

Australian Government Department of Social Services

Submission to the Blueprint Expert
Reference Group – Developing a Not-
for-Profit Sector Development Blueprint

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1. The Smith Family

The Smith Family is a national charity which has supported Australian children and families experiencing disadvantage for more than a century. Our **vision** is a world where every child has the opportunity to change their future. Our **belief** is that education is one of the world's most powerful change agents and our **purpose** is to **overcome educational inequality** caused by poverty.

We take a **place-based approach** and are currently working in over **90 low SES communities** across every state and territory. Around a third of these communities are in **regional** areas such as Ballarat, Burnie, Collie, Tamworth, Townsville and Whyalla (see the Appendix for further details).

The Smith Family's programs are:

- **Highly targeted**, supporting children and young people at significant risk of poor educational outcomes.
- Based on the principles of **reciprocity, accountability** and **parental engagement**.
- Demonstrably **effective** at improving educational and employment outcomes for highly disadvantaged young people.
- **Cost-effective**, through leveraging multiple partnerships with families, schools and other educational institutions, governments, business, philanthropy and the broader community.

The children and young people we support

In FY23, The Smith Family supported **200,000** children, young people, parents, carers and community professionals nationally through our education-focused programs. This includes over 162,000 children and young people, of whom more than **62,800** accessed the multiple benefits of our largest program, the **Learning for Life** educational scholarship, up from 32,000 students in FY16.

The Learning for Life program

The *Learning for Life* program recognises that young people experiencing disadvantage benefit from **extra support to succeed at school**, complete Year 12, and go on to work or further studies. *Learning for Life* provides families and scholarship students with the following support:

- A **modest biannual payment**¹ to families to help them cover core education-related expenses such as books, uniforms and excursions.
- Support from a **Learning for Life Family Partnership Coordinator** (a Smith Family team member) who works with the family to support their child's long-term participation in education.
- Access to a range of **programs** to help ensure children's engagement in

¹ The annual *Learning for Life* payment to a family for a school student is \$478 and for a senior secondary school student is \$772.

education. These include **literacy** and **numeracy** programs, learning clubs, mentoring and career programs and digital and financial literacy programs for parents/carers (see the Appendix for further details).

The *Learning for Life* program is highly **targeted**. Students in receipt of the scholarship, are likely to struggle to achieve educationally without support, as shown by the profile of students on the program across **Australia**:

- All are **financially disadvantaged**, as evidenced by having a Health Care Card or Pensioner Benefit Card.
- A **quarter** are from an **Aboriginal** and/or Torres Strait Islander background.
- A **quarter** of *Learning for Life* students have a parent/carer from a **non-English speaking background**.
- **38 percent** of *Learning for Life* students and 34 percent of primary carers have a **health** or **disability** issue.
- 52 percent of parents/carers have **not completed Year 12** or equivalent.
- The parent/carer of around **three quarters** of students are **not in paid employment**.
- 55 percent of students live in a **single parent** family and a further five percent live in **grandparent**-headed families or other care relationships.
- A **third** of students live in a household with **six or more** people.
- **One in seven** *Learning for Life* families do not have access to a **home computer** with an **internet** connection.

Each *Learning for Life* student is supported by a **sponsor**² who provides regular financial support to enable the student's participation on the program. Sponsors and students can also communicate with each other through a de-identified child-safe process which is administered by The Smith Family. Sponsors offer encouragement to students to stay engaged in learning and many older students reflect on the confidence 'boost' that comes from being supported in such a way.

Our partner schools

The Smith Family has formal partnerships with **800** schools nationally, including primary schools, high schools and Colleges, around a shared goal of supporting students experiencing disadvantage to achieve educationally. The **Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage** (ICSEA) of around 90 percent of these partner schools is below the national average (of 1000) and around 30 percent have an ICSEA below 900.

² The vast majority of sponsors are individual Australians.

Our outcomes and research

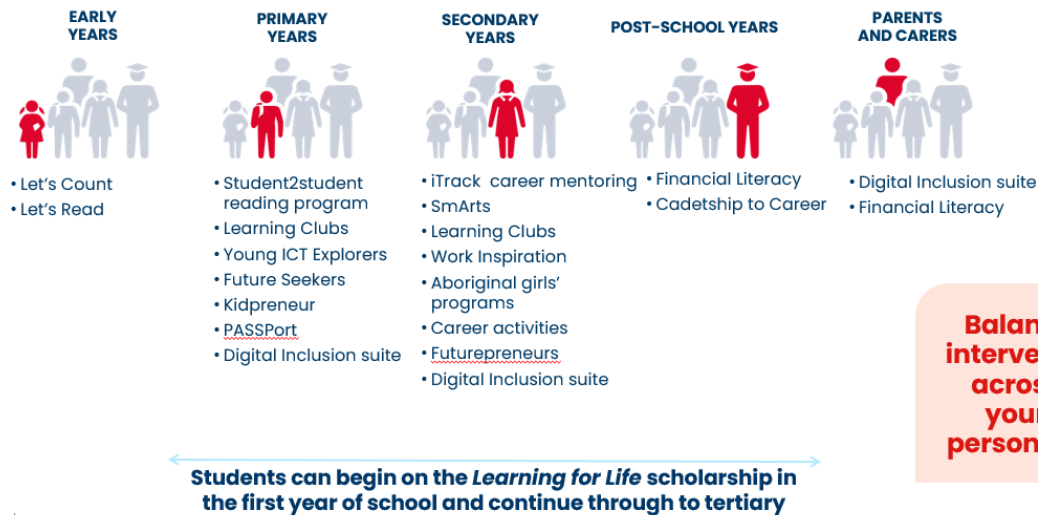
The Smith Family has a strong focus on and internal **capability** to measure the **outcomes** of the children and young people supported on our programs. We use Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) to measure the effectiveness of our programs (see the Appendix for further details).

Each *Learning for Life* student has a **Unique Student Identifier**, enabling us to longitudinally track their **school attendance, achievement in literacy and numeracy, school completion** and post- school engagement in **employment, education and training**. By way of example of the impact of our work, **85 percent** of the highly disadvantaged young Australians who were on the *Learning for Life* program and in Year 12 in 2020, were in **work, study or training, two and a half years** after leaving school.

Appendices

The Learning for Life Program Suite

Key Programs at Different Life Stages



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Details on some of these programs

Learning Clubs

Learning Clubs are a **safe** and **supportive out-of-school learning environment**, where primary or secondary students can access resources and participate in activities that enhance their **academic** and **social skills**. Students are supported by **tutors** who have the knowledge to support students with their homework and provide literacy and numeracy support. Learning Clubs also help students to develop **self-efficacy** and support **stronger engagement** in education. The program is delivered on school grounds or in a community centre at least once a week for 20 weeks or more.

Student2student

Student2student is an evidence-based **peer-to-peer reading program**. It targets students who are in Years 3 to 8 who are struggling with their reading. They are matched with a trained reading 'buddy' who is also a student. The students connect either over the phone or digitally on a regular basis over a number of weeks. The program helps the targeted students to **improve their reading ability**, enhances their **self-confidence** and their confidence towards school work.

Passport

This program prepares students in **Year 6** for a successful **transition to high school**, by increasing their **self-management** skills, **motivation** to learn and **understanding** of what high school will be like. Through the program, students learn the skills that will assist with the increased workload including time management, planning and goal setting. Students have the opportunity to hear from a secondary school student about their high school experience and ask questions and raise concerns about the transition.

Learning for Life Program Outcomes

The Smith Family uses **Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA)** to measure the effectiveness of both our shorter programs and the *Learning for Life* scholarship program. OBA asks three central questions:

- How much did we do? (outputs)
- How well did we do it? (quality)
- Is anyone better off? (outcomes)

Data is collected for each of the shorter programs to answer each of these questions.

For each *Learning for Life* student, we track key longer terms outcomes, which research has shown are important – school attendance, school completion, post-school engagement in employment, education and training and for students on a tertiary scholarship, whether they complete a qualification. We have a unique longitudinal dataset on young people experiencing disadvantage and our analysis of this data is contributing to the Australian educational evidence base.

Measures of effectiveness



85 percent of the highly disadvantaged young Australians who were on the *Learning for Life* program and in Year 12 in 2020, were in work, study or training, two and a half years after leaving school.

National reach: Communities The Smith Family is currently working in

ACT 4	Tarrawanna		Geelong
Belconnen	Tuggerah Lakes	SA 10	Lakes Entrance
Gungahlin	Wagga Wagga	Christie Downs	Morwell
Murrumbidgee	Warrawong	Elizabeth Downs	Shepparton
Tuggeranong	Wiley Park	Elizabeth Vale	Werribee
	Windale	Hackham	
	Wyong	Morphett Vale	
NSW 32		Port Adelaide/	WA 8
Albion Park		Enfield	Armadale
Auburn	NT 3	Port Augusta	Bunbury
Bathurst	Darwin	Salisbury North	Collie
Blue Haven	Katherine	Smithfield Plains	Gosnells
Chester Hill	Palmerston	Whyalla	Kwinana
Claymore			Midland
Coffs Harbour			Mirrabooka
Cranebrook	QLD 16	TAS 4	Rockingham
Dapto	Brighton	Bridgewater/	
Dubbo	Brisbane	Gagebrook	
Fairfield	Caboolture	Burnie/Wynyard	
Goulburn	Cairns	Chigwell/	
Jesmond	Coomera	Claremont	
Lithgow	Gladstone	NE Launceston	
Macquarie Fields	Inala		
Miller	Ipswich	VIC 14	
Mount Druitt	Logan	Bairnsdale	
Nowra	Mackay	Ballarat	
Orange	Maroochydore	Bendigo	
Raymond Terrace & Karuah	Redlands	Brimbank	
Seven Hills	Rockhampton	Broadmeadows	
Shellharbour	Southport	Collingwood	
Springfield	Toowoomba	Dandenong	
Tamworth	Townsville	Epping	
Taree		Frankston	

