

A GUIDE TO

NDIS Readiness

ECIA (VC) would like to thank the individuals and organisations that contributed to the development of the original resource:

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Digital Storytelling Collective

Mesh Communications

Disruptive Business Network

Jobs Australia

Disability Services Consulting

Australasian Shared Services Association

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Hello, Welcome.

It has been acknowledged that Early Childhood Early Intervention service delivery differs to the rest of the NDIS scheme, as a consequence the readiness supports our sector requires need to be reflective of this. ECIA (Victoria Chapter) has worked closely with the NDIA to ensure the early years is viewed in a unique way as it differs in nature and in all aspects from disability services in the adult space.

ECIA (VC) views that it is of paramount importance that the ECI sector is well supported in the transition to the new scheme. When designing support systems, we are not attempting to reinvent the wheel, instead we are leveraging off the existing capacity, expertise and networks within our sector. We are also incorporating new ways of thinking to ensure our sector is responsive to the changing landscape, is robust and sustainable into the future.



The focus of our Readiness Supports are:

- Communication, information and engagement
- Family readiness for ECI providers
- Capacity building and upskilling
- Taking advantage of diagnostic tools to measure readiness
- Targeted supports for individual ECI providers

Please do not hesitate to contact ECIA (VC) for assistance and support in managing the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Who we are

Early Childhood Intervention Australia (VC) is a non-profit association to promote and support a system of quality services for young children with disability and/or developmental delay and their families.

**“Young children
of all abilities can
fully participate
in family and
community life”**

Our Vision

“To lead and strengthen professionals and organisations that provide early intervention support services for young children with disability and/or developmental delay and their families.”

Our Purpose

We do this by:

- Advocating for and promoting accessible child and family centered services
- Influencing community and government to promote the value of diversity and inclusion
- Enhancing and promoting best practices in early childhood intervention
- Providing and promoting professional development
- Representing the interests of and supporting our members
- Building community inclusion of early childhood intervention and the issues facing children with disabilities and developmental delays
- Promoting and disseminating information and evidence-based research about early childhood intervention
- Developing strategic linkages and partnering with other relevant organisations

About ECIA (VC) NDIS Readiness Program

readiness

[ˈrɛdɪnəs]

NOUN

1. The state of being fully prepared for something:

"your muscles tense in readiness for action"

Synonyms: preparedness · preparation · fitness · ready · at the ready · available · on hand · accessible · handy · at one's fingertips · prepared · primed · on standby · standing by · on stand-to · on call · on full alert · on tap

2. Willingness to do something:

"Spain had indicated a readiness to accept his terms"

Synonyms: willingness · inclination · enthusiasm · eagerness · keenness · gameness · promptness · quickness · alacrity · ease · facility · address

3. The quality of being immediate, quick, or prompt:

"quickness of hearing and readiness of speech were essential"

Synonyms: promptness · quickness · rapidity · swiftness · speed



In partnership with the Victorian Government and the Victorian Early Childhood Intervention sector, ECIA (VC) will roll out a suite of NDIS Readiness activities to further assist the sector in the transition to the NDIS – the approach undertaken is an acknowledgement of the unprecedented size and scale the NDIS reforms have presented to the sector. As such, a major part of the NDIS Readiness Program is to ensure that the right readiness activities are provided where they are needed most.

The Program is intended to provide readiness activities across Victoria for the pre and early transition phase up until mid-2017.

The NDIS Readiness Program has three clear objectives:

- To support ECI service providers to transition to NDIS.
- To ensure a sustainable, family centric, ECI sector long term.
- To ensure that ECIA (VC) is responsive to the changing needs of the sector during the transition to the NDIS.

Note: As the names suggests – this is a guide. The NDIS Readiness Program has been designed to be responsive to the changing needs of the sector during the transition to the NDIS. This will mean that ECIA (VC) may schedule additional events and/or develop resources ongoing and throughout the year.

NDIS Readiness Program

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS



Planning Considerations

To ensure the right supports are offered in the right place and at the right time, an NDIS Readiness Tool will be utilised. State wide, ECI service providers will be encouraged to complete the readiness tool. This data will then be used by both ECI Providers and ECIA (VC) to determine the level of organisational readiness and which components of the supports offered are the most appropriate.

Throughout the NDIS Readiness Program ongoing surveys and evaluations will take place to ensure that the Program is being responsive and meeting the changing and developing needs of our sector.

Readiness Activities

Communication, Engagement and Information Sharing

- Communications – regular E-Communique
- Email and phone advisory service
- Online resources available at:
www.eciavic.org.au
www.theinclusionhub.com.au

Regular E-Communique

ECIA (VC) E-Communique has been produced to highlight and share learnings from the NDIS as it rolls out across the state. We hope the information included is useful and relevant to your organisation. Feedback of topics or area of focus is most welcome.

Email and Phone Advisory Service

ECIA (VC) provides free phone and email support. We can answer your questions, provide you with a range of resources, or direct you to the appropriate agency to support your needs.

Our phone line is operational from 9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday (exclusive of public holidays)

Please call us on: (03) 8559 2620

Online Resources

To support the ECI sectors transition to the NDIS, we provide a range of resources, tools and useful links on:

www.eciavic.org.au

www.theinclusionhub.com.au

These resources aim to assist families, individual practitioners and ECI services alike navigate the NDIS system.

Capacity Building Events

- Sector wide events
 - NDIS Readiness Thinking sessions
 - Marketing
 - Communications
 - Family Engagement
 - Workforce Development
 - Service Delivery & the ECIA National Guidelines - Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention
- Targeted ECI practitioner sessions
- Targeted CEO and Senior Management sessions
- Presentations, Speakers and Community Forums

Sector Wide Events

NDIS Readiness Thinking Sessions

Overview: Sector wide events are planned in accordance with the Victorian NDIS roll out - These events are based on ongoing sector consultation and incorporate the lessons learnt from the trial sites.

The NDIS Readiness Thinking Sessions will position ECI providers with:

- A deeper understanding of the NDIS within ECI context
- Provocations and considerations across a range of areas
- Planning and priority setting
- Resources that are available to you

Targeted ECI Practitioner Sessions

Overview: To ensure that ECI practitioners are best prepared for the transition, a series of sessions will be presented across Victoria that will unpack the implications of the NDIS for ECI practitioners and their professional identity.

Targeted CEO and Senior Management Sessions

Overview: The CEO and Senior Management sessions provide an opportunity for organisational leaders to examine the elements they require within their own service to build capacity and manage change.

Within the context of the NDIS, these sessions will also explore the evolving policy landscape and the implications for your organisation.

Presentation, Speakers and Community Forums

Overview: You can request assistance in seeking a range of guest speakers or presenters to talk at your forums.

We require a minimum of 4 weeks to ensure availability and develop the presentation to meet your needs.

Readiness Coaching

Readiness Coaching refers to collaborative support to ECI services experiencing challenges. ECI Services are generally referred for this support via self-referral system – (identifying the need via the NDIS Provider Toolkit: www.readiness.nds.org.au).

A skilled NDIS coach will work with managers, service leaders and practitioners of the ECI service using a range of strategies to guide and support the transition to the NDIS.

Intensive Readiness Coaching is provided through:

- Unlimited access to phone and email support and advice
- Onsite visits
- Stepping back to see alternative perspectives and identifying areas that require attention
- Development of a Transition Action Plan
- Ongoing customised support for services to progress the Action Plan
- A plan for organisational professional development opportunities to support transition.

Readiness Coaching involves a two-day onsite consultancy focused on the identified and individual needs of your ECI service.

In-Service and Customised Professional Development Opportunities

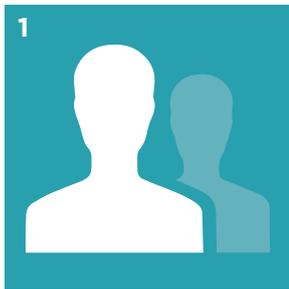
Overview: Customised Professional Development Sessions are a responsive and flexible way to build the quality and capacity of the early intervention provision within your organisation as you transition to the NDIS. It is critical to ensure that your whole team is part of the process as your organisation adapts to the new operating environment under the NDIS.

In-Service and Customised Professional Development sessions are offered in your own setting, in your time and are accessible to your whole team – this is critical in ensuring that all are hearing the same messages.

ECIA (VC) will arrange for an NDIS consultant to come to your service or location and present one of the following sessions:

- Business Transition - “Shifting the Mindset”
- Communication and Stakeholder Engagement
- Service Delivery

NDIS Readiness Program: Process



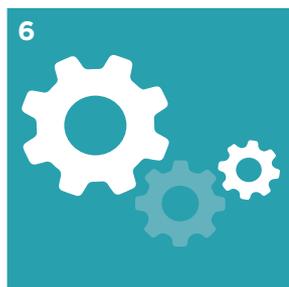
1
Contact ECIA (VC):
(03) 8559 2620



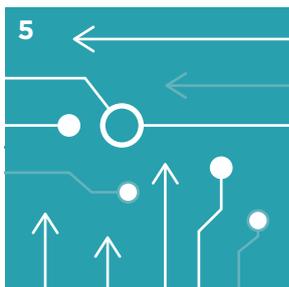
2
Book a phone
or face-to-face
consultation with the
ECIA (VC) team



3
Undergo a
self-analysis process
(by completing the
NDIS readiness tool)



6
Implement action



5
Develop an NDIS
transition action plan



4
Determine your level
of support - consider
the resources that
are most appropriate
for your organisation
(see table across)

Levels of Support:

What's Offered:

Level 1: Organisation well advanced in their readiness for NDIS, limited support required.

- Communications, engagement and information
- Email and phone advisory service
- Capacity Building Events – Sector Wide

Level 2: Organisation has undertaken some activities to support transition to NDIS; some additional support required.

- Communications, engagement and information
- Email and phone advisory service
- Capacity Building Events – Sector Wide
- Targeted sessions in your local area

Level 3: Organisation has undertaken limited preparation for transition, will require intensive support.

- Communications, engagement and information
- Email and phone advisory service
- Capacity Building Events – Sector wide
- Customised and targeted sessions in your local area
- In-house whole-of-team sessions
- Intensive Readiness Coaching

Frequently Asked Questions

What is available to your organisation?

As outlined in this guide, depending on your level of readiness for the NDIS, a range of Readiness Supports are available. To ensure that the right supports are offered to the right organisations, at the right time – ECIA (VC) are implementing an approach that will see the supports at a more intensive level offered to those organisations that will need the most support.

Communications, Engagement and Information and sector wide capacity building events will be offered across the state and attendance is welcomed from the whole ECI sector.

Is there a cost?

The Victorian Government Departments of Education and Training; Health and Human Services provides funding under the Transition Support Package to enable Victorian ECI providers and practitioners to access the subsidised NDIS Readiness supports, as outlined in this guide.

Subscriptions to the NDIS Readiness E-Communique is at no cost. Capacity Building Events are subsidised, and Readiness Coaching is fully subsidised,



Will the events be in your geographical area?

Yes, however, they will align as much as possible with the NDIS roll out areas.

Can you have support on-site in your location?

Yes, if you identify yourself as an organisation that needs readiness coaching please contact ECIA (VC) to discuss further.

What is the NDIS Provider Toolkit?

The NDIS Provider Toolkit is a set of self-assessed exercises that focus on business practice required under the NDIS. The exercises are structured around seven key questions. The resource is free to disability service providers. You can access this resource online at: www.readiness.nds.org.au

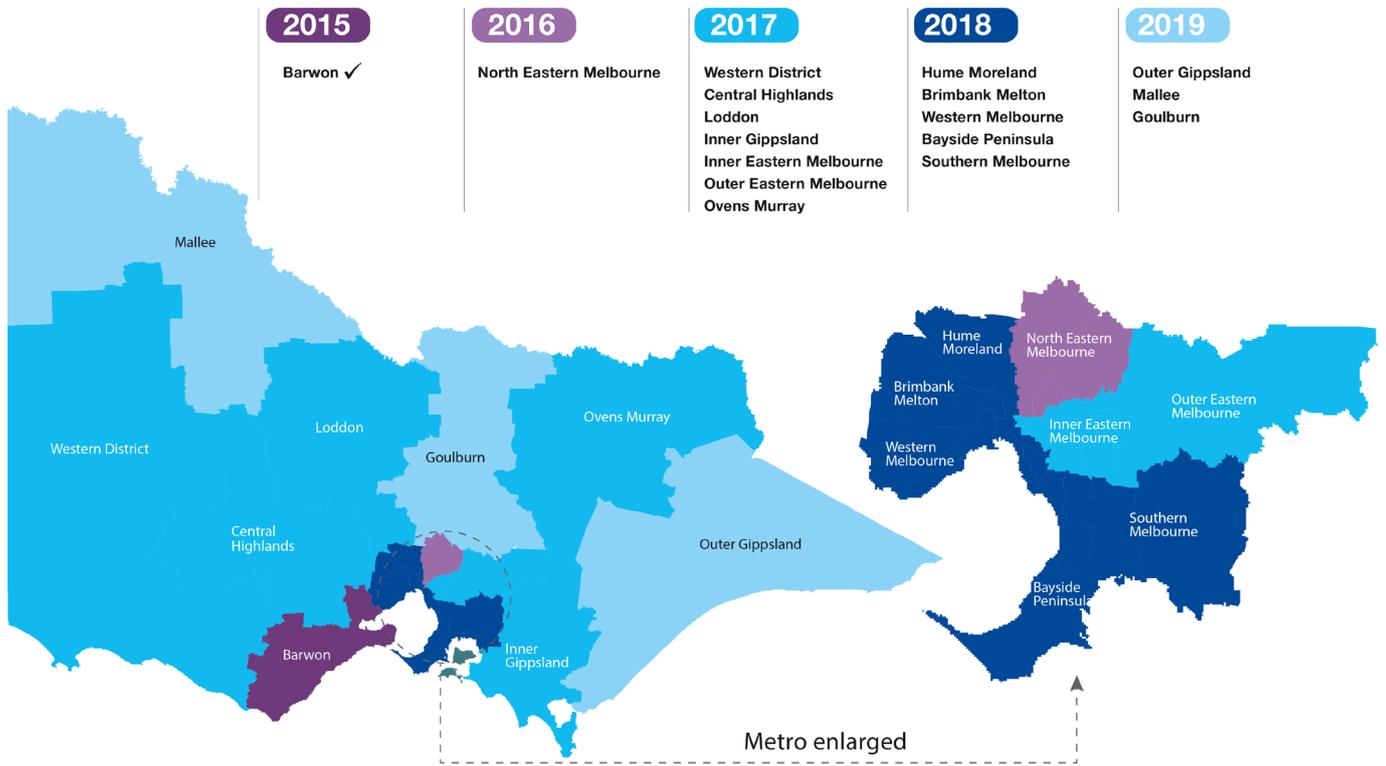
The NDIS Roll Out in Victoria

The ECIA (VC) NDIS Readiness Program is underpinned by the notion that organisations and individuals will need to undergo considerable change as they transition to the NDIS.

The NDIS presents a range of complex changes in practice, thinking and approaches to the ECI sector. The NDIS Readiness Program offers resources as a provocation – a starting point for organisations to consider in your NDIS Transition Action Planning.

Areas addressed:

- Changes to Organisations and Culture
- Business Transition – Shifting the Mindset
- Communication and Stakeholder Engagement
- Service Delivery
- The Workforce – Human Resources
- Customer Service
- Marketing
- Digital Transformation
- Financial Management – Costing & Pricing
- Something to think about – Shared Services





NDIS READINESS GUIDEBOOK

How to build the NDIS

Changes to Organisation and Culture

The legislation of the NDIS is based on human rights principles and views disability through a social model lens rather than one which focuses on risk and deficit. This requires a shift in thinking about how disability is viewed, where the principles of choice and control sit and how services are delivered.

For the scheme to be a success it requires a commitment from all involved to challenge thinking around historical views of disability and to help shift the dis-empowering perception of disability to a strengths based social model.

The NDIS requires a shift in organisational culture and thinking. There are many challenges that come with working in an environment of change and uncertainty as organisations transition. Changes to service delivery and new ways of working has an impact on staff morale, capacity and motivation.

When NDIS transition planning commences, investing in staff should be paramount to ensure retention and quality.

Systemic Change: Whilst the NDIS provides a platform for the provision of disability supports in a way which empowers individuals with disability and their families, it requires the whole of the community to embrace inclusive practices.

High quality ECI services are effective in achieving outcomes for children and their families but the early years' sector and interfacing systems need to be educated and supported to view children with disability and/or developmental delay through a learning and development lens if they aren't already doing so.

Moving to and embedding the ideas of the social model of disability across all aspects of your organisation is a critical element of the NDIS.

What does this mean for organisational strategy?

- Are staff connected to the vision of the organisation?
- What are your strengths? What are the areas that need work?
- What is your current organisation strategy, values and missions? Do these align with the NDIS?
- How do your staff currently feel in their workplace? Are they informed of the changes?
- Have you planned any community or whole staff events to discuss the social model of disability and how this can be embraced?

What does this mean for practitioners?

- Do you have all the answers you need to feel comfortable with the change?
- Is your team regularly talking about areas of change?
- Have you informed other services you interface with about the changes with the NDIS and what this means for families?
- Have you talked through with families about what the NDIS is and what the positive changes will be?

Business Transition: Shifting the Mindset

We know that in order to be successful under the NDIS we're going to need to change.

It is important not to be overwhelmed by this change and to manage the change accordingly. To have the ability and awareness to firstly adjust your mindset around your business model, to believe in the changes that you are making.

As ECI service providers, you will now be operating in a 'commercially competitive' environment. This will create challenges for everyone. It is how you overcome these challenges as not only individuals but also organisations that will determine the level of success you will have under the scheme.

There needs to be a shift. A shift from operating inside your comfort zone (block funded) to outside your comfort zone (entrepreneur). This shift takes bravery. This shift involves risk. But most importantly, this shift will bring immense change and position your organisation, children, families and the community to better transition to the NDIS.

What is an entrepreneurial mindset? A desire to solve a problem, be persistent with technical ability. You need to invest in your organisation, your team and prioritise learning.

That prioritisation of learning will encompass stepping outside of your comfort zones as you:

- Learn about the digital world
- Develop marketing and social media plans
- Focus on customer service
- Adopt new financial management processes

Significant change creates great uncertainty, and a common reaction to that uncertainty is to lead in a more controlling manner. One of the most common mistakes that can be seen during times of change is a shift to a top-down leadership style. This can occur even in leaders who are usually highly collaborative.

Instead you need to learn to lead from uncertainty, rather than avoiding it. Leading from uncertainty requires the ability to impart confidence without clarity, to be able to say, 'I don't know, but I do know that together we are going to work it out.' This kind of leadership takes courage and humility, but it reaps huge rewards in team cohesion.

Effective leadership engages the team in working collaboratively on the change. Because collaborative change efforts engage people in addressing problems and designing solutions, these efforts tend to bring out each person's management skill, helping everyone to step up and manage themselves better.

You also need to recognise that the resistance to change you witness in some staff is an inevitable side effect of change. It is pointless resenting team members for making your job more difficult. Working with resistance is part of change, and the best way to manage the team is to manage yourself well enough to handle the situation appropriately.

Communication & Stakeholder Engagement

A comprehensive communication strategy is critical for any business especially when preparing for a change such as the NDIS. Communication with families, staff members, stakeholders, and community members will ensure everyone is on the same page and on parallel journeys.

The ECI sector in Victoria practices collaboration well. Network meetings, forums and regular catch-ups between providers have meant relationships across services are strong and supportive. Working in partnership and collaboration, sharing resources, experiences and information through effective communication channels will strengthen your business from a strategic point of view and for quality practice.

Relating directly to the marketing strategy in place, it's critical your communication with your staff (internal) and your communication with your families (external) is consistent by way of language and delivery.

As with any strategy, a solid communication strategy must take into consideration all parties, have clear goals, and be applied through the appropriate channels?

Effective communication starts within your setting with staff and extends to your clients, referral partners, agencies and even competitors. Be sure to be consultative, inclusive and responsive in all communication, and remember, if you're not communicating to your key stakeholders - no one is.

Communication is a two-way activity involving a sender and a receiver that involves the sending from one person to another of a message, which is understood by the receiver, as the sender intended.

What are some of the roadblocks in your communication strategy?

The biggest roadblock facing many organisations is the ability to recognise the right communication targets, and then tailor this communication to these partners. From a new business perspective, the sector has good experience communicating with government departments, agencies and to a lesser degree, families and clients.

The language used has typically been somewhat clinical, and official. Is this appropriate for families? If not, what do you need to change?

The biggest roadblocks with effective communication strategies can be broken down into two key areas:

1. Not taking the necessary time to communicate to key stakeholders; and
2. Communicating to key stakeholders in the way that you think is right without checking back if the message(s) is understood.

Remember, as the person instigating the communication, it is contingent on you to ensure that the message is received as you intended. Not the other way around.

What are the potential risks if you don't?

Organisations that have not identified their key communication partners, and that do not have a clear communication strategy to engage with these partners are in a very high-risk position. Firstly, the key partners will not understand what services are available, and how they can be accessed. Secondly, if the communication loop is not effective, that is two-way, you may be missing opportunities to grow and improve your organisation.

If you do not appropriately articulate your message, using the right tools, to the right people, in the right way, quite simply your message will not be received and understood. The transition into the NDIS is already likely to be creating great uncertainty with your staff, clients, and other key stakeholders. Your clarity of communication will help to manage and mitigate any negative impact this uncertainty may cause.

What are the outcomes that can be achieved?

By running an inclusive, genuine, coordinated and effective communication strategy your clients, potential clients, referral partners, agency and departmental partners, and staff will all be appropriately engaged, and included in your sustainable and on-going success.

Having an effective communication strategy delivered through the right channels, and maintained consistently, will be one of the keys to a successful NDIS transition.

By effectively communicating what this success looks like, and communicating how you are going to get there, the transition to the NDIS will impact positively on your organisation, its people and clients.

Communication to Staff

Staff will need to be well informed about what the change means to them for their own practice and for their conversations with existing and new families. Communication blockages between management and practitioners does have an effect on relationships, staff morale and confidence.

The old saying that “all good behaviour starts at home” is absolutely true with communication. Staff are the face of your organisation. Therefore, your communication strategy internally, with staff, is of paramount importance. Regular meetings, opportunities for staff to ask questions, offer and receive feedback, collaborate, and contribute to your organisation are, and will be, fundamental to your success.

If your staff are confident, engaged and comfortable with your organisational change, they will make the NDIS transition a successful one.

Communication to Customers

The principles of choice and control are effective when people making decisions are well informed. Being well informed about what quality services could and should look like and how to navigate the path of the NDIS will be fundamental for families as they transition to the NDIS.

A multifaceted communication strategy is key. Remember that you need to communicate with your clients and potential clients? Their perception of you will be shaped by how you communicate with them.

Language and Terminology: Both the NDIS and ECI use terminology and language that can easily confuse and have different meanings to others. The terms ‘intervention’ and ‘insurance’ are examples of words that may not be well understood by the families you work with.

It is important to know what you mean when using terms, reflecting on how they can be interpreted and ways you can simplify what it is you mean to ensure you engage your audience.

What does this mean for organisational strategy?

- Do you have a comprehensive communication strategy/plan?
- Do all your staff say the same thing about your organisation?
- Is your client facing communication ready to go? How is it delivered? By whom?
- Is your communication appropriately tailored to your different key stakeholders?
- Have you allocated enough time for communication - meetings, feedback, forums, time for one-on-one consultation?
- Are your managers equipped to effectively communicate with staff, clients and each other?
- Are your client facing resources equipped to deliver the right message?
- What are your key messages?

What does this mean for practitioners?

- Are you able to articulate the work you are doing in a way that families, stakeholders and the community can understand?
- Have you reflected on the language you use in practice? Is this family friendly?
- Are you listening to families about what they want?
- Are family's needs shaping what services could look like? Does this sit alongside evidence based practice?
- How are you going to work in partnership with families?
- How are you different from other practitioners?

Service Delivery

Delivery Quality ECI Services & Reflecting on Practice:

There have been opportunities and challenges to ECI practice with the emergence of the NDIS. Some of these have always existed however when a national scheme brings the states and territories under one umbrella they become more apparent.

Despite there being some national differences (and difference in service is optimal in regards to choice if supported by an evidence base), there is a general consensus to core principles which govern the way ECI professionals should work.

One of these is around what services could/ should look like for families which was the driving force behind the ECIA National Guidelines - Best Practice for Early Childhood Intervention, a project which was funded through the NDIA Sector Development Fund.

From a review of current international and Australian literature and extensive consultation with the ECI sector, four quality areas were identified comprising of eight key best practices in Early Childhood Intervention (ECI).

Quality Area 1: Family

1. *Family-Centered and Strengths-Based Practice:* is a set of values, skills, behaviours and knowledge that recognises the central role of families in children's lives. Family-centered practice is a way of thinking and acting that ensures that professionals and families work in partnership and that family life, and family priorities and choices, drive what happens in planning and intervention. Family-centered practice builds on family strengths and assists families to develop their own networks of resources - both informal and formal.
2. *Culturally Responsive Practice:* creates welcoming and culturally inclusive environments where all families are encouraged to participate in and contribute to children's learning and development. Practitioners are knowledgeable and respectful of diversity and provide services and supports in flexible ways that are responsive to each family's cultural, ethnic, racial, language and socioeconomic characteristics.

Quality Area 2: Inclusion

3. Inclusive and Participatory Practice:

recognises that every child regardless of their needs has the right to participate fully in their family and community life and to have the same choices, opportunities and experiences as other children. All children need to feel accepted and to have a real sense of belonging. Children with disability and/or developmental delay may require additional support to enable them to participate meaningfully in their families, community and early childhood settings.

4. Engaging the Child in Natural Environments:

promotes children's inclusion through participation in daily routines, at home, in the community, and in early childhood settings. These natural learning environments contain many opportunities for all children to engage, participate, learn and practice skills, thus strengthening their sense of belonging.

Quality Area 3: Teamwork

5. Collaborative Teamwork Practice: is where the family and professionals work together as a collaborative and integrated team around the child, communicating and sharing information, knowledge and skills, with one team member nominated as a key worker and the main person working with the family.

6. Capacity-Building Practice: encompasses building the capacity of the child, family, professionals and community through coaching and collaborative team work. The goal is to build the knowledge, skills and abilities of the individuals who will spend the most time with the child in order to have as great an impact as possible on the child's learning and development.

Quality Area 4: Universal Principles

7. Evidence Base, Standards, Accountability and Practice: ECI services comprise practitioners with appropriate expertise and qualifications who use intervention strategies that are grounded in research and sound clinical reasoning. Standards based on these ECI key best practices will ensure ECI practitioners and services are accountable to continuous improvement and high quality services.

8. Outcome Based Approach: focuses on outcomes that parents want for their child and family, and on identifying the skills needed to achieve these outcomes. ECI practitioners share their professional expertise and knowledge to enable families to make informed decisions. Outcomes focus on participation in meaningful activities in the home and community with outcomes measured and evaluated by ECI services from a child, family and community perspective.

What does this mean for organisational strategy?

- What outcome measurement tools are the organisation using?
- Are the outcomes being measured aligned with the NDIS view of disability?
- Does your organisation have an outcomes statement?
- Do you know why you do what you do?
- What are the critical results that should be achieved at the end of early childhood intervention services?
- What impact or changes are desired?

What does this mean for practitioners?

- Are families well aware of the individual plans currently in place, the services they are receiving and how they are funded?
- What do families need to make well informed choices?
- Are families aware of the value in the services delivered? Are they asking questions?
- Why does ECI improve outcomes for children and families?
- How do you currently measure outcomes for children and families?
- Are these tools consistent with measuring functional outcomes, capacity and engagement?

The Workforce: Human Resources

The ECI sector has faced some unique challenges in the workforce area including the impact the NDIS has had on the training of new staff (in particular keyworkers), the management of non-contact hours and training and development including student placements. With a primary purpose behind the key worker model being the relationship that the worker has with the family, challenges have come up with gaps in face to face service provision during the day. Previously under block funding, this did not require the same amount of accountability.

In circumstances where there is a cancellation or a last minute reschedule, fitting the staff member in with another child and their family may be contrary to the model if a relationship doesn't exist.

Forward planning around staff time management is important so there are always other things the practitioner can be undertaking during these times which are relevant to a child's plan in their caseload.

Services will need to think innovatively about how they orientate and induct new staff as key workers in their organisation, taking into account the way funding works under the NDIS and that staff time for shadowing and coaching would not be claimable against a child's plan.

Services will be required to build that into their back end costs.

Working outside of business hours:

With family choice and control comes the ability to request when services can be provided. In some cases, this means after hours or on weekends. Some services are managing this through awarding Time off in Lieu (TOIL) for after-hours work as the cost of overtime which is set forth in the award comes out of the pocket of the service and cannot be claimed.

Other providers have made the internal decision to only provide services during standard business hours.

There has been a significant increase in the amount of school aged children receiving supports under the NDIS. This has been a great move forward for a cohort of children who have had limited support previously.

The increasing number of children has impacted on the workforce and the emerging theme of 'donut shifts' has come up in trial. Donut shifts refer to professionals who may work before and after school in order to work with children and their families resulting in changes to work hours.

Training and Development:

The ongoing training and development of staff is critical to workforce quality recruitment and retention and needs to be factored into the organisational on costs.

Shifting away from a block funding model has highlighted the need for organisations to have sound human resource practices and procedures in place in order to not only ensure that the standard of services being provided remains high, but to ensure that the staffing body remains highly motivated and satisfied in their jobs.

A critical examination in areas such as recruitment & retention, unpredictable workloads and the potential 'casualisation' of your organisation's staff body is paramount to ensure that it doesn't have a negative impact on the organisation.

Recruitment & Retention:

Recruitment and retention are key areas that require intentionality in your approach. It is key that when you're hiring the staff that they are not only the most qualified for the position, they fit into your organisation's culture, align with client preferences and also have relevant competencies across ECI and their area of qualification.

Once the staffing body has been recruited, retaining them under the NDIS will be more challenging than before due to competition from other sectors that may be able to provide more predictable hours of work and stable career paths.

Unpredictable Workloads:

With families having autonomy over the services they receive, choice and control sits with them. This is one of the greatest attributes of the NDIS, however how organisations manage this choice and control will be key to ensure they are able to hold on to valued staff.

Managing the unpredictability of workloads as clients exert their control in ways that are less predictable than in the past has the potential to make work less attractive if not well managed.

What does this mean for organisational strategy?

- What will you build into your business that will attract and retain a skilled workforce?
- What will be your strategy to train new graduates and provide learning and development opportunities for all staff?
- How will you manage changes to delivery of services such as after-hours work?

What does this mean for practitioners?

- What motivates and inspires you in your work?
- What are your current time management strategies?
- How do you manage the times when you are not directly seeing a child and family? Are families aware of the work you do 'behind the scenes'?

Customer Service

Customer services encompasses everything you do across every element of your organisation. It is important that you recognise that families are your customers.

The principles of family centered practice and family partnerships should inform your customer service strategy.

It is important to create a positive connection with each family member and focus on the power of relationships.

The Importance of Relationships:

Relationships are a powerful tool for all aspects of business whether it be relationships internally with staff, with your clients or with external stakeholders. Genuine connections with people will improve your transition experience and boost client satisfaction and engagement.

Accepting constructive criticism and feedback is now also of heightened importance. If families are unhappy with the customer experience, they are more than likely to shop around to find another service provider. Having well developed feedback processes in place will help you keep track of customer satisfaction.

Under the NDIS, delivering an outstanding customer experience will become a decisive factor for sustainability, profitability and growth. It is, therefore, essential ECI service providers successfully navigate this next frontier of customer engagement.

In the new world, clients become customers, and the customers becomes the boss. They will shop around for the best offer, service and price and will 'vote with their feet' if dissatisfied.

To prepare for this change, service providers must re-engineer their operating models and challenge their organisational thinking.

Customer experience is assessed through a customer's conscious and subconscious mind. It's a blend of an organisation's performance; the sense stimulated and the emotions

evoked, intuitively measured against customer expectations across all moments of contact.

Delivering an outstanding customer experience is an organisation-wide responsibility.

The starting point is a clear vision of what your organisation is to be known for – your Customer Promise – followed by a holistic review of business operations through the customer lens.

Six key areas are critical to developing a customer-centric responsive and adaptable organisation:

1. Communications: Engage customers with a brand and language that is responsive.
2. Multi-Channel: Deliver personalised, seamless interactions across all channels.
3. People and culture: hardwire a culture of ‘customer first’ and empower your team to live it.
4. Product and Pricing: Deliver products and supports that your clients want, need and value.
5. Technology and Process: Design systems that support your brand and customer promise.
6. Insights and Strategy: Embed the ‘voice of your customer’ in decision-making and planning.

What does this mean for organisational strategy?

- Is your 'customer promise' defined and articulated in a way that resonates with customers and staff?
- Do you clearly understand the end-to-end journey your customers experience when dealing with your organisation?
- How can you engage more closely with customers to build empathy around their experience and understand what they want, need and value?
- How do you engage and empower staff to drive customer experience and innovation across all levels of your organisation?

What does this mean for practitioners?

- Think about what a good experience looks, sounds and feels like when you are a customer - How can you introduce those principles to your daily work practice?
- What insights or feedback can you share with your organisation that will help design a better experience for your customers?
- Are you being upfront about the work being done outside of the face to face contact time?
- Are you willing and ready to accept constructive criticism and feedback?
- Do you know what your customers want and are you delivering to their needs?

Marketing

Being able to successfully market your organisation under a commercially competitive environment is going to be a key element to success under the NDIS. Marketing yourself to families, referral partners and other stakeholders through word of mouth, Online, print collateral and other marketing initiatives have been highlighted as areas of main importance for communicating the services that your organisation provides.

This is both internal with service providers as well as families. From the Barwon trial sites, it has become apparent that word of mouth is still one of the most effective marketing tools at a service providers' disposal and as a result, organisations have started to make a conscious shift.

Co-dependent of the communication being used both internally with your staff as well as externally when you are communicating with your families and potential new families, the messaging needs to be consistent. Consistency through all marketing collateral that gets produced to the content published Online, to email communications and most importantly, conversations with families.

The modern consumer goes on a journey when making decisions:



Discover



Educate



Validate



Buy

In the case of ECI, we feel that the “Buy” stage of the journey, will, in fact be contacting you, the provider.

There are a number of elements involved in each stage of this journey. And the journey will apply to Families (Clients), Agencies and Referral Partners. If you do not have a strategy for each of these areas, how will you substantiate your business?

Each of your key partners (clients, agencies, referral partners and other key stakeholders) will need to be able to: Find you easily; understand the service or services you are providing; and feel good about your organisation and confident that you will be able to help them.

A well-executed marketing strategy will help with this.

What are some of the roadblocks in your way to developing a good marketing plan?

For organisations that have never had to “market” before, creating a marketing plan, engaging the right marketing tools, and most importantly tailoring the right messages to the right targets can be overwhelming. One of the biggest roadblocks will be appropriately resourcing your marketing strategy.

Just like the services provided to the families, each component of your marketing strategy will need to be unique, developed and nurtured over time. Your referral partners, clients and potential clients are likely to have made at least 65% of their decisions about you before they even contact you.

Where are you now, and what do you look like to these key partners?

What resources are you allocating, financial, personnel and external, to create and execute your necessary marketing strategy?

If you are engaging a word of mouth, website, social media, newsletter, brochure strategy to referral partners, competitor partners, and of course families, you are embarking on an Omni channel marketing strategy.

What resources (print, digital, copywriting & training) are you engaging? And how much are you paying for them? How do you measure the results?

Without simplifying things too much, the second biggest roadblock is Clarity of Message.

Under previous arrangements, the key people to communicate to and secure business continuity was Agencies and Government Departments.

The NDIS is a completely different environment. Is your message clear enough? Is the language right?

What are the potential risks if it isn't?

Your organisation will struggle to maintain its current consumer base, and engaging potential new clients will be an even greater challenge. Over time, without the necessary exposure, your organisation may struggle to continue to provide services.

What are the outcomes that can be achieved?

A cohesive and engaged marketing strategy can deliver growth and improvements beyond imagination. It will take time, but it is absolutely worth it!

What does this mean for organisational strategy?

- Do you need to re-vamp your brand?
- Do you need to put a new marketing plan in place?
- Is your website 'user-friendly'?
- Is the language you are using appropriate?
- Who is going to maintain the strategy?
- Have you allocated appropriate budgets for what you are hoping to achieve?
- What external resources (if any) do you need to engage in achieving your goals?

What does this mean for practitioners?

- Are you using the correct language when talking to families?
- Are you using the correct mediums to reach families?
- Are you promoting your organisation and all services that you offer?
- Are you ensuring the families you work alongside are subscribed to receive your email marketing updates?

Digital Transformation: Business Systems

Introducing new business systems and processes such as a dynamic CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system can help to reduce administrative burdens across the entire organisation. Under the NDIS, having more automated processes that can communicate to the NDIA's payment portal will streamline what could otherwise be quite an administrative and labour taxing task.

Having a care management system or a customer relationship management system that has the ability to manage bookings, streamline payment processes under the NDIS, manage client case notes as well as store documents against particular clients will be an underrated asset to organisations.

Effective systems can take time for staff to adjust to, and it is wise to have these systems in place prior to your organisation being included in the NDIS.

Benefits of a good, integrated CRM include being able to automate raising invoices, manage case notes & client bookings as well as managing staff hours and eDMs.

What are some of the roadblocks in your way to integrating digital business systems?

The four biggest roadblocks when it comes to CRM are: selection of the right tool; using the tool, and setting the tool up properly (typically a resource issue); understanding what the tool can, and cannot do; and implementing the tool in the right areas and ensuring that it's used properly.

For the selection of the right tool, remember not to let "the cart lead the horse", do a thorough brief on what you need from a solution, select the one that best matches that criteria, and then work around it if necessary. Don't change your good operational processes to meet the way a CRM operates, unless it makes incredibly good sense to do so.

Remember that a CRM is only a tool, and it will only give you what you put into it. Set it up properly, and use experts if you can.

Be conscious that a CRM is a Customer Relationship Management solution, most have significantly broader functionality, but they are not necessarily accounting packages, or full Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solutions. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is expecting a CRM to fulfil functions that it is not designed for.

The final roadblock in implementing a CRM, like any software is it requires time and resources to implement properly.

Some key areas include: time in training; adjusting practices; ensuring that all parties impacted by the CRM implementation understand the program and know how to use it; and are using it as it should be used.

What are the potential risks if you don't?

Many organisations, depending on size, will be able to continue to operate without a CRM. However, if you are going to be able to market effectively to a number of different stakeholders or if you are looking to scale your business, or maintain your business with less resources, a CRM may be critical.

What are outcomes that can be achieved?

From a purely marketing perspective, a CRM will enable you to manage, effectively communicate to and engage with a wide variety of partners and key stakeholders simply, efficiently, professionally and do so with limited resources.

Imagine being able to send a professional newsletter to all your clients and potential clients, and track their engagement. Imagine talking to a potential client on Monday, and having the same potential client call back on Wednesday, talk to a different person, and still get the same service (with history, information, etc).

The right CRM will deliver this consistency of service and communication, as well as make your model scalable.

What does this mean for organisational strategy?

- Does your organisation need to update or upgrade the CRM?
- Do you have the budget for a CRM?
- What financial systems do you need to integrate with your CRM?
- What are you currently using to track existing client, potential client and partner information?

What does this mean for practitioners?

- Do you understand the back end processes you currently have in place?
- Are you comfortable using mobile devices?
- What are your general IT skills like?
- What systems are you currently using now?

Financial Management: Costing & Pricing

The models of funding that existed have now changed. Differences for block funded and Individualised funding require different ways of thinking.

Understanding the actual costs that it takes to deliver your services is paramount and also the cornerstone for your organisation's success. The change from block funding in advance to being paid in arrears means you need to have a steady cash flow to correctly manage your balance sheet.

It is important that ECI providers:

- Have an understanding of the real cost to delivering the service, this cost is not only referring to staff wages but also the tea and coffee in your lunch room, networking meetings and car fleets.
- Know how non-contact hours are currently managed.
- Have an understanding of exactly what families want to maximise their return on investment.
- Know what services/groups that are currently run need to be re- looked at and re-financed under the NDIS.

The Challenge:

The NDIS is underpinned by the concept of unit pricing for supports.

The accurate and timely costing of supports will need to be a core organisational skill for providers under the NDIS.

The ability to predict and manage variable cash flows will be critical for ongoing organisational solvency.

Providers that proactively embed costing, pricing and financial management skills can build financial resilience and leadership positions in selected disability markets.

What does this mean for organisational strategy?

- Understand the methodology behind the NDIS' "Reasonable Cost Model"
- Measure your component unit costs against those of that model.
- Identify and implement strategies to address disparities between existing costs and funded components.
- Acquire costing and pricing tools and train staff in order to use such tools.

What does this mean for practitioners?

- Do you understand the methodology behind the NDIS' "Reasonable Cost Model"?
- Do you need to up-skill yourself in order to facilitate payments being approved?
- Do you understand the cost of the service and all contributing factors that make up the cost?
- When putting together the service plans, have you covered off everything that you need to include to ensure costs are being recovered?
- When working on case notes and reports, ask yourself: "Is this necessary?" "Is there benefit to the family?" Everything being claimed for under the NDIS needs to be accounted for.

Something to think about: Shared Services

Shared Services is a concept that has been around for many years – since the early 80's in the US – and can also be known as Business Services, Group Services, Shared Business Services or Global Business Services. In short, Shared Services brings together common internal functions, which are often duplicated across a company or a group of companies, into one location.

The functions normally included in a Shared Services Centre (SSC) vary from company to company but usually will include many of the following:

- Accounts and general financial management
- HR administration
- Purchasing/Procurement
- IT help desk & desk top services

There is no doubt shared services is about cost reduction, but it is also and more importantly, about freeing up different parts of your organisation to be focused on delivering a better service to customers than was previously delivered as well as standardising the processes across the company.

Shared Services (SS) is different to centralisation. The following table highlights some of the key differences.

Key differences between Shared Services and Centralisation

