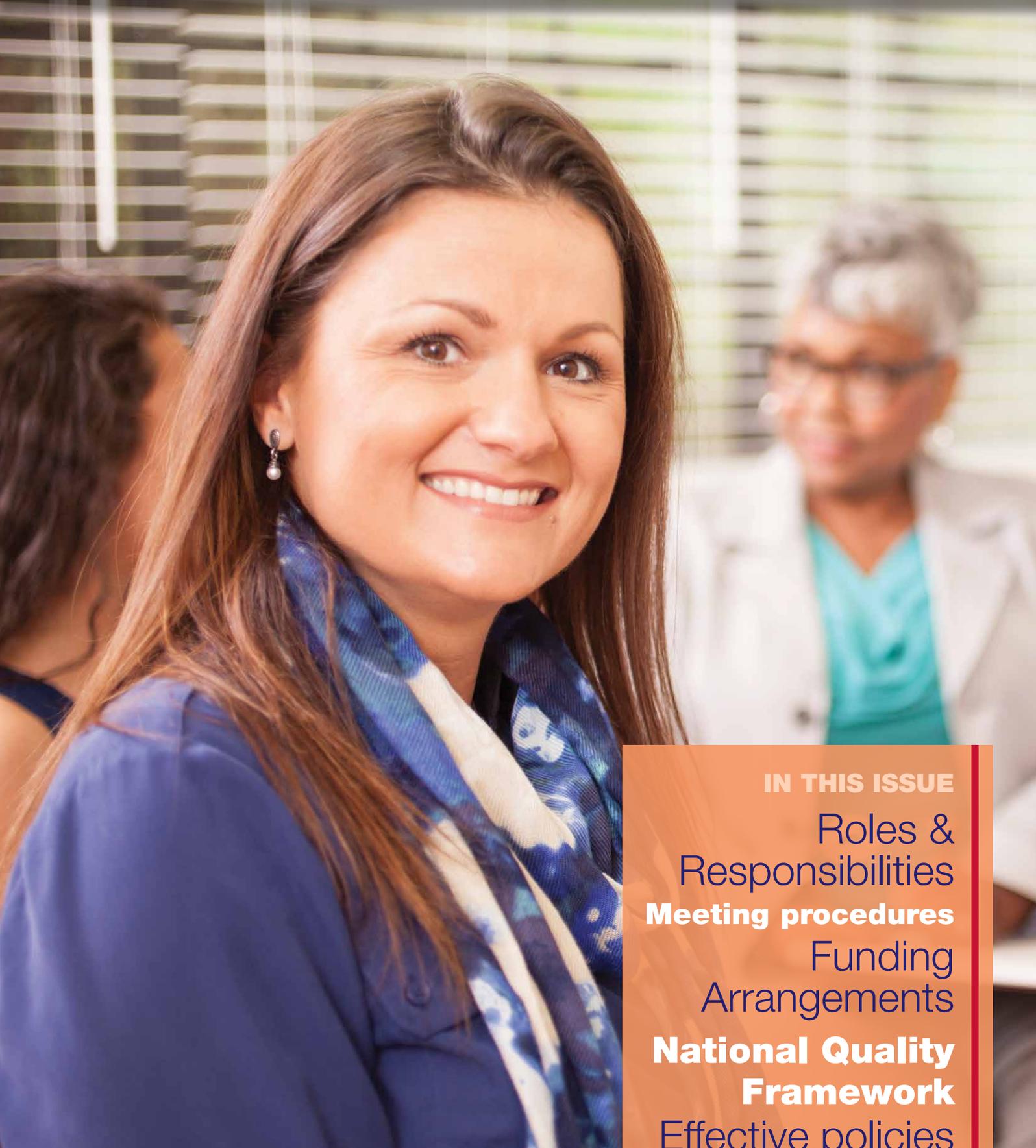




# CommitteeMembers Guide

CCSA March 2017



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Responsibilities  
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# Welcome to the Committee **Members** Guide



**Meg Mendham**  
General Manager

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Congratulations on your appointment to the management committee\* of your local early childhood education service. Your service is a member of CCSA and we provide a range of services to support you in your role as a management committee member.

As part of the leadership team, you will oversee various parts of the service such as financial planning and reporting; staffing and employment matters; compliance with legal, industrial and regulatory requirements; and the development of plans, strategies and policies.

To help you, CCSA provides a range of **Member Support** services. You can call our Infoline 1800 991 602 (free call from landlines) for immediate phone support from our experienced and friendly team. You can sign up for our e-newsletters that will be sent directly to your preferred email address. And you can access a range of information and resources through our website. We also provide individualised and specialised consultancy and training at a subsidised member rate. Through your membership of CCSA, you will be provided with accurate, up to date and early childhood sector specific advice and assistance. You will have the strategies to be an **effective leader**, and a member of a committee that can **promote a positive organisational culture** and continue to build a **professional and high quality service**.

CCSA's support and advice helps your service meet obligations under the National Quality Standard for continuous improvement, in particular for Quality Area 7 – Leadership and Service Management.

If you have any questions and concerns about your responsibilities, legal obligations or financial risks, you can access confidential support and information whenever you need it from experienced professionals, through your service's membership with CCSA. We look forward to working with you as your partner in management.

\*For ease of reading we have used "committee" to describe the governing body of a community based organisation. Some services may use other terms such as "board of management" to describe the same thing.

# Roles and Responsibilities of Committee Members

## What is community management?

Community-owned children's services are non-government, non-commercial providers that reflect the needs of their community within the guidelines of good practice, as outlined by legal, ethical and community sector requirements. Services that are managed by the community can make decisions that reflect their community, be responsive to their community, and develop social capital by building connections, relationships and networks for families. The management committee is made up of representatives of that community. In your role as a committee member your contribution is vital, not only to your service, but also to the principles of community management and ownership.

## What is the overall role of the committee?

The role of the management committee is to provide the overall governance and management of the service. Good governance supports the purpose of the service – which is to provide quality outcomes for children and families in the community. This purpose should underpin your thinking when making decisions as a committee member, and you must be aware that as a committee member you are representing the community, not yourself. Committee members are also:

**The Approved Provider of the service:** with responsibilities to the regulatory bodies that oversee education and care services.

**The Employer of the service:** with responsibilities to a range of industrial legislation covering employer responsibilities and employee entitlements.

**The Financial Manager of the service:** with responsibilities to the Australian Tax Office as well as to your State and/or Commonwealth funding bodies.

**The Business Planner and Strategist of the service:** seeking to ensure a sound future for the service through research, planning and policy making.

The committee also oversees the work of the Director, who is appointed by the committee to manage the day-to-day operations of the service in line with the strategic plan and policies set by the committee.

Some of the issues a committee are likely to deal with include:

- Compliance with local, state and national government laws regarding the operation of the service.
- Staff and employment issues.
- Meeting the requirements of the National Quality Framework including overseeing the development and implementation of the service's Quality Improvement Plan.
- Financial matters including approving and monitoring the budget, setting fees, ensuring funding requirements and financial obligations are met.
- Marketing, promoting and fundraising for the service.

Though the job of being on a committee may appear daunting, access to information and well established processes can make the role less complex than it appears. Most committee members report that the experience is positive. It can be very rewarding to know that you have played a part in developing high-quality services for your community while meeting new people and developing your skills.

## What are the key responsibilities of the different committee members?

Your committee will be made up of "ordinary members" as well as office bearers.

**Ordinary Members:** are responsible for supporting the executive members, participating in discussion and decision making, and supporting organisational activities. They bear as much responsibility for the management and control of the service as the office bearers.

Office bearer positions include:

**The President or Chair:** responsible for the leadership of the committee, liaison with the Director and, often, public relations.

**The Vice-President or Vice-Chair:** supports the role of the President and acts in their absence.

**The Secretary:** prepares and circulates meeting agendas, keeps an accurate record of meetings, circulates the minutes of meetings, and reports on and responds to correspondence on behalf of the committee.

**The Treasurer:** ensures that the service prepares an annual budget, that profit and loss is monitored, and that correct accounting procedures are in place. The Treasurer presents financial reports to the committee meetings and presents the annual financial statement and auditors report at the Annual General Meeting. In most services, day-to-day financial administration will be delegated to the Director and a bookkeeper.

Although the office bearers may hold specific roles under your constitution, ALL members of the committee are responsible for the management and operation of the service. Therefore, ALL members of the committee should be involved in significant decisions.

### What are my responsibilities as a committee member?

Your responsibilities as a committee member include:

- Attending committee meetings, and taking an active part in discussion and decision making.
- Having a working knowledge of the service's constitution, policies, procedures, Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), strategic and/or business plans.
- Being accountable for all committee decisions.
- Always declaring any potential conflicts of interest.
- Maintaining confidentiality.
- Ensuring any information gained through your position is used properly and in the best interests of the service.
- Ensuring that the service does not incur expenses or liabilities it cannot meet.
- Accepting the decisions of the committee.
- Developing and maintaining strong links with the local community.

### What is the relationship between my role and the Director?

To ensure that the service is able to meet the overall objectives set by the committee, a Director is employed to manage the day-to-day operations of the service. While the Director does not have voting rights at committee meetings, they are an integral part of the service's leadership team.

The Director:

- Manages the day-to-day operations of the service, including managing staff.
- Provides relevant and up-to-date information to the committee to assist them in their decision making.
- Works in partnership with the committee to achieve the service's mission and purpose.
- Reports to the committee on progress against the service's strategic plan.

The committee has overall longer-term strategic and governance responsibility, and the Director has operational responsibility on a day-to-day basis. The Director will lead curriculum development and implementation, and is responsible for on-site management.

The committee and Director need to be appropriately encouraged, resourced and supported by each other, and both roles must be respected and acknowledged, to create an effective working relationship.

### Will I be liable for losses?

One of the most common concerns for a new committee member is whether they could be held responsible for the debts or liabilities of the organisation if something goes wrong. One of the benefits of being an incorporated organisation is that members and office bearers are not generally liable for debts or liabilities incurred by the organisation.

However, incorporation does not provide protection for committees who act outside the framework and capabilities of the organisation. Committee members are required to fulfil their role to the best of their ability. Where a committee member is negligent, does not act in good faith, or deliberately ignores the rules and procedures of the organisation, they can be found personally liable for any resulting loss or damages.

### Where can I get help?

Being a committee member can seem like a big responsibility – but as a member of CCSA you have the advantage of access to the CCSA Management Infoline and members-only website. We provide expert information and guidance, and can support you and your committee to operate as effectively as possible. ■

# Tasks to Complete Now

## Responsibilities as an incorporated organisation

- Within 30 days of your AGM, submit your organisation's Annual Statement (Form A12) to *NSW Fair Trading* (for incorporated associations) or annual return fee to ASIC (for companies).
- If the public officer has changed, complete the appropriate notification to *NSW Fair Trading* (Form A9) or ASIC (Form 484) within 28 days of the change.

## Responsibilities as an Approved Education and Care Service

- If one or more people have left or joined the committee complete the PA08 form accompanied by, for each new committee member, a PA02 form, a Working with Children Check clearance and a current Criminal History Check and submit to the regulatory authority in your state or territory.

In NSW this is the *Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate* within the NSW Department of Education (DOE). If you are operating in a state of territory other than NSW, please **contact CCSA** for more information.

## Other contact details and authorisations to update

- If necessary change your service's bank account signatories.
- If necessary update your contact details with the Australian Tax Office and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.
- Subscribe all committee members to CCSA's eConnect newsletter and provide them with the login details for the CCSA website. ■



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# Meeting Procedures

As a committee member, you will be expected to regularly attend committee meetings, taking an active part and listening to other committee members. Your role at these meetings is to take a broader view and independently represent the best interests of the service; the management committee and employees; parents, carers and children; and the broader community.

Committee meetings are where ideas will be floated, management issues discussed and important decisions made. To ensure the effective use of time, and to encourage the regular attendance of members, committee meetings must be well planned and focussed on achieving outcomes.

Your organisation will also be required to hold at least one general meeting of the members each year. Your organisation's constitution will determine the minimum number of general and committee meetings that your service need to hold each year, and the minimum number of attendees (the quorum), required at each.

Before each meeting, the President/Chair or Secretary of the committee should prepare an agenda for the meeting, and circulate this to all members. The agenda provides a framework for the meeting by identifying a list of items to be discussed. It gives direction to the meeting and enables time to be kept. Agenda items should be prioritised, so that the most important issues are dealt with at the start of the meeting and can be given adequate time for discussion. The minimum agenda items for an Annual General Meeting will be laid down in your organisation's constitution.

Each meeting requires a Chairperson (usually the President or, in their absence, the Vice President) and minute taker (usually the Secretary or another nominated individual).

The role of the Chairperson is to provide direction to the meeting – keeping the discussion relevant to the agenda items and within the agreed times. The Chairperson must be impartial and encourage the participation of all attendees. The Chairperson moves the meeting forward by calling for motions after a reasonable discussion period, and ensures that all motions are recorded accurately. An effective Chairperson will come to the meeting well prepared. They will have identified the purpose of the meeting, have a pre-planned agenda, and have any relevant material available.

While the Chairperson provides leadership and direction within the meeting, there is a responsibility on all participants to contribute to progressing through the agenda and the success of the meeting.

The minute taker is responsible for preparing a concise and accurate record of decisions resolved at the meeting. The minutes of management committee meetings are the recorded history of the service, and must be kept for the life of the organisation. The minutes should include the date and time of the meeting; the names of the Chairperson, attendees and any apologies; a motion to confirm the minutes of the previous meeting, or to amend as required; and any business arising from the previous meeting's minutes.



Most importantly, minutes must record items of general business discussed at the meeting, including a brief summary of the discussion and an exact record of any decisions made. In previous times, decisions were recorded in the form of motions with a mover and a seconder. Current recommended practice is that at the start of a meeting the minutes note something like 'all decisions of the committee are unanimous unless specified otherwise' and then list each of the committee member's names. However, you must note if someone opposes or abstains from a decision. The minutes should also identify who is responsible for actioning the decision, where appropriate.

The records of the Association, including committee minutes, are required to be open to inspection by any member of the Association. However, the committee may refuse to permit a member of the Association to inspect or obtain a copy of records of the Association that relate to confidential, personal, employment, commercial or legal matters or where to do so may be prejudicial to the interests of the association. ■

# Understanding your service's funding arrangements

ECEC services receive their income from two primary sources: **parent fees** and **government funding**.

Some services also generate income through fundraising. However, as fundraising income can vary greatly, it is not generally used to cover a service's core operating expenses.

The government funding your service receives will largely depend on whether your service is:

- A long day care style service (operating 48 weeks or more per year and at least 8 hours per day).
- A preschool or similar service (operating school terms).

## Long day care style services

In the case of long day care and similar services, the Australian Government provides subsidies to reduce parent fees through:

- Child Care Benefit (CCB) - this is based on a family's income and is usually paid directly to the service to reduce a family's fees
- Child Care Rebate (CCR) – this allows a family to claim a rebate on their out-of-pocket child care expenses and may be claimed directly by families or paid to the service to reduce the family's fees.

Other long day care style services, such as out of school hours care and vacation care, may also receive funding from the federal government through the Community Support Program.

The federal government is proposing changes to the funding arrangements for education and care services. CCSA will keep you informed about the passage of these changes through parliament and the implications for your service. Signing up to CCSA's e-Alert and e-Connect is a great way to stay in touch. You can sign up through our website.

Some long day care services also receive funding from the NSW Government to support the employment of early childhood teachers in their service. The NSW Government is currently implementing some changes to this funding under its Start Strong initiative. CCSA will continue to provide information and support as these changes roll out.

## Preschools and similar services

Preschools and similar services, such as mobile services, operating according to the NSW school year, are funded by the NSW Government through the Department of Education (DoE).

On 14 September 2016, the NSW Government introduced the new Start Strong early education funding reform package. This new funding approach commenced on 1 January 2017 and will be fully phased in by 1 July 2017.

Start Strong's primary aim is to increase the number of children who are accessing 600 hours of preschool in the year prior to starting school. This will enable NSW to better meet the Council of Australian Governments' objective of 'universal access' for all four-year-olds.

In NSW preschools receive a base rate of funding based on the SEIFA (Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas) score for the suburb in which your service is located. Under Start Strong, base rates have been increased across all SEIFA Bands. In addition to the base rate of funding, services may also receive from the NSW Government:

- Safety Net funding
- Equity Funding
- English Language Loading
- Regional Loading (formerly Service Loading).

Additional grant funding may be provided through the Preschool Disability Support Program.

Incoming committee members should receive a full briefing from your Director on how your service is transitioning to the new Start Strong funding arrangements.

Further information go to:

<http://www.ccsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Start-Strong-Information-Sheet.pdf>

<http://www.preschoolsnsw.org.au/departement-of-education>

Or call CCSA on 1800 991 602.

## Funding Contracts

Incoming committee members should ensure that they are aware of the requirements of the various funding contracts their organisation has entered into, as they will bear the legal responsibility for meeting the obligations the service has agreed to. It is important to ensure that funds received from government grants are being accurately tracked in the accounts of the organisation. However, there should not need to be a separate bank account maintained unless this is a specific requirement of a funding contract.

Accurate tracking will ensure that end of year acquittal requirements can be met. Often this will require the submission of audited financial statements for the entire organisation, in addition to an audited income statement for the specific grant funding and signed statements of compliance from the management committee. Monitoring that funds are only used for the purposes permitted under the funding contract will make acquittal easier and eliminate demands for repayment by the funder. The funding contract may also contain other compliance requirements such as minimum levels of insurance to be maintained by the ECEC service or compliance with other government policies such as the rules on universal access to early childhood education. ■

# The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)

The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) is responsible for the registration and regulation of charities.

Not-for-profit entities seeking registration as charities can apply online at [www.acnc.gov.au](http://www.acnc.gov.au). After the ACNC has approved the registration it automatically forwards the approval to the Australian Taxation Office to commence the process of determining eligibility for tax concessions. Incorporated Associations that are endorsed as charitable institutions are then required to report to the ACNC, as well as to the NSW Office of Fair Trading as the State regulator. The 2016 Annual Information Statement (AIS) and associated financial report for charities using a reporting period of 1 July to 30 June was due to be submitted by 31 January 2017. Charities that wish to use a reporting period other than 1 July to 30 June must request this in writing (ACNC Form 4A).

## Benefits of being a Charitable Institution

Endorsement as a Charitable Institution brings a range of benefits to an eligible organisation, including Federal Government tax concessions and exemptions or reductions in some State and Local Government charges. A quick way to determine if your organisation is already registered as a charitable institution and eligible for these concessions is to check the Australian Business Register [www.abr.gov.au](http://www.abr.gov.au). Enter your ABN or legal name into the search facility and the search result for your company will include information on your charity tax concession status if applicable.

## Federal Government Tax Concessions

Federal Government Tax Concessions are administered by the Australian Taxation Office. The key concessions relevant to not-for-profit early childhood education services are:

- GST Concessions. These can be particularly beneficial by improving the fundraising outcomes of not-for-profit ECEC services.
- Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) Rebate.
- Income Tax Exemption.

Detailed information on these concessions can be obtained from the ATO website [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au) or from CCSA.

## Concessions on State and Local Government Charges

Depending on the circumstances of a particular charitable institution it may be eligible for reduction or exemption from a range of charges including:

- Rates.
- Stamp duty.
- Motor vehicle registration fees.

Detailed information on these concessions and whether they apply to your particular circumstances can be obtained from the NSW Office of State Revenue [www.osr.nsw.gov.au](http://www.osr.nsw.gov.au), or from your local Council, or from CCSA. ■

# Fundraising



As a committee member, you share responsibility for the financial management of your service. While your service receives the majority of its income from fees and government funding, most early childhood services will have a fundraising strategy to supplement these. Your organisation should not be dependent on fundraising to remain viable, but fundraising activities can provide important additional income for special purchases or expenses.

All services that conduct fundraising activities need to hold an “Authority to Fundraise” issued by the NSW Office of Fair Trading ([www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au)) under the terms of the *Charitable Fundraising Act 1991*. The objects of the Act are to ensure that fundraising activities are properly and efficiently managed, that accurate and audited accounts are kept in relation to fundraising, and that members of the public that may wish to support worthy causes are protected from deceitful fundraising activities.

For fundraising to be successful, it must be a shared responsibility. While the committee may designate a fundraising coordinator or sub-committee to have overall responsibility for fundraising, everyone in the organisation needs to be involved for a fundraising activity to succeed. Fundraising should be a fun experience that encourages participation, and gives everyone who does participate a sense of involvement and achievement.

## Your role as a committee member

Committee members are responsible for providing leadership to the organisation and its members. You have a role in inspiring staff, families and the wider community, and making them aware of the importance of fundraising activities to your service. The management committee is responsible for

creating a fundraising strategy, and committee members are expected to support individual fundraising activities.

## Your fundraising strategy

Your service will probably already have some established fundraising activities in place and, as a member of the incoming management committee, you should be involved in reviewing and evaluating these. While recognising that staff and parents may be accustomed to a particular type or program of fundraising activities, it is important that the committee remain flexible so that it can respond to new opportunities and stop participating in activities that are not profitable.

When establishing or reviewing a fundraising strategy, the committee should consider the following for each fundraising activity:

- What are the goals of the activity?
- Has this worked in the past?
- Who can you approach for support? (Government departments, local businesses, families, etc.)
- Has this been successful for other organisations? (use your contacts)
- What method is to be used to raise the funds?
- What is the estimated monetary target for the activity?
- What is the timeline for raising the funds? (be aware of deadlines when applying for grants)
- How will progress on the activity be recorded?
- How will the fundraising activity be evaluated?

When preparing your strategy, remember that most people will more readily support you if they know exactly what their money is going to be used for. It will be easier to raise money for a specific project or purpose, than for the organisation as a whole. Individually identified fundraising activities for targeted purchases (for example, a trivia night to raise funds for new playground equipment) will have the greatest success. Other fundraising options can then be incorporated into the initial activity. At a trivia night you could, for example, also hold a raffle and have a stall set up selling children's artworks, to raise additional funds.

### Your fundraising options

Fundraising options include:

**Grants** – all levels of government, as well as corporations and individuals, periodically offer grants to community organisations. While the grant completion process can be involved and time consuming (especially in the case of larger government grants), the funding available can be significant, and you can often adapt an initial application to future grant applications. Information about available grants, and how to prepare an effective grant application, can be found online.

**In-kind support** – this can be in the form of goods, services or resources. These can either be directly used by the service (for example, a local builder may offer to build a new cubbyhouse for your playground) or used for further fundraising activities (for example where a local hotel donates a night's accommodation that can be offered as a raffle prize). Developing and maintaining relationships with local businesses, and using the contacts of the committee, staff and families will help widen the potential pool of supporters.

**Special events** – your annual fete, an open day, an art exhibition, or the grand opening of building extensions.

**Sales** – you could frame and sell children's artworks, or sell products with your service name and logo.

**Commercial fundraising products** – includes book clubs, school photographs, class tea-towels, hardware store BBQ's etc. where the service receives a percentage payment based on sales made. The benefit of these is that the administration of the activity is carried out by the third party, however they cannot be as targeted as those that are organised by the service itself and so may not be as profitable.

### Ethical fundraising

When making fundraising decisions, the management committee is acting as the representative of families and the community. The committee is responsible for ensuring that fundraising activities reflect expected community standards, and for ensuring that fundraising is conducted in an ethical way. Your fundraising strategy should be supported by a policy that outlines the service's commitment to ethical behaviour when fundraising.

Your fundraising activities should meet the following standards:

- All fundraising complies with relevant laws.
- Communication with potential supporters is truthful and non-deceptive.
- Money raised is used for the stated purpose.
- Any personal information collected remains confidential.
- Fundraising activities will not be detrimental to the community standing of the service.

Your service will also need to carefully consider whether to accept funding or donations from particular organisations; for example, fast-food, gambling, alcohol or tobacco companies. A failure to take into account the public's potential perceptions of these companies could result in a backlash against your service by families and the wider community. ■



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# National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework (NQF) applies to most preschool, long day care, family day care and outside school hours care services in Australia. It was introduced on 1 January 2012, with some requirements being phased in over time.

The primary aim of the NQF is to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in early childhood education and care services (ECEC) across Australia. The NQF contains the following elements:

- A national legislative framework that consists of the *Education and Care Services National Law* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*.
- A Regulatory Authority in each state and territory. In New South Wales, this is the NSW ECEC Directorate in the Department of Education.
- A National Quality Standard (NQS) which has seven Quality Areas.
- A national quality rating and assessment process through which the Regulatory Authorities assess services against the NQS and provide services with a rating from one of the five rating levels.
- A national body called the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) which guides the implementation of the NQF in a nationally consistent way.

Under the National Law and the National Regulations, all education and care services that are covered by the NQF need to have an 'Approved Provider' and a 'Nominated Supervisor'. The National Law and the National Regulations place many requirements on the Approved Provider and the Nominated Supervisor. ACECQA's "Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations", provides useful information in plain English about the obligations. It is available at [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au) and from [www.ccsa.org.au](http://www.ccsa.org.au).

## What is an Approved Provider?

The Approved Provider is the owner or operator of a service. When an education and care service is owned by an organisation that is incorporated under the NSW *Associations Incorporation Act 2009*, all the members of the association's committee are responsible for managing the education and care service. Therefore, CCSA's view is that all the members of the committee need to go through the provider approval process. This includes notifying the Regulatory Authority of changes to the membership of the committee and verifying that each committee member is a 'fit and proper person' through undertaking a working with children check and a criminal history check.

Note: The NSW Regulatory Authority, DoE, has advised that their interpretation of persons exercising management and control of an association is limited to the office bearers of the association. This sets a minimum group of people whose details as 'fit and proper persons' must be reported to DoE. However, the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009* states that "an association must establish a committee to manage its affairs". It does not differentiate between office-bearers and other committee members in their responsibility for exercising that management function. Therefore, CCSA strongly recommends that all members of the management committee undergo this process, as it represents best practice from both a child protection and corporate governance perspective.

## What is a Nominated Supervisor?

The Nominated Supervisor is the person designated by the Approved Provider to be responsible for the day-to-day management of an Approved Service. The Nominated Supervisor is an individual who holds a Certified Supervisor certificate and who accepts the nomination of the 'Approved Provider' to take on that role. The Nominated Supervisor is usually the Director or Coordinator of the preschool, long day care, family day care or outside school hours care service.

## What is the National Quality Standard?

The NQS outlines seven 'quality areas' that are important for providing high quality outcomes for children. The service will be rated against each of these quality areas as part of the rating and assessment process. As a committee member, you will be involved to some degree in each of the quality areas. However, the ones which have the highest relevance for most committee members are Quality Area 4 – Staffing Arrangements, Quality Area 6 – Collaborative Partnerships, and most significantly Quality Area 7 – Leadership and Service Management.

## What is a Quality Improvement Plan?

To achieve the goals of the NQF and demonstrate how you are 'working towards', 'meeting' or 'exceeding' the National Quality Standard, all participating services are required to develop a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations (NSW), services are also required to review and update their QIP at least annually. It is the responsibility of the service's leadership team to regularly monitor, review and record progress on Quality Improvement projects under your QIP. The Management Committee, as the Approved Provider, should endorse the QIP after it has been reviewed and updated each year.

You can find out more about developing your QIP in CCSA's Resource Guide on the National Quality Standard <http://ccsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/CCSA-Resource-Guide-NQS-Overview-web.pdf> ■

# Effective Policies



## Why do we need policies?

An important role of the management committee is to plan, deliver and evaluate the service's policies. Policies are the "blueprints" for the management of the service, providing:

- An outline of the operation of the service for children, parents, carers, staff, management and the broader community.
- A structure to guide day-to-day decision-making.
- Authority and support for management and staff in dealing with service delivery and other issues, such as human resources and interactions with children and families.
- A framework for compliance with legislative and regulatory obligations.

A set of effective policies will help ensure that the management committee is making consistent decisions that reflect the overall goals and expectations of the service.

Policies also promote:

- Consistency in day-to-day management.
- A work environment with less conflict.
- Increased efficiency.
- Smooth transitions in changes to management and staff.
- An opportunity to evaluate existing systems and procedures.
- A focus on future direction and ongoing evaluation of service objectives.

## What policies do we need?

Determining what policies are required for the service is an on-going and evolving process. The policies your service needs will not be the same as those of another service. Individual services must continually assess the policies they need to function effectively.

Policies fall into three basic categories:

- Compulsory policies (those required by legislation, funding or other legal requirements).
- Essential policies (those that direct the overall philosophy, structure and objectives of the service).
- Desirable policies (those that support and guide service operation).

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations* (Reg 168) specifies a number of compulsory policies that must be made available in all children's services. You are also required to have policies in place to meet your obligations under National and State legislation, including child protection, workplace health and safety, privacy and anti-discrimination.

Essential policies include those dealing with operational matters such as enrolment procedures and fee setting principles, and staffing issues such as recruitment and leave application procedures.

Desirable policies are those that deal with less vital aspects of the service's management, but where it is useful to have guidelines for dealing with issues that may arise. For example, you may wish to implement a dress code policy, or a policy around the use of social media in the workplace.

What one service sees as an essential policy may be only desirable to another, and your committee will need to prioritise policy development according to the individual circumstances of the service at any given time.

### Where do we start?

An incoming management committee should take the time to review the service's existing policies, and ensure that they still meet legislative requirements, and the organisation's overall structure, philosophy and strategic objectives.

Some important questions to consider are:

- What is currently happening and what should be happening?
- Has an incident occurred which in turn has prompted the need for a policy?
- Have circumstances changed which impact on current policies?
- Is policy development a response to new or changing legislative requirements e.g. children's services regulations, work health and safety?
- Has there been a change to our service's overall structure?

### What do we include in a policy?

Your service should adopt a consistent framework for developing and documenting policies. All policies should contain the following elements:

**Title/subject:** what the policy is about

**Rationale:** why the policy is required

**Aim/purpose:** what the desired outcome is

**Application:** who is affected by the policy and in what context it is applied

**Implementation:** when and by whom the policy will be implemented

**Date for evaluation:** set a date for review at the time the policy is adopted.

Using a consistent template will make your policies clearer and easier to understand, and will make creating new policies easier.

Generally, a policy will outline "what" the committee is aiming to achieve, and "why" they wish to achieve it, but not "how" it will be achieved. A procedure document will detail the steps that need to be taken to meet the objectives of each policy. You will need to create, or review and update, your service's procedure documents to reflect new or amended policies.

### What makes a policy effective?

Effective policies:

- Are based on sound research and consultation with key stakeholders, and are subject to regular review. Include policies as an agenda item at meetings to encourage input from committee members, staff and families.
- Meet the individual circumstances of your service. A generic or template policy may provide a useful starting point, but to be effective these must be customised to your specific situation. Failure to do this may expose your service to a number of legal liabilities.
- Do not contravene or conflict with legislation, regulations or other legal obligations such as funding agreements.
- Are worded carefully to ensure they accurately represent what you want them to say. The wording is specific but not so precise as to need frequent changes, and simple language is used.
- Are easily accessible for all staff, parents and management, and key policies are explained during any orientation process for staff, parents or management.

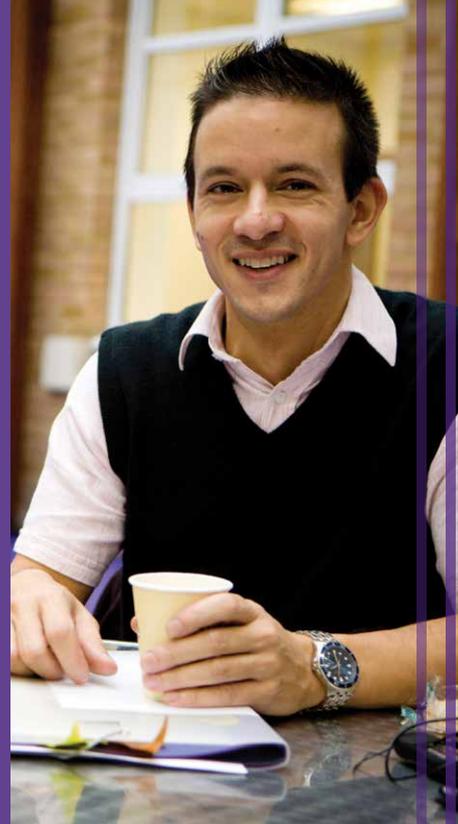
### How do we evaluate our policies?

All your policies should include a date or timetable for review (for example, every two years), or should be reviewed as needed if it becomes clear that a change in policy is required. During these reviews the effectiveness of the policies, and the associated procedures, should be evaluated.

Questions to help your committee assess the effectiveness of policies and procedures include:

- Do our policies and procedures reflect the service's philosophy and long term goals?
- Were they developed in conjunction with the people who carry them out?
- Do our policies and procedures reflect best practice?
- Are they continually being revised and improved?
- Is there a system in place to co-ordinate, authorise, distribute and review policies and procedures?
- Are our policies and procedures appropriate and useful to those doing the work? Are they used and followed?
- Are the policies easy to follow and as simple as possible? ■

# Delegations Policy



The delegations policy is an essential policy for any ECEC service, irrespective of its corporate structure. Delegation is the act of authorising another person or entity to carry out specific activities. Without a delegations policy, the task of performing and achieving all the legal, compliance and corporate governance functions of the ECEC service remains with the committee or equivalent body.

It is important to note that, while tasks and accountability for those tasks can be delegated, the committee cannot abrogate its overall responsibility for the outcomes.

The most important part of a delegations policy is laying out the process required to make a proper delegation, including the authority for further sub-delegation, responsibility for the task in the absence of the person to whom it was delegated, and the enabling authorities and accountabilities associated with the delegated task.

Often a range of delegations are included in other documents of the organisation. For example, some of the employer responsibilities of the committee may be effectively delegated to the service Director by virtue of tasks included in their letter of engagement and associated job description. For clarity, however, it is best to have a consolidated listing of delegations attached to the delegations policy. This makes it easier both to identify current delegations and to appropriately update them to changed circumstances.

Delegations are most commonly thought of in financial terms (e.g. authority to expend funds in accordance with the budget up to a dollar limit). However, a broader range

of compliance and governance functions are suitable for delegation. Good practice suggests that any major changes to policy or practice in delegated areas should always be reviewed by the Director and/or Committee. The following list is certainly not exhaustive but provides an indication of the range of activities that can be delegated, remembering that ultimate responsibility still rests with the committee.

- Development of operational and business plans.
- Development of certain service policies.
- Development of risk management plans.
- Signing routine correspondence.
- Preparing and reporting on budgets.
- Processing authorised payments.
- Liaising with families.
- Representing the organisation at meetings.
- Recruiting staff.
- Authorising engagement of casual staff.
- Authorising leave.
- Performance management of staff.
- Work Health and Safety tasks.
- Ensuring compliance with regulations.
- Submitting returns including BAS to the Australian Taxation Office. ■

# Looking Forward

You need to organise a planned hand over from the last committee to the new one – and it's not too early to start thinking about next year's committee now!

**Induction** – having an induction procedure in place will help make new committee members feel welcome and a part of the team. Providing new members with all the necessary information and tools to carry out their role (for example, policies and procedures, strategic plan, minutes of past meetings) will ensure they understand the processes, procedures and aims of your service; making them more effective more quickly, and making the settling-in process less daunting. You can download an Induction Checklist for new Management Committee Members ([http://ccsa.org.au/ccsa-manual/cat\\_view/41-governance.html](http://ccsa.org.au/ccsa-manual/cat_view/41-governance.html)) here.

**Committee assessment** – your committee should be continuously self-assessing; looking at strengths and weaknesses, identifying skills gaps and ensuring that the committee is representing and reflecting the interests of your service. There are a number of online quizzes available that can help assess your committee, with a view to improving its effectiveness. The Institute of Community Directors ([www.communitydirectors.com.au](http://www.communitydirectors.com.au)) Australia is a good place to start for free information, tools and resources to help assess and improve the effectiveness of your committee.

**Future planning** – committee self-assessment can help direct your future planning. Turnover of committee members is inevitable, and identifying your committee's strengths and weaknesses can help you target the new members you will need

to achieve your service's goals and objectives into the future. When planning for the future of your committee, you also should consider the size of your committee, the gender and age balance of members, and the diversity of your membership. Diversity brings new perspectives and ensures your committee is really reflecting the community it represents.



**Attracting new committee members** – don't leave your committee recruitment till a vacancy occurs, and don't only look for membership from your parent body! Use your current committee to advertise by word of mouth that you are always looking for potential new members, and encourage and maintain contact with anyone who displays interest. Consider putting together an information pack, so that potential committee members can make an informed decision. Consider approaching local business owners, community leaders, local schools, indigenous elders, and professionals such as accountants, lawyers, marketers and event managers who have skills that are valuable to a community management team. ■



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