

Organisation name

Quercus Beechworth

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

A cohesive relationship between CSOs and the government that reflects an understanding of what our individual local community needs are. This includes reporting to government data that genuinely reflects services provided to community members including those experiencing complex needs.

This may include services provided to clients with complex needs who may need a longer period of emergency assistance if waiting for support service assistance including financial counselling.

Grant funding to be mutually agreed upon by both parties that is sustainable to both parties. Funding to be negotiated and mutually agreed upon before finalised to be signed. Funding to be based upon reported collected data as well as proof of unique locational needs.

CSO reporting and government responses are efficient and constant to reflect changing needs of the community, especially with rapid need changes due to climate change, natural disaster and economic change. Responses are adaptive.

Funding is available and adaptive throughout the year.

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?

The current reporting program does not effectively provide opportunity to identify the needs of people receiving the emergency assistance. This leads to lack of opportunity for the CSO to report all the emergency assistance services provided to their clients.

A new reporting system can be simplified to ticking a list of boxes rather than limited drop down boxes. Collected data from each CSO can be regularly reported back to the CSO by government in an easy to read summary of client caseload needs and services provided within a reporting period. (monthly?) The CSO can then easily adapt services according to the summary report if changes are occurring.

Reporting can include the opportunity for the CSO to report changing trends of assistance requests and preferred referrals to other services within their region.

The best result from reporting of referral needs is that government play a role in linking service options through the reporting data. These links can be used by the CSO and client to discuss assistance options within a region.

Continue with regular face to face meetings between the CSO representative and government representative to discuss data reporting trends.

2.1 What would adequate and flexible funding look like?

A grant funding system that is quickly adaptive to changing community needs. Regular payments of funding that reflect the needs as reported in each reporting period. eg. A payment each month that reflects the reported needs of the previous month. Reporting by the CSO needs to include proof of what funding changes are required and why. What services were provided that month for each caseload, and why? eg. A sharp trend to utilities assistance due to an increase in utilities charges.

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

The increase in costs for services provided to the CSO including food items, utilities costs and personal required to deliver the service. Seasonal variation in support needs are currently not considered.

With expanding community demand for assistance, our building capacity is stretched to be able to provide services to clients in an environment where clients feel safe and are allowed access to privacy.

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

In our organisation's case, rising operational costs together with six monthly funding payment periods are impacting greatly upon cashflow. We are currently reducing essential emergency assistance due to poor cashflow resulting from funding payment frequency and amounts that are delayed beyond the immediate needs of community.

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?

A more efficient reporting system will genuinely reflect the needs of each organisation, regardless of their size or location. The system needs to be easy to use and be responsive to immediate needs.

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

By making each reporting form easier to fill (ticks of optional boxes rather than limited drop down boxes). One form for emergency assistance rather than a case form followed by sessions forms. Reduce any duplication of information required.

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

Longer grant agreement terms provide stability, however they need to be flexible to quick adaptation for changing assistance environments due to climate change events, economic or social change throughout the agreed term of contract.

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

Flexibility and fast adaptation is essential to meet changing needs requirements.

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

Sector innovation relies upon direct grant funding accessibility. Grants that are designed to improve CSO delivery of services to their community.

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?

Yes. CSOs need to provide evidence that they can adapt to changing community needs and are providing value for money services to communities.

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

Provide equal access to CSOs despite their size or history

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

Not enough access to information about services and grant potentiality is currently available to small CSOs. Having direct meeting access to a government representative is useful and provides connection through that relationship. This needs to continue.

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

The biggest barrier to larger CSOs supporting smaller CSOs is competition for limited funding.

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

Quercus Beechworth Neighbourhood House is the first place considered by people in our community when they need assistance. We are easily accessible. We are known and trusted by community members. We can provide immediate assistance followed with the opportunity to expand services through referrals. Referrals to our service come from local government, medical services and other organisations within our local region. They know what we can offer and they trust we can deliver the service. Local organisations know and understand the changing needs of their community.

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

Quercus Beechworth Neighbourhood House provides not only emergency assistance services. We provide social connection opportunities, we have a beautiful community garden that is used by community for reflection, solace or celebration. We connect with other organisations within our region to deliver health, employment and support service. We provide leadership and networking opportunities within our community, especially following natural disasters.

Neighbourhood Houses with the capability to provide these services and linkages should be better grant supported. The local community connects better to local organisations such as Neighbourhood Houses.

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

Yes. Evidence from research following natural disaster events prove communities need to feel that they are leading their recovery with the assistance of government.

6.3 What does success look like?

A transparent, efficient and adaptive response to community needs as they arise. Responsibility and assistance delivery is shared between government and local organisations that serve the community. Service provision is regularly assessed and adapted as required.