

New OSCAR programmes

Guidelines for programme feasibility

Sector Background

The OSCAR sector is made up of hundreds of local before/after school and holiday programmes, most of which operate as independent stand-alone entities. There is no organisation called “OSCAR” that a programme is required join or register with. However, many OSCAR services access advice and professional development from the OSCAR regional networks based in Auckland (OSCN) and Christchurch (The OSCAR Network)

There is currently no government funding to assist with starting an OSCAR service. MSD operating grants for OSCAR providers are fully allocated to approx. 700 services and there are very limited opportunities for new providers to access this funding.

PROGRAMME NEED

➤ **What’s already available and what demand is there for a new service?**

- Where are the current OSCAR providers in your area?
To locate local providers, consult with local schools and refer to the Family Services Directory <https://www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory/>
- What is the point of difference for the new programme compared with others in the same community e.g. hours, fees, programme content, different target group such as older children?
- What is the likely demand for the new programme? Consider numbers enrolled at local schools, feedback from child care centres, kindergartens etc. It may be possible to survey a school community, or reach parents through social media channels or local organisations like sports clubs, churches, pools, libraries, doctors, large employers etc.
- How might the current provision of services effect demand for a new service?
Is there really sufficient demand to justify starting a new service?

If you find other services on offer already in your community, we recommend that you give careful consideration to what benefit there would be in opening another similar service. OSCAR programmes operate on very tight budgets and financial returns are very modest – many struggle to just break even. The arrival of a new programme serving the same community might be good for parent choice but can end up harming the sustainability of all services in that location.

Successful start-ups usually find real gaps in provision and work from there. While surveys and feedback from potential users of the programme might give some indication of demand, real utilisation can only be quantified once a service is up and running

PROGRAMME LOCATION

➤ Is the proposed facility safe and suitable?

➤ How will children get there?

- If a facility has been determined for the new programme, does it meet minimum safety requirements? If you wish to gain Social Service Accreditation (SSA) for OSCAR, then you will need to ensure the facilities are up to current building code requirements, as well as being generally safe, clean and with adequate space, toilets, phone access etc.

NOTE: SSA for a private dwelling where people are living is not possible under current policies, unless the service is registered with a licensed ECE home-based care organisation.

- Is the facility available for a suitable period of time, on a daily basis? Are there other users in the facility and will they require access to the programme space? If the programme is successfully established, can it remain in the facility longer-term?
- For before/after school services, is the programme located conveniently for children to get to/from school – will transport be needed?
- For holiday programmes, parents may have more flexibility but will still be seeking a service that is either in their local community or easily accessible on route to or from their workplace.

PROGRAMME ESTABLISHMENT

➤ How will the programme keep going for the first 6 months?

- What is the budget for the first 6-months? How will the programme stay solvent? What are initial projections for the numbers attending and conservative income estimates? How does this compare with staffing and other weekly operational costs?

Is there a possibility that staff can work on a voluntary basis in the initial stages?

OSCN can advise further on particulars in budgets, current fee levels across the sector etc...

- What can be done to promote the programme in order to meet enrolment projections?
- What is the time-line for gaining OSCAR Accreditation – especially if parents need to access the OSCAR Fee Subsidy?

Note: OSCAR Accreditation is not mandatory and it may be advisable to operate for at least a term before undertaking the process, to be more certain that the service is viable longer-term.

Other helpful start-up information

OSCN website <https://www.oscn.nz/gettingstarted.html>

The Holiday Programme Survival Guide <https://www.flipsnack.com/oscnjo/holiday-programme-survival-guide-sample-pages.html>

Social Service Accreditation Standards https://www.oscn.nz/files/SSA_Standards_OSCAR.pdf

Work and Income Fee Subsidy <http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/oscar-subsidy.html>