

Building Early Education Fund – Fact Sheet

What is the Building Early Education Fund?

The **Building Early Education Fund (Building Fund)** is a capital funding program designed to help early childhood education and care (ECEC) services build new centres, expand existing services or upgrade facilities in areas of need.

The Australian Government has announced a total of \$500 million in capital grants for high-quality non-profit ECEC providers over 4 years for the Building Fund. It will have several grant streams, each with a specific focus, including a targeted ACCO grant round. The Australian Government has committed a further \$500 million for government-owned ECEC services. It is not yet clear how these will be commissioned or funded.

The goal of the fund is to increase access to early learning in communities where there are not enough ECEC places for children. For ACCOs, the Building Fund may provide funding to:

- build a new ECEC service,
- expand an existing service to create more places,
- upgrade or renovate buildings.

Further information on the Building Fund is available [here](#).

What is the ACCO grant opportunity and how can ACCOs access it?

The **ACCO Capital Grant stream** will provide funding for ACCOs to expand or build new **Centre-Based Day Care (CBDC)** services in areas of need. These grants are specifically designed to strengthen ACCO-led service delivery and increase access to culturally safe early learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Participation in this grant opportunity is by invitation only, with eligible ACCOs identified by the Australian Government through consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners and peak bodies, including SNAICC. The grant is open from **23 March 2026** and will close on **30 June 2027**. Organisations will be invited to apply between these dates.

Funding is available to fund *capital* works for new or expanded ECEC services only. It is not available to facilitate or support the ongoing operational costs of ECEC service delivery. However, grantees may be eligible to apply for operational funding under a Supplementary Operational Support Funding Grant opportunity (see further below).

To learn more about the ACCO Capital Grant stream under the Building Early Education Fund, read the grant guidelines [here](#).

SNAICC is here to support

In the coming weeks, SNAICC will reach out to ACCOs to ask if you would like support to apply for these grants. We are keen to hear from any ACCOs that want to start new childcare services or expand existing childcare services.

You may be looking to build new buildings, extend existing ones or renovate so that you can provide new or more early education and other connected support services in your community. We are reaching out because we want as many ACCOs to benefit from these grants as possible, and we know that you are best placed to meet the needs of children and families in your community.

SNAICC's role will be to help ACCOs put together business cases to access the grants.

SNAICC is not the funder and does not make the funding decisions for these grants.

We are your peak, supporting you and advocating for the best outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

All funding decisions will be made by the Department of Education. Please look out for more information about the **Request for Support** process in the coming weeks. For further information or to discuss the grant opportunity with someone at SNAICC, please email SNAICC at policy@snaicc.org.au.

Grant amount and funding period

At least \$20 million is available for the ACCO Capital Grant stream. There is no minimum or maximum grant amount each recipient will receive.

Eligibility criteria: To be eligible, you must have received an invitation to apply from the Department of Education, which will determine invited applicants in consultation with peak bodies, including SNAICC.

Applicants who can deliver projects in areas of disadvantage and ECEC undersupply in line with the objectives of the Building Fund will be prioritised. Applicants will be selected based on First Nations peak body and community consultation, prioritising communities with socio-economic disadvantage and low or no supply of ECEC.

In addition, to be eligible, ACCOs must:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN),
- be registered for the purposes of GST,
- have an account with an Australian financial institution,
- be an ACCO (consistent with the National Agreement definition),
- either currently hold, or commit to obtaining, provider approval under National Law and under Family Assistance Law.

Small-Scale Capital Grant Round

A grant round to provide support to smaller providers and in-venue Family Day Care providers is also open for applications from ACCO Centre-Based Day Care providers.

The grant is open from **23 March 2026**, and applications for funding under this grant stream close at **5 pm AEST on 29 May 2026**.

The Small-Scale Capital Grants provide at least \$20 million to support the construction or expansion of early childhood education and care services in areas of high unmet need. Funding can be used to build or expand a Centre-Based Day Care service for children aged 0–5 years, or to modify an existing building to deliver in-venue Family Day Care in communities with no current ECEC services.

The grants are open to small, not-for-profit Child Care Subsidy approved providers and are competitive, with a focus on outer suburban, regional and remote communities. Organisations applying to build or expand a Centre-Based Day Care service must currently operate between one and nine services, have the support of their local council, and hold secure tenure over the land. Funding is capped at \$3 million per site, with one application allowed per legal entity, and priority will be given to projects that can be delivered by 31 March 2028 and improve access to culturally safe, high-quality ECEC for First Nations children and families.

These grants create pathways for ACCOs to expand ECEC services and meet community needs. The Large-Scale Capital Grant stream has now closed, and it was primarily targeted at established, large not-for-profit providers and therefore excluded most ACCOs. However, the Small-Scale Grant Round is expected to be more accessible to ACCOs of varying sizes, including those seeking to establish or expand centre-based services, provided they hold (or commit to obtaining) CCS and National Law approvals.

For questions about the small-scale capital grant or to express your interest in SNAICC's support for your application, email SNAICC at policy@snaicc.org.au anytime or the Australian Government BuildingFundSmallScaleGrant@education.gov.au before 15 May 2026.

Philanthropic co-investment opportunities

Funding for Integrated Child & Family Hubs (Co-invested by Department of Education and the philanthropic sector (Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children))

Up to \$50 million from the Building Fund is allocated for projects under the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC). Philanthropic partners have committed an additional \$50 million in principle. Co-funding by the Australian Government and its philanthropic partners will support integrated hubs combining:

- early learning,
- maternal and child health, and/or,
- family/community support.

IDAC has committed to partnering with, investing in and backing the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. While SNAICC is not involved in decision-making for the Integrated Child & Family Hubs grant stream, we understand that ACCO integrated early childhood services are a priority for IDAC. We will continue to advocate that the Integrated Child & Family Hubs grant stream builds the strengths of the ACCO integrated early years sector.

As the Integrated Child & Family Hubs grant stream is delivered through a co-investment model, it is unlikely to use a typical open grant round process with an online application process. Rather, IDAC's intent is to partner directly with communities to design and resource place-based projects that will be assessed against criteria such as:

- early childhood vulnerability,
- ECEC supply,
- land availability,
- preparedness to deliver.

To understand more about philanthropic co-investment opportunities for integrated early childhood services, under the Building Fund, please visit the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children's [website](#).

Supplementary Operational Funding for Building Early Education Fund-supported services

The Department of Education has opened a Supplementary Operational Support Funding stream. This is an *operational* funding grant opportunity of up to **\$40 million** is available to provide time-limited support to early childhood education and care services that receive a Building Early Education Fund *capital* grant.

This funding is intended to help services open and operate sustainably, particularly during the early stages of establishment. Operational funding is only available to organisations that have already been funded through a Building Fund capital grant and can demonstrate a clear need for additional operational support. This support recognises the challenges of establishing new services in areas of high need and aims to improve long-term service viability.

Eligible services can apply at any time during the application period up until 30 June 2029. More information about this operational funding opportunity can be found [here](#).

SNAICC's ongoing advocacy

SNAICC has been advocating since 2025 to ensure that 20% or \$67.5m of the unallocated Building Fund is allocated to ACCOs. While an ambitious target, SNAICC expects a commitment by the Australian Government to specifically fund new ACCO services to reflect a 'meaningful proportion' of new investment aligned to clause 55 of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, based on population, need, addressing inequities and prioritising Closing the Gap outcomes.

SNAICC's [2026-2027 Pre-budget Submission](#) emphasised that the ACCO allocation would drive meaningful progress toward Closing the Gap target 4, which is currently worsening and projected to continue declining. We know that improved access to culturally responsive early years services enables children to thrive, creating lifelong benefits. SNAICC will continue to advocate for meaningful proportions of new investment.

SNAICC has been engaging with the Department of Education to ensure the Building Fund is tailored to meet the needs and expectations of the ACCO sector, and the process includes genuine codesign and engagement with communities. The specific ACCO Capital Grants stream is a step towards this, and SNAICC will continue to work closely with our sector in a supportive role, and with the Department of Education to ensure the Building Fund meaningfully meets our communities' needs.