

Better Beginnings Community Grants Program Guidelines

Applications open Friday 28 August 2026

What is Better Beginnings?

The State Library's Better Beginnings program is a Western Australian early literacy program that connects families with books through free reading packs. Our goal is to inspire a love of reading and learning for all Western Australian children by encouraging families to **read, talk, sing, draw** and **play** with their child every day.

The key aim of Better Beginnings is to support the development of literacy in children from birth; providing them with greater potential to grow, learn and develop, perform well at school, and succeed in later life. Improved literacy levels across Western Australia contribute to the creation of a skilled workforce and future economic development.

Better Beginnings is developed and managed by the State Library of Western Australia and delivered in partnership with Western Australian local governments which operate 233 public libraries throughout the State.

Western Australian Public Libraries sit at the heart of Better Beginnings, acting as the community hubs supporting parents in their role as their child's first teacher. They are the distribution point for the Better Beginnings program within their community and liaise with organisations working with children in the early years and Community Child Health Nurses to ensure the program is accessible to families in their area. Many public libraries deliver early childhood programs at their library which support the Better Beginnings program and encourage families to read, talk, sing, draw and play with their child every day.

In delivering Better Beginnings, the State Library also works with the [Child and Adolescent Health Service](#), [Child and Adolescent Community Health](#) and the [WA Country Health Service](#) to deliver book boxes.

The program is funded by the [Government of Western Australia](#) (including Royalties for Regions), Western Australian local governments and Rio Tinto.

Better Beginnings Community Grants Program

In March 2021, a State Government election commitment enabled the State Library to implement four rounds of grant funding. The success of the Better Beginnings Community Grants Program has led to further funding from the State Government to assist libraries and community organisations to develop early literacy activities to meet their local community needs.

Purpose

The Better Beginnings Community Grants Program prioritises funding for new and innovative literacy activities focused on building the crucial parent-child relationship essential for the highest impact of early literacy development (0-5 years). The funding does not replace resources for activities already in existence and is seeking exciting new proposals and ideas for activities that reach new audiences/participants.

In particular, the Program seeks to encourage partnerships across public libraries and community groups to develop relevant literacy activities, events, publications, and programs

that increase access for the key vulnerable communities identified as displaying low literacy levels against Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains.

Priority will also be placed on projects that demonstrate sustainability and that can be shared across networks and the community.

Funding categories

\$200,000 per annum is available in the following categories:

Better Beginnings Micro Grants

- A pool of \$80,000 per year for Micro Grants, from \$5,000 up to \$10,000 for Local Governments, public libraries and community groups or organisations.
- Innovative small projects can include new program development, community book production (with relevant activities that connect them to the parent/child interaction), interactive technology, new events, increased marketing, and promotion to new communities, targeted bi-lingual or cultural projects that promote the early literacy messages aligned with Better Beginnings aims.

Micro Grants may be used for the development and testing of pilot initiatives that may become eligible for the Better Beginnings Innovation Grants.

Better Beginnings Innovation Grants

- A pool of \$120,000 per year for longer term programs, or innovative partnerships between Local Governments, public libraries and community groups and organisations, from \$10,001 up to \$30,000.

Local Governments may apply for projects to be delivered across multiple library branches in their jurisdiction.

- Innovative programs and/or partnerships will address early childhood vulnerabilities against AEDC language and cognitive measures for school readiness, target multicultural and/or Indigenous communities, increase access through development of innovative sensory or play based learning initiatives.
- Innovative cross-community partnerships that strengthen health, social and cultural responses to early literacy development are encouraged.

AEDC research and evaluation of Better Beginnings indicates that socio-educational inequities of access and outcomes exist within:

- Remote communities.
- Indigenous communities.
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.
- Financially disadvantaged communities

There is also evidence of low levels of literacy where families and parents display low literacy levels themselves.

Priorities will apply to applications to the Better Beginnings Community Grants Program.

Applications for both the Micro and the Innovation Grants must:

1. Increase the engagement and connection between parent and child in early literacy activities (0-5 years of age), building confidence in families to read, talk, sing, draw and play; and
2. Explore new ways to engage families and the community in early literacy activities, reaching new participants who have been difficult to engage before.

Applications for the Innovation Grant (\$10,001 - \$30,000) must also:

3. Address barriers to participation for regional and remote, Indigenous, CALD or disadvantaged communities.
4. Indicate opportunities for sustainability beyond this funding program's investment; and
5. Build partnerships across community/ health/ cultural groups and organisations, that embed literacy outcomes in the longer term.

You will be asked to set targets against specified measures for each of the outcomes above.

How much can I apply for?

Better Beginnings Micro Grants Eligible applicants can apply for \$5,000 to \$10,000 (up to 80% of total project costs).

Better Beginnings Innovation Grants Eligible applicants can apply for from \$10,001 to \$30,000 (up to 80% of total project costs).

When, and how many times, can I apply?

The Better Beginnings Community Grants Program will open for online applications from 9am (AWST) on Friday 28 August 2026.

Applications will close at 5pm (AWST) on Wednesday 30 September 2026.

Applicants may apply to both funding categories: Micro Grants (\$5,000 - \$10,000), and Innovation Grants (\$10,001 - \$30,000) each year, but not for the same project. Applicants are restricted to one application per category in each grant funding round.

Applicants may only receive two Innovation Grants (\$10,001 - \$30,000) in total, from commencement of the grants program in 2021. Applicants may apply for the development of the same project progressively over these two applications.

Applications for public libraries must be submitted through the Local Government Authority, multiple branch-based projects are eligible in the Innovation category.

Payment of funds is dependent on completing any outstanding acquittals. Projects must be completed within 12 months of contracting and acquitted within 4 weeks of the end of the project contract.

Who can apply?

Public libraries, through their Local Government Authority. Not-for-profit community groups and organisations already established and operating in WA are welcome to apply, however:

- Organisations must be registered under law (e.g., incorporated association, company limited by guarantee).

- Un-incorporated groups, teams, or partnerships informally collaborating on an activity must be based in Western Australia and require a public library or incorporated community group to act as an auspicing body. Please speak to the Better Beginnings team before commencing your application.
- If you are applying on behalf of Aboriginal people, you must provide evidence of significant Aboriginal involvement in the conception, development of and participation in the activity.

Please note:

- WA educational institutions (kindergartens, primary schools) **cannot** apply.
- Individuals **cannot** apply for this funding alone, and must be part of a group, organisation, or partnership.

Eligible activities

You may apply for costs associated with delivering new family literacy activities and events within Western Australia including:

- Materials, equipment, and technology that will improve or increase the access to early family literacy activities and/or events.
- New kits or specialist resources to support a new program are eligible and can be made available for loan to patrons.
- Consultancy support and expertise in developing new activities, events and programs, including travel costs. This can include training for staff if it supports the early literacy aims of the grant application and will give library staff the skills required to continue the program past the funding round.
- Professional writers, performers, groups and musicians to deliver activities, events and programs.
- Production and publication costs associated with community-specific books or online programs, this includes any cultural or language specific advice and input, dependent on the application making clear the activities that link the publication to the development of the parent/child relationship.
- Marketing and promotional materials that increase awareness of family literacy activities, events and programs, as well as the Better Beginnings messages.
- Fees for professional documentation of outcomes of the activities and events, for future sharing, use online and/or reporting.
- Passive infrastructure that promotes early literacy to families in the absence of programming. This could include signage and resources that engage families to the read, talk sing, draw and play.
- Tier 2 and 3 public libraries and small community organisations may be able to apply for relief for staffing support for substantial periods for research and partnership development. Clear justification for this need must be provided.

All facilitators that engage with children should also abide by the State Government's Working with Children Check guidelines.

What can't I apply for?

The aim of this funding program is to increase activities in the early family literacy area, and to increase the reach and inclusion of these programs to those families and communities who may not currently have access to them. The following are not eligible for this funding:

- Programs that currently exist and are already funded. You may apply for projects that exist elsewhere, but are new to your community, or will be tailored to suit a new target audience or community.
- Re-imbursement of costs associated with a project started before the funding contract is awarded.
- Core library and community organisations staffing and administration costs.
- General library collection purchases (this refers to general stock).
- Training costs which do not support the early literacy aims of the grant application.
- Capital works, vehicles or refurbishment projects. This includes library fit outs (furniture, shelving) and building projects.
- University or academic research activities.
- Charitable fundraising activities, prizes, competitions and trophies.

What will make my application ineligible?

Your application becomes ineligible if you:

- Submit a late application.
- Submit an incomplete application or one that exceeds the limits of submission.
- Include requests for items in the excluded costs of a program, activity or event above.
- Request funds that are more than 80% of the total project cost, or more than the limits of the grant category.
- Exceed the number of applications you are allowed to this program.
- Are not a Local Government Authority, public library, community group or organisation registered under law (e.g., incorporated association, company limited by guarantee) or auspiced by such an organisation.
- Are a Portfolio organisation of the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport and Cultural Industries.
- Are a WA educational institution (kindergartens, primary schools).

Assessment and notification

Applications are assessed by a panel of representatives from Senior Management of the State Library of Western Australia, the Public Library network, and the early years sector.

Assessment is based on the following:

1. Strength of the application's proposal to meet the aims and priorities of the Better Beginnings program
2. Ability of the proposal to reach the target audience and achieve expected outcomes
3. Financial and project planning: is this achievable?

For Innovation Grants, sustainability beyond one round of funding will also be taken into consideration as a criterion for assessment.

The timeline is provided below.

- Friday 28 August 2026: Better Beginnings Community Grants open for applications.
- Wednesday 30 September 2026: Applications close.
- End November 2026: Assessment and approval of recommended applications completed.
- November – December 2026: Applicants notified of outcomes. Contracting for successful applicants completed.
- January 2027 – December 2027: Micro and Innovation Grants projects implemented across 12 months
- 31 January 2028: Acquittals completed.

Financial information and budget information

Requested budget information is focused on the income and expenditure of the program or project application you are making only.

Expenditure items can be grouped in categories:

- Administration: includes telephone, internet costs, postage, insurance, accessibility costs, financial management, printing cost, software/app licensing.
- Marketing and Promotion: advertising, design, documentation gathering, editing, printing, banners, posters and flyers, website development, social media.
- Development and Production: materials and equipment, costumes, props, publications, venues, research, language translations, filming costs.
- Salaries and Fees: professional fees, consultancy fees, commissioning fees, staff costs being aligned to the project (own contribution), photographers, filmmakers etc.

Ensure you have researched the costs of the elements of your project through seeking quotes and consultancy fees, even if you won't be submitting them as support material. Additional funding is not available for any under-estimated project costs once the grant application has been approved.

Please note elements of the budget that cannot be funded by the Better Beginnings Innovation Grant funding and ensure these are offset in your Income sections of the overall Project budget.

The 20% required income level may come from your own organisation's funding contributions, other sponsorships, donations or grant applications, partnership

contributions, or in-kind contributions such as staff time, venue hire, administration costs etc.

You must show your expenditure **exclusive** of the GST component. GST will **not be paid** as part of this funding.

Support material

A small amount of support material may be submitted to assist the assessment panel understand the proposed activities, events, or programs. This should be kept to text or photographic documentation that you can upload, or links to websites, event pages, Vimeo sites for examples of previous activities.

It may be useful to include:

- Resumes, biographical information or proposals from any professional expertise/consultants you wish to assist with your project.
- Letters of confirmation from partners or collaborators of their involvement.
- Quotes for major equipment, technology, production expenses (over \$2,000).
- Confirmation of agreed financial and in-kind contributions to the project.
- Examples of previous activities, events or programs undertaken by the proposed team members.

Acquittal Reporting

If you are successful with your application, you will be required to provide a final acquittal report at the conclusion of your project. This report will be submitted through the online Submittable platform.

The report should detail the outcomes of the project funding, the participant target groups reached and their satisfaction and feedback on the project, as well as an indication of the future status of the project (e.g., whether the funded program will continue or not). The financial report component should provide the actual expenditure and income against the proposed figures from your original application. Differences are acceptable, all projects change in implementation. Provide notes on any significant differences between the proposed and actual figures. A financial statement signed by the CFO in your organisation will need to be submitted. Appropriate wording for the statement will be provided to successful applicants.

Documentation on the project's outcomes such as photographs, video or written feedback will provide evidence of implementation, and enable Better Beginnings to promote future grants rounds. Please ensure any participants featured in photographs and video footage have provided consent for promotional use of their image.

Further information on the acquittal reporting will be provided to successful grant recipients.