

Webinar for: Department of Social Services Discussion Paper: Families and Children Services 2020 presentation briefing

Questions taken on notice due to time constraints

Consultation Process & Submissions

1. Is it possible to receive a copy of the questions captured within the Online Survey Questions, so that organisations can prepare a consolidated response given there is a 500 word limit per question?

Yes, a Word and PDF version of the Online Guided Questionnaire are now available on the DSS Engage website.

Funding Extensions and Grant Agreements

2. Does this mean that Specialist Family Violence Services (SFVS) funded separately (as part of the 4th National Action Plan) will cease at the end of their current contracts?

Specialised Family Violence Services (SFVS) funded under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children (2010-2022)* (National Plan) run until 30 June 2022. The next National Plan is being developed by Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments. Stakeholder consultations will commence in 2021 to determine the scope and priorities of the next National Plan which builds on the success of the current plan, fills the gaps in our approach and is responsive to new and emerging issues in keeping women and children safe from violence.

3. Will we be able to negotiate the base payment? Where we can show increased need in our communities, will this be considered?

Funding extensions from 1 July 2021 will be at current funded levels plus indexation. Additionally, if Social and Community Services Supplement (SACS) has previously been paid, then an equivalent amount will be built into the base payment from 1 July 2021. The department will work with providers to ensure the successful implementation of any necessary program changes within the existing funding levels.

4. Will existing funding amounts be sufficient to enable the proposed integration of Children and Parenting Services (CaPS) and Budget Based Funded (BBF) services into the Communities for Children Facilitating Partners (CfC FP) program? Will additional funds be available to ensure CfC FPs are sufficiently resourced?

These policy ideas are in the very initial stages of planning and consultation. If progressed, the department would work with providers to successfully transition relevant CaPS and BBF services to CfC FP within existing funding levels. CfC FPs have substantial flexibility to use funding as needed to support direct service delivery, capability building and community coordination.

5. Will longer term grant agreements lock providers to delivery of specified and rigid work arrangements for the duration? How can providers ensure changes to service delivery arrangements are reflected in the Grant Agreement?

Service providers can contact their Funding Arrangement Manager to discuss current service delivery, including emerging issues.

Providers may also submit this type of information to the department through their Activity Work Plans.

Additionally, the department is consulting with service providers through early 2021 to discuss current service delivery arrangements, and potential program changes.

Outcomes & Outcomes Framework

6. Will the department develop supplementary reporting templates which allow Community Partners to provide commentary on their project outcomes? The Data Exchange (DEX) does not capture these. Also noting that innovative projects are best assessed using input and formative evaluation as opposed to outcomes evaluation.

Generally, the Data Exchange (DEX) has been developed to capture the service delivery that occurs directly to clients where a measurable outcome is expected to occur. Community Partners are able to capture service delivery information and outcomes data achieved by clients.

The department appreciates that quantitative data in DEX is only one source of information and there are other sources, including those provided through Activity Work Plans that are equally important.

7. How are children, young people and families being engaged on the development of the outcome's framework?

The department's submission process as part of this consultation is open to anyone and we are interested in hearing a range of views. The department is aware that some organisations are in the process of collating practitioner and client views to inform their response and this will help ensure we have the feedback required for a deeper conversation.

The proposed outcomes framework will also link with the development of the successor plan to the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*. At the Community Services Ministers' meeting on 20 March 2020, Ministers agreed ensuring the voice of the child is included in decision-making would be one of the key principles underpinning the development of the successor plan. The department expects to conduct targeted consultations with children and young people in the first half of 2021 on the successor plan for the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*.

8. Will the outcomes framework be universally applied across providers? Or might you consider a tiered system where providers who receive a relatively small amount of funding might have a proportionally lighter reporting requirement?

The outcomes framework will apply universally across providers. Reporting requirements are also expected to be broadly consistent across individual programs. For example, we would expect all FMHSS providers to have the same reporting requirements. However, these might be a bit different to the reporting requirements for the CfC FP program.

DSS Data Exchange, Outcomes Measurement & Reporting

9. Will CfC FPs have access to the SCORE data of Community Partners (CPs) - this is critical for our whole of community planning?

CfC lead organisations and delivery partners have the ability to share their data via a handshake agreement. The 'handshake' function was added to the Data Exchange in late 2017 as a way for delivery organisations to agree to show their aggregated data to their lead organisation in Data Exchange standard reports. As a new function, it was only applied to the Organisation Overview report.

It was always our intention to extend the functionality to Partnership Approach reports at a later time, however Partnership Approach reports are more complex, and therefore this has taken longer to develop. Development work continues and we are anticipating the handshake functionality to be made available to Partnership Approach reports early next year. The handshake is intended to be applied to all existing Partnership Approach reports (e.g. Client Outcomes, Community Outcomes, Service Footprint, Resource Planning, etc.). Community Profiles report will be excluded from this, as it does not contain Data Exchange data.

The department is keen to keep working with you to ensure you are able to access community partner data to support community planning and values your feedback.

10. For programs in the Evidence Based Guidebook, will more work be done to identify appropriate assessment tools, and consequently a SCORE translation matrix for those tools?

Yes, more work will be done to identify appropriate assessment tools and to consider whether to translate these into SCORE, especially when providers suggest specific tools. Organisations are encouraged to discuss the translation of popular instruments with their Funding Arrangement Managers to raise with the relevant policy area.

11. Will programs that currently complete bulk data uploads to DEX be able to continue with this method?

Yes. Bulk XML upload will continue to be a method via which organisations can upload their data. Organisations are able to upload their data via the bulk XML method as often as they like throughout a reporting period. The department strongly encourages organisations not leave their upload to the last minute.

12. I wonder if a tool such as the Personal Wellbeing Index or similar could be rolled out across the country to get a common measurement for community SCORE data?

The department wants to remain flexible to allow providers to choose the tool that best suits their program. If providers think the Personal Wellbeing Index would be of value as a common measurement for community SCORE data, then this is something we can explore through the consultation process.

13. For funded organisations that deliver single session (short duration) programs... Will expectations with regard to the amount of data collected and subsequently evidencing outcomes be considered?

Yes, the department will consider this.

The DEX Protocols outline that in short to medium term service delivery, a SCORE is recorded in two parts: an initial SCORE (also known as a pre-SCORE) should be recorded against a session toward the beginning of service delivery; and a follow-up SCORE (also known as a post-SCORE) should be recorded against a session toward the end of service delivery.

The department appreciates that single, one off sessions mean that it's difficult to conduct a pre and post SCORE and will consider how to evaluate partial assessments (in which only a pre or post assessment is undertaken) when determining if an organisation is meeting its reporting obligations.

14. Will CfCs have the ability to tailor an outcomes measurement tool (or develop their own in consultation with AIFS) that suits the local context (culturally and socially appropriate) and mitigates what is already a high level of *research fatigue* in our community?

SCORE allows organisations to measure client and community outcomes using their own self-selected tools and methods, and to report these outcomes in a way that is consistent and comparable. This includes tools that you may develop to suit local contexts. There is significant guidance on how to input SCORE data on the Data Exchange website. We are always interested to hear about the tools you are using. This consultation will give us useful insight into improving SCORE in the future.

15. We currently measure parent outcomes, as parents are our client. Is this sufficient, or are you expecting consideration of both child and parent outcomes?
Providers will be expected to measure the outcomes that are most relevant to their activity. So if through your program logic you outline that your activity is aimed at achieving changes in a parent's outcomes, then that is what you should measure. For example, the Parent Empowerment and Efficacy Measure (PEEM) tool is designed to measure the efficacy of individuals to parent, so this would be an appropriate measurement tool for a parenting program or activity.

16. How will outcomes for community capacity building programs be measured? Will there be outcomes tools developed to support this?
These outcomes are amount the most difficult to measure. We could consider how to develop outcomes tools to support this but in the first instance, we'd be keen to hear what you think is necessary.

Performance Reviews & Accountability

17. How does accountability align with Accreditation processes - NSMHS, HSQF, NDIS, and the planned National Principles for Child Safe Organisations?

All service providers are required, through their grant agreements, to monitor and comply with any codes of ethics, regulations, other industry standards and other service compliance requirements relevant to their grant activities. For example, providers are required to comply with the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework, under which, adopting and implementing the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations is one key requirement. Service providers should refer to their individual grant agreements and Operational Guidelines (where applicable) for further guidance on accreditation requirements.

Capability Building & Innovation

18. Will the Expert Panel still support CfC FPs in the next iteration and will there be flexibility (other than what was already discussed) around how to meet the Evidence Based Program (EBP) requirements?

Currently, the AIFS Expert Panel Project continues to offer free support to Families and Children service providers to plan, implement and evaluate their programs using evidence-based approaches.

Future arrangements beyond 30 June 2021 regarding the Expert Panel Project have not been finalised.

In terms of the future of the EBP requirements, the department will work with providers to ensure the successful implementation of any program changes relating to evidence-based requirements (EBRs) within the CfC FP sub-activity.

19. Will there still be scope for state-wide services or will funding focus on national services together with neighbourhood services?

The department is proposing funding extensions for current in-scope programs based on their current service footprint. That means if a service is currently delivering state-wide services, then the expectation is that they will continue delivering these services on a state-wide basis. If there are any issues related to service delivery areas, organisations should contact their Funding Arrangement Managers in the first instance.

20. Our organisation is currently delivering some innovative programs with positive longer-term outcomes. Will there be support to develop program logic for these types of programs?

The department is interested to hear about innovative programs that are showing positive longer-term outcomes. The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) Expert Panel Project can already provide free support to you to develop a program logic for programs that demonstrate promising outcomes. Future capacity building is being discussed through this consultation process.

21. How can the department support organisations that want to develop evidence-based programs?

The AIFS Expert Panel Project continues to offer free support to Families and Children service providers to plan, implement and evaluate their programs using evidence-based approaches. Service providers can also visit the AIFS Child Family Community Australia Information Exchange for information and resources for professionals working in the child, family and community welfare sector.

Future arrangements related to capability building are under consideration and will be informed by these consultations.

Sub-Activity or Program-specific

Communities for Children Facilitating Partners (CfC FP)

22. Is CfC FP expected to develop a new Strategic Plan for the 5 years

Yes, a new Community Strategic Plan (CSP) will be a requirement under the new CfC FP funding agreements.

The department is aware that a reasonable lead in time is required to undertake this process. In terms of indicative dates – the department will look to distribute a refreshed CSP template before July 2021, following discussion of proposed updates to the CSP template with Advisory Group members. Providers would have at least six months to complete their CSP.

23. Can some of the 50% EB requirement expenditure can be used for data collection and evaluation?

Yes. Where an organisation has undertaken data collection and evaluation activities that are directly attributable to adhering to the Evidence Based requirement, then that expenditure can be captured against the 50 per cent requirement.

Children and Parenting Support (CaPS)

24. A service Map of Family and Children programs and Family Mental Health Support Services (FMHSS) would be helpful in commenting on the proposed integration of these programs please

Thank you for your suggestion, we will consider developing service maps to assist with consultation as these proposals are developed.

For clarity, there are two separate proposals presented to improve coordination and collaboration between services.

Firstly, the department is proposing to bring Family Mental Health Support Services (FMHSS) (as a whole) to sit under the Families and Children Activity. Given the focus on early intervention support with a family and carer focus, there is good synergy with other Families and Children programs. Information on FMHSS locations is listed on the DSS website, under [‘Locating a Family Mental Health Support Services \(FMHSS\) service’](#).

Secondly, the proposed integration of programs includes merging CaPS, BBF services into the CfC FP program where suitable. This proposal is still in the very early stages of development, and the department will work with impacted providers to make informed decisions during this process.

25. Is there additional information on the difference between the CaPS funding for National providers being 5 years vs the CaPS funding for 2 years?

Five CaPS services are receiving a five-year funding extension from 1 July 2021 because they are delivered centrally with national reach. Because these services are delivered at a national level, they cannot be better integrated into the CfC FP program at a local, community level.

Other CaPS services will be extended by two years from 1 July 2021. This provides more flexibility in considering how these services could be better integrated into the CfC FP program after 1 July 2023.

General

26. DSS first KPI in 2020-2021 budget is the delivery of a new child strategy by June 2021. What is happening with that?

Australian and state and territory governments are working together to progress work on the successor plan to the *National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020*. Ministers have agreed that a co-design and engagement process with Indigenous communities will be a key element of the successor plan development. A co-design process is expected to formally commence in January 2021.

At their meeting on 27 November 2020, Community Services Ministers agreed in principle to the vision, goal and target cohorts for the successor plan. Ministers also agreed that the successor plan will be endorsed and launched in July 2021, and the first five-year

implementation plan by November 2021. For more information, please see Minister Ruston's communique [here](#).

Further consultations for the successor plan are expected to occur in 2021, and will include a consultation paper available on the DSS Engage website. If you would like to participate in these consultations, the department encourages you to keep an eye on DSS Engage.

27. Universal services versus targeted also impacts on numbers versus intensity. Will this be taken into account?

Yes. The department acknowledges that families and children in our communities benefit from a mix of targeted and universal services. A mix of services can partially address the trade-off between the number of clients that services can support and the intensity of support they can offer, but relies on providers taking appropriate action such as addressing barriers to participation and establishing links and referral pathways with other organisations.

It is expected however, that all providers focus on continuously improving the targeting and accessibility of their services, especially for families and children in their communities who experience greater vulnerability or disadvantage, or who are harder to reach. This might require targeting or tailoring some activities to provide these cohorts with more equal opportunities to access support. It is acknowledged that this might look different for each provider dependent on their community, model and service type.

28. When we will hear about whether Stronger and Resilient Communities (SARC) - inclusive communities will be extended or not?

The current SARC grants commenced from 1 April 2018 and are due to cease by 30 June 2021. The department is currently developing options for the Government's consideration regarding ceasing grants and the future of the SARC activity.

29. What are DSS ideas around digitisation and geographic footprints?

The department is aware of the importance of digital service delivery, especially following the use of alternative service delivery methods in response to recent crises such as bushfires, drought, floods and the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We think that leveraging technology is vital to better delivering family and children services in future. We also think it is critical to ensure that access is not restricted due to client access to reliable technology and digital literacy issues.

The department is interested in hearing from service providers how they adapted their service delivery in response to these recent crises and what ideas service providers have around how digitisation could better support improved practices, including any interactions with geographic footprints.