



FACTSHEET – NATIONAL CHILD AND FAMILY INVESTMENT STRATEGY

General guidance only – prepared by the Department of Social Services (DSS), March 2024.

OVERVIEW

The National Child and Family Investment Strategy (Investment Strategy) is a key action under the *Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026*.

The Investment Strategy will comprise a set of principles and actions to reconsider funding priorities for the child and family service system across all jurisdictions, with a focus on:

- shifting from crisis-driven responses towards preventative and early supports to reduce child abuse and neglect
- building the capacity and capability of the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) sector, to prepare ACCOs for the proportionate transition of child and family service delivery functions.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INVESTMENT STRATEGY

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children has been engaged to develop the Investment Strategy. SNAICC will consult extensively with all relevant stakeholders during the course of this project, including jurisdictions, First Nations, and ‘mainstream’ stakeholders.

Families Australia has been engaged to develop a comprehensive report identifying the major challenges faced by ‘mainstream’ NGOs from the transfer of proportionate funding to ACCOs. This will be developed in parallel to the Investment Strategy, ensuring that processes are not duplicated.

Both projects are expected to be completed in June 2024.

INNOVATION FUND

The principles and actions from the Investment Strategy will be practically demonstrated and assessed in select locations through an Innovation Fund grant opportunity, opening in the second half of 2024 and commencing in 2025.

The Australian Government has committed \$10 million over 5 years (2022-23 to 2026-27) for the Investment Strategy including the Innovation Fund.

DSS anticipates that funded organisations will be at varying stages of maturity and cover diverse geographical settings to better understand what support will be required when proportionate service transfer occurs on a larger scale.

DSS will work with SNAICC, the Safe and Supported System Leadership Working Group and other key stakeholders to develop the Innovation Fund’s Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

An external evaluation of the Innovation Fund (to be completed by 2027) will evaluate the outcome of the trial.

The Investment Strategy, Families Australia report and evaluation of the Innovation Fund will help guide jurisdictions’ future funding decisions for the child and family sector.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&AS)

Q: What scope of programs will the Investment Strategy apply to?

A: The Investment Strategy will apply to DSS funded child and family services with other Commonwealth agencies strongly encouraged to implement the principles in their relevant funding decisions.

- As an example, programs that may be in-scope could include programs such as Intensive Family Support Services, Family and Relationship Services, and Specialised Family Violence Services.
- Programs such as income management services, housing assistance, or community support programs are likely to be out of scope.
- The scope will continue to be refined through the design phase of the Investment Strategy.

Q: What about states and territories?

A: It will be up to each state and territory to consider how they can best implement the Investment Strategy, also taking into consideration learnings from the Families Australia report and Innovation Fund evaluation.

While national consistency is desirable and an aim underpinning Safe and Supported, jurisdictional readiness may vary and result in different implementation approaches.

Q: Does this mean that my funding is at risk?

A: The Investment Strategy will not affect any existing funding agreements. Once the Innovation Fund activity has concluded and been evaluated (by June 2027), learnings from this will influence how funding is allocated for new and renewed programs.

Q: What if my organisation wishes to vary a grant agreement to achieve the principles and actions of the Investment Strategy earlier than 2027?

A: For DSS funded programs, organisations should get in touch with their Funding Arrangement Manager (FAM) or program contact to discuss a grant variation if this is something they wish to pursue earlier on a voluntary basis.

For programs outside DSS (Commonwealth as well as state/territory) this would similarly need to be discussed with the relevant program contact.

Q: Is there new funding available to support my organisation to transition proportionate services to ACCOs?

A: The Innovation Fund grant opportunity will apply to a limited number of organisations to trial principles and actions from the Investment Strategy. For broader implementation of the Strategy, this will be up to each jurisdiction to manage, including supports available.

Q: What if the Investment Strategy presents challenges for my organisation?

A: These challenges are precisely what Families Australia is seeking to explore through their report. We therefore encourage your organisation to engage with Families Australia's consultations to the extent possible to ensure these issues are captured.

This project aims to understand the potential organisational, operational and sustainability challenges likely to be faced by mainstream NGOs. The outcomes of the consultations will inform governments on the supports required for long-term viability of the mainstream sector.



Q: What are the trial site locations?

A: The trial sites have not yet been determined. The Project is in the early design stage and the outcomes of the consultations will inform the selection of the sites.

Trial sites will be selected where there is readiness and willingness to test the transition principles.

First Nations stakeholders and state and territory governments will be involved in the selection of the trial sites.

Q: What are the timeframes for funding transition?

A: The Investment Strategy will be finalised by June 2024. The principles and actions from the Investment Strategy will be trialled through the Innovation Fund from March 2025 – June 2027. The evaluation of the Innovation Fund will be finalised in 2027 and will inform future funding decisions going forward.

It is important to note that only a small number of organisations that are willing to trial the transition principles will be involved in the trial.

This project will not affect current agreements or contracts. It is expected that new or renewing agreements will start to implement funding reprioritisation from 2027.

Q: Why do we need to transfer funding and service delivery if we are high performing?

A: All governments have agreed to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Closing the Gap is underpinned by the principle that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a genuine say in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services that affect them, better life outcomes are achieved. It also recognises that structural change in the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is needed to close the gap.

The Investment Strategy strongly aligns with Priority Reforms 2 – building the community-controlled sector, and Clause 55 to increase the proportion of services delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly community-controlled organisations.

The Investment Strategy aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to strengthen their capacity and capability so they are able to manage an increase in funding and service delivery that reflects the proportion of First Nations clients accessing services.