

## National Early Years Access Initiative

### Eligibility Guidelines

#### A. Applicant Eligibility

##### Who is Eligible to Apply?

The NEYAI is a targeted intervention and the eligibility of certain geographical areas is a condition of philanthropic and statutory funding. In addition to the established 11 Children's Services Committees (CSCs) specific inclusion and investment in Dublin environs and Cork city is stipulated. Eligibility to apply to the National Early Years Access Initiative (NEYAI) is confined to projects working in **consortia**.

To support the formation of consortia it is envisaged that Children's Services Committee's/Partnerships & Integrated Local Development Company's (ILDC's)/City and County Childcare Committee's (CCC's) will play a role in supporting the engagement of local groups to submit *Expressions of Interest* under the Initiative. It is envisaged that their role is to bring key stakeholders in their area together and act as an information conduit in respect of the Initiative, as appropriate to their level of capacity.

The following groups/organisations are considered to be eligible consortia members:

- Children's Services Committees;
- City & County Childcare Committees;
- Partnerships/Integrated Local Development Companies;
- Early years care and education providers including schools;
- Education and training providers e.g. colleges, training institutions etc.;
- National Voluntary Childcare Organisations; and
- Voluntary and community groups/organisations e.g. Family Resource Centres;
- The involvement of other consortium members will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Applicant groups will be expected to work in consortia with one or more of the aforementioned groups. As part of the initial process of putting together expressions of interest, consortia groups should agree on a lead partner who will assume overall contractual responsibility for the project. This partner will have overall legal, governance and financial responsibility and will be directly accountable to Pobal for all aspects of project implementation.

It is envisaged that CSC's/Partnerships & ILDC's /CCC's would have a **role in supporting the engagement** of local groups in forming consortia and in submitting expressions of interest. Each of these structures has varying levels of capacity to lead the process locally. Their role is to bring key actors in their areas together and act as an information conduit in respect of the Initiative. It should be noted that it is not envisaged that these groups will take on a vetting/appraisal role.

Following the expression of interest phase successful consortia will be obliged to engage in further work to refine their application if this is deemed necessary. Support will be provided by the Appraisal and Development Working Group.

The appraisal process will be a competitive one and it is not envisaged funding more than 13 local projects.

## B. Project Eligibility

At a strategic and programmatic level the National Early Years Access Initiative will fund local demonstration projects that collectively have a capacity to:

- Demonstrate innovative inter-agency responses to the provision of early years care, education and development;
- Improve access to early childhood care and education services;
- Increase participation in early childhood care and education services;
- Inform a community-based model to underpin the local delivery of joined up services to children and families;
- Involve children and families as active participants in the programme;
- Contribute to the development of robust evidence-based evaluation;
- Influence early years' mainstream practice and provision;
- Contribute to the ongoing development of early years' policy.

The primary target population is 0-6 year old children and families residing in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. The secondary target population is early years service providers; Children's Services Committees (CSCs), City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs), educational establishments, voluntary organisations and local communities.

### The focus of local projects

The Initiative will fund a limited number of consortia to deliver innovative local demonstration projects. Local projects will be configured around one or more of the activity areas listed below and must demonstrate how they will document effective practice and policy learning for local dissemination. The design of local projects will be based on the identification of local needs and therefore will be structured in a way that reflects an appropriate mix of activity areas to suit the local operating environment.

### Activity areas:

This Initiative is based on recognition that the *Síolta* and *Aistear* frameworks are the fundamental bedrocks and reference points for the future growth and development of the early years care and education sectors. Together they provide the strategic quality frameworks for the early years care and education sectors. Therefore it is essential that all projects are designed in ways that reflect various aspects of these frameworks but tailored to local needs.

Additionally the following activity areas apply:

- The promotion and dissemination of quality improvements through the use of *Síolta*, The National Framework for Early Childhood Education, and *Aistear*: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework;
- Upskilling the early childhood care and education workforce;
- Fostering improved health/ learning and school readiness outcomes among young children;
- Developing parent's skills and improved parenting support;
- Demonstrating a continuum of services for the 'whole child' linking and integrating the child, family, local services and the community.