



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Skills and Employment**

STEM in the early years

Programme

Grant Guidelines 2016-2020

Version 3.

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Purpose

The Guidelines set out objectives and administrative requirements for the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in the Early Years Programme from 2016-17 to 2019-20.

Programme Objectives

The objective of the STEM in the Early Years Programme is to enhance STEM learning opportunities for young children by:

- Supporting parents and early years educators to develop the mathematics skills of the children in their care through the provision of education support materials to parents, and face-to-face professional development opportunities for early childhood educators.
- Providing accredited professional development opportunities for early childhood educators in science education for young children.

Programme Description

Through the provision of funding to organisations to provide specialised early learning education services, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment supports early childhood educators and parents with STEM education strategies to increase STEM learning opportunities for young children.

This grant is non-competitive.

Eligibility

The STEM in the Early Years Programme is a grant that has been determined through Ministerial decision, as described by the *Commonwealth Grants, Rules and Guidelines* (see 13.11). Two organisations have been identified as eligible for funding:

- The Smith Family
- Froebel Australian Limited

Both these organisations will receive funding to expand the reach of their existing initiatives which provide professional development for educators, support parental engagement in their child's learning, and provide age appropriate STEM learning for children aged three to five.

An independent evaluation of The Smith Family's Let's Count initiative, across 2012 to 2014, found that for early childhood educators it made a positive difference in their approaches to children's mathematics as well as engagement of the families in mathematics education. This in turn fostered parents/families confidence in their own abilities to assist in the mathematical development of their children.

The Little Scientists initiative in Germany was highlighted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in their 'Innovative Teaching for Effective Learning Report' 2012. Froebel Australia Limited commenced the Little Scientists initiative in 2013. The Little Scientists initiative assists early childhood providers meet a range of requirements of the Early Years Learning Framework.

These organisations will be funded in accordance with the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines* and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

Context

The STEM in the Early Years Programme contributes to the Australian Government's National Innovation and Science Agenda (NISA). The NISA will focus on four pillars:

- Culture and capital ('Taking the Leap'): to help businesses embrace risk and incentivise early stage investment in start-ups
- Collaboration ('Working Together'): to increase the level of engagement between businesses, universities and the research sector to commercialise ideas and solve problems
- Talent and skills ('Best and Brightest'): to train Australian students for the jobs of the future and attract the world's most innovative talent to Australia
- Government as an exemplar ('Leading by Example'): to lead by example in the way Government invests in and uses technology and data to deliver better quality services.

Four measures support the 'talent and skills' pillar of NISA:

- Embracing the digital age
- Inspiring a nation of scientists – Inspiring all Australians in Digital Literacy and STEM
- Opportunities for women in STEM
- Supporting innovation through visas.

The STEM in Early Years programme is an initiative under the 'Inspiring all Australians in Digital Literacy and STEM' measure and will contribute to the NISA by investing in foundation skills in STEM to promote positive experiences in science and mathematics for children aged three to five years.

The Smith Family's *Let's Count* early years numeracy programme, which children in low socio-economic status (SES) communities, achieves the objectives of the programme by supporting educators in early childhood contexts to work in partnership with parents and other family members to promote positive mathematical experiences for children aged three to five years. Grant funding will enable the development of an online *Let's Count* facility and the development of parent/carers App to support their child's develop numeracy skills to successfully transition to primary school.

Froebel Australia Limited's *Little Scientists* achieves the objectives of the programme by providing early childhood educators with skill development in STEM ideas and concepts and facilitating age appropriate learning in a fun and playful enquiry-based learning context. Grant funding will enable the translation into English of a further eight Little Scientists modules and the delivery of early childhood educator STEM professional development activities.

Legislative Authority

Legislative Authority for this Programme comes from Schedule 1AB of the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Regulations 1997*, subject to these being made by the Finance Minister at the Executive Council meeting on 14 April 2016.

Funding

The Government provides administered funding through the STEM in the Early Years Programme under the *Appropriations Act (No. 1.)*.

The STEM in the Early Years Programme has approved funding of \$8 million over four years. The available funding for the Programme ceases in 2019-20 and no further funding is available.

All funding under the STEM in the Early Years Programme will be governed by an Agreement/Contract where funding is weighted against the acceptance and satisfactory completion of deliverables.

Payment procedures

All payments as set out in the agreement/contract between the organisations funded through this grant and the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment will be paid on the achievement of milestones and receipt of a correctly rendered invoice and the Department's acceptance of a completed deliverable. The usual terms of payment are 30 business days.

Ownership and Use of Resources Developed with Commonwealth Funding

Ownership and use of the Intellectual Property (IP) developed through Commonwealth funding will be determined by the Agreement/Contract between the organisations funded through this grant and the Department.

Unless otherwise specified in the Agreement/Contract, upon its creation any IP is owned legally and beneficially by the Commonwealth of Australia and is immediately licensed to the funding recipient and to the public under the Creative Commons Licence, in so far the Creative Commons Licence is applicable.

Programme Contacts

For all enquiries, please contact the Department of Education, Skills and Employment on 1300 566 046.

The Programme delegate is the Branch Manager, Curriculum and Students with Disability Branch, Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Loc: C50MA9, GPO Box 9880, Canberra ACT 2601.

The contact for administration and management of the programme is the Director (currently Ms Deborah Durie), Early Learning and Languages Team, Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Loc: C50MA9, GPO Box 9880, Canberra ACT 2601. Ms Durie can be contacted at deborah.durie@dese.gov.au.

Agreement/Contracts

The two organisations to be funded under this grant will be required to enter into an Agreement/Contract with the Government.

The Agreement/Contract will form the legal documentation between the Department and the recipient over the funding period. Once executed, the Agreement/Contract will constitute the entire Agreement between the parties. There are no legally binding responsibilities for the Department until the Agreement/Contract is signed by the relevant Departmental delegate and duly executed by the person or persons authorised to bind the recipient.

Funding will only be provided in accordance with the terms of an executed Agreement/Contract and the recipient must comply with all requirements of the Agreement/ Contract.

The Agreement/Contract will also specify:

- reporting and financial management requirements
- insurance requirements (to cover recipient's obligations in relation to the funding to be delivered)
- compliance with the Australian Privacy Principles as set out in Section 14 of the *Privacy Act 1988*
- requirements to maintain the confidentiality of any information deemed by the Commonwealth to be confidential.

All funding Agreements/Contracts signed between the Department and the recipient under the Grants and Awards Programme is subject to current Commonwealth, state and territory laws. This includes, but is not limited to the:

- Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013
- Commonwealth Grant Rules Guidelines
- Privacy Act 1988
- Freedom of Information Act 1982
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Archives Act 1983
- Australian Information Commissioner Act 2010
- Bankruptcy Act 1966
- Criminal Code Act 1995

Types of Agreement/Contract

The terms and conditions of the Agreement/Contract may vary depending on the amount and nature of the funding and level of risk. The Agreement/Contract will be developed in consultation with the

relevant organisation/s. The Department will offer the Agreement/Contract to the recipient for review, negotiation and execution. The Agreement/Contract will set out the terms and conditions on which the funding will be provided to the recipient. To enable efficiency, the Commonwealth can negotiate Agreements/Contracts that are in effect for varying lengths of time.

Grant and Procurement Reporting

In accordance with the Public Governance, *Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, the two organisations funded under this grant will have their agreement/contract details publically reported on the Department's website or AusTender.

All grants will be published on the Department's website at www.dese.gov.au/grants within 14 working days of both parties signing the agreement.

All procurements will be reported on the AusTender website at www.tenders.gov.au within 42 working days of both parties signing the contract.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Unless otherwise indicated by the Department, funding provided under the STEM in the Early Years Programme is subject to GST.

Organisations that are required under tax law to be registered for GST must ensure they are registered in order to receive funding under this Programme.

Legal and Financial Advice

The Department does not provide financial or legal advice to recipients. Recipients should seek their own independent professional advice on all financial and legal matters, including compliance with any statutory obligations.

Monitoring, Performance Reporting and Improvement

The Department will monitor the performance of Government funding to ensure that it is meeting its objectives and outcomes. All Agreements made between recipients and the Department must include systematic, timely monitoring that demonstrates if results are being achieved and supports ongoing adaptation and innovation where necessary.

The two organisations funded under this grant may be required to submit to the Department reports concerning the funding such as project plan, work plans and progress reports, in the format and by the due dates detailed in the Agreement/Contract. Organisations may be required to collect data to measure how the project contributes to the identified outcomes and deliverables. Organisations must agree, if requested by the Department, to collect data and maintain records to assist with performance monitoring or evaluations.

Within the grant funding for each agreement, independent evaluation will be overseen by Project Advisory Group with representation drawn from the early childhood sector and a departmental representative.

The Department is committed to working with organisations to minimise the volume of reporting requirements whilst maintaining transparency and accountability requirements.

The Department is committed to a comprehensive and systematic approach to the effective management of potential opportunities and risk. Any funding will be managed according to its level of risk to the Commonwealth. As such, organisations may be subject to a risk management assessment, and depending on level of funding and risk, a Financial Viability check, before entering into any contractual arrangement and periodically thereafter during the funding term. Organisations will be required to supply financial and other information for this process if requested.

Financial Reporting

The STEM in the Early Years Programme is managed to ensure the efficient and effective, ethical and economical use of public monies. Funding must only be used for the purposes for which it is provided. The Department may require recipients to provide financial statements/reports in accordance with the Agreement/Contract. Recipients may be required to submit:

- a final report on the funding outcomes, and
- independently audited financial statements and other financial information.

Full details of what recipients must submit to acquit the funding will be specified in the Agreement/Contract.

Evaluation

Evaluations help Government see whether it is getting the results expected and assist to invest in what works. To support a consistent and good practice evaluation approach, a number of principles will guide evaluation activity. These include:

- independence, impartiality and transparency
- competence and ethical behaviour
- designing evaluation to support utilisation and build on what is already known
- avoiding duplication and minimising respondent burden
- learning and adaptation through a cycle of critical review and improvement
- strengthening capacity, using participative approaches and joint ownership.

Conflicts of Interest

The Department has appropriate mechanisms in place for identifying and managing potential or actual conflicts of interest, such as, requiring grant funding Project Officers to sign conflict of interest declarations prior to overseeing the signing of funding agreements.

Privacy

In administering the STEM in the Early Years Programme, the Department and funding recipient will be bound by the provisions of the Privacy Act 1988 (the Privacy Act).

For further information, please go to our website: www.dese.gov.au/privacy, or write to:

Privacy Contact Officer
Legal and Compliance Group
Department of Education, Skills and Employment
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601
privacy@dese.gov.au

Privacy complaints may be made to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner but will only be actioned where a complaint was made in the first instance to the Department.

Fraud

Any suspicion or evidence of fraud will be dealt with as per the Department's standard fraud procedures and fully investigated as appropriate.

The Department's fraud reporting procedures are at www.dese.gov.au/how-report-fraud.

Risk Management

An internally managed and approved Risk Management Plan supports the STEM in the Early Years Programme Guidelines. This plan incorporates all potential risks in the successful management of this Programme and associated Agreements/Contracts. It will be reviewed regularly throughout the life of this Programme.

Freedom of Information

Under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* a person who wants to gain access to documents held by the Department may make a Freedom of Information (FOI) request.

Requests to access documents must be in writing. FOI requests should be sent to:

FOI Team Leader
Legal and Investigations Group
C50MA10
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601

Requests may also be lodged via email to FOI@dese.gov.au. There is no fee for making a request but the Freedom of Information Act 1982 provides that charges may be imposed for processing requests. Requests must provide enough information about the documents sought to enable the Department to identify them. The FOI Team can be contacted on 1300 363 079 to discuss any prospective request. Detailed information about FOI can be found at the website for the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner at www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information.

Amendments

The Government reserves the right to amend the Guidelines as necessary. Updated Guidelines will be made publicly available on our website www.dese.gov.au.