

Innovative Solutions Support Projects

Guide for Services

February 2025

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What is Innovative Solutions Support?

Innovative Solutions Support is one of four [Inclusion Development Fund \(IDF\) subsidy options](#) available to eligible early childhood education and care services (ECEC), through the Inclusion Support Program (ISP).

When a service has identified Barriers to inclusion that cannot be addressed through support from the Inclusion Agency, another IDF funding stream, or other state/territory funding options or programs, Innovative Solutions Support provides them with a flexible and responsive solution to increase their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs.

While there is no national definition of additional needs, for the purposes of Innovative Solutions Support, additional needs may arise for children who:

- have a disability or developmental delay or are currently undergoing assessment for disability
- have a serious medical or health condition, including mental health
- are presenting with challenging behaviours or trauma related behaviours

Meeting the needs and requirements of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children from refugee or humanitarian backgrounds

may also require specific considerations, such as language or cultural support, to ensure that these children are able to participate fully in ECEC services and experience positive outcomes.

Approved Purposes

Individual ECEC services, specific care environments within a service, individual Family Day Care educators, Family Day Care Services or groups of services can apply to access Innovative Solutions Support.

Information about Group Project applications can be found on [page 17](#) of this Guide.

Innovative Solutions Support may be used for:

- Cultural advice and mentoring from cultural experts, including specialist advice on how to include a particular child or children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentoring, cultural advice in respect to children and families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities.
- Bilingual support, such as facilitating a non-English speaking child's enrolment and inclusion into the service or the provision of translating and interpreting services
- Collaboration with specialists to obtain specialist advice on how to include a child or children with a disability or additional needs, such as speech therapists.
- Networking and community engagement for example, service visits to view quality inclusive practices and engage in professional dialogue/conversations or engagement with other agencies to collaboratively manage the successful transition of a child or children with additional needs, for example, In Home Care to mainstream ECEC services.
- Specialised inclusion training essential to a child's inclusion. That is, the child could not attend the service without educators having this specific knowledge and skill. For example, training required to include a child with a medical condition.

Non-Approved Purposes

Innovative Solutions Support **cannot** be used for Projects that:

- Do not have an explicit and primary focus on inclusion for a cohort of children with additional needs.
- Do not demonstrate how they will result in the genuine inclusion of child/ren with additional needs or improve the inclusion capacity of the service and educators.
- Provide one-to-one support for a child/ren from an external provider. Innovative Solutions Support Projects should focus on a team approach to supporting inclusion.
- Provide medical and therapeutic interventions for a specific child or group of children by a therapist or consultant.
- Provide assistance to access other services, such as one-to-one early intervention or therapy sessions.
- Include the purchase of specialist equipment or resources. Any resources included in a Project budget should be essential to the implementation of the Project and form a minor part of the overall cost of the Project (i.e.: less than 10% of the total amount of funding requested).
- Assist the service to meet licensing requirements as outlined in the National Regulations, meet the National Quality Framework and relevant state/territory regulations including educator to child ratios and adequate supervision.
- Are more appropriately funded by state/territory governments or other agencies or through other Australian Government programs.

For example:

- settlement services for migrants where alternative funding is available.
- support that would be more appropriately funded through another IDF funding stream

Further information about non-approved purposes for funding refer to Section 4.1.4. of the [Inclusion Support Program Guidelines](#).

Funding Limits

There is no limit on the number of Innovative Solutions Support Project applications a service can make, or the number of times funding can be approved. However, as the annual IDF funding allocation is capped, if demand for funding exceeds what is available, funding will be prioritised to support educators to include children with a diagnosed disability and children awaiting a disability diagnosis. In this situation the IDFM will also prioritise funding to services that have not accessed Innovative Solutions Support before.

Innovative Solutions Support Project applications up to \$10,000 are assessed and approved by the IDFM. Any Innovative Solutions applications requesting more than \$10,000 (GST exclusive) must be submitted with a clear rationale detailing the reason for requesting over the \$10,00 threshold. Amounts over the limit, will be approved only in exceptional circumstances and will be determined by the Department on a case-by-case basis.

Each Innovative Solutions Support application needs to address new or different inclusion Barriers to those identified in previous applications. Applications that propose to repeat the same Project in the same service, or that address the same inclusion Barriers as a previous Project, will generally not be approved.

Exceptions:

Applications that address similar Barriers, for a different child/ren, to that of a previous Bilingual Support or Specialised Training and Advice Project can be submitted.

In exceptional circumstances further applications to support building educator capacity, for the same purpose can also be submitted. These application must clearly state why an additional Project is necessary and include:

- Why the Barriers to inclusion continue to exist
- How the educators' inclusion capacity has improved as a result of the previous Project
- How the new Project aims to build on the outcomes of the previous Project to enable further educator capacity, beyond what was achieved in the previous Project.

When assessing applications, the IDFM will consider all previous applications and the outcomes of previously approved Projects in order to help determine if the Project will address the Barriers to inclusion, the service have the capacity to implement the Project, and the outcomes are achievable and will be sustained.

Project Types

When seeking to access Innovative Solutions Support services develop an **Innovative Solutions Support Project** tailored to meet their individual needs and designed to address their specific Inclusion Barrier/s.

Projects usually involve engaging an external Support Provider who has the necessary skills, experience, and qualifications to support the service to address their inclusion needs and enhance their inclusion capacity.

There are five types of Innovative Solutions Support Projects:

- Bilingual Support
- Cultural Mentoring
- Specialised Training and Advice
- Guided Practice
- Unique Projects

These Project types are outlined briefly on the following page and in more detail within this guide. Services are supported by their Inclusion Professional (IP) to determine the most suitable Project type.

Overview of Innovative Solutions Support Project Types

Bilingual Support	Cultural Mentoring	Specialised Training and Advice	Guided Practice	Unique Projects
<p>Bilingual Support Projects provide access to a bilingual facilitator and /or translating and interpreting services, to support the inclusion of children where language differences present a Barrier to inclusion.</p>	<p>Cultural Mentoring Projects provide services with cultural advice and mentoring in order to support the inclusion of children and families from specific cultural backgrounds.</p> <p>Cultural Mentoring support can be accessed in relation to all cultures, including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures.</p>	<p>Specialised Training and Advice Projects provide training and/or advice to support educators to meet the specific needs of children with a disability or medical condition.</p>	<p>Guided Practice Projects typically engage an external Support Provider with expertise in relation to the particular Barriers being faced by a service. The Support Provider works with the service over a period of time to provide tailored professional development and coaching and mentoring of educators to enable them to effectively implement new approaches.</p>	<p>Unique Projects include new or unique approaches to inclusion support that do not fit within any of the other existing support categories, or that combine elements from several different Project types.</p> <p>Unique Projects are usually highly specific to the context of the service/s involved.</p>

- For each Project Type there is a **Project Guide** and **Application Form**.
- Copies of the [Project Guides](#) are provided in this document. When deciding on a Project Type, services are encouraged to refer to the Project Guides.
- **Project Applications**, for each Project Type. can be accessed via the [IDFM website](#).
- [Project Plans](#) are required for some Projects. Project Plan requirements are outlined in each individual [Project Application](#).

Assessment Criteria

Innovative Solutions Support applications are assessed by the IDFM based on the information provided in the Application Form and the IPs endorsement.

It takes into consideration value for money, level of risk involved, the quality of the deliverables and the extent to which the proposed Project:

- leads to the genuine inclusion of a child or children with additional needs;
- leads to enhanced inclusion capacity and capability of the service and educators;
- can be realistically implemented;
- can be delivered within the current capacity of service; and
- cannot be provided by alternative or more appropriate funding sources.

Further information about Assessment Criteria can be found in Section 9 of the [Inclusion Support Program Guidelines](#).

Assessment timeframes

Routine applications are assessed within 15 business days of being submitted.

Urgent applications are processed within 5 days when the urgency of the application is supported by the services IP endorsement and the reason for the urgency is in line with current department advice.

NB: Applications should only be marked as urgent where a child's enrolment or continued attendance is dependent on the ability of the service to access Innovative Solutions Support. This generally relates to Bilingual Support or Specialised Training and Advice Projects.

Developing an Innovative Solutions Support Project

Developing an Innovative Solutions Support Project requires the service to:

- Consult with their Inclusion Professional (IP)
- Have a current Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) (in most cases)
- Complete an application
- Develop a Project Plan (where required)
- Select a Support Provider and obtain a financial quote
- Create and submit an IS Case on the IS Portal

IPs play an important role in supporting services to access and implement Innovative Solutions Support Projects. Before beginning the Innovative Solutions Support Project application process, services should consult with their IP to determine if Innovative Solutions Support is the best fit for their specific needs.

IPs are required to endorse the services application before it can be submitted to the Inclusion Development Fund Manager for Approval (IDFM).

When Innovative Solutions Support is identified to be the most suitable type of assistance for the service, their IP will support them to:

- Develop/update their SIP
- Determine the most appropriate Project Type
- Access the relevant Project Guide and Application Form

- Complete an Application Form
- Develop a Project Plan
- Select a Support Provider
- Create and submit an Innovative Solutions Support case (IS Case) through Inclusion Support Portal (IS Portal)

SIP Requirements

► Routine Applications

Before commencing an Innovative Solutions Support Project application, the service must have a current [Strategic Inclusion Plan](#) (SIP) in the IS Portal which includes a Care Environment Plan for the Care Environment/s seeking to access Innovative Solutions Support. In the case of urgent applications this is not an immediate requirement. Please refer to urgent applications information below.

To be eligible to apply for Innovative Solutions, the Care Environment Plan/s must demonstrate that an Innovative Solutions Support Project is the most appropriate solution to overcome at least one of the Barriers identified.

- The **Strategy Category** of *Inclusion Development Fund* and the **Strategy** of **IDF Innovative Solutions Support** must be chosen from the list of available Strategies options and linked to at least one or more Barriers.
- The **Action/s** linked to the **IDF Innovative Solutions Support Strategies** should outline how the Project will build the skills, knowledge and confidence of educators to include children with additional needs, from the identified cohort of children the Project seeks to support and how the Project will lead to their genuine inclusion.

SIP Care Environment Plans will include additional Barriers, Strategies and Actions that are not related to the services' need to access Innovative Solutions.

► Urgent Applications – Bilingual Support or Specialised Training and Advice Projects only

Applications are only considered urgent where a child's enrolment or continued attendance is dependent on the ability of the service to access Innovative Solutions Support.

A SIP is not required for urgent Projects, however, after the assessment and outcome of the application the service is required to develop their SIP, including a SIP Care Environment Plan for the Care Environment/s participating in the Innovative Solutions Support Project as noted above.

Future IDF applications will not be considered until this requirement has been met.

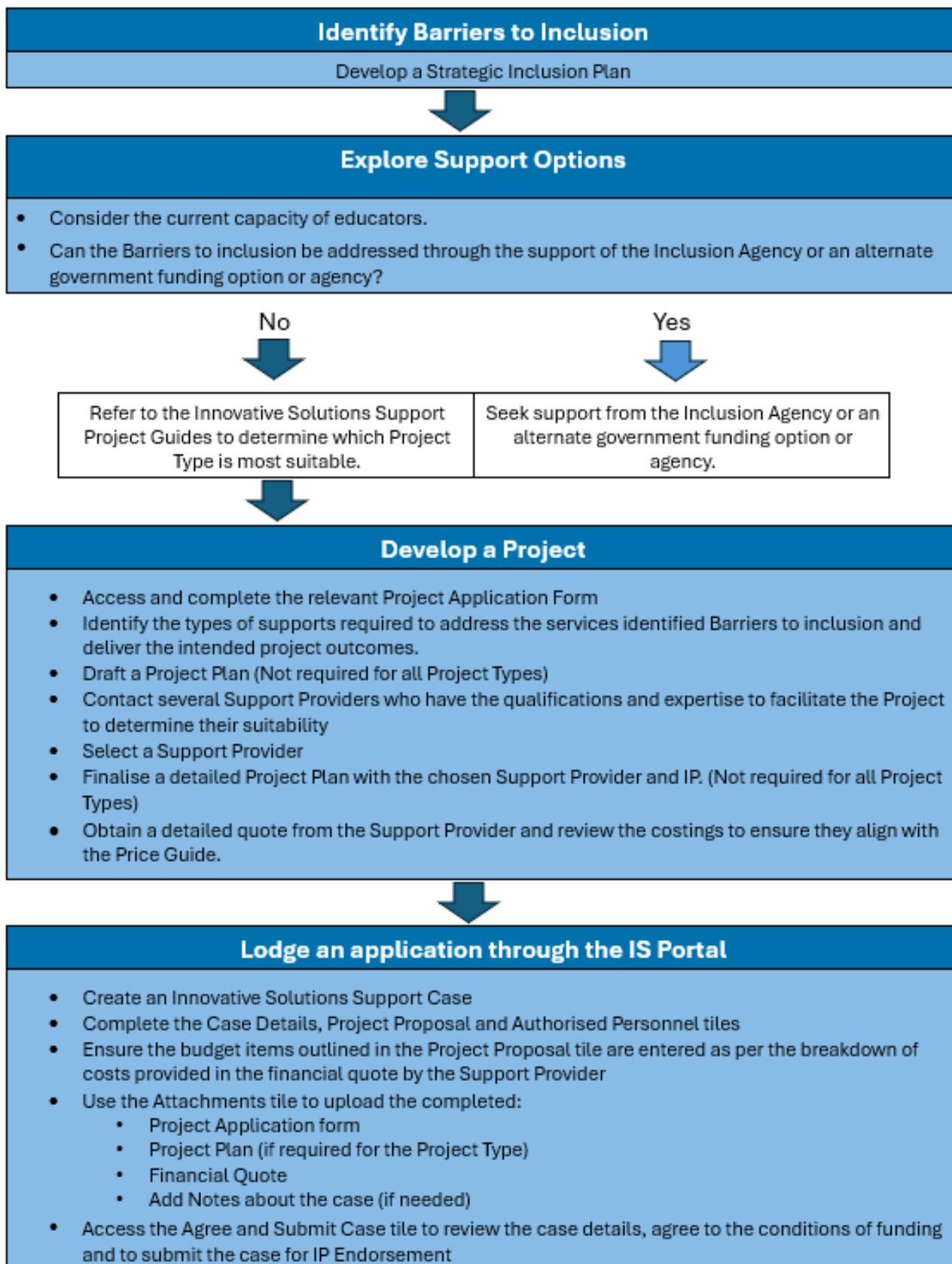
Supporting resources

A flowchart for services outlining the process of Innovative Solutions Support Project, is provided on the next page.

An [endorsement flowchart for IPs](#) is available in the *Login for IAs* section of the IDFM website.

Innovative Solutions Support Project Application Process Flowchart for services

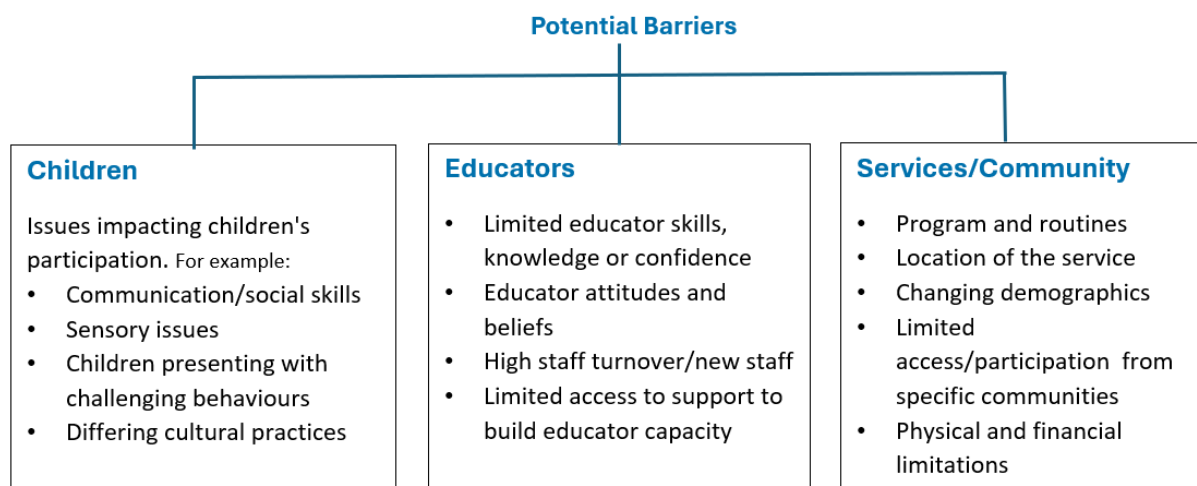
In collaboration with your Inclusion Professional



Identify Inclusion Barriers

When developing an Innovative Solutions Support Project, the service is required to identify the specific Barriers to inclusion, the Project will target for the cohort/group of children the Project seeks to support.

Barriers may exist for children, educators and/or the service and broader community.



Identifying Barriers involves the service engaging in a reflective and honest assessment of their current capacity and circumstances, with support of their IP. By recognising Barriers and their impact on both children and educators, the service can plan appropriate and realistic solutions that will lead to the genuine inclusion of children with additional needs and enhance the development of educator skills and capacity.

When completing an Innovative Solutions Support Project Application services are required to respond to the following Barrier related questions:

- What are the Barriers that this Project will address for children and educators?
- What is the impact of these Barriers for children and educators?
- What has already been done to try to address these Barriers?
- How will the Innovative Solutions Support Project help to address these Barriers?

Project Plan

Developing a Project Plan is an important part of the planning process. Most Projects require a Project Plan. Project Plan requirements are clearly outlined in each Project Application Form.

Project Plans detail who will be involved in each component of a Project, the locations the activities will occur, the specific activities that will be undertaken and the way they will be implemented.

Where required, services should develop their Project Plan in consultation with their IP and chosen Support Provider.

A [Guide to completing a Project Plan](#) and [Example Project Plan](#) are provided on the next 4 pages.

Guide to Completing a Project Plan

Why have a Project plan?

Project Plans provide the IDFM and the service with a timeline of each session being delivered in the Project, from the beginning to its completion.

The Project Plan is a critical part of the assessment of the application and also serves as a useful 'Action Plan' to support the service when they begin to implement their Project. It assists the service to anticipate and prepare for what components of the Project are happening, when they are happening, and the preparation required. (e.g. arrange for casual staffing to be rostered on when mentoring for educators occurs off the floor, or to ensure that educators plan and commit to professional development sessions that occur after business hours).

The Project Plan will assist the service to stay on track with the Project and help ensure that it is implemented within the timeframe of the approval period.

Overview of the Project Plan template

Below is an image of the Project Plan Template. This example includes guidance to support services to complete their Plan. A blank *Project Plan Template* is available in the Resources section of the IDFM website.

Service Name			
Name of service contact person			
Case ID	<i>This is the number allocated to the Innovative Solutions Support Case on the IS Portal</i>		
Project Type	<i>Identify the type of Innovative Solutions Support Project</i>		
Name of Inclusion Professional			
Project Component	When	Who and Where	What and How
<i>Use this column to describe each of the specific components of the Project.</i>	<i>Use this column to outline when the activity will occur.</i>	<i>Use this column to identify who will participate in this component.</i>	<i>Use this column to outline what will happen in this component and how it will occur.</i>
<i>Where a Project involves multiple components, and especially if they are occurring on the same day, it is helpful to break them up into specific support types (e.g.: Professional Development, Coaching, Mentoring etc)</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Include the number of educators that will be involved in each component</i> <i>Include the care environment/s or location/s where they will occur.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>For Professional Development sessions provide a brief overview of the content to be delivered by the selected Support Provider.</i> <i>For mentoring/reflection, where educators are required to be away from the care environment, include information about how this will be managed.</i>

Example Project Plan

Service Name	Example service		
Name of service contact person	Jo Smith		
Case ID	XXXXXXXX		
Project Type	Guided Practice		
Name of Inclusion Professional	Example- IP		
Project Component	When	Who and Where	What and How
Initial consultation and observation visit	<p>Week 1</p> <p>Date: (if known)</p> <p>Time and duration: 9am to 12pm</p> <p>Initial consultation – 1 hour</p> <p>Observation Visit</p> <p>2 hours.</p>	<p>Meet with Centre Director.</p> <p>Kindy room (3 educators), Pre Kindy room (3 educators) and Toddler room (2 educators).</p>	<p>Discuss Project implementation and centre goals.</p> <p>Consultant will move between care environments, meet, and greet educators and observe care environments, interactions and practices.</p>
Professional Development session 1.	<p>Week 2. Day 1.</p> <p>Date: (if known)</p> <p>Staff meeting after hours.</p> <p>6pm to 8pm</p>	All educators (10 in total)	PD session: Introduction to theory of understanding children’s behaviour and their social and emotional needs.
Coaching Session on the floor	<p>Week 2 Day 2.</p> <p>Date: (if known)</p> <p>9am to 12pm</p>	<p>1 hour per care environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindy • Pre Kindy • Toddler 	On-the-floor coaching session. Consultant will provide practical guidance to support educators to implement new strategies from PD Session 1

Example Project Plan continued

Project Component	When	Who	What
Mentoring Session off the floor	Week 2 Day 2. Date (if known) 12pm to 1.30pm	30 minutes per care environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindy Pre Kindy Toddler 	Off the floor mentoring session to provide educators opportunities to debrief, reflect and seek advice from the consultant following the coaching session. Centre Director will be available to replace educators to participate in off the floor conversations.
Professional Development session 2	Week 4 Day 1 Date: (if known) Staff meeting after hours.6pm to 8pm	All educators (10 in total)	PD session: -Understanding how Attachment impacts on children's behaviour -Explore the 'Circle of security'
Coaching Session on the floor	Week 4 Day 2. Date: (if known) 9am to 12pm	1 hour per care environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindy Pre Kindy Toddler 	On-the-floor coaching session. Consultant will provide practical guidance to support educators to implement new strategies from PD Session 2
Mentoring Session off the floor	Week 4 Day 2. Date (if known) 12pm to 1.30pm	30 minutes per care environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindy Pre Kindy Toddler 	Off the floor mentoring session to provide educators opportunities to debrief, reflect and seek advice from the consultant following the coaching session. Centre Director will be available to replace educators to participate in off the floor conversations.
Professional Development session 3.	Week 8 Day 1 Date: (if known) Staff meeting after hours. 6pm to 8pm	All educators (10 in total)	PD session: Understanding how trauma impacts on children's development -How to support children who have experienced trauma

Example Project Plan continued

Project Component	When	Who	What
Coaching Session on the floor	Week 8 Day 2. Date: (if known) 9am to 12pm	1 hour per care environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindy • Pre Kindy • Toddler 	On-the-floor coaching session. Consultant will provide practical guidance to support educators to implement new strategies from PD Session 3
Mentoring Session off the floor	Week 8 Day 2. Date: (if known) 12pm to 2pm	30 minutes per care environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindy • Pre Kindy • Toddler • 30 minutes with Centre Director 	Off the floor mentoring session to provide educators opportunities to debrief, reflect and seek advice from the consultant following the coaching session. Centre Director will be available to replace educators to participate in off the floor conversations.
Final staff reflection session	Week 10 Date: (if known) 6pm to 8pm	All educators (10 in total)	Final reflective session for educators to reflect on the Project and collaborate with the consultant to devise ongoing strategies for Project sustainability.

Support Providers

Support Providers are an individual or organisation with relevant skills and qualifications who is engaged to provide support to a service through an Innovative Solutions Support Project.

Support Providers play an essential role in most Innovative Solutions Support Projects. They use their knowledge, skills and expertise to help services to address the Barriers to inclusion that they have identified as the focus of their Project. Their role is to build a service's capacity to be inclusive. This typically involves upskilling staff in a way that can be sustained after a Project is completed.

When sourcing a Support Provider, it is important for the service to first identify the skills and/or expertise they are looking for. This can be achieved by talking to their IP about who might be suitable or asking for recommendations through their professional networks or by searching online.

Considering more than one Support Provider can help a service to find the best fit for their Project.

When sourcing a Support Provider, services should refer to the relevant Project Guide and consider what they know about them:

- What is their experience with the addressing the Barriers you have identified?
- Do they have experience working on similar Projects?
- What are their values, philosophy, or approach? How well do they fit with the service?
- Do they come with a recommendation from a trustworthy source and/or can they provide references or testimonials?
- Do they have an ABN? In most cases this is required, although there are a limited number of exceptions. Contact the IDFM for more information about this.
- What is their experience with and/or understanding of Innovative Solutions Support? Are they aware of and have they accessed the Support Provider resources available on the IDFM website link with a potential new Support Provider who is new to Innovative Solutions Support
- Are they able to offer the support that you are looking for? Are they willing to be flexible and tailor their services to ensure that the Project achieves its outcomes?
- How much do their services cost? Do their costs provide value for money? Using the Price Guide can help to help determine this. If there are a number of potential Support Providers, consider asking for quotes in order to compare costs and the services that each Support Provider is able to deliver.
- Consider the availability of potential Support Providers and any associated costs with them working with your service (such as travel and accommodation). Refer to the Price Guide for an overview of reasonable costs in relation to this.

An Innovative Solutions Support- Guide for Support Providers and a Price Guide are available for on the [IDFM Website](#).

Sustainability

One of the aims of Innovative Solutions Support is to develop ongoing inclusion capacity. In planning your Project think about how the outcomes can be sustained once the Project is completed.

Consider:

- How will the Project support educators to implement new approaches independently and avoid them becoming dependent on the Support Provider for long term support and guidance?
- How will new ideas and approaches become embedded in-service practice?
- How will improved inclusion outcomes for children continue once the Project is completed?
- How will the knowledge and skills gained from the Project be passed onto new educators in the future.

Group Project Applications

A group application is where a number of services who have identified the same, or similar, inclusion Barriers work together to develop a joint Project application that will lead to the genuine inclusion of children with additional needs across multiple services.

Group Project lead

One service must be nominated as the lead for the Project. This service will be responsible for submitting the application on the IS Portal and administering the Project. This includes taking responsibility for complying with the Conditions of Funding and ensuring other services in the group understand their obligations as per the Conditions of Funding.

Group Project SIP requirements

Each service must develop a SIP and Care environment Plan demonstrating that an Innovative Solutions Support Group Project is the most appropriate solution to overcome their inclusion Barriers

Group Project application requirements

In addition to completing a Project Plan, Application Form and obtaining a Financial Quote from the chosen Support Provider, Group applications must also be accompanied by a completed [Innovative Solutions Support – Group Project form](#).

The **details of each service** participating in the group Project, including their names, SIP and CCS IDs and the name of their IP are documented on this form along with a **rationale for the group Project** and an **explanation** of how the group Project will result in improved inclusion outcomes for all of the participating services.

The IP supporting the lead service is required to endorse the group application after they have consulted with each of the participating services IPs. Where the services involved in a group application are located in different states or territories this consultation must occur with each of the relevant Inclusion Agencies.

The IDFM will consider this information, along with the cost effectiveness of the group Project, when assessing the application.

Project Guides

There are five Innovative Solutions Support Project Guides, one for each Project Type.

- [Bilingual Support](#)
- [Cultural Mentoring](#)
- [Specialised Training and Advice](#)
- [Guided Practice](#)
- [Unique Projects](#)

Services should consult the Project Guides to identify the most appropriate Project Type to address their identified needs.

Project Guide – Bilingual Support

What is Bilingual Support?

Bilingual Support provides language support for children and/or families who do not speak English fluently. This is usually done through the provision of a Bilingual Facilitator who can speak the child's first language and assist educators to communicate with the child and their family. Bilingual Support can also include access to interpreter services and translation of written documents to support communication with a child's family. In most cases Bilingual Support is a short-term form of support while a child settles into a new early childhood setting.

What does a Bilingual Facilitator do?

A Bilingual Facilitator typically works directly with the child and their educators to interpret and to provide security and comfort during the child's transition into the service. They can also help educators to communicate with the child's family members and facilitate information sharing between the service and the family.

In addition to this language support, Bilingual Facilitators also provide insight into the child's culture for educators. This is often done in an informal way as the facilitator and educators work alongside each other.

When is Bilingual Support needed?

Bilingual Support is needed when language differences create a Barrier to inclusion. This could be because a child becomes distressed or withdrawn because of their inability to communicate effectively with their peers and educators or because educators are unable to communicate with the child's family members in order to share important information.

Bilingual Support will not be needed in all cases where there are language differences. There may be another educator or family member who can act as an interpreter, or a child may settle happily despite the language difference.

It is important to explain in an application how language and/or communication Barriers are impacting on the child and/or their family and how Bilingual Support will help to address this.

Bilingual Support and the Strategic Inclusion Plan

Routine Applications

Before commencing a Bilingual Support Project application, the service must have a current [Strategic Inclusion Plan](#) (SIP), documented in the IS Portal, which includes a SIP Care Environment Plan for the Care Environments who will be involved in the Project. In the case of urgent applications this is not an immediate requirement. Please refer to information about urgent applications on the next page.

SIP Care Environment Plan/s must demonstrate that a Bilingual Support Project is the most appropriate solution to overcome their inclusion Barriers and clearly identify Barriers related to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from Culturally and Linguistically

Diverse or Refugee/humanitarian backgrounds. There should be a clear alignment between the Care Environment Plan/s and the proposed Project.

- The **Strategy Category** of **Inclusion Development Fund** and the **Strategy** of **IDF Innovative Solutions Support** must be chosen from the list of available Strategies options and linked to at least one or more Barriers.
- The **Action/s** linked to the **IDF Innovative Solutions Support Strategies** should outline how the Project will build the skills, knowledge and confidence of educators to include children with additional needs, from the identified cohort of children the Project seeks to support and how the Project will lead to their genuine inclusion.

SIP Care Environment Plans will include additional Barriers, Strategies and Actions that are not related to the services' need to access Bilingual Support.

Urgent Applications

Bilingual Support applications are only considered urgent where a child's enrolment or continued attendance is dependent on the service being able to access Innovative Solutions Support.

A SIP is not required for urgent Projects, however, after the assessment and outcome of the application the service is required to develop their SIP, including a SIP Care Environment Plan for each Care Environment participating in the Bilingual Support Project as outlined above.

Future IDF applications will not be considered until this requirement has been met.

How much support is needed?

Bilingual Support is usually short term, typically lasting between 6-12 weeks and providing up to 100 hours of support. However, each application will be different, reflecting the unique circumstances of each child, family and service. In determining the duration, frequency and intensity of support needed you should consider the following factors:

A. Who is the support for?

Is the support primarily needed to support a child? Or is it also about supporting other family members? If communication with family members is important, then the Bilingual Facilitator may need to be available at pick up and drop off times as well as throughout the day. If the support is more focused on the child, then the support hours may be focused on key parts of the day.

B. Attendance patterns

How often a child attends will often make a difference to how quickly they settle into a service. A child who attends full time may need more intensive support initially but will usually settle more quickly than a child who only attends one or two days a week. For example, support for a child attending full time may be needed more intensively but for a shorter number of weeks; for a child attending one day per week the support would only be needed one day per week but potentially for a greater number of weeks.

C. Other Barriers

Where other Barriers to inclusion are present additional levels of support may be required. For example, children and families who are refugees may face language Barriers but also be

impacted by the trauma of their experience. It may take longer to build a trusting relationship with the child and family in such circumstances and so Bilingual Support may be needed for a longer period of time than usual.

Applications for Bilingual Support for longer than 12 weeks, or for more than 100 hours of support, will need to provide a rationale for this level of support.

What happens when Bilingual Support ends?

Bilingual Support aims to create a smooth transition into a service for children and families. In most cases this can be achieved in the time frames mentioned above. Due to the short-term nature of Bilingual Support, it is important that educators and Bilingual Facilitator work together to ensure that the child and family do not become dependent on the Facilitator's presence and that there is a Transition Plan in place to ensure that the support can be successfully removed at the end of the funded period.

Transition Plan

A Transition Plan should be developed by the service, Bilingual Facilitator/ Agency and the service's IP. The service can document their Transition Plan in a way that suits them best. A copy of this plan is not required to accompany the Project Application however, the services IP must confirm that there is an appropriate Transition Plan in place when they endorse the services Application.

Sample Strategies

The following strategies may be useful to consider when developing a Bilingual Support Transition Plan.

- **Build Educator Child Relationships**

Consider gradually decreasing the level of Bilingual Support over time. Support may commence at a more intensive level for the first weeks of a Project before tapering off. This helps to gradually reduce reliance on the Bilingual Facilitator over the course of the Project and also enables educators to further develop their own relationships with the child/ren as the Bilingual Facilitators involvement reduces.

- **Build Peer Relationships**

Plan for the Bilingual Facilitator to support the team of educators to build peer to peer relationships. The Bilingual Facilitator can help the child to successfully engage in experiences with others and begin to build peer relationships. Such relationships are often the key to a child's successful transition into a new environment. Having friends to play with reduces anxiety and distress and also helps to reduce dependence on adults for a sense of security. The sense of belonging that comes from being an accepted member of the group is valuable in its own right but also reduces the likelihood of long-term dependence on the Bilingual Facilitator.

- **Establish a Routine**

A calm and predictable routine helps to provide a sense of security for all children. This is particularly important for children requiring Bilingual Support. A predictable routine allows children to predict what will happen next and to feel a greater sense of control over their day. This is particularly helpful when they do not yet have the English language skills to understand verbal cues or directions. Familiar routines and rituals (such as looking at a book with a parent before they leave or waving goodbye from a particular

spot each day) can also help to minimise distress at drop off time. Once children are familiar with the routine the Bilingual Facilitator can take a reduced role in helping to guide them through the day.

- **Introduce Visual Cues**

Visual cues are an effective way to support the establishment of a predictable routine. They are particularly helpful while children are developing their English language skills. The Bilingual Facilitator and educators can develop visual cues for key parts of the day (if they are not already in use) and support the child/ren to understand what they mean. Again, as understanding develops, the Bilingual Facilitator can reduce their direct involvement in supporting the child's participation and allow educators to do this with the aid of the visual cues.

Sustainability of Bilingual Support

One focus of Innovative Solutions Support is enhancing the inclusion capacity of educators so that inclusive practices can be sustained after a Project ends.

This can be challenging with Bilingual Support as it is not reasonable to expect educators to learn to speak another language in 6-12 weeks. While educators will pick up key words and phrases during this time it is highly unlikely that they will be able to communicate fluently with children or family members in their home language. Services should provide opportunities for educators to reflect on and share any insights that they have gained as a result of working with the Bilingual Facilitator, and plan for how this information can be shared and/or utilised in the future.

Further applications to address similar Barriers

It is expected that most Bilingual Support Projects will be successful within the initial funded period. However, in exceptional circumstances, educators may require further support to facilitate the child's inclusion after the initial period of Bilingual Support ends. This could be because the situation is a complex, multiple Barriers to the child and/or family's inclusion exist and/or because the child's transition into the service has not progressed as expected.

In such cases, the service and IP should discuss what further support will be needed once the Bilingual Support Project ends. If the IP is unable to support the service to address these Barriers, the service may consider applying for support under the IDF Innovative Solutions Support Stream.

If applying for further Bilingual Support, to address similar Barriers to inclusion, the service will need to outline in the application why this Project is necessary and outline:

- Why the Barriers to inclusion continue to exist
- How the educators' inclusion capacity has improved as a result of the previous Project
- How the new Project aims to build on the outcomes of the previous Project to enable further educator capacity, beyond what was achieved in the previous Project.

What if more support is needed to work with children and families from particular cultural backgrounds?

Bilingual Support is usually focused on supporting specific children and their families to transition into a service. Where a service identifies a broader lack of cultural understanding amongst educators as a Barrier to inclusion, they may seek to access Cultural Mentoring Support to improve educators' awareness and understanding of a particular culture.

Cultural Mentoring is different to Bilingual Support in that it aims to develop educators' cultural responsiveness in a more formal way, for example, through organized professional development sessions or team meetings. It has a focus on building staff understanding and knowledge rather than on directly supporting an individual child and their family.

Sometimes a service may identify that they need both Bilingual and Cultural Mentoring Support at the same time. In these cases, they should complete a Cultural Mentoring including Bilingual Support application

Project Guide - Cultural Mentoring

What is Cultural Mentoring?

Cultural Mentoring supports early childhood services (ECEC) to better understand and work with specific cultural groups in their community. It aims to increase the cultural responsiveness of educators and other staff and thereby facilitate greater inclusion for children, their families and communities. Cultural Mentoring can also support services to increase enrolments from specific cultural groups.

Cultural Mentoring can focus on any culture, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

What does a Cultural Mentor do?

A Cultural Mentor works with a service (or services) to develop their understanding of the specific cultural group that they are seeking to work with. This usually involves providing information, advice and guidance to educators as well as working alongside educators to support them to implement this knowledge into everyday practice.

The Cultural Mentor may support educators to plan and implement culturally appropriate learning experiences for children as well as supporting them to establish and develop stronger relationships with families and the local community.

Building a service's capacity to create connections with the local community is important to ensure the outcomes of the Cultural Mentoring Project continue after the mentor leaves.

Who can be a cultural mentor?

Cultural Mentoring is provided by a mentor who understands, and has a connection to, the specific cultural group that the service is seeking to work with. The Cultural Mentor may be a member of the local community or someone else with the knowledge, skills and experience to undertake the role who is acceptable to the local community.

Mentors do not require formal qualifications, but applications for Cultural Mentoring support need to provide evidence that the proposed mentor is an appropriate person to undertake the role.

For Projects that provide cultural mentoring in relation to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures the mentor must be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

When is Cultural Mentoring needed?

Cultural Mentoring is needed when a service identifies that a lack of cultural understanding amongst educators is creating a Barrier to inclusion. This may be in relation to a child or children who are already enrolled at the service, or children and families in the community who are not engaging with the service because of the identified lack of cultural understanding.

In order to demonstrate a need for Cultural Mentoring, services must show that the Barriers identified are having an impact on the inclusion of children from the specific cultural group and that the proposed mentoring Project will address these Barriers.

Please note: Innovative Solutions cannot provide funding support to address Barriers to inclusion which are the responsibility of the service under the National Quality framework. This includes services' responsibility to implement the approved [Learning Framework Version 2.0](#) which includes providing opportunities for

children to see themselves, their identities and families' cultures reflected in their environment and to create culturally safe places.

The design of the Project should be specific (rather than general) and demonstrate a high likelihood of success in achieving the intended outcomes. For example, if a service aims to increase enrolments from a specific community or cultural group, their Project will need to demonstrate how they will reach out to and connect with this community in order to achieve this. Building educator knowledge and understanding of the particular cultural group will be an important part of such a Project but on its own increased cultural awareness will not necessarily lead to an increase in enrolments. The service will need to show how they will use their increased awareness, and the mentor's support, to build concrete connections with the target community.

If a service aims to improve inclusion outcomes for a child or children who are already enrolled, then they will need to show how the proposed Project components will do this.

Cultural Mentoring and the Strategic Inclusion Plan

Before commencing a Cultural Mentoring Project application, the service must have a current [Strategic Inclusion Plan](#) (SIP) in the IS Portal which includes a Care Environment Plan for the Care Environments who will be involved in the Project

The Care Environment Plan/s must demonstrate that a Cultural Mentoring Project is the most appropriate solution to overcome the identified inclusion Barriers. There should be a clear alignment between the Care Environment Plan/s and the proposed Project.

- For each Barrier, that directly relates to the services need for Cultural Mentoring, the **Strategy Category** of **Inclusion Development Fund** and the **Strategy** of **IDF Innovative Solutions Support** must be chosen from the list of available Strategies options and linked to at least one or more Barriers.
- The **Action/s** linked to the **IDF Innovative Solutions Support Strategies** should outline how the Project will build the skills, knowledge and confidence of educators to include children with additional needs, from the identified cohort of children the Project seeks to support and how the Project will lead to their genuine inclusion.

SIP Care Environment Plans will include additional Barriers, Strategies and Actions that are not related to the services' need to access Cultural Mentoring support.

What specific support can Cultural Mentoring provide?

Cultural mentoring support varies from Project to Project, and most Projects include a combination of different support strategies.

The kinds of support that may be provided through cultural mentoring include:

- Cultural awareness training to learn about local culture, history and traditions etc
- Support to incorporate specific cultural perspectives or elements into a service's program
- Coaching and modelling to support educators to implement new practices
- Support to establish connections with the target community
- Support to strengthen existing connections with the target community

What is important is that the proposed supports clearly address the identified Barriers and will lead to increased educator capacity in working with the target cohort.

What support cannot be provided by Cultural Mentoring?

Cultural Mentoring support is intended to address specific Barriers to inclusion and build educator capacity to be inclusive.

Applications that seek to provide generic ‘cultural awareness’ training unrelated to identified Barriers, or that do not show how a Project will actively support changes in educator practice, will not be approved.

Similarly, applications that primarily focus on Support Provider-led ‘incursions’ for children or Support Provider delivery of experiences for children are not able to be funded under Innovative Solutions Support.

Where a Project includes delivery of particular experiences for children this must be done in such a way that it develops the educator’s ability to present such experiences independently.

Support Providers should focus on how they can upskill educators in this regard, rather than on presenting such experiences themselves.

Projects involving Support Provider delivered experiences for children will only be considered where such experiences form a limited part of a Project, and it can be clearly seen that they are part of a sequence of learning that will enable educators to observe an experience before implementing it themselves.

Applications that aim to increase enrolments from a particular cultural group need to demonstrate that the target cohort is present in the local community and that the Project has a realistic chance of engaging with them in order to be approved.

Example:

Smith St Early Learning Centre identifies a lack of cultural understanding as a key Barrier that is hindering the inclusion of Aboriginal children from the local community. While some Aboriginal children are enrolled in the service they are underrepresented in comparison to the number of Aboriginal children in the wider community. *The service further identifies that they are not able to adequately cater to the needs of those children who are enrolled leading to a lack of meaningful participation in the program.*) They are also unable to attract further enrolments because of their lack of cultural understanding.

In an effort to more effectively include those Aboriginal children who are currently enrolled the service seeks to engage a local Support Provider to implement a series of cultural ‘incursions’ to introduce aspects of the local Aboriginal culture into the program.

While such incursions may be valuable and have a positive short-term impact on the children’s sense of inclusion, they are, on their own, unlikely to lead to a longer term or ongoing sense of inclusion or significantly enhance the inclusion capacity of educators. An application that is focused only on incursions or activities run by the Support Provider would not be funded under Innovative Solutions Support. Such a Project design does not provide long term benefits or increase educator’s capacity to be inclusive.

Such a Project would be more likely to be funded if the cultural experiences were included as part of a program to support educators to develop and implement such elements into the program themselves.

To increase enrolments from the local Aboriginal community the service also asks the Support Provider to undertake a series of cultural awareness sessions with educators in the hope that increased cultural understanding will lead to the creation of a more culturally safe environment that would then lead to increased enrolments.

Increased cultural awareness is an important outcome and one that services should be aiming to achieve. However, without concrete strategies to help the service to engage with the local community and start to build a trusting relationship, increased awareness is unlikely, on its own, to lead to increased enrolments. A Project focused solely on increased awareness would not be funded under Innovative Solutions Support. Increased awareness with a concrete plan to engage with the local community (via a Support Provider who can act as a cultural broker to support such engagement) would be much more likely to be approved.

What level of support is needed?

Mentoring support is generally most successful when it occurs over time. This allows the service and mentor to develop a relationship and for the mentor to support changes to practice so that they become embedded. A series of mentoring sessions should be planned to provide information to educators and to support the incorporation of this information into daily practice. Cultural Mentoring Projects typically last between 3-9 months.

The exact nature and level of support needed will depend on the specific circumstances of each service and the identified Barriers to inclusion.

In developing a Cultural Mentoring Project consideration should be given to the following:

- The specific Barriers to inclusion the Project seeks to address
- The current capacity of educators
- Whether the Project aims to support greater inclusion for children who are already enrolled at the service, or to increase enrolments from the local community (or both)
- Whether the Project will also include Bilingual Support (see below for more information about this)
- Whether the proposed support is realistic in terms of its demands on educator time and participation
- Whether there is sufficient time between proposed mentoring sessions to allow educators to implement changes
- How the proposed Project will help the service to form connections with the local community

How can the benefits of Cultural Mentoring be sustained?

The purpose of Cultural Mentoring support is to increase educator capacity to include children and families from a specific cultural group. While the mentor's support in achieving this is essential it is equally important that educators can sustain the Project outcomes after the Project has finished.

Projects should be designed to be sustainable in the long term. Services should consider specific Strategies to achieve this. These could include:

- Planning implementation strategies to occur between mentoring sessions
- Appointing a specific person (or people) to be a 'champion' for the Project
- Collecting information from Cultural Mentoring sessions to share with new educators in future
- Including the Project on meeting agendas to ensure that it is revisited on a regular basis
- Facilitating connections with key community members to enable the service to build a relationship that can continue after the Project is completed

How does Cultural Mentoring link to Bilingual Support?

In some cases, services may need Bilingual Support and Cultural Mentoring at the same time. This may occur where Barriers to inclusion include language Barriers as well as a lack of cultural awareness.

Bilingual Support Facilitators often provide cultural mentoring support informally through their work alongside educators. Where this is the case, the support is still classified as Bilingual Support.

When Bilingual Support is provided in a more formal or planned way (e.g.: through organised team meetings or professional development sessions) and/or where it is provided by a separate Cultural Mentor in addition to the Bilingual Facilitator, then the Project is considered to be Cultural Mentoring. For these types of Projects, services should complete a *Cultural Mentoring including Bilingual Support application*.

Project Guide - Specialised Training and Advice

What is Specialised Training and Advice?

Specialised Training and Advice Projects provide training or advice to enable services to meet the specific needs of a particular child or children. Specialised Training and Advice Projects may focus on training regarding specific medical and/or care procedures (e.g.: PEG feeding; administration of medication) or providing advice regarding management of a specific condition.

Specialised training and advice is a short-term form of support and usually involves a small number of sessions in a short period of time. It is often required prior to a child commencing at a service in order to ensure that educators can appropriately meet the child's needs.

Specialised Training and Advice Projects support educators to address immediate Barriers to inclusion for:

- Children with a disability or developmental delay
- Children presenting with challenging behaviour
- Children with a serious medical or health condition
- Children presenting with trauma related behaviours

A Guided Practice Project may be more appropriate if educators require skills, knowledge and confidence to address ongoing Barriers to support a cohort of children with additional needs.

Specialised Training and Advice and the Strategic Inclusion Plan

Routine Applications

Before commencing a Specialised Training and Advice Project Application, the service must have a current [Strategic Inclusion Plan](#) (SIP) in the IS Portal which includes a SIP Care Environment Plan for the Care Environment/s who will be involved in the Project.

The Care Environment Plan/s must demonstrate that a Specialised Training and Advice Project is the most appropriate solution to overcome the identified inclusion Barriers. There should be a clear alignment between the Care Environment Plan/s and the proposed Project.

- For each Barrier that directly relates to the services need for Specialised Training and Advice, **Strategy Category of Inclusion Development Fund** and the **Strategy of IDF Innovative Solutions Support** must be chosen from the list of available Strategies options and linked to at least one or more Barriers.
- The **Action/s** linked to the **IDF Innovative Solutions Support Strategies** should outline how the Project will build the skills, knowledge and confidence of educators to include children with additional needs, from the identified cohort of children the Project seeks to support and how the Project will lead to their genuine inclusion.

SIP Care Environment Plans will include additional Barriers, Strategies and Actions that are not related to the services' need to access Specialised Training and Advice Support.

Urgent Applications

Specialised Training and Advice Applications are only considered urgent where a child's enrolment or continued attendance is dependent on the ability of the service to access Innovative Solutions Support.

A SIP is not required for urgent Specialised Training and Advice Projects, however, after the assessment and outcome of the application the service is required to develop their SIP, including a SIP Care Environment

Plan for the Care Environment/s participating in the Project as outlined above. Future IDF applications will not be considered until this requirement has been met.

When can a service apply for Specialised Training and Advice?

Specialised Training and Advice supports services to upskill their educators in regard to specific medical conditions and/or disabilities. It should be applied for where there is a need for specific training in order to implement a particular procedure or where educators do not have experience working with a particular condition that requires substantial changes to practice.

It is not available to provide training or advice in relation to conditions for which services are expected to have already undertaken training under the National Regulations and for which there should be existing policies and procedures in place. e.g.: Asthma, allergies or anaphylaxis; routine administration of medication. For more information about this see [The ISP Guideline Series: No. 3 Including Children with Serious Medical and Health Conditions.](#)

In some cases, the medical and/or other professionals working with a child may be able to provide suitable training, instruction or advice to educators free of charge (or through a child's NDIS plan), as part of their work with the child and their family. This option should be explored prior to applying for funding to provide Specialised Training and Advice in order to meet the requirement that funding for proposed Innovative Solutions Support Projects is not available elsewhere.

Who can provide Specialised Training and Advice?

Support Providers of Specialised Training and Advice should have specific qualifications and/or experience re: the condition/s for which the service is applying for support. Where applicable they should be appropriately accredited to deliver the training or advice required.

How can the value of Specialised Training and Advice be sustained?

While Specialised Training and Advice is short term and focused on the needs of a specific child or children, services should also consider how they will embed this knowledge into their practice so that it is sustained in case it is needed again in future.

Where specialised training is provided it may be valuable to train a number of staff to ensure that expertise is retained in case of staff turnover. It may also be worthwhile to consider training that can be 'refreshed' as needed in the future, or to incorporate any 'advice' provided into policies and procedures so that it becomes embedded in practice.

In most cases Specialised Training and Advice is seen as a one-off form of support. After initial training it is expected that the service will be responsible for refresher training (if this is required). It is not expected that a service would need to re-apply for Specialised Training and Advice in relation to the same condition or medical procedure unless there has been a change to the child's medical treatment or their condition that require new training, or unless there have been significant changes at the service that mean there are no longer staff at the service with the relevant training.

Project Guide - Guided Practice

What is Guided Practice?

Guided Practice Projects support services to implement changes to their practice through a combination of content delivery and practical support to implement new approaches. Guided Practice Projects typically involve professional development sessions to provide information to educators followed by coaching and mentoring support to assist educators to incorporate the information provided into their practice.

Guided Practice Projects are defined by this methodology rather than by the specific focus of the Project. That is, Guided Practice Projects can address a wide range of inclusion Barriers, including, for example, those related to challenging behaviour, trauma, speech and language development or specific conditions such as autism.

Guided Practice and the Strategic Inclusion Plan

Before commencing a Guided Practice Project application, the service must have a current/up to date [Strategic Inclusion Plan](#) (SIP), in the IS Portal, which includes a SIP Care Environment Plan for the Care Environment/s who will be involved in the Project.

The Care Environment Plan/s must demonstrate that a Guided Practice Project is the most appropriate solution to overcome the identified inclusion Barriers. There should be a clear alignment between the Care Environment Plan/s and the proposed Project.

- For each Barrier that directly relates to the services need for Guided Practice, the **Strategy Category** of **Inclusion Development Fund** and the **Strategy** of **IDF Innovative Solutions Support** must be chosen from the list of available Strategies options and linked to at least one or more Barriers.
- The **Action/s** linked to the **IDF Innovative Solutions Support Strategies** should outline how the Project will build the skills, knowledge and confidence of educators to include children with additional needs, from the identified cohort of children the Project seeks to support and how the Project will lead to their genuine inclusion.

SIP Care Environment Plans will include additional Barriers, Strategies and Actions that are not related to the services' need to access Guided Practice Support.

How does Guided Practice work?

Guided Practice Projects reflect current understandings of effective professional development that emphasize the importance of practical learning delivered over a period of time. In the context of Innovative Solutions Support this means the provision of direct coaching and mentoring support for educators in addition to content delivery.

While each Guided Practice Project will be different, they should all incorporate the following elements in the design:

- **Clear, evidence-based content.** That is, the content that will be delivered through the Project should be able to be clearly described and should be reputable, based on accepted theory or evidence and align with the principles of inclusive practice.

- **Delivery by a Support Provider** with sufficient knowledge, expertise and experience to provide effective support to educators
- **A combination of content delivery and practical support** (i.e.: professional development supported by coaching and mentoring)
- **Opportunities for educators to engage with content** and receive direct feedback on their implementation of the content into their practice.
- **Coaching opportunities for each content session** to allow for practice and improvement and the incorporation of feedback. The exact ratio of coaching:content will vary depending on the complexity of the content and the level of change required.
- **Opportunities for Mentoring/ Reflection.** Successful coaching requires uninterrupted time for educators to reflect and talk with the coach/mentor. Projects should demonstrate when and how time will be provided for this to occur (e.g.: how will educators be released to participate in mentoring sessions/reflective discussions?)

Can Guided Practice Projects include Professional Development?

Yes, professional development is an essential part of Guided Practice. Professional development sessions provide educators with knowledge that will underpin changes to practice. However, professional development alone is unlikely to be effective in supporting ongoing or sustained changes. Projects that only (or predominantly) focus on professional development will not be approved. The Guided Practice model is dependent on professional development supported by coaching and mentoring to guide educators as they implement new approaches.

What is the difference between coaching and mentoring?

There are many definitions of coaching and mentoring. For the purposes of Guided Practice Projects:

Coaching describes direct ‘on-the-floor’ support whereby the coach provides practical guidance to help educators to implement new practices. Such support may range from ‘passive’ (e.g.: observing the educator’s practice and providing feedback) to ‘active’ engagement by the coach (e.g.: direct modelling of specific techniques providing spontaneous real time directions or guidance to an educator as they work).

In general, the purpose of such coaching is to develop the educator’s skills to a point where they are able to implement the new techniques on their own. As such, the coach should aim to ‘taper’ their support to educators, moving from an active to passive role over the course of a Project.

Coaching can occur at an individual or team level depending on the nature of the strategies to be implemented. Coaching is most effective when it is carried out in-person. Remote coaching sessions may be offered in exceptional circumstances where the coach is unable to attend the service in person, however face-to-face support is preferred whenever possible.

Mentoring describes advice, support and guidance that is provided in an ‘off-the-floor’ capacity. A mentoring session may provide an opportunity for an educator/s to debrief about what happened during a coaching session or reflect on a specific experience and seek advice from the mentor. Mentoring sessions may also provide opportunities for broader reflection and discussion about the progress and future direction of a Project.

Mentoring sessions may be for individuals and/or for teams.

Innovative Solutions Support Project Guide – Guided Practice

Mentoring sessions may allow educators in leadership roles to discuss and plan with the mentor regarding the next steps in implementing a Project effectively. They may also provide opportunities for team reflection on progress.

Mentoring may also be an appropriate way to ‘taper’ support after a period of more intensive coaching.

Unlike coaching, mentoring sessions are less dependent on in-person contact. Effective mentoring can often be carried out remotely, by phone, video-call or even email.

In general, coaching is most likely to support changes in educator practice, while mentoring is more likely to support reflection, either by individual educators about their practice, or about the progress of a Project as a whole service or care environment teams. Both are important but coaching will typically make up a greater proportion of a Project in order to most effectively guide and support changes to practice.

What is the role of the Support Provider in a Guided Practice Project?

The Support Provider’s role is to guide and support changes to practice within the service that address the identified Barriers to inclusion. This will be through a combination of professional development sessions, coaching and mentoring.

The Support Provider should have demonstrated knowledge and expertise in relation to the specific Barriers to be addressed. They also need to have the ability to work effectively with adults to guide and support changes to practice.

Because the aim of Innovative Solutions Support is to increase the inclusion capacity of services the Support Provider’s role is to support the development of educator capacity in a way that leads to sustainable and ongoing change.

When planning a Project, the service, Support Provider and IP should discuss how the planned changes will be sustained once the Project ends.

In general, it is not the role of the Support Provider to work directly with individual children or targeted groups of children – however, in the context of providing coaching to educators, Support Providers may, when appropriate, demonstrate or role-model specific techniques. Such direct support is spontaneous and provides an opportunity for educators to practice using such techniques themselves.

Support Providers should also aim to ‘taper’ their support over the course of a Project so that educators are able to implement new approaches with increasing independence. For example, Support Provider involvement may become less frequent as a Project progresses and/or direct coaching may transition to mentoring as educators become more skilled and confident in using new approaches.

Ultimately educators should be able to implement the new approaches without the Support Provider’s support.

Incursions and curriculum-based interventions

For the reasons outlined above, Projects that primarily focus on support providing ‘incursions’ for children or support delivery of experiences for children are not able to be funded under Innovative Solutions Support.

Where a Project focuses on new approaches to curriculum or the delivery of particular experiences this must be done in such a way that it develops the educator’s ability to present such experiences independently. Support Providers should focus on how they can upskill educators in this regard, rather than on presenting such experiences themselves.

Innovative Solutions Support Project Guide – Guided Practice

Projects involving Support Provider delivered experiences for children will only be considered where such experiences form a limited part of a Project, and it can be clearly seen that they are part of a sequence of learning that will enable educators to observe an experience before implementing it themselves.

Project Guide – Unique Projects

What are Unique Projects?

Unique Projects are Projects that meet the criteria for Innovative Solutions Support (i.e.: lead to the genuine inclusion of a child/ren with additional needs and enhance the inclusion capacity of educators in relation to a particular cohort) but do not fit into one of the other four Project Types (Bi-lingual Support, Cultural Mentoring, Specialised Training and Advice, Guided Practice).

The Unique Projects Project type is designed to allow services to be innovative and flexible in designing a support solution that meets their own specific needs. Unique Projects may include new or unique approaches to inclusion or combine elements from several different Project types. They are usually highly specific to the context of the service/s involved.

Developing a Unique Project

The [Inclusion Support Program Guidelines](#) outline both approved and non- approved purposes of funding (ISP Guidelines 9.1 Approved Purposes, 4.1.4 non-approved Purposes). The services Inclusion Professional (IP) can also provide guidance about what kinds of Projects are possible under Innovative Solutions Support.

When developing a Unique Project services must demonstrate how it will lead to clear inclusion outcomes for children and increased inclusion capacity for educators.

Unique Projects and the Strategic Inclusion Plan

Before commencing a Unique Project application, the service must have a current [Strategic Inclusion Plan](#) (SIP), in the IS Portal, which includes a SIP Care Environment Plan for the Care Environment/s who will be involved in the Project.

The Care Environment Plan/s must demonstrate that a Unique Project is the most appropriate solution to overcome the identified inclusion Barriers. There should be a clear alignment between the Care Environment Plan/s and the proposed Project.

Applying for a Unique Project

The Unique Project application process is similar to that for the other Project types.

Services will need to provide an explanation of, and rationale for, what they plan to do and the outcomes they aim to achieve.

As Unique Projects provide opportunity for services to be innovative and flexible in their project design, it is anticipated that not all Projects will require the service to engage an external Support Provider. If your Project is requesting funding for purposes, other than for engaging a Support Provider, your Quote must align with the Innovative Solutions Support Price Guide and Approved Purposes of funding as outlined in the Inclusion Support Program Guidelines (ISP Guidelines 9.1 Approved Purposes, 4.1.4 non-approved Purposes). It should also demonstrate that the Project represents value for money and show that it has a likely chance of success.

Definitions

<p>Coaching</p>	<p>Coaching describes direct ‘on-the-floor’ support whereby the coach provides practical guidance to help educators to implement new practices. Such support may range from ‘passive’ (e.g.: observing the educator’s practice and providing feedback) to ‘active’ engagement by the coach (e.g.: direct modelling of specific techniques providing spontaneous real time directions or guidance to an educator as they work).</p>
<p>Mentoring</p>	<p>Mentoring describes advice, support and guidance that is provided in an ‘off-the-floor’ capacity. A mentoring session may provide an opportunity for an educator/s to debrief about what happened during a coaching session or reflect on a specific experience and seek advice from the mentor. Mentoring sessions may also provide opportunities for broader reflection and discussion about the progress and future direction of a Project.</p>
<p>Support Provider</p>	<p>An individual or organisation with relevant skills and qualifications who is engaged to provide support to a service through an Innovative Solutions Support Project.</p>
<p>Service</p>	<p>An Early Childhood Education and Care Service that is eligible to receive Inclusion Development Fund support. Includes centre based early childhood services, family day care and outside school hours care services.</p>