

Application guide

Leadership for School Excellence

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Program overview



About Orbis

Orbis facilitates professional learning designed for South Australian schools and preschools. Our learning is aligned to Our Strategy for Public Education in South Australia, underpinned by the latest research and co-designed with global and local experts.

Program details

This immersive program has been designed specifically for the local educational landscape. Led by the Harvard faculty, every session delves into crucial areas of importance to school principals and preschool directors including culture, strategy, wellbeing and engagement.

You'll have the opportunity to:

- learn through faculty-led sessions and case studies using Australia-specific examples and learning contexts
- participate in facilitated discussion groups that engage peers in collaborative learning and reflection
- reflect on and refine personal leadership goals
- develop a school leadership plan that can be implemented in multiple school settings and contexts
- build lasting connections by engaging with faculty and fellow principals and school leaders in your cohort.

The Leadership for School Excellence program directly supports leaders to turn our strategy into action. Aligned with the focus on empowered leadership and partnering with families and communities, it develops the skills and dispositions, identified in the Leadership Capability Framework, that leaders need to lead people, shape culture and drive improvement.

Learning objectives

Through participation in the program you'll:

- gain a deeper understanding of the leadership skills needed to establish high expectations, including how to cultivate a learning culture that prioritises learning for all
- become a more effective educational leader and learn new leadership approaches for creating change and building optimal conditions for learning
- develop leadership strategies informed by relevant data to make evidence-based decisions that align resources and initiatives
- foster improved outcomes by increasing the involvement of family members, community stakeholders, school principals and preschool directors.

Key information



Important dates

Applications open: Wednesday 9 September 2026
Applications close: Sunday 27 September 2026 11.30pm (ACST)
Applicants notified: Between 27 October and 2 November 2026
Travel to Sydney: Sunday 10 January 2027
Return travel: Friday 15 January 2027
Post-program sessions (3): Once in terms 1, 2 and 3



Eligibility

Orbis invites applications from principals and preschool directors who:

- have at least 2 or more years' experience in the role
- will be leading a school or preschool throughout 2027
- have capacity and commitment to fully engage in the program
- are willing to share learning across the system.

The program is contextualised for school settings, however, it's also valuable for preschool directors.



Continue the learning

When you return from Sydney, you'll attend 3 face-to-face sessions at Orbis to:

- deepen your learning to create a meaningful impact
- reconnect with Harvard faculty experts
- collaborate professionally and engage in reciprocal exchanges.



What's included

Orbis will fund up to 20 principals and preschool directors. Funding covers:

- program costs valued at \$6,360 per participant
- the cost of accommodation at Rydges Sydney Hotel (5 nights)
- return economy flights to Sydney
- follow up sessions at Orbis
- travel and accommodation for regional leaders attending follow-up sessions in person.



How to apply

Applications are open from Wednesday 9 September and close Sunday 27 September 2026 at 11.30pm (ACST)

Follow the link to the [online application portal](https://apply.orbis.sa.gov.au/) or cut and paste the link into your browser <https://apply.orbis.sa.gov.au/>

- Create a login and complete the form.
- Save and return to your application any time before submitting.
- Once submitted, you'll receive a confirmation email, and your application will automatically be sent to your education director for endorsement.

Applications are subject to department checks. Orbis may withdraw an application at any time based on the outcomes.

Endorsement

Education director endorsement is required. It's recommended you discuss your application with them. They'll consider your:

- capacity and commitment to fully engage in the program
- willingness to share your learning across the system
- alignment to your Performance and Development Plan and school or preschool priorities.

If there are multiple applications from one portfolio, the education director may be asked to prioritise. Orbis will liaise with successful applicants regarding next steps to register.



Selection process



Selection panel process

Applications will be assessed by a panel. You'll be notified of the outcome between Monday 26 October and Monday 2 November 2026. Due to the volume of applications, we're unable to provide individual feedback.

The selection panel will consider the following principles as part of the selection process:

- Capacity for change: You'll need to demonstrate your school or preschool's commitment to contributing to the department learning system. An important component of this is reciprocity—being willing to share your learning and actively engage your networks to benefit others.
- Equity and access: The balance of preschool, primary, secondary, metropolitan, regional and remote schools and preschools attending.

Application questions

You'll be required to answer these 3 questions in your online application:

- With consideration to Our Strategy for Public Education in South Australia, how has your leadership impacted your learners?
- Have you influenced meaningful change in other department schools or preschools? If so, how?
- Thinking about the learning objectives, how will this professional learning support your development as a leader?

Each question has a limit of 250 words. Keep your answers clear, concise and use plain language. You may provide attachments totalling no more than 3 pages to support your responses, with minimum font size of 11pt. Attachments may include your site learning plan. You are requested to highlight if sections are pertinent. This information may be considered as additional information to assist with selecting successful applicants.

Contact us



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