

# Request for Tender

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## Mental Models Deep Dive:

Exploring the best strategies to shift the mental models shaping early childhood development outcomes in Australia today

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Closing Date: Expression of Interest	Monday 16 January 2023 (midday)
Full Proposal	Monday 30 January 2023 (5pm)

# 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 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).<sup>1</sup> 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.

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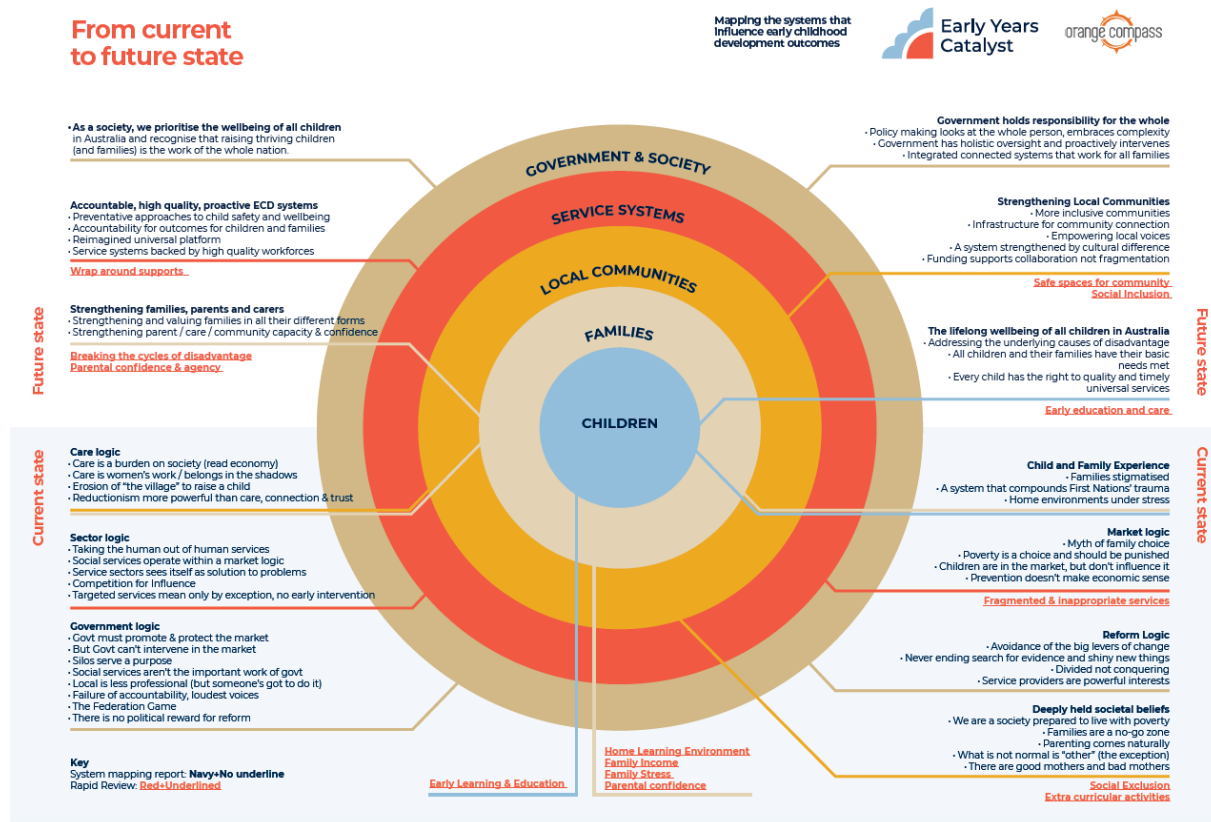
<sup>1</sup> The EYC was established in 2021 with twelve founding members: ARACY (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth), Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Centre for Policy Development, Every Child Campaign (led by The Benevolent Society), 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 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', underpinned by accountable, high-quality and proactive service systems and with government holding responsibility for 'the whole'.

The image below captures the deep systemic forces and embedded narratives that are holding current conditions in Australia's early years system 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 Mental Models

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. The systems mapping process uncovered a range of deeply held societal beliefs - including about children, families, parenting, caring and poverty - that engagement participants believe are holding the current system (and the outcomes it produces) in place - some of the most deeply held forces that we must challenge if we are to truly disrupt and transform Australia's early years system. These include:

- *the family is private (and should be protected from interference by government)*
- *market based solutions are better*
- *caring work is not real work*
- *governments are not accountable for system failures.*

The Systems Mapping Report (refer pp. 28-39) includes five iceberg diagrams that illustrate the cascading links between each of these beliefs - and for the 'current state' overall - including the deep narratives, mental models and assumptions underpinning them, and the more visible symptoms in the system (ie. systems structures, patterns of behaviour and everyday events).

Shifting mental models ('creating big societal shifts') was also prioritised by systems mapping participants as one of two key areas of leverage to realise transformational change in the early years. In imagining a distinctly different and better future ECD system (ie. the 'desired future state'), systems mapping participants called for big shifts so that as a society, we:

- *prioritise the (lifelong) wellbeing of all children in Australia*
- *recognise that raising thriving children (and families) is the work of the whole nation.*

The mental models underpinning the desired future state of Australia's early years system, including 'a society that prioritises the wellbeing of all children' are also unpacked in detail through a series of 'future state icebergs' (refer pp. 49-59 of the Systems Mapping Report).

## 2. Project Requirements

### 2.1 Overview

As part of its ongoing evidence gathering and strategy development, the EYC is seeking to commission a deep dive into the mental models surfaced through the systems mapping process to better understand them and how they could be influenced (Phase 1) and to then draw on these insights to lead the co-design of a strategy for implementation by the EYC and wider early years field (Phase 2). It is intended that the project will explore both the deeply held societal beliefs shaping ECD outcomes in Australia today, as well as those underpinning the desired future state of Australia's early years system, with the aim of identifying how the mental models that are holding current conditions in place could be shifted towards those that would support significantly more young children (and families) in Australia to thrive.

#### *Phase 1: Deep Dive*

It is envisaged that Phase 1 of the project will answer the following three questions:

1. **What does the EYC and wider field need to understand both about the mental models that are holding current conditions in place and the mental models that are required to support the desired future state of Australia's early years system?**

Our long-term goal is to create the big societal shifts that are needed to realise the desired future state of Australia's early years system. We envisage our partner exploring the underlying drivers, characteristics and pervasiveness of, and inter-relationships between, the mental models surfaced through the systems mapping process.

2. **What are the most effective strategies available to shift mental models?**

We require our partner to provide advice on the most effective strategies/approaches for shifting mental models (and/or values, beliefs and attitudes) at an individual, organisational and societal level including 'what not to do' based on case study examples. This will require a partner who is able to distil and illustrate the preconditions for success and implementation learnings from chosen case study examples.

3. **What is the recommended approach to shifting the mental models shaping ECD outcomes in Australia today?**

Drawing on the evidence gathered in response to questions 1 and 2, we require advice on which mental models should be prioritised for action and what are the most promising approaches to shifting these and/or realising those that underpin the desired future state.

## *Phase 2: Strategy Co-Design*

Drawing on the insights gathered in Phase 1, we require our partner to co-design a strategy for implementation by the EYC and wider early years field aimed at creating the big societal shifts needed for Australia to become a society that prioritises the (lifelong) wellbeing of all children and recognises that raising thriving children (and families) is the work of the whole nation. The EYC will provide access to networks and stakeholders to inform this process.

It is expected that both phases of the project (ie. the deep dive and strategy co-design) will be informed by relevant current and past activity in the ECD field and adjacent fields and will also draw on a range of relevant disciplines such as First Nations knowledge and traditions, public health, social psychology, behavioural economics and advertising.<sup>2</sup>

## **2.2 Key Deliverables**

### *Phase 1: Deep Dive*

- A detailed report including ‘standalone’ executive summary and reflection from our partner on the key learnings and insights from the deep dive process with evidence-based advice that addresses questions 1 to 3 in section 2.1 above. The report should:
  - incorporate infographics, charts and graphics and other relevant visual presentations of key information that can be extracted for use on the EYC website
  - include a list of source documents and subject matter experts consulted
  - be written for a wide audience including ECD practitioners/service delivery organisations, other early years initiatives, government/policy makers, academics and funders
  - be produced to a professional (designed) standard (including compliance with accessibility standards) ready for publication on the EYC website.
- A 90-minute webinar presenting the deep dive findings to the early years field.

### *Phase 2: Strategy Co-Design*

- A tailored co-designed strategy and implementation plan for the EYC and wider early years field to foster the big societal shifts that are needed to realise the desired future state of Australia’s early years system including indicative timelines and costings.
- A minimum one-day workshop with EYC members and other key stakeholders exploring the findings and insights and translating to strategy and activation.

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<sup>2</sup> This includes for example, the extensive work undertaken by FrameWorks Institute in collaboration with the Centre for Community Child Health on framing ECD in the Australian context to unlock social change.

## 2.3 Indicative Timeline

Milestone	Date
Detailed Project Plan	Tuesday 14 February 2023
Draft Report	Friday 28 April 2023 (Subject to Project Plan)
Final Report, Strategy and Workplan	Friday 26 May 2023

## 2.4 Budget

The EYC has an indicative budget of \$200,000 (ex GST) for this project.

We are open to receiving advice on alternate approaches which will add to the success of the project for which we will need to bring funding partners on board.

## **3. Submission Requirements**

### **3.1 EOI Requirements**

The EOI should contain a short overview of how you propose to respond to this request for tender. It should also detail whether you propose to apply as a single organisation or any members of a consortium you propose to form.

### **3.2 Proposals for RFT**

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).
  - If the proposal is a joint or network proposal, a clear explanation of the partners specific roles and expertise should be provided.
- 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:

- Demonstrated understanding and engagement with the subject matter of the project
- Demonstrated previous performance with projects of similar or related nature
- Methodology and Innovative approach
- Depth and breadth of network of contributors to this project
- Within budget (not negotiable).

### 3.3 Submission Timetable

We require interested parties to submit an expression of interest (EOI) to develop and submit a full proposal so that we can avoid conflicts of interest in the assessment panel.

Proposals should be submitted via email to: [backbone@earlyyearsatalyst.org.au](mailto:backbone@earlyyearsatalyst.org.au)

Activity	Date
Closing Date for Expressions of Interest	Monday 16 January 2023 (midday)
Closing Date for Full Proposals	Monday 30 January 2023 (5pm)
Successful Consultant Notified	Tuesday 7 February 2023

### 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.