



Request for Tender

Gathering Evidence for Action:
Rapid Assessment of Leverage Points for
Transformational Change to the Early Years System

Commercial In Confidence

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| Contact: | Geoff Sharp Early Years Catalyst Lead Mobile: 0424 783 253 Email: gsharp@earlyyearscatalyst.org.au |
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| Closing Date: Thursday 24 November 2022 (5pm) |
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1. Project Background

1.1 Early Years Catalyst

The Early Years Catalyst (EYC) is an ambitious, long-term systemic change initiative that emerged from the 2020 National Early Years Summit. We are a national collaboration working to improve early childhood development (ECD) outcomes for children experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability. We seek to connect, support and amplify the work of organisations across the country so that together we can transform the early years system to better meet the needs of young children and their families. Our vision is that by 2030, significantly more children in Australia will be thriving in their first 2,000 days and beyond (pregnancy to five).¹ Our work is nationally focused and spans four key areas:

- **Connecting** - strengthening coordination and collaboration by convening the field around a shared goal and facilitating connections between organisations and other early years initiatives
- **Diagnosing** - supporting a shared understanding of the problem we are collectively working to solve (including the early years 'ecosystem') as well as the development of systemic solutions
- **Amplifying** - shining a spotlight on the importance of the early years, amplifying voices and mobilising support for innovative, evidence-based approaches to improving early years outcomes
- **Capacity and Capability Building** - filling gaps in the collective effort to transform the early years system including by supporting leadership and systems change capability building in the field.

1.2 Systems Mapping Project

In late 2021, the EYC commissioned Orange Compass to undertake a major systems mapping process to identify the forces influencing ECD outcomes in Australia today and possible leverage points for transformational change. This work was informed by a participatory engagement process involving more than 300 people from across the country with knowledge and insights of the early years system together with a rapid review of published perspectives and deep dives into prevailing societal and economic ideologies.

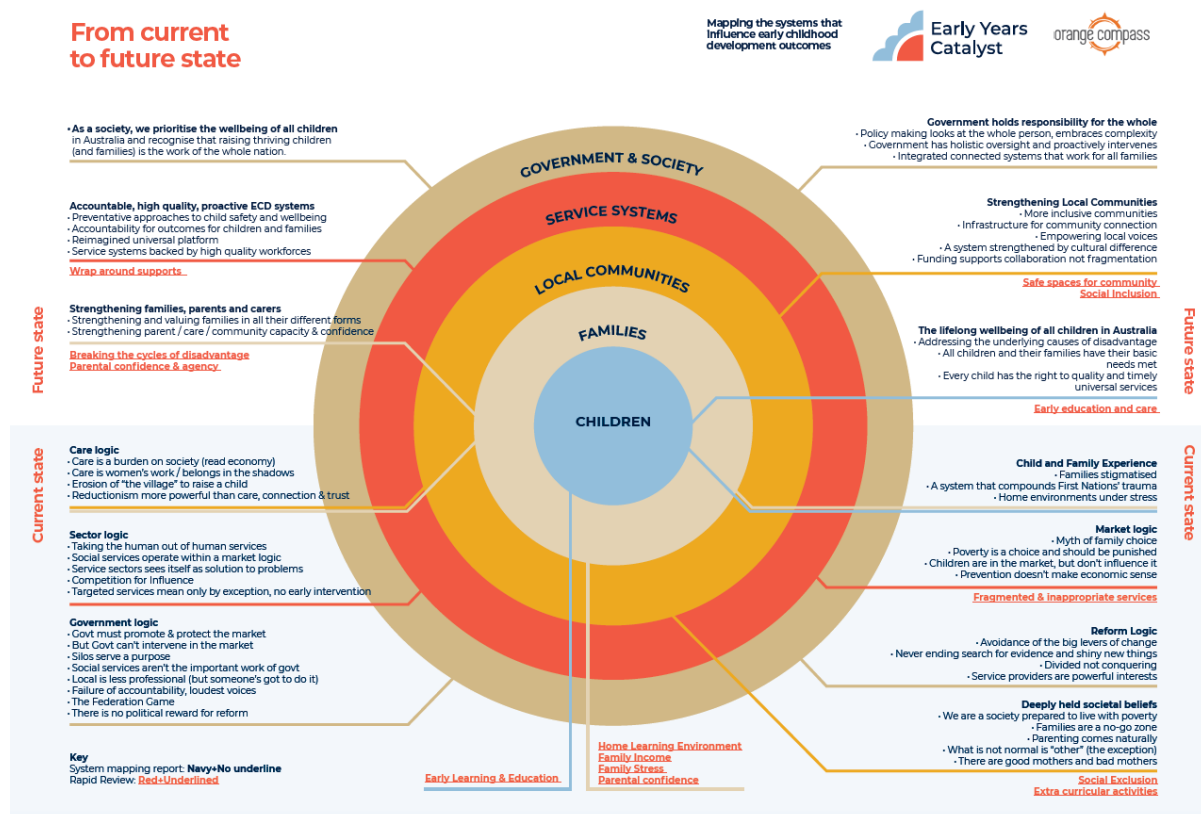
¹ The EYC was established in 2021 with twelve founding members: ARACY (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth), Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Centre for Policy Development, Every Child Campaign (led by The Benevolent Society), Families Australia, The Front Project, Goodstart Early Learning, Logan Together, Parent-Infant Research Institute, SNAICC - National Voice for our Children, Social Ventures Australia and Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership.

The EYC is co-chaired by Jane Hunt, CEO of The Front Project and Penny Dakin, CEO of ARACY. Social Ventures Australia houses the initiative's backbone, holding the project funds, sub-contracting work and employing the backbone staff.

The systems mapping process generated a range of complex, fascinating and thought-provoking findings, highlighting the inherent complexity of the many systems that influence ECD outcomes. While there are many strengths in the current system(s), the systems mapping process uncovered seven broad challenges (deep systemic forces, each underpinned by embedded narratives), that are maintaining unacceptably high levels of disadvantage in the early years. These relate to the frameworks underpinning the way our social service systems currently operate; the way we understand and value care - which is central to the health, wellbeing and development of young children; the powerful interests that benefit from maintaining the status quo of our systems and the failure of our current systems to effectively prevent or respond to the pervasive impact of entrenched disadvantage and intergenerational trauma on young children and their families in Australia.

The systems mapping process also revealed the field's vision for a distinctly different and better future early years system that supports significantly more young children and their families to thrive. This includes strengthening families, parents, carers and local communities so that every child has 'the village it takes to raise a child' as well as creating big societal shifts so that as a country, we prioritise the wellbeing of all children and recognise that raising thriving children (and families) is the work of the whole nation.

The image below captures the deep systemic forces that are holding current conditions in place (current state - lower half) as well as the key characteristics of the desired future early years system (future state - upper half).



1.3 Leverage Points for Change

Surfacing deep systemic forces and embedded narratives (ie. what is really happening in the system) enables us to start to find potential leverage points or areas to intervene or apply pressure to influence systemic changes - to improve ECD outcomes for children experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability and ensure significantly more children in Australia are thriving in their first 2,000 days and beyond.

A range of possible leverage points for transformational change were identified and explored through the 'sense making and exploration' phase of the systems mapping process. The Systems Mapping Report identifies nearly 60 leverage points across six categories of leverage in the system (refer p.69 of the Systems Mapping Report – available to download at: <https://www.earlyyearscatalyst.org.au/fieldinsights/>), while those identified by systems mapping participants were largely related to two categories:

- *creating big societal shifts and interventions to shift the ECD system*
- *interventions to build an ECD system where all children and families thrive.*

In the final 'rapid testing and iteration' phase of the systems mapping work, the most popular interventions to *build an ECD system where all children and families thrive* were:

- a national bi-partisan ECD framework with shared language and vision that provides well supported pathways for every child to thrive, in their first 2,000 days and beyond, addressing inequality, poverty and intergenerational vulnerability
- fit-for-purpose funding and commissioning approaches that include feedback loops from community to government and service providers, delivering fit for purpose systems for disadvantaged children and communities.

2. Project Requirements

2.1 Overview

As part of its ongoing evidence gathering activity and to inform the further iteration of the National Early Years Blueprint first developed at the National Early Years Summit, the EYC is seeking to commission a rapid assessment of the full suite of leverage points identified through the systems mapping process and their relative potential for impact on ECD outcomes with the aim of establishing an evidence-based inventory of interventions to transform Australia's early years system. It is envisaged that the assessment of leverage points will canvass:

- intent and potential impact on ECD outcomes, including identification of the deep systemic forces (and embedded narratives) in focus
- suggested/possible approach(es) to implementation including pre-conditions
- case study examples of successful implementation or relevant promising practice, learnings and evidence of impact whether domestic/international (and at local, state/territory or national levels) and within or outside of the ECD system
- any available information regarding implementation costs and timelines drawing on successful implementation from other jurisdictions or other similar reforms (where possible extrapolate cost and time implications for implementation)
- significant barriers to implementation (eg. legislative, political, public opinion, stakeholder interests, etc) and potential unintended consequences.

We would also be interested in recommended approaches to clustering or filtering of the leverage points through the assessment process where appropriate (eg. leverage points that could be approached in tandem) as well as proposed metrics for both assessment and ranking.

2.2 Key Deliverables

A written report presenting the key findings from the assessment, including a comparative assessment across the full suite of leverage points assessed and recommendations regarding which leverage points offer the greatest potential for positive impact on ECD outcomes.

The report should include a list of source documents used in the analysis and assessment and be written for a wide audience including ECD practitioners and service delivery organisations, other early years initiatives, government/policy makers, academics and funders.

It is intended that the report will be professionally designed for publication on the EYC website.

2.3 Outputs

The outputs that we anticipate from this project are:

- a rapid, evidence-based assessment of the full suite of leverage points identified through the EYC systems mapping project and their relative potential for impact on ECD outcomes
- a ranking of the leverage points based on an agreed set of metrics (eg. complexity, cost, time, risk and overall impact on ECD outcomes)
- recommendations regarding which leverage points offer the greatest potential to transform the Australian early years system over the longer-term (ie. 10, 20, 30, 40-year horizons)
- advice regarding which (if any) leverage points carry significant risk and unintended consequences and are therefore not considered to be viable for implementation.

2.4 Indicative Timeline

| Milestone | Date |
|---|---|
| Project Plan | Friday 9 December 2022 |
| Draft Summary Assessment of Leverage Points | Friday 10 February 2023 (Subject to Project Plan) |
| Draft Report | Friday 3 March 2023 (Subject to Project Plan) |
| Final Report | Friday 31 March 2023 |

2.5 Pricing (ex GST)

The EYC has an indicative budget of \$200,000-\$240,000 for consultancy fees for research, assessment and development of the final project report.

3. Submission Requirements

3.1 Proposals

Proposals must outline the following:

- Respondent's details, including:
 - Entity Name
 - ABN
 - Address
 - Contact Person
 - Phone Number
 - Email Address
 - Web Address
- A detailed explanation / description of the methods and processes proposed for the delivery of the outcomes of project.
- A high-level project plan to demonstrate how the respondent will meet required timeframes.
- A quotation with fees, GST inclusive (and inclusive of any expenses necessary to complete the assignment).
- Personnel proposed to conduct the assignment.
- Identify the key personnel and provide a detailed description of their skills and experience in relation to the specification (include resumes if applicable).
- Detailed description and examples of your organisation's experience in completing similar and/or related assignments or other work.
- Contact details of two referees willing to comment on the consultant's work.
- Professional Indemnity and Public Liability insurance policies held by the consultant.

3.2 Selection Criteria

All submissions will be assessed against the following criteria:

| Criteria | Weighting |
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| Demonstrated understanding and engagement with the subject matter of the project | 40% |

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| Demonstrated previous performance with projects of similar or related nature | 25% |
| Methodology including approach to including metrics for assessment and the filtering/clustering of leverage points as appropriate | 20% |
| Price (must be within indicative budget – this is not flexible) | 15% |

3.3 Submission Timetable

| Activity | Date |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| RFP Document Issued | Thursday 10 November 2022 |
| Closing Date for Proposals | Thursday 24 November 2022 |
| Successful Consultant Notified | Wednesday 30 November 2022 |

3.4 Insurance and Indemnity

Workers' Compensation

The Consultant must effect, and ensure that each of its sub-contractors effects, a WorkCover policy of insurance complying with the provisions of the *Accident Compensation Act 1985* in respect of all of its employees.

Public Liability Insurance

The Consultant must, at all times during the Contract Term, be the holder of a current public liability policy of insurance in the joint names of the Consultant and its sub-contractors, providing coverage for an amount of not less than \$10 million.

Professional Indemnity Insurance

The Consultant must, at all times during the Contract Term, be the holder of a current professional indemnity policy of insurance in respect of the activities specified, providing coverage for an amount of not less than \$5 million.

3.5 Submission Process

Proposals must be submitted on time, by **5pm on Thursday 24 November 2022**.

Proposals should be submitted via email to: **backbone@earlyyearscatalyst.org.au**