

How to select software

Child care management software (CCMS) and hardware for attendance and enrolment collection

This guide has been designed to help you choose the right software and hardware for your service. Please refer to the essential selection criteria to know what to look for.

What to look for when selecting software

Type of system

It is important that services purchase a cloud-hosted CCMS or other suitable ECEC-specific system which is hosted in Australia and integrates – or will integrate – with the ECEC Digital Hub.

When deciding on the right CCMS or other suitable ECEC-specific system for your service, we recommend you check with potential software providers of their intention to engage with the NSW Department of Education and integrate their software with the Digital Hub.

Other essential selection criteria for software are listed below.



Essential selection criteria

Your chosen technology provider will be able to provide guidance on selecting a digital solution that will meet these criteria, and the needs of your service.

Has the capacity to collect key information

The software can capture identifiable fields and other information including:

- child details, including disability

- parent/carer details
- enrolment particulars
- attendance
- service and provider details
- fee and subsidy.

Security

- The software has secure logins and authentications in place and has data access restrictions based on role.
- Data is backed up and encryption is available.

Reporting

- Ability to provide single consolidated reporting on enrolment and attendance.
- Software has the capability to support data transfer requirements to NSW Department of Education for community preschools*.

Privacy

- Software complies with the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*.

Data storage

- Software stores all the data in Australia.
- Data is stored on a cloud-hosted solution.
- Software can securely store all the attachments provided by parents/carers.

*Eligible software providers can request data transfer requirements by contacting DigitalHub@det.nsw.edu.au

Desirable selection criteria

Offline mode

- Software allows for data capture and viewing data when the internet is unavailable and can upload the data when the internet is available again.

Mobile interface

- Software is designed for mobile device usage.

Fit for purpose

- Software is tailored to a community preschool environment without modifications.

Training and support

- Set up and migration support is provided.
- Training is offered over the life of the right to use the software.
- The service is offered an information session before they purchase the license.
- Consider help desk options, times available, if in-person support is offered, and response times.
- Consider any ongoing costs associated with the support help desk.

Other considerations to assist technology selection

Set up

- If transitioning from one CCMS, or ECEC-specific system to another, find out if the new CCMS or ECEC-specific system can help, the time involved and any associated costs.

Financial costs

- The costs involved, including if the license fees are per module, business size, or a flat fee for a set number of modules or enrolments.
- If you are billed annually or monthly.
- Adding modules over time and how this impacts the cost structure or number of users.
- Whether extra support is provided and if this has an additional cost.

Usability

- If the software is easy to use and if it meets your business management needs. Does it have report flexibility? Does it have integrated address validation? Does it allow additional information to be added to enrolment forms?
- Daily attendance sign in/out is straight forward for parents/carers/staff.

Hardware requirements

- Understand if there is any hardware required when capturing attendance, for example, a tablet, and if you already have this available or need to purchase additional items.
- If you need additional tablets, consider if a cellular data tablet is needed to capture attendance from anywhere in your premises or on the road.
- Find out if the software provider will configure the tablet for you onsite.

Parents or carer app/portal

- An intuitive and easy to use app could help streamline communications, enrolment form and processes, attendance management, signing forms or notices.
- Whether the system allows for multiple carers connected to each child.

Accounting, billing, payroll

- If you need the software for accounts management or need it to connect with your accounting system.
- If automated billing or digital payroll management is important to you.

Peers

- Are other community preschools in your area using the same software system, and how have they experienced the system, training, and support?



What to look for when selecting hardware

When selecting IT hardware to support and track attendance and manage enrolments, please consider hardware that meets the following:

- Devices and equipment that will support the CCMS or other suitable ECEC-specific system you have selected. Examples of devices and equipment are:
 - laptop or desktop computer where your chosen software is operating from
 - mouse, keyboard, ergonomic computer equipment to assist the user
 - tablet/s for sign in and sign out.
- Router or mesh WiFi network to extend your internet connection if you have a large premise and/or internet coverage is weak in parts.
- Mobile phone or cellular tablet/s if you have a large premise or the internet is unreliable in your area. You may want to consider using mobile phone data to support the capture of attendance and enrolments when internet access is down.

Internet services

Your internet service provider will usually supply the WiFi router and modem when you connect with them. They may also supply a booster to support the connection. If you have intermittent internet coverage in your area, you may want to consider using data from a mobile plan. Speak to your internet service provider about the best option for your premises.

If your internet coverage is intermittent, consider selecting software that can operate while offline (offline mode) and then upload to the cloud storage when internet is available. If this is required, consider the size of the data plan you have on the device you will use to capture information.

Rural towns with weak internet connections may need to consider a range of stable and high-speed internet options that best suit the geographical location of the service.

For assistance and further information, please contact Early Childhood Outcomes at the NSW Department of Education, 1300 060 450 or visit the [Digital Hub webpage](#) on the department's website.