



Australian Government



Supported Wage System for Open Employment Assessment Guidelines

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Disclaimer

This document is not a stand-alone document and does not contain the entirety of the Providers' obligations. It should be read in conjunction with the Supported Wage System for Open Employment Handbook any relevant Guidelines or reference material issued by the Department of Social Services (the Department) under or in connection with the Disability Employment National Panel of Assessors Grant Program Agreement (2018-2023).

Supported Wage System for Open Employment Assessment Guidelines

Document Change History..... 3
Background..... 3
Summary..... 3
Disability Employment National Panel of Assessors Program Grant Agreement relevant Clauses: 4
Reference documents relevant to these Guidelines: 4
Explanatory Note:..... 4
Flow Chart – Supported Wage System Assessment Guidelines:..... 5
Text version of Supported Wage System Assessment flow chart..... 5
Supported Wage System Assessment Guidelines 6
Managing Availability 13

Document Change History

Version	Effective Date	End Date	Change & Location
1.0	1 July 2018	2 December 2018	Original version of document
1.1	3 December 2018	7 December 2020	Updated terminology
1.2	8 December 2020		Incorporating Supported Wage System Supporting Document into this guideline

Background

These Guidelines outline the process for arranging and conducting a Supported Wage System (SWS) Assessment for a Participant. SWS applications can be made for participants by either a Disability Employment Services Provider (Provider) if the participant is registered in DES, or directly by their employer. The Assessment process is very similar, except that the Assessor must work directly with the Employer to obtain information about the job.

Assessors, Employers, Providers and other parties have access to comprehensive information about the SWS at [JobAccess](#). This includes the SWS Handbook for Open Employment, which is the key SWS document, and provides information on the industrial relations instruments and the roles of all parties involved. Questions may also be directed to the Department's Assessment Team on 1800 065 123.

Industrial relations and wages information is available from the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 or the [Fair Work Ombudsman website](#).

Information about the SWS Minimum Weekly Wage is available from JobAccess, or the [Fair Work Commission](#) (FWC) website.

Summary

The SWS was introduced in 1994 to improve employment opportunities for people with disability. This followed consultation with the relevant industrial authorities, Employers, trade union and disability peak bodies, state and federal government departments and disability employment services.

Many people with disability obtain employment at full award wages, but for others, the nature of disability can affect their productive capacity. People in such circumstances may wish to use a reliable process of productivity-based wage assessment to obtain a job. The SWS was introduced to provide both the industrial relations framework and the Assessment process to enable reliable productivity-based wage assessments for eligible people with disability.

The Department of Social Services (the Department) manages a National Panel of Assessors under the Disability Employment National Panel of Assessors Program Grant Agreement 2018-2023 to deliver a range of assessment services, including SWS Assessments.

Disability Employment National Panel of Assessors Program Grant Agreement relevant Clauses:

Clause 4 – Formation of Grant Agreements

Clause 7 – Conduct of Assessments

Clause 9 – Provider’s Personnel

Clause 13 – Excluded activities

Clause 57 – Conflict of Interest

Clause 70 – The SWS Services

Clause 71 – SWS Assessments

Clause 72 – SWS Assessment Reports

Clause 73 – SWS Grant Payments

Reference documents relevant to these Guidelines:

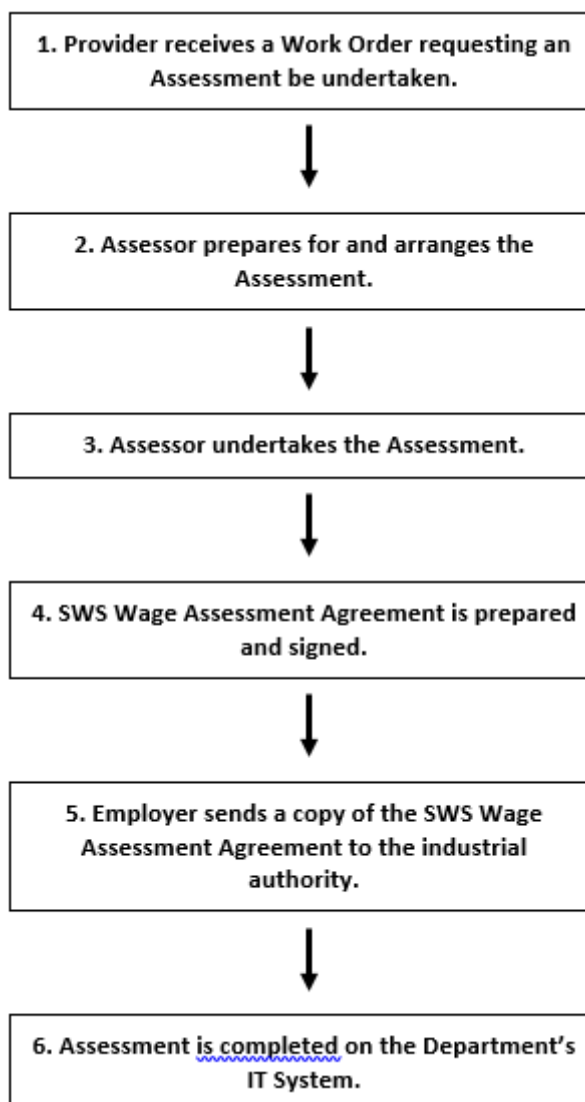
Supported Wage System Handbook for Open Employment

Explanatory Note:

In this document:

- Must means that compliance is mandatory and should means that compliance represents best practice.
- Provider refers to a National Panel of Assessors Provider (NPA Provider), unless otherwise stated.
- Assessment is a Supported Wage System Assessment.
- Assessor is an Assessor accredited by the Department of Social Services.

Flow Chart – Supported Wage System Assessment Guidelines:



Note: This should not be read as a stand-alone document, please refer to the Disability Employment National Panel of Assessors Program Grant Agreement 2018-2023.

Text version of Supported Wage System Assessment flow chart

Step 1: Provider receives a Work Order requesting an Assessment be undertaken.

Go to Step 2.

Step 2: Assessor prepares for and arranges the Assessment.

Go to Step 3.

Step 3: Assessor undertakes the Assessment.

Go to Step 4.

Step 4: SWS Wage Assessment Agreement is prepared and signed.

Go to Step 5.

Step 5: Assessor sends a copy of the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement to the industrial authority.

Go to Step 6.

Step 6: Assessment is completed on the Department's IT System.

Supported Wage System Assessment Guidelines

Who is Responsible:	What is Required:
<p>1. Provider</p> <p>Receives a Work Order requesting an Assessment be undertaken.</p> <p><i>Disability Employment National Panel of Assessors Program Grant Agreement 2018-2023 Clause References:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clause 4 • Clause 13 • Clause 57 	<p>Providers may receive a Work Order on the Department’s IT System which will request the Provider to complete an Assessment. The Provider must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regularly check the Department’s IT System for any new Work Orders • accept or reject Work Orders within one Business Day of receiving a Work Order • record reasons for rejecting a Work Order • take action to resolve any Conflict of interest that arises in connection with any Work Order. <p>The Department may have regard to previous rejections of Work Orders when deciding whether to allocate further Work Orders to the Provider.</p> <p>In the Departments IT system the Contract End Date for the Work Order will default to 10 weeks from the date of the SWS Application being approved, but may be reduced or extended by the Department’s Assessment Team as required. For example, the Contract End Date might be reduced for a Job at Risk so that the assessment can be completed sooner.</p>
<p>2. Assessor</p> <p>Prepares for and arranges the Assessment.</p> <p><i>Disability Employment National Panel of Assessors Program Grant Agreement 2018-2023 Clause References:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clause 7 • Clause 9 • Clause 70 • Clause 71 • Clause 72 	<p>After accepting the Work Order on the Department’s IT System, the Provider may allocate the Assessment to one of its Specified Personnel who has been approved as an Assessor by the Department and has completed the SWS online training modules.</p> <p>The Assessor will be able to determine from the Department’s IT System whether the Assessment is an initial or a review Assessment, and view the relevant background.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if it is an initial Assessment, the Assessor will access the details about the job, employee (and nominee where applicable), employer and applicant from the application screen • if it is a review Assessment, the Assessor will also access the details about the previous Assessments completed for that employee. <p>The Assessor will familiarise themselves with the relevant Assessment details on the Department’s IT System; particularly the work classification, nominated industrial instrument, duties, tasks and past productivity ratings, where relevant.</p> <p>The Assessor should check that the name of the employer on the JobAccess SWS application screen is correct by confirming the details with the employer and advise the Department’s Assessment Team so that the details are amended.</p>

Who is Responsible:	What is Required:
	<p>The Assessor contacts the DES Provider (where there is one), the employer, and the nominee (where there is one), to make arrangements for the Assessment; including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agreeing on the time to conduct the Assessment • explaining to the employer the Assessment process • confirming with the employer if there are any special WHS and building access requirements • confirming with the employer and the DES Provider who will be present during the Assessment and whether there is a union representative or nominee. <p>Ideally, the Assessor should develop rapport with all parties at a meeting before the Assessment. It is particularly important to ensure that the employee (and nominee) knows when the Assessment is to occur. The Assessment should be undertaken at times and on days when the employee works. The employee should have the relevant tasks to do during the Assessment.</p> <p>The Assessor should collect background information from the DES Provider, where relevant, and verify this information with the employer. The Assessor should collect all the relevant information that is required to make a detailed Assessment, from the employer and the DES Provider, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job description • task descriptions • job and task analysis • core tasks and miscellaneous • a copy of the award or other industrial instrument under which the employee is employed • time spent on each duty per week/fortnight • hours/days worked • task sequencing • supervisor's name/title • allowable breaks • employee performance information/specific performance issues • busy and quiet period • best times to take timings • level/description of supervision required by client • site/employee specific information relevant to conducting wage assessments • safety requirements/WHS considerations • worksite access <p>Before an Assessment is conducted, the assessor should confirm with the employer and DES Provider that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all the necessary modifications to the work environment and job have occurred to maximise the employee's productivity • there is an appropriate job match

Who is Responsible:	What is Required:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that appropriate training has been provided to the employee in all duties to be performed, this is especially important for initial assessments and for review Assessment where the duties have recently changed • agreement has been reached that the employee is unable to work at the productivity level that would be expected by the minimum standards for that position. <p>Understanding the Assessment process</p> <p>The SWS Assessment process has been developed after significant consultation and trialling and it provides a reliable method of assessing work productivity.</p> <p>The SWS methodology focuses on observing and timing employees doing their work tasks. The Assessor uses all the information gathered about the job to identify the duties – the key outcomes or results; and the tasks – the smaller pieces of work that together make up the duty.</p> <p>For example, for the position of a room attendant in a motel, a duty could be to “clean the room”, and the tasks making up this duty would include things such as “make the bed”, “vacuum floor” and “dust furniture”.</p> <p>The Assessor must describe each task in sufficient detail so that anyone else would be able to observe and measure the task being performed in exactly the same manner. The Assessor must document a description of the task so that the tasks are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observable • measurable • replicable • have a clear beginning and end <p>The task description is particularly important for the 12 month review, when a different Assessor may be conducting the Assessment. There must be enough information in the SWS Assessment Report about the standard that was set, so that another Assessor reviewing the employee’s productivity 12 months later can assess if productivity has changed.</p> <p>The Assessor must confirm if there are any duties that are performed at 100% productivity. If there are duties performed at 100%, the assessor must not time these duties, but should include them (maximum 100%) in the productivity calculation so that the final productivity result accurately and fairly reflects the employee’s performance in all their duties.</p> <p>The Assessor must assess the duties that are actually performed by the employee, even if there are more or less duties on the duty description. Jobs are often modified for people with disability and therefore standard position descriptions will not always fully reflect the duties actually performed by the employee with disability.</p> <p>The Assessor, the employer, the employee (and nominee where applicable), and any other parties to the SWS Wage Assessment</p>

Who is Responsible:	What is Required:
	<p>Agreement must agree on the duties to be assessed before proceeding with the assessment.</p> <p>Establishing performance standards</p> <p>The Assessment requires a performance standard to be set. This is the minimum work performance standard that the employer will accept to pay the full award wage.</p> <p>The Assessor must discuss with the employer the selection of a suitable co-worker to use to time as a method of establishing the performance standard. Do not select the highest or lowest performing co-worker. Even the average performing co-worker may be doing more than the basic performance level required. It is the performance standard considered as the minimum performance acceptable to the employer that must be established.</p>
<p>3. Assessor Undertakes the Assessment.</p> <p><i>Disability Employment National Panel of Assessors Program Grant Agreement 2018-2023 Clause References:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clause 7 • Clause 71 • Clause 72 	<p>The Assessor should phone the employer within 12 hours of the agreed time to conduct the Assessment and confirm with the employer that the Assessment will be conducted at the agreed time. The Assessor should explain the assessment procedure and the need for timings to the employer and any other parties with whom the assessment process has not already been discussed.</p> <p>The Assessor should put the employee at ease and take care to make the assessment as stress-free as possible.</p> <p>Observe and time performance</p> <p>Using the agreed duty and task description and performance standard, the Assessor will observe and time the employee doing their tasks, allowing the employee to stop and repeat the process if something has unduly affected their productivity. Interruptions may be common in busy customer focussed work environments such as a busy supermarket and the assessor may need to repeat their timings.</p> <p>The Assessor should maintain a flexible approach when taking timings and continue to take timings until satisfied there is a good consistency in results and an accurate measurement of work productivity. Generally, an Assessment requires a minimum of three and a maximum of eight observations to be recorded for each task.</p> <p>The Assessor should not time breaks if they conform to what is accepted in the workplace, however, unacceptable time away from tasks should be included and timed as a part of the duty in which it occurs. Acceptable breaks can be counted at 100% (e.g. meetings, morning tea break).</p> <p>The Assessor must always measure exactly the same thing for the employee as they did when setting the performance standard. For example, if the performance standard was set during a very busy time of the day, the employee's productivity must be measured at a similar busy time, where relevant.</p>

Who is Responsible:	What is Required:
	<p>The employee should have the same level of supervision during the Assessment as they normally would while doing their tasks.</p> <p>How to do time weightings</p> <p>The Assessor must assign a time to all duties, even those performed at 100% productivity (maximum of 100% to be recorded). The assessor must give a weighting to each duty the employee performs according to the amount of time spent on that duty (usually per week, but could be per day or fortnight). Duties are time weighted so that lower productivity on a minor duty (or vice versa) does not unduly affect the wage rate.</p> <p>Example of Time Weighting</p> <p>An employee in a plant nursery spends 60% of her time on one duty at which she achieves 70% of full award level productivity. She spends 30% of her time on a second duty in which she achieves 50% of full award level productivity. The remainder of her time is spent on a duty in which her productivity is 40% of the standard.</p> <p>Without a time weighting, her productivity rating would be 53% - an average of the comparative timings of 70%, 50% and 40%, for example</p> <p>Duty 1 – 70% Duty 2 – 50% Duty 3 – 40% Result – 53%</p> <p>With a time weighting, the person’s productivity rating (without supervision or other adjustment) is 61%, e.g.</p> <p>Duty 1 – 0.7 (70%) x 0.6 (60%) = 0.42 (42%) Duty 2 – 0.5 (50%) x 0.3 (30%) = 0.15 (15%) Duty 3 – 0.4 (40%) x 0.1 (10%) = 0.04 (4%) Result – 0.61 (61%)</p> <p>If required, the Assessor must request any existing information from the DES Provider and the employer to verify the amount of time spent on each duty. If the amount of time spent on each duty fluctuates, the parties to the assessment may agree to use an average time per week.</p> <p>Rounding</p> <p>The Assessor must round each productivity assessment calculation to two decimal places, i.e. all productivity results for duties and tasks must be recorded to two decimal places. The productivity rate for each duty must be added and then the total productivity rate must be rounded to the nearest whole decile that best reflects the employee’s total productivity (e.g. usually 53% would be rounded to 50% and 55+% would be rounded to 60%.</p>

Who is Responsible:	What is Required:
	<p>If the Assessor considers that the employee requires significantly more supervision from their employer than is required in the minimum basic standard, the Assessor may round an overall productivity rating down to the nearest whole decile (e.g. the 57% rating could be rounded to 50% if there is significantly more supervision required. Conversely, a productivity rating may be rounded up if the employee is highly focussed and a steady worker, e.g. a 53% rate could be rounded to 60%). The Assessor should carefully consider any rounding that is other than to the nearest whole decile and in particular, should only make the decisions to round down when it is very clear that there is a high level of supervision required.</p> <p>Any rounding must be within the percentile band in which it falls.</p> <p>After the final SWS productivity rating, including any rounding that is calculated, the Assessor discusses the result with the employer and other parties to the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement and confirms the final rating.</p> <p>If any parties dispute the rating made as a result of the Assessment, the Assessor should work with the parties to resolve the dispute. Some things that the Assessor can do, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct more timings, if the dispute relates to the results of particular duties • reconsider the rounding decision, taking into consideration the views of all the parties to the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement. <p>If any party to the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement still wishes to dispute the result they should contact the Department's Assessment Team, who will either provide the party with the details of how to submit a request for a review of the Assessment; or if their dispute relates to industrial relations matters, direct them to the relevant industrial relations authority which has jurisdiction in the matter.</p>
<p>4. Assessor</p> <p>SWS Wage Assessment Agreement is prepared and signed.</p> <p><i>Disability Employment National Panel of Assessors Program Grant Agreement 2018-2023 Clause References:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clause 7 • Clause 72 	<p>After the Assessor has determined the final total SWS productivity rating, which the employee (and nominee), employer and any other parties to the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement have agreed to, the following things must happen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Assessor enters the productivity rate into the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement • the employer uses the agreed SWS productivity rate to calculate the SWS pro-rata weekly wage, applicable to the classification of work in which the employee is being employed • the Assessor enters the SWS weekly wage rate in the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement, and the Assessor must ensure that the amount entered in the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement is not below the SWS Minimum Weekly Wage, as determined by the Annual Wage Review.

Who is Responsible:	What is Required:
	<p>The current SWS Minimum Wage is available from the Fair Work Commission.</p> <p>The Assessor should inform the employer that they need to advise the Department’s Assessment Team if the industrial instrument expires or is replaced by a new one so it can be updated in the Department’s IT system. The assessor should also check that all contact details are included on the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement, including employer name and phone numbers.</p> <p>The Assessor should provide a copy of the signed SWS Wage Assessment Agreement to the employer and employee, and the employee’s nominee who is a party to the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement, if they request a copy. The assessor may also provide a copy to the DES Provider, with the consent of the employee or their nominee.</p> <p>The Assessor should advise the parties to the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement that a Review Assessment will occur in 12 months’ time, or earlier if the employee’s productivity has either significantly increased or declined, or if there has been a significant change in duties. In such cases, any party to the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement may request a review assessment by contacting the Department’s Assessment Team.</p>
<p>5. Employer and Assessor Employer sends a copy of the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement to the industrial authority, where relevant.</p>	<p>The employer sends a copy of the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement to the relevant industrial authority, where required by the industrial relations SWS provisions. The Assessor may do this on behalf of the employer where convenient.</p> <p>If the relevant industrial instrument containing the SWS provisions is a Federal instrument, the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement is sent to Fair Work Commission.</p> <p>If the relevant industrial instrument containing the SWS provisions is a State instrument, the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement is usually sent to the relevant State Government Industrial Registrar.</p> <p>Assessors should check the signed SWS Wage Assessment Agreement thoroughly before it is sent to the industrial authority (including employer name and phone numbers), as this will ensure that only valid agreements are signed and lodged.</p> <p>The Assessor should obtain the details of any requirements to lodge the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement by checking the industrial instrument which is being used as the basis to employ the person and/or by checking with the Fair Work Infoline or the Fair Work Ombudsman.</p> <p>Refer to the SWS Handbook for Open Employment for more information this is available on JobAccess.</p>
<p>6. Assessor Assessment is submitted on the Department’s IT System.</p>	<p>The Assessor enters the details of the Assessment and the date the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement was signed into the Department’s IT System. This must be submitted within seven business days of the date the assessment is conducted.</p>

Who is Responsible:	What is Required:
<p><i>Disability Employment National Panel of Assessors Program Grant Agreement 2018-2023 Clause References:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clause 7 • Clause 72 • Clause 73 	<p>If the Department, at its absolute discretion, considers an Assessment or SWS Assessment Report is unsatisfactory or incomplete, the provider may be required to conduct a further Assessment in whole or in part or resubmit a revised SWS Assessment Report. This will be done without any additional charges or fees.</p> <p>Where the Assessment and SWS Assessment Report will jointly take more than five hours to complete, the Provider may apply to the Department for additional Fees. This must be done prior to submitting the report.</p> <p>Where the Provider seeks the Department’s agreement to pay the additional fees, the Provider must meet additional requirements.</p> <p>Apart from the above, no further payments or reimbursements will be made by the Department to the Provider for the service.</p>

Managing Availability

Process	Notes
<p>Availability</p> <p>An employee of the NPA Provider with the appropriate authority to access the Department’s IT System to manage the availability of their Organisation to be allocated SWS Work Orders in each ESA.</p> <p>The Department’s IT System will not allow the allocation of any new SWS Work Orders to an NPA Provider in an ESA where the <i>Available</i> indicator has been set to No.</p>	<p>Although this should happen rarely, there may be occasions where the NPA Provider is temporarily unavailable to be allocated assessments in an ESA. For example, if all assessors are unavailable due to illness.</p> <p>If this occurs the Department’s Assessment Team should be informed and then the <i>Available</i> indicator should be set to ‘No’ with a date and appropriate comments entered in the IT system. If the NPA Provider is available to receive Work Orders, the <i>Available</i> indicator should be set to ‘Yes’.</p> <p>Availability is managed at the ESA level and done through the Outlet Region screen in ESSWeb.</p>

Process	Notes
<p>Capacity</p> <p>An employee of the NPA Provider with the appropriate authority to access the Department's IT System to manage the capacity of their Organisation to be concurrently allocated SWS or OSA Work Orders in each ESA.</p>	<p>The Assessment Capacity indicator is a useful tool for Providers who are concerned that they will be allocated too many SWS or OSA Work Orders at a time.</p> <p>The <i>Assessment Capacity</i> indicator determines the maximum number of assessments that the NPA Provider is capable of completing at the same time. This is recorded for each ESA that the NPA Provider services.</p> <p>If the <i>Assessment Capacity</i> is set to '0' then there is no limit on capacity. The Department's IT System will not restrict the number of SWS or OSA Work Orders allocated.</p> <p>The <i>Assessment Capacity</i> indicator is ignored if the <i>Available</i> indicator is set to No, as no Work Order allocations will be made.</p> <p>Availability is managed at the ESA level and done through the Outlet region screen in ESSWeb.</p>
<p>Allocation</p> <p>The Department's IT System will not allocate any new SWS or OSA Work Orders to an NPA Provider in an ESA where the Assessment Capacity indicator is greater than or equal to the total number of SWS and OSA assessments that have been allocated but not completed. This number includes SWS and OSA Work Orders that have not yet been accepted.</p>	<p>Example</p> <p>An NPA Provider has the <i>Available</i> indicator set to 'Yes' and the <i>Assessment Capacity</i> set to four. The NPA Provider has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepted two Work Orders, for OSA reports that have not been submitted or cancelled • Accepted one Work Order, for a SWS report that has not been submitted or closed • Has one OSA Work Order that has been allocated but awaiting acceptance. <p>In this scenario, the <i>Assessment Capacity</i> Indicator is equal to the number of OSA and SWS Work Orders that have been allocated but not completed. The Department's IT System will not make a further allocation to this NPA Provider in this ESA until at least one of the OSA or SWS reports is submitted or closed/cancelled, or the OSA Work Order awaiting acceptance is 'not accepted'.</p>
<p>Allocation methodology between NPA providers</p>	<p>To encourage a more equal distribution of SWS Work Orders, the Department's IT System will allocate a SWS Work Order to the NPA Provider with the lowest count of currently allocated OSA and SWS Work Orders in the ESA. If multiple Providers have the same lowest count then the SWS Work Order will go to the Provider with the least recently allocated SWS Work Order for the ESA.</p>

Process	Notes
<p>Allocation of Initial assessments</p>	<p>Once a SWS Application has been approved by the Department's Assessment Team, the system will automatically allocate a SWS Work Order to an NPA Provider.</p> <p>The Contract End Date for the Work Order will default to 10 weeks from the date of the SWS Application being approved, but may be reduced or extended by the Department's Assessment Team as required. For example, the Contract End Date might be reduced for a Job at Risk so that the assessment can be completed sooner.</p>
<p>Allocation of review assessments</p>	<p>The Work Order for a Review Assessment is automatically allocated to an NPA Provider 43 weeks after the SWS Contract End Date of the previous SWS Assessment. If a Work Order is rejected, the system will automatically reallocate to a different NPA Provider.</p> <p>The Contract End Date of the Work Order will usually be 10 weeks in the future, but this period may be reduced if the Work Order has been previously offered and not accepted by another NPA Provider.</p> <p>A Review Assessment may also be manually arranged by the Department's Assessment Team at an earlier date, if required because of a significant change in work tasks or employee productivity.</p>