



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Social Services**

# Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program

Summary: Review of the ILC program and next steps

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## Background

In July 2017, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) established the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Program (ILC) to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The ILC consists of two components: the ILC grants program, and referral, information and capacity building services undertaken by Local Area Coordinators (LACs) as part of their broader role.

In line with the original concept, ILC grant activities are available to support all 4.4 million people living with disability in Australia, including those who are not NDIS participants. The original concept focused on providing supports to people with disability outside the NDIS to improve their outcomes, in turn reducing the likelihood they would require support from the NDIS.

The *Strengthening Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) – A national strategy towards 2022*<sup>1</sup> (ILC strategy) released in December 2018, provides program funding priorities and parameters for current activities.

There are four grant streams in the ILC strategy to be progressively implemented from 2019-20 for people with disability, their families and carers.

- *National Information Program* – to provide access to up-to-date, relevant information linking people to supports and services in the community.
- *Mainstream Capacity Building* – to improve the capacity of mainstream services to respond to and include people with disability, increase accessibility and use of mainstream services.
- *Economic and Community Participation* – to connect people with disability to activities, employment, community supports and opportunities and help communities and employers to be inclusive and responsive to people's needs locally and nationally.
- *Individual Capacity Building* – to establish and support organisations run by people with disability, for people with disability, assisting people with disability to improve their skills and confidence to achieve their goals.

In December 2019, the Disability Reform Council agreed the NDIA would develop a new evidence-based ILC Investment Strategy commencing with an initial review of existing arrangements under the current strategy (2018-2022).

The ILC grants program transferred from the NDIA to the Department of Social Services (the department) in 2020 to realise benefits of greater integration and better alignment with Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 (ADS) and other Commonwealth services and programs.

With the transfer of the ILC grants program to the department, the work on the review and the new strategy is being led by the department.

The department's approach to conducting a review of existing arrangements included:

- review and analysis of all transferred ILC grant data and information including, where available, project progress reports

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<sup>1</sup> [Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Investment Strategy | Department of Social Services, Australian Government \(dss.gov.au\)](https://www.dss.gov.au/information-linkages-and-capacity-building-investment-strategy)

- stakeholder consultations with states and territories, Disability Representative Organisations (DROs) and the NDIA, to identify issues and high level themes
- building a knowledge base of relevant interdependencies between the ILC program and other related policy and program areas.

## Scope of the review

The review has been undertaken within the context that ILC projects funded under the ILC strategy have been operating for very short timeframes.

While the ILC strategy was introduced in 2018, implementation was delayed, with 197 projects starting between November 2019 and April 2020 and a further 138 from October 2020. At the time of writing two further rounds of funding are in the assessment stage, with successful projects to commence in mid-2021. Many projects have had their implementation delayed due to the impacts of COVID-19, or have experienced lower than expected participant engagement. A number of requests for project extensions have been received as projects were postponed, or reconfigured to online platforms to accommodate lockdown restrictions.

Due to short operating timeframes and delays to projects, meaningful data and evaluation information is very limited. Going forward, as more data becomes available, the department will be able to monitor progress from all projects and ILC grants overall under a new monitoring and evaluation framework.

Initial consultations with internal and external stakeholders have highlighted a number of factors to consider with the current investment strategy including:

- the strategic intent of ILC;
- the challenge of achieving national coverage including rural and remote;
- the distribution of funding across jurisdictions;
- the role of intermediaries such as LACs;
- the method of distributing funds i.e. considering approaches other than short-term grants;
- how to share data and learnings across projects; and
- how to improve application and funding processes and minimise duplication of services.

While there is general support for the four grant streams under the current strategy, there is also criticism around the lack of flexibility and responsiveness in the administration of funding.

Over the course of the review, the department will build an accurate and informative picture of the effectiveness of projects funded under the current strategy. In addition, to understand the broader disability landscape, the department is looking to invest in a gap and needs analysis for people with disability, their families and carers. There will also be further consultations with all jurisdictions, relevant Commonwealth agencies, service providers, DROs, the NDIA and people with disability, their families and carers.

## Next steps

The department is proposing a range of related foundational pieces of work to inform the development of a new strategy in the absence of data on the current strategy:

- evaluate outcomes from projects being funding under the current strategy;
- consider the strategic intent of ILC now the NDIS has reached full scheme;
- understand the evolving role of LACs;
- provide a range of options for future grants funding including commissioning, equitable and upfront jurisdictional split, greater transparency and opportunity for organisations seeking to apply for funding;
- align the future approach with the ADS and continue engagement with disability related policy areas in the department to consider interactions; and
- undertake a needs and gap analysis.

In addition, consideration is being given to:

- the role of ILC grants projects in prevention, protection and early intervention through building the capacity of the community and supporting the connectedness of people with disability both in and out of the NDIS; and
- options to increase the transferability, scalability and replication of ILC projects, and transition out plans to mainstream activities.

These pieces of work would better align ILC grant activities to the ADS outcomes.