



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Disability Employment Services National Panel of Assessors: Industry Information Paper

August 2017



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1. Background

As announced in the June 2017 Disability Employment Services (DES) Reform 2018 [Industry Information Paper](#), the National Panel of Assessors (NPA) provider arrangements will take effect from 1 July 2018.

1.1 NPA Services

The NPA is a standing panel of independent assessment service providers, contracted to provide Ongoing Support Assessment (OSA), Supported Wage System (SWS) and Workplace Modifications Scheme (WMS) assessments.

NPA panel providers do independent evaluations of a workplace and a person's individual job requirements or needs. This evaluation can include an assessment of the physical environment, analysis of specific work tasks, review of injury-prevention strategies and recommendations for workplace modifications.

NPAs work closely with employment service providers, particularly DES providers, who schedule and attend OSA assessments for DES participants, and can apply for SWS and EAF on behalf of their clients.

Panel providers are expected to have an understanding of employment support requirements for people with disability and mental illness, including workplace barriers. They are required to exercise expert judgement in making appropriate and accurate recommendations.

OSAs independently assess the ongoing support needs of participants where a DES provider identifies a participant likely to need ongoing support in the workplace to retain their job. This assessment may include collecting of information regarding:

- the person's employment
- barriers to employment
- assistance received from their DES provider or from other services
- meeting with the participant, their employer and DES provider, and
- inspecting the participant's place of employment.

The responsibilities and the actions required to complete an OSA are outlined in the [Disability Employment Services Ongoing Support Assessment Guidelines V2.2](#).

If a person with disability is not able to work at the same productivity levels as their co-workers due to the effects of their disability, and the person with disability meets the impairment criteria for receipt of the Disability Support Pension, the person may be eligible to participate in the SWS. A SWS assessment will determine the eligible employee's productivity so it can be applied to their wage, and facilitate an agreed SWS wage agreement between the employer and employee and submitted to the relevant industrial legislative authority. The process for arranging and conducting a SWS Assessment is outlined in the [Australian Government Supported Wage System Assessment Guidelines V1.3](#). Further information about SWS, including the SWS Handbook, is available on the Australian Government's website [JobAccess](#).

The WMS assessment provides for employees with disability to identify their barriers to accessing or doing their work, and to recommend equipment, modifications and other support to help them overcome these barriers. WMS assessors need to have an in-depth understanding of industry building and accessibility codes and human physiology. An NPA provider may also provide specialist WMS assessment services, and may be requested to do specific assessments, such as for people with visual impairment or spinal injuries. Information about the responsibilities and actions to do WMS assessments are found in the [Australian Government Workplace Modifications Assessment Guidelines V1.2](#).

1.2 DES-NPA 2018 Grant Application

The Department of Social Services (DSS) will invite applications for a non-competitive grant application process to deliver assessment services as part of the DES-NPA 2018 standing panel. The DES-NPA will run over **five years** from **1 July 2018 to 30 June 2023**. The program was announced as part of the Australian Government's commitment to improving employment outcomes for people with disability and getting more people with disability into jobs.

The application process will be administered by the Community Grants Hub on behalf of the DSS under a Whole of Australian Government initiative to streamline grant processes across agencies and according to *the* [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines \(CGRGs\)](#).

DES-NPA 2018 applicants may submit an application to provide either or both of the following combinations of assessments:

- OSA and SWS assessments together, and
- WMS assessments.

Applicants may also nominate to provide specialist WMS Assessment services.

Broadly, the range of assessment services required under DES-NPA 2018 will remain the same as currently being delivered by the NPA. In addition, there may be variations to the way the SWS operates in Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) which choose to use the SWS under the *Supported Employment Services Award 2010* (SES Award). If these variations are agreed by the Fair Work Commission, their requirements will be included in the SWS Handbook and relevant guidelines, with training available.

The DES-NPA 2018 Grant Application will be advertised on the [Community Grants Hub website](#) and interested organisations are encouraged to subscribe to receive Hub updates and other grant alerts. There will be no requirement to submit a Registration of Interest prior to the grant application for this process.

The grant application process for DES NPA will be an open non-competitive application process. DSS reserves the right to directly approach approved panel members to deliver services in areas where there is no or low take up.

1.3 DES-NPA 2018 – indicative timeline

Below is an indicative timeline for the DES-NPA 2018 grant application process. DSS is aware that the DES-NPA 2018 grant application process is significantly different from previous purchasing processes.

Indicative date*	Milestone
2nd week of September 2017	Grant application opens (six weeks)
February 2018	Announcement of successful Grant applicants
March - May 2018	Grant agreements executed
May 2018	Transition period
1 July 2018	DES Grant Agreement commencement date

*Timeframes may change within the start and end date of this process.

1.4 SWS for Supported Employment in Australian Disability Enterprises

In December 2012 the Federal Court of Australia found the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool indirectly discriminated against two Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE) employees with an intellectual disability. Since then DSS has been actively supporting evidence-based testing of possible solutions for future wage assessment practices, through resolution in the Fair Work Commission (FWC). Parties involved in the FWC resolution included unions, advocates for people with disability, representatives of employee’s families and carers, ADEs and National Disability Services.

An extensive trial and demonstration was done in 2016 and 2017 to test variations to the way the SWS operates in ADEs which choose to use the SWS under the SES Award. In June 2017, the FWC parties agreed to a proposal to amend the SES Award to include variations that were tested. The proposal has been submitted to the FWC Full Bench for consideration and is available on the FWC website under matter AM2014/286. Further information will become available once a decision has been made.

If agreed, DSS recommended the changes come into effect from 1 July 2018, so that change management processes are put in place for the SWS variations to be implemented effectively by ADEs and assessors, and minimises disruption to employees who are assessed using the SWS. If agreed, the amendments will change the operation of the SWS under the SES Award only. The operation of the SWS will not change in open employment.

The amendments will not require ADEs to stop using other wage assessment tools. ADEs can use any approved wage assessment tool under the SES Award, as long as those tools remain in the Award.

2. NPA Fees

The grant opportunity is for membership of the NPA standing panel. Approved panel members will get fees for providing a range of assessment services to help people with disability in the workplace.

2.1 Schedule of NPA Fees

Table 1 is the fee arrangements for each of the assessment types applicable to the NPA. **Table 2** is the fee arrangements for assessments in remote areas, and assessments requiring travel fees.

The fees for the NPA will be indexed annually on 1 July, with the first indexation point on 1 July 2019.

Where an OSA and SWS Assessment are undertaken concurrently, the panel provider may be eligible for both an OSA fee and an SWS fee.

Table 1 - Fees for NPA

Payment types	Assessment fee	Additional assessment fee
Ongoing Support Assessment Fee	\$420	Nil
Supported Wage System Assessment Fee	\$600	\$120 per hour (up to \$480)
Workplace Modifications Assessment Fee	\$120 per hour (up to \$600)	\$120 per hour (up to \$480)

Table 2 - Remote loading and travel fees for NPA

Payment type	Assessment fee with 1.7 loading	Additional assessment fee with 1.7 loading	Travel fee
Ongoing Support Assessment Fee	Nil	Nil	Nil
Supported Wage System Assessment Fee	\$1,020	\$204 per hour (up to \$816)	Nil
Workplace Modifications Assessment Fee	Nil	Nil	\$50 per hour and other reimbursements as applicable (for travel in excess of 200 km)

2.1.1 Ongoing Support Assessment Fees

An assessment fee of \$420 (including GST) is payable to providers on completion and acceptance of an OSA report by the DSS.

2.1.2 Supported Wage System Fees

An assessment fee of \$600 (including GST) is payable on completion of an SWS Assessment and SWS Wage Assessment Agreement. If an assessment will take more than five hours to complete, DSS may approve payment for up to an additional four hours at an hourly rate of \$120 (including GST).

A loading of 70 per cent will be applied to the assessment fee where the assessment is completed in a Community Development Program Region.

2.1.3 Workplace Modifications Fees

An hourly rate of \$120 (including GST) will be payable to panel providers on completion of a Workplace Modifications Assessment. If an assessment will take more than five hours to complete, DSS may approve payment for up to an additional four hours at an hourly rate of \$120 (including GST).

Panel providers who complete Workplace Modifications Assessments that require them to travel in excess of 200 kilometres for a return trip, may claim kilometre allowance and travel time at the rate of \$50 (including GST) an hour, for a maximum of eight hours per day. Travel time is not part of the time allocated for assessment services. For travel that includes an essential overnight stay, costs for meals and accommodation may also be claimed. Payments are reimbursed basis on receipt of a tax invoice and evidence of travel expenditure, up to the *Reasonable daily allowance amounts* (published annually by the Australian Taxation Office), calculated at the rate of an employee with an annual salary of \$117,450 or below.

3. Grant eligibility criteria

Your application must meet all the eligibility criteria to be considered.

3.1 Who is eligible to apply?

To be eligible you must:

- be one of the following entity types:
 - Aboriginal Corporation
 - Australian Government
 - Private Company
 - Public Company
 - Incorporated Cooperative
 - Trustee on behalf of Trust

- Incorporated Association
- Organisation established through a specific piece of Commonwealth or State/Territory legislation
- Individual/Sole Trader
- Local Government
- Non-Entity Joint Venture
- Partnership
- State/Territory Government
- Other Incorporated Entity, and
- have legal personality.

An individual or organisation will have legal personality if it has the right and obligations of a legal person. These include, but are not limited to, the right to buy, sell, assign or lease any property; enter into contracts; and sue and be sued in their own name.

Current NPA panel members are encouraged to re-apply for panel membership.

Applications from consortia are acceptable, provided a lead applicant is nominated and all members of the consortia are eligible as per the criteria above.

3.2 What qualifications or skills are required?

It is essential that all nominated OSA/SWS assessors possess a minimum of a diploma or higher-level qualification in one or more of the following fields:

- psychology
- rehabilitation counsellor
- vocational training, or
- other diploma or higher-level qualification which DS S considers is relevant to providing the required assessment services.

All nominated Workplace Modification Assessment assessors must possess a minimum of a diploma or higher level qualification in one or more of the following fields:

- occupational therapy
- physiotherapy
- exercise physiologist, and
- medical practitioner.

All nominated qualifications will have a full (non-provisional or restricted) qualification that is registered with Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) or nominated qualification recognised or accredited with one of the following associations:

- Occupational therapist (registered)
- Physiotherapist (registered)
- Exercise physiologist (accredited with Exercise and Sports Science Australia)
- Medical practitioner (registered)
- Rehabilitation counsellor (recognised with Australia Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors or Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia), and
- Nurse (registered).

If nominated assessors possess a qualification in another relevant area, successful applicants will need to provide evidence at a later date or through formal negotiations that this diploma or higher-level qualification is relevant to conducting the assessment services. This may include a transcript of relevant subjects completed and a written explanation of their relevance to the assessment services. Based on this information, and any other information available to it, DSS will determine whether the qualifications submitted are relevant to the assessment services, and whether the nominated assessor meets the mandatory qualification requirements.

It is also mandatory that each nominated assessor possess a minimum of two years practical experience in the disability employment or related sector.

DSS will recognise any previously approved NPA accreditation applied during the 2010-2018 NPA Deed of Standing Offer.

Glossary

Term	Definition
assessment criteria	The specified principles or standards which applications will be judged. These criteria are used to assess the merits of proposals and, in the case of a competitive granting activity, to determine applicant rankings. (as defined in the CGRGs)
commencement date	The expected start date for the grant activity.
completion date	The expected date that the grant activity must be completed and the grant money spent by.
date of effect	This will depend on the particular grant. It can be the date in which a grant agreement is signed or a specified starting date. Where there is no grant agreement, entities must publish information on individual grants as soon as practicable (as defined in the CGRGs).
eligibility criteria	The principles, standards or rules that a grant applicant must meet to qualify for consideration of a grant. Eligibility criteria may apply in addition to assessment criteria (as defined in the CGRGs).
Commonwealth entity	A Department of State, or a Parliamentary Department, or a listed entity or a body corporate established by a law of the Commonwealth. See subsections 10(1) and (2) of the PGPA Act.
Community Development Programme Region	Community Development Programme (CDP) regions are those regions in which CDP is delivered, as defined by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)	Financial assistance provided by the Australian Government to eligible people with disability and mental health condition and employers to buy work related modifications and services.
grant	<p>A grant is an arrangement for the provision of financial assistance by the Commonwealth or on behalf of the Commonwealth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) under which relevant money or other Consolidated Revenue Fund money, is to be paid to a recipient other than the Commonwealth b) which is intended to assist the recipient achieve its goals

Term	Definition
	<p>c) which is intended to help address one or more of the Australian Government’s policy objectives, and</p> <p>d) under which the recipient may be required to act in accordance with specified terms or conditions.</p> <p>(as defined in the CGRGs section 2.3)</p>
grant activity	The project/tasks/services that the grant recipient is required to undertake with the grant money as described in the Grant Agreement. (Proposed definition in the grants taxonomy)
grant agreement	Grant agreement means the contract template used by Australian Government entities stating the mutual obligations to the provision of the grant. The Australian Government is standardising and streamlining grant agreements between the Commonwealth and grant recipients to allow grant recipients to engage more easily and efficiently with the Commonwealth (as defined in the CGRGs).
grant opportunity	A notice published on the Community Grants Hub and GrantConnect advertising the availability of Commonwealth grants. (Proposed definition in the grants taxonomy)
grant program	May be advertised within the ‘Forecast Opportunity’ (FO) section of GrantConnect to provide a consolidated view of associated grant opportunities and provide strategic context for specific grant opportunities.
grant recipient	An individual/organisation that has been awarded a grant. (Proposed definition in the grants taxonomy)
Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Program	Described within the entity’s PBS programs, each link to a single outcome and provide transparency for funding decisions. These high level PBS programs often comprise a number of lower-level, more publicly recognised programs, some of which will be Grant Programs. A PBS Program may have more than one Grant Program associated with it, and each of these may have one or more grant opportunities.
selection criteria	Comprise eligibility criteria and assessment criteria (as defined in the CGRGs).
selection process	The method used to select potential grant recipients. This process may involve comparative assessment of applications or the assessment of applications against

Term	Definition
	the eligibility criteria and/or the assessment criteria (as defined in the CGRGs).