



**Australian Government**  

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**Department of Social Services**

## **National Disability Insurance Scheme Programme**

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### **National Disability Insurance Scheme Transition Guidelines Overview**

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4 March 2015

## Preface

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

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

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

The Programme Guidelines for each grant funding round include:

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

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

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

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# **1. Programme Overview – National Disability Insurance Scheme Transition**

## **1.1 Programme Outcomes**

The Department of Social Services (DSS) works to provide improved independence, participation and lifetime wellbeing for people with disability, people with a mental illness and their carers.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) intends to ensure people with disability are supported to participate in and contribute to social and economic life to the extent of their abilities. People with disability and their carers will have certainty that they will receive the individualised care and support they need over their lifetime.

## **1.2 Programme Objectives**

To improve the wellbeing and social and economic participation of people with disability, and their families and carers, by building a National Disability Insurance Scheme that delivers individualised support through an insurance approach. This Programme also includes existing supports that are transitioning in to the NDIS in a phased approach as well as services to support the market, sector and workforce to adjust to the NDIS environment.

# **2. Programme Component Overview – National Disability Insurance Scheme Transition**

The NDIS is the new way of providing individualised support for eligible people with permanent and significant disability, their families and carers. The changes that are required to existing disability support systems are significant. Arrangements are being made to ensure the NDIS can be introduced gradually, ensuring a smooth transition for people with disability and support providers. From 1 July 2013, the first stage of the NDIS rolled out in South Australia, Tasmania, the Barwon area of Victoria and the Hunter area in New South Wales. Western Australia, the ACT and the Northern Territory joined the launch in July 2014.

The NDIS Transition programme component supports the market, sector and workforce transitioning to the NDIS environment by funding eligible organisations that provide:

- early intervention service, information and support to eligible children with a disability and their family and carers;
- short-term or immediate respite to carers of people with severe or profound disability and respite services to young carers at risk of not completing secondary education;
- outside school hours care for teenagers with disability;
- Australian Disability Enterprises assisting supported employees; and
- support services for people whose lives are affected by mental illness.

## **2.1 Aims and objectives**

The NDIS Transition programme aims to manage the transition of existing activities identified to ensure:

- existing clients are sensitively transitioned into the NDIS in line with the full roll-out of the Scheme;
- services and service providers are transitioned gradually to the NDIS in line with the full roll-out of the Scheme;
- continuity of service throughout trial sites for clients that cannot access individualised packages under the NDIS; and
- an effective framework for transitioning the information, linkages and capacity building elements of transitioning programmes to provide systemic level support.

The NDIS will support 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 NDIS Transition programme will, therefore, be required to work closely with DSS and the NDIS to make the shift to this new model.

Please note that funding rounds may not be held for all activities outlined within these guidelines due to the majority of the activities transitioning to the NDIS.

## **2.2 Activities**

### **2.2.1 Respite Support for Carers of Young People with Severe or Profound Disability**

The Respite Support for Carers of Young People with Severe or Profound Disability (RSCYP) activity objective is to reduce the unmet demand for short-term and unplanned respite by increasing immediate and short-term respite to carers of young people with severe or profound disability whose needs are not being met through existing programmes.

RSCYP principally benefits carers of young people with severe or profound disability less than 30 years of age. RSCYP also supports carers who are experiencing significant stress in caring for a person with a disability less than 65 years of age.

### **2.2.2 Outside School Hours Care for Teenagers with Disability**

Outside School Hours Care for Teenagers with Disability (OTD) activity increases outside school hours care for teenagers with a disability, with a focus on providing social, recreational and life skills development activities that are stimulating and age appropriate.

OTD provides teenagers with a permanent disability aged 12 to 18 years with appropriate outside school hours care. Outside schools hours care includes before school, after school and holiday care.

### **2.2.3 Young Carers Respite and Information Services**

The Young Carers Respite and Information Services activity assists young students who need support to complete their secondary education or the vocational equivalent due to the demands of their caring role. This activity has two components:

- services to assist school-aged young carers to access respite and age appropriate support including educational, social and recreational activities, for example time off to study for exams, tutoring, skills development, young carers camps and activities in the school holidays;
- information, referral and advice services (including referral to counselling) to support young carers up to and including 25 years in managing the challenges they face as part of their caring role.

### **2.2.4 Younger Onset Dementia Key Worker Programme**

The Younger Onset Dementia Key Worker Programme (YOD) activity provides individualised support to improve the quality of life for people with younger onset dementia, their carers and families.

Key Workers work with local health and support services to build their capacity to respond to this group of people.

## **2.2.5 National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service**

The National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service (NABS) aims to facilitate communication between people who are deaf or hearing impaired and private medical practitioners by providing Auslan interpreters for private medical appointments that attract a Medicare rebate.

NABS provides accredited Auslan (Australian Sign Language) interpreters to deaf Auslan users free of charge when they attend private medical consultations, including general practitioners, specialists and a range of other private health care providers that attract a Medicare rebate. NABS provides interpreting services for both deaf adults and children. The service will also accommodate situations where there is Deaf adult and hearing child, or hearing parent and Deaf child attending a private medical consultation. Consultations that occur in private or public hospitals are not covered by the NABS service.

## **2.2.6 Mental Health Respite: Carer Support**

Mental Health Respite: Carer Support (MHR:CS) provides relief from the caring role, through in-home or out-of-home respite or social and recreational activities; carer support; including counselling, practical assistance, social inclusion activities, case management; and education, information and access including community mental health promotion.

MHR:CS supports carers of people with mental illness, whose health and wellbeing, or other impediments, are negatively impacting their ability to provide care. Support will assist carers and their families to continue in their caring roles, improve their health and wellbeing and participate socially and economically in the community. The highest priority will be given to carers without access to similar respite or carer support through other government funded services.

Services under MHR:CS should be accessible and delivered in a sensitive and appropriate manner and must give consideration to the needs of carers facing additional disadvantage. These include but are not limited to:

- Indigenous carers, including Stolen Generations and Indigenous kinship carers
- carers with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including humanitarian entrants and recent migrants
- older parent carers
- carers needing urgent assistance or support, including those at risk of homelessness
- special needs group carers specific to the service coverage area, such as:
  - carers in rural and remote communities
  - Forgotten Australians
  - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex carers.

## **2.2.7 Personal Helpers and Mentors**

Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) provides practical one-to-one assistance to people severely impacted by mental illness, aged 16 years and over, to help them achieve their personal goals, develop better relationships with family and friends, and manage their everyday tasks. One-to-one support ensures the individual needs of program participants can be addressed. Participants are assisted to access services and participate economically and socially in the community, increasing their opportunities for recovery.

PHaMs identifies a number of groups of people who are facing additional disadvantage. These include but are not limited to:

- Indigenous Australians, including Stolen Generations
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including humanitarian entrants and recent migrants and refugees
- Young people aged 16 to 24 years
- People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- People who have previously been institutionalised (including Forgotten Australians/ care leavers and child migrants)
- Young people leaving out-of-home care
- People who have been previously incarcerated
- People with drug or alcohol co-morbidity.

Services are required to prioritise and actively target these special needs groups, or other identified locally, for which there are significant populations in their service coverage areas, or which are inadequately supported.

The Department expects services to develop the relevant expertise to be able to focus on these special needs groups and to manage their caseloads to ensure the uptake is representative of special needs groups in the local community.

### **2.2.8 Early Intervention for Children with Disability**

The Early Intervention for Children with Disability grant activity forms part of the Better Start for Children with a Disability Initiative. This initiative aims to improve access to early intervention services for eligible children with disabilities that affect their development, and to assist them to achieve their potential. The Early Intervention for Children with Disability grant activity consists of the following three elements:

- funding of up to \$12,000 for eligible children to access a range of early intervention services and resources delivered on a fee for service basis by members of the Early Intervention Service Provider Panel;
- a registration and information service; and
- a range of education and support projects and services aimed at: informing and assisting families, carers and service providers with early intervention; research; and sector development.

### **2.2.9 Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centres**

The Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centres (ASELCCs) grant activity supports the Helping Children with Autism Package programme component. The ASELCCs provide early learning programs and specific support to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in a long day care setting. As well as delivering early intervention services the ASELCCs also undertake research on these service models and engage in workforce capacity building.

### **2.2.10 Disability Employment Assistance - Australian Disability Enterprises**

Disability Employment Assistance provides supported employment for people with a disability so they can develop their capabilities and actively participate in economic and community life. Disability Employment Assistance is utilised to fund Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs), which are non-government and not-for-profit organisations that run commercial businesses, to provide supported employment assistance to people with moderate to severe disability who face barriers to working in the open labour market, but who are able to work for at least eight hours per week in a supported environment.

People with disability working in ADEs receive employment support based on their individual assessed need. ADEs enable people with disability to engage in a wide variety of work tasks, for example, garden maintenance, cleaning services, and food services.

The types of support individuals may require in the workplace include frequent prompting, occupational health and safety assistance and ongoing close supervision to undertake their work tasks.

Funding may also be provided to support other activities linked to supported employment such as sector, individual and community capacity building initiatives, and other eligible services defined under the *Disability Services Act 1986*.

### **2.2.11 Disability Employment Assistance - Work Based Personal Assistance**

Disability Employment Assistance provides supported employment for people with a disability so they can develop their capabilities and actively participate in economic and community life. Work Based Personal Assistance (WBPA) grants provides work-based support to job seekers or employees accessing Disability Employment Services funding for up to a maximum of 10 hours per week, including for additional assistance to eat a meal, use the toilet or take medication.



### **2.2.12 Supported Accommodation Innovation Fund**

The Supported Accommodation Innovation Fund (SAIF) is a Commonwealth funded capital initiative designed to promote innovation in design and delivery of permanent and respite accommodation places for people with disability through individual projects across Australia.

The SAIF initiative encourages partnerships both within the disability sector and in other public sectors in the development and delivery of innovative accommodation facilities and support models. The involvement of people with disability and their carers is an integral component of the design and delivery of the accommodation and support models.

### **2.2.13 Sector Development Fund**

The Sector Development Fund is a pool of money to assist individuals and organisations to transition to the new NDIS operational environment. This includes activities such as improving the capability and capacity of the sector to deliver services within the NDIS, assistance for participants to exercise choice and control, as well as activities to ensure the sector has enough workers with the right skills.

## **2.3 Applicant eligibility**

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

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

The following entity types may be invited in special circumstances:

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

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

The NDIS Transition programme targets will vary. The specific information regarding target groups for each activity will be specified in the funding summary.

Clients of grant recipients may meet the target group requirements if:

- they have a permanent disability or impairment;
- the impairment substantially reduces their ability to participate effectively in activities, or perform tasks or actions unless they:
  - require assistance from other people on most days; or
  - have assistive technology, equipment (other than common items such as glasses); or
  - can't participate effectively even with assistance or aids and equipment.
- their impairment affects their capacity for social and economic participation;
- they are children aged under six years of age with a developmental delay which results in:
  - substantially reduced functional capacity in one or more of the areas of self-care, receptive and expressive language, cognitive development or motor development; and
  - results in the need for a combination and sequence of special interdisciplinary or generic care, treatment or other services which are of extended duration, and are individually planned and coordinated; and

- there is evidence that getting supports now (early interventions) will help them by:
  - reducing how much help you will need to do things because of your disability in the future; and
  - improving or reducing deterioration of their functional capacity; or
  - helping their family and carers to keep helping them.
- they are carers of a person with a disability;
- they are likely to require support under the NDIS (and not another service system such as the health system) for their lifetime.

## 2.5 Funding for the Programme

An amount of \$2.089 billion has been allocated over four years from 1 July 2014 by the Australian Government for the NDIS Transition programme. All amounts are GST exclusive.

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

In particular, grants recipients should be aware that funding will be provided in the context of the NDIS environment. This means that grant and block funding levels may reduce as the NDIS rolls-out, providers will be expected to prepare for and move to a fee-for-service arrangement in a competitive market environment over time, register with the NDIS to provide such services and providers may, in the meantime, need to account for existing service provision on an in-kind basis. These impacts on funding will be specified in the Application Packs and funding agreements for each activity.

The Assistant Minister for Social Services has overall responsibility for the NDIS Transition programme. Where DSS has invited applications for grants, the final decision about service 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, degree of risk, and priorities for funding.

Funding for the direct service element of the Early Intervention for Children with Disability activity will be reimbursed on a fee-for-service basis. That is, clients will access their chosen provider from the Early Intervention Service Provider Panel who will then claim payment from DSS after delivering their services or providing resources to clients.

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 the NDIS Transition Activity. To be eligible for supplementation funding, organisations must be delivering in-scope Commonwealth funded programmes 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 grant may be used for:

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

Grants are not provided for:

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

In the case of Early Intervention service provider panel members, they are required to charge fees in line with their approved fee schedule which is published on the DSS website. This schedule is developed by the provider in line with their business model for delivering their services in a market-based environment. DSS will assess the fee schedule for individual providers against market prices to ensure reasonableness but will not consider the detailed expenditures relating to the business model

## 2.7 Links and working with other agencies and services

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

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

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

These include, but are not limited to:

- the [Disability Services Act 1986](#);
- the [Social Security Act 1991](#); and
- the [National Health Act 1953](#).

In delivering the Activity, grants recipients are required to:

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

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

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

## 2.9 Information technology

NDIS Transition Programme grants recipients must have information technology systems\* in place to allow them to meet their data collection and reporting obligations outlined in their Schedule.

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

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

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

The new application will:

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

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

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

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

## 2.10 Performance and reporting

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

DSS's Performance Indicators focus on three key questions:

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

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

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

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

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

## **2.11 Financial reporting**

The NDIS Transition programme 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 Assistant Minister for Social Services has responsibility for the day to day oversight of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

DSS will:

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

## **2.13 Grant recipient's responsibilities and accountabilities under the Activity**

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

Grant recipients are responsible for ensuring:

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

## **2.14 Risk management strategy**

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

## **2.15 Special conditions applying to this Programme**

Not applicable.

# **3 Application Process**

## **3.2 Overview of the application process**

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

## **3.3 Programme Guidelines**

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

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

### **3.3.1 Application Pack**

The Application Pack will comprise the following documents:

#### **Funding Round Summary**

This document includes the following information:

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

#### **Application Form**

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

#### **DSS Grant Agreement template – General Grant Conditions**

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

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

### **Questions and Answers**

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

## **3.4 Achieving value for money**

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

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

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

## **3.5 Choice of selection process**

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

### **3.5.1 Open competitive selection process**

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

### **3.5.2 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.

### **3.5.3 Direct selection process**

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

### **3.5.4 Expressions of Interest (EOI) process**

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

DSS may advertise any funding process:

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

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

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

### **3.5.5 Early Intervention Service Provider Panel**

Application for the Early Intervention Service Provider Panel is an ongoing, open and non-competitive process. As service providers on the panel operate on a fee-for-service basis and there is no upfront funding, applicant's need only complete the relevant application form and be assessed as suitable for the panel.

## **3.6 Service delivery areas (if applicable)**

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

Service delivery areas or catchment areas designated within the grant agreement must not change without prior written agreement from DSS. However, grant recipients are encouraged to monitor demographic changes in their broader region and discuss varying their catchment areas with DSS if this helps address an emerging need not being met in that area. Where service delivery areas or catchment areas require definition, this will be provided in the Application Pack.

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

## **3.7 Selection Criteria**

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

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; and
4. demonstrate your organisation's capacity and your staff capability (experience and qualifications) to deliver the Activity objectives in the specified community and/or the specified target group.



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

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

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](#)

### **3.8 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](#)

#### **3.8.1 Applicant's Responsibilities**

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

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

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

#### **3.8.2 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.

#### **3.8.3 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.

#### **3.8.4 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.

### **3.8.5 Closing date and time**

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

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

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

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

### **3.8.6 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.

### **3.8.7 Questions and answers during the application period**

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

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

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

### **3.8.8 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.

### **3.8.9 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.

### **3.8.10 Notification of funding round results**

DSS will notify applicants of results for the relevant funding round via email.

### **3.8.11 Applicant Feedback**

Feedback is valuable to assist organisations strengthen proposals for grant funding in the future. Feedback provided on grant applications will be relevant to the specifics of individual funding rounds and proportional to the complexity of the assessment process and total funding available. Applicant feedback will comprise round-specific feedback summaries and, in some cases, individual feedback.

### **3.9 Conflicts of Interest**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **4 Terms and conditions applying to Selection/s**

### **4.1 Liability issues**

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

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

### **4.2 DSS' rights**

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

### **4.3 Disclaimer**

DSS, its officers, agents and advisers:

- are not, and will not be, responsible or liable for the accuracy or completeness of any information in or provided in connection with the Programme Guidelines;
- make no express or implied representation or warranty that any statement as to future matters will prove correct;
- disclaim any and all liability arising from any information provided to the applicant, including, without limitation, errors in, or omissions contained in, that information;

- except so far as liability under any statute applies, accept no responsibility arising from errors or omissions contained in any information in this document and the Application Form; and/or
- accept no liability for any loss or damage suffered by any person as a result of that person, or any other person, placing reliance on the contents of these documents, or any other information provided by DSS.

#### **4.4 Fraud**

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

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

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

#### **4.5 Public reporting**

DSS is required to publish on both its and the whole of Australian Government register website all grants awarded by DSS. There may be circumstances where DSS determine that public reporting of grants is contrary to the *Privacy Act 1988*, other statutory requirements or the specific terms of a grant agreement.

#### **4.6 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

#### **4.7 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](mailto:foi@DSS.gov.au)

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

## 5 Financial and Other Arrangements

### 5.1 Financial arrangements

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

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

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

Grant recipients are responsible for ensuring that:

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

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

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

## 6 Complaints

### 6.1 Applicants/Grant Recipients

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

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

Telephone: 1800 634 035

Fax: (02) 6204 4587

Mail: The Department of Social Services Complaints  
PO Box 7576  
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610

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

### 6.2 Client/Customer

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

## 7 Contact information

Contact information for the Activity:

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

Mail: PO Box 7576  
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610

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

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

## 8 Glossary

Not applicable.