

2025

Specialist Disability Support in Schools Program Guidelines



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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education (the Department) is committed to ensuring Queenslanders have the education and skills they need to contribute to the economic and social development of Queensland.

The Department delivers world-class education for people at every stage of their personal and professional development. We are also committed to ensuring Queensland education is aligned to the state's employment, skills and economic priorities.

The Office of Non-State Education within the Department administers the Specialist Disability Support in Schools Program. This program supports schools by providing funding to approved suppliers to improve access to and participation in curriculum and learning outcomes for eligible school-age students with disability.

The Specialist Disability Support in Schools (SDSS) Program provides approximately \$12 million annually to eligible suppliers that support schools by providing services to students with disability.

The important distinctions between the Department's SDSS Program and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are available on the Department's website - [SDSS and the NDIS](#).

Organisations are funded under service agreements in 2025 for the funding categories (1) School Support Services and (2) Resource Centre Services; and (3) Specialised Equipment.

This funding is provided to approved suppliers to support the three education sectors (State, independent and Catholic) in meeting their legislative responsibilities, which includes the *Disability Standards for Education (2005)* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Applications for funding are assessed on eligibility, financial viability, the demonstrated need and projected service, resource and equipment level expectations.

The SDSS Program Guidelines apply to all organisations seeking funding by outlining the objectives and desired outcomes, eligibility requirements, the selection process, funding arrangements and SDSS Program references.

Eligible Applicants must read these SDSS Program Guidelines before submitting their application(s).

1. PROGRAM PURPOSE

The SDSS Program supports Queensland schools by providing funding to approved suppliers to deliver services to improve access to and participation in curriculum and the educational outcomes for eligible school-aged students with disability.

2. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Support schools to provide reasonable adjustments for students with disability to access and participate in education through:

- identification of barriers to access, participation and achievement; and
- the provision of supports to enhance student attendance, participation and achievement in schooling.

3. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicant Eligibility

An eligible Applicant must:

- (i) be a registered Charity or Incorporated not-for-profit Entity; or
- (ii) Local Government Entity.

When one of the top two eligibility requirements are met, then the organisation must also:

- (iii) have a registered office in Queensland;
- (iv) provide programs or activities designed specifically for students with disability; and
- (v) not be a school. Where the organisation is associated with a school or is co-located at a school site, the Applicant must be able to demonstrate they operate as a separate entity.

Examples of an eligible organisation include:

- ✓ Registered charities
- ✓ Not-for profit service providers
- ✓ Religious organisations
- ✓ Local government council
- ✓ Community organisations

If the Department is unable to clearly identify if your organisation is eligible through public registers, you will be asked to submit supporting documents.

Student Eligibility

It is recognised that a small number of students with disability require support to access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers without disability as soon as they commence school.

For Prep students or new students to a school, where the student has a diagnosed disability and documented ongoing complex needs, schools can apply for SDSS program services to commence at the start of the school year if the student requires immediate support to access and participate in learning, and/or for their safe attendance at school.

To be eligible to receive a SDSS service, a student must be enrolled in a Queensland school (state or non-state) and be identified in one of the following ways:

- Students who were recorded in the latest submission of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) as receiving supplementary, substantial or extensive adjustments; **or**
- the school requires assistance to address a barrier to the student's physical access to the school environment; **or**

Students new to a school (including Prep students)

- School has evidence of a diagnosed disability and has confirmed by the end of Term 1 that the adjustments provided are consistent with the descriptors for either supplementary, substantial or extensive in the NCCD Guidelines (please refer to the 'NCCD selecting the level of adjustment' matrix):
 - Supplementary: Student receives adjustments supplementary to the strategies and resources already available for all students within the school for particular activities **at specific times throughout the week.**
 - Substantial: Student has substantial support needs and receive essential adjustments and require considerable assistance to the usual educational program **at most times, on most days.**
 - Extensive: Student has very high support needs and are provided with extensive targeted measures and sustained levels of intensive support **at all times.**

Program Purpose Eligibility

The application and proposed services are required to meet the Program Purpose of the SDSS Program as it described in section 1.

4. PROGRAM CATEGORIES

SDSS organisations are funded under service agreements with the Department of Education for three types of funding categories – School Support Services, Resource Centre Services and Specialised Equipment.

Funding Category	Funding Category Description
School Support Services	<p>Funding for the provision of a range of professional services and consultation in schools for eligible students with disability. The role of professional staff providing SDSS services in schools is to work with the school support team to identify factors that can interfere or disrupt effective learning, and plan or assist in planning interventions or programs that can improve access to and participation in the curriculum.</p> <p>Services may include support from specialist educators, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, audiologists, orientation and mobility specialists, assistive technology specialists and psychologists.</p>

Resource Centre Services	Funding to provide equipment, materials and resources to schools for the support of eligible students.
Specialised Equipment	<p>Funding for specialised equipment is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) To improve the equipment loan pools of organisations providing support services to students with disability to enhance access and participation in school; (2) For equipment that is complementary to the equipment that is available from the regionalised loan service; (3) For trial purposes at school; and/or (4) For short term equipment loans up to six months. <p>This funding cannot be used for equipment for individuals or minor equipment and materials.</p>

5. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Each application will be assessed to determine how well it meets the SDSS Program Purpose and Objectives. Applications will be considered on its merits and weighting will be applied to reflect the relative importance of the Assessment Criteria, with ratings as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Assessment Criteria and Weightings

Assessment Criteria		Weighting (%)
1	Proposed service meets the Program Objectives	30
2	Proposed service meets the requirements of the relevant Program Category	15
3	Proposed service meets an identified need	15
4	Proposed service provides value for money	15
5	Applicant and key personnel capabilities to deliver services, resources or specialised equipment	15
6	Compares to other applications	10
7	Other considerations - clarification questions or additional information requests	N/A

Applications will be assessed by the extent to which they fully meet the assessment criteria, partially meet the criteria or did not meet the criteria.

Other considerations include:

- Previously approved funding provided under the Program;
- Historical performance and compliance; and
- Financial viability of organisation.

Funding cannot be used for:

- Capital expenditure, including purchase or leasing of vehicles.
- Activities which will provide commercial advantage to the applicant (e.g. promotion of the applicant's own organisation).
- Costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application.
- Activities for which other Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Government bodies

- have primary responsibility.
- Completed projects, services or purchased equipment prior to application.

An application that meets some or all assessment criteria and priorities does not automatically guarantee funding. The SDSS Program is usually oversubscribed and applications may be part funded to assist funding distribution to meet the SDSS Program's Objectives. If Applicants are offered part funding, Applicants will be given the opportunity to negotiate an amendment of outcomes provided in their application and/or may need to fund the balance of the cost of their proposed services, resources or specialised equipment.

6. PROGRAM TERMS AND CONDITIONS

To enable consistency of approach in contracting social service providers, a [Standard Suite of Contracts](#) for Social Services was developed by the Queensland Government.

The SDSS Program Service Agreements comprise two parts:

1. Standard Terms Version 1.1 – dated 17 February 2015. (Standard Agreement) and
2. Funding and Service Details, which provides specific information about the funding, service provision, reporting requirements and other requirements for individual Government Programs.

Examples of requirements under the SDSS Program include:

- Organisation Funding and Service Details;
- Educational and Financial Accountability and Reporting Requirements;
- Protocols for School Visits; and
- School Request for Support Form.

7. GOODS AND SERVICES TAX (GST)

If you are not registered for GST but have an active ABN, the Department will pay the agreed amount (which is exclusive of GST) to you.

If you are registered for GST and have noted that the supply you are making for this SDSS Program is taxable, the Department will pay the agreed amount plus an additional 10% GST amount to you.

If you are registered for GST and have noted that the supply you are making to the department for this SDSS Program is not a taxable supply, the Department will pay the agreed amount (which is exclusive of GST) to you.

Where the Department determines that a repayment is required, it will provide you an invoice or a RCTI adjustment note to return the repayment amount.

For tax compliance purposes, it is important that you advise the Department as soon as possible if there is a change to your ABN and/or GST registration status and the status of the supply under this SDSS Program.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

The Department will provide qualified interpreting services during the application process for Applicants who have a hearing or communication disability. If you require interpreting services, please request through the Department's [website](#) under Contact Us.

Further information and forms relating to the SDSS Program can be obtained from the Department's [website](#).

9. PROGRAM APPLICATION ASSESSMENT PROCESS



