

Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme – Funding Requirements

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Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES) is a best practice model for local councils and other organisations to support families and carers to secure a kindergarten place for their child.

The Department of Education (the department) offers funding to eligible Victorian local councils to contribute to the operating costs of running a CRES in their municipality.

Introduced in 2024, the CRES Funding Requirements set out the baseline requirements and expectations for the provision of CRES and guide the delivery of equitable, accessible and consistent kindergarten¹ registration processes. The requirements are set out in the table below, according to the five stages of a CRES process, as articulated in the [CRES Practice Guide](#).

The funding requirements are supported by the CRES practice model which is underpinned by a set of principles - simple, inclusive, adaptable, consistent, transparent and collaborative – to guide providers to consistently implement high-quality CRES across all contexts.

The funding requirements are expected to be applied along with relevant policies in the [Kindergarten Funding Guide](#) and under the Best Start, Best Life (BSBL) reforms.

Local councils receiving a funding contribution from the department are expected to operate their CRES in line with the requirements. The department's Early Childhood Improvement Branches (ECIBs) monitor adherence to the requirements as part of Service Agreement compliance activity.

The requirements will be the subject of ongoing periodic review, with councils informed of any changes.

CRES Funding Requirements

Stage 1: Proactive engagement and awareness

- 1.1 CRES providers register (and enrol as applicable) children eligible for Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) and include information to families about the availability of ESK as part of council's CRES policy and CRES communications.
- 1.2 CRES providers accept registrations at any time throughout the year. This includes children that meet the Pre-Purchased Places (PPP) eligibility criteria being supported to register (and enrol as applicable) at a service that has been allocated PPPs in the current kindergarten year.
- 1.3 CRES providers ensure children are registered (and enrolled as applicable) in line with kindergarten funding policies including Best Start, Best Life operational policy settings and ensure required information is collected to do so. This includes delivering Pre-Prep to eligible children from priority cohort groups.
- 1.4 CRES providers communicate with families and carers using their preferred contact method. Where needed, CRES providers supply translated materials and access to interpreters to ensure CALD families can understand and participate fully in the kindergarten central registration and enrolment process.
- 1.5 CRES providers promote the benefits of kindergarten and the registration process to families and carers to support kindergarten enrolment, working collaboratively with CALD Outreach workers, where relevant.
- 1.6 CRES providers make families aware of all funded kindergarten services operating in the local government area by including a link to the [Find a Kinder](#) website and information regarding upcoming community-based services including Kinders on School Sitesⁱⁱ in council and CRES communications.
- 1.7 CRES providers communicate information for the current year's process to CRES partners (kindergarten service providers, MCH and other support services) to ensure they are well-equipped to support families and carers to register (and enrol as applicable) via the CRES.

Stage 2: Registration with CRES

- 2.1 Councils publish a current, compliant CRES policy document (reviewed annually) that is accessible for families and articulates and guides the scheme's delivery.
- 2.2 Provide kindergarten registration services at no cost to families.
- 2.3 Provide registration forms that allow families and carers to select more than one preferred kindergarten service.
- 2.4 Ensure that data collected through the CRES process is captured, stored and transferred in line with data privacy requirements and relevant legislative and regulatory responsibilities.

Stage 3: Allocation

- 3.1 CRES providers apply the department's [Priority of Access](#) (PoA) criteria transparently and with integrity and collect an appropriate level of information to do so. This includes applying PoA to all registrations before applying locally agreed criteria.
- 3.2 Locally agreed criteria are clearly communicated with families, and kindergarten places are allocated in accordance with anti-discrimination and human rights laws. Characteristics such as gender, date of birth/ageⁱⁱⁱ or the date of registration should not be used to determine the allocation of places.
- 3.3 Where there are more registrations than available kindergarten places following the application of PoA and locally agreed criteria, a ballot should be conducted to randomly allocate remaining places according to the family's nominated preferences. This process must be communicated in the public facing CRES policy document.
- 3.4 CRES providers communicate with kindergarten services that the department's PoA criteria must be applied by all funded kindergarten providers when allocating enrolments.

Stage 4: Confirmation and communication

- 4.1 CRES providers advise the department via the local ECIB in the event there are more children than available kindergarten places (e.g., as indicated by waitlist across the LGA).
- 4.2 Where practical, CRES providers follow up if an offer of a kindergarten place to a child experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage is not accepted.
- 4.3 CRES providers ensure second and subsequent rounds of allocations, including for late registrations, are conducted using the same process as the first round.
- 4.4 CRES providers ensure consistent and transparent communication to families about the CRES process and their child's allocation of a place.
- 4.5 CRES providers have a clearly communicated process for responding to and resolving complaints. This may include referring families to council general complaints process in CRES Policy.

Stage 5: CRES planning, maintenance and development in partnership with ECIB

- 5.1 Councils provide the department (via the local ECIB) with CRES data to support the monitoring and evaluation of the policy, and supply and demand for local kindergarten places through the development of agreed ECIB/CRES council processes.
- 5.2 CRES providers work with ECIBs to annually review CRES processes, procedures and adherence with these funding requirements.
- 5.3 CRES providers encourage non-CRES services in the area to participate in the CRES to support equitable access to kindergarten places.
- 5.4 Councils ensure the inclusion of CRES as part of their corporate quality improvement process.
- 5.5 Councils set up appropriate contract management arrangements, where they have chosen to include a third party in the CRES operating structure.

CRES delivery expectations

It is acknowledged that the provider coordinating a CRES may be the local council, or a contracted third party funded by the local council. The department provides a CRES funding contribution to local councils with the expectation that the local council will ensure CRES delivery in all contexts is aligned to these Funding Requirements.

The department's expectations for CRES providers and councils beyond the Funding Requirements (Table 1) include:

- relationships with local partners such as Maternal and Child Health (MCH) nurses, family day care services and kindergarten service providers, including Early Years Management (EYM) organisations, private providers, long-day care services and standalone providers
- a structured approach to engaging CRES partners including providing the right information at the right time
- proactive engagement of families, carers and communities experiencing vulnerability in the local area and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- collaboration with MCH and other family support services to identify children and families experiencing vulnerability and actively reach out to ensure they are aware of and engaged in the CRES process
- that the scheme has a clear governance structure to balance accountability, responsibility and responsiveness.
- using the [CRES Self-Assessment Tool](#) to reflect on strengths and opportunities for improvement.

More information on CRES is available at [Kindergarten Central Registration and Enrolment | vic.gov.au \(www.vic.gov.au\)](#) or via the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) at centralenrolment@mav.asn.au.

Further information on the CRES Funding Requirements can be sought from the MAV or the Department of Education at central.registration@education.vic.gov.au.

ⁱ Funded Kindergarten Programs refer to Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten and Pre- Prep (where appropriate).

ⁱⁱ Noting that kindergarten services should not be placed on the CRES until service approval has been granted.

ⁱⁱⁱ Children eligible for kindergarten must not be allocated a place in order of their age. For example, a child that turns 4 in July must not be prioritised over a child that turns 4 in August.