

Frequently asked questions

What is the Early Years Initiative?

The Initiative is a commitment to work differently with communities to improve the health, development and learning of children from conception to the age of four, and create lasting change.

It will build on the strengths, assets and knowledge of communities to establish evidence-informed solutions that meet local needs.

As a 10-year partnership, the Initiative will bring together community leaders, all levels of government, researchers, business and philanthropic organisations to achieve better outcomes for Western Australian children and families.

Why is it taking place?

From conception to the age of four is a critical time for child development.

However, one in five children in Western Australia is considered developmentally vulnerable, as measured by the Australian Early Development Census.

In recent years, despite significant effort, there has been little or no improvement in key developmental indicators for young children in many high-needs communities.

Research shows that change requires a portfolio of approaches tailored to suit the individual needs of communities.

The Initiative will empower communities to have more say in what they need to support their children to flourish. This includes, among other things, implementing changes to make better use of existing services, to provide holistic and joined-up support for families with young children.

Who are the main partners in this Initiative?

The Initiative is a partnership between the State Government, Minderoo Foundation and Telethon Kids Institute (through CoLab). The Initiative's board is made up of representatives from these organisations, with two independent co-chairs.

At a State Government level, the key agencies are the Departments of Communities, Education and Health.

Each selected community will be a critical partner in the Initiative, involving local leaders and community members, and service providers from the government and non-government sectors.



Isn't it the role of government to fund initiatives in the early years?

The Initiative is a place-based approach that will leverage and join up current government investment, activities and services in the selected communities to improve child development, health and learning.

Participation by Minderoo Foundation and Telethon Kids Institute enables the State Government to better incorporate world-leading research about 'what works' into every day practice, and provides additional resources to implement and evaluate innovative changes.

What exactly will the Initiative be looking at with children and families?

In Australia, the development of young children is monitored and measured via the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC).

The five key areas, or domains, of the AEDC that will be examined as part of the Initiative are:

- physical health and well-being
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills, and
- communication skills and general knowledge.

The Initiative will consider the range of factors that influence these domains, including access and quality of support, availability of opportunity and employment, family and domestic violence, housing, and social isolation.

How will partner communities be selected?

The Initiative has identified communities with a high population of children aged four years and under, and where data shows a clear need to improve early childhood outcomes. This data has come from the Australian Early Development Census, Australian Bureau of Statistics, State Department of Health and other key agencies.

Final community selection will be decided by the Early Years Initiative board and influenced by community capacity and readiness, and strong local leadership and interest in participating in the Initiative.



Where is the Initiative being implemented?

Communities across metropolitan, regional, remote and very remote Western Australia will be invited to take part in the Initiative.

The Central Great Southern Shires of Katanning, Broomehill-Tambellup, Kojonup and Gnowangerup are the first partner community to join the Initiative. The remaining three partner communities will be announced in 2019.

We want the Initiative to benefit all families in Western Australia, so we will share what we learn, as we learn it.

How will each selected community be involved?

Community decision-making will be critical, as local communities know their children and what they need.

Once invited to join the Initiative, each partner community will be supported to form a local decision-making body, to combine local insights with global best practice. The body will be made up of key community members, and representatives from local non-government and government service providers.

Communities will be supported to assess the needs of children and families, and develop their own 10-year evidence-informed community plans to improve the health, learning and development of children.

