

Organisation name

Young Families Connect

Is your organisation....?

- A provider currently funded under one or more of the 5 programs in scope for this consultation

What type of service or support do you mostly provide?

- Prevention or early intervention services
- Intensive family supports

What state or territory does your organisation deliver services and supports in?

- Queensland

Where does your organisation deliver most of their services and supports?

Regional area

1. Does the new vision reflect what we all want for children and families?

Yes. The new vision strongly reflects what we want for children, young women, and young parents in our community. It aligns with a holistic, strengths-based approach that recognises that children and families thrive when they are supported by safe, connected, and responsive community systems.

This vision mirrors the core principles we see as essential for young mothers and their children to succeed.

Early, accessible, and non-judgmental support. Young women and young parents often face complex barriers, including stigma, unstable housing, financial stress, relationship breakdown, trauma, and limited access to education and employment. A system that offers early and easy-to-access support without shame or judgment, creates opportunities for genuine engagement and positive outcomes.

Wrap-around, community-based services. The vision recognises that families do best when their needs are met through coordinated local supports. For young parents in Ipswich, this means integrated pathways across health, education, child

development, social services, and community organisations. Wrap-around models ensure no young mother is left navigating complex systems alone.

Strengthening relationships and capability. Central to the vision is supporting parents to build skills, confidence, and strong relationships with their children. This aligns with what we see daily in the Young Families Connect (YFC) programs. When young women are empowered and supported, their children benefit through improved stability, attachment, and learning outcomes.

Flexibility and responsiveness. Young parents' circumstances can change rapidly. A system that adapts to their needs such as offering flexible education, outreach support, trauma-informed practice, and practical assistance directly supports sustainable engagement.

Inclusive and culturally safe services. The new vision acknowledges that families come from diverse backgrounds, and services need to be culturally safe, respectful, and accessible. This is vital in communities like Ipswich, where many young parents may have experienced intergenerational disadvantage or cultural disconnection.

Overall, A New Approach aligns with the aspirations we hold for all young mothers and their children, to be safe, supported, connected, and given every opportunity to build positive futures. It reflects a shared commitment to early intervention, empowerment, and integrated community support principles that underpin best practice in wrap-around services.

2. Are the two main outcomes what we should be working towards for children and families? Why/Why not? - Outcome 1: Parents and caregivers are empowered to raise healthy, resilient children - Outcome 2: Children are supported to grow into healthy, resilient adults.

The two main outcomes empowering parents and caregivers to raise healthy, resilient children, and supporting children to grow into healthy, resilient adults are the right goals for families. They reflect a long-term view of wellbeing that starts with strengthening parenting capacity and continues through the child's development.

However, achieving these outcomes requires recognising that young parents have unique, age-related vulnerabilities and support needs that differ from older parents. Young mothers and young families often face additional barriers, including interrupted education, limited financial stability, unstable housing,

relationship breakdown, trauma histories, and reduced parenting confidence. Importantly, they are still developing emotionally, socially, and cognitively themselves.

Because of this, the pathway to achieving these outcomes must look different for young parents.

Young parents need more intensive and developmentally appropriate support to build the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to raise healthy, resilient children.

Many young parents do not have strong adult support networks, meaning services must actively fill those gaps through wrap-around, community-based assistance.

Empowerment must be paired with practical, hands on guidance, not just referrals so that young families can access health care, child development support, education, stable housing, and income security.

Educational pathways and employment planning must be flexible and accessible, recognising that young parents are trying to complete their own growth into healthy, resilient adults at the same time they are raising children.

Trauma informed, non-judgmental support is essential, as stigma and shame often prevent young parents from engaging with services that could help them achieve these outcomes.

For young parents, these outcomes are entirely achievable but only when they are supported through a consistent, coordinated, and compassionate wrap-around service system, such as the community based model proposed for Ipswich. Strengthening a young parent strengthens a child. When both generations are supported, the benefits compound across the lifespan, breaking cycles of disadvantage and creating stronger families and communities.

Investing in young parents is a direct investment in their children's future resilience.

The two outcomes are ideal and appropriate, but their success relies on acknowledging that young parents require more intensive, coordinated, community-based wrap-around support than general family services often provide.

If we want their children to grow into healthy, resilient adults, we must also ensure their young mothers have the opportunity to grow into healthy, resilient adults themselves. A tailored Ipswich model grounded in “A New Approach” is essential to realising these outcomes for this cohort.

3. Will a single national program provide more flexibility for your organisation?

A single national program could bring benefits such as reduced duplication, consistent standards. However, in practice a single national program is likely to be challenging for organisations that work with young parents unless it is expressly designed to permit strong local tailoring and devolved decision-making. Below are the main reasons why a single national model can be problematic for services working with young mothers

each reason ties back to the unique realities of young parents and their communities.

1. Different prevalence, geography and service needs between and within states

The incidence of births to women under 20 varies substantially by geography. In Queensland there are clear regional hotspots eg: Far North, some parts of western Queensland, plus urban pockets such as Ipswich, Logan and Cairns where rates per 1,000 are markedly higher than the state average. A single program with uniform activity rules risks under resourcing these higher need areas.

2. Local system configuration and partner networks differ

Effective wrap-around support for young parents depends on local partnerships such as Schools, Maternal & Child Health, community health, housing, local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island Community Health Services, early childhood programs, DVF services, GOs & NGOs. These networks differ by LGA/HHS, a national program with prescriptive service models will struggle to fit local delivery models and disrupt locally established referral pathways.

3. Cultural safety and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander governance

First Nations communities have different fertility patterns, service preferences, and governance expectations. Service design needs to support local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to lead and adapt service delivery, a top-down national model risks undermining self-determination and cultural safety. AIHW data shows First Nations mothers remain over-represented in younger age

groups, and community-led approaches are critical.

4. Different socioeconomic drivers and risk profiles

Young parents in urban disadvantaged pockets face barriers such as housing stress, school disengagement, child protection surveillance and domestic & family violence compared with those in remote communities who may struggle to access antenatal care, transport and experience workforce shortages. National eligibility, activity and KPI rules that do not reflect these differences will skew resources away from some cohorts.

5. Workforce and capacity constraints vary

Remote/rural/very remote areas and some regional centres experience recruitment and retention problems for nurses, allied health, and youth workers. A one-size funding model that assumes similar staffing costs and availability across jurisdictions will be inequitable.

6. Data, reporting and administrative burden

A single, central reporting framework may simplify some aspects but can impose heavy, ill-fitting administrative requirements on small local providers, this reduces time for frontline relationship work which is essential for engaging young parents.

7. Need for flexibility in intensity and delivery mode

Young parents often require outreach, in-home support, flexible education pathways, creche access, transport assistance and relationship-based case management. A national program that funds a narrow set of activities the same way everywhere will struggle to allow these variable intensities or to fund ad-hoc supports that keep a young parent engaged.

8. Timing and continuity of funding

Local providers need multi-year predictable funding to build trusting relationships with young parents. National programs that operate on short contracts or frequent procurement cycles undermine continuity of care.

If the Government proceeds with a single national program, it must be designed to enable local flexibility. That means outcome based funding (not prescriptive

activities), local decision rights for a share of funds, simplified reporting proportionate to provider size, dedicated Aboriginal community provider streams, and a recognition that young parent services require higher intensity and longer term relationship funding than other family services.

Our First Nations mothers continue to have a higher birth rate overall than non-Indigenous mothers. The proportion of First Nations mothers aged under 20 who gave birth has been declining, but young motherhood remains an important focus in many communities. AIHW materials note improvements in antenatal attendance and declines in some risk behaviours, but clear disparities persist and require community-led responses.

Queensland Perinatal Statistics (2022) and the QFCC “Parenting as a young person” insights paper highlight regional concentration of births to mothers under 20. For example:

In 2021 over a quarter (26.9%) of mothers aged under 20 gave birth in facilities located in Logan, Ipswich or Cairns showing these urban/regional centres are important service delivery locations for young parents.

At the SA3 level some regions show very high rates per 1,000 females aged 15–19, demonstrating strong geographic variation and the need for tailored local responses rather than single, uniform national service rules.

A single national program risks being inflexible for services supporting young parents unless the model explicitly enables local adaptation, devolved decision-making and Aboriginal community leadership. Young parents’ needs vary markedly by region. Urban pockets like Logan, Ipswich, Far North, remote communities and our First Nations communities needs a strong workforce and program design that must be locally responsive.

4. Does the service or activity you deliver fit within one of the three funding streams? Do these streams reflect what children and families in your community need now – and what they might need in the future?

The Young Families Connect (YFC) program fits strongly within the Early Intervention – Targeted Assistance funding stream. This stream aligns closely with the needs of young parents in our community and with the way YFC delivers holistic, wrap-around support to improve outcomes for both young mothers and their children.

YFC works with a clearly defined, higher-risk cohort who benefit from early, intensive, tailored support. Young parents particularly those under 20 years of age face increased risks related to poverty, housing instability, educational disengagement, domestic and family violence, and lower access to antenatal and parenting support. They require early, proactive intervention to prevent escalation into crisis or child protection involvement.

YFC's model is built specifically to engage this cohort early, reduce risk, and strengthen protective factors.

Early intervention is critical for promoting healthy development in both generations. Young mothers are simultaneously transitioning into adulthood and parenthood. Providing targeted support during pregnancy and the early years of a child's life creates immediate benefits for children's safety, development, attachment, and school readiness. This aligns directly with the intent of the Early Intervention stream, to prevent poor outcomes before they occur.

YFC delivers a coordinated, wrap-around response across education, health, wellbeing, and family functioning. Targeted Assistance stream emphasises integrated support.

YFC brings together:

Education and re-engagement pathways

Mental health and wellbeing support

Parenting education

Child development and health pathways

Practical assistance such as counselling, outreach & case management

Culturally safe connections, including partnerships with Aboriginal community organisations

This multi-disciplinary approach prevents families being bounced between fragmented services.

YFC addresses unmet need in a high-risk local population, Ipswich has one of the higher concentrations of young parents in Queensland. Many face intergenerational disadvantage and lack access to stable, trusted adult support.

YFC provides targeted, localised assistance tailored to the specific demographic and social realities of the Ipswich region exactly what this stream is designed to support.

The model is future focused and adaptable, early intervention & targeted assistance stream reflects the needs of young families now, but also gives room for services to evolve.

YFC is designed for long-term relevance through:

Flexible delivery (onsite, outreach, in-home, online)

Integration with schools and community partners

Capacity to respond to emerging issues (cost-of-living pressures, mental health, family violence, housing shortages)

Support for both current parents and those expecting their first child.

A strong commitment to ongoing improvement in service delivery, especially as new generations of young parents emerge with changing needs, expectations, and ways of engaging

This ensures the program remains responsive, contemporary, and aligned with what families will increasingly require in the future.

This ensures the program remains responsive to what families will need in coming years.

YFC's core purpose is supporting young mothers and their children through early, targeted, intensive assistance that aligns directly with the Early Intervention – Targeted Assistance funding stream. The stream not only reflects what children and young parents in the Ipswich community need now, but also provides the flexibility, prevention focus, and integration required to meet their evolving needs into the future.

5. Are there other changes we could make to the program to help your organisation or community overcome current challenges?

It is becoming increasingly difficult to engage this generation of young parents in education. Many sit in a unique and vulnerable space where they are no longer children, nor are they fully recognised as adults. Instead, they are parents who often feel displaced within our community, unsure of where they fit. This sense of displacement affects their confidence and willingness to participate in education and support services. These challenges have required us to rethink how we deliver

services and design programs that reflect the reality young parents are living in today.

This generation faces challenges that make traditional engagement strategies less effective than in the past:

High levels of anxiety, social overwhelm, and mental health concerns, which make attendance in formal or unfamiliar environments difficult.

Increased reliance on digital communication and reduced confidence in face-to-face interaction, requiring more time to build trust.

Social media pressures and fear of judgment, which can create hesitation to participate in group programs or mainstream education.

Unstable routines and living situations, including housing insecurity and limited family support, making consistent attendance challenging.

Past negative experiences with schooling, leaving young parents disengaged or apprehensive about returning to mainstream settings.

A stronger need for personalised, flexible, and relational support, as one-size-fits-all programs do not meet the realities of their lives.

Heightened awareness of trauma and safety needs, requiring programs to provide safe, welcoming, and non-judgmental environments.

Because of these factors, we believe the most effective approach is a community-based wrap-around service model, delivered outside mainstream high schools. This “one-stop hub” would bring together:

Health services

Domestic and family violence support

Child health and early childhood services

Childcare and education programs

Counselling, wellbeing support, and case management delivered by a trusted personal worker

Flexible education pathways tailored to young parents

Such a model removes barriers, allows young parents to engage in a safe and supportive environment, and helps them build trust, confidence, and stability. Through this approach, young women can grow into educated, empowered parents, break cycles of welfare dependency, and move towards fulfilling employment, ultimately benefiting both themselves and their children.

Early intervention is a cornerstone of this wrap-around model, providing vulnerable

young women who may be at risk of teenage pregnancy with a safe and supportive space before they become parents. By engaging these young women early, the program would offer access to education, life skills development, mentoring, and connections with health, wellbeing, and social support services. This proactive approach allows them to build confidence, develop healthy relationships, and make informed choices about their futures. Integrating early intervention within a community-based hub ensures that support is continuous, relational, and tailored to the unique needs of each young woman, rather than delivered in fragmented or judgmental settings.

By equipping vulnerable young women with knowledge, skills, and a trusted support network, the program would help prevent early pregnancy, reduce intergenerational disadvantage, and create pathways for positive educational and employment outcomes. Ultimately, early intervention within the model strengthens both individual young women and the broader community, promoting resilience and long-term wellbeing for future generations.

Government funding is essential to establish and sustain this model. Without targeted investment, it is not possible to provide the intensity, wrap-around coordination, and multi-service partnerships that this generation of young parents requires to succeed. Funding would allow us to implement a sustainable program that meets both current and emerging needs in Ipswich and surrounding regions.

6. Do you agree that the four priorities listed on Page 4 are right areas for investment to improve outcomes for children and families?

We agree that the four priorities listed are the right areas for investment to improve outcomes for children and families. The proposed Young Parents Hub aligns strongly with each priority and demonstrates how targeted, community-based support can achieve meaningful outcomes for young families.

1. Early investment to improve wellbeing

The program provides early intervention for Young women, young parents and their children, particularly during pregnancy and the first five years of life. By offering education, parenting support, health and wellbeing services, and practical assistance at an early stage, the program helps prevent family crises, reduces the risk of child protection involvement, and promotes long-term wellbeing for both parent and child.

2. Connected, co-located, and integrated services

The wrap-around model is inherently integrated, bringing together health, domestic and family violence services, child health and early childhood programs, childcare,

education, and personalised case management. Co-locating or coordinating these services within a single community-based hub allows young parents to access multiple supports in one place, building trust, reducing barriers, and improving engagement.

3. Services informed by, and responding to, community need

The program is locally designed to respond to the specific needs of young parents in Ipswich and surrounding regions. It addresses social isolation, disrupted education, housing instability, and other barriers identified through community consultation and service mapping. This ensures that activities are locally relevant, flexible, and responsive to the realities of the families the program serves.

4. Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families

Culturally safe practice is embedded in the program design. Partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations ensure services are culturally respectful, community-led, and strengthen connections that help identify the challenges in our community. This approach recognises cultural identity as a protective factor and enhances engagement and outcomes for First Nations young parents and their children.

The Young Parents Wrap-Around Program aligns closely with the four priorities. By providing early intervention, integrating services, responding to local needs, and embedding culturally safe practices, the program supports young parents to develop confidence, resilience, and capability, ultimately improving outcomes for both children and their families.

7. Are there any other priorities or issues you think the department should be focusing on?

The most critical issue the department should consider is the imbalance in visibility and resourcing between large organisations and smaller, locally based services that work directly with young parents. Large organisations often have extensive budgets and administrative capacity, which allows them to produce high level reports, glossy promotional materials, and competitive grant submissions. While these organisations play an important role, their size and structure can make it difficult for them to respond to the day-to-day, face-to-face challenges that young parents encounter.

Smaller, community-based organisations like ours are on the ground delivering intensive, relational support. We work directly with young mothers and families every day, building trust, providing education, parenting support, and practical

assistance. However, we often lack the budget and resources to compete with larger organisations in terms of visibility, submissions, or public advocacy, despite having deeper knowledge of local needs and stronger direct engagement.

This disparity can result in funding and recognition being disproportionately directed to larger, top-heavy organisations, while smaller providers who are critical to achieving tangible outcomes for young families remain under supported.

We strongly believe that if funded, the proposed community based wrap-around hub model could serve as a national exemplar, demonstrating how intensive, locally tailored, and integrated support for young parents leads to improved outcomes for both parents and children. By prioritising support for smaller, agile organisations embedded in their communities, the department could foster innovative, high impact programs that are scalable, evidence-based, and capable of becoming a federal government success story.

8. Do the proposed focus areas – like supporting families at risk of child protection involvement and young parents match the needs or priorities of your service?

The proposed focus areas, particularly supporting families at risk of child protection involvement and young parents, closely align with the priorities of our service. Evidence consistently shows that young mothers are disproportionately represented in, or have prior experience with, the child protection system. Many young women we work with were themselves involved in care as children, experienced neglect, or witnessed family violence, placing them at heightened risk of challenges when becoming parents.

Intergenerational involvement with child protection sees young mothers who experienced abuse, neglect, or out-of-home care themselves often face complex parenting challenges, limited knowledge of safe parenting practices, and reduced support networks.

Social and economic disadvantage such as housing instability, financial stress, and limited access to education increase vulnerability to family crises and potential child protection intervention.

Mental health and trauma history such as past trauma, anxiety, depression, and unresolved grief impact parenting capacity and coping strategies.

Limited support networks affects many young mothers who lack family or

community support, leading to isolation and higher risk of parenting difficulties.

Early intervention is critical in breaking this cycle. Programs like Young Families Connect (YFC) provide intensive, targeted support before crises occur. By offering a wrap-around, community-based model, YFC addresses the complex needs of young mothers through:

Flexible education pathways and re-engagement with learning

Trauma-informed parenting support and mentoring

Access to health, mental health, domestic violence, and child development services

Personalised case management with a trusted support worker

Childcare and early childhood development programs

Through early engagement, YFC empowers young mothers with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to parent safely and effectively. It strengthens protective factors, reduces risk, and promotes resilience, preventing the next generation of children from entering the child protection system.

Focusing on families at risk of child protection involvement and supporting young parents is not only aligned with our service priorities it is essential. Early intervention programs like YFC play a crucial preventative role, breaking intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and safeguarding both young parents and their children.

9. Are there other groups in your community, or different approaches, that you think the department should consider to better support family wellbeing?

There are several local groups and alternative approaches that the department should consider to better support family wellbeing. In Ipswich, a number of community organisations are already working with young parents and families, and many are eager to contribute their expertise and resources to a coordinated, community-based model.

Key organisations include:

Ipswich Community Youth Service (ICYS): Provides youth engagement programs, mentoring, accommodation services and educational support for vulnerable young people, including young parents. ICYS has extensive experience in building trust and relationships with young people who may be socially isolated or disengaged.

Domestic Violence Action Group: Offers specialist support, safety planning, advocacy, and counselling for families experiencing domestic and family violence. Their involvement ensures that the hub can address safety and wellbeing needs comprehensively, giving them an opportunity to reach out to young parents.

Child Health Services: Already a partner to the YFC program providing essential health and developmental support for both parents and children, including immunisation services, health checks, parenting guidance, and early intervention for developmental concerns.

These organisations have expressed strong interest in providing in-kind contributions such as staffing, mentoring, workshops, and direct service delivery to a newly developed young parents' one-stop hub. By co-locating or coordinating services, the hub could provide integrated, holistic support, reducing duplication, improving access, and strengthening outcomes for families.

A collaborative, community driven approach ensures that services are locally relevant, culturally safe, and responsive to the unique needs of young parents and their children. This model not only improves engagement and wellbeing for families, but also maximises the expertise and resources already present in the Ipswich community.

This is certainly a different approach that has not been rolled out anywhere across the country but certainly should be considered in supporting family wellbeing.

10. What are other effective ways, beyond co-location, that you've seen work well to connect and coordinate services for families?

While there are multiple ways to connect and coordinate services for families, evidence and experience show that co-location is the strongest method for engaging young parents and their families. Many young parents are unlikely to independently reach out to services they are, in essence, children with children. They may feel isolated, anxious, or judged, and as a result, engagement without proactive outreach is extremely limited.

Young parents are a very challenging cohort to work with. They often face multiple, overlapping vulnerabilities including unstable housing, disrupted education, limited social support, past trauma, and mental health concerns. These factors make it unlikely that they will navigate fragmented service systems on their own, even when support is available.

Co-location, in a one-stop, community-based hub, addresses this challenge by bringing multiple essential services such as health, mental health, domestic violence support, childcare, education, and case management into a single, trusted space. This integrated model ensures that young parents can access the support they need in a safe, non-judgmental environment, while simultaneously reducing barriers such as transportation, stigma, and the need to retell their story multiple times.

Beyond co-location, complementary approaches that strengthen coordination include:

Dedicated case workers or personal mentors who provide relational, consistent support and help families navigate multiple services

Inter-agency collaboration and regular communication between service providers to streamline referrals and monitor outcomes

Outreach and home-visiting services to meet young parents where they are when engagement in the hub is initially difficult

Peer support and group programs to reduce isolation and build social networks

Despite these complementary strategies, co-location remains the most effective mechanism to reach and engage young parents, providing the foundation for all other forms of support. For this reason, we strongly advocate for a community-based one-stop hub as a vital service to improve engagement, wellbeing, and outcomes for young parents and their children.

11. What would you highlight in a grant application to demonstrate a service is connected to the community it serves? What should applicants be assessed on?

To demonstrate that a service is truly connected to the community it serves, grant applications should highlight experience, reputation, relationships, and demonstrated outcomes. For the Young Families Connect (YFC) program, this connection is evident in several key areas:

Extensive experience: YFC staff collectively have over 50 years of experience working with young parents in Ipswich and surrounding regions. This experience includes direct engagement, advocacy, education support, and wellbeing services for vulnerable young mothers and their children.

Long-standing reputation: The YFC program, formerly known as the Pregnant and Parenting Students Program, has over 20 years of proven success in supporting young parents, both locally and across Queensland. The program's track record demonstrates its reliability, credibility, and deep understanding of community

needs.

Demonstrated outcomes: Hundreds of young mothers have graduated from high school under YFC's guidance, reflecting the program's ability to enable young parents to achieve educational, employment, and personal outcomes despite significant barriers. Each success story provides evidence of the program's impact and its embeddedness in the community.

Advocacy and partnerships: YFC staff have extensive experience advocating for young mothers, whether addressing enrolment cancellations, school based and community based discrimination, or other systemic barriers. The YFC manager works closely with Education Queensland and Queensland Health staff across the state, providing advisory support to workers who are in direct contact with young parents and their children. Membership in relevant support groups ensures that the program is actively informed by community and sector expertise.

Evidence-informed practice and continuous improvement: YFC staff are well-versed in the latest research on young parents, child development, and family wellbeing. The program regularly reviews its practices to identify opportunities to improve service delivery, respond to emerging needs, and ensure that programs remain effective and contemporary.

Community responsiveness: The program has been shaped by decades of engagement with young parents, families, schools, and community services. Lessons learned over the years through direct service delivery and reflection on successes and challenges ensure the program is locally relevant, culturally safe, and responsive to real-world needs.

Assessment considerations for grant applications should therefore include:

Evidence of long-term engagement and demonstrated outcomes within the community

Partnerships and collaborative networks with local services

Experience in advocacy, relational support, and responding to complex needs

Commitment to culturally safe, evidence-informed, and flexible service delivery

Demonstrated capacity for continuous improvement and responsiveness to emerging needs

A program like YFC exemplifies how extensive experience, strong community relationships, evidence-based practice, and proven outcomes demonstrate a deep connection to the community it serves.

12. Beyond locational disadvantage, what other factors should the department consider to make sure funding reflects the needs of communities?

Beyond locational disadvantage, there are several critical factors the department should consider to ensure funding reflects the true needs of communities, particularly for young parents and vulnerable families.

High levels of poverty, unemployment, housing instability, and financial stress directly impact families' ability to engage with education, health, and support services. Funding should account for communities where these factors are prevalent, as they significantly increase risk and need.

Communities with high rates of previous child protection involvement, teenage pregnancy, or disengagement from education require additional support to break cycles of disadvantage. Programs must recognise the complexity of intergenerational issues to provide effective early intervention.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, as well as families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, may face unique barriers to service access. Funding should reflect the need for culturally safe, community-led programs that are responsive to identity, language, and traditions.

Families with minimal social networks, young parents with no family support, or communities with limited service infrastructure require targeted, relationship-based programs to improve engagement and outcomes.

Many young parents face multiple, overlapping challenges such as domestic and family violence, mental health issues, substance use, or trauma histories. Funding models should consider the intensity of support required to address these complex, high-risk situations effectively.

Communities where young parents have limited access to flexible education, vocational training, or employment opportunities require additional investment to ensure these families can achieve long-term independence and wellbeing.

Smaller, locally embedded organisations often have deeper knowledge and trust within the community but may lack the resources or capacity to compete with larger organisations for funding. Funding allocations should recognise the value of these organisations and provide equitable support for programs delivered on the ground.

By considering these factors alongside locational disadvantage, the department

can ensure funding is evidence-based, equitable, and responsive to the real, complex needs of communities, particularly young parents and families at risk.

13. What's the best way for organisations to show in grant applications, that their service is genuinely meeting the needs of the community?

The best way for organisations to demonstrate in grant applications that their service is genuinely meeting the needs of the community is to provide clear, evidence-based and evidence-informed examples of impact, engagement, and responsiveness. Key indicators may include:

Evidence of sustained service delivery, measurable outcomes, and long-term engagement. For example, the Young Families Connect (YFC) program has over 20 years of proven success supporting young parents, with hundreds of graduates completing high school and progressing to further education or employment.

The YFC program has over 12 years of experience as a facilitating partner with Mission Australia Communities for Children, demonstrating a strong record in program delivery and accountability, including experience with DEX reporting requirements. This reflects our ability to manage funding, measure outcomes, and maintain transparent, evidence-based reporting.

Applications should show how the service engages with the community to identify local needs and how program design reflects those needs, including partnerships with families, schools, community organisations, and culturally diverse groups.

Collecting and presenting data on participation, outcomes, and impact provides tangible evidence that services are effective and responsive. This may include education completion rates, health and wellbeing improvements, or engagement in training and employment pathways.

Demonstrating strong relationships with other local service providers, including co-location arrangements, referral pathways, and joint initiatives, shows the service is integrated and community-connected.

Highlighting the skills, qualifications, and lived experience of staff working directly with clients strengthens confidence that the program can meet complex needs. YFC staff bring over 50 years of combined experience working directly with young parents in Ipswich and across Queensland.

Showing examples of how staff advocate for families, navigate complex systems,

and respond to barriers in real-world situations provides evidence that the service is actively addressing the challenges faced by the community.

Applications should describe how the organisation monitors and reviews its service delivery, integrates the latest research, and adapts to emerging community needs. This demonstrates responsiveness and commitment to ongoing improvement.

In summary, grant applications should combine evidence of outcomes, community engagement, expert staff, partnerships, a history of program accountability, and adaptive practice to demonstrate that services are genuinely meeting the needs of the community and creating meaningful, lasting impact.

14. How could the grant process be designed to support and increase the number of ACCOs delivering services to children and families?

To support and increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) delivering services to children and families, the grant process should be designed to be accessible, flexible, and culturally responsive, recognising the unique strengths and challenges of ACCOs.

Streamlined application forms and clear guidance reduces administrative burden and allow ACCOs to focus on program delivery rather than complex paperwork. By providing training, mentoring, and technical assistance for grant writing, reporting, and program evaluation strengthens ACCOs' ability to access funding and deliver high-quality services.

Grant applications should value community knowledge, cultural expertise, and lived experience as equally important as formal qualifications or organisational size. ACCOs often operate in smaller, localised contexts but have deep connections and understanding of community needs.

Multi-year funding agreements allow ACCOs to plan, recruit, and deliver programs sustainably, rather than being constrained by short-term or rigid funding cycles.

The grant process should encourage ACCOs to work with schools, health services, and other community organisations while still valuing ACCOs as lead agencies, ensuring culturally appropriate decision-making and service delivery.

Emphasising outcomes and impact over compliance heavy reporting supports ACCOs to demonstrate effectiveness without being disproportionately burdened by administrative requirements. By involving ACCO representatives in program and grant design ensures funding priorities reflect community needs, local knowledge,

and culturally appropriate service delivery models.

By embedding these principles into the grant process, the department can increase participation of ACCOs, strengthen culturally safe service delivery, and improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

15. What else should be built into the program design to help improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families?

To improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) children and families, program design should embed culturally safe, community-led approaches and strong partnerships with organisations already working with ATSI young people.

Collaborative partnerships with ATSI organisations, working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, Elders, and local youth services ensures that programs are culturally grounded, responsive to community priorities, and delivered in a way that respects cultural identity, traditions, and connection to Country.

Family programs could integrate education, health, parenting support, early childhood development, mental health, and family wellbeing services in a coordinated manner, recognising the interconnected needs of ATSI families. Co-designing activities and support with young parents themselves ensures services meet real needs and build empowerment and agency within the community.

Strengthening cultural identity and connections, services could actively support practices that promote cultural learning, community participation, and intergenerational connection, recognising cultural identity as a key protective factor for children and families.

By building these elements into program design, services can improve engagement, build trust, and create culturally safe pathways for ATSI young parents and their children, ultimately strengthening resilience, wellbeing, and long-term positive outcomes.

16. What types of data would help your organisation better understand its impact and continuously improve its services?

To better understand its impact and continuously improve services, our organisation requires data that is both easy to access and directly informs program

design. Information collected directly from young parents and families is particularly valuable, as it provides insight into their needs, preferences, and satisfaction. This ensures that programs remain relevant, responsive, and culturally safe, reflecting the lived experiences of those we aim to support.

Tracking participation and engagement metrics, such as attendance, retention, and completion rates in education, parenting programs, health services, and mentoring activities, provides critical insight into which strategies effectively engage young parents. Similarly, outcome and progress indicators covering areas such as child development, parenting confidence, education completion, employment outcomes, health and wellbeing, and social connectedness allow the program to demonstrate impact while identifying areas requiring improvement.

It is also important to gather data on service accessibility, including barriers such as transport, scheduling, childcare, or technology limitations. Understanding these obstacles helps the program adapt delivery approaches to increase engagement and participation. Additionally, information on the broader community and demographic context, such as local population statistics, teenage pregnancy rates, involvement with child protection services, and socio-economic indicators, provides essential context for planning and resource allocation.

Finally, the program benefits from continuous improvement feedback loops, where data is summarised in an easily accessible, user-friendly format. This enables staff to learn from insights quickly and adjust services to meet emerging needs. By collecting client-centred, actionable, and locally relevant data, the program can remain evidence-informed, adaptive, and focused on delivering meaningful, effective support to young parents and their children.

17. What kinds of data or information would be most valuable for you to share, to show how your service is positively impacting children and families?

The most valuable data for sharing how our service is positively impacting children and families is information that demonstrates both tangible outcomes and lived experiences. This includes tracking participation and engagement, such as attendance in education programs, mentoring sessions, health and parenting support activities, and completion of key milestones. Such data illustrates the direct reach and involvement of families in the services provided.

Equally important is information on outcomes, such as improvements in children's developmental milestones, parental confidence, educational attainment, employment engagement, social connectedness, and overall wellbeing. Capturing

these measures demonstrates the real-life impact of support services on both parents and their children, showing how intervention and guidance lead to meaningful change.

Data collected directly from clients, including feedback, testimonials, and reflections on their experiences, is especially valuable. It provides context and depth to quantitative measures, highlighting the ways the program has supported families to overcome challenges, build skills, and increase resilience. Collectively, this combination of quantitative and qualitative data ensures a comprehensive picture of how the service is improving outcomes for children and families.

To gather this rich, detailed, and meaningful data, additional funding is required. Resources are needed for data collection, analysis, and reporting to ensure it is accurate, actionable, and informs continuous program improvement. Without adequate funding, it is challenging to generate the depth of evidence required to fully demonstrate the impact of services like YFC and to continue refining programs to best meet the needs of young parents and their children.

18. If your organisation currently reports in the Data Exchange (DEX), what SCORE Circumstances domain is most relevant to the service you deliver?

The Young Families Connect program currently reports in the Data Exchange (DEX) and the most relevant SCORE Circumstances domain for the service we deliver is “Parenting and Family Functioning”. This domain accurately reflects the focus of our program, which is to support young parents in building the skills, knowledge, and confidence necessary to provide safe, nurturing, and stable environments for their children.

19. What kinds of templates or guidance would help you prepare strong case studies that show the impact of your service?

To prepare strong case studies that clearly demonstrate the impact of our service, it would be helpful to have templates and guidance that provide a structured yet flexible framework for capturing the depth of each young parent’s journey. Templates that prompt us to document key elements such as the presenting issues, the barriers faced, the supports provided, and the measurable changes in the young parent’s circumstances—would ensure consistency and clarity across case studies. Guidance on how to incorporate both qualitative stories and quantitative data would also strengthen our ability to highlight outcomes in a way that is emotionally compelling and evidence-informed.

Additionally, best-practice examples would be valuable, particularly those that demonstrate how to balance client confidentiality with meaningful storytelling. Templates that encourage reflection on cultural considerations, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, would support more inclusive and strengths-based reporting. Clear advice on linking narrative examples to SCORE domains or other reporting frameworks would further enhance the usefulness of case studies in demonstrating impact to funders and stakeholders.

20. What does a relational contracting approach mean to you in practice? What criteria would you like to see included in a relational contract?

A relational contracting approach, in practice, means building a genuine partnership between the funding body and service providers, one grounded in trust, transparency, and a shared commitment to improving outcomes for vulnerable families. For services working with young parents, this approach is essential. The needs of our cohort can shift quickly, and effective support requires flexibility, open communication, and a willingness to adapt in real time rather than being constrained by rigid compliance measures.

In our experience, relational contracting ensures that government not only funds programs but actively listens to and values the expertise of frontline workers. It recognises the complexity of engaging young parents, many of whom have experienced trauma, child protection involvement, unstable housing, or educational disadvantage and understands that meaningful progress cannot always be captured purely through numerical outputs. A relational contract allows services to focus on the relational work that underpins long-term change.

A strong example of relational contracting in practice is the long-standing partnership between YFC and the Mission Aust Communities for Children, Inala - Ipswich initiative. Over more than 12 years, this relationship has been built on mutual trust, consistent communication, and a shared understanding of community needs. This contract has demonstrated how collaborative problem-solving, flexibility in service delivery, and ongoing respect for frontline insights create better outcomes for young parents and their children. It shows the power of true partnership where each party brings expertise, listens to the other, and works together to strengthen the local service system.

In a relational contract, we would like to see criteria that reinforce this collaborative spirit, including flexible delivery expectations, shared data access, regular partnership meetings, cultural safety commitments, and space for co-design throughout the life of the contract. When contracts prioritise relationship

over bureaucracy, they empower services to innovate, respond effectively to emerging needs, and deliver programs that genuinely improve the lives of young families.

21. What's the best way for the department to decide which organisations should be offered a relational contract?

The best way for the department to decide which organisations should be offered a relational contract is to prioritise those with a proven, long-standing commitment to their local community and a demonstrated track record of delivering meaningful outcomes for vulnerable families. Organisations that have deep community trust, sustained engagement with hard to reach cohorts, and evidence of stable, consistent service delivery are best positioned to benefit from and contribute to the relational contracting model. The department should carefully consider the organisation's history of collaboration with other local services, its reputation among partner agencies, and its ability to work transparently and responsively in a shared-governance environment.

It is particularly important to assess whether the organisation already operates in a relational way through authentic partnerships, co-design with clients, and a willingness to adapt services based on feedback and emerging need. Frontline experience should be weighted more heavily than marketing reach or organisational size. Smaller community organisations often have the deepest relationships with families and the highest engagement rates with vulnerable young parents who do not engage with mainstream services. The department should also evaluate the organisation's cultural capability, its history of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and its demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement.

Ultimately, relational contracts should be awarded to organisations that genuinely understand their community, have earned the trust of the families they serve, and have shown over many years that they can deliver high-quality, responsive, and relationship-based support. This approach ensures that funding is directed where it will have the greatest impact and strengthens the stability, sustainability, and effectiveness of the local service system.

22. Is your organisation interested in a relational contracting approach? Why/why not?

Our organisation is very interested in a relational contracting approach. This model strongly aligns with the way the YFC program has always operated through deep

relationships, long-term commitment to young parents, and collaborative partnerships across education, health, and community services. A relational contract would provide the stability and continuity required to support a highly vulnerable cohort who depend on trusted, consistent workers and programs. Unlike short-term or transactional funding, relational contracting recognises that meaningful outcomes such as breaking intergenerational cycles of welfare dependency, disengagement from education, and child protection involvement require time, trust, and ongoing collaboration.

We have over two decades of experience delivering specialised support to pregnant and parenting young people in the Ipswich region and have maintained longstanding partnerships with organisations such as Communities for Children (Inala to Ipswich). This partnership has operated successfully for more than 12 years and is a strong example of how we already work within a relational, trust-based, and outcomes driven framework. We understand the value of shared accountability, open communication, and adaptive service delivery all core principles of relational contracting.

A relational contract would allow us to focus on innovation and continuous improvement, particularly as we respond to the changing needs of this generation of young parents who require new, flexible, and community-based approaches. It would also create stability for staff, reduce administrative burden, and allow more time and resources to be invested directly into frontline work rather than the continual cycle of short-term grant applications.

In short, we are ready for and supportive of a relational contracting approach because it mirrors our values, strengthens our partnerships, and most importantly enhances our ability to provide life-changing support to young parents and their children.

23. Is there anything else you think the department should understand or consider about this proposed approach?

The department should always remain open to innovative, responsive, and community-led approaches that reflect the evolving needs of children and young parents. What works today may not work tomorrow, so continual learning, flexibility, and genuine collaboration with frontline organisations are essential to achieving best practice.