

## Over R400m to assist struggling ECDs

As part of relief measures to cushion the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on early childhood development (ECD), Social Development will use R496 million to assist the sector, which is amongst the hardest hit.



Image source: Getty Images

In a statement on Friday, the department said the budget allocation, known as the Early Childhood Development Stimulus Relief Fund (ECD-ESRF), is part of sustaining and creating employment opportunities in the sector, in light of the high unemployment rate and job losses occasioned by the pandemic.

“In response to the President’s call, the national Department of Social Development developed and submitted a project proposal to National Treasury to access funding from the Presidential Employment Stimulus package for the ECD sector.

“The proposal focused on four interrelated policy imperatives including employment protection in the ECD sector, employment creation, containing the spread of Covid-19, and registration rollout for ECD programmes,” the department said.

Through the ECD-ESRF, ECDs will be better placed to survive the risk of permanent closure, and will be able to cover financial costs, including the payment of employees’ salaries.

The department - supported by its provincial departments, including the South African Social Service Agency (Sassa), the National Development Agency (NDA), DG Murray Trust, GOVchat and the ECD Inter-Sectoral Forum, together with other stakeholders - has been hard at work to develop a digital application platform and the rollout plan.

## **Eligibility criteria**

In line with the eligibility criteria, the ECD stimulus package is intended for all types of ECD programmes, including centre and non-centre-based programmes.

“Furthermore, organisations that run, manage or oversee multiple centre- and non-centre-based ECD services, may also apply,” the department said.

It also noted that while the funding is aimed at subsidising the cost of employment for ECD services and ECD services that are applying, applications for support can only be made by the operator of the ECD service and not individual staff members.

“In other words, ECD services will be making the application on behalf of their staff, with qualifying staff, including ECD practitioners, cooks, administrators and all other types of ECD employees. ECD services can only use the funds to subsidise the cost of employment for staff presently employed within the ECD service.

“Only one application per ECD service can be made, as multiple applications may result in delays in processing applications. For ECD services that are applying and who are not currently operational (i.e. have not reopened owing to Covid-19), they will need to make a commitment to reopen within 60 days of receipts of funds,” the department explained.

The value of the support provided through the stimulus package will be a maximum of up to R4,470 per staff member, made as a once-off payment, given that the allocation is R496 million.

There will be a limit of up to four staff members for ECD centres and up to one staff member for non-centre based ECD services that will be eligible for support.

If the number of applications are more or fewer than the budget available, the department said it may review the payment amounts to the ECD services accordingly.

## **Participants in Vangasali campaign encouraged to apply**

The department has also encouraged all ECD services, who have participated in the DSD-led Vangasali campaign, to apply for this programme.

Before making an application, applicants must ensure that they have a banking account under the name of the ECD service.

ECD services that do not currently receive funding from Provincial Social Development will need to be registered on the Central Supplier Database (CSD), which can be done via the link <https://secure.csd.gov.za/Account/Register>.

The registration number generated from the CSD database will be required for the stimulus application.

For any enquiries and further information, ECD services may call the contact centre using the toll-free number 08000 89 666, or visit the website: [www.dsd.gov.za](http://www.dsd.gov.za).

The applications opened on 5 February 2021 and will close on 19 February 2021 at 11:59pm. The Department of Social Development is supported by Govchat to receive all applications online.

In order to complete an application, please follow the link <https://govchat.app> or copy it into your browser.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>