



Australian Government
Defence

Defence School Mentor Program:

School Application and Funding Guidelines



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Application Opening and Closing Dates

Activity	Date
Applications open	17 February 2025
Application deadline	31 March 2025
Assessment period	April 2025
Funding decisions announced	May 2025

Responsible Entity

Defence Member and Family Support (DMFS) Branch
Defence People Group
Department of Defence

Enquiries

If you have any enquiries, please contact:
Defence School Mentor Program Team
dsm.program@defence.gov.au
Enquiries should be made no later than 3 days prior to applications closing.

Type of Funding Opportunity

Open Competitive

Disclaimer

The Australian Government will not accept responsibility for any misunderstanding arising from the failure by an applicant to comply with these Guidelines.

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1. Defence School Mentor Funding Process

1	<p>Funding Opens</p> <p>Applications for funding open on 17 Feburary 2025 for Financial year 2025-26</p>
2	<p>Submit Application</p> <p>To be considered for DSM Program funding schools must complete an application form that addressesthe eligibility criteria, agree to reporting requirements and agree to the terms and conditions of the program</p>
3	<p>Funding Closes</p> <p>Applications close on 31 March 2025. Application must be submitted by the due date. All applications received will be acknowledged by a reciept email</p>
4	<p>Assessment</p> <p>Applications will be assessed against the program criteria</p>
5	<p>Decision</p> <p>The program will review the available budget, applications and any other relevant factors to approve recommended schools</p>
6	<p>Notification of Outcome</p> <p>Schools will be notified via email of the outcome of their application</p>
7	<p>Execution of Funding</p> <p>Successful schools must return all relevant documents to facilitate the funding agreement and payment of approved funding</p>
8	<p>Empoyment of a DSM and program delivery</p> <p>DSM is employed to deliver approved activities in line with the funding agreement and program guidelines</p>
9	<p>Mid Year Program Reporting</p> <p>Schools are required to complete a mid year progress report</p>
10	<p>End of Year Program Reporting</p> <p>Schools are required to complete an end of year program evaluation and financial acquittal including evidence of expendature and delivery</p>

1. Introduction

These guidelines contain information for the Defence School Mentor School funding program. Schools must read this document before applying for funding.

This document sets out:

- The purpose of the program
- The eligibility criteria
- Funding bands
- Roles and responsibilities of schools
- Roles and responsibilities of Defence School Mentors
- How funding applications are assessed
- How schools are notified and receive funding
- How schools will be monitored and evaluated

This funding program and process is administered by Defence Member and Family Support (DMFS).

1.1 Purpose of the Program

The Defence School Mentor Program (DSMP) is designed to support the wellbeing of children of current serving ADF members.

The program provides funding to Australian primary and secondary schools to facilitate the employment of a Defence School Mentor (DSM).

In collaboration with existing school staff DSMs identify at risk, disengaged Defence students, and link them to the appropriate school supports to improve the wellbeing of Defence students. DSMs are employed by the school.

The DSM program provides funding based on evidence that demonstrates the strong association between safety, wellbeing and learning¹.

1.2 DSM Objectives

School based Defence School Mentors are employed to achieve the following:

1. Connect with Defence families, and provide information about the school environment and available support relevant to their child’s development
2. Support Defence students to access school-based social and emotional supports, in line with school policies

3. Facilitate opportunities for Defence students to build relationships and connections through events and other initiatives
4. Raise awareness among school staff and the wider school community about the unique Defence lifestyle.

1.3 Key Benefits

- The program has a range of benefits for schools, ADF children and families:
- Enhanced student wellbeing and learning outcomes
- Improved integration and inclusion of ADF families into school communities
- Greater awareness and understanding of ADF family challenges within schools

2. Eligibility Criteria

2.1 Eligible Schools:

All Australian based public, private, or independent school are eligible to apply for funding

2.2 Student Criteria:

For assessing minimum enrolment numbers students from ADF families are defined as:

- Children of **current serving Australian Defence Force (Army, Navy Air force) members.**

¹ Australian Student Wellbeing Framework - [Framework | Student Wellbeing Hub](#)

3. Available Funding

Funding is available in ‘bands’ to ensure funding is provided based on the number of Defence students in the school, the relative hours required to deliver the program, and a standard allocation for resources to support delivery.

By applying schools are committing to the hours of delivery as outlined in the funding band.

3.1 Funding Bands

Funding band	Hours/week	Resource Funding
1	15	\$1000
2	20	\$1500
3	25	\$2000

3.1 Funding Components

Total funding is based on the following factors:

- An Average of 10 hours per student annually
- DSMs employed 52 weeks of the year on a part time contract. See Appendix A - DSM Employment Awards
- A contribution to resources to support program delivery

3.3 Requirements of Funding

By accepting funding under the DSM Program, it is expected that the school will:

- Deliver the program in line with the activities approved in the funding agreement and minimum delivery standards outlined in [section 6](#)
- Comply with the employment and recruitment requirements for DSMs as outlined in [Appendix A](#)
- Meet program compliance including financial acquittal and program impact reporting as outlined in [section 7](#)
- Ensure relevant point of contact information is maintained to enable DMFS to communicate program requirements
- Comply with the guidance outlined in the ‘Defence School Mentor Communication Pack’

4. Application Process

The funding application form is used to determine school eligibility for Program funding and appropriate funding amounts.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON THE APPLICATION PROCESS

- All information requested on the funding application form must be provided for a complete assessment of the application.
- The Principal or appointed well-being team member is responsible for completing the funding application.
- Due to the high risk of conflict of interest employed DSMs are not be involved with program application or funding administration processes.

If there are any questions regarding the application process, please contact the Program team at dsm.program@defence.gov.au.

4.1 Assessment process

1. Applications are considered as part of a competitive process.
2. Applications will be assessed for eligibility by DMFS.
3. If the selection process identifies unintentional errors in the application, the school may be contacted to correct or explain the information.
4. Eligible applications will then proceed to assessment against the assessment criteria.

4.1 Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed against the below criteria. Schools should ensure their applications address all relevant areas.

Criteria	Descriptor
Demonstrated Need	Schools must provide evidence of the unique needs of their Defence students, including factors such as the number of Defence students enrolled, the impact of relocations, and parental deployments.
Alignment with Program Objectives	Schools must clearly articulate how their proposed use of the DSM aligns with the program’s objectives, including improving student wellbeing, building connections within the school community, and raising awareness of Defence-related challenges.
Planned Activities	Schools should provide a detailed plan of the DSM’s proposed activities, including one-on-one support, group sessions, events, and other initiatives. The plan should be realistic and tailored to the school’s Defence student population.
Proposed KER and Metrics	Schools must propose measurable Key Expected Results (KERs) and outcomes to track the success of the program. These could include metrics such as improved attendance, social/emotional wellbeing, and academic performance of Defence students.
Capacity for Program Delivery	Schools must demonstrate they have the resources and infrastructure (e.g., administrative support, collaboration with teachers) to successfully deliver the program.
Monitoring and Reporting	Schools should explain how they will track and report on progress and outcomes throughout the funding period, including mid-year and end-of-year reports tied to KERs.

5. Successful Applications

5.1 Funding agreement

Successful schools will be required to enter into a funding agreement with the Department, representing the Commonwealth of Australia. The agreement will form the legal agreement between the Department and the school over the funding period.

Successful schools will have 30 days, from the date of a written offer, to execute a funding agreement with the Department of Defence. Any schools failing to meet the terms of the agreement during the year may forfeit their eligibility to receive funding in subsequent years.

Once executed, the funding agreement will constitute the entire agreement between the parties. There is no binding contract until the agreement is duly executed by the person or persons authorised to bind the recipient and agreed to and signed by the relevant departmental delegate. Funding will only be provided in accordance with the terms of an executed agreement and the recipient must comply with all requirements of the agreement.

Defence will not be responsible for any expenditure until this time. Funded schools are responsible for ensuring the terms and conditions of the agreement are met. Funds are unable to be paid to schools where there is an acquittal still outstanding from a previous funding opportunity.

5.2 Payment of the funding

Payments will be made available to successful applicants **annually**.

Payments will be made available on receipt of a tax invoice. DMFS will provide schools with tax invoice instructions. Payment of Program funds will be available upon receipt of a correctly rendered tax invoice. Payment of funds will be made directly into a bank account by electronic funds transfer only.

Defence’s payment policy is up to 20 days from the date the invoice is received by the Department.

Payments may be withheld if there is any uncertainty about governance, performance, or capacity to deliver the services agreed by schools.

A tax invoice must be received for the financial year it relates to. If invoices are not received by the due date funding will be withdrawn.

6. Program Implementation and Delivery

The following Minimum Delivery Standards will be required of all funded schools. These Standards are necessary to provide Defence families with a consistent level of support and care, regardless of which school their children attend. By standardising key activities, the Defence School Mentor Program ensures that mobile Defence families can expect a reliable and supportive experience at any funded school.

6.1 Minimum Delivery Requirements

Requirement	Detail
Formal Administrative System to Identify ADF Students	<p>Schools must have a formal and secure system in place to identify ADF students upon enrolment and maintain an up-to-date register of Defence children throughout the school year.</p> <p>A structured and reliable system ensures that all Defence students are quickly identified upon arrival at a new school. This allows the school to promptly connect these students with the Defence School Mentor (DSM) and other available support services. Identification is crucial to deliver targeted support and track the ongoing needs of Defence children.</p>
Initial Communication with New Defence Families	<p>The DSM or designated school staff must initiate formal communication with new Defence families, welcoming them to the school and providing information about available support services and programs.</p> <p>Early and proactive engagement with Defence families sets a positive tone and helps parents and children feel supported and connected to the school community. It ensures that families are aware of the services available to help their children adjust to the new school environment, reducing the stress of transitions due to relocations.</p>
Defence School Mentor Attendance at Forums	<p>All DSMs must attend the DSM Program forums. Dates/times will be provided in advance.</p> <p>These forums provide DSMs with opportunities to share best practices, receive updated program advice, and collaborate with their peers from other schools. This enhances the quality of service they provide to Defence students, ensures they remain informed about program changes, and fosters a sense of professional community across the network of DSMs</p>
Regular Communication with School Leadership and Staff	<p>DSMs must meet with school leadership and relevant staff members at least once per term to discuss the progress and needs of Defence students, and to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting them.</p> <p>Effective communication between DSMs and other school wellbeing staff ensures that Defence student support is integrated into the broader school strategy. It enables teachers and administrators to work collaboratively in addressing the specific needs of Defence children and embedding the program into the school culture.</p>
Parent Engagement and Feedback Collection	<p>Schools must conduct at least one formal engagement with the parents of Defence children per school term, such as an information session or feedback forum, and distribute an annual survey to collect feedback on the program's impact.</p> <p>Regular engagement with Defence families ensures that parents are kept informed about the support available to their children and provides them with a platform to share their experiences and concerns. Collecting feedback allows the program to adapt and improve based on family needs.</p>

7. Program Compliance Requirements

Schools will be required to complete program impact reporting in the middle and at the end of the funding period. Program reporting is conducted to assess the impact of program delivery against identified Key Expected Results (KERs).

Schools will be required to complete a financial acquittal at the end of the funding period to identify any unspent funds. Underspends may result in a reduction in future funding allocations and/or repayment of the funds to Defence.

Reporting requirements are outlined below:

Compliance Requirement	Date
DSM Onboarding Requirements: - DSM Online Induction - ADF Aware – School Capability Building Program	Commencement of Program
Mid Cycle Program Report	Term 4 2025
End Cycle Program Report	Term 2 2026
Financial Acquittal	Term 2 2026



8. Appendixes

8.1 Appendix A - DSM Employment Awards

Awards outline the minimum conditions of employment and operate as a safety net. Agreements are collective agreements establishing further conditions of employment and entitlements for specific employees and their employers.

Once registered, the agreement's provisions apply to all employees in the workplace who perform work covered by the industrial agreement. It is important to read both the relevant agreement and the award for the specific occupational group to understand an employee's full entitlements.

The following awards in place cover Defence School Mentors. The below table outlines the relevant classification and aligned descriptor for Defence School Mentors. When applying for funding schools should ensure they are aware of the relevant award and classification.

State	Award	Classification	Descriptor	Link
QLD	QLD Public Service Officers and Other Employees Award – State 2015	Administration Officer Level 3 (AO3)	Defence School Mentor	https://qed.qld.gov.au/workingwithus/Documents/ao3-dsm-secondary.pdf
ACT	ACT PUBLIC SECTOR ADMINISTRATIVE AND RELATED CLASSIFICATIONS ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT 2023–2026	School Assistant 2/3	Defence School Transition Aide (Primary)/ Defence Transition Mentor (Secondary)	https://www.cmteed.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/2287633/ACT-Public-Sector-Administrative-and-Related-Classifications-Enterprise-Agreement-2023-2026.pdf
NSW	Crown Employees (School Administrative and Support Staff) Award 2022	School Administrative Officer (SAO)	Provides administrative, student welfare/ wellbeing support and assistance.	http://www.ircgazette.justice.nsw.gov.au/irc/ircgazette.nsf/LUPublications/25AB698B20F286EAC A258A0400120500?OpenDocument
WA	Primary School - EDUCATION ASSISTANTS' (GOVERNMENT) GENERAL AGREEMENT 2023	Education Assistant	Defence Force Transitional	https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj3JTlo_aJAxWb8jgGH7ELkMQFnoECBYQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fdownloads.wairc.wa.gov.au%2Fagreements%2Fedu017.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2AgqoU7spmmq2tp4X7T38N&opi=89978449
NT	NORTHERN TERRITORY PUBLIC SECTOR 2021 – 2025 ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT	School Based Administration	AO3	https://ocpe.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/513193/ntps-2021-2025-enterprise-agreement.pdf
VIC	Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017.	Education support class	level 1 range 2	https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/VGSA-2017.pdf
SA	SCHOOL SERVICES OFFICERS (GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS) AWARD	School Services Officer	Level 3	https://www.saet.sa.gov.au/app/uploads/2018/12/school-services-officers-government-schools-award.pdf

8.2 Appendix B –DSM Recruitment, Employment and On-boarding Checklist

- Link in with the Regional EDLO in your Region - DMFS has R/EDLOs located in each State or Territory to provide advice and support to the school.
- Principal nominates an in-school Supervisor for the DSM position. Supervision of the DSM should be someone in the School Leadership/Wellbeing/Pastoral Care Team.
- Seek advice from the DSM Program or Regional EDLO, on the suitable state award/agreement, classification level and hourly rate of pay applicable to the DSM role requirements and DSM Program resource allocation.
- Seek advice from the R/EDLO on the DSM Position Description. In general, a suitable candidate for a DSM will have the following qualities:
 - knowledge of the State/Territory school system
 - knowledge of the Defence lifestyle
 - knowledge about wellbeing principles for young children and young adults – a formal qualification is not required
 - genuine affinity for children and young adults.
- Advertise the DSM Position, ensuring an open and transparent merit-based selection process that clearly demonstrates how the preferred candidate has been identified as suitable for the DSM role. Schools may use their own preferred avenues for promotion of the DSM opportunity.
- Liaise with the Regional EDLO - available to assist with the DSM recruitment process, supporting the school in identifying a candidate with a strong understanding of the unique needs of Defence students.

Upon employment, the DSM is required to:

- Complete all Employee Mandatory Training provided by the Education Department/Governing Body
- Complete the DSM Onboarding – National DSMP Induction and ADF Aware Modules on the ADELE (O) platform.
- Attend and participate in Quarterly DSM Network Meetings, facilitated by DMFS.
- Deliver the school's DSM Program, as outlined in the KERs in the Funding Application.

