



Frequently asked questions about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) impact on funding arrangements

The following questions and answers have been developed by the Department of Social Services (the department) to assist funded service providers (and prospective organisations) in service delivery arrangements in light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). There will be evolving information and guidance provided by government and we encourage you seek up to date information.

Please contact your **Funding Arrangement Manager** in the first instance to discuss your individual circumstances and to find a flexible solution. You can contact them using the emails below:

State / Territory	Email address
Queensland	gldperformance@communitygrants.gov.au
New South Wales	nswactperformance@communitygrants.gov.au
Australian Capital Territory	nswactperformance@communitygrants.gov.au
Victoria	vicperformance@communitygrants.gov.au
Tasmania	tasperformance@communitygrants.gov.au
South Australia	SAPerformance@communitygrants.gov.au
Western Australia	WAPerformanceDSS@communitygrants.gov.au
Northern Territory	ntpperformance@communitygrants.gov.au

If you are unable to contact your Funding Arrangement Manager, please contact the Community Grants Hotline via telephone 1800 020 283 (option 6), or TTY 1800 555 677.

Questions and Answers as at 27 March 2020

General questions

What is the government's response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

- The latest Coronavirus (COVID-19) news, updates and advice from government agencies across Australia are available on the website www.australia.gov.au/. This website includes key updates and information on health and prevention, information for travellers, receiving financial support, information for education providers, information for businesses and employees, supporting the community, and state and territory government information.
- The Department of Health website www.health.gov.au is updated regularly with public health information, prevention strategies and resources. Service providers should refer to the website on a regular basis for up to date advice. The Department of Health also has a National Coronavirus Helpline (phone 1800 020 080), which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Local advice can also be sought through your state/territory government departments of health.
- For information on the Australian Government's economic response to Coronavirus (COVID-19), including support for individuals, households and businesses and supporting the flow of credit, visit the Treasury website: <https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus>. The Australian Taxation Office (www.ato.gov.au) also has support measures for businesses experiencing financial difficulty as a result of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

What is the Department of Social Services' response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

- The department continues to operate as normal and functions such as administering grants continue. This includes continuing to accept and assess grant applications for the small number of grant opportunities currently open. We also continue to offer grant agreements and manage the grants already in place.
- However, we are adapting our approach to the ongoing management of grants. This includes not pursuing current outstanding Data Exchange reporting or financial acquittals.
- The department also supports flexibility in the use of grants where funding has been provided to cover a workshop, event, travel or similar, which can no longer proceed due to current health advice. In this situation, funding may be used to cover non-refundable costs or the grant agreement may be extended to allow the event to be rescheduled and used as originally intended.
- In the event that your organisation cannot operate either due to staffing impacts from Coronavirus (COVID-19), or your clients or customers have been impacted, the department will work with you to consider other viable options. It is important that services are in place throughout this period, where possible, but also standing ready to operate when this period of uncertainty is over.
- To discuss your circumstances please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager to work with you to find a flexible solution.

Funding arrangements already in place

What should I do if I cannot meet the deliverables and/or milestones in my funding agreement?

- Service providers should take note of key impacts of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on service provision, including details such as changes in client numbers, and/or particular cohorts, and the services and support offered.
- These matters should be reported to the department, through your Funding Arrangement Manager, in accordance with the requirements set out in Funding Agreement grant conditions, at the appropriate time.
- The department is committed to being as flexible as possible to ensure that organisations can continue to operate.
- The department is adapting its approach to the ongoing management of grants. This includes not pursuing current outstanding Data Exchange reporting or financial acquittals.
- The department also supports flexibility in the use of grants where funding has been provided to cover a workshop, event, travel or similar, which can no longer proceed due to current health advice. In this situation, funding may be used to cover non-refundable costs or the grant agreement may be extended to allow the event to be rescheduled and used as originally intended.
- Please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager to discuss your individual concerns and talk through the available options.

If the Coronavirus (COVID-19) inhibits my ability to spend grant funds this financial year, can I carry it over into next financial year?

- The department is committed to being as flexible as possible to ensure that organisations can continue to operate. The department will consider variations to grant agreements to allow funds to be carried over into next financial year on a case by case basis.
- Please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager to discuss your individual concerns and talk through the available options.

If Coronavirus (COVID-19) causes a spike in clients wishing to access my service, how do I manage with funding?

- It is important that organisations remain viable during the period of the pandemic. The department is considering many options to support service providers through this time.
- Please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager to discuss your individual concerns and talk through the available options.

Can my non-service delivery deliverables and reporting obligations be postponed?

- The department is adapting its approach to the ongoing management of grants. This includes not pursuing current outstanding Data Exchange reporting or financial acquittals.
- Please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager to discuss your individual concerns and talk through the available options.

Will there be extensions to Data Exchange reporting obligations?

- At this stage, the next Data Exchange milestone remains at 30 July 2020.
- However, the department will not be pursuing current outstanding Data Exchange reporting or financial acquittals.

What should service providers do if their service delivery sites and or partner sites are closed?

- The department is aware that site availability is based on a range of key factors such as client demand, location, suitability and operational hours. In some instances a service provider will no longer be able to operate an activity/activities because a site is closed by a third party.
- Alternative service delivery options should be considered where practicable. This may include service providers relocating the activity to other appropriate premises, pending appropriate insurances, meeting system, record and privacy requirements in your grant agreement, and consideration of staff safety. Please notify your Funding Arrangement Manager of the revised operating location.
- Advice from the Department of Health (www.health.gov.au) should be taken into account.
- If you have any concerns about your organisation's capacity to deliver activities in your grant agreement, please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager as soon as practicable so they can work with you to find a flexible solution.

My organisation offers programs within Aged Care facilities. Should we cease these services? What would be the impact on our organisation for not meeting the grant agreement?

- The Chief Medical Officer, Professor Brendan Murphy wrote to all Aged Care Providers on 13 March 2020, to provide an update on Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and the role that the Aged Care Provider plays in the National Response. In the first instance we would recommend that you speak with the Aged Care Provider, who can provide information on their current position.
- Please refer to the Department of Health website www.health.gov.au for current advice on aged care facilities.
- Should your service temporarily cease, or be delivered in another location, please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager to talk through the available options.

Should staff continue to be paid if my service is not being delivered?

- It is important that services are in place throughout this period, where possible, but also standing ready to operate when this period of uncertainty is over.
- Where staffing costs are an eligible cost under your grant agreement, you may continue to pay staff if the service is temporarily not being delivered due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- Service providers should take note of key impacts of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on service provision, including details such as changes in client numbers, and/or particular cohorts, and the services and support offered.
- These matters should be reported to the department, through your Funding Arrangement Manager, in accordance with the requirements set out in Funding Agreement grant conditions, at the appropriate time.

What should I consider in a Coronavirus (COVID-19) business continuity plan?

- You may wish to consider in your business continuity plan how your organisation will manage over the coming months, including:
 - Interim staffing arrangements and workforce issues, including options for flexible work arrangements for staff and communication mechanisms.
 - Alternate options to deliver services such as over the phone or online technology (or providing referrals to other phone and web-based supports) and how access to these services will work for clients with low English and/or technical skills.
 - How your clients would communicate to you if they need to self-isolate.
 - Ensuring the safety of your staff and clients, including staff knowing the symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19), appropriate actions should staff or clients appear unwell, and what resources and support services are available for those concerned about the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).
 - Whether you are able to operate from your existing premises or need to consider alternate location/s.

Do I need to provide the department with a copy of our organisation's preparedness plan or business continuity plan?

- Generally you do not need to provide the department with a copy of your organisation's preparedness plan or business continuity plan, however some Client Agencies that use the Community Grants Hub for the administration of their grants may specifically request this information from you. We encourage you to ensure your staff are familiar with the plan.

Who do service providers contact if there are concerns regarding service delivery and or implementation of business continuity plans?

- If you have any concerns about your organisation's capacity to deliver activities in your grant agreement, please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager to work with you to find a flexible solution.

We provide a service in remote and or regional Australia. Our Lands Council has advised that certain communities are now closed until the threat of Coronavirus (COVID-19) has passed. Who do I communicate the impacts to service delivery? What would be the impact on our organisation for not meeting the grant agreement?

- Please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager to talk through the available options.

Will the Australian Taxation Office be extending the deadline for AUSkey?

- The Australian Taxation Office will decommission AUSkey on 27 March 2020, requiring all organisation users to obtain a new myGovID and link this to their organisation to continue accessing DSS portals like the Data Exchange. While the decommission date cannot be moved, it is important to note that a DSS grant funded organisation has until 30 July 2020 to meet the Data Exchange reporting obligations within their grant agreement and the department will continue to support organisation users to obtain their myGovIDs once AUSkey is decommissioned.

Staff and client health and safety

How do I keep staff and clients safe?

- Service providers should be guided by current advice available from the Department of Health (www.health.gov.au) and local state or territory departments of health on a regular basis.
- This includes guidance regarding social distancing, physical contact and hygiene protocols.
- The Department of Health has also developed a free training module for all support workers, including those in disability and aged care. The training covers the fundamentals of infection prevention and control (IPC) for Coronavirus (COVID-19). It is available at <https://covid-19training.com.au>.
- The Department of Health has also developed a webinar on Coronavirus (COVID-19) preparedness for in-home and community aged care. This webinar is also relevant to all service providers and workers in the disability sector and is available at <https://publish.viostream.com/app/s-n3f4rpt>.
- Safe Work Australia (www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au) also has information about work, health and safety considerations for managing staff in relation to the current pandemic.
- Consider options for alternate service delivery (such as via the phone or online technology) and how access to online or telephone information will work for clients with low English and/or technical skills.

Should service providers continue to hold group activities for clients?

- Keep up to date with and follow health advice warning from the Department of Health (www.health.gov.au) and local state or territory departments of health. This includes information regarding social distancing, non-essential gatherings and reconsidering the need for non essential travel. The latest information is available on the website www.australia.gov.au/.
- The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee advises for gatherings of fewer than 100 people that, in a given occupied space, there must be a density of no more than one person per four square metres of floor space (www.health.gov.au).
- You could also explore alternate options to group activities.
- Please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager to discuss your circumstances.

What should I do if a client presents unwell?

- Contact your state or territory health authority to seek advice about management of any possible exposure to Coronavirus (COVID-19), and act in accordance with advice provided.
- The latest advice, information and resources are available from the Department of Health (www.health.gov.au).
- You may wish to advise clients that medical practitioners and pharmacies have access to the Free Interpreting Services to assist in communicating with people who have limited or no English language proficiency.
- Consider options for alternate service delivery (such as via the phone or online technology) and how access to online or telephone information will work for clients with low English and/or technical skills.
- Safe Work Australia (www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au) has information about work, health and safety considerations for managing staff in relation to the current pandemic.

Should service providers advise the department of confirmed cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) among their staff or clients?

- Service providers should contact their state or territory health authority to seek advice about management of any possible exposure to Coronavirus (COVID-19), and should act in accordance with advice provided.
- Pending any advice, service providers should exercise caution to limit further possible exposure, which may include temporary closure of the office and self-isolation of staff or participants present.
- Please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager to advise if you have any concerns about service delivery or your organisations capacity to deliver activities in your funding agreement due to a confirmed contact with Coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Safe Work Australia (www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au) has information about work, health and safety considerations for managing staff in relation to the current pandemic.

My organisation provides services to clients at high risk of serious infection. Should we cease these services? What would be the impact on our organisation for not meeting the grant agreement?

- You should make an informed decision based on information from the Department of Health (www.health.gov.au) and local state or territory departments of health.
- Once you have made an informed decision, please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager to advise details of decision made and talk through the available options.

Grant applications in progress

What will happen if I cannot submit an application within the required timeframe, or I need to update my application?

- If you are unable to apply by the application close date, you should complete the Late Application request form available on the Community Grants Hub website www.communitygrants.gov.au/information/information-applicants/timing-grant-opportunity-processes.
- If you wish to revise information you can contact the Community Grants Hub (support@communitygrants.gov.au, telephone 1800 020 283 (option 6) or TTY 1800 555 677), to discuss your individual concerns and talk through the available options.