



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Ageing and Service Improvement Programme Guidelines Overview

May 2015

Preface

The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) has a suite of Programme Guidelines which provides information about each Programme that provides grants funding, and the suite of Activities that contribute to that Programme. They provide the key starting point for parties considering whether to participate in a Programme and form the basis for the business relationship between DSS and the grant recipient.

DSS recognises and supports the work of civil society organisations. The DSS approach to working with civil society is based on reducing red tape, providing greater flexibility and respecting the independence of the sector. This approach recognises that civil society organisations should be supported to self-manage the delivery of support to our communities rather than being burdened with unnecessary government requirements.

Programme Guidelines are provided to applicants for each grant funding round. The approach to grants funding described in the Guidelines aims to foster collaboration and innovation in the community across civil society freeing up resources to improve outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

The Programme Guidelines for each grant funding round include:

- a Programme Guidelines Overview document (this document) that provides an overview of how funding rounds may be conducted for each Activity (PBS administered line item) that contribute to the overall Programme outcome, and
- an Application Pack - a suite of documents with information specific to each grant funding round conducted within the Activity.

The simplified Programme arrangements establish the framework for DSS to move towards a single Grant Agreement per provider, implement new and improved financial reporting systems, reduce reporting and regulation, consolidate funding rounds and support greater service delivery innovation to meet the needs of clients.

DSS reserves the right to amend these documents from time to time by whatever means it may determine in its absolute discretion and will provide reasonable notice of these amendments.

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1. Programme Overview – Ageing and Service Improvement Programme

1.1 Programme Outcomes

The Aged Care Service Improvement Programme is an Australian Government initiative administered by the Department of Social Services designed to better support activities that strengthen the capacity of the aged care sector, to promote healthy and active ageing, to better respond to existing and emerging challenges including dementia care, and to better support services targeting people from diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

1.2 Programme Objectives

As part of the Aged Care Reforms, the Australian Government is working with aged care providers, workers, health professionals, clients and carers to build a seamless, end-to-end aged care system. The broad architecture of the system, from a programme funding perspective, is intended to provide a continuum of increasingly intensive support and care options for frail, older people.

Implementation of the Aged Care Reforms is supported by initiatives funded under the Aged Care Service Improvement Programme, including increased support for people with dementia, supporting the uptake of evidence-based better practice in aged care, and greater recognition of and support for older people from diverse backgrounds.

2. Programme Component Overview – Ageing and Service Improvement Programme

2.1 Aims and objectives

Please note: As part of the 2015-16 Budget, the ACSIHAG Programme is being redesigned into the Dementia and Aged Care Services Fund (DACS Fund). The DACS Fund will commence from 1 July 2015. SBRT will be a sub activity of the DACS Fund. New Programme Guidelines for the DACS Fund will be released in due course.

From now until 1 July 2015, there will be no new grant agreements entered into under the current ACSIHAG programme with the exception of SBRT and current transitional arrangements.

2.1.1 Aged Care Service Improvement Healthy Ageing Grants (ACSIHAG)

Broadly, the ACSIHAG's (the Fund) primary objective is to strengthen the capacity of the health and aged care sectors to deliver high quality aged care, and to promote healthy ageing by targeting the following priority areas:

- Support activities that promote healthy and active ageing;
- Respond to existing and emerging challenges, including dementia care;
- Support activities that build the capacity of aged care services to deliver high quality care;
- Support activities that provide information and support to assist carers maintain their caring role;
- Support to services providing aged care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people living in remote areas; and
- Support older people with diverse needs, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, care leavers, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

The Fund is intended to be flexible enough to continue to support the types of activities that have previously been supported under the various consolidated programs (subject to demonstrated evidence of their effectiveness and available funding), but in a more streamlined manner, as well as new aged care and healthy ageing priorities that may arise over time.

2.1.2 Severe Behaviour Response Team (SBRT)

The primary objective of this activity is to support the establishment of a mobile workforce of clinical experts available to provide timely and expert advice to residential aged care providers that request assistance with addressing the needs of people with very severe and extreme Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD).

2.2 Activities

2.2.1 Aged Care Service Improvement and Healthy Ageing Grants

The ACSIHAG was established by the Australian Government in 2011 through the consolidation of a range of existing ageing and aged care programmes.

The ACSIHAG is intended to be broad in scope, and flexible enough to support a wide range of activities for the purposes of strengthening the capacity of the aged care sector to deliver high quality aged care, and promote healthy ageing.

Grant funding round timeframes will be advertised on the DSS website.

2.2.2 Severe Behaviour Response Team

People experiencing extreme or very severe behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) can experience continual or episodic behaviours which are extremely challenging for other residents and very difficult for staff of residential aged care facilities to deal with.

SBRT will focus solely on aged care residents posing a significant risk to either themselves or others. SBRT will act on referral from a Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service (DBMAS).

SBRT will respond to residential aged care facilities within 24-48 hours to assist them with providing appropriate care for residents with very severe and extreme BPSD.

The programme will be implemented in two phases. Phase one will be a stand-alone SBRT in 2015-16. In Phase two from 2016-17, the SBRT and DBMAS programme will be integrated.

2.3 Applicant eligibility

The following entity types meet the eligibility requirements to be invited to apply for a grant under these Activities:

- a. Incorporated Associations (incorporated under state/territory legislation, commonly have 'Association' or 'Incorporated' or 'Inc.' in their legal name)
- b. Incorporated Cooperatives (also incorporated under state/territory legislation, commonly have 'Cooperative' in their legal name)
- c. Companies (incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* – may be a proprietary company (limited by shares or by guarantee) or public companies)
- d. Aboriginal Corporations (incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*)
- e. Organisations established through a specific piece of Commonwealth or state/territory legislation (public benevolent institutions, churches, universities, unions etc.)
- f. Partnerships; and
- g. Trustees on behalf of a Trust.

The following entity types may be invited in special circumstances:

- h. State and Territory Governments; and
- i. Local Governments.

2.4 Participants/clients/recipients/target group

The target groups for ACSIHAG and SBRT correspond to the Fund's priority areas for action, and include but are not limited to:

- older Australians, to support healthy and active ageing;

- workforce groups that provide services to older Australians, including health, allied health, and staff in aged care services;
- families and carers of older people and those with early onset dementia;
- aged care providers, including those providing services to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or in remote areas;
- older people with diverse needs, and their families and carers.

2.5 Funding for the Activities

2.5.1 Aged Care Services Improvement Healthy Ageing Grants

An amount of approximately \$353 million¹ has been allocated over four years from 1 July 2014 by the Australian Government for the ACSIHAG. All amounts are GST exclusive.

The relevant Minister will be provided with an opportunity to set the priority areas for funding through an open competitive process under the ACSIHAG. These priorities will be used as the basis for allocating uncommitted money, and will allow for the adjustment of the funding allocation against priorities and to ensure that emerging ageing challenges, including those that intersect with the health sector, are being addressed.

The Assistant Minister for Social Services has overall responsibility for the ACSIHAG.

Where DSS has invited applications for grants, the final decision about funding locations and proposals for activities will be made by DSS, in consultation with the relevant Minister.

Funding amounts are inclusive of discretionary grants awarded under these Programme Guidelines and funding provided through other processes such as procurement. Funding amounts included in these Programme Guidelines are estimates and may change in the course of the budget year as government priorities change.

2.5.2 Severe Behaviour Response Team

An amount of up to \$12.7 million has been allocated for one financial year, from July 2015 to 30 June 2016. An additional \$41.8 million has been allocated for Phase 2 from 2016-17 to 2018-19. These amounts are GST exclusive.

2.6 Eligible and ineligible activities

2.6.1 Aged Care Services Improvement Healthy Ageing Grants

To be considered eligible for funding, applicants must propose to undertake activities that meet the objectives and priorities for ACSIHAG and comply with the terms of the application documentation. Supporting documentation, as required, will include matters such as the following:

- project activities/items that will be considered eligible;
- any funding caps (minimum and/or maximum limits);
- any restrictions on Start/End dates for activity. For example, all projects must be completed within the stated Financial Year/s;
- any restrictions around whether funding will be provided only for new or additional work; and
- any restrictions on when funding must be expended by.

Retrospective items/activities will not normally be funded by ACSIHAG (unless allowed under the terms of the ACSIHAG and agreed by DSS).

2.6.2 Severe Behaviour Response Team

The grant may be used for:

¹ This figure is for the ACSIHAG only and is included in the figure shown in the 2014-15 Portfolio Budget Statements under Ageing and Service Improvement expenses.

- staff salaries, on-costs and sub-contractor costs which can be directly attributed to the provision of the Activity in the identified service area or areas as per the grant agreement;
- employee training for paid and unpaid staff including Committee and Board members, that is relevant, appropriate and in line with the Activity, and
- operating and administration expenses directly related to the delivery services, such as:
 - telephones;
 - rent and outgoings;
 - computer/ IT/website/software;
 - insurance;
 - utilities;
 - postage;
 - stationery and printing;
 - accounting and auditing;
 - travel/accommodation costs; and
 - assets as defined in the Terms and Conditions that can be reasonably attributed to meeting agreement deliverables.

Grants are not provided for:

- purchase of land;
- capital works;
- the covering of retrospective costs;
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation;
- overseas travel, and
- activities for which other Australian, State, Territory or local government bodies have primary responsibility.

2.7 Links and working with other agencies and services

In delivering services, all grant recipients must develop and maintain links with other relevant organisations to assist in making appropriate referrals and co-ordinating services with a view to improving consumer outcomes and ensuring consumers receive services tailored for their needs to better prevent issues from escalating or recurring.

2.8 Specialist requirements (e.g. Legislative requirements)

All funded activities are operated in line with, and comply with, the requirements of relevant Commonwealth and state and territory legislation.

In delivering the Activities, grants recipients are required to:

- comply with all relevant laws; and
- comply with DSS Policies as specified at [Doing Business with DSS](#); and
- ensure that workers (paid and voluntary) undertake training appropriate to the service they deliver.

Grants recipients must also comply with all relevant state and territory legislation, including state and territory legislation applicable to working with children and vulnerable people.

Australia's *Multicultural Access and Equity Policy: Respecting diversity. Improving responsiveness* obliges Australian government agencies to ensure that cultural and linguistic diversity is not a barrier for people engaging with government and accessing services to which they are entitled, for example, by providing access to language services where appropriate. Grant applicants should consider whether services, projects, activities or events may require the use of professional translating or interpreting services in order to communicate with non-English speakers. If required, based on an assessment of the target group, costs for translating and interpreting services should be factored into grant applications. For further information on the Multicultural Access and Equity Policy please refer to the [DSS website](#).

2.9 Information technology

ACSIHAG and SBRT grants recipients must have information technology systems* in place to allow them to meet their data collection and reporting obligations outlined in their Schedule.

Performance information (e.g. client characteristics and service delivery information) will be required to be collected by grants recipients at the client level and entered directly into DSS' client data capture system, its predecessor or via a DSS approved alternative mechanism.

Where collection of client level data is not appropriate, for instance due to the Activity involving a large group, aggregate reporting will be permitted.

The Data System protocols and requirements are available at the [DSS website](#).

The new application will:

- be a web based portal;
- allow submission of data through external approved third party applications, and
- support submission of data through other approved methods.

Performance information required to be collected may include (but is not limited to):

- client consent (where required);
- client identity characteristics;
- client demographic characteristics;
- service delivery information; and
- client outcomes.

*Please note there are no minimum Information Technology requirements for grant recipients.

2.10 Performance and reporting

DSS monitors and evaluates programme performance to ensure activities and grant recipients have a focus on outcomes for beneficiaries through effective and efficient use of funds and resources.

DSS's Performance Indicators focus on three key questions:

1. Are we achieving what we expected?
2. How well is it being done?
3. How much is being done?

Performance Indicators based on these questions may be included in the grant agreement for the grants recipients.

Grant recipient performance will be measured against benchmarking of other organisations funded for this programme and compare a grant recipient's service delivery performance against national benchmarks. Benchmarking will take into consideration the delivery of similar services, scale of funding, locality of service location and other relevant characteristics.

Information needed to evaluate service delivery/project performance, must be reported via the DSS approved mechanisms outlined in the grant agreement with DSS.

Full details of reporting requirements will be listed in the grant agreement for each grant recipient.

2.11 Financial reporting

The Activities will be managed to ensure the efficient and effective use of public monies. This will be consistent with best value in social services principles, the DSS grant agreement, and will aim to maintain viable services and act to prevent fraud upon the Commonwealth.

Acquittal documents must be provided to DSS as outlined in the grant agreement.

Funding must only be used for the purposes for which it was provided.

2.12 DSS responsibilities and accountabilities under the Activity

DSS will:

- meet the Australian Government’s terms and conditions of the grant agreement established with organisations;
- ensure that services provided under the Activity are accountable to the Australian Government under the terms and conditions agreed in the grant agreement;
- administer the operation of the Activity in a timely manner;
- identify suitable providers to deliver the activities required as per the grant agreement;
- work in partnership with the provider to ensure the Activity is implemented and will provide the service provider with constructive feedback;
- ensure that the outcomes contained within the Programme Guidelines are being met and evaluate the provider’s performance against the Activity outcomes; and
- information on the successful grants will be published on the [DSS Website](#) within the required timeframes.

2.13 Grant recipient’s responsibilities and accountabilities under the Activity

In entering into a grant agreement with DSS, the grant recipient must comply with all requirements outlined in the suite of documents that comprise the agreement including these Programme Guidelines, the grant agreement and the Agreement Terms and Conditions (available on the [DSS Website](#)).

Grant recipients are responsible for ensuring:

- the terms and conditions of the grant agreement are met;
- service provision is effective, efficient, and appropriately targeted;
- highest standards of duty of care are applied;
- services are operated in line with, and comply with the requirements as set out within all state and territory and Commonwealth legislation and regulations;
- ensuring Indigenous Australians have equal and equitable access to services;
- working collaboratively to deliver the Programme; and
- contributing to the overall development and improvement of the Programme such as sharing best practice.

2.14 Risk management strategy

All DSS grant agreements are managed according to their level of risk. Organisations will be subject to a risk assessment prior to the negotiation of grant agreements. Organisations may also be required to participate in a Financial Viability Assessment during the assessment process of an application. A periodic monitoring process is undertaken during the term of an agreement which monitors service delivery and is used to provide evidence for ongoing risk assessments.

2.15 Special conditions applying to this Programme

Not applicable

3. Application Process

3.1 Overview of the application process

All grant processes will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Commonwealth Grant Rules and will be for purposes that are consistent with the objectives and priorities of the Activity.

3.2 Programme Guidelines

Applicants for grants funding rounds conducted for this Activity will be provided with the Programme Guidelines suite of documents comprising:

- the Programme Guidelines Overview (this document); and
- an Application Pack - a suite of documents with information specific to each grant funding round conducted within the Activity.

3.2.1 Application Pack

The Application Pack will comprise the following documents:

Funding Round Summary

This document includes the following information:

- objectives and requirements of the funding round;
- the type of selection process being used;
- opening and closing dates;
- the value of the funding round;
- how to submit an application;
- selection criteria; and
- eligibility criteria.

Application Form

This document asks you to address selection criteria relating to the particular funding round you are applying for and also requires you to complete general information about you as the provider applying for funding.

DSS Grant Agreement template – General Grant Conditions

The signed grant agreement will include information relating to the Grant objectives, the activities to be undertaken, the duration of the grant, payment, reporting requirements, supplementary terms and conditions, and signatures of DSS and providers.

Applicants for funding rounds may also be provided with the following additional information as part of the Application pack including:

Questions and Answers

This document aims to answer any questions and provide additional information relating to the Activities and the application process for each individual activity that you are applying for funding. This will include operational guidelines if applicable.

3.3 Achieving value for money

In assessing the extent to which the application represents value for money, DSS will have regard to the:

- relative merit of each application;
- overall objective/s to be achieved in providing the funding;
- relative cost of the proposal, or of elements of the proposal;
- extent to which the applicant has demonstrated a capacity to fund the proposal taking into consideration all possible sources of finance, including debt finance;
- geographic location of the proposal; and
- extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that the proposal will be located in a community with one or more of the following features:
 - the community is identified as a priority community by DSS;
 - the community has high levels of the target population or of a special needs group;
 - the community has high population growth in the target population or has anticipated high population growth in the target population.

Note in the case of fee-for-service Early Intervention providers, value for money will be assessed against prevailing market rates.

3.4 Choice of selection process

When undertaking a selection process, DSS will consider the proportionality of scale, nature, funding amount, complexity and risks involved in the funding round. DSS will consider proportionality to inform the choice of the application and selection process, the type of grant agreement to be used and the reporting and acquittal requirements.

3.4.1 Open competitive selection process

An open competitive selection process is open to all providers operating in the market place. Open processes are advertised through the media, the [DSS website](#) and other sources in order to attract as much interest as possible. Open competitive grant rounds have open and closed nominated dates, with eligible applications being assessed against the nominated selection criteria.

3.4.2 Restricted competitive selection process

A restricted (or targeted) selection process is used where there are few providers available due to highly specialised services being required, there are geographical considerations, specific expertise is required or there are time constraints. A restricted grant round is still competitive, but only opens to a small number of potential grant recipients based on the specialised requirements of the granting activity or project under consideration. Potential grant recipients are invited to apply and will still need to be assessed against nominated selection criteria.

3.4.3 Direct selection process

A direct selection process is a closed non-competitive process, where an approach is made directly to an existing, high performing provider to expand its current service delivery activities or deliver new services. It involves assessment of a provider's capacity to deliver an expanded service or capability to deliver a new service through use of selection criteria and/or an assessment of a provider's current performance.

3.4.4 Expressions of Interest (EOI) process

DSS may call for EOIs to test the market to ascertain the extent of potential applicants. An EOI will be advertised as the first in a two stage process. The second stage involves applicants selected through the EOI process applying in either a targeted or direct process.

DSS may advertise any funding process:

- in major national newspapers and other selected newspapers;
- on the DSS website; and
- on the Government grants website.

Any advertisement will inform potential applicants of where to obtain application information for the relevant process. Processes will be provided on the [DSS website](#) under the Grants tab.

DSS from time to time may conduct a direct selection in the event that there is a change in government policy, a shift in demographics, unforeseen circumstances or due to provider failure.

3.4.5 Unsolicited proposals

DSS may make provision under the ACSIHAG and SBRT for one-off, unsolicited proposals, and emergency payments, provided that these proposals have been assessed by the Department to ensure they meet the aims, objectives and priorities of the ACSIHAG and SBRT.

3.5 Service delivery areas (if applicable)

3.5.1 Aged Care Services Improvement Healthy Ageing Grants

It is expected that if a service area/rollout site changes, the grant recipient will be able to meet the cost of delivering the Activity in the revised area through its own efficiencies and within the funding provided.

Service delivery areas or catchment areas designated within the grant agreement must not change without prior written agreement from DSS. However, grant recipients are encouraged to monitor demographic changes in their broader region and discuss varying their catchment areas with DSS if

this helps address an emerging need not being met in that area. Where service delivery areas or catchment areas require definition, this will be provided in the Application Pack.

DSS may also, at its discretion, facilitate flexible grants in circumstances where grant recipients have met grant agreement requirements within a specified service area and wish to reallocate all or part of any remaining funds to another service they are funded to deliver in another service delivery area under the same grant agreement.

3.5.2 Severe Behaviour Response Team

It is expected that service delivery will be a national operation with teams in every state and territory; covering all Commonwealth residential aged care facilities including Flexibly Funded Services.

3.6 Selection Criteria

Depending on the Activity and type of funding process, a reduced set of assessment criteria may be set by the appropriate departmental delegate exercising their ability to waive certain criteria. The final set of selection criteria will be reflected in the Application Pack.

3.6.1 Aged Care Services Improvement Healthy Ageing Grants

The equally weighted selection criteria that may be used for any funding process under the Activities are:

1. demonstrate your understanding of the need for the funded Activity in the specified community and/or the specified target group;
2. describe how the implementation of your proposal will achieve the Activity objectives for all stakeholders, including value for money within the Grant funding;
3. demonstrate your experience and/or capability in effectively developing, delivering, managing and monitoring activities to achieve Activity objectives for all stakeholders; and
4. demonstrate your organisation's capacity and your staff capability (experience and qualifications) to deliver the Activity objectives in the specified community and/or the specified target group.

When applying for grant funding, the following specialist criterion may apply:

5. describe and demonstrate a service delivery model that includes effective partnerships, linkages and referral pathways that directly contribute to the Activity outcomes.

3.6.2 Severe Behaviour Response Team

CRITERION 1 – Service Delivery Model

1. Provide a detailed description of the proposed service delivery model your organisation plans to implement that includes but is not limited to:
 - a. the structure of a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary model (including nursing, medical and allied health input), with access to specialist psycho geriatric staff with skills in behavioural management;
 - b. details of specified personnel and mechanisms for sourcing specialist sub-contractors (if required), detailing relevant attributes commensurate with providing a high level of clinical and psychosocial support;
 - c. a risk based, referral mechanism for DBMAS to SBRT to enable nationally consistent referrals, and which takes into account both client characteristics and risk factor factors. Upon agreement of this referral mechanism with the Department. The successful SBRT will need to work with DBMAS to ensure this referral mechanism is clearly documented and implemented to ensure only appropriate cases are referred to the SBRT;
 - d. clear clinical governance arrangements regarding personal, medical and specialist care needs of clients;
 - e. a clinical and bio psychosocial² care pathway for the service episode that includes actions, interventions and assessment activities.

² A [biopsychosocial](#) model is the interaction between one's [genetic](#) makeup (biology), mental health and [personality](#) (psychology), and [sociocultural](#) environment (social) that contribute to health or illness. Source: Boundless. "The Biopsychosocial Model." Boundless, 03 Jul. 2014.

CRITERION 2 – Core Service Elements

1. Provide a detailed description of how your organisation will deliver the following Core Service Elements:
 - a. delivery of a nationally consistent operation covering all Commonwealth residential aged care homes and flexible funded services;
 - b. undertaking short term case management including assessments to ascertain causes of the behaviours, facilitating appropriate diagnostic interventions and assisting care staff in resolving the immediate crisis;
 - c. undertaking longer term case management including assisting care staff to develop long term care plans;
 - d. devising transition strategies between acute and residential care, that support the transition process without managing the logistics; and
 - e. provision of information, hands on education, training and follow up assistance as needed;
 - f. building and sustaining relationships with other relevant Commonwealth Programme providers such as DBMAS, DTSC and Primary Health Networks; and
 - g. building and sustaining relationships with other relevant state and territory government organisations such as psychogeriatric units, as required.

CRITERION 3 – Organisational Experience

2. Provide evidence of your organisation's demonstrated skills and experience in a similar service delivery model which must include:
 - a. achieving improved client outcomes;
 - b. providing service delivery to special needs groups, including CALD, LGBTI and Indigenous Australians, as noted under section 2.4 of the *Ageing and Service Improvement Programme Guidelines, April 2015*;
 - c. supporting existing provider and health systems, including transition processes; and
 - d. maintaining linkages across the different disciplines and sectors for continuity and co-ordination of care.

CRITERION 4 – Infrastructure

3. Provide an overview of current and proposed infrastructure within your organisation that will enable the achievement of the desired outcomes of the project which must include:
 - a. facilitating initial responses to referrals within 24-48 hours either by face to face or video conference contact, including for rural and remote clients; and
 - b. strategies for ensuring access to remote and rural providers, accounting for the differences in capacity, access to technology and distance from services that may exist.

CRITERION 5 – Analysis and Benchmarking

1. Provide a response to the Department's aforementioned benchmarking requirement which addresses the following components :
 - a. your organisation's proposed handling of the benchmarking data requirements;
 - b. your organisation's proposed approach to collection and analysis of the data;
 - c. your organisation's proposed Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to allow measurement of the above requirements; and
 - d. your organisation's proposed target measures of these KPI's.

3.7 How to submit an application

To apply under this process, applicants will need to complete the Application Form and respond to selection criteria as detailed above. Applications must be received electronically by the closing date and time as stated in the Application Pack.

All applicants including current grant recipients will need to respond fully to the selection criteria in the Application Form and provide the information required in the format and to the extent specified.

Applications can only be submitted during the application round for the Activity and for the locations or sites as defined in the Application Form.

An application is not an agreement or contract. Meeting the selection criteria does not guarantee funding. Funding is limited and applications will be assessed and prioritised according to the extent to which they meet the selection criteria. Only applications meeting the selection criteria to a high degree are likely to be considered for funding. All information requested on the application must be provided to enable an application to be fully considered.

DSS will **not** issue Application Forms or accept completed applications by fax or mail.

3.7.1 Applicant's Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that their application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information to DSS is a serious offence. Applicants or their partners who do so may be prosecuted under section 137.1 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.

Make sure you keep a copy of your application and any supporting papers, either electronically or in hard copy, for your own records.

Only one application per organisation/region will be assessed. If more than one application is submitted, only the latest application will be considered.

3.7.2 What needs to be included?

DSS will not assess applications that do not contain all required attachments (see Application Form checklist) outlined in the Application Form, where an Application Form is provided for completion by applicants.

3.7.3 What should not be included?

Any attachments to the Application Form which are not specifically requested in the Application Form will not be considered as part of the assessment process.

3.7.4 What happens if you provide more than the specified number of words?

The Application Form specifies a word limit for each selection criteria. Text beyond the word limits will not be considered as a part of the assessment process.

3.7.5 Closing date and time

The timeframe for submission of applications for any funding process will be set out in the Application Pack.

In order to be received by DSS, the application must be submitted in full via the method prescribed in the Application Pack.

The application must be received by DSS within the application period to be considered.

Note: the Early Intervention Service Provider Panel selection is an open and ongoing process. There is no closing date or timeframe for application.

3.7.6 Late Applications

DSS may reject any application lodged after the closing date. If an application is late, DSS may determine that there were exceptional circumstances beyond the applicant's control that meant the deadline could not be met. The applicant will need to supply documentary evidence to support any

exceptional circumstances. DSS has no obligation to accept a late application. Any decision by DSS to accept or not accept a late application will be final.

3.7.7 Questions and answers during the application period

Details of 'Questions and Answers' facilities and contact details will be provided on the DSS website under the Grants tab. DSS will respond to emailed questions within five working days.

Note: A list of 'Frequently Asked Questions' is available on the DSS website. Responses to questions of interest to all applicants may be added to the list during the application period.

DSS will only respond to requests for information that seek clarification of issues to allow them to better understand the requirements of the Application Form and Programme Guidelines.

3.7.8 Questions after the application period

DSS will **not** accept or respond to any applicant requests for information or correspondence about the status or progress of their application during the assessment phase.

3.7.9 Application Acknowledgement

Unless prior agreement has been reached with DSS, an application will not be considered lodged until it is received by DSS. The applicant will receive email notification from DSS within 48 hours of an application being lodged correctly. If the applicant has not received notification in this timeframe, the applicant should contact DSS to confirm that the form has been lodged correctly.

3.8 Conflicts of Interest

Applicants must identify, in their application, any potential or actual conflicts of interest they believe will or may arise from submitting their application. This should address their responsibilities to the Australian Government and other parties in the course of the Activity.

A conflict of interest can arise when an applicant's integrity, objectivity or fairness in performing the services is at risk due to a pecuniary interest of a person or organisation associated with the applicant or a conflicting business arrangement.

Applicants must specify in their applications how any actual or perceived conflict of interest will be addressed and monitored to ensure it does not compromise the outcomes desired for this funding process.

DSS reserves the right to assess the potential impact of the conflict or perceived conflict and what plans, if any, are proposed to address the conflict of interest in relation to the application for funding. DSS may reject an application if DSS is not satisfied that there are arrangements in place to appropriately address/manage a perceived or actual conflict of interest.

DSS also has mechanisms in place for identifying and managing potential or actual conflicts of interest such as requiring assessment staff to sign conflict of interest declarations prior to undertaking the assessment of applications.

Follow this link for more information on the [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) for DSS employees and contractors (who are treated as agency staff and required to abide by this policy and the APS Values and Code of Conduct).

4. Terms and conditions applying to Selection/s

4.1 Liability issues

DSS is not liable to the applicant in relation to the selection process, including without limitation, when DSS:

- varies or terminates all or any part of the selection process or any negotiations with the applicant;

- decides not to acquire any or all of the services sought through the selection process;
- varies the selection process; and/or
- exercises or fails to exercise any of its other rights under, or in relation to the Programme Guidelines.

4.2 DSS' rights

DSS reserves the right to amend the Programme Guidelines by whatever means it may determine in its absolute discretion and will provide reasonable notice of these amendments.

4.3 Disclaimer

DSS, its officers, agents and advisers:

- are not, and will not be, responsible or liable for the accuracy or completeness of any information in or provided in connection with the Programme Guidelines;
- make no express or implied representation or warranty that any statement as to future matters will prove correct;
- disclaim any and all liability arising from any information provided to the applicant, including, without limitation, errors in, or omissions contained in, that information;
- except so far as liability under any statute applies, accept no responsibility arising from errors or omissions contained in any information in this document and the Application Form; and/or
- accept no liability for any loss or damage suffered by any person as a result of that person, or any other person, placing reliance on the contents of these documents, or any other information provided by DSS.

4.4 Fraud

DSS is committed to the Commonwealth Fraud Control Policy and Guidelines. Applicants should familiarise themselves with the DSS Fraud Control Policy Statement. The Fraud Control Policy Statement also underpins an applicant's respective fraud and risk minimisation responsibilities when dealing with DSS.

One key responsibility outlined in the DSS Fraud Control Policy Statement is to report all fraud concerns by:

- leaving an anonymous voicemail message on the DSS Fraud Hotline (1800 133 611); or
- emailing fraud@DSS.gov.au.

4.5 Personal Information

Any personal information you provide is protected under the Privacy Act 1988. It can only be disclosed to someone else if you have been given reasonable notice of the disclosure; where disclosure is authorised or required by law or is reasonably necessary for the enforcement of the criminal law; if it will prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to a person's life or health; or if you have consented to the disclosure.

If you have questions or concerns about how your personal information is handled you can contact the Privacy Officer at DSS on 02 6244 1449, the Privacy Commissioner on 1300 363 992 (local call cost, but calls from mobile and pay phones may incur higher charges) or the Australian Government Privacy Officer by emailing: privacy@privacy.gov.au.

4.6 Freedom of Information (FOI)

All documents in the possession of DSS including those in relation to the Programme are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act).

The FOI Act creates a general right of access to documents in the possession of DSS and this right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary for the protection of essential

public interests and private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

Decisions regarding requests for access under the FOI Act will be made by an authorised decision maker in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act.

All FOI requests are to be referred to the FOI Coordinator, Public Law Branch, in DSS.

By mail: FOI Coordinator, The Department of Social Services,
Public Law Branch,
PO Box 7576
CANBERRA BUSINESS CENTRE
ACT 2610

By email: foi@DSS.gov.au

For more information on making a request for access to documents in the possession of DSS under the FOI Act, please visit the [Freedom of Information](#) page on the DSS website.

5. Financial and Other Arrangements

5.1 Financial arrangements

DSS uses standard grant agreements. Funding will only be provided in accordance with an executed grant agreement. The terms and conditions of DSS's grant agreements cannot be changed.

The grant agreement will contain the entire agreement between the parties. There is no binding agreement on any parties until the grant agreement is agreed to and signed by the delegate and the applicant's authorised representative.

The grant agreement is the legal agreement between DSS and the grant recipient over the grant period. In managing funding provided, the grant recipient must comply with all the requirements of the grant agreement.

Grant recipients are responsible for ensuring that:

- the terms and conditions of the grant agreement are met;
- service provision is effective, efficient, and appropriately targeted;
- highest standards of duty of care are applied; and
- services are operated in line with, and comply with the requirements as set out within all state and territory and Commonwealth legislation and regulations.

Grant recipients should also be aware of any case based law that may apply or affect their service delivery.

The Terms and Conditions of the grant agreement are available on the [DSS website](#).

6. Complaints

6.1 Applicants/Grant Recipients

Applicants and grant recipients can contact the complaints service with complaints about DSS's service(s), the selection process or the service of another of DSS grant recipients.

Details of what constitutes an eligible complaint can be provided upon request by DSS. Applicants and grant recipients can lodge complaints through the following channels:

Telephone: 1800 634 035
Fax: (02) 6204 4587
Mail: The Department of Social Services Complaints
PO Box 7576
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610

If an applicant or grant recipient is at any time dissatisfied with DSS's handling of a complaint, they can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman through the [Ombudsman Website](#) or on 1300 362 072.

6.2 Client/Customer

It is a requirement of your grant agreement to have a transparent and accessible complaints handling policy. This policy should acknowledge the complainant's right to complain directly to you, outline the process for both dealing with the complaint and provide options for escalation both within your organisation and to DSS if necessary. Ensure that you provide information about your complaints handling policy and processes in all correspondence to guarantee it is readily available to the public.

7. Contact information

Contact information for the Activity:

Address: Tuggeranong Office Park
Soward Way (cnr Athllon Drive)
Greenway ACT 2900

Mail: PO Box 7576
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610

Phone: 1800 625 136 If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, you can use the [National Relay Service](#) to contact any of DSS's listed phone numbers.

Email: grants@dss.gov.au

8. Glossary

Not applicable.