



Forced Adoption Support Services

Feedback summary

Overview

Forced Adoption Support Services grants are aimed at improving outcomes and enhancing wellbeing for people adversely affected by past institutional and child-welfare practices and policies. They do so by enabling organisations to provide specialist support through a national 1800 number (1800 21 03 13) and will include face-to-face services where possible. An important element of the Forced Adoption Support Services will be the development of local networks. This will involve mainstream, post-adoption professionals and peer support services working together to enhance quality, coordination and flexibility of services for people affected by forced adoptions, within their community.

DSS recognises and supports the work of civil society organisations in the provision of services and support to people affected by forced adoptions. These organisations have deep experience in the sector and strong commitment to providing valuable specialist services which complement and enhance government services for people affected by forced adoptions.

Selection results

The selection process for Forced Adoption Support Services has allowed DSS to focus on the development of local networks where mainstream, post-adoption, professionals and peer support networks can work together to enhance quality, coordination and flexibility of support services for people affected by adoptions within their community area. The Forced Adoption Support Services offered funding will also each administer small grants funds, which will benefit peer support and advocacy groups.

Selection process

DSS received 20 applications with proposals for the Forced Adoption Support Services funding round 2014-15 which were of a very high quality. Proposals overall demonstrated a comprehensive and thoughtful understanding of the historical context of forced adoption and suggested a number of innovative approaches to the delivery of support services for people affected by forced adoption. There is evidently a wide range of providers skilled and able to offer these important services.

DSS considered each proposal against five equally weighted selection criteria which are listed below.

The Department also emphasised that in responding to any of the selection criteria for funding rounds, applicants needed to provide evidence to support claims about how they meet each of the criteria. During the application process, the Department provided guidance for applicants in providing evidence including a fact sheet on the types of evidence that could be used for addressing selection criteria as well as guidance on what strong evidence looks like.

In determining the results of the round, DSS considered the spread of grants to ensure adequate coverage of all states and territories.

Criteria 1: Demonstrate your understanding of the need for the funded activity in the chosen community/communities and/or target groups.

Preferred applicants demonstrated a range of strengths in relation to Criteria 1, as shown in the table below.

Strength	Example
The applicant clearly identified target groups.	Research provided on target groups, including mothers, mothers who had further children, fathers, and people who were adopted.
The applicant identified gaps in current service delivery in the chosen community/communities.	Described status of current services in relevant jurisdiction and showed how additional services and professional networks are required.
The applicant demonstrated a thorough understanding of historical context of forced adoption.	Understanding of need was linked to relevant studies, reports and historical data in the target community.
The applicant demonstrated comprehensive understanding of the needs of people impacted by forced adoption.	Clearly identified impact of forced adoption with links to studies on mental health and social outcomes.

Areas for improvement

Applicants could have strengthened their responses to Criteria 1 in a number of ways:

- demonstrating benefits of local networks and small grants
- demonstrating an understanding of past institutional practices and context specific to the chosen community/communities and/or target group/groups
- using evidence from relevant evaluations, research or studies
- identifying all target groups and affected persons (including adopted people, mothers, fathers, extended family).

Criteria 2: Describe how the implementation of your proposal will achieve the activity objectives for all stakeholders, including value for money within the grant funding.

Preferred applicants demonstrated a wide range of strengths in relation to Criteria 1, as shown in the table below.

Strength	Example
The applicant clearly articulated the activities to be conducted.	Comprehensive details of staffing structure and how clients will access the services was provided, including support through the telephone service, referral and escalation points.
The proposal demonstrated commitment to collaboration with other organisations.	Clients will be referred to specialised services (internal or external) where required.
A strategy for development of local networks of service providers was provided.	A list of local services was attached and mechanisms for coordination of local networks were proposed.
The applicant had robust systems of clinical governance and evidence-based approaches.	Current services of the organisation are evidence-based with robust research and evaluation frameworks, and a strong governance structure.
The applicant illustrated understanding of uses and benefits of the Small Grants Fund.	The organisation will deliver value through supporting peer support groups and advocacy groups as part of the Small Grants Fund.

Areas for improvement

Applicants could have strengthened their responses to Criteria 2 in a number of ways:

- demonstrating value for money, including providing a proposed budget
- providing a detailed description on how telephone services would be delivered
- providing more detail on continuous improvement and evaluation strategies
- providing a detailed description of benefits of local networks and how they will be developed
- providing a detailed description of benefits of small grants and how they will be administered.

Criteria 3: Demonstrate your experience in effectively developing, delivering, managing and monitoring activities to achieve the activity objectives for all stakeholders.

Preferred applicants demonstrated a wide range of strengths in relation to Criteria 3, as shown in the table below.

Strength	Example
The organisation demonstrated experience in service development and delivery to people affected by forced adoption practices.	History of service delivery in the sector detailed, ranging from counselling to case management to advocacy.
The organisation had specific experience in telephone-enabled services.	The proposal included details of telephone-enabled post adoption services, and experience across other service models.
The organisation demonstrated its commitment to evaluation and continuous improvement.	Staff performance, programme design and service delivery will be monitored to measure outputs and outcomes.
The organisation showed experience with stakeholder consultation and customer feedback.	Policies and procedures will be in place regarding client feedback and customer complaints.
The organisation had collaborative arrangements with local service providers.	The proposal described established links with local providers to co-facilitate support activities.

Areas for improvement

Applicants could have strengthened their responses to Criteria 3 in a number of ways:

- demonstrating a link between current activities and services and grant objectives
- providing evidence of outcomes from past activities
- providing evidence of experience in offering monitoring and reporting to government.

Criteria 4: Demonstrate your organisation’s capacity and your staff capability (experience and qualifications) to deliver the activity’s objectives in the chosen community/communities and/or target group/s (national coverage required).

Preferred applicants demonstrated a wide range of strengths in relation to Criteria 4, as shown in the table below.

Strength	Example
Individuals within the organisation have suitable skills and experience.	Staff members have professional qualifications and extensive experience in delivering support services.
The application detailed how the organisation has multi-disciplined staff with training specifically in complex trauma.	Staff members include social workers, counsellors and psychologists and have experience in mental health and trauma informed counselling.
The application proposed sound governance structures.	The proposal specified governance arrangements including roles and responsibilities, policies and processes and clinical governance framework.
The organisation has strategic planning in place.	Detail of a strategic plan which is underpinned by an operational plan was included.

Areas for improvement

Applicants could have strengthened their responses to Criteria 4 in a number of ways:

- providing specific detail of individual staff capabilities and qualifications
- linking organisation capacity to achievement of better outcomes
- explaining staff-support mechanisms and capability development.

Criteria 5: Demonstrated independence from organisations or individuals that may have been involved with past institutional and child-welfare practices and policies.

Preferred applicants demonstrated a wide range of strengths in relation to Criteria 5, as shown in the table below.

Strength	Example
The organisation provided comprehensive information demonstrating their independence.	No historical connection with institutions or organisations involved in forced adoption practices.
The organisation had robust conflict of interest policies and procedures in place.	Comprehensive information provided on steps taken to resolve current and future real and perceived conflicts of interest.
The organisation demonstrated ongoing commitment to transparency.	Collaborative work with past providers is done with full client awareness and advocacy is provided on behalf of the client where the client does not wish to have contact.

Areas for improvement

Applicants could have strengthened their responses to Criteria 5 in a number of ways:

- providing detail on how conflicts of interest will be managed into the future (including when working with individuals or organisations which are not independent)
- providing detail on staff screening processes and relevant recruitment procedures.

Further Feedback

To register to receive further feedback, please email grants@dss.gov.au providing all of the following details:

- Organisation name, as used on the application for funding (legal name or trading name, if different from the legal name);
- The Application ID issued by DSS upon receipt of the application for which feedback is sought;
- The name of the funding round(s) as per the application pack materials and application form (feedback for more than one funding application can be requested in the one email);
- A contact name and telephone number; and
- A contact email address.

To be eligible to receive feedback for the Forced Adoption Support Services round you must register by **Friday 13 February 2015**.

The Department will undertake to provide individual feedback to organisations within 12 weeks of the closing date for registrations. Please refer to the [DSS Feedback Policy](#) for more information.