

Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme

Funding Guidelines for Central Governing Bodies and Member Kindergarten Services



About these guidelines

Purpose

The Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme: Funding Guidelines for Central Governing Bodies and Member Kindergarten Services provides detailed information about:

- · Eligibility criteria;
- Central Governing Body (CGB) membership;
- Funding;
- Subsidies; and
- CGB and member kindergarten list of responsibilities.

How to use

This guide is designed to provide specific guidance around the administration of Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme (QKFS) funding and should be read in conjunction with the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme: Program Delivery Guidelines for Approved Kindergarten Program Providers.

Table of Contents

1. Eligibility Criteria	4
2. CGB Membership	5
2.1. Transition between CGBs	
3. Funding Overview	6
3.1. Funding Calculation	6
3.2. Funding Reconciliation	
3.3. Subsidies	
3.4. Out of Cycle Payments	. 10
3.5. Real Funding Guarantee	. 11
3.6. Recalculating the Real Funding Guarantee	. 12
4. Data, collection, monitoring and reporting	
5. CGB and Member Kindergarten Services	
Responsibilities	. 13

1. Eligibility Criteria

In order to receive the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme (QKFS) subsidy, eligible kindergarten services must be a member of an approved <u>Central Governing Body</u> (CGB). The CGB is a member service's primary contact for all matters relating to the delivery of their kindergarten program. The five CGBs approved to support kindergarten services to provide quality kindergarten programs are:

- Crèche and Kindergarten Association Limited (C&K);
- Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ);
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC);
- Queensland Lutheran Early Childhood Services (QLECS); and
- Lady Gowrie (Qld) Inc.

CGBs have been approved by the Department of Education, Training and Employment (the Department) to distribute the QKFS subsidies to kindergarten services delivering approved kindergarten programs.

To be eligible to receive funding under the QKFS, a kindergarten service must be approved as a Kindergarten Program Provider (KPP) by meeting the following criteria:

- hold a current service approval under the Education and Care Services National Law (Queensland) or service approval for a Centre Based Child Care Service, under the Education and Care Services Act 2013 (or other applicable child care legislation);
- not be in receipt of Commonwealth Child Care Benefit (CCB) payments on behalf of eligible families within the kindergarten program;
- demonstrate that the fee structure is not a barrier to access; and
- offer a learning program that:
 - a) is provided for children in the year prior to Prep (i.e. children who are at least 4 years old by 30 June in the year they participate);
 - b) is operated for at least 600 hours per year, typically for 15 hours per week and 40 weeks per year. Any other model must be agreed to by the Department;
 - c) is based on the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline or an alternative kindergarten learning guideline accredited by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority;
 and
 - d) is delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher.

The Department will assess and approve a KPP based on the criteria detailed above and information provided by regional officers as part of their Assessment and Rating visits under the Education and Care Services National Law (Queensland)., or a service approval for a Centre Based Child Care Service, under the Education and Care Services Act 2013. If KPP approval is granted, the service will be issued a KPP certificate.

Unsuccessful applicants will be advised in writing of the reasons for not approving their KPP application and have a right of review. Requests for review are to be submitted in writing to the Department.

Without limiting any other rights it might have, the Department may suspend or revoke the approved KPP status at any time the service fails to meet any of the eligibility criteria. If a KPP approval is suspended or revoked the Department will automatically cease funding to the CGB for that provider. The Department will advise the CGB in writing of the decision to suspend or revoke the KPP approval for that provider.

2. CGB Membership

Approved KPPs may apply to become a member of any CGB for which they meet the membership criteria. A kindergarten service can choose to transfer its membership from one CGB to another.

2.1. Transition between CGBs

All kindergarten services have the right to transfer their membership from one CGB to another. The Department's preferred approach is that the transition occurs at the beginning of a semester. Listed below are the steps that need to be completed to transition the membership of a kindergarten service between CGBs:

- 2.1.1 As soon as a kindergarten service terminates their service agreement with their existing CGB, this CGB must notify the Department.
- 2.1.2 Once a kindergarten service has signed a service agreement with the new CGB, the new CGB must provide the Department with confirmation of the new membership.
- 2.1.3 The Department will then confirm the date for transition with the new and previous CGBs.
- 2.1.4 If the transfer occurs at the beginning of a semester, and the new CGB is yet to make a claim for that period, the new member service can be added to that semester's forecast data spreadsheet by the Department.
- 2.1.5 The new CGB can then include the forecast data for that service and funding for the service will then be included in the total claim amount for that CGB.
- 2.1.6 When a service transfers between CGBs during a semester, the Department will:
 - confirm the amount for which the member service was eligible, based on the actual enrolment data for the period of time it was with the former CGB;
 - confirm the amount paid to the former CGB, based on forecast data for that service; and

- raise the recoupment amount in <u>QGrants</u>¹ to be offset against the next CGB payment for the agreed outstanding amount or difference between the forecast payment and the actual entitlement.
- 2.1.7 Once the financial payment to the previous CGB has been reconciled the Department will consider the relationship between this CGB and the member service to be finalised.
- 2.1.8 The Department will issue an out of cycle forecast spreadsheet to the new CGB for the purpose of collecting data to facilitate payment for the transitioning service.
- 2.1.9 The Department will calculate the forecast amount to be paid to the new CGB for the remainder of the semester.
- 2.1.10 At the end of the semester the new CGB must confirm the actual enrolment data for the new service.
- 2.1.11 The Department will use the actual enrolment data to calculate whether there has been an under or over disbursement of funding, and any additional payment or recoupment will be managed in the reconciliation process.

3. Funding Overview

QKFS subsidies are allocated to CGBs by the Department as a block grant to distribute to their member services for the provision of a kindergarten program. Funding is distributed to CGBs in accordance with their service agreement with the Department.

CGBs have flexibility in the way they administer funding to their member kindergarten services, in line with their particular business needs; however the amount of funding distributed to each individual member service must be consistent with the enrolments reported by the CGB for that service.

3.1. Funding Calculation

Funding is provided on a semester basis, in advance, using projected enrolments as supplied by CGBs. CGBs receive funds for each member service delivering an approved kindergarten program. The funding that is payable to the CGBs is calculated in accordance with QKFS rates, eligible subsidies and/or any eligible Real Funding Guarantee.

To calculate the funding amount:

- 3.1.1 a forecast calculation spreadsheet will be sent to each CGB prior to the beginning of each semester. CGBs are required to complete and return the spreadsheet, providing the following data:
 - number of kindergarten programs each member service delivers;

¹ QGrants is an online grants management portal

- number of weeks each member service will deliver each of its programs;
- start date of the service agreement with any new member services;
- forecast eligible enrolments for each program; and
- forecast number of eligible QKFS Plus Kindy Support enrolments.
- 3.1.2 Where a member service delivers more than one approved kindergarten program across a standard week, and a child is enrolled for up to five days per week across two approved kindergarten programs, only one subsidy can be claimed for that child.
- 3.1.3 Once the Department has confirmed the forecast data, it will use this data (along with the addition of Remote Area subsidies (ARIA) and Low Socio-Economic subsidies (SEIFA) where applicable) to calculate the amount payable for the semester.
- 3.1.4 The Department will confirm whether the forecast enrolment data is reasonable by:
 - comparing the data for each service against the forecast enrolment data for the previous semester's enrolments in the same calendar year; and/or
 - comparing the forecast data against the actual, reconciled data for the previous period.
- 3.1.5 If the Department identifies that a service has provided significantly different data from the previous enrolment forecast or actual data, clarification of the forecast information may be requested.
- 3.1.6 The conduct of reasonability checks by the Department does not remove the responsibility of the CGB to forecast the enrolments for their member services based on their service agreements with these services.
- 3.1.7 Following discussion with the CGB regarding data submitted the Department may amend the amount of a forecast payment.
- 3.1.8 The Department will calculate pro-rata amounts for children enrolled for less than the number of hours the program is offered (600 hours per year).
- 3.1.9 The Department will return the spreadsheet, with any necessary adjustments, within 30 days of receipt. Once it has confirmed the details contained in the returned spreadsheet, the Department will process the payment through QGrants.
- 3.1.10 The Department will aim to make payments to a CGB within 10 working days.
- 3.1.11 CGBs should notify the Department in writing of any significant error/s on the previous claim as soon as the error/s is detected. Significant errors include missing a service or program from the forecast.
- 3.1.12 Adjustments will only be processed if a member service is significantly disadvantaged by an underestimation or error in the enrolment data supplied. The CGB can request an out-of-cycle adjustment to the forecast payment.

3.1.13 Adjustments prior to reconciliation may also be requested when new services (that were not included in forecast enrolments) are approved and commence operation during a semester.

3.2. Funding Reconciliation

- 3.2.1 At the end of each semester the Department will supply each CGB with a reconciliation spreadsheet. CGBs are to complete the reconciliation spreadsheet by providing the following actual data for each member service, and return the spreadsheet to the Department within 30 days:
 - number of kindergarten programs per unit each member service delivered;
 - number of weeks or hours each member service delivered each of its units;
 - actual eligible FTE enrolments for each unit;
 - number of actual eligible QKFS Plus Kindy Support enrolments; and
 - any teacher absences over 10 consecutive days.
- 3.2.2 Once the Department has confirmed the reconciliation data, it will calculate whether there has been an under or over disbursement of funding provided to the CGB (during forecast) for that period.
- 3.2.3 If the CGB has been underpaid for that semester, the Department will aim to make payments via QGrants within 10 working days from the point of which the adjustment amount is agreed.
- 3.2.4 If the reconciliation indicates that a CGB has been overpaid for that semester, the Department will raise an invoice for the CGB to repay the excess funding. If the invoice is not paid prior to processing the next CGB payment the outstanding amount will be automatically offset.
- 3.2.5 Once the reconciliation process is complete, no further adjustments for that semester will be made.
- 3.2.6 The reconciliation process will not delay the release of funds based on forecasts for the next semester.

3.3. Subsidies

Funding is provided in the form of various subsidy payments that aim to ensure cost is not a barrier for families accessing the kindergarten program.

Fees should be responsive to the local community, considering parents' capacity to pay and service needs, while maintaining a high quality of early education. Fees should not be a barrier to access as:

- subsidies are provided to assist with the costs of delivering an approved kindergarten program;
 and
- additional subsidies are provided to reduce costs for families and to assist with the costs of attracting and retaining teachers in remote locations.

All subsidy rates can be found on the Department's website.

Of the following subsidies, member services receiving the Real Funding Guarantee are only eligible to receive QKFS Plus Kindy Support.

3.3.1 Standard per Child Subsidy

The standard subsidy is paid on a per child basis for each eligible-age child. Each eligible child can only access funding for one approved kindergarten program at a time.

Pro-rata amounts will be paid for children enrolled for less than the full 40 weeks of the program.

Younger children (not 4 years old by 30 June in the year they participate) may participate in a kindergarten program where vacancies exist but are not eligible to be included in the reported forecast and actual enrolment data.

The standard subsidy is indexed annually in July as determined by the State Treasurer.

3.3.2 Remote Area Subsidy

The remote area subsidy is to be used to attract and retain qualified early childhood teachers

in remote areas.

The subsidy is a per-child loading on the standard subsidy for services operating in areas classified as remote and very remote using the ABS Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA).

3.3.3 Low Socio-Economic Subsidy

This subsidy is to be used by services to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for all families participating in the kindergarten program.

The subsidy is a per-child loading on the standard subsidy for services operating in locations

within the bottom 40% of Statistical Local Areas (SLAs), using the ABS Socio Economic

Indexes (SEIFA).

3.3.4 QKFS Plus Kindy Support

QKFS Plus Kindy Support is provided to services to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for eligible families to access kindergarten programs at low or no cost.

To be eligible for QKFS Plus Kindy Support a family must meet one of the criterion below:

• The family (including foster families), or the child, must present **one** of the following:

- a current Australian Government Health Care Card (HCC). The HCC should be sighted each quarter and a copy kept by the service. The HCC must name the enrolled child, whether it is the child's own card or a card belonging to their parent/guardian; or
- current Australian Government Pensioner Concession Card (automatic HCC entitlements);
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or White Card; or
- Formal communication, such as a letter, from the relevant agency stating the intent to issue a HCC; or
- The child identifies as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and the family chooses to identify them as such on their enrolment form; or
- The family has multiple (three or more) children, of the same age, enrolled in the same kindergarten service. QKFS Plus Kindy Support is available for each child enrolled in a program. Proof of date of birth for these children is required to claim QKFS Plus Kindy Support. The Department will consider circumstances where three or more kindergarten-aged children are not able to attend the same service. In this situation services are to contact their CGB, who will need to advise the Department.

QKFS Plus Kindy Support can only be claimed **once per child** regardless of how many of the above criteria they meet.

Provided the child/family meet the eligibility requirements for QKFS Plus Kindy Support at any point during the semester they are entitled to funding for the full semester.

A family with an eligible child should not receive QKFS Plus Kindy Support funds above theirout-of-pocket costs for the kindergarten program.

If a child's fees are fully covered by another source that family is not eligible for QKFS Plus Kindy Support and the service cannot claim for that child.

Once the service has used QKFS Plus Kindy Support to meet the family's out-of-pocket costs, any balance can be retained by the service and applied towards the costs of delivering the kindergarten program.

Kindergarten services must not change or increase their fees for children entitled to QKFS Plus Kindy Support above that payable by other families.

3.4. Out of Cycle Payments

The Department's primary goal is to process forecast enrolment funding prior to the commencement of each semester and to receive and reconcile actual enrolment data at the end of each semester. This will ensure that QKFS promptly flows to CGBs so that CGBs can then forward these funds to member services.

CGBs may submit a request to the Department on behalf of a member services to review their Real Funding Guarantee.

Additionally CGBs may submit a request to the Department on behalf of a member service to provide forecast funding for a new service or to adjust forecasted enrolment numbers for an existing member service level.

These requests will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the Department and will be processed by the Department as out of cycle adjustments.

The Department will advise the CGB on the likely time to process out of cycle adjustments to enable the CGB to advise their member service. While the Department will aim to process such requests in order of receipt, the Department will prioritise based on assessment of the funding impact on both the CGB and the member service.

3.5. Real Funding Guarantee

Legacy-funded kindergarten services may be eligible to receive a Real Funding Guarantee. The Real Funding Guarantee is a guaranteed minimum level of funding that recognises previous funding entitlements under the former funding scheme known as the Department of Education Community Kindergarten Assistance Scheme (DECKAS).

- 3.5.1 The Real Funding Guarantee was indexed annually until July 2013, in line with the State budget forecast wage/price index and the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- 3.5.2 Member kindergarten services will continue to receive their Real Funding Guarantee until eligible for increased funding under QKFS by meeting the criteria to become a KPP. The Department will determine which rate is higher (either the Real Funding Guarantee rate or the QKFS rate) and advise the CGB when the forecast calculation spreadsheet is returned.
- 3.5.3 CGBs are encouraged to support a kindergarten service that receives a Real Funding Guarantee to work towards meeting the QKFS KPP eligibility criteria.
- 3.5.4 Services receiving the Real Funding Guarantee may accept enrolments from three year old children only when all efforts have been made to enrol eligible-age children. This should occur no earlier than three weeks before the end of term four each year. CGBs may consider earlier requests to enrol three year old children in services facing particularly difficult viability issues, on a case by case basis.
- 3.5.5 When a legacy kindergarten service transitions between CGBs, its Real Funding Guarantee transitions with it.
- 3.5.6 If a legacy kindergarten changes their service model to become a long day care service offering a kindergarten program, it loses its Real Funding Guarantee and will not regain it, even if it subsequently reverts to a kindergarten service model of delivery. This outcome will also occur if a service closes and subsequently reopens.
- 3.5.7 Such services will, however, be eligible to receive QKFS subsidy funding if they achieve the eligibility criteria for an Approved Kindergarten Program.

3.6. Recalculating the Real Funding Guarantee

- 3.6.1 A CGB can apply for a recalculation of the Real Funding Guarantee paid to a member service if one of the following exceptional circumstances occurs:
 - The member service appoints a teacher who meets the qualification requirements, or the existing staff member obtains the appropriate qualification. The funding guarantee will be recalculated to reflect the award level of the teacher. A recalculation under this circumstance is only applicable to services that employed an exempt teacher before December 2010. This circumstance can be applied once only for each eligible member service.
 - If a permanent staff member takes leave or a secondment for a period of six months or longer
 the Real Funding Guarantee can be recalculated and paid at either the existing Real Funding
 Guarantee rate or the salary rate of the temporary staff member (whichever is the higher). If the
 Real Funding Guarantee is recalculated to the higher rate, the guarantee will return to the
 previous rate upon the permanent staff member's return to the service.
 - If a kindergarten program is discontinued, the Real Funding Guarantee will be adjusted to reflect the change in service delivery.
- 3.6.2 CGBs must notify the Department in writing as soon as a member service which receives a Real Funding Guarantee ceases delivering a kindergarten program to eligible-aged children.

4. Data, collection, monitoring and reporting

CGBs and member services are required to provide a range of data, as outlined in their service agreement with the Department, to enable the Department to monitor funding provided under QKFS.

All CGBs are required to submit bi-annual forecast enrolment data and reconciliation data to inform funding calculation and entitlements.

All member services are required to participate in the annual Queensland Early Childhood Education and Care Census, which collects data on service information, child enrolments, demographic characteristics of children, kindergarten program delivery and staffing within the service.

The Department has the right to confirm the compliance of a CGB with their service agreement and with these guidelines. The Department also has the right to confirm the compliance of a CGB's member services with the eligibility criteria and with these guidelines.

The Department may undertake planned or unplanned site visits to a CGB and/or its member services for the purpose of confirming compliance.

The Department (or another party engaged by the Department) has the right to conduct an audit of a CGB for the purposes of the Department's data collection and monitoring activities, or to examine accountability for the claiming and expenditure of government funds as identified in the relevant service agreement.

The Department reserves the right to amend the reporting requirements for data collection purposes. Where possible, the Department will provide adequate advance notice of any changes to reporting to the CGB.

5. CGB and Member Kindergarten Services Responsibilities

CGB	Member Service
Kindergarten Program Provider Approval	
Ensure that government investment is directed to eligible kindergarten services.	Use QKFS funding to deliver an approved kindergarten.
Act as member services' primary contact fo all matters relating to the delivery of their kindergarten programs.	
Advise and support member services to meet KPP eligibility criteria.	
Ensure reported forecast and actual enrolment data factor any changes in service delivery.	Inform the CGB of changes to service delivery that affect the members services eligibility to meet the QKFS requirements or other matters identified in the service agreement with the CGB.
CGB Membership	
Disseminate information regarding the application process and criteria for membership (including details of any membership fee).	Provide written advice within 10 business days to the CGB of any significant changes to the service, such as:
Ensure the Department is provided with a copy of this information prior to distribution.	 service name or address, banking details, principal office bearers, contact persons or key staff or changes to current or potential financial status that could impact on the financial viability and stability of the service.
Give an applicant written notice of their decision to accept or reject a membership application within 20 business days.	Discuss and agree membership requirements with the CGB.
Enter into a service agreement with each member	Comply with the requirements of their service

service.	agreement with the CGB.
Maintain a policy that supports the transition of member services to another CGB if required, including a process for transitioning any outstanding funding entitlements.	
Maintain a record of current member services.	Ensure data provided to the CGB is up to date and accurate.
Notify the Department within 10 working days if a service's membership has either ceased or been terminated.	
Program delivery	
Provide advice and support to assist member services to maximise the number of eligibleage children enrolled and to increase enrolments that represent the characteristics of individual communities.	Implement strategies to maximise the number of eligible-age children enrolled.
Provide advice and support (including resources and policies) to member services to enable the delivery of an inclusive quality education program for all children.	Ensure all children have equitable access to a kindergarten program.
Support services to implement an enrolment policy and processes that articulates how waiting and enrolment lists are managed.	Establish and apply procedures for the inclusion of children with diverse needs and for managing the program, activities and physical environment to ensure they cater for all children.
Assist services to support increased participation of children who may be considered vulnerable and/or disadvantaged.	Implement a clear enrolment policy defining the eligible age cohort for each year of enrolment.
Funding	
Maintain policies and procedures for administering funds to member services.	
Ensure information about the funding distribution model is available publicly.	

Clearly identify and account for the funding provided by the Department in its annual audited financial statements.	
Ensure that services' fee structure is not a barrier to access.	Ensure that the service's fee structure is not a barrier to access.
Ensure reasonable steps are taken to minimise claims for kindergarten funding for children enrolled in more than one kindergarten program.	Ensure reasonable steps are taken to ensure information provided to the CGB does not include children enrolled in more than one kindergarten program for the purposes of funding.
Work with member services to strengthen viability and sustainability.	
Data collection, monitoring and reporting	
Provide data to the Department to ensure that the financial and performance reporting requirements outlined in their service agreement are met.	
Provide accurate and timely responses to any reasonable requests for data made by the Department.	Provide information to CGBs about projected and actual enrolments.
Establish policies and procedures for collecting and reporting information to the Department regarding member kindergarten services, including information about:	Provide accurate and timely responses to any reasonable requests made by the Department e.g. a review of the service's kindergarten program.
enrolments	
number of children attending as delayed entry or delayed exit	
demographic characteristics of children	
eligibility for additional subsidies	
• fees	