget Based Funded service staff and management, which effectively support the sustainable delivery of quality early childhood education and care programs, that is culturally appropriate and is based on evidence and good practice;
 - quality assurance and complaints handling mechanisms;
 - demonstrated sound human resource management capability, including:
 - employment and people management practices; and
 - recruitment and support of staff with diverse backgrounds and abilities;
 - demonstrated sound financial management capability, including budget management and reporting practices;
 - practices for reporting on outputs and outcomes; and
 - the systems and processes that will be used for reporting to DEEWR.

6. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 Each day following the publication of this Request for Applications (RFA), DEEWR will register Applications that have been received and undertake a check of their conformance to the requirements set out in the RFA.
- 6.1.2 Following the Closing Time, DEEWR will conduct an assessment of all conforming Applications. A selection process will be undertaken for each Program Element, and on a region-by-region basis where applicable.
- 6.1.3 The selection process will be open and competitive, whereby conforming Applications are assessed against the published selection criteria (see Section 5) and given a score. A financial viability assessment will be undertaken by DEEWR to determine whether there are any circumstances that may adversely affect an Applicant's ability to meet its contractual obligations under the Funding Agreement.
- 6.1.4 DEEWR, including any external assessors or professional advisors it may elect to use, will assess Applications primarily on the basis of the information provided in the Application Form, the statements against the selection criteria, and any referee reports. DEEWR may also use information about an Applicant that is known, or becomes known, to DEEWR in the course of DEEWR's business, as well as any publicly available information.
- 6.1.5 An applicant should ensure that it has complied with all relevant laws and with Commonwealth Government policy in preparing and lodging its application and taking part in the RFA process.
- 6.1.6 DEEWR's decisions on the parameters and methodology for the assessment of Applications will be final.

6.2 Responding to questions from DEEWR

- 6.2.1 If DEEWR asks the Contact Person a specific question about the Application during the selection process, the Contact Person must respond in writing within the timeframe specified by DEEWR.
- 6.2.2 If the Contact Person does not provide answers to particular questions within the specified timeframe, DEEWR may base its assessment on the information already provided in the Application.
- 6.2.3 DEEWR will only ask the Contact Person for clarification of information provided in the application or in relation to a referee report, if applicable. If the contact person's response conflicts with the information in the Application, DEEWR may decide not to use it as part of the selection process.
- 6.2.4 Notwithstanding this, DEEWR is not responsible for ensuring that Applications are complete and does not undertake to contact the Applicant if an Application is incomplete. Applicants are solely responsible for ensuring that their Applications are complete and up-to-date.

6.3 Opportunity for Feedback

- 6.3.1 All Applicants will be informed, in writing, of the outcome of DEEWR's assessment of their Application at the conclusion of the assessment process.
- 6.3.2 After the announcement of the successful Applicants, DEEWR will offer the opportunity for Applicants to receive verbal feedback through a debriefing.

7. APPENDIX A – GLOSSARY

This glossary is a guide to assist Applicants complete their Application. It is not intended to substitute for the defined terms in the Funding Agreement.

Applicant	Means the organisation/Group that submits an Application.
Application	An Application comprises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a completed and signed Application Form; • a completed financial viability and credentials form; and • completed and signed written referee reports (if applicable).
Application Forms	Refers to Application Forms in this Request For Applications (RFA): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion Support Agency Application Form; • National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider Application Form; • Professional Support Coordinator Application Form; and • Indigenous Professional Support Unit Application Form.
Bicultural Support	Provides time limited support to ECEC services to assist in enrolling and setting children from cultural and linguistically diverse and Indigenous backgrounds.
Care Environment	A specific setting, room or grouping of children in care (for example, a 0-2 years room in long day care, or an educator’s home in family day care).
Closing Time	Refers to 2:00pm Canberra time, Friday, 24 February 2012.
Consortium	Means a group of two or more organisations lodging an Application. A partnership consisting of individuals will not be considered a consortium. If the group of organisations has been incorporated, the incorporated body is not considered to be a consortium for the purposes of this selection process, but as an organisation in its own right.
Contact Person	Means the person specified in the Application Form who has authority to receive and sign Notices and written communications for the Applicant.
DEEWR	The Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
Early childhood settings	Includes long day care, occasional care, family day care, multi-purpose Aboriginal children’s services, preschools and kindergartens, playgroups, crèches, early intervention settings and similar services.
ECEC	Means early childhood education and care.
Early Years Learning Framework	Is part of the Council of Australian Governments’ (COAG) reform agenda for early childhood education and care and is a key component of the Australian Government’s National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care.
Educators	Means early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings.

Eligible Organisations	Means entities that have legal personality and have full legal capacity to contract to provide IPSP activities. The entities must be capable of entering into a legally binding agreement, have an Australian Business Number (ABN), and be registered for GST. Commonwealth Government agencies and state and territory government agencies are not eligible to apply in their own right or as members of a Group.
Funding Agreement	The document signed by the successful Applicant and the Australian Government in relation to the delivery of the Program Element.
Funding Agreement Period	The next IPSP Funding Agreement Period will commence on 1 January 2013 and cease on 30 June 2016.
Group	Means a group of two or more legal entities, however constituted, other than a partnership, which have entered into an arrangement for the purposes of jointly delivering IPSP activities, and which have appointed a Lead Member Entity of the Group with authority to act on behalf of all members of the Group for the purposes of the Funding Agreement.
IPSP	Inclusion and Professional Support Program.
IPSP Guidelines	Means the program guidelines for the Inclusion and Professional Support Program 2013–2016, covering Inclusion Support Agencies, the National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider, Professional Support Coordinators, and Indigenous Professional Support Units. The IPSP Guidelines form part of the RFA Pack.
IPSU	Indigenous Professional Support Unit.
ISA	Inclusion Support Agency.
Joint Venture	Is a business enterprise in which two or more legal entities enter into a temporary partnership through the use of a joint venture agreement for the purpose of delivering ECEC services.
Lead Member Entity	The entity appointed as the lead member of a Group with the authority of the other members of the Group to act as agent for the other member entities and to negotiate and contractually bind each member of the Group.
LiveMeet	Is a web-based conferencing service.
NISSP	National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider.
Other Alliance	Means if there are other alliance arrangements between corporate entities that have not been contemplated by DEEWR, provided the arrangements meet the group Application requirements as specified in this RFA. DEEWR will be open to the delivery of ECEC services through those arrangements.

Partnership	Is an agreement entered into by two or more legal entities in which each agrees to provide a part of the capital and/or labour for a business enterprise, and by which each shares a defined proportion of profits and losses.
Program Delegate	The Group Manager, Early Childhood Quality and Workforce Group, DEEWR.
Program Elements	The four elements of the IPSP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs); • the National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider (NISSP); • Professional Support Co-ordinators (PSCs); and • Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs).
PSC	Professional Support Coordinator.
Region	IPSP Region means the relevant Region applying to the IPSP Program Element as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for ISAs, the Regions are as defined in the Region Profiles included in the RFA pack; • for the NISSP, the Region is Australia; • for the PSCs, the Regions are the states and territories; and • for the IPSUs, the Regions are the states and two Regions in the Northern Territory. For more information see the IPSP Guidelines, section A5.1 'IPSP Regions' and section 1.3.3 of this RFA.
RFA	Request for Applications. It means this document titled <i>the Request for Applications for Funding to Deliver IPSP Activities in 2013-2016</i> .