

# Early Years Management Funding Requirements

The Department of Education and Training (the department) is supporting Early Years Management (EYM) organisations to fulfil their role in the delivery of high-quality, accessible and inclusive services, by clarifying their service delivery obligations with these EYM Funding Requirements.

## Introduction

Early Years Management (EYM) organisations deliver professional leadership and centralised management of kindergarten services which are focussed on improving outcomes for children. EYM organisations are required to demonstrate compliance with baseline service delivery obligations outlined in the EYM Funding Requirements (below), as part of their funding and Service Agreement with the department. The Funding Requirements are unique to EYMs and build on the legislative, regulatory and contractual obligations (including ChildSafe and those arising from EYMs' role as employers) and department policies and funding requirements that apply to all funded kindergarten services.

The EYM Funding Requirements respond to the recommendations of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office report '*Early Years Management in Victorian Sessional Kindergartens*' which also align with department priorities to strengthen the focus on outcomes, use data to drive improvement and demonstrate value for public investment.

## Implementation of the Funding Requirements

For all organisations that hold a Service Agreement with the department, monitoring activity is required on an annual basis. The Funded Organisation Performance Monitoring Framework (FOPMF) is the monitoring tool currently used by the department. Under the FOPMF policy, all EYMs that receive kindergarten funding are required to be monitored using the *service plan checklist*. The EYM Funding Requirements support monitoring against Question 6 of this checklist, which asks: *Is the organisation meeting its service plan performance measure targets?*

There will be a staged implementation of the EYM Funding Requirements:

- In 2022, EYM organisations will be required to review their practices and processes to identify and respond to any gaps in compliance with the Funding Requirements. The department will support EYMs with this process.
- In 2023, the department will commence assuring EYM compliance with the requirements on an annual basis, as part of formal Service Agreement compliance monitoring activity. The department will request evidence of compliance, where required.

As EYM policy is now well embedded in service delivery, it is likely that EYM organisations will already be operating in line with the Funding Requirements.

The EYM Funding Requirements will be outlined in the Kindergarten Funding Guide and will be the subject of ongoing periodic review.

## How do the EYM Funding Requirements align with the EYM Improvement Framework?

The Funding Requirements and Service Improvement Planning (SIP) template and process have been developed to align with the five domains of the [EYM Improvement Framework](#), which guides EYM continuous improvement to achieve child outcomes. The Funding Requirements are used for Service Agreement compliance monitoring, whereas the SIP process (guided by the Improvement Framework) supports EYM continuous improvement on an annual cycle. This ensures consistent themes across baseline service delivery and improvement activity for EYM organisations.

## EYM Funding Requirements

Improvement Framework Domain	Funding Requirement
<b>1. Governance and Sustainability</b>	<p>1.1 The EYM organisation informs the department (ECIB Service Agreement lead) of changes to the governance, leadership and management of the organisation that could impact legal authorisation and decision making about the EYM, its services and operations, within at least 15 working days of the change occurring. This includes changes to key personnel e.g. Executive Officers, senior management, key Department contact/s, Chair of Board or if multiple board members resign/require election at any time.</p> <p>1.2 Partnership agreements are in place with each service transitioning to the EYM organisation in line with EYM Operating Guidelines, including articulating the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of service, including staffing and policies</li> <li>• management model</li> <li>• governance arrangements, including changes to constitution of Parent Advisory Group (PAG)</li> <li>• communication strategy</li> <li>• reporting processes, including financial reporting.</li> </ul> <p>1.3 The EYM organisation provides the ECIB lead area of the department with written notice of potential changes to the kindergarten portfolio that may alter the number of local kindergarten places or services. Where the reduction is part of the strategic direction of the EYM, the department must be provided with notice 18 months in advance of implementation* to enable coordination and management of access and inclusion implications.</p> <p><i>* Note: the Service Agreement with the department specifies a minimum contractual notice period of 3 months for the closure or divestment of services.</i></p> <p>1.4 The EYM organisation monitors its financial position at a service, EYM portfolio and organisational level through budgets and reports, with transparent attribution of its management costs.</p>
<b>2. Access and Participation</b>	<p>2.1 The EYM organisation establishes and follows clear communication and referral protocols in each Local Government Area (LGA) to support the placement of vulnerable and disadvantaged children, including application of the department's Priority of Access criteria to all enrolments, and participating in kindergarten central registration and enrolment (where a scheme exists).</p> <p>2.2 The EYM organisation actively promotes and supports child access to kindergarten for two years before school for all children, including children experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability, through strategic planning that maximises use of licensed places and staffing, where feasible.</p> <p>2.3 The EYM organisation supports and improves access and participation for children experiencing vulnerability in kindergarten programs, including Early Start Kindergarten, through local networks and established relationships with child and family services agencies and organisations.</p> <p>2.4 The EYM organisation has processes to support services to identify children with developmental delay and disability and facilitates appropriate referrals including to Maternal and Child Health, allied health and paediatric services.</p> <p>2.5 The EYM organisation ensures that all services have embedded in their organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a documented diversity, access and inclusion policy (or similar) that is responsive to the specific needs of the local community and consistent with the department's Priority of Access criteria.</li> <li>• a policy detailing how teachers and staff identify and refer or apply for additional supports for children and families.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Quality</b>	<p>3.1 The EYM organisation implements an annual Service Improvement Plan (SIP), aligned with the organisation's strategic plan, that reflects on the organisation's strengths and identifies areas for improvement and outlines timeframes for achievement.</p> <p>3.2 Leadership roles and responsibilities are clearly documented, and there are dedicated management positions delivering staff support oversight, mentoring and development to enable high quality service delivery.</p> <p>3.3 Organisational processes are in place that support implementation of the National Quality Framework and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and influence education program and practice to strive toward meeting and exceeding outcomes.</p>

Improvement Framework Domain	Funding Requirement
	<p>3.4 To inform ongoing quality improvement planning, implementation and review processes for policy and practice, the EYM organisation formally seeks parent, child and staff feedback (at least annually) and conducts informal feedback sessions where appropriate to promote community engagement. The feedback should seek input in relation to their experience of the EYM, its service and performance.</p>
	<p>3.5 EYM management and teaching staff engage and participate in professional development, utilising School Readiness Funding (SRF) in line with emerging trends and staff experience and participate in department-facilitated kindergarten forums and networks including Best Start partnerships.</p>
<p><b>4. Highly Skilled Collaborative Workforce</b></p>	<p>4.1 The EYM has organisational policies, processes and structures that support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ongoing professional development of teachers, educators, coordinators and staff</li> <li>• provisionally registered teachers to obtain full registration within two years</li> <li>• career pathways within the organisation</li> <li>• formal and informal mentoring and development of potential leaders</li> <li>• succession planning.</li> </ul> <p>4.2 The EYM organisation has a plan to attract, retain and invest in a quality workforce to meet growing sector demand.</p> <p>4.3 The EYM organisation collects feedback from staff through surveys or other mechanisms to inform organisational people management practices and processes, e.g. recruitment, retention, career pathways, skills forecasting, pedagogical support, professional development, performance management and succession planning.</p> <p>4.4 All eligible employees have access to an employee assistance program (EAP) or other services to support staff wellbeing.</p>
<p><b>5. Strong Partnerships</b></p>	<p>5.1 Processes are in place to enable regular, effective communication with local government organisations to support the provision of services that are responsive to the needs of the local community. This includes close collaboration on planning and potential changes to service provision.</p> <p>5.2 The EYM organisation maintains an inclusive and welcoming environment for families to partner in their child's learning, engage with their community and influence their policy and practice. In addition, the EYM provides both informal opportunities and formal mechanisms, such as Parent Advisory Groups (PAGs), to involve and represent the interests of families attending the kindergarten service.</p> <p>5.3 The EYM organisation participates in local early years networks and maintains effective local partnerships to create services which are responsive to families and the local community. Connections should be made with services and programs such as Maternal and Child Health, Child FIRST, Child Protection, LOOKOUT Early Childhood Advisors, integrated family services/Orange Door, Preschool Field Officers, Koorie Pre School Assistants, Koorie Engagement Support Officers, Access to Early Learning, Aboriginal organisations, disability organisations, organisations providing migrant and refugee settlement support services and Supported Playgroups.</p> <p>5.4 The EYM maintains relationships with transition partners as children progress through early childhood services, participates in local transition activities and shares Transition Learning and Development Statements (TLDS) with local feeder schools to support each child's continuity of learning.</p> <p>5.5 The EYM actively participates in the work of a Best Start partnership/s where available and appropriate and facilitates staff participation in localised place-based improvement and partnership meetings where appropriate.</p>