



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Sector Development Fund

Strategy and operational guidelines

December 2015



1.1 Preface

The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS or the Department) has a suite of Programme Guidelines which provides information about each Programme that provides primarily 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 funding 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.

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1.3 Part 1 – The Strategy

Definition

The Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements (PAES) 2014–2015 Programme 5.2 deliverables list the Sector Development Fund (SDF or the Fund) information as:

People with disability, the disability services sector and its workforce are assisted with the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), including through:

- building community capacity and engagement
- increasing individual support capacity and development of new forms of support to meet the needs of people with disability
- building disability sector capacity and service provider readiness to manage the transition
- assistance with the required expansion and diversification of the workforce
- building the evidence base.

The key performance indicators for the SDF as listed in PAES 2014-2015 are:

- Increase the capacity of people with disability and their families to exercise choice and control, both in engaging with the NDIS, and in purchasing supports in an open market in order to realise their aspirations.
- Develop a market capable of providing the necessary supports required for full scheme.
- Increased mix of support options and innovative approaches to provision of support.
- Increase the disability services workforce, making it more diverse and better equipped to meet the needs to people with disability.
- Develop an evidence base to inform an insurance approach to disability support.

Aims and objectives

The SDF aims to support the market, sector and workforce to transition to the new NDIS operational environment of full scheme by funding activities that assist individuals and organisations so:

- there is an efficient, responsive and innovative market that meets the diverse needs of people with disability and their families
- people with disability are able to effectively exercise choice and control to shape the nature of the market.

The strategy ensures projects do not duplicate any activity previously or currently funded by State or Territory governments or the projects managed by the Department.

NDIS supports choice and control by providing needs-based, individualised funding to be used in a market-based environment. This will be a large shift for providers and clients currently delivering and receiving services under transitioning programmes. In particular, over time, there will be a move away from grant and block funded one-size fits all services towards a purchaser/provider model individually funded by the choice of consumers. While there will be some provision for information, linkages and capacity building as well as individually funded services, wherever possible disability services will be provided in line with this new approach.

All grant recipients funded under the SDF will be required to work closely with the Department and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to make the shift to this new model.

Funding

A total of approximately \$146 million has been set aside for sector development from 2012–13 to 2016–18.

Background

The Department managed the SDF during 2012–13. The Department established initial outcomes and priorities for the fund in consultation with state and territory governments. Each state and territory was provided with SDF funding to undertake sector development activities tailored to each jurisdiction's unique market environment in preparation for trial and full scheme commencement. Currently, \$19.5 million has been or will be provided to the state and territory governments for their own activities.

Upon establishment of the NDIA as a statutory authority on 1 July 2013, responsibility for the SDF transferred to the NDIA.

On 9 December 2014 the Government transferred responsibility for the SDF back to the Department to ensure the NDIA can focus on its core responsibilities in delivering the NDIS. The Department has considerable expertise in grants management, and will work to ensure the Fund is used to assist the market, sector and workforce to transition to the Scheme. Appropriation Bill 3 will transfer the funds.

The Strategy has also been drafted to be consistent with the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*.

The Strategy in context

Development of an efficient, effective market is essential to the success of the NDIS. It will ensure there is sufficient diversity, innovation and quantum of services to enable people with disability to meet individual needs as well as ensure scheme sustainability.

A substantial proportion of existing service providers are unlikely to operate effectively in the new environment without significant transformation. Providers long accustomed to block funding will require support to transition to business models responsive to individualised funding, and to diversify their service offerings to meet the support requirements of NDIS participants. The disability services workforce will also need to double in order to supply the increased level of services funded by the NDIS.

Similarly, many people with disability and their families, accustomed to rationing and limited choice, will require support to become informed and engaged consumers able to drive change in the market.

There is also a need to invest in data and research. Years of chronic under-funding in the sector has also had an impact on research. There is limited data available to guide decision-making and limited research identifying best practice. The link between research and outcomes for people with disability has not always been clear. The sector, the Government and the NDIA require data and evidence to guide decision making, not only during transition, but as the scheme rolls out across the country. The effective operation of an insurance scheme is dependent on quality data to inform operations and skilled analysts to turn data into monitoring, information and reports.

The SDF Strategy has been drafted to meet all of these challenges.

The context in which the SDF operates influences the projects and activities which will be considered for funding. In addition to ensuring potential projects meet the outcomes identified in the Strategy, the Department will also emphasise the following:

- The need to avoid duplication. State and territory governments have commenced a wide range of transition and capacity building projects and activities. The Department will select projects that build on the work of jurisdictions, and avoid duplication. The Department will also work with states and territories and the Commonwealth to identify areas of emerging need.
- The need for timely investment. The Department will select projects that will ensure sector readiness for full scheme introduction while retaining substantial SDF funds to support the ongoing implementation of the Workforce, Market and Sector Strategy.
- The need for evidence. The Department will utilise state and territory reviews, reviews of current and completed SDF projects, trial site feedback and actuarial analysis to inform future projects and funding.
- The need for continuous learning. While early investment is important to build momentum for change, it is also important to allow room for flexibility so learnings from activities can be harnessed. The Department will ensure there is flexibility in the SDF to adapt to the changing needs of the Workforce, Market and Sector as we move closer to full scheme.
- The need for effective and efficient partnerships. The Department will look to partner with organisations that are uniquely placed to engage with people with disability, their families and carers and service providers. Successful organisations will have a broad reach and an extensive capacity to engage with their constituents. Partnerships with credible organisations in the sector are an efficient mechanism to drive change whilst also ensuring that standards of probity are met.
- The need to consider solutions which do not distort markets. In examining activities to support disability service providers to make the transition to the new set of arrangements for disability support, the Department will need to ensure that it does not undermine the development of a competitive market.
- The need to recognise the role of well informed and engaged consumers in contributing to an effective market and the need for low transaction costs associated with consumers moving from one service provider to another.

Working with the NDIA, states and territories

Jurisdictions have been provided with funding as part of the Memorandum of Understanding to support the disability sector in their region in transitioning to the new disability services environment.

States and territories will be able to propose projects, aligned with the outcomes below, to address issues that are specific to their jurisdictions and that will not be addressed through the national projects being funded through the SDF. States and territories may also propose projects of a national nature that they intend to lead. Similarly, the NDIA will identify areas of need through the trial sites and bring forward proposals to address these needs.

The NDIA, states and territories will work closely with the Department to develop any proposals for funding. The Department will keep them informed of projects and the progress.

Outcomes

The outcomes listed in this Strategy are designed, in the first instance to achieve the objectives and the performance indicators as outlined in the PAES 2014-2015. At a practical level the outcomes will reflect identified priorities and provide flexibility throughout the transition period.

The SDF Strategy recognises that in order to develop an efficient, responsive and innovative market that meets the diverse needs of people with disability and their families, both supply and demand issues will have to be addressed.

Part of the role of the SDF is to examine and support mechanisms to ensure supply — such as how to support existing providers to make the transition, and how to encourage innovation and change. Equally important is to examine means of driving and shaping demand by building the capacity of people with disability and their families to become active, engaged and assertive consumers.

Outcomes have been identified as primary and secondary, to recognise the contributing work required in achieving the outcomes. For example emerging priorities and innovation supports all of the primary outcomes but is not an outcome in its own right.

1.3.1 Primary outcomes

1.3.1.1.1 Outcome 1 - Building community capacity and engagement

Building the community capacity to support the transition to full scheme will underpin the acceptance of the scheme in the broader community. Projects will be considered for community awareness building that increase community awareness and support in the transition to full scheme.

1.3.1.1.2 Outcome 2 – Increasing individual capacity and increasing new forms of support

Increase the capacity of people with disability and their families to exercise choice and control both in engaging with the NDIS and in purchasing supports in an open market in order to realise their aspirations.

Efficient and effective operation of the NDIS is in large part dependent on participants who are well informed, resourced and equipped to engage with the NDIS and the open market.

Active and engaged participants who have spent time considering their needs, investigating options and alternatives, and have a good understanding of the NDIS process will arrive at the NDIS in the best position to articulate their needs and contribute to solutions. Engaged consumers, able to exercise choice and control, will drive change and ensure the market is efficient and effective, providing services which meet their needs.

The SDF will consider projects that:

- Improve understanding of the operation of the NDIS and the principles which underpin it.
- Build the capacity of people with disability and their families to exercise choice and control.
- Encourage and enable people with disability to move towards greater independence, self-management and meaningful community inclusion.
- Encourage innovation in the way supports are delivered or can be accessed.

Future projects will address areas of identified need such as:

- Greater availability of information and resources to assist with informed decision making in key areas (such as early intervention) and with key population groups (such as people with an intellectual disability), including the development of e-markets for information, services and supports.
- Development of peer mentors, peer networks and peer support organisations to build greater capacity for choice and control.
- Development and promotion of information, resources and tools to ensure greater take up of part or full self-management, including web-based solutions.

1.3.1.1.3 Outcome 3 – Building disability sector capacity and service provider readiness

A well-developed market capable of providing the necessary supports is required for full scheme introduction.

Greater choice and control for participants will only be possible with robust and diverse providers operating in an efficient and effective market. The market should be characterised by a culture of innovation. New entrants should be able to easily enter the market while meeting quality and safeguard requirements. Existing providers should be well placed to compete in the new environment. The market should be responsive to choices exercised by people with disability.

While flexibility — in addition to accountability and control — is necessary for evolving the market, it is also critical that there be recognition of the limits to the extent that markets can be designed. There are also limits to the capacity for additional intervention by governments to deliver the necessary results.

Provider induction/orientation training together with corporate governance training and provider readiness will also be required to support providers in the transition.

On ground support for providers transitioning in to the NDIS may also be required. It is important to recognise the challenges providers face in the modified market and assist them with the transition when necessary, while recognising that not all providers will choose to make the transition or at least not in their current form.

Providers may also need to develop adequate business or strategic plans for the NDIS transition — and many will need assistance from government to undertake this preliminary work. Larger providers with more diverse operations (i.e. delivering a range of services and/or operating in a range of sectors) may require less assistance to transition to the NDIS than small, local level providers. Providers that operate in the disability sector alone may be most vulnerable in transition and may require more on ground support to move to the new operating environment

To give real choice and control, the area of housing as a market sector needs to be considered in order that people with disability are able to choose to have more independence and control over their living arrangements.

Projects that support groups and individuals at the intersection of the NDIS and other service systems will also be considered with the aim of ensuring an effective and complementary range of support are available to people with disability.

Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Develop the capacity of existing providers to transition to the NDIS in the short term and to develop business models responsive to individualised funding in the medium term to contribute to scheme sustainability.

- Improved organisational capacity to understand and respond to changing consumer demand.
- Improved organisational understanding of cost structures, cash flows, costs models to ensure adaptation to individualised funding.
- Development and promotion of models of shared service to ensure economies of scale.
- Examine and support innovative approaches to disability support, particularly for accommodation supports.
- Cross sector areas including Indigenous/rural/remote, health, ageing and education.

1.3.1.1.4 Outcome 4 – Expansion and diversification of the workforce

Increase the disability services workforce to meet the needs of people with disability. By beginning of full scheme, it is anticipated the disability workforce will need to more than double to 162,100 full-time equivalent (FTE) workers, and adjust to a person-centred model. A larger workforce should be developing which is stronger, more diverse and better equipped to deliver high quality responsive support reflecting the choices of people with disability.

A key challenge will be ensuring that the workforce has the range, and diversity required to meet the demands of the future. Key areas of focus include increasing the supply of allied health professionals, and ensuring that there are effective ways of securing a sufficient and diverse workforce in thin markets, including in remote and rural areas.

To meet the increased demand for disability workers, it will be necessary to nationally promote the disability sector as a career. As well as seeking to increase the size of the workforce, the aim is also to develop a more diverse workforce which more effectively reflects the diversity of the disability community.

To meet the needs of participants under the NDIS, it will be important to develop new and differentiated support work functions and roles, including the capacity to support people with complex needs and to direct investment in skills that make a difference to participant outcomes. Innovative workforce and service projects could be funded which aim to redesign and test new work roles and related models of supervision, deploy workforce more flexibly and improve outcomes through the use of technology.

The SDF will consider projects that:

- Examine and implement strategies to ensure growth of the workforce.
- Examine and implement strategies to ensure current and new care workers are attracted to diverse and flexible opportunities
- Design and test new work roles and related models of supervision, enable the more flexible use of the workforce and enable improved outcomes through the use of technology.
- Examine and support mechanisms to ensure workforce planning and supply – such as how to support existing providers to undertake effective planning and efficient workforce use, and how to encourage innovation and change.
- Examine means of driving and shaping demand by building the capacity of people with disability and their families to become active, engaged and assertive consumers
- Provide on the ground support to assist providers and their workforce to transition successfully.

1.3.1.1.5 Outcome 5 – Building the evidence base

The insurance principles which underpin the NDIS demand comprehensive and robust data to inform decisions and operations. The market also requires information, data and research to inform decision making, particularly during transition and to ensure innovation.

Approximately \$19.5 million from the SDF has been allocated to state and territory governments to carry out sector development activities tailored to the needs of each jurisdiction. Analysis of the activities will be undertaken to ensure lessons learnt are captured and any gaps are identified in activities that may be considered for future SDF projects.

The SDF will consider projects that:

- Invest in developing quality data sources and streams for people with disability, service organisations and the governments.
- Ensure that information on demand/population and service data is available to providers or prospective providers to highlight market opportunity and support strategic provider investment in specific market segments.

1.3.2 Secondary outcomes

1.3.2.1.1 Outcome A – Emerging priorities and innovation

There will be continual learnings throughout the transition period and new issues and priorities will emerge within each of the five outcomes. The Fund needs to be flexible to enable individuals or small groups to bring forward proposals that will address these issues and encapsulate innovation across the sector.

Projects would be similar to those funded through the Practical Design Fund.

1.3.2.1.2 Outcome B – Quality and safeguards

As the market and sector develop there is a need to ensure existing and new entrants meet quality and safety requirements that support the workforce and participants while ensuring supports for people with disability are of a high quality.

In the NDIS, the primary funding relationships will be between the person with disability and the provider of supports. This means the Commonwealth, states and territories will not continue to have funding agreements with providers. The current quality assurance arrangements, and some of the current safeguards, will therefore no longer apply.

This is an opportunity to simplify the rules and make them the same across all states and territories. This should facilitate the start-up of new national providers and offer greater choice to people with disability in the scheme. The NDIS is a national scheme and as such needs a consistent quality and safeguarding framework for all jurisdictions.

The SDF may consider projects in relation to quality and safeguards.

1.4 Part 2 – Operational guidelines

Programme management

1.4.1 Developing project proposals

It is not envisaged that open selections will be used to formulate project proposals. Proposals aligned with one or more of the outcomes, will primarily come from the following sources but this does not preclude projects coming forward from other sources:

- Market, Sector and Workforce strategy
- Quality and safety strategy
- Disability Sector, including providers and peak bodies
- State and territory governments
- NDIA.

The source of the proposal may determine how the selection process is undertaken. For example, proposals that come from the Market, Sector and Workforce Strategy may be appropriate for a restricted competitive selection process or an expression of interest (EOI) while projects from the disability sector may be a direct selection process.

Draft proposals will be discussed in the first instance with the SDF manager to ensure the proposal aligns with the SDF Strategy, there is no cross-over or duplication with approved projects, the required funding is available, and to ensure the proposal is robust before it is put forward for consideration formally. A high level workflow to guide the process is in the Chapter 16 Templates.

1.4.2 Applicant eligibility

The following entity types meet the eligibility requirements to be invited to apply for a grant for this Activity:

- 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
- g. Trustees on behalf of a Trust; and
- h. Where there is no suitable alternative, an individual or – jointly or separately - individuals

The following entity types may be invited in special circumstances:

- i. State and territory governments
- j. Local Governments.

1.4.3 Participants/clients/recipients/target group

In the first instance the SDF will focus on projects that fall within the following areas:

- Outcome 1 – Building community capacity and engagement
- Outcome 2 – Increasing individual capacity and increasing new forms of support
- Outcome 3 – Building disability sector capacity and service provider readiness
- Outcome 4 – Expansion and diversification of the workforce
- Outcome 5 – Building the evidence base.

The SDF will also consider projects that contribute to the main outcomes in the following categories:

- Outcome A – Emerging priorities and innovation
- Outcome B – Quality and safeguards

1.4.4 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.

These include, but are not limited to:

- the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*
- the *Disability Services Act 1986*
- the *Social Security Act 1991*
- the *National Health Act 1953*.

In delivering the Activity, grants recipients are required to:

- comply with all relevant laws
- comply with DSS policies as specified at [Doing Business with DSS](#)
- 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](#).

1.4.5 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.

The DSS 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 compares 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.

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

DSS or their representatives may conduct regular scheduled meetings with contracted SDF providers to:

- Ensure initial and subsequent project work-plans are aligned to the SDF Strategy, project objectives and contract performance indicators
- Review progress against work plans and actively manage provider underperformance
- Seek necessary approvals for contract variations or amendments, as necessary
- Assess provider performance against project milestones in preparation for release of milestone payments
- Undertake a formal evaluation of completed projects regarding the usefulness of the project findings/deliverable and submit recommendations regarding wider distribution.

1.4.6 Financial reporting

The SDF 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.

1.4.7 DSS responsibilities and accountabilities under the Activity

The Assistant Minister for Social Services has overall responsibility for the National Disability Insurance Scheme Programme.

DSS will:

- meet the 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
- information on the successful grants will be published on the [DSS Website](#) within the required timeframes.

1.4.8 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
- Indigenous Australians have equal and equitable access to services
- work is undertaken collaboratively to deliver the Programme
- contribution to the overall development and improvement of the Programme such as sharing best practice.

A single point-of-contact for SDF contracted providers will be provided for responses on ad-hoc requests for support, information and queries e.g. request for input and feedback on pamphlets developed by a contracted provider, requests for information regarding NDIS planning products etc.

1.4.9 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.

1.4.10 Special conditions applying to this programme

Not applicable.

Application Process

1.4.11 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.

1.4.12 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)
- an Application Pack — a suite of documents with information specific to each grant funding round conducted within the Activity.

1.4.13 Application Pack

The Application Pack will comprise the following documents:

1.4.14 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
- eligibility criteria.

1.4.15 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 Streamlined 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 activity and the application process for each individual activity that you are applying for funding. This will include operational guidelines if applicable.

1.4.16 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
- 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.

1.4.17 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.

1.4.18 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.

1.4.19 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.

1.4.20 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.

1.4.21 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
- 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 service provider failure.

1.4.22 Selection criteria

Depending on the Activity/Sub 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.

The equally weighted selection criteria that may be used for any funding process under the NDIS Transition programme 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
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.

Note Early Intervention fee-for-service panel members need to address specific criteria to the provision of these services rather than the above criteria. These can be found on the application form at [HCWA / BSI service provider application information](#).

1.4.23 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.

Early Intervention Fee-for-service providers can submit an application at any time by completing the application at [HCWA / BSI service provider application information](#).

1.4.24 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.

1.4.25 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.

1.4.26 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.

1.4.27 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.

1.4.28 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 Fee-for-service provider panel selection is an open and ongoing process. There is no closing date or timeframe for application.

1.4.29 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.

1.4.30 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.

1.4.31 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.

1.4.32 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.

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).

1.5 Terms and conditions applying to selection/s

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
- exercises or fails to exercise any of its other rights under, or in relation to the Programme Guidelines.

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.

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
- 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.

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.

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.

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.

1.6 Financial and other arrangements

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 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
- 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](#).

1.7 Complaints

Applicants/grant recipients

Applicants and grant recipients can contact the complaints service with complaints about DSS 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.

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.

1.8 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

1.9 Templates

The following templates have been developed to support the SDF:

- SDF Project Proposal Process Map
- SDF Project Proposal
- SDF Project Progress Report
- SDF Project Final report
- SDF Project Evaluation Report.