Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Families and Children Activity Newsletter

Issue 3 | December 2021

What is in this issue?

This issue focuses on:

- updates to the Families and Children Activity webpage
- the first FaC Activity Data Exchange webinar, the handshake approach and DEX reports
- questions and answers following the first FaC Activity Data Exchange webinar.

The department encourages providers to circulate this newsletter to their staff. If staff would like to receive the newsletter directly, they can send their email addresses to families@dss.gov.au.

The department is open to feedback on the frequency, format and content of the newsletter. Please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager if you have suggestions.

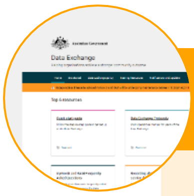
Families and Children Activity webpage

The FaC Activity webpage now includes links to:

- previous versions of the FaC Activity newsletter
- information on program logics and templates that service providers can use to develop program logics for their grant activities (please double-check your organisation uses the most recent templates).

Please note all service providers except Communities for Children Facilitating Partners are required to develop and submit draft program logics **by 31 March 2022**.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies recently hosted two webinars on the program logic requirements. The links to those recordings and other resources will be shared in the next issue of the FaC Activity newsletter.



Data Exchange

DEX webinar for service providers

- The department hosted a DEX webinar for FaC service providers via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday 13 October 2021.
- The webinar highlighted useful resources on the DEX website and provided a recap of the DEX web portal, including how to add SCORE assessments to client records.
- Following unforeseen delays, the department published a recording of the webinar on YouTube: https://youtu.be/8O5pDGARRII.
- Please feel free to circulate the link to any staff or delivery partners who might find the webinar useful.
- Answers to questions from the DEX webinar are at **Appendix A**.
- If you have additional questions about content in the webinar, please email these to families@dss.gov.au.
- The department is planning to host a second DEX webinar in the first half of 2022. Details will be confirmed next year.

DEX handshake function

- Grant recipients that have handshake agreements with subcontractors can view the Partnership Approach data of subcontractors via DEX reports.
- The department rolled out this new functionality on 18 October 2021 following delays to the original roll out date of 1 October 2021.
- Further information will be available in future notifications and updates from the Data Exchange.

Learn more about DEX reports

- Each month from October 2021, the department is explaining one of the DEX reports in detail via the DEX Update mailing list.
- To subscribe to the mailing list, navigate to the notifications and updates webpage on the DEX website and click the button named *Subscribe to our updates*.

Thank you

The Family Policy team would like to thank all service providers and staff for their tireless work in 2021.

We wish you, your families and friends a happy and safe festive season. We hope the holiday period is restorative and we look forward to working together in 2022.

Appendix A – Answers to questions following the DEX webinar

1. **Is there a document where I can access reporting and how the numbers in reports are calculated?**

   The following resources outline how organisations can access and use self-service reports in the Data Exchange (DEX):

   - Overview of Data Exchange reports (3 minute video)
   - Accessing Data Exchange reports
   - Organisation overview report
   - Client outcomes report
   - Organisation data quality report
   - Resource planning report
   - Service footprint report
   - Community profiles (2nd edition) report.

   Each report includes an information sheet with a glossary. Each glossary defines terms used in a report, and some of these definitions outline how data is calculated.

   If you're seeking further information about data in a report, including how it is calculated, please contact the DEX Helpdesk by sending an email to dssdataexchange.helpdesk@dss.gov.au or calling 1800 020 283 between 8:30 am – 5:30 pm (AEST/AEDT) Monday to Friday.

2. **When is the trial period for the Data Exchange Partnership Approach and when is partnership data required?**

   All service providers have a 12-month transition period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 to build their capability, troubleshoot problems and work towards the requirements of the Data Exchange (DEX) Partnership Approach. During this transition period, the department strongly encourages providers to strive towards the requirements as early as possible.

   From 1 July 2022 onwards, the Partnership Approach is a requirement of funding under the FaC Activity.

3. **We find the Data Exchange's list of reasons that a client has exited a service to be limited. Can the department add more options?**

   The department recently expanded the list of exit reasons in the Data Exchange. If there are additional reasons that you think are missing from the list, please email your suggestion(s) to the Data Exchange Helpdesk at dssdataexchange.helpdesk@dss.gov.au for consideration.

4. **My organisation delivers capacity-building activities to significant numbers of unidentified clients. Is this practice still acceptable under the new grant agreement as long as my organisation provides sufficient justification in its reporting to the department?**

   Yes, the department understands that service providers delivering capacity-building activities to large groups of individuals might find it difficult to collect information about each individual. Under these circumstances, providers should report individuals as unidentified clients.

   Please note each program imposes a limit on the number of unidentified clients that a provider can report in each reporting period. Please refer to the *Program Specific guidance for Commonwealth Agencies in the Data Exchange* for further information.

   The department strongly encourages providers to outline in their Activity Work Plans (AWPs) and AWP Reports general details about activities delivered to unidentified clients, including general details about unidentified clients, so the department can understand what activities are delivered to unidentified clients and who is considered an unidentified client.

5. **Is extended demographics data mandatory?**

   No, service providers are not required to record any extended demographics data for their clients, but may choose to do so for their own purposes.

6. **My organisation chooses to report data on year of first arrival in Australia. The Data Exchange web portal requires us to also specify a month when reporting year of first arrival, but not all clients tell us this information. Should we report a particular month if a client is not willing or able to tell us which month they arrived in Australia?**

   If a client is not willing or able to specify the month they arrived in Australia, please select January.

   The department encourages service providers that report this data to ask clients which month they arrived in Australia rather than simply entering ‘January’ by default.

   Please note service providers do not have to collect data on year of first arrival in Australia, but may choose to do so for their own purposes. This data is extended demographics data, which is not mandatory under the following grant programs:

   - Budget Based Funded
   - Children and Parenting Support
   - Communities for Children Facilitating Partners
   - Family and Relationship Services
   - Family Mental Health Support Services.

7. **When I create a case in the web portal, it asks me to report the number of unidentified clients associated with the case. The portal will not let me navigate to the next page unless I enter a number for unidentified clients, even if I have no unidentified clients to report. What am I doing wrong?**

   The web portal requires you to enter a number for unidentified clients. If the case you are creating has no unidentified clients, please enter ‘0’.

8. **Is it possible to have suburb summary reports in the Data Exchange?**

No, suburb-level data increases the risk of re-identifying clients.

The Department has a responsibility under the *Privacy Act 1988* to protect the identity of clients. For this reason, it does not display data for geographic boundaries smaller than Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2), which mitigates the risk of someone re-identifying clients.

Please note service providers are able to apply filters to show the number of clients in each SA2, as well as the demographic information of these clients.

If you are seeking further information or clarification, please contact the Data Exchange Helpdesk by sending an email to dssdataexchange.helpdesk@dss.gov.au or calling 1800 020 283 between 8:30 am – 5:30 pm (AEST/AEDT) Monday to Friday.

9. **Is there capacity for the Data Exchange to have pre- and post-program surveys for activities that are funded by Communities for Children Facilitating Partners and assessed as 'Approved Evidence Based' by AIFS?**

The only way service providers can enter survey results into the Data Exchange is by translating the results into SCORE. If surveys incorporate a 1-5 scale for responses, it may be possible to translate the results into one or more SCORE domains. If a survey has a number of questions related to a single SCORE domain, a provider might be able to average the results to report a single result for that SCORE domain.

If your organisation has further questions or is experiencing difficulty translating surveys into SCORE, please contact the Data Exchange Helpdesk by sending an email to dssdataexchange.helpdesk@dss.gov.au or calling 1800 020 283 between 8:30 am – 5:30 pm (AEST/AEDT) Monday to Friday.

10. **Will the department provide support for Communities for Children Facilitating Partners to enter SCORE data for 'clients' of capacity building activities such as governance activities and building service system capability?**

The Community component of SCORE allows service providers to report outcomes data for activities delivered to large groups, organisations and/or communities. This makes Community SCORE suitable for Facilitating Partners that deliver activities focused on governance or building service system capability/capacity. For example, a Facilitating Partner might record unidentified clients and Community SCORE data for information sessions delivered to groups of community organisations (e.g. Community Partners) or consultation sessions with stakeholders (e.g. CfC Committee meetings).

Community SCORE data is also relevant to other Families and Children Activity providers that deliver group or community activities in which it is difficult, or inappropriate, to record details of individual clients.

The department strongly encourages Facilitating Partners to outline general details about activities delivered under the service types 'Governance' and 'Service system capability/capacity' in their Activity Work Plans and Activity Work Plan Reports so the department can understand what activities are delivered to unidentified clients and who is considered an unidentified client for these service types.

Please note the department expects **no more than 15 per cent of a Facilitating Partner's clients are recorded as unidentified clients in a reporting period. Please note a Facilitating Partner's total number of clients includes the clients of its Community Partners**.

Here is a step-by-step method for recording Community SCOREs for unidentified clients in the Data Exchange web portal:

1. Add a case
    i. Record the number of unidentified clients associated with the case (e.g. the number of attendees at an information session).
    ii. If applicable, record the attendance profile of the case as ‘Community event’.
    iii. Click ‘Next’ to add clients.
    iv. If no identified clients attended the session, click ‘Next’ to review the details of your case.
    v. If the details of your case are correct, click ‘Submit’ to view a summary of the case you are creating. The summary will include a Case ID; take note of this ID so you can search for it later in Step 3.

2. Add a session
    i. Find the case you created and click on the Case ID to view details of the case.
    ii. Scroll to the bottom of the case details and click ‘Add session’.
    iii. At a minimum, add the session date, service type and number of unidentified clients that attended the session, then click ‘Next’. (Please note the number of unidentified clients recorded for the session cannot exceed the number of identified clients recorded for the case.)
    iv. You can skip the next page for clients and support persons if this page is not applicable to the session (i.e. no identified clients attended the session).
    v. Review the details of the session and click ‘Submit’.

3. Find the case and add Community SCORE data
    i. Search for the Case ID of the case you created in Step 1.
    ii. Click on the ‘Case ID’ to view the case details.
    iii. Scroll to the bottom of the case details and click on the Session ID of the session you created in Step 2 to view the session details.
    iv. Scroll to the bottom of the session details and click ‘Add Community Score’.
    v. Please select the most appropriate option for ‘Assessed by’ and fill out the Community SCORE rating scale(s) applicable to your session, then click ‘Save’.

If you completed SCORE assessments at the start and end of a session, and you want to record at least two Community SCOREs for the same domain (e.g. Group/Community knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours), scroll to the bottom of the session details and click ‘Add Community Score’. Please read the Community Outcomes (SCORE) fact sheet to understand the three different ways of recording Community SCOREs: unpaired SCOREs, session-paired SCOREs and case-paired SCOREs. Please note the Community Outcomes Report enables organisations participating in the Data Exchange Partnership Approach to view and analyse this data.

The department is keen to understand what other types of support service providers need. We encourage Facilitating Partners to discuss their needs with their Funding Arrangement Managers (FAMs) in the first instance, and the department can follow-up with additional guidance if required.

11. Is the 50% target for Circumstances and Goals inclusive of unidentified clients (a.k.a. 'group' clients)?

No, these targets are based on identified clients only.

12. As part of participating in the Partnership Approach, do organisations have to collect SCORE data in multiple domains within Circumstances, Goals and Satisfaction for each client?

This is not the case, but is generally recommended. If necessary, service providers can report data against a single outcome domain for each type of outcome (i.e. Circumstances, Goals or Satisfaction).

It is important to note that providers are not required to report all types of outcomes data for each client (i.e. Circumstances, Goals and Satisfaction), but the department strongly encourages providers to report as much relevant data for each client as possible.

The type and number of SCORE domains that are sufficient to measure a client's outcome(s) depends on the objectives of a grant activity and the needs of individual clients. If a grant activity is targeting a highly specific outcome, then perhaps a single outcome domain is sufficient to measure change, but generally providers measure client outcomes across multiple domains.

Please note the Program-specific guidance for Commonwealth Agencies in the Data Exchange sets out outcome domains that are most relevant to each grant program, but service providers must determine which domains align with the objectives or their grant activities and the needs of their individual clients.

13. Do service providers have to report initial SCORE data and follow-up SCORE data in the same reporting period if they want clients with SCORE data to count towards the minimum requirements of the DEX Partnership Approach (e.g. the requirement that '50 per cent of clients assessed for Circumstances')?

No, service providers can report their clients' initial SCORE data and follow-up SCORE data in different reporting periods without affecting their performance against the minimum requirements of the Partnership Approach.

For example, the department will measure performance against a requirement such as '50 per cent of clients assessed for Circumstances' by calculating the percentage of clients in a reporting period with follow-up SCORE data for at least once outcome domain under Circumstances. The department will not consider the timing of initial SCORE data in its calculation.

14. Are subcontractors able to use a mixture of outcomes measurement tools or do they need to stick to one tool?

Service providers and subcontractors have flexibility to decide how they measure outcomes. Some providers might choose to use a single outcomes measurement tool for each client whereas others might choose to use a mixture of tools.

Irrespective of your organisation's chosen approach, it is crucial to use the same tool(s) to measure a client's initial SCORE and follow-up SCORE.

15. Can the department translate more evidence-based tools into SCORE?

The department is open to translating more outcomes measurement tools into SCORE if there is sufficient demand for particular tools. If your organisation would like the department to consider translating a particular tool, please notify your Funding Arrangement Manager.

The department's SCORE Translation Matrix currently includes translations for ten tools:

- Child Neglect Index
- Carers Star
- Growth Empowerment Measure
- Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale
- Kessler Psychological Distress Scale
- Outcome Rating Scale
- Parenting, Empowerment and Efficacy Measure
- Personal Wellbeing Index
- Sessions Rating Scale
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

The Matrix also includes a generic translation matrix template for service providers to translate their own in-house outcomes measurement tools into SCORE.

16. My organisation understands that it needs to record a minimum of two SCOREs per client (i.e. an initial SCORE and follow-up SCORE), but does it have to record the second SCORE against a different session?

Yes, an initial SCORE should be recorded in a session towards the beginning of service delivery and a follow-up SCORE should be recorded in a session towards the end of service delivery.

It is rare for service providers to record initial and follow-up SCOREs in one session for individual clients. If you think this approach is appropriate for your grant activity, please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager in the first instance, and the department can follow-up with additional guidance if required.

17. My organisation provides Family Mental Health Support Services (FMHSS). How do we record parents, family members or carers who participate in the Family Action planning and counselling process?

For Data Exchange (DEX) reporting purposes, 'primary clients' are children and young people up to, and including, 18 years of age who are affected by, or showing early signs of, mental illness.

A parent, family member, guardian, carer, case worker, friend or mentor who attends a session with a client, but is not directly receiving services, should be reported in the DEX as a 'support person'. A parent or family member of a client is considered a support person even if they attend a session without the client.

While it is important to note that clients must have suitable adults who are willing and able to work with them and engage with services, these adults are not the primary clients of FMHSS, therefore, they need to be reported as 'support persons' for DEX reporting purposes.