The **Community Preschool Operational Support Program** offers general business and sector-specific support at a practical and operational level to eligible community preschools funded under the NSW government’s Preschool Funding Model.

The program was developed following the introduction of the new Preschool Funding Model in January 2014. The program’s purpose is to assist community preschools to adjust to the new funding model, develop the business and other skills necessary to operate an efficient and effective community preschool service, and to ensure sustainability of the service over the longer term.

### How does the program work?

There are two stages to the program.

During the **first stage**, eligible preschools will receive assistance from a small business advisor through up to four face-to-face sessions. These small business advisors are part of the Government’s Small Biz Connect program. Small Biz Connect funds a network of mobile business advisors to provide advice to local small businesses, not-for-profits and social enterprises. The advisors will assist preschools in areas such as:

- financial planning
- cash flow management
- marketing
- strategic planning.

During the **second stage**, eligible preschools will also be able to access mentoring support from sector specialists, commissioned to provide early childhood education sector-specific advice to assist them in maximising funding under the Preschool Funding Model. It will include areas such as:

- maximising enrolments through outreach
- modelling and implementing an appropriate fee structure
- attracting, retaining and developing qualified staff.

### Is my preschool eligible for support under this program?

Preschools eligible to participate have already been informed of their eligibility by email. These are preschools which:

- are metropolitan services in receipt of transition funding, or
- are services outside of metropolitan areas in receipt of transition funding, or receiving a small funding increase under the new PFM with the potential to benefit further, and
- in addition, services must be independently operated, or part of a group of no more than four (4) preschools under the same service provider; or
- are preschools that meet the definition of a mobile preschool.
Mobile Preschools

To assist with the move to ‘opt in’ fixed term contracts, mobile preschools can only be offered a fixed term contract if they have completed the program. Click here for further information about mobile contracts and eligibility to participate is available through the Department’s website.

When will the program start?

Local Small Biz Connect advisors, located in regional centres across NSW, are waiting for preschools to call and make a first appointment. By contacting Small Biz Connect on 1300 134 359, preschools will be automatically directed to their local Small Biz Connect advisor.

Can my preschool get support if it has not been identified as eligible?

As small social enterprises, community preschools are eligible for general business advisory services under the existing Small Biz Connect program. This includes a number of free advisory sessions funded by the NSW Government’s Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner. Small Biz Connect advisors can be contacted by calling 1300 134 359 or click here for more information.

What will it cost my preschool service?

For eligible preschools, there is no cost - the program is fully funded by the NSW Government.

For preschools not eligible for the wider program, a number of free Small Biz Connect advisory sessions funded by the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner can still be accessed.

What kind of assistance can my preschool get and who determines what assistance my preschool needs?

There is a wide variety in the types of assistance that an eligible preschool could receive under this program. For example, one preschool may require advice on setting up a financial management system and enrolment procedures. Another may benefit from marketing specifically targeted at its local demographic.

During the first stage, local Small Biz Connect advisors – with local knowledge about small businesses and social enterprises – will work with these preschools to assess their needs through a ‘health check’. They will provide a report with actions and recommendations. Following these recommendations the Department will then allocate sector specialist support services for the second stage of the program.

Next Steps

To take advantage of the assistance provided under the Operational Support Program, eligible preschools should:

- Call Small Biz Connect on 1300 134 359 to be directed to a local advisor.
- Reply to the eligibility confirmation email you received on either 17 September or 11 November 2014 from ECEC.OperationalSupport@det.nsw.edu.au and confirm your consent to participate.