

9.1.1 WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT EARLY CHILDHOOD (WALGEC) AEDC GRANT PROGRAM 2024 - DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

AUTHOR	Estelle Lottering – Project Manager and Community Services
DATE	Monday, 20 November 2023
FILE NO	FM.SPN.1
ATTACHMENT(S)	<p>9.1.1.1 - Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Program</p> <p>9.1.1.2 - Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Information Pack 2023</p> <p>9.1.1.3 – Local Government AEDC Grants Program 2024 Grant Guidelines and Application form</p>

<p>'PLACEMAKING' STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN JULY 2023 TO JUNE 2033 To be "The Cultural Experience Centre of the Great Southern" STRATEGIC/CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS</p>		
Key Strategic Pillar/s	Community Goal/s	Corporate Objective/s
Lifestyle	2. Proactive Community Spirit	2.6 Wellbeing advancement

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Nil

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider supporting a grant application for funding towards the WALGEC Australian Education Development Census Grant Program 2024.

BACKGROUND

The Kojonup Rotary Club recently contacted Cr Egerton-Warburton to raise with the Shire of Kojonup (Shire) the possibility of introducing to Kojonup the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program (Program), as provided through United Way Australia.

A request was made by Cr Egerton-Warburton, on behalf of the Kojonup Rotary Club, for assistance in applying for financial support via the Western Australian Local Government Early Childhood AEDC (Australian Early Development Census) Grant program to fund this Program.

Cr Egerton-Warburton discussed this proposition at the 7 November 2023 Briefing Session and raised it within the 7 November 2023 Special Council Meeting where it was proposed that an item be brought to Council's 21 November 2023 Ordinary Meeting.

Due to staff time constraints, this item is being presented as a late item for consideration at this meeting.

COMMENT

The Program provides books to children at a rate of one per month from birth until children reach school age – at a value of \$108 per year per child (Cr Egerton-Warburton has advised a number of 135 for children in this age cohort in Kojonup).

The Western Australian Department of Education (Education) has partnered with the Department of Communities (Communities) and the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) to deliver the AEDC Grant Program.

The AEDC Grant Program provides one off grants to Local Government Authorities (LGAs) to implement projects aimed at improving the overall health and wellbeing of young children aged 0 to 5 years living in Western Australia.

The AEDC is a population measure that takes place every three years to facilitate the national collection of information on young children's development across five key areas linked to the predictors of good adult health, education, and social outcomes.

The outcomes are:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- communication skills and general knowledge

In Western Australia, analysis of 2021 data indicates that the percentage of children who began school with developmental difficulties increased between 2018 and 2021. In 2021, nearly 30 Local Government areas had 25% or more children classified as developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains (see attachment 9.1.1.3).

Research (as outlined in attachment 9.1.1.3) into child development overwhelmingly supports the view that focussing on early childhood health and wellbeing leads to improved school readiness, better outcomes while at school, education, employment, and health into adulthood, as well as reduced economic costs to government, communities, and families and better security for neighbourhoods and society.

Local governments play an essential role across a range of areas that support young children's health and wellbeing, development, and learning and are well placed to work directly with their community to respond to AEDC results.

The Western Australian Local Government Early Childhood AEDC Grant Program is offering LGAs grants of up to \$100,000.00 (excluding GST) to implement community-wide, strategic initiatives. If Council is in support of this Program for Kojonup children and submits a successful grant application for the next two years, the Kojonup Rotary Club has pledged \$5,000 per year for two years in support of the project; covering the cost of the Program (being \$35,000 for two years inclusive of a postage estimate of \$7,500 per year) - see Financial Implications.

CONSULTATION

Briefing Session – 7 November 2023

Cr Warburton-Egerton on behalf of the Kojonup Rotary Club

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

s. 6.8 (1) *Local Government Act 1995* – Expenditure from Municipal Fund not included in annual budget

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Nil

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If an AEDC Grant Program 2024 application for \$35,000.00 over two years should be successful, the Kojonup Rotary Club will contribute \$5,000.00 per year for two years' support of this project.

The size and weight of books is unknown; however, it is estimated that postage and packaging costs would be in the vicinity of \$5 per book per month per child per year; this cost has been factored into the \$35,000 grant application (in the event that 135 Kojonup children partake in the project).

It is suggested that staff time is available to undertake the task of handling and posting books.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK			
Risk Profile	Risk Description/Cause	Key Control	Current Action
6. Engagement	Inadequate involvement with or support of community groups	Community engagement/networking	Nil
<i>Risk rating: Low</i>			
IMPLICATIONS			
It is possible that there may be an expectation of provision of books past the two year timeframe catered for by this recommendation.			

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Nil

SOUTHERN LINK VROC (VOLUNTARY REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS) IMPLICATIONS

Nil

VOTING REQUIREMENTS

Absolute Majority

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That Council submits a grant application to the Western Australian Local Government Early Childhood Australian Education Development Census Grant Program 2024 (Grant) for an amount of \$35,000 for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 to support the implementation of Dolly Parton's Imaginations Books, as provided by Uniting Way, Australia on the basis there is no cash provided by the Shire of Kojonup (Shire) and, on the proviso that the Grant is successful, the Shire will commit to provide in-kind resources to support implementation.



Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Program

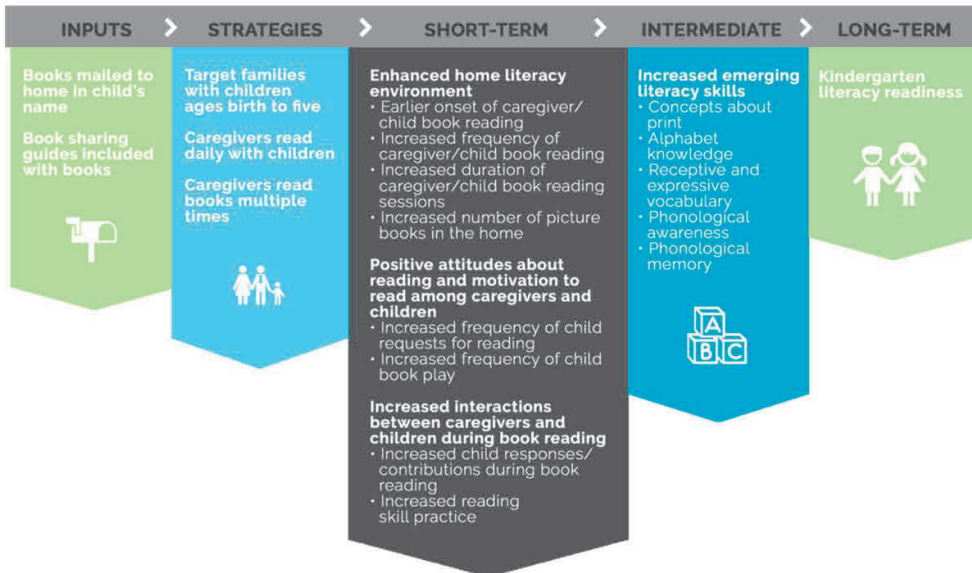
Impact Report 2020

Version 1.0

The Impact of the Imagination Library on the Home Literacy Environment and associated Emerging Literacy Skills in Infants and Young Children

Logic Model

Based on Imagination Library Research Findings and Literature Review.



SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO READ, LEARN AND SUCCEED.

Background

The critical early years

Research shows that the experiences we have as young children shape the adults we become. Over the past thirty years, the understanding of the importance of the first five years to life outcomes across health, education, and work has profoundly shifted due to a growing body of cross-disciplinary evidence. Scientists have shown that by age five, when most children enter school, approximately 90% of brain development has occurred, with the cognitive and linguistic “building blocks” largely set in place (Centre on the Developing Child, 2017). Anderson et al (2018) posit that ‘children’s readiness as literacy learners at kindergarten entry strongly predicts their early reading acquisition and trajectory toward reading success throughout their school experience.’

However, in Australia, 1 in 5 children start school unprepared for learning (AECD 2018). In some communities, this is as high as 1 in 3 children (AECD 2018). Entering school with a smaller vocabulary than classmates is a disadvantage that has lifelong impacts on an individual’s chances for success (World Literacy Foundation, 2018). Furthermore, without the ability to read or write, people can become trapped in a cycle of poverty with limited opportunities for employment or income generation (World Literacy Foundation, 2018).

Shared book reading and the building blocks of early literacy

“Helping children become excited about learning and making sure that they don’t enter school already behind their fellow classmates is extremely important for addressing illiteracy.” (World Literacy Foundation, 2018)

Shared book reading, the act of reading with a caregiver, promotes children’s vocabulary, story comprehension, language development and emotional development (Anderson et al 2018). Children who have engaged in shared book reading associate reading with enjoyable, positive experiences, setting the context for future literacy learning (Anderson et al). More broadly, shared reading contributes to a child’s ‘cultural toolkit’, which increases future academic success across disciplines (Hoyne and Egan, 2019). Research has found that the age at which a caregiver begins reading has impacts for development, with birth being the optimal time to begin (Hoyne and Egan, 2019).

However, shared book reading is by no means universal, and research shows that families living in low-socioeconomic circumstances, and those with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, may have fewer books in the home and engage less in shared book reading (Anderson, 2018). It is with this in mind that Anderson et al posit that ‘providing books for families who have few (or none) is another way to support families in their important role in preparing their children for school success’ (Anderson et al, 2018 p4).

Evidence for the Imagination Library literacy intervention

Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library empowers caregivers of children aged 0 – 5 to engage in shared reading by gifting their child an age-appropriate book each month. Accompanying each book is a tip sheet which provides ideas for engaging with the book in ways that are known to be beneficial for language acquisition and development.

Much of the existing evidence on the impacts of the Imagination Library has been conducted by program partners in the US and UK. Recent research from the UK from Tura et al (2021) shows that the Imagination Library increases frequency of reading in low-socioeconomic families, bringing them in line with their more socio-economically advantaged peers in the control group. Importantly, the study shows that families receiving the Imagination Library engage in significantly more beneficial parent-child interactions while reading than the control group who were not receiving the program, despite their lower socio-economic status (Tura et al, 2021).

A US study by Andersen et al. (2018) measured children's language and literacy abilities at the beginning of the Imagination Library program and then again on kindergarten entry. It found that frequency of shared book reading was strongly correlated with later measures of print concepts, reading behaviours, narrative retelling, narrative comprehension, and interest in reading. It also found that alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness measures were improved by stopping to ask the child about specific letters and words (2018).

These findings are supported by other studies. In 2017 Ridzi et al. examined whether consistent participation in the Imagination Library is associated with Letter Naming Fluency (LNF), which is considered a key marker of kindergarten readiness. They found that those children who consistently participated in the Imagination Library for three years or more had significantly higher LNF test scores than those who had not participated in the Imagination Library. In an earlier study, the same authors found that the length of enrolment in the Imagination Library was positively associated with measures of child-directed reading and story discussion (Ridzi et al., 2014). Another recent study (Samiei et al., 2016) also examined the association between the Imagination Library and kindergarten readiness, finding that program participation was positively associated with higher early language and maths scores.

In 2018 the *incus group* conducted an independent evaluation of the program rolled out to over 400 children in 'out-of-home' care in Victoria, Australia. They found that 90% of carers surveyed reported that they read more often and for longer with their children as a result of the Imagination Library, and 86% of carers reported an increase in child requests for reading. The report also showed that 79% of carers reported feeling more connected to the child through reading Imagination Library books.

2020 Outcomes

Evaluation approach

Based on the Program Logic, both quantitative and qualitative approaches to measurement are used to measure activities, outcomes and impact. Survey questions align with The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC data) and have been developed in consultation with educational professionals, data collection specialists and a senior statistician at Cerebral Palsy Alliance and Sydney Children's Hospital, Westmead. Evaluation relies on prospective data which follows families through time and collects real life data as time progresses. The initial baseline survey is conducted at enrolment, and therefore captures reading habits before the introduction of the Imagination Library to the home reading environment. Caregivers are surveyed again at 6 and 12 months after the introduction of the Imagination Library to the home reading environment. Surveys are conducted on an opt-in basis in selected Imagination Library communities across Australia, and are collected online, on paper and via phone. This report provides data from 287 caregivers who have volunteered to respond to surveys in selected Imagination Library communities across Australia.

This report provides results of the short and medium-term outcomes, as highlighted in the Logic Model. These outcomes, which include increased interactions between caregivers and children during book reading, and resulting emerging literacy skills, are known drivers of school readiness. Data from the first 6 months reveals increased reading time and frequency, and positive changes in caregiver behaviour, enjoyment and attitudes associated with reading to their child. Early results from the 12-month data suggest positive trends in reading time and frequency, and caregiver behaviour changes.

United Way Australia plan to further investigate the impact of the Imagination Library on school literacy readiness by focussing evaluation on the Tamworth Regional Council area, where the Imagination Library is implemented using a universal, whole of community approach. Since 2019 all children in Tamworth have been enrolled on the program from birth, with 1545 children currently

enrolled. This allows further investigation using the Australian Early Development Census statistics over time to see changes in school readiness. Due to the scope of this program, and the availability of resources to dedicate to evaluation, findings from Tamworth will also be examined in this report.

Overview of survey results

Indicator	Baseline	6 months	Gain
Enhanced home literacy environment			
Increased frequency and duration of reading			
Child is read to regularly (several times a week or more)	76%	90%	14%
Child is read to once a day or more	61%	72%	11%
Child is read to for more than 10 mins in a session	16%	47%	31%
Increased interactions between caregivers and children during book reading			
Increase in reading techniques beneficial for emerging literacy			
Caregiver repeating/teaching rhyming words	41%	59%	18%
Caregiver repeating/teaching letter sounds	31%	43%	12%
Caregiver counting images/objects	60%	80%	20%
Caregiver describing/discussing images	57%	79%	22%
Non-primary caregivers read to child	4%	47%	43%
Caregivers spend quality time as a family with books	4%	81%	77%
Positive attitudes about reading and motivation to read			
Among children			
Child initiates self-directed book time	4%	23%	19%
Child shows interest in books and reading	6%	43%	37%
Among caregivers			
Caregiver finds reading with child enjoyable	7%	66%	59%
Caregiver feels confident to read to child	8%	81%	73%
Caregiver seeks out books for child	5%	64%	59%
Increased emerging literacy skills			
Caregiver reports DPIL increased child vocabulary		58%	
Caregiver reports increase in child interacting with books		84%	

Discussion - National Survey

Logic Model - Enhanced home literacy environment

“I appreciate having the opportunity to consider how I am incorporating reading time into our day and thinking about how I can improve how we spend time - like swapping some screen time for book reading.” – Imagination Library Parent, Smithfield SA

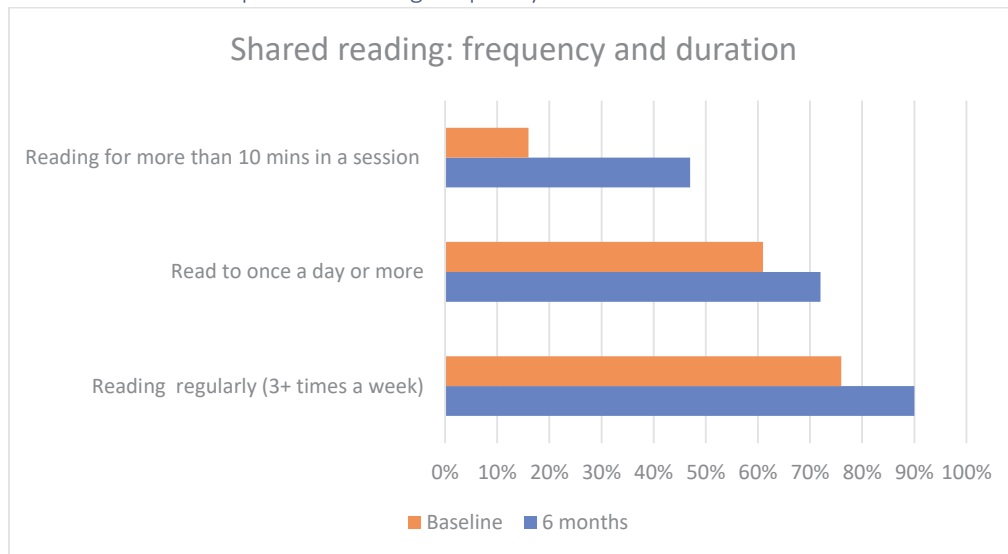
Survey responses showed that the introduction of the Imagination Library increased both the frequency of reading aloud, and the duration a child was read to. At the same time, it decreased irregular reading, that is, reading once a week or less.

After receiving the Imagination Library for 6 months 72% of children were being read to at least once a day, an increase of 11%, and 90% were being read to several times a week, an increase of 14%. Irregular reading, that is, reading at most once a week, and at minimum not at all, reduced from 24%

at baseline, to 6% at 6 months, and by 12 months, only 1% of parents were reading once a week or less.

Overall, the amount of time caregivers spent reading in one sitting increased substantially within the first 6 months of receiving the Imagination Library. The proportion of caregivers reading for more than 10 minutes increased by 31%. The proportion reading between 11 – 20 minutes tripled, from 10% at baseline to 34% at 6 months.

Table 1: National snapshot of reading frequency and duration



Logic Model - Increased interactions between caregivers and children during book reading

“The tip sheets have completely changed how I interact with the books and my children before, during, and after reading.” – Imagination Library Parent, Ryde NSW

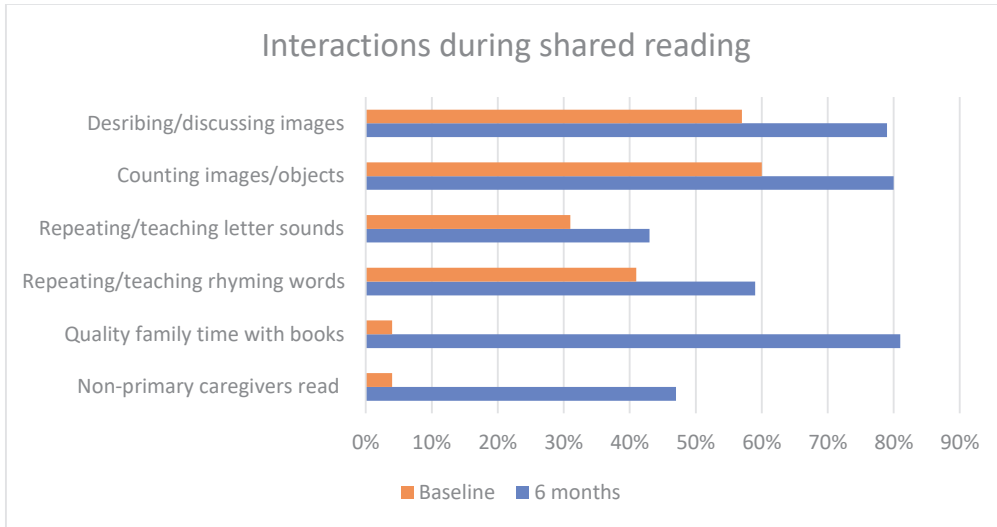
The Imagination Library changes the way that caregivers read to children, increasing reading techniques known to be beneficial for language acquisition and development. In the first 6 months of receiving the Imagination Library, the proportion of caregivers using repeating rhyming words during reading time increased by nearly 20%. The proportion of caregivers counting objects while reading also increased by 20% and the proportion of caregivers describing and discussing images increased by more than 20%.

“It’s even got my husband reading to the kids too.” – Imagination Library Parent, Bendigo Vic

The data revealed a substantial increase in others reading to children in the first 6 months of receiving the Imagination Library, increasing from 4% at baseline, to 47% at 6 months, and remaining increased at 12 months. This is also shown in the optional comments field, with many caregivers noting an increase in reading with dad or other family members.

The Imagination Library also promotes family time with books. After 6 months of receiving the Imagination Library 90% of caregivers reported spending more quality time as a family with books. At baseline only 4% of respondents reported spending time together as a family with books.

Table 2: National snapshot of caregiver-child interactions during shared reading



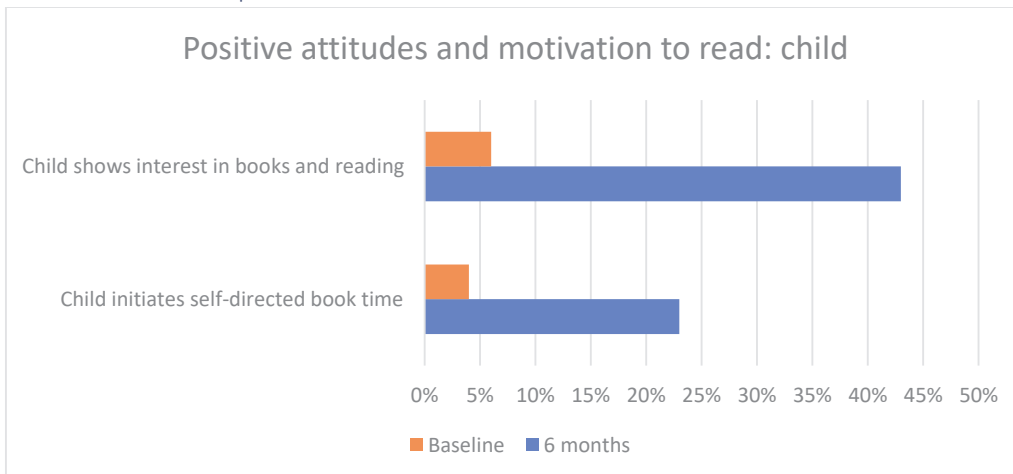
Logic model - Positive attitudes about reading and motivation to read among caregivers and children

Among children

“He knows how to turn the pages and what direction you read. I think a huge reason for this is because I enrolled him so young and started reading to him every day.” – Imagination Library Parent, Ryde, NSW

After 6 months of receiving the Imagination Library, caregivers reported an increase in child directed book play, with only 4% of children engaging in book play at baseline, and 23% after 6 months receiving the Imagination Library. Children also showed more interest in books after receiving the Imagination Library, with 43% of caregivers reporting their child was interested in books and reading, an increase of 37%.

Table 3: National snapshot of child attitudes and motivation to read

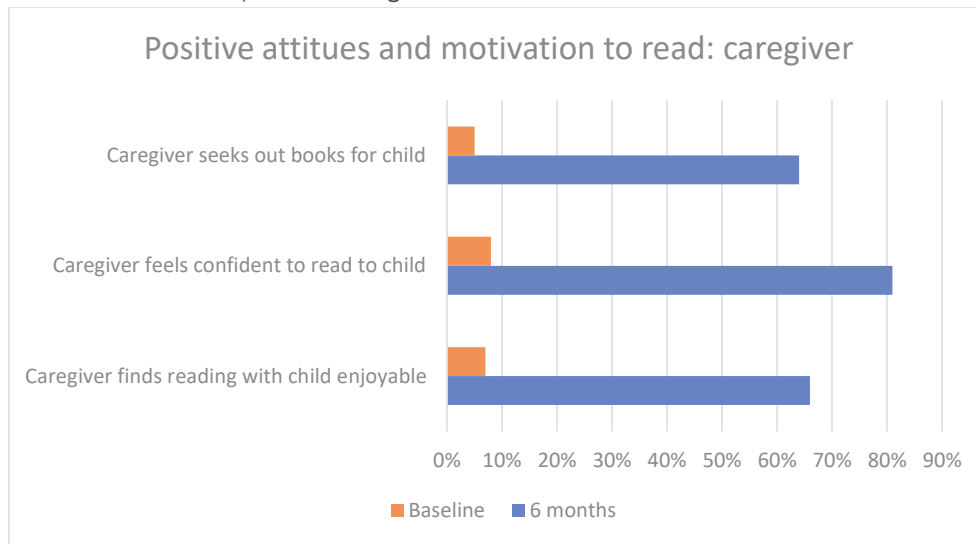


Among caregivers

“We enjoy our time together in reading the books.” – Imagination Library Parent, Ryde, NSW

After receiving the Imagination Library for 6 months, caregivers reported a 10-fold increase in their enjoyment of shared reading from 7% at baseline to 66% at 6 months. This remained elevated at 12 months after receiving the Imagination Library. Similarly, caregivers reported an 8-fold increase in their confidence to read to their child, with 80% agreeing that they felt more confident to read to their child after receiving the the Imagination Library for 6 months. The Imagination Library also prompted caregivers to seek out other books for their children, with 64% of caregivers looking for additional books for their child after receiving the Imagination Library for 6 months, compared to 5% at baseline. Furthermore, 46% of caregivers reported that their own reading habits had improved since receiving the Imagination Library.

Table 4: National snapshot of caregiver attitudes and motivation to read



Logic Model - Increased emerging literacy skills

“We thought our son might need speech therapy but since getting the books his speech has improved.” – Imagination Library Parent, Vale Grove SA

“I strongly believe it is the program and the beautiful quality books that have helped mould Charlotte’s interest in reading and even the interaction she is showing in wanting to touch the book and point at the imagery throughout. I want to shout to the world how amazing this program is, and how it bonds a family together each and every month!” - Imagination Library Parent, Tamworth NSW

84% of caregivers reported that their child’s interaction with books increased as a result of receiving the Imagination Library each month. 58% of caregivers surveyed reported that their child’s vocabulary had grown as a result of receiving the Imagination Library.

Table 5: National snapshot of change in child interaction with books due to the Imagination Library

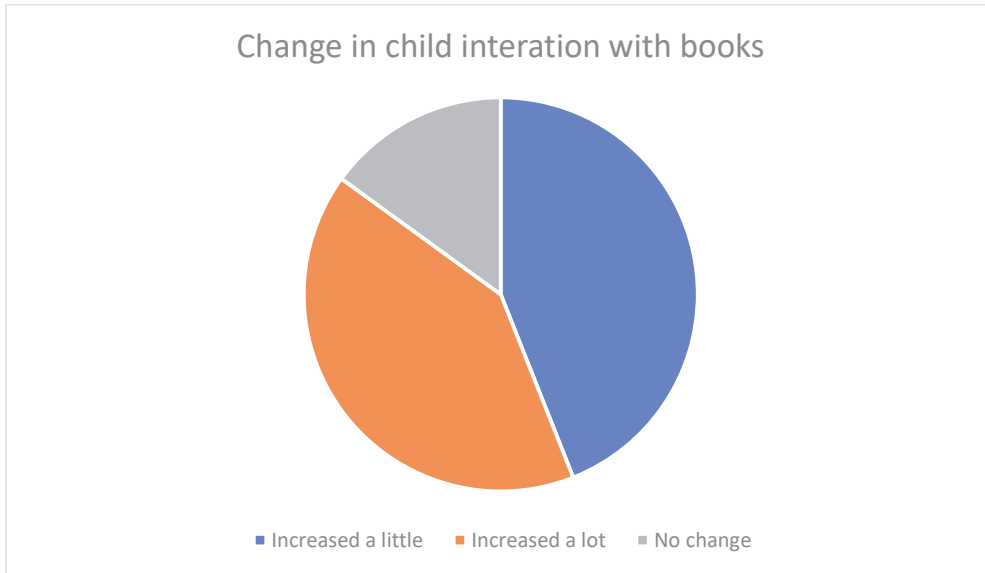
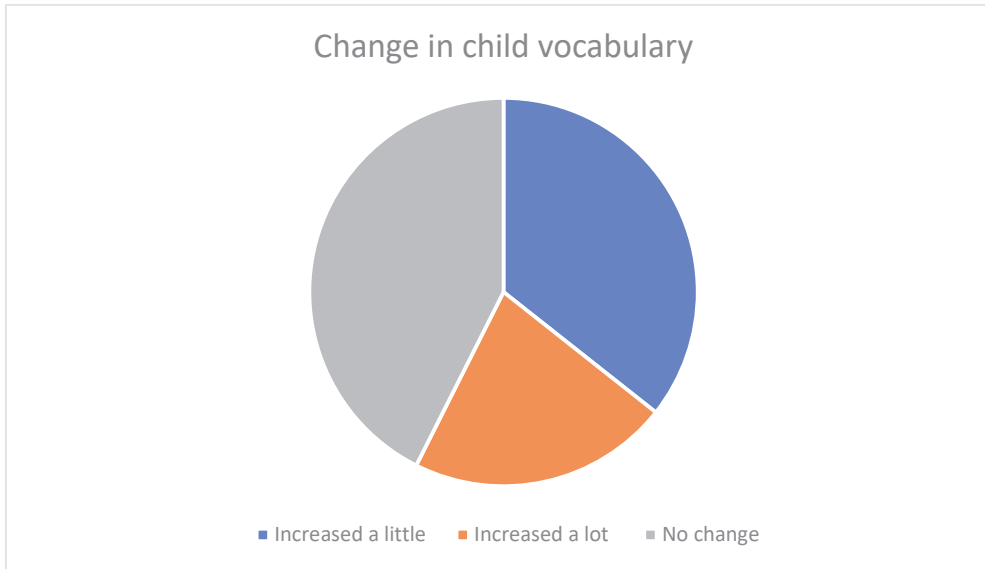


Table 6: National snapshot of change in child vocabulary due to the Imagination Library



Case Study: DPIL in the Tamworth Regional Council area

In Tamworth, the Regional Council, early childhood nurses, Libraries, Primary Health Network and local businesses have come together to support early childhood literacy by ensuring all children born in the regional are enrolled in the Imagination Library. Since 2019, the nurses at the hospital have been enrolling babies at birth, with 1545 children currently enrolled. This gives a unique opportunity to examine the impact of a community wide approach using a combination of prospective data collected by United Way Australia, and National Data collected as part of the Australian Early

Development Census, both current and future. While the age range of the children reported on for the National report is between 0 and 4.8 years at baseline, and 4 months and 5 years at 6 months, for the Tamworth data, children are aged between 0 and 6 months when completing the baseline survey, and between 5 months and 13 months when completing the 6-month survey. This shows an early onset of beneficial reading frequency, duration and caregiver-child interactions during shared reading.

Overview of Tamworth survey results

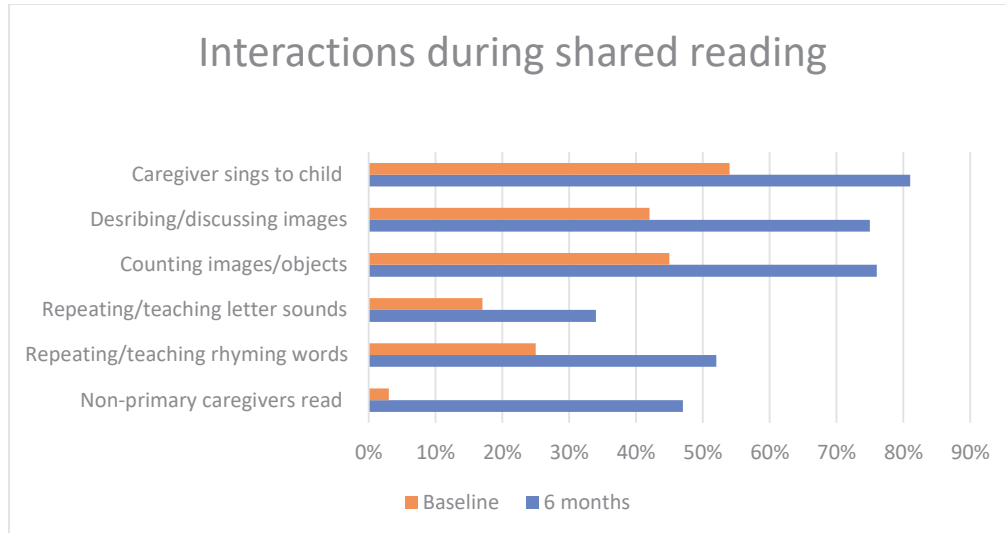
Indicator	Baseline	6 months	Gain
Enhanced home literacy environment			
Increased frequency and duration of reading			
Child is read to regularly (several times a week or more)	75%	88%	13%
Child is read to once a day or more	58%	72%	14%
Child is read to for up to 10 minutes in a session	24%	55%	31%
Child is read to for more than 10 mins in a session	14%	38%	24%
Increased interactions between caregivers and children during book reading			
Increase in reading techniques beneficial for emerging literacy			
Caregiver repeating/teaching rhyming words	25%	52%	27%
Caregiver repeating/teaching letter sounds	17%	34%	17%
Caregiver counting images/objects	45%	76%	31%
Caregiver describing/discussing images	42%	75%	33%
Caregiver sings to child	54%	81%	27%
Non-primary caregivers read to child	3%	47%	44%
Positive attitudes about reading and motivation to read			
Among children			
Child shows interest in books and reading	4%	41%	37%
Among caregivers			
Caregiver finds reading with child enjoyable	9%	64%	55%
Caregiver feels confident to read to child	9%	77%	68%
Caregiver believes reading is important	47%	96%	49%

Discussion – Tamworth Survey

Earlier onset of caregiver-child interactions during shared reading

While increases in reading frequency and duration, and positive attitudes about reading, were similar in both the national data and in the Tamworth data, it is worth noting that bigger gains were made in increased interactions between caregivers and children during shared reading in Tamworth (see Table 7). Notably, 15% of caregivers reported that their child was too young to be read to at baseline in Tamworth, reflecting the common misconception that shared reading is for older infants and children. With this in mind, it is clear that the Imagination Library results in earlier onset of reading and caregiver-child book interactions, particularly in children who are enrolled at birth.

Table 7: Tamworth snapshot of caregiver-child interactions during shared reading



What Tamworth caregivers tell us

“This program is absolutely fantastic! Every single new mum I have spoken to has been enrolled at the hospital (midwives enrol babies at the hospital so vulnerable or socially isolated people don’t miss out). This not only helps our children’s literacy, but our own as well. It is such a beautiful bonding experience and I just love our dedicated reading time each day. Thank you thank you thank you!!!!”
 – Imagination Library Parent, Tamworth NSW

“I can’t thank you enough. This program gives me so much validation that my community cares about the future of my son.” – Imagination Library Parent, Tamworth NSW

Conclusion

International research has shown that the Imagination Library increases frequency and duration of shared reading, caregiver-child interactions during reading, and ultimately school literacy readiness. The evaluation of the Imagination Library in Australia is consistent with these findings. In particular, the Imagination Library in Australia is shown to boost positive attitudes about reading among both caregivers and children, resulting in more frequent, enjoyable and interactive shared reading sessions, fostering skills that are known to drive school literacy readiness.

References

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United
Way



Australia



DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

Information Pack

2023

**STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITIES** **TOGETHER**





About United Way Australia



1. About United Way Australia
2. Why focus on early literacy – evidence and research
3. About Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
4. Case study – Tamworth Region DPIL
5. Program costing

STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITIES **TOGETHER**





About United Way Australia

Founded in 1887, United Way is a global organization, focused on improving lives, and strengthening communities. Operating in 41 countries and with over 1800 local chapters, United Way is the largest privately funded not-for-profit charity in the world.

In Australia, we operate at the heart of communities to empower and educate children and young people through flagship early childhood and youth employment initiatives. We build foundations for communities to thrive.

Our key initiative, READ LEARN SUCCEED, operates across many geographically and culturally diverse communities. Early literacy skills are supported through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.



STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITIES **TOGETHER**





A word from our CEO, Clayton Noble.

United Way Australia finds ways to spark the potential of children who might otherwise be left behind.

These children are born with the same capacity for learning as their peers, but don't get the same literacy building blocks to carry throughout life. They are left behind before they get started.

Your postcode shouldn't determined your potential. We understand the problem, and we have a simple, affordable way to tackle it that gets children smiling.

Research tells us that the first 2,000 days of a child's life are vital for brain development, and the impact on the next 80-plus years is profound. The simple act of regularly reading to a child opens up a whole new world. That begins with owning books at home. Receiving their own book each month, addressed to them, allows a child to make that world their own.

Deliver this in a structured, nurturing way for five years before school and that child's trajectory can change completely.

That's what United Way Australia is passionate about.

Clayton Noble

CEO, United Way Australia

**STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITIES TOGETHER**





Why focus on early literacy – research and evidence

- Research shows that early literacy is a foundational key for future success
- 50% of language learned by 3 years of age
- 90% of brain development occurs by age of 5, therefore early intervention is critical
- Access to books in the home contribute to additional years of academic achievement
- Children with access to at least 20 books in the home reach an overall higher level of educational attainment than those without, regardless of the parent's education, occupation, and socioeconomic status
- Children not reading proficiently by Grade 4, are four times more likely to drop out of school prior to graduation
- Low literacy linked is to lower wages, standards of living and impaired health outcomes
- Poor literacy skills are associated with higher rates of welfare dependency, lower self-esteem, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy.





Our Impact Assessment found that the Imagination Library is backed by robust peer-reviewed research and Australian program evidence, and likely delivers a strong return on investment*.



Shared book reading helps children develop early literacy skills, resulting in improved Year 3 NAPLAN scores



The Imagination Library has a unique offering, and a track record of impact in Australia



There is a robust body of peer-reviewed research evidence showing that the Imagination Library improves shared reading behaviour and strengthens early literacy skills



Program evidence shows that the Imagination Library is also delivering strong results in Australia



It also suggests that the benefits of the program go beyond shared book reading and early literacy, and include strengthened connections within and between families and the broader community

1 / 20

Economic analysis suggests that the program breaks even on its original investment if around one in twenty families start reading to their child 6-7 days per week as a result of the program

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

*Research conducted by dandolo partners
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library - Impact assessment. October 2022





About Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library was licensed by UWA in Australia in response to ongoing decline in literacy and early childhood outcomes.



An Imagination Library:

- brings the magic of a library into the home
- with the gift of a book
- every month
- before school begins
- alongside a tip sheet for families on how to make the most of the books
- supporting parents as their child's first and most important teacher
- taking a proven first step towards much more in a child's life.

"Without these books arriving each month, we probably wouldn't have started reading bedtime stories or get excited when a new book arrived in the mail box".

DPIL Family NSW



Case study - Tamworth Imagination Library

- In 2019 Tamworth Regional Council partnered with United Way Australia to deliver the Imagination Library to **every child born** in the LGA.
- Children are enrolled at the hospital hearing check, shortly after birth. Child and Family Health Nurses check in with parents about the program at developmental checks and reinforce the importance of reading to babies and children.
- The Library manages enrolments, and also provides the baby with their first library card. Parents are encouraged to attend wraparound events at the library using the books they are receiving at home.
- Hunter New England Primary Health Network fund a monthly bookmark insert in books to link families to services available and provide education on a range of early childhood development topics
- Since 2019, over 2,800 children have been enrolled in the Tamworth Imagination Library, and library attendance and engagement has increased across all programs.
- Media link: [Dolly Parton's TCMF Launch video](#)



Region's youngest library member

DOLLY Parton's Imagination Library (DPIIL) has had its youngest member sign-up, after its launch at the beginning of the month.

Jack Rogers, born on January 7, is the first newborn to be a part of the program, in which he will receive a book every month until he turns five.

Mum Bianca Rogers said she was excited to receive the books in the coming years. "I thought it was a good initiative," she said.

"I have 1000 books at home already, but I don't think you can have too many books." The first book Jack has received from the program

is a soft-touch book with patterns and textures.

Library children's services officer Kelly Makepeace said the books were chosen by academics and early childhood teachers.

"They're all very high-quality, age-appropriate and mainly Australian authors," Ms Makepeace said.

"We do have a lot of Indigenous and multicultural books, as well."

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Tamworth Launch Concert will be held at The Capitol Theatre on January 20; all proceeds will go to the program.

- JESSICA WORBOYS

STORY TIME: Bianca, Wane and baby Jack Rogers, the first newborn signed up to the DPIIL. Photo: Peter Hardin 160119PHC005



Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Free home-delivered books for babies born in 2019, every month until they reach school!

[Learn More](#)

[Donate Now](#)

Registration opens 2019!



Available to babies born in 2019 & currently living in the Tamworth Local Government Area.



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES **TOGETHER**





Low cost per Child Registration



Program costs*	TOTAL
1 Child for 1 year	\$108
1 Child for 5 years	\$540
50 Children for 1 year	\$5,400
100 Children for 1 year	\$10,800

***Note:** Cost of \$9 per child/month for new book and parent tip sheet, inclusive of postage

A minimum number of 50 children needed to open a new program.



Together, we can ensure all children **read, learn and**
succeed.



STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITIES **TOGETHER**





Government of Western Australia
Department of Communities



Local Government Australian Early Development Census Grants Program 2024

DOCG202333393

Guidelines and Application Form

Part A - Guidelines

All applications for the Local Government Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) Grants Program 2024 must be received by the Department of Communities (Communities) via email on or before the advertised closing time and date below to be eligible for assessment.

Applications received after the closing time/date will not be accepted.

Please allow up to 12 weeks from the closing date for your application to be processed.

Who can apply

To be eligible for a grant through the Western Australian Local Government Early Childhood AEDC Grant Program (AEDC Grant Program), applicants must be a Local Government Authority (LGA) operating within the state of Western Australia.

Submitting an application

Closing Time: 2:30pm

Closing Date: 5 December 2023

Applications must be submitted by:

Email grants@communities.wa.gov.au

All applications will be acknowledged via email within five business days of receipt. Please contact Communities to confirm receipt if no acknowledgement is received by this time.

About the program

The Western Australian Department of Education (Education) has partnered with the Department of Communities (Communities) and the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) to deliver the AEDC Grant Program.

The AEDC Grant Program will provide one off grants to LGAs to implement projects aimed at improving the overall health and wellbeing of young children aged 0 to 5 years living in Western Australia.

LGAs are encouraged to work with their communities to address the developmental needs of children as identified by the AEDC results.

Applicants are also encouraged to review the current AEDC data on the [AEDC website](#).

The AEDC is a population measure that takes place every three years to facilitate the national collection of information on young children's development across five key areas linked to the predictors of good adult health, education, and social outcomes.

These are:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- communication skills and general knowledge

In Western Australia, analysis of the 2021 data indicates that the percentage of children who began school with developmental difficulties increased between 2018 and 2021. In 2021, nearly 30 Local Government areas had 25% or more children classified as developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains.

Research into child development overwhelmingly supports the view that focussing on early childhood health and wellbeing leads to improved school readiness, better outcomes while at school, education, employment, and health into adulthood, as well as reduced economic costs to government, communities, and families and better security for neighbourhoods and society.

LGAs play an essential role across a range of areas that support young children's health and wellbeing, development, and learning and are well placed to work directly with their community to respond to their AEDC results.

Program Objectives

Initiatives and projects that promote the enhancement of developmental milestones for young children will be prioritised. In particular, projects that:

- Increase the capacity for Local Government in co-planning local responses to developmental vulnerabilities of young children in their community, in collaboration with community stakeholders, including through the employment of an early year's coordinator or similar.
- Increase awareness of and engagement with the AEDC among local government and community stakeholders in the Local Government area.
- Increase evidence-informed support and initiatives for young children and their families in the local government area by funding new or significantly adapted programs and initiatives.
- Improve developmental outcomes for young children.

Projects may include:

- The development of a community/strategic plan with issues and strengths identified and prioritised by the community.
- Undertaking consultation within the community to support the mapping and identification of local early years services, assets, and programs.
- Holding workshops or presentations for local government and community stakeholders to increase awareness of AEDC data and the importance of early childhood development in the Local Government area.
- Undertaking direct community action in response to local AEDC results, including trial initiatives, development of service models and strategies that complement and/or build on existing early childhood initiatives within the local government area.

To be eligible for funding, proposed projects must also align to the following program requirements:

- Include active engagement with an existing Early Years Network or facilitate the development of an Early Years Network in collaboration with the community.
- Include participation in face-to-face AEDC training sessions and regular online peer support sessions provided by Education over the term of the grant program. These sessions will increase LGAs expertise to interpret and use AEDC data to inform early years planning in collaboration with community partners.
- Identify a Project Committee to oversee the project.
- Support direct community action in response to local AEDC results.

Projects delivered through collaborative community partnerships that are actively involved in the planning and delivery of the project are encouraged. Applications that display successful partnerships between multiple local governments are also encouraged particularly in locations where there are a smaller number of residents.

Grant Period

Projects must be completed by the 28 February 2026.

Funding available

Grants of up to \$100,000 (excluding GST) are available for LGAs to implement community-wide, strategic initiatives.

Funding may be used for:

The following items are eligible for funding:

- hire of equipment, transport and venue;
- publication costs of resources and material created through the project;
- publicity, communications and marketing costs;
- consultants and facilitators;
- wages directly related to the project;
- audit costs; and
- project evaluation.

What is not covered by the grant:

- purchase of infrastructure and capital equipment;
- operational staff wages, not directly related to the project;
- prizes and gifts, including cash;
- intrastate, interstate and overseas travel;
- ongoing operating costs of the organisation or costs not directly related to project;
- retrospective costs (any money spent before a grant is approved);
- projects involving fundraising, unless the funds raised are expended on the project;
- projects that duplicate an existing or similar project or service within the community;
- projects that are traditionally funded through other sources (e.g. school activities or sporting/cultural events); and
- projects that could be delivered through an existing service agreement or grant agreement the organisation has with Communities.

Assessment criteria

Each application will be assessed against the following criteria:

- The project will benefit young children aged between 0 and 5 years of age and their families.
- The project addresses one or more of the Program Objectives.
- The project aligns to the AEDC results and aims to improve developmental outcomes for young children.
- Evidence of sound planning and ability to manage the project, including clearly defined aims, project outcomes and evaluation measures to determine the effectiveness, feasibility and sustainability of the initiative.
- Evidence that the applicant has sound governance and management structures in place to deliver the project.
- Evidence of sustainable benefits for young children aged between 0 and 5 years of age following completion of the project.
- The project delivers value for money and is reasonable to deliver the project activities and outcomes.

After meeting the above core requirements, Communities will also prioritise applications that:

- support vulnerable or disadvantaged cohorts in the community; and/or
- support or complement the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Outcome 4 - Children thrive in their early years.

Who can apply:

To be eligible for a grant through the AEDC Grant Program, applicants must be an LGA operating within the state of Western Australia.

Who cannot apply:

Entities not eligible to apply for funding through this program include:

- Commonwealth or State Government agencies
- Individuals
- not-for-profit or community organisations
- commercial, for-profit organisations
- unincorporated, community sector organisations
- organisations located in the Indian Ocean Territories.

LGAs that have outstanding acquittal or evaluation requirements from previous Communities' grant or program funding are ineligible to apply until the required documentation has been submitted. Please contact Communities if there are any queries about an organisation's acquittal status.

How to apply

1. Carefully read Part A - Guidelines.
2. Complete Part B - Application Form.
3. Attach any supporting documents, if required.
4. Ensure the application is signed by the authorised delegate for the LGA.
5. Check you have completed all requirements as per Part C - Application Checklist.
6. Submit the signed application to Communities at grants@communities.wa.gov.au

Late applications will not be accepted.

All applications will be acknowledged via email within five business days of receipt.

Please contact Communities to confirm receipt if no acknowledgement is received by this time.

Assessment and notification

Please allow up to 12 weeks from the closing date for advice regarding the outcome of an application.

All applications will be reviewed against the assessment criteria outlined above. All organisations that apply for funding will be notified in writing of the outcome of the submission.

Successful applicants

A grant agreement will be negotiated with each successful applicant which will outline project details and full reporting requirements.

Successful applicants will be required to report on the activities undertaken, participants and partners, lessons learned, evaluation of effectiveness, outcomes achieved, and a certified statement of income and expenditure for the funded project. Once the project is completed, the acquittal report must be submitted to meet the requirements, which will be specified once the grant is approved.

Any unspent grant funds, or grant funds not expended in accordance with the grant program, must be returned to Communities.

Technical Assistance

For technical assistance submitting the application form, please contact:

Melinda Cunningham
Procurement Officer
Mobile: 0432 835 077
Email: grants@communities.wa.gov.au

Part B - Application Form

Section One - Administering Organisation

Enter the LGA details in this section.

If the project will be delivered through a collaborative partnership across multiple Local Government Areas, a lead agency must be nominated. The lead agency will assume administrative responsibility and accept and adhere to all terms and conditions of the grant, maintain financial records, and provide reporting information for successful applications.

1.1 Local Government Authority

Legal name of Local Government Authority	Shire of Kojonup		
Trading name <i>if different to the legal name</i>	Shire of Kojonup		
ABN	61822625995		
Contact person	Estelle Lottering		
Position	Project Manager and Community Services		
Email address	pmcs@kojonup.wa.gov.au		
Telephone	98312440	Mobile	0460426416
Postal address	PO Box 163		
Suburb	Kojonup	Postcode	6395
Website	https://www.kojonup.wa.gov.au		

Section Two - Project Details

2.1 Project name: Dolly Parton Imagination Library

2.2 Please provide a brief overarching description of your proposed project (maximum 40 words*)

*Please note, if successful, this is the description of your project which will be used in any media statements or related publicity.

A project which delivers a book to every child enrolled, once a month, from the time the child is born until they reach their fifth birthday. Their carers read to the child, with help from tip sheets.

2.3 Please provide a detailed description of the project, including the project objectives, in accordance with the Guidelines.

The project enrolls all children in the area and delivers a suitable, age relevant, book to their address every month for five years from birth. The book is marked with the child's name and is theirs to keep. The books are selected by a professional board of experts, are culturally appropriate within a range of subjects. Carers receive a tip sheet to help their dependent child become competent in literacy before they start in formal schooling, giving them confidence and a positive start to school.

The programme is specifically aimed at children who do not have access to books at home, and who may not be read to. It should be a very positive exercise in 'closing the gap', not only but importantly for indigenous children, of which Kojonup has a relatively high proportion.

The cost of the programme to the end users (the community) is \$108 per child, per year. The managers of the programme, United Way Australia, need a two-year guarantee of funding.

Our near-term objective is to fund this programme at least for the minimum 2 years. During this time, we will assess the impact (whether the child and the family welcomes the books, if the child is being read to at least 3 times a week, does the family wish to continue, are they getting value out of the programme, are the benefits of the programme apparent?) This will be done by personal contact where possible, or by survey for outlying recipients.

Should the answers be mostly in the affirmative, the Rotary Club, in conjunction with the Shire Council and other interested parties will endeavour to make the programme a permanent feature of the Shire. We have a strong vested interest in an improved outcome in education and its benefits in the Community.

2.4 Attach a detailed project plan, including a project schedule of key phases, milestones, activities, staffing and community engagement to this application.

2.5 Timeline of your project.

Estimated project start date** 5th April, 2024

Estimated project finish date*** 30th January, 2026

**Please note, allow 12 weeks from the closing date of this application process to estimate your project start date.

***Please note, projects must be completed by the 28 February 2026.

2.6 What region will your project run in?

State-wide	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pilbara	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gascoyne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Southwest	<input type="checkbox"/>
Goldfields/Esperance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wheatbelt	<input type="checkbox"/>
Great Southern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Northwest Metropolitan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kimberley	<input type="checkbox"/>	Northeast Metropolitan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mid-West	<input type="checkbox"/>	Southwest Metropolitan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Southeast Metropolitan	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.7 Provide evidence of community need and support of the project by the community. Include a description of how community organisations will be (or have been) engaged in the project design or implementation. (500 words limit)

The Kojonup Rotary Club has supported this project and is willing to guarantee \$5,000 a year for the first two years towards it. The Council is prepared to offer Library resources towards the implementation of the project, including mailing, collection of data and coordination with the town library.

2.8 How will the project benefit young children and their families?

An early start in reading and talking is vital to brain development in children and the consequences of a good start, along with the family connections and nurturing are life-changing, especially for families with little background in reading and a deprived culture of education. There is a robust body of peer reviewed research evidence that this programme improves reading behaviour and strengthens early literacy skills. Poor literacy skills are associated with higher rates of welfare dependency, lower self-esteem, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy. Educational opportunities are very much poorer in inland country towns, and this programme will help overcome some of

that disadvantage. Economic analysis suggests that the programme will break even if 1 in 20 families start reading to their children 6-7 days a week. Research shows that the uptake is very much higher than that in practise.

2.9 List the intended outcomes of the project.

The intended outcome of the project is to awaken an interest in literacy in every child, give them confidence with the connection that companion reading engenders in the family dynamics, and see that they enter formal schooling with a positive mindset. A side benefit is that more parents and carers will also learn to appreciate what reading can do for their child and for themselves. Evidence shows that participants make better connections with other health and well-being programmes on offer, including medical, housing and quality of life issues. There are additional benefits for children and families who speak languages other than English at home.

2.10 How will the project be evaluated against the intended outcomes described above and the program objectives outlined in the grant program Guidelines?

The project will be monitored by the Rotary Club, using interviews with the families concerned to check on the uptake of reading and time spent with their children. The experience of the Playgroups, Early childhood teachers regarding the impact of the programme will also be important; but limited in the first two years. Evidence will be made available to CommunitiesWA.

2.11 How will young children and families continue to benefit from the project following the term of the grant?

The children who have received an early start in literacy and associated skills, including maths, will gain a lifetime advantage with proven better outcomes at school, socially and with their careers. If the benefits of the programme are seen to be proven, there will be no problem in making the programme a permanent feature of the community. There is no more important enterprise for a community than to see the children thrive and lead lives of purpose and hope.

2.12 Identify the primary target group for the project.

- All young children (age 0 to 5 years)
- Young children with disability

Local Government AEDC Grants Program 2024

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Young children from CaLD communities

Rural, remote and regional

Other

[Click here to enter text.](#)

2.13 Community partnerships

What other groups, organisations or LGAs are involved in planning and implementing your event/activity. Please list ALL the organisations involved, with contact details and how they are contributing.

Organisation Name	Contact Person/Phone	How is this organisation involved?
Rotary Club of Kojonup	Alan Egerton-Warburton 0438 336 249	On planning committee, \$5,000 per year for two years (Total of \$10,000.00), continuing if it's working.

Section Three - Project Budget

Requested grant amount (Excluding GST) (enter an amount up to \$100,000)	\$35,000
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It is important to detail the proposed expenditure of the requested grant and indicate any other income that is expected in support of the project, either cash or in-kind. The value any contributions made to the project by partner organisations noted above should be specified in this section.

Use the table below to evidence all sources of income for this project, proposed and confirmed, cash and in-kind, and how it will be expended. Include the AEDC Grants Program grant amount. The budget should align to the proposed project activities and outcomes specified in this application.

Do not include GST in the costings below.

Budget Item	This Grant (\$ excluding GST)	Other Cash or Grants (\$ excluding GST)	In-kind Support	Source of Other Cash or In-kind Support
What the funding is to be spent on	Proposed grant expenditure from the AEDC Grants Program only.	Any other cash income anticipated for this project from the applicant and/or project partners	An estimated dollar value of the in-kind support for the project from the applicant and/or project partners	Note the source of Other Cash or In-kind support and if this is confirmed or unconfirmed with the source
Dolly Parton Imagination Library	\$35,000	\$10,0000	\$5,000, for evaluation.	Rotary Club of Kojonup. Confirmed
TOTAL	\$35,000	\$10,000	\$5,0000	Click here to enter text.

Section Four - Taxation and banking details

This section is to be completed by the LGA managing the grant funds.

Taxation

Australian Business Number (ABN)	61822625995
Registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST)	Registered for GST <input type="checkbox"/>
	Not registered for GST <input type="checkbox"/>

Bank account

Bank name	NAB
Branch / suburb	Click here to enter text.
Account name	Shire of Kojonup Municipal Account
BSB number (must be six digits)	086 746
Account number (up to nine digits only)	508 343 485

Affiliated body

If the requested grant amount, combined with any other grants or funding received from the Communities comprises **more than 50%** of the applicant organisation's total annual income for the current financial year, the organisation is an **Affiliated Body** of Communities.

Acknowledgement of affiliated bodies is a requirement of Communities in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 2016* and prescribed by the Treasurer's instructions.

Yes, the organisation is an affiliated body	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, the organisation is not an affiliated body	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Section Five - Declaration

On behalf of the applicant LGA, I declare that:

- All the information provided in this application, including any attachments, is true and correct.
- The taxation and banking details entered in this application are true and correct.
- The organisation is financially viable and able to meet all accountability requirements.
- I give permission to the Department of Communities, when applicable, to contact any persons or organisation in the processing of this application and I understand that information may be provided to other agencies, where appropriate.

Legally authorised officer signature	
Date	20/11/2023
Legally authorised officer name	Estelle Lottering
Legally authorised officer position	Project Manager and Customer Services
Local Government Authority	Shire of Kojonup
Legally authorised officer telephone	9831 2440
Legally authorised officer email address	pmcs@kojonup.wa.gov.au

Witness signature	
Date	Click here to enter a date.
Witness name	Click here to enter text.

Part C - Application checklist

Before applying, ensure the following have been completed and checked:

Checklist item	Complete
The Guidelines have been read and understood by the authorised signatory or delegate of the administering LGA, and any other relevant parties.	<input type="checkbox"/>
All questions in Part B – Application Form are complete.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A project plan is attached.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The taxation and banking details of the administering LGA have been entered and are correct.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The declaration has been signed by the authorised signatory or delegate of the administering LGA.	<input type="checkbox"/>
All attachments have been included in the application (i.e. project plan, terms of reference etc.), where applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>