



Australian Government

**Department of Families,
Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs**

Part B: Information for Applicants

Preface

The Australian Government Department of Housing, Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA or the Department) has a suite of documents (the **Program Guideline Suite**) which provide information relating to the program. They provide the key starting point for parties considering whether to participate in the program and form the basis for the business relationship between FaHCSIA and the funding recipient.

They are:

- **Part A: Program Guidelines** which provides an overview of Program and the Activities relating to the program;
- **Part B: Information for Applicants** which provides information on the Application, Assessment, Eligibility, Selection and Complaints processes; Financial and Funding Agreement arrangements. Any special conditions to this information will be noted at Section 4 of Part C of the Program Guideline Suite.
- **Part C: Application Information** provides specific information on the Activity, Selection Criteria, Performance Management and Reporting. This part should be read in conjunction with the Draft Funding Agreement for the Activity and the [Standard Terms and Conditions](#).
- The **Application Form** which is completed by applicants applying for funding during a selection process.

FaHCSIA 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 Information about the Application Process

1.1 *Application Process*

This section explains how applications are managed for community programs funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Service and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

An application is the submission of a completed application form and provision of any other requested information as stated in the application form. Organisations must prepare applications in accordance with this document, the Application Information and the application form.

Applications can only be submitted during the application round for the Program 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.

1.2 *Type of Selection process*

The selection process will be either an open, restricted, direct, renew or expression of interest at the discretion of FaHCSIA.

Open Selection

Open Competitive selection processes are open to all providers operating in the market place. Open processes are widely advertised through the media, the FAHCSIA Internet site and other sources in order to attract as much interest as possible.

Restricted Selection

A restricted 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.

Direct Selection

A direct selection process is 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 provider's current performance and an assessment of a provider's capacity to deliver an expanded service or capability to deliver a new service through use of selection criteria.

Renew

A renew process is where we are creating a new funding agreement to continue the same service delivery activities to the same customers with existing service providers. Assessment of suitability is done internally and is based on past performance in delivering the service to the target group.

Expression of Interest

An Expression of Interest process aims to identify eligible providers who are then invited to submit a more detailed application. It is an open invitation for potential providers to register their interest to deliver the service on FaHCSIA's behalf.

Part C of the Program Guideline Suite will advise the type of selection process.

1.3 *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 the Department is a serious offence. Applicants or their partners who do so may be prosecuted under section 137.1 of the Criminal Code Act 1995.

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

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

1.4 What needs to be included?

FaHCSIA will not assess applications that do not contain all required attachments outlined in the application form.

1.5 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 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.

FaHCSIA 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.

FaHCSIA may reject an application if FaHCSIA is not satisfied that there are arrangements in place to appropriately address/manage a perceived or actual conflict of interest.

1.6 What should not be included?

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

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

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

1.8 Closing date and time

Part C of the Program Guideline Suite and the Application form will advise the closing date and time.

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

1.9 Late Applications

FaHCSIA may reject any application lodged after the closing date. If an application is late, FaHCSIA 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. FaHCSIA has no obligation to accept a late application. Any decision by FaHCSIA to accept or not accept a late application will be final.

1.10 Checks of Applicants

As a part of the Selection Process, the Department **may** undertake further checks of applicants. The Department may also conduct checks for non-disclosure of any relevant information.

In addition, any debts that the applicant has accrued to the Department or other Australian Government agencies may be taken into account when making a decision to offer funding.

The Department reserves the right to use information from:

- the Department's databases,

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- other Australian Government agencies, such as the Australian Taxation Office and Australian Securities and Investments Commission,
- state or territory agencies,
- law enforcement agencies,
- credit reference agencies,
- courts or tribunals, or
- any other appropriate organisation or person reasonably required as part of these checks.

Information obtained from checks on applicants described in this section, may be taken into account during the assessment of applications or in making the final decision to offer funding.

2 Selection & Eligibility Criteria

2.1 Selection Criteria

The selection criteria are contained in the application form and in Part C of the Program Guideline Suite.

2.2 Value for money

Organisations will be assessed on the extent to which they offer the Australian Government value for money. FaHCSIA considers value for money as an integral part of the assessment and ongoing management of programs.

The overriding principle guiding the Selection Process is value in social service delivery to the Australian Government. The Department has funding principles in place to guide Selection Processes. The selection process will be conducted in accordance with these principles.

2.3 Service provider eligibility

FaHCSIA will only enter into Funding Agreements with:

- 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 - maybe not-for-profit or for-profit proprietary company (limited by shares or by guarantee) or public companies);
- d) Aboriginal Corporations (incorporated under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2006 and administered by the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations).;
- e) Organisations established through a specific piece of Commonwealth or State/Territory legislation (many public benevolent institutions, churches, universities, unions etc);
- f) Partnerships ;
- g) Trustees on behalf of a Trust;
- h) Local Governments; and
- i) where there is no suitable alternative, an individual or - jointly and separately - individuals

2.4 Application Conditions

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 funded. All information requested on the application must be provided to enable your application to be fully considered.

3 Assessment Process

Following the application Closing Date, the Department will conduct an assessment of all applications.

To enable a comprehensive and accurate assessment of applications against the Selection Criteria, applicants must provide the information required in the format as stated in this document and in Part C of the Program Guideline Suite and the Application Form.

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.

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) will assess applicants for funding primarily on the basis of the information provided in the Application Form. FaHCSIA **may** use information about an applicant that is, or becomes known to FaHCSIA in the course of FaHCSIA's business, as well as any publicly available information.

Decisions on the parameters and methodology for assessment of applications will be final.

3.1 Stages in the assessment process

This process is generally followed:

Stage 1 – Receipt and registration of applications, initial screening for compliance;

Stage 2 – Assessment of applications against the Selection Criteria;

Stage 3 – Financial Viability Assessment;

Stage 4 – Selection of Preferred Applicant/s; and

Stage 5 – Offer / Agreement of Funding.

Stage 1 - Receipt and Registration of Applications, Initial Screening for Compliance

Following the receipt and registration of applications, there will be an initial screening of applications to ensure:

- Eligibility of organisations;
- Applicants comply with the terms and conditions detailed in the Program Guideline Suite; and
- Complete information has been provided in the Application Form to enable a fully informed assessment to be made.

Stage 2 - Assessment of applications against selection criteria

Assessment Teams

The Assessment team will consist of staff from FaHCSIA and/or FaHCSIA Portfolio bodies and/or ICCs and include individuals who collectively provide the following expertise:

- the program
- the site/area or location
- local issues or issues affecting the program/activity target group.

Consideration will be given to any conflict of interest that may impact; and whether there are appropriate conflict of interest management strategies in place.

Assessment Teams will undertake assessment of applications and will consider the applicant's response to each Selection Criterion against a 6-point (0 to 5) scale (see Table below).

Assessment Teams will assess applications primarily on the information provided in the Application Form. FaHCSIA may use information about an applicant that is, or becomes known to FaHCSIA in the course of FaHCSIA's business, as well as any publicly available information.

Table 1: Six-point rating scale for selection criteria

Rating	Score
Excellent quality—excellent claims against the criterion, exceeds expectations, supporting information confirms consistent superior performance	5
Very good quality—very good claims against the criterion, meets all expectations to a high standard with complete and comprehensive supporting information	4
Good quality—good claims against the criterion, meets all expectations with convincing supporting information	3
Satisfactory quality—adequate claims against the criterion, mostly meets expectations, but may be lacking detail and/or supporting information	2
Marginal or poor quality—poor claims against the criterion, does not meet expectations, has deficient supporting information	1
Does not meet criterion at all	0

Stage 3 – Financial Viability Assessments

Applications will be subject to Financial Viability Assessments.

Note: The Department may not fund applicants that are assessed as high-risk in terms of Financial Viability.

Information required from applicants for the Financial Viability Assessment is gathered via the information requested in the Application Form.

Stage 4 – Selection of Successful Applicants

The Department will prepare a list of recommended applicants following assessment against the Selection Criteria and consideration of the Financial Viability Assessment.

The Department’s decision relating to Successful Applicants will be finalised when the Minister or his/her Delegate indicate their acceptance of the final list of successful applicants.

Stage 5 - Entering into Funding Agreements

Successful applicants are then invited to enter into Funding Agreements with the Department. See Section 5 Financial Arrangements for more details.

3.2 Process for advising outcomes

Applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of the assessment process.

3.3 Opportunity for feedback

Unsuccessful applicants will be offered feedback on their application.

Any or none of the applications under this selection process may be accepted.

4 Terms and Conditions applying to Applications

4.1 *Liability Issues*

The Department is not liable to the applicant in relation to the Selection Process, including without limitation, when the Department:

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

4.2 *The Department's Rights*

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

FaHCSIA reserves the right to mark any application 'non-compliant' if it has concerns about the genuineness of the information provided or where it feels the application has *not* been submitted in the spirit of the program as outlined in this document.

4.3 *Disclaimer*

The Department and its officers, employees, 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 Guideline Suite;
- 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 cannot be excluded, accept no responsibility arising in any way from errors or omissions contained in any information in this document and the Application Forms; 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 the Department.

4.4 *Fraud*

FaHCSIA is committed to the Commonwealth Fraud Control Policy and Guidelines. Applicants should familiarise themselves with the Department's Fraud Control Policy Statement www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/doingbusiness/Pages/default.aspx#4 which also underpins their respective fraud and risk minimisation responsibilities when dealing with the department. One key responsibility is to report all suspected fraud to the relevant contact officer and Fraud Control Manager within FaHCSIA.

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 FaHCSIA on 02 6244 1449, the Privacy Commissioner on 1300 363 992 (local call cost, but calls from mobile and pay phones may incur higher charges) or the Australian Government Privacy Officer by emailing: privacy@privacy.gov.au.

4.6 Freedom of Information

All documents in the possession of FaHCSIA including those in relation to the Program 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 FaHCSIA 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 FaHCSIA.

By mail:

FOI Coordinator
FaHCSIA
Public Law Branch, TOP CW2
GPO Box 7576
CANBERRA BUSINESS CENTRE ACT 2610

By email:

foi@fahcsia.gov.au

For more information on making a request for access to documents in the possession of FaHCSIA under the FOI Act, go to the Freedom of Information content on FaHCSIA's website at www.fahcsia.gov.au.

5 Financial and Other Arrangements

5.1 *Financial Arrangements*

FaHCSIA uses standard Funding Agreements. Funding will only be provided in accordance with an executed funding agreement. The terms and conditions of FaHCSIA funding agreements cannot be changed.

The Funding Agreement will contain the entire agreement between the parties. There is no binding agreement on any parties until the Funding Agreement is agreed to and signed by the Delegate and the applicant's Authorised Representative.

The Funding Agreement is the legal agreement between the Department and the service provider over the funding period. In managing funding provided, the service provider must comply with all the requirements of the Funding Agreement.

Funded service providers are responsible for ensuring that:

- the terms and conditions of the Funding 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.

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

Copies of the draft funding agreement and the Terms and Conditions – Standard Funding Agreement will be included with these documents during selection processes.

6 Complaints

6.1 *Service Provider*

The service provider can contact the complaints service with complaints about FaHCSIA's service(s) or the service of another FaHCSIA funded service provider.

Details of what constitutes an eligible complaint can be provided upon request by FaHCSIA. The service provider can lodge a complaint through the following channels:

Telephone: 1800 634 035

Fax: (02) 6204 4587

Mail:

FaHCSIA Complaints

PO Box 7576

Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610

If a provider is at any time dissatisfied with the Department's handling of a complaint, they can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman at www.ombudsman.gov.au or 1300 362 072.

6.2 *Client/Customer*

It is a requirement of your funding 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 the Department 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.