



# Exposure Draft for the National Panel of Assessors Request for Tender (RfT) – Frequently Asked Questions

## **Fees and provider caps:**

### **Q: Why are fees not increasing?**

The department has considered feedback from current National Panel of Assessors (NPA) providers that the small number of assessment services for each Provider is a big factor in financial viability of NPA provider organisations. The introduction of a cap on Provider numbers should result in more assessment services for each NPA Provider, increasing work and funding under the Deed.

Indexation will continue to apply to NPA assessment services fees each July.

### **Q: How are travel costs being accommodated?**

Fees for the NPA program are outlined in the Request for Quote Exposure Draft in section 2.8.1.

Additional fees for Supported Wage System assessments are payable if the assessment is conducted in a Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program region.

Additional travel costs for Workplace Modification Assessments are payable where a return trip exceeds 200 kilometres.

### **Q: Will providers need to guarantee they have the capacity to deliver services in any ESA they tender for?**

Respondents should consider their capacity for providing assessments when determining which ESAs they wish to bid for. Providers will be expected to hire additional assessors, if needed, to meet demand in any ESA they are contracted to deliver services in.

The department is looking to release the historical number of assessments undertaken in each ESA, and the ESA provider cap, with the final RFT.

This should assist Respondents in identifying which ESAs they may wish to bid for., noting that past assessment demand may not necessarily reflect future assessment demand.

### **Q: Are organisations of all sizes; small, medium and large, eligible to submit a response to the RFT?**

Yes, the department will consider organisations of all sizes that submit a response to the Request for Tender, subject to those organisations meeting the eligibility criteria. All Respondents need to satisfy themselves when tendering that they can meet demand in any ESAs tendered for and have the ability to hire additional assessors if needed.

### **Q: Can the Department please provide clarification around estimating the value of the contract (given that the tender only pays assessment fees for completed assessments and these are allocated based on the provider with the lowest allocation in their ESA)?**

The NPA program is a demand-driven program, and the value of the contract will vary depending on the number of ESAs being serviced, the number of providers in each location and the demand for assessments in those locations.

Data will be made available shortly to assist potential applicants to estimate the expected number of assessments in each ESA, noting that past assessment demand may not reflect future demand.

## **Delivery of assessments:**

**Q: Starting from 1 July 2025, ongoing support assessments will include an assessment of the timeframe till the next assessment (1,2 or 5 years). How should this assessment be made?**

The department expects that providers will look at a range of factors including individual support needs and circumstances relating to each individual participant. This could include:

- the nature of their disability and/or the likely duration injury or health condition,
- the nature and requirements of their employment, and
- the supports required to help the participant maintain their employment.

Further details outlining conditions for 5-year review recommendations will be available in Ongoing Support Assessment Guidelines.

**Q: What kind of specialist Workplace Modification assessment providers are anticipated by the department?**

There is no set list of expected specialist Workplace Modification assessment providers. As examples, specialists could focus on:

- people with vision impairments
- people with hearing impairments
- people with spinal cord injuries.

**Q: Why do assessment services need to be undertaken face to face?**

Face-to-face assessments are important for high-quality service, especially for people with high support needs. However, the department understands that in some exceptional circumstances there may be a need for virtual assessments. The department must approve any requests for a virtual assessment and will consider these requests on a case-by-case basis.

**Q: Are providers required to conduct specialist Workplace Modification assessments?**

No this is optional.

When completing their response to the RFT, providers will need to select the assessment services they wish to deliver. If a provider wishes to deliver specialist Workplace Modification Services (WMS) assessments, they will need to complete additional information in their response to the RFT.

**Q: Will DES providers be able to choose which NPA provider they use? Or will it be randomly assigned?**

No, Providers of the new specialist disability employment program will not be able to choose which NPA Provider they use.

Assessment work orders will be allocated to Providers using the lowest count method. This means that in each ESA, any new assessment will be allocated to the Provider who has the lowest number of assessments allocated to them at the time.

This means that the assessment services will be allocated on an equitable basis.

## **Conflict of interest:**

### **Q: How will conflicts of interest be managed when an NPA provider is recommending (as part of Workplace Modification assessments) products their employer sells? Or when an assessor has a relationship with a product supplier?**

The department is considering approaches for managing this issue in the new program. This could include program assurance activities for the NPA program, such as an assessment of the suitability of recommended products and value for money.

### **Q: Can assessors work for multiple providers?**

Yes, individual assessors can work for multiple NPA providers.

Assessors working across multiple NPA providers will have their own logon credentials to the IT system, specific to the organisation they are doing the assessment for. An assessor can only do an assessment for the Provider that the assessment was allocated to.

Nominated assessors will need to be approved by each NPA Provider they wish to work for, who will consider their qualifications, skills, knowledge and experience to deliver services.

### **Q: How will it be managed if a single organisation is both a DES provider and an NPA provider?**

The NPA Provider cannot conduct an assessment for a person who receives employment assistance services from their own organisation, or a related organisation.

#### For example:

Organisation A is both a new specialist disability employment program provider and an NPA provider. Organisation A cannot conduct an assessment for a participant that their organisation is also supporting through the specialist disability employment program.

There are IT system rules in place to stop any inappropriate referrals.

The department is considering new program assurance activities for the NPA program, which may include activities which identify any actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

### **Q: If an assessor is working for multiple providers, how are conflicts of interest managed?**

Individual assessors cannot conduct assessments for a person who receives employment assistance services from any organisation they work for.

#### For example:

Assessor Jane works for NPA Provider X and NPA Provider Y. Provider Y is also a provider in the specialist disability employment program.

Through her role working at Provider X, Jane is allocated an assessment of a participant who is supported by Provider Y.



Jane should not undertake the assessment as it would be considered a conflict of interest. This assessment work order must be reallocated to another assessor who works for Provider X, as long as they do not have a conflict.

## **Provider qualifications:**

### **Q: Can occupational therapists conduct ongoing support assessments?**

Yes, an occupational therapist is qualified to conduct all three assessment types.

## **Admin/ application process:**

### **Q: Will providers be allocated a contract manager within the department?**

Yes. All Providers will be allocated a Relationship Manager who will be their contact point in the department. Relationship Managers will be responsible for monitoring Provider performance, including Key Performance Indicators.

### **Q: What information is required as part of the Tender response to ensure the department can evaluate whether an organisation is financially viable?**

The Request for Tender will advise that Respondents must provide complete a Financial and Credentials Information Form that demonstrates their viability as a business. This is to ensure the department only enters into contracts with organisations who are viable businesses.

The Request for Tender will outline what information Respondents must provide as part of the Tender response.

### **Q: Can the Department please clarify if a Statement of Tax Record (STR) is required for Sole Traders registered for GST? And, will this also be required for sub-contractors? Is a STR required given it is not expected that you will get \$4 million?**

As part of the Tender response process, all Respondents must include a copy of a valid and satisfactory Statement of Tax Record (STR) or include a receipt demonstrating they have requested the STR from the Australian Taxation Office by the closing date and time and provide the STR no later than 4 business days from the RFT closing date and time.

Respondents must hold a STR for any first tier subcontractor that they propose, as part of their response, to engage to deliver services if it is considered that they will make \$4 million or more through this contract. It is the decision of the Respondent to determine whether the Subcontractor is likely to reach \$4 million.

### **Q: Will IT platforms/systems be accessible for assessors (for example, for assessors with vision impairment)?**

The department is working to ensure IT platforms/systems are accessible.

### **Q: Do NPA Assessors who sub-contract need to meet minimum IT security requirements?**

All Subcontractors will need to meet minimum IT security requirements. It is the responsibility of the NPA Provider to ensure all assessors and sub-contractors meet any IT security requirements as part of their work under the Deed.