

Organisation name

[REDACTED]

Email

[REDACTED]

1.1 What would a partnership between CSOs and the government that achieves outcomes for Australians being supported by the community sector look like?

Firstly, the Government whether intentionally or otherwise needs to reconsider the dollar-for-dollar grant. This type of grant is institutionalized discrimination towards both the Aboriginal Community and the lower socio-economic areas who do not hold assets to leverage or have the capacity to borrow money or who do not have capital income invested. In a way, this type of grant excludes the very people that need assistance the most. By providing services to National NFP's pockets of rural and regional Australia miss out on the grant programs anyway.

Secondly, NFPs or CSOs can never afford to pay for administrative staff or bookkeepers or Auditors when these costs are often not part of grants. Foundational funding is only generated when large grants and many of them contribute to the Administrative pool, additionally, clever grant writers hide these costs well inside the grant and can appear as project management, etc. Rural and Regional CSOs without grant writing capacity and with integrity find it difficult to massage the costs into grants for these purposes.

Good Outcomes in low socio-economic areas, the people who really need the assistance for many grant areas need long-term commitments. Gaining trust within a community who have only ever had services last for a year or two gives up engaging. We are different people and require different things. Yes, it's good to have some programs available but what if we could have programs that can modify over more than a politician's term? That's when we can really create change.

1.2 How can CSOs and government streamline the sharing of information, particularly through utilising technology to effectively engage, distribute, share, influence and inform in a timely and efficient manner?

It would be beneficial for each grant recipient to upload flyers, minutes, photos, etc. to build a story of the process of the grant. That way, smaller CSOs don't have expensive administrative costs at the end of the grant to acquit, and the government could monitor the process in real-time. If the system allowed for suggestions and support even better.

1.3 How can government ensure the community sector, including service users, and those not able to access services, have an opportunity to contribute to program design without imposing significant burdens?

If the government had long-term grants that worked with Communities over decades instead of 1-4 years we could build up better engagement and trust. Data-driven reviews will keep the programs relevant but the service itself will get a better reach the longer they are in communities that are small and rural. If schools understand and advise what we do then those young adults will eventually utilize or tell someone about the service. In these towns, the service needs to be known first perhaps years before it is needed. We often see the community come in and ask about a service that is no longer available.

Often the same few people (especially women) take on the significant burdens of community consultation. If the government had a postcode-effective social media contribution page that was bi-partisan and long-term, those who don't engage may and those who engage all the time will not need to attend multiple meetings after work, etc.

2.1 What would adequate and flexible funding look like?

Adequate funding looks like it doesn't require the CSOs to take on a burden in Admin and Audit. It should contribute to these costs always. A set percentage of the grant should be automatically allocated to these costs. In terms of cross advantage for government if wages for employment can be full-time or part-time not contract or temporary then real jobs can be created. Contract or temporary rolls don't allow staff to borrow money for a car or find longer-term housing, and the cost to the service is that if one of those rolls comes up somewhere else we lose knowledge and consistency in our staff and the burden to readvertise and go through trying to find the right fit in a small pool starts all over again. The program in some cases has to be halted for upwards of 6 weeks and the contingency funding often overlooked becomes the burden of the CSO to bear.

Governments know how much services cost. Your employees are paid well, they have roles that are mostly permanent, and can plan their lives. We are expected to employ short-term roles rarely above minimum wages and provide services that lead to improvements in outcomes for the population within a budget that comes nowhere near the budget for quality. We are constantly striving for quality and as staff often give more hours, our own assets and creations and we are "on call" to the general community in

supermarkets and football games - and we all do it.
Flexible funding allows services to continue within the community keeping the same staff and assets but uses data and feedback to modify or move in a different direction or onto a new stage without going through massive competitive grant processes.

2.2 What administrative and overhead costs are not being considered in current grant funding?

Wages
Re-advertising if you lose a staff member
Auditing
Bookkeeper to pay staff and do super etc
Someone to monitor budgets
Someone to monitor project co-ords etc.
Internet costs
Phone Costs
Stationery Costs
Fuel Costs

If you complete grants as per the grant requirements you have none of the above. The only way you can afford to run a program or project is to have to be creative in how you write it. And that creativity doesn't sit well with "salt of the earth" people.

2.3 How are rising operational costs impacting the delivery of community services?

Operational costs are killing NFPs. For example, if you don't have staff to do the super contributions and you are late, those fees imposed eat into other very slim budget items. This is just one example. Electricity costs see us not using air conditioning and having no lights on, something we do without complaint if it means we help the community for a longer period of time.

People who work in NFP's give until they can't. It's generally not like the commercial sector, we bake at home, and we generally volunteer for multiple events and assistance(because the pool of people in small towns is small) We really never leave our work behind and are talking and referring people as we do our shopping or banking, etc. People ring us at home at night.

Women generally make up the majority of the services in our area. We are grandmothers, and mothers, and keep our communities together, we see the needs and come up with ideas to solve those needs. We notice when someone is not eating, we notice when someone doesn't have a warm coat, and we notice subtle signs of DV. And we are getting tired. Buring out. I believe this is a direct result of the wages we accept and the burden the roles bring to us.

Why do Governments value social services less? When we have to apply for grants competitively over a state or nation to give the "best value for money" what are we really measuring? It's important to measure the right things! 10 people getting paid minimum wages rarely attracts superstars. One superstar on great money can achieve sometimes just as much if not more.

2.4 What have been your experiences with and reflections on the supplementation and change to indexation?

Sometimes indexation supplementation does not reflect in different parts of the Country the same way it reflects in the city.

2.5 How can CSOs and the department work together to determine where funds are needed most to ensure equitable and responsive distribution of funds?

Why doesn't the Government create real long-term roles in smaller areas? These people have investment in that community. They have ownership in that community. If you live in a community you know what is needed or who to talk to about what is needed. This will increase employment, give live on-the-ground feedback, and assist CSOs to vary or apply for grants.

Alternatively, listen to what we are saying. Make a commitment to change, regardless of the consequences politically. Think long-term, bi-partisan, human.

The government could use statistics and data to rank areas of need prior to grants being released based on the type of grant and the need per % of the population. EG: If the level of drunk driving is high in one town as a percentage of their population then they should get a greater priority.

EG: For DV and other hidden issues like Drug and Alcohol abuse, police reports could be used but these should be addressed Nationwide regardless.

2.6 How can government streamline reporting requirements, including across multiple grants, to reduce administrative burden on CSOs?

It would be beneficial to build the story or data over time. If you hold a consultative meeting the number in attendance and outcomes would add to the story. Processes are getting better, however, some of the

spreadsheets for budgets are burdensome, and take time to reconcile.

If you want to collect the data for government purposes, be transparent and write a list of data points you want. So NFPs can plan in advance. Governments could have a running list online that can be filled out after events. It benefits the government by having real-time numbers and outcomes and allows for variations and additions if needed.

The reason the Government requires reporting requirements is for governments to report on tangible outcomes. EG: 50,000 people benefited from this grant. Only what are you really measuring? 50,000 attending something is not 50,000 people changing behaviors or benefiting it's just a number. You could have a service that looks on the outside to attract large numbers without any outcomes. Or you could have a similar service that sees 1000 people and changes their behaviors 80% of the time.

If the situation is not changing the way you thought it would then you are measuring the wrong things. Eg: We invested 1M in DV but the numbers haven't really changed. That could be because DV victims now report more, or that a one-on-one approach at a greater overall cost may work 800% better than community information days for more people. Streamlining reporting will work better if we measure the right things.

3.1 What length grants are CSOs seeking to provide certainty and stability for ongoing service delivery?

5 years plus.

3.2 What timeframes should the government aim for, at a minimum, to provide final outcomes on grant variations/extensions before the current grant ceases?

3 months

3.3 What funding flexibility do CSOs require to enable service delivery and innovation?

We need to be able to real-time say - this isn't working and we need to do something else. We need to be able to say we didn't expect this outcome and that drives us in another direction. We need to be able to say that if we want to fix "A" we can't address "A" in our community we have to go around it another way. We have to be able to run a service that may not be represented by data in a peer-reviewed journal because no one has ever done this before.

Part of the grant must be flexible in terms of "what is done" to get the best possible outcome.

Governments again have to realize that CSOs in principle want the best for their community, one in which the staff live. We have so many checks and balances now because of bad behavior or the minority that the majority have to jump so many fences we have to decide if we want to enter the race at all.

3.4 What flexibility is required by CSOs in acquittal processes to support and encourage sector innovation?

Storytelling should be part of the acquittal. This should be allowed to be in multi-media and give a snippet of the whole program. If we say we are going to do "A" then can't we show you us doing "A" rather than writing a report on how we prepared to do A, what our objectives were, what we did, how many showed up, what feedback we got ETC.

3.5 How can government improve the variation process, with consideration that CSOs must demonstrate alignment with the grant agreement and provide evidence of value for money outcomes?

Part of the grant should be variable by say 10% without having to beg for a variation.

Define Value for Money. Whose value? If the government gives a CSO \$1m and they roll out an expensive-looking service with all the lovely brochures and has professional acquittal admins is that value for money? Or is it the service that on average costs more but finds and helps those forgotten or unengaged and changes their lives? Governments have to redefine value and measure what is important, and quite often small services cost more money to run. We see more and more large National or State based NFP's getting big buckets of funding to roll out services over large areas of the state. They are not invested in the people, they don't even have a presence in most places. They apply for Grants to fund their jobs. Smaller NFPs apply for grants to change our community that we live in for the better.

4.1 How can the government ensure opportunities are available for new and emerging organisations to access funding?

Governments need to accept applications from new and emerging organizations and not be so critical of runs on the board or other metrics held by ongoing grantees. Let them have a grant and monitor it perhaps closer. NSWALC (New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council) had a program based on 144 metrics and inspected actions, they were weighted and the end result rated Land Councils funding models. Those not performing got no money, those whose capacity was low had money distributed monthly. Those who had proved themselves got funding quarterly and those who were providing above

and beyond were funded yearly. Governments could hand out grants similar to this model. BUT governments are notoriously bad at paying on time so this would have to be fixed first.

4.2 What programs, supports and information are already available for smaller CSOs to help build capacity of the organisation? Are these working?

There are many and NO they don't work.

If you offer minimum wage and need people with capacity and experience - those people either never take the job or take it and leave when a role comes up paying more money.

Knowledge and capacity walk out the door without job security. At the end of the day, people need to borrow money from a bank, get a mortgage, trade in and buy a car, etc Banks are reluctant to do this for short-term contracts, temporary work, or casual workers.

Not for Profits Staff burn out quicker too. So keeping knowledge and capacity is difficult in this respect also.

4.3 How could larger CSOs support smaller CSOs? What are the barriers to providing this support?

Larger CSOs are driven by different things than smaller CSOs. When you have a large organization you have to continuously move forward (it's a mini economy really) you have to get more grants and more programs to keep knowledge and capacity or offer bigger wages to attract these kinds of people. At the same time, bigger CSOs are removing themselves further and further from the communities they service. Larger CSOs also concentrate on Branding, uniforms, templates, and other erroneous things that smaller CSOs don't have. Again in a way the larger CSOs gradually lose the coal face on the ground investment for a more corporate successful grant-getting entity they eventually become.

5.1 What is your experience with and reflections on place-based funding approaches?

Placed based funding works better because multiple services can come at a problem from different angles all at once to really effect change.

5.2 What innovative approaches could be implemented to ensure the grant funding reaches trusted community organisations with strong local links?

Again, if governments had funding staff embedded in communities as full-time positions then they would know all that information. They would be on the ground, working with and assisting the funded organizations.

5.3 Which areas do you consider have duplicative funding or gaps you think need to be addressed, and what is the evidence?

Drug and Alcohol services have duplicated funding. Local Drug and Alcohol Teams, Community Drug and Alcohol Teams, Health NSW Drug and Alcohol counseling, Medical Professionals etc. No one is disputing that Drug and Alcohol abuse affects communities but the gaps are in the "WHY" of the behavior. This is so important because this leads to DV, Drunk Driving, Assault, Health problems, etc. Sometimes we are so fixated on early intervention, prevention, and recovery that we lose sight of the WHY.

It would be good for the government to fund PHD students to look deeply into underlying causes for the major grant-funded community issues and come up with some ideas on how to address the WHY. Or even a new department of researchers linked to grant areas that work 5 years ahead of the grant process.

EG: Could generational trauma be the key and therefore healing of that trauma unlocks the persistent D & A issues? Is it personality type, or is it triggered by a diet that causes depression that leads to D& A? Should parents have to undergo training and have a license to have children? It could be none or all of these but we need to have evidence from government investigations that emboldens academics or researchers to go way outside the box and be funded for it. In 1970 we would no more have imagined that stomach ulcers were caused by bacteria and that in 2020 you were prescribed a pill to fix them.

5.4 Where there is a community-led change initiative, could shared accountability to community and funders (government) strengthen service delivery?

Define Shared accountability and how do you impose accountability onto people who can't find enough food to eat? This type of thinking is top-down, control.

The government wants the community's money earned from taxes or other means to be used in the best possible way we understand your concerns and your needs as the spender and ultimately the reporter back to the community of what you have done with that money. We all get that and in some ways, it has to

have accountability however we have to remember what we measure. No point in having 10 people turn up for an event and walk away having no change than having one person show up and change their lives. It may cost the same but the second program is more effective than the first.

6.1 If any, what are the problems or challenges you think have been overlooked?

What is measured?

What data is real and life changing and what just looks effective?

How can you have effective services if wages aren't included for the people overseeing the staff running the projects?

How do maintain the knowledge and wisdom of those who leave because of the constant pressure to "win" grants for people's wages?

Auditing costs can bankrupt small CSOs

Engagement dwindles when governments don't listen.

It appears Governments expect CSOs to provide services at much lower costs than they can provide themselves because otherwise, governments would be funding these services themselves. So the challenges are that we are expected to do effectively your work regardless of the department for less money, with fewer assets, for less time and less support and more scrutiny, and be happy and not burn out? Perhaps governments should have minimum standards fixed in place for things like wages so that grant writers don't have to screw every cent out of the grant to 1. Get the Grant 2. Place the burden on staff to buy their own copy paper and toilet paper etc.

6.2 What other solutions or changes could also be considered?

Grants could come with staffing minimums and wages calculated after the grant is written within the department. eg: we write a grant that we deliver a plastic recycling plant to employ 5-10 staff, cleaning up the waterways and land, building the capacity of currently unemployed low socio-economic community members, creating a circular economy, bringing information to the community and changing habits, etc and the government says this will take EFT staff of 3 to run and the value of those roles is x. And that amount is added to the cost of the project and delivered.

6.3 What does success look like?

Success is when Governments strive for innovative solutions. Success looks like having a go and something and working out that it doesn't work in this location. Success is having researchers go way outside of boxes and look at experimental and underlying causes for behaviors and having Governments say they will pilot project that idea so we know if it works. Success is perhaps taking one or two areas and really investing in them long-term to see what works and what doesn't. Success is saying that there is no data or peer-reviewed evidence on that but we will invest in the research, Success is when Community service positions can be full-time and offer holiday and sick days and the money is there to pay for the copy paper and the toilet paper. Success is when governments lead from the front in terms of research that informs services of how to make better communities. Success is when our communities are healed and engaged in making the world a better place to live. Success is then asking communities how they would like to see the service for their area and giving the community control of who and what they do.