



**Australian Government**

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**Department of Social Services**

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**Families and Communities Program**

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**National Initiatives Guidelines Overview**

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December 2016

## Preface

The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) has a suite of Program Guidelines with information about each Program that provides grants funding, and the suite of Activities that contribute to that Program. They provide the key starting point for parties considering whether to participate in a Program 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 manage the delivery of support to our communities rather than being burdened with unnecessary government requirements.

Program 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 and across civil society, freeing up resources to improve outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

The Program Guidelines for each grant funding round include:

- a Program 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 Program outcome, and
- an Application Pack - a suite of documents with information specific to each grant funding round conducted within the Activity.

The simplified Program arrangements establish the framework for the Department 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.

## Version Control

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# 1 Program Overview – Families and Communities

## 1.1 Program Outcomes

The Department of Social Services (DSS) funds organisations to develop and maintain a cohesive Australian community and improved independence and self-sufficiency recognising that government contributions are only one source of funding for the operation of community services.

The Families and Communities Program aims to support families, improve children's wellbeing and increase participation of vulnerable people in community life to enhance family and community functioning.

The following seven Activities make up the Program and support the Commonwealth Government's priorities and responsibilities:

- Financial Wellbeing and Capability
- Families and Children
- Strengthening Communities
- Settlement Services
- Civil Society
- Families and Communities Service Improvement
- National Initiatives

## 1.2 Program Objectives

The Families and Communities Program aims to strengthen relationships, support families, improve children's wellbeing and increase participation in community life to strengthen family and community functioning, and reduce the costs of family breakdown. The Program will provide a range of services, focussed on strengthening relationships, and building parenting and financial management skills, providing support for better community connections, as well as services to help newly arrived migrants in their transition to life in Australia.

The Program also aims to provide a foundation for integrated, community led program delivery that understands and meets local needs and promotes innovation and collaboration. This will include the establishment of a platform for continued improvement in the way DSS does its business, clarifying and strengthening Commonwealth and state/territory government responsibilities and fostering stronger relationships with civil society and partnering with service providers.

The Program will provide a range of services, predominantly focussed on early intervention, prevention, and support, including assistance for relationship breakdown.

These services will be provided to families, children, young people, volunteers, multicultural communities, humanitarian entrants, migrants and individuals with special circumstances.

## 2 Activity Overview – National Initiatives

DSS provides leadership in Australian Government policy on issues affecting women and children's safety.

DSS works with state and territory governments as well as portfolios across the Commonwealth through the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* and the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* to help support and bring about change for our most vulnerable children, women and families. These National Initiatives Activities have an emphasis on supporting systems and services for those affected by violence and abuse.

DSS also provides support to eligible victims of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices including forced labour and forced marriage.

## 2.1 Aims and objectives

The National Initiatives aim to achieve positive outcomes for families, women and their children by working across sectors to improve the safety and wellbeing of children, advancing gender equality and reducing violence against women and their children.

## 2.2 Sub-Activities

The sub-activities capture DSS' business, in line with the Commonwealth Government's priorities and responsibilities, and aim to contribute to a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect and violence against women and their children in Australia over time, and include:

- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (refer 2.2.1)
- National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (refer 2.2.2),
- Support for Trafficked People Program (refer 2.2.3), and
- Women's Safety Package (refer 2.2.4).

### 2.2.1 National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

The *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* (the National Framework) aims to drive change for families and children so that Australia's children grow up safe and well. The target group for the National Framework projects are those organisations that are committed to working together to improve safety and wellbeing of Australia's children through research, policy development and evaluation, enabling and strengthening the focus of other national reform agendas.

The National Framework is a long-term partnership between the Commonwealth Government, state and territory governments and civil society to deliver a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect over time.

Projects funded aim to drive change via a national approach in order to gain greater national consistency or improve outcomes for children and may include, but are not limited to:

- Research and innovation in areas where additional information is needed to guide intervention and prevention practice and promote child safety and well-being.
- Development of data and information sharing to support and contribute to the evidence base about families and children at risk.
- Education and professional training on the impacts of child abuse and neglect on child development.
- Development of resources for professionals and support workers that supports capacity for early identification of and appropriate response to children at risk of abuse and neglect.
- Support for organisations to build and promote the evidence base about the intersections between children and young people at risk of abuse and neglect.
- Exploration and sharing of best practice that promotes a better understanding of the relationship between risk factors for child abuse and neglect.
- Exploration of collaborative approaches to child safety and well-being.
- Facilitation of stakeholder and community consultations.
- Delivering and facilitating events, conferences, education workshops and community capacity building activities that support child safety and well-being.
- Improving engagement between non-government organisations, local governments, local business and Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
- Engagement with the business community at the national level, including developing links with peak businesses and industry bodies.
- Trial ways to improve support for young people leaving out-of-home care, to assist them to transition to adulthood and independence by linking them with appropriate services and supports.
- Trial ways to build parenting skills in the first 1,000 days for a child, particularly among vulnerable families, with a focus on encouraging strengths based parenting.

## 2.2.2 National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the National Plan) is a long-term partnership between the Commonwealth Government, state and territory governments and civil society to deliver a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children in Australia.

In addition to DSS measures, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet the Attorney Generals Department and the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner are also responsible for funding measures under the National Plan. Components funded contribute to filling the gaps in service provision for victims of family, domestic and sexual violence and build the evidence-base to reduce violence against women.

Projects may include, but are not limited to

- information, resources and support services for victims of domestic, family and sexual violence and technology-facilitated abuse
- innovative projects to support women who have experienced, or who are at risk of experiencing domestic, family or sexual violence and to change behaviours of men who perpetrate violence
- supporting organisations delivering telephone and online information and resources, referral, counselling and support services to people who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, domestic, family and sexual violence as well as family and friends and frontline workers
- supporting nationally accredited and other educational and professional training, information and resources and capacity building for community frontline workers regarding domestic, family and sexual violence
- resources, conferences, educational programs, workshops and community capacity building activities aimed at raising awareness of all forms of domestic, family and sexual violence and changing attitudes and behaviours that contribute to violence
- engaging with and supporting local governments, communities, relevant sectors and the business community, to develop and implement activities to reduce domestic, family and sexual violence and meet the needs of women with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women in regional areas
- improving collaborative service delivery between mainstream and specialist services and between government and non-government services, including in the health, disability, mental health, education, justice, housing and homelessness, drug and alcohol, family law and other service systems. This includes supporting vulnerable cohorts.
- supporting primary prevention organisations and strategies, including social marketing campaigns, aimed at promoting gender equality; changing attitudes and behaviours that contribute to violence; countering the impact of pornography; raising awareness of non-physical forms of family domestic and sexual violence; and empowering bystanders to take action
- supporting men to change attitudes and behaviours that contribute to violence against women and children through awareness-raising and educational activities and targeted resources
- education and professional training, information and resources for front line workers to support early identification of, and appropriate response to, victims and perpetrators of family, domestic and sexual violence
- capacity-building activities to support services with program planning, implementation and evaluation, including outcome measurement, to promote the use of effective, evidence-based programs and practices
- research and data improvement activities to build a national evidence base that will drive reform and inform policy and best practice, including:
  - Personal Safety Survey
  - National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey
  - National Data Collection and Reporting Framework
  - National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions
  - other research and data projects undertaken under the National Plan



### 2.2.3 Support for Trafficked People Program

Support for Trafficked People Program recognises that trafficked people have specific and individual support needs, may still be at risk from traffickers and have few safe supports or friends in Australia. For this reason, the Sub-Activity provides individualised case management and access to a tailored range of support services. to suit each client's particular circumstances.

The Sub-Activity provides support to all victims of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices including forced marriage, who meet the eligibility criteria to assist them to meet their basic needs and develop options for the future. It is demand-driven and delivered nationally by a single service provider.

### 2.2.4 Women's Safety Package

The Women's Safety Package is a \$100 million package of practical measures to help keep women and children safe, including better frontline support and services, innovative technologies and education resources to help change community attitudes to violence and abuse. In addition to DSS' measures, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Health, the Department of Education and Training and the Attorney-General's Department are also responsible for funding measures under this \$100 million package.

Projects funded may include, but are not limited to:

- Technology Trials – the Commonwealth and state and territory governments work to design, deliver and evaluate state-based trials that explore a broad range of technologies and the use of innovative technology.
- Local Support Coordinators – coordinate support and services for women affected by domestic and family violence and help women navigate the service system by providing case management and facilitating the integration of the support service network.
- Safer at Home - new or existing technologies to keep women who have experienced violence safe from repeated violence by their former partner.
- Safe Technology – distributes safe smartphones to victims and provide safe technology training to frontline women's services
- 1800RESPECT – provides confidential telephone and online services staffed by professional counsellors to assist people who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, domestic and family violence and/or sexual assault. The service is also for their family and friends and for frontline workers.
- DV Alert – provides free training to community frontline workers including health and allied health workers, settlement services workers and community workers , with a focus on equipping participants with the skills to recognise, respond and refer people experiencing domestic or family violence to relevant support services.

## 2.3 Applicant eligibility

The following entity types meet the eligibility requirements to be invited to apply for a grant for this National Initiatives 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. State and territory governments;
- h. Local Governments;
- i. Where there is no suitable alternative, an individual or – jointly and separately – individuals; and

- j. Where i) is used, it also needs to be stated who the decision maker is on the issue.

Not-for-profit entity types specified above meet the eligibility requirements.

For-profit entity types specified above may be invited in special circumstances.

## **2.4 Participants/clients/recipients/target group**

National Initiatives Activities are underpinned by evidence involving all governments, civil society and the wider community. It is necessary to reduce violence against women and their children, and to deliver a substantial and significant reduction in child abuse and neglect overtime.

### **2.4.1 National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children**

- Commonwealth, state and territory governments working together to develop and deliver on National Framework outcomes.
- Researchers, institutions, peak bodies and organisations working to improve data collections and evidence base about child safety and wellbeing.
- Civil society and philanthropic organisations who work towards improving child safety and wellbeing.

### **2.4.2 National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children**

- Commonwealth, state and territory governments working together to develop and deliver on National Plan outcomes.
- Service systems working with victims, perpetrators and their families
- Researchers, institutions, peak bodies, governments and other organisations working to improve data collections and build the evidence base on violence against women and their children.
- Civil society and philanthropic organisations who work towards reducing violence against women and their children

### **2.4.3 Support for Trafficked People**

- Victims of human trafficking and slavery, and slavery like practices (including forced labour and forced marriage).
- Civil society and community organisations who work towards raising community awareness.
- Commonwealth agencies responsible for the overall strategy.

### **2.4.4 Women's Safety Package**

- Commonwealth, state and territory governments working together to end violence against women and children.
- The women's sector, service providers and organisations delivering services, researching and/or evaluating good practice around perpetrator responses and interventions, and primary prevention to reduce violence against women and their children.

## **2.5 Funding for the Activity**

An amount of \$236 million (GST exclusive) has been allocated over five years from 1 July 2016 by the Australian Government for National Initiatives Activity. All amounts are GST exclusive.

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

The Minister for Social Services has overall responsibility for the National Initiatives Activity.

Where DSS has invited applications for grants, the final decision about Activity Delivery Areas, sites and proposals for service delivery will be made by the Departmental delegate.

DSS may negotiate grant agreements ranging up to a five-year term based on the grant purpose and degree of risk and priorities for funding.

As a part of the National Initiatives Activity, organisations may choose to use up to 10 per cent of their funding for innovative projects. This will be negotiated as part of the grant agreement.

In accordance with the Fair Work Australia decision of 1 February 2012 to increase wages in the Social and Community Services (SACS) sector, DSS will provide supplementation funding to organisations employing SACS workers delivering National Initiatives Activities. To be eligible for supplementation funding organisations must be delivering in-scope Commonwealth funded programs and have employed staff under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SACS Modern Award), specifically under one of the following Schedules:

- Schedule B – Classification Definitions - Social and Community Services Employees, and
- Schedule C – Classification Definitions - Crisis Accommodation Employees.

Organisations affected by the Western Australia Industrial Relation Commission (WAIRC) SACS Decision of 29 August 2013 may also be entitled to SACS supplementation.

## **2.6 Eligible and ineligible activities**

The grants may only be used to:

- deliver resources
- products
- research
- services outlined in the agreed grant agreement
- In addition to the development and delivery of specified products and outcomes, funding may be used for:
  - delivery of services which meet the Program Guidelines;
  - staff salaries and on-costs for project implementation and ongoing management;
  - evaluation and review of the project;
  - staff training;
  - materials and equipment directly related to the implementation of the project;
  - operating expenses directly related to the Activity;
  - assets as defined in the Terms and Conditions that can be reasonably attributed to meeting agreement deliverables; and
  - travel within Australia directly and specifically related to the project.

Grants are not provided for:

- purchase of land
- the covering of retrospective costs
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation
- major construction/capital works
- overseas travel, and
- activities for which other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government bodies have primary responsibility.

## **2.7 Activity links and working with other agencies and services**

The type of projects funded, under the National Initiatives Activity, will determine the extent to which organisations will be required to work with other agencies. These requirements will be determined in collaboration with the organisation being funded during the grant agreement negotiations.

## **2.8 Specialist requirements (e.g. Legislative requirements)**

In delivering the Activity, organisations are required to comply with all relevant laws; and comply with DSS Policies as specified at [Doing Business with DSS](#).

Organisations funded under the National Initiatives Activity must comply with all relevant Commonwealth legislation including:

- *The Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) in performing the obligations outlined in the grant agreement
- *The Copyright Act 1968* (the Act) in regards to undertaking the project
- *The Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Commonwealth) (FOI Act)
- Compliance with access standards for people with disability
- Working with children or other vulnerable people, and
- Mandatory reporting.

National Initiatives Activity projects must also comply with all relevant state and territory legislation.

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 more information on the Multicultural Access and Equity Policy please go to [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au).

## 2.9 Information technology

National Initiative grant recipients must have systems in place to allow them to meet their data collection and reporting obligations outlined in their Schedule.

Funded organisations are reminded that under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* agencies must ensure that people with disabilities have the same fundamental rights to access information and services as others in the community.

Publication and dissemination of web-based resources should therefore endeavour to comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0.

Funded organisations are required to provide information that demonstrates the efficient, effective and ethical delivery that evidences the delivery of the deliverables and objectives stipulated in their grant agreement.

Activity performance and reporting requirements are negotiated between the relevant DSS program area and the funded organisation on a case-by-case basis.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are determined based on the specifics of the required activities.

Periodic progress reports on such elements as activities/actions undertaken, major reports/submissions/releases relevant to government policy, and/or progress/achievements in accordance with the grant agreement are a standard requirement.

Specific reporting requirements including timeframes and format (where specified), are specified in individual grant agreements.

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

## 2.10 Activity Performance and Reporting

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

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 grant recipient.

Recipients Performance will be measured against National benchmarking of other organisations funded for this Activity and compare a grant recipient's service delivery performance against national benchmarks for similar services, considered against 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 National Initiatives Activity 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**

The Minister for Social Services has overall responsibility for the Families and Communities Program.

DSS will:

- meet the Australian Government's terms and conditions of the grant agreement established with organisations
- ensure that services provided under the program are accountable to the Australian Government under the terms and conditions agreed in the grant agreement
- administer the operation of the program 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 program is implemented and will provide the service provider with constructive feedback, and
- ensure that the outcomes contained within the Program Guidelines are being met and evaluate the provider's performance against the program outcomes.
- Information on the successful grants will be published on [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au) within the required timeframes.

## **2.13 Grant recipients 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 Program Guidelines, the grant agreement and the [Standard Agreement Terms and Conditions](#).

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 Activity, and
- contributing to the overall development and improvement of the Activity 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 Provider Capacity 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 Activity**

N/A

# **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 Guidelines and will be for purposes that are consistent with the objectives and priorities of the National Initiatives Activity.

## **3.2 Program Guidelines**

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

- the Program Guidelines Overview (this document)
- 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 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.

### **3.3 Achieving value for money**

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

- the relative merit of each application
- the overall objective/s to be achieved in providing the funding
- the relative cost of the proposal, or of elements of the proposal
- the extent to which the applicant has demonstrated a capacity to fund the proposal taking into consideration all possible sources of finance, including debt finance
- the geographic location of the proposal, and
- the 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.

### **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.

The National Initiatives Activity funds a diverse range of service types and other activities. Due to the size and complexity of the National Initiatives Activity, access to funding will be available through a variety of means and at various times throughout the funding period. DSS proposes to undertake a mix of the following selection processes to achieve the objectives and priorities for the National Initiatives Activity.

#### **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, [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au) 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 their 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 [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au), 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 at [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au) 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.

## 3.5 Service delivery areas

It is expected that if a service area 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. 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.

## 3.6 Selection Criteria

This section sets out the full suite of selection criteria that may be used for any funding process under the National Initiatives Activity.

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 are:

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



When applying for grant funding the following specialist criteria may apply:

- Appropriateness of the proposed project to the aims and objectives of the Sub-Activity. Demonstrate that the proposal is evidence informed and outcomes focused; has the ability to achieve the desired outcomes; has a national focus; aligns to the broader objectives of the Sub-Activity and has relevant links with other significant national social reform agendas; and links and collaborates with other organisations.
- Demonstrate a proven track record or demonstrated capability in providing quality and culturally competent services; a credible record of good governance, efficient delivery of relevant products, effective stakeholder relationship management and a sound record for collaboration; a commitment to engaging with civil society, the broader community and organisations committed women's safety, support for victims of trafficking, child safety and wellbeing as applicable to the Sub-Activity.
- Demonstrate how the organisation will work with DSS to ensure the agreed project meets the objectives, and its ability to manage, deliver and report on the project.

### **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 service providers 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.

Your 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 your application to be fully considered.

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

#### **3.7.1 Applicant 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 applications must be received by DSS within the application period to be considered.

### **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 at [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au) under the Grants tab. DSS will respond to emailed questions within five working days.

**Note:** A list of 'Frequently Asked Questions' is available at [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au). 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 Program 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 the 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 grant 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.

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) go to [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au).

## **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 Program Guidelines.

### **4.2 DSS's rights**

DSS reserves the right to amend the Program 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 advisors:

- are not, and will not be, responsible or liable for the accuracy or completeness of any information in or provided in connection with the Program 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
- 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](mailto:fraud@DSS.gov.au).

1800 calls are free from fixed lines; please note calls made from mobile phones may incur additional costs.

### **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](mailto:privacy@privacy.gov.au).

## 4.6 Freedom of Information

All documents in the possession of DSS including those in relation to the National Initiative Activity 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, DSS.

By mail:           FOI Coordinator  
                    Department of Social Services  
                    Commercial and Corporate Law Branch,  
                    PO Box 9820  
                    Canberra ACT 2601

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 at [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au).

## 5 Financial and Other Arrangements

### 5.1 Financial arrangements

DSS uses standard grant agreements. Grants 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 the grant 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 at [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au).

## 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 6133 8442

Mail: DSS Feedback  
GPO Box 9820  
Canberra ACT 2601

If an applicant or grant recipient is at any time dissatisfied with DSS's handling of a complaint, they can contact DSS Ombudsman via [www.ombudsman.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au) 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: GPO Box 9820  
Canberra ACT 2601

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](mailto:grants@dss.gov.au)

## 8 Glossary

N/A