



Promising Practice Profiles

Promising Practice Profile Form Guide - Round 4

What works, how and why?

Promote your project as a Promising Practice and be part of Australia's first evidence-based information repository of early childhood and early intervention programs!

Promising Practices cover large-scale service models, medium-scale community joined-up projects and small local community initiatives that have received funding under the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004-2009. All proposals to Promising Practice Profile will be externally validated by an independent peer review panel to ensure that the practices are of high quality and can demonstrate effectiveness.

What is a practice?

A practice is more than a task, action or program element (eg. running a breakfast program at the school). A practice includes the task but also explains the key ingredients or critical elements that made that action work (e.g. building small groups of parents to run the breakfast program; enabling parents to talk to each other as part of the activity; organising children to help prepare the food which built their skills).

There are usually many sets of practices within a project. For example, one project may include: practices to do with consulting community members; practices related to delivering a set of project activities (eg running a parenting program or recruiting and training volunteers); and practices to do with checking the project activities are successful.

The Promising Practice Profile asks you to focus on *one* practice or set of practices, rather than the project as a whole.

What is a Promising Practice Profile?

A Promising Practice Profile is a summary document that explains a particular practice or set of practices (ways of working) that have helped to achieve a project's objectives. It comprises a description of the "key ingredients" of a program/project, what was done, or what particular ways of working were important.

It also includes a summary of what is known about the effectiveness or relevance of this practice (the existing evidence base), information about how a particular practice or set of practices within a program worked on the ground (how it worked and what made it work), and the evidence linking the practice to outcomes (evidence that it worked). Profiles then become useful summary tools and guides to others who may be working to address similar issues.

For examples of successful profiles, please go to:
<http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/topics/alpha.html>

A guide to completing the Promising Practice Profile proposal form - Round 4

How has your practice/project demonstrated promising practice? (Promising Practice Profile proposal form items 9 to 12)

1. Things to remember when sharing your practice:

Focus on a particular aspect of the project. Think about which aspect of the project you are particularly happy with or think was especially valuable. Identify the actions and ways of working relating to that specific practice or practice set.

- Tell us **how** it worked – Provide procedural information by describing, step-by-step, what you did and identifying the major components of the practice – these are the key ingredients of the practice.
- Tell us **why** it worked – Usually what makes a practice work involves a number of specific ways of working or processes. You will need to:
 - Be specific in identifying the important ingredients that made each component work by identifying the activity, tools, processes, systems and the context that have made the practice produce desired results.
- Include a discussion on limitations of the practice
- Item 10 of the Promising Practice Profile form asks for a summary of existing evidence regarding what is known about the effectiveness or relevance of the practice. The evidence you present could include *research/scientific-based evidence* (a review of literature on the efficacy of the interventions/programs; an explicit theory of change, etc.); *practice wisdom* (accumulated knowledge of professionals working in the field); and/or *practice-based evidence* (which come from results of evaluations and action research findings of successful and effective programs).



Helpful tips

What is it about your project that makes it successful?

Think about including a discussion of factors that helped to overcome barriers to effective practice

Highlight lessons learnt, practical tips, thoughtful analysis and reflection that could lead towards further improvements

If you have more than one practice you want to profile, complete separate proposal forms for each. For example, you may complete a proposal about the parenting program you delivered to families, and another proposal about the way you skilled up local child care providers to address the needs of at risk families. Together, these two sets of practices comprise your whole project, but they each can be treated as separate (though obviously complementary and interrelated) practices for the purposes of Promising Practice Profile.

2. Things to remember when demonstrating that your project works:

Promising practices have **indicators or evidence of positive results or effectiveness**.

Your claims of success need to be justified – meaning, you can show or verify what evidence you have to make your claims.

Evidence can include a wide range of subjective and objective data obtained through a variety of qualitative and quantitative approaches, sources and tools. Some of these are:

- **Data collection** – presentation of “hard” evidence, particularly if the program has measurable goals or quantifiable outcomes to support claims of change by:
 - before and after data obtained from feedback surveys (or comparison group studies or follow-up studies) and agency records;
 - Analysis of participant feedback forms, participant records, and surveys;
 - Data on cost effectiveness if the program has been running for a sufficient length of time.

- **Presentation of data from Evaluation Reports** (internal or external):
 - Highlight positive references to the practice in quotes and cite examples of program effectiveness, eg. *“a review of offending records of the 15 youths involved in the program at the time of service evaluation, showed that 12 of the 15 youths (80%) were found to have decreased their rate of offending by at least 25% . Five participants had not offended at all since their involvement with the program”*.

- **Supporting evidence:**
 - Key people – testimonials from program participants, community members, funders, key stakeholders
 - Media write-ups
 - Internal reviews and assessments
 - Other data sources – feedback from management and staff; feedback from other service providers, etc.



Align the evidence you are presenting with the specific practice under discussion.

3. As well as being effective, a Promising Practice could also demonstrate one or more of the following:

- **Replicability** – Identify which elements of the practice are replicable (against those that are proprietary; meaning that they will work only under the given circumstances) and describe **how** the elements can work in a different context; **where** it can work (eg. with a different type of service/target group) and **with whom**. In some instances, project models may have been adopted by other organisations and this can be cited as evidence of replicability.
- **Innovation** – has your practice improved or changed an existing practice to adapt it to a particular community or target audience? How did you change the approach to make it work in a different context? Provide evidence that the change or innovation produced positive outcomes.
- **Sustainability** – What elements of the practice make it able to be continued into the future? Sustainability can be thought of in terms of processes, outcomes and funding. Sustainability of outcomes can be looked at either from a short-term or longer-term perspective and can be gauged by such things as an increase in the knowledge and skills as well as improvements in areas such as productivity, capacities, health and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families and the communities. Sustainability also refers to the capacity of the project to continue even when funding has ceased or by the expansion of the project to new target groups or communities. Evidence of outcomes can be demonstrated by presentation and analysis of before and after data, feedback/interviews/case studies of participants, feedback from stakeholders and other service providers and the evaluation results of the program.
- **Contributes to existing evidence base** – demonstrate how your practice has contributed to the knowledge of “what works” in the area of early childhood intervention by highlighting lessons learnt from the practice that would be useful knowledge for other practitioners. You will need to clearly explain what new knowledge has been gained and how this relates to the existing evidence base.

What happens once you have submitted your proposal?

All promising practice proposals will be assessed by an independent Promising Practice Profile peer review panel.

The panellists’ job is to determine whether the practice suits its aims and is proven to work (the essential criterion). The panellists will also determine whether the practice demonstrates replicability, innovation, sustainability and/or whether it contributes to the evidence base, if this information is provided.

The review process will be semi-blind, meaning that the names of the review panel will remain anonymous.

The details of projects will remain strictly confidential. Project details will only be revealed if a proposal has been deemed promising.

Projects that are not assessed as promising will receive confidential feedback from the review panel.

Once a proposal has been assessed as promising, the Promising Practice Profile team at AIFS will use information contained in the proposal form to develop a promising practice profile. The Promising Practice Profile team will remain in close contact with the projects while the profiles are being prepared, and projects will be asked for their endorsement before profiles are published on the CAFCA website.



HAVE A LOOK AT:

Examples of accepted Promising Practice Profiles:

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/topics/alpha.html>

NEED HELP?

*For queries or assistance in completing the form, please contact
one of the CAFCA Research Officers on*

1800 352 275
