

Organisation name

Queensland Remote Area Tracking Incorporated

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

The CSO I am involved with governs itself successfully with no managerial or WH&S incidents in its seven years of operations. The government agencies we work with directly always ask us not to be governed by any large entity as the regulations and processes involved would critically reduce our ability to be timely, flexible and dynamic in our service delivery. Therefore, an affective partnership for our organisation would be one that sees funding from the government for operations without the oversight. Our organisation already gets adequately audited for the appropriate use of funds and legal structure through the ACNC audit process.

Insurance for our CSO is completely inaccessible. After the COVID period our insurance provider refused to insure us anymore. In seven years we have had no incidents and no claims. The only insurance we can access has premiums that are many hundreds of times our annual turnover. In our case a successful partnership would see an insurance solution for our sector.

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?

Our CSO does not require streamlined sharing of information.

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?

Allow CSOs to design programs in a more localised area based on localised needs. Local knowledge always outperforms highly restrictive governance from afar. Our CSO allows sees its units as independent localised entities that adjust structure and services to suit the niche that they operate in, while adhering to 'bare bones' general overarching structures and processes.

2.1 What would adequate and flexible funding look like?

The process of having a 'project' to fund is not reflective of the needs of established CSOs.

Established CSOs need flexible funding for ongoing costs such as 'Starlink' to provide services in remote areas, or the cost of ongoing and unjustifiable insurance premiums.

These flexible monies could also support the replacement of failed equipment, repair and Maintenance of current assets. These are the real costs of running a successful CSO like our organisation.

Regular 'unmarked' funding could be used on an as needs be basis and surpluses could be saved up until a larger project could be funded.

The ultimate funding solution for an organisation like our CSO would be to have a large seed fund given to the organisation from which the income from the principle could be accessed to run the organisation. This would be very sustainable if within the ACNC audit process the organisation could not make use of the principle. As long as the CSO were using the funds in line with its Objects and the ACNCs current requirements, the monies would be used affectively and justifiably to deliver localised economical services.

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

Ongoing costs like

- Insurance
- Registration
- Internet services
- Wages for administration only (if applicable)
- Fuel
- Consumables
- Replacement, repair & servicing

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

Quality and purposefulness of services decline steeply when operational costs increase. In our CSOs case, people's lives are put in greater jeopardy.

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

Not really an issue for our small CSO.

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?

In the case of our CSO the department should trust the ACNC admission and audit process along with the Objects of the CSO. These 'already in place' checks and balances ensure that monies are spent appropriately and even require reports of service levels provided. All the department SHOULD NEED is already there.

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

In our CSOs case, the streamlined processes are already there.

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

Life of organisation in our CSOs case.

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?

Difficult to answer as there are many variables in this question. However the word SITUATIONAL comes to mind. It depends on the grant and the needs of the organisation.

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

Freedom to use monies within the objects of their organisation.

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

Perhaps all applications should be made available to other organisations. In the case of charities, our outcomes can be seen on the ACNC portal.

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?

In the case of a charity, it has already been established that the charitable purpose of the organisation is of value. Especially in the smaller volunteer organisations, volunteers are already value for money. If volunteers are pushed through agreements to scavenge value as per paid employees, then volunteers will just quit on the idea or organisation. that then becomes a substantial loss that cascades through the nation.

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

Start having open funding applications. Our CSO is an emergency service and veteran health volunteer charity that spans across several ACNC charitable purposes. The generalised and substantial nature of our services sees us not specifically fitting into ANY of the grant applications in the last several years. As we cover multiple services, the specific grants reject us because we do not exclusively meet the grant eligibility requirements. So we cannot even apply.

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

None that we can access.

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

In our experience larger CSOs do not part with their hard-earned funding unless there is a large net benefit above and beyond the objects of either CSOs. Large CSOs easily write memorandums of understanding for mutual benefit, or give away written off or superseded equipment, but will not help FUND smaller organisations. There is a clear culture of monopolisation in the large CSO sector. Example, the [REDACTED] seems to NOT fund other smaller animal shelters, but seems to be antagonistic towards them.

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

I feel that place-based funding is excellent for small CSOs when establishing new units/outlets. However, in the case of our CSO, after establishment, what one place gets, the other places get.

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

Open up the process.

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

Popular political issues, sport, disability, minority rights, the arts, climate change, educational awareness raising etc. My evidence is that in the last 7 years not one grant has been accessible by my CSO, however these other categories appear ALL the time in one form or another in EVERY grant connect e-mail I receive.

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

No I don't believe that this would strengthen delivery. The flexibility to deliver services at a local level to suit local issues achieves this.

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

Small organisations without incomes, run completely by volunteers clearly benefit from funding to a greater degree than larger organisation that have incomes and paid leaders. Small volunteer organisations do not have to cover the salary making overheads of the larger organisations so value for money is assured.

6.2 What other solutions or changes could also be considered?

Open up the process and make funding flexible.

6.3 What does success look like?

The public stops asking 'why aren't you helped by the government? it's ridiculous that members self-fund such an important charity'.