

**inTOUCH SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO:
*A STRONGER, MORE DIVERSE AND INDEPENDENT
COMMUNITY SECTOR - ISSUES PAPER***

inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

November 2023



Multicultural Centre
Against Family Violence

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first inhabitants of this nation and the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live. We pay our respect to their Elders – past and present. We express our gratitude for the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and hope that we may move forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

Acknowledgement of Victim-Survivors

We also acknowledge the countless women who have experienced family violence, in particular women from migrant and refugee backgrounds. We recognise the courageous path they have travelled to rebuild their lives and honour their stories which continue to inspire and drive our work.

About inTouch

inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence (**inTouch**) has provided person-centred, integrated and culturally responsive family violence services to migrant and refugee communities in Victoria since 1984.

inTouch works across the family violence continuum, providing culturally-informed early intervention, case management, legal and migration assistance, perpetrator programs, post-crisis recovery and enhanced capability-strengthening across the sector and community through our training and impact and project management teams. We are proud to provide high-level leadership and guidance to all levels of government with our evidence-based policy and advocacy work.

Our services are informed by an integrated inLanguage, inCulture delivery model and supported by our diverse workforce, which is comprised primarily of people who are migrants and refugees themselves. Our team's unique understanding of culture and the migration journey allows inTouch to deliver expert, specialist case management to our clients in over 20 languages.

inTouch's services include:

- Case management that encompasses a first-hand understanding of the migration journey and unique cultural barriers women may face when seeking assistance for family violence.
- An integrated community legal centre (inTouch Legal Centre) working at the intersection of family and migration law - the first multidisciplinary practice in Australia to provide this inclusive service response.
- inSpire, a post-recovery initiative for victim-survivors, focusing on economic independence, social connection and emotional wellbeing.
- A policy, advocacy and research unit that informs government legislation, service provision and media coverage and is informed by victim-survivors and our client services' team.
- Prevention and capability-strengthening projects and resource development for multicultural communities and the family violence sector.
- A specialised inLanguage, inCulture program, Motivation for Change, that works with men who use violence, focusing on trauma and the impacts of migration.
- A comprehensive suite of Training and Impact modules centred and informed by the experiences of victim-survivors and inTouch's specialist expertise working across the family violence continuum.
- NOOR Family Violence Survivor-Advocates, a group of migrant and refugee victim-survivors who influence policy, service provision and media reporting with lived experience.

For more information, visit www.intouch.org.au email admin@intouch.org.au or call 03 9413 6500

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Introduction

inTouch welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Issues Paper from the Department of Social Services (DSS) on *A stronger, more diverse and independent community sector (Issues Paper)*.

For over 40 years inTouch has been steadfast in our mission to support migrant and refugee women who have endured family violence. We offer comprehensive case management services that acknowledge and address the unique cultural challenges these women often encounter when seeking assistance.

inTouch recognises Commonwealth funding has been instrumental in supporting community service organisations (CSOs) to deliver critical, innovative services across Australia. This is demonstrated by inTouch's experiences delivering state-based and national initiatives across the family violence continuum, providing learning on promising and effective approaches to CSO partnerships and funding. However, for organisations such as inTouch, who are state-based and support clients with intersectional needs, it is evident there are limitations with the approach to funding and grant allocation that need to be addressed.

For inTouch, current grant processes do not adequately enable the flexible delivery of services to clients across the spectrum of needs, from prevention, early intervention and response through to long-term recovery and empowerment. Despite the impact and value of our integrative service model, we have often missed funding opportunities due to limitations with the allocation process including short timelines and limited engagement. Furthermore, the lack of long-term funding across the sector poses significant workforce challenges, limiting our ability to deliver sustained assistance, at a level that meets demand, for those who require it most.

As an organisation, inTouch is focused on redesigning our services with a victim-centric lens, ensuring that client voice is central throughout our decision-making processes and in all our service delivery. We are mapping client journeys and prioritising the expansion of our services to truly address the complex dynamics of family violence within multicultural communities.

We welcome the opportunity to meaningfully work as partners with government on the major reform needed to ensure that grant and funding processes better reflect the reality of delivering services and enable a more effective and efficient approach across the community service sector.

At inTouch, small grants of Federal funding have contributed to supporting programs including our men's behaviour change program, Motivation for Change; a long-term healing and recovery support for women and their children who have experienced family violence, inSpire; and the programs led by our Legal Centre under the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP).

This submission seeks to respond to key questions posed by the Issues Paper and demonstrate our vision for a well-funded, effective and equitable integrative service system that enables migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence to receive the support they require across the spectrum of prevention, response and recovery needs.

Recommendations

Giving the sector a meaningful voice

1. Establish a coordinated approach and forward plan across the whole of the Commonwealth government for policy and legislative co-design opportunities that seek CSO and lived-experience participation.
2. Provide advance notice and communication about co-design processes and ensure appropriate timeframes for co-design inputs are established.
3. Provide adequate funding to enable and support CSOs to resource engagement within the footprint of their workforce, ensuring they can collect evidence, collate positions and consult to support the co-design process.
4. Utilise existing governance and collaborative practice forums to participate in co-design processes, such as established victim-survivor advocacy groups.
5. Ensure transparency in the criteria for determining CSO involvement in advisory groups and co-design processes with broad opportunities to express interest in participating.
6. Prioritise contributions from organisations that bring strong expertise in an intersectional approach to policy and program design.
7. Enable advisory groups to also operate as a feedback mechanism to proactively identify trends and emerging issues for consideration in partnership, rather than only being engaged in response to specific service design and planning.

Grants that reflect the real cost of delivering quality services

8. Adequate funding for CSOs must appropriately incorporate staffing costs, and recognise that these extend beyond service delivery professionals to include program design, evaluation, community engagement and broader operational overheads.
9. Program outcomes and metrics must be determined relative to the funding available to prevent organisations absorbing costs.
10. inTouch supports improved timeliness and transparency in indexation and how this is applied to CSOs to support retention and attraction of staff through adequate wages.
11. Community outcomes must be at the centre of funding allocation decisions, across grant programs at all levels of government, to enable a more holistic and flexible approach that supports service delivery rather than a focus on individual programs.

12. A partnership approach to funding oversight and reporting, rather than individual contract management for separate funding streams, would reduce administrative burdens and support flexibility.
13. Outcomes based reporting frameworks should be utilised to prioritise learning and program evolution and reduce administrative burdens.
14. Consortia funding should adequately fund the lead agency to cover costs associated with administering arrangements and meeting obligations.

Providing longer grant agreement terms

15. Multi-year funding for a minimum of 3 years, but ideally 5 years, will positively impact innovation, service delivery efficiencies and staff wellbeing and retention.
16. At minimum, final outcomes and grant variations and extensions should be advised 3 to 4 months before a grant ceases.
17. Multi-year funding supported by annual work plans provides flexibility and ongoing opportunities to reflect learnings and project evolution.

Grant funding to a diversity of Community Service Organisations

18. Dedicated funding streams for small and emerging CSOs, that incorporate organisational development funding, are required to build capacity and diversity across the sector.
19. Investing in strengthening partnership capabilities of larger CSOs and building partnership requirements and incentives into funding models will enable growth opportunities for small and emerging CSOs.

Partnering with trusted community organisations

20. Successful place-based service delivery requires flexible, multi-year funding that prioritises and enables the establishment of trusted relationships at a local level as a key outcome.
21. Racism and cultural responsiveness remain a critical barrier for individuals to access social services, and funding to support organisations to identify and address this gap in service delivery is essential.

22. Ensuring baseline and consistent funding to maintain and scale existing programs is an efficient and effective way to address gaps in service delivery. National investment in family violence prevention programs working with men with migrant and refugee backgrounds who use violence, as well as programming to support the recovery and empowerment of women with migrant and refugee backgrounds who have experienced family violence are examples of existing services that address critical demand and service gaps

Key inTouch services

Overview

inTouch works across the spectrum of family violence services and support, providing culturally-informed case management, perpetrator programs, legal assistance and representation and specialised migration assistance, crisis recovery and training and development and capability-strengthening programs across the sector and community.

Client profile

Our clients have highly complex and intersectional needs. On a daily basis, we have the privilege of seeing first-hand how our trauma informed, in-culture and in-language support enables our clients to receive services and rebuild community and connections. Our unique service delivery not only supports a more effective and efficient process, but also provides a strong foundation for our clients' healing and recovery, ensuring the best possible outcomes for our clients, their children and their communities.

During the 2021-22 financial year, inTouch demonstrated its commitment to supporting vulnerable women, providing support to 1431 women through direct services, 1223 of whom had children in their care. A further 74 women attended our community recovery groups and 108 men were supported through our Motivation for Change program.¹

While the impact of inTouch on women's experiences in addressing family violence cannot be understated, the demographics of our clients underscores the unique challenges and barriers our service faces in delivering these vital supports. Among the women we assisted:

- 86 percent speak a language other than English as their first language, highlighting the importance of providing culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services.
- 83 different languages were spoken by inTouch clients in the last financial year, and clients represented people from 100 different counties, demonstrating the diversity of our clients.
- 36 percent reported living with a disability or mental illness, emphasising the need for wrap around supports that adequately take into account these circumstances.
- 44 percent were on temporary visas, demonstrating their vulnerability and lack of stability, driven by the uncertainty about their immigration status.
- 33 percent of inTouch clients overall have lived in Australia for less than 5 years, making it very difficult to navigate a legal system they have limited understanding of.

¹ inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Annual Report 2021-22 (2022)* p4.

- 62 percent of our clients are either homeless or at risk of homelessness, underscoring the urgency of addressing housing and stability issues alongside and through legal assistance.
- 88 percent of clients are grappling with severe financial disadvantage and 24.3 percent of our clients had nil income at the point of engaging our service. Critically, clients with nil income are also excluded from the “safety net” services, such as Medicare, childcare subsidy and the pharmaceutical benefits scheme, entrenching their disadvantage and creating significant additional barriers to recovery.

These statistics serve as a critical reminder of the role the inTouch plays in addressing the intersecting challenges faced by vulnerable women experiencing family violence within migrant and refugee communities.

inSpire

Established in 2018, inSpire supports women and their children from migrant and refugee backgrounds post crisis through a longer-term model of ongoing, integrative supports. inSpire is the only post-recovery program in Australia embedded within a trusted specialist service provider, offering a bridge between family violence and migrant and multicultural communities.²

The program is designed to boost confidence, skills and connection, supporting women to build economic independence, wellbeing and social connections. Our goal is to bridge the gap between crisis and long-term wellbeing, empowering women to live their lives, their way. The initiative was designed alongside clients and case managers, to ensure the aims and focus reflect the needs of women who are participating in the program. We regularly engage our advisory group, NOOR Survivor-Advocates, to ensure the program continues to reflect the objectives and needs of the women we work with.

In order to achieve this, inSpire supports women to seek meaningful employment, supporting them to gain the relevant skills to engage with the Australian job market through the inSpire's Employment program. The program also assists women with discovering local support networks and fortifying their social ties, particularly with other migrant and refugee women who are entering the workforce. Likewise, the inSpire Mentoring Program supports women on their journey to employment, addressing barriers, providing emotional and practical support and building mentee confidence, capability and progress towards career goals.

In addition, we work with women to establish a trusted social circle where they can confidently engage with their communities and establish lasting friendships. These social connections are vital in providing a sense of belonging and support for women to speak about their experiences, which can otherwise be isolating, particularly in communities where cultural understandings stigmatise family violence. Initiatives including scholarships for extracurricular activities, school holiday excursions, employment workshops and training, referral services, mentoring and mini grants to access social events all support this healing and recovery process.

In response to increasing demand for therapeutic support and a heightened emphasis on mental and physical health, inSpire introduced a third program stream in 2023 to provide wellbeing and therapeutic programs. This includes in-language, in-culture therapeutic groups, art and music therapy as well as a mental health awareness initiatives in partnership with multicultural organisations. . The inSpire Wellbeing program co-designs with participants to raise awareness of mental and emotional health issues, break down barriers and promote wellbeing through culturally-informed practice.

inSpire is primarily funded through philanthropy, donors, corporates and inTouch, However, the Commonwealth Government Fostering Innovation Grant provided one-off funding for employment programs operated through inSpire.

As one inSpire participant noted:

“inTouch saved my life and inSpire taught me how to survive.”

² inTouch, *Annual Report 2021-22* (2022) p12.

Motivation for Change

The Motivation for Change program utilises inTouch's innovative inLanguage, inCulture delivery model to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours using culture, language and community as a strength-based response.³ The program works with men who use violence, recognising the complex and intersecting barriers that can make prevention and response challenging with culturally diverse men.

Differences in language, culture and faith can also impact the ability of these individuals to seek help, whether it is from traditional family violence services or their own community. This can be compounded by trauma associated with the migration and settlement journey and a lack of understanding of Australian laws and our justice system.⁴

The program is offered in a range of languages and cultures, including to South-Asian groups delivered in Hindi and English, and to Afghan groups delivered in Dari. Several of the facilitators involved understand and/or speak multiple languages. For example, in groups where there are a number of Tamil-speaking men, the facilitators are able to conduct the sessions bilingually in Tamil and English, or Tamil and Hindi, to ensure more effective comprehension. By speaking to a client in their first language, the program aims to support them in understanding more complex concepts.

The program content is designed to support a person's journey of change. Over the course of the program, the content is designed to:

- assist men to understand the impact of violence on their families.
- work through their beliefs and attitudes that are supportive of violence or excuse, justify and rationalise violence

In 2021-22, inTouch received one-off Federal funding through an external agency to work with recently arrived Afghan refugees on family violence education and early intervention. This funding allowed inTouch to expand the MFC program, which takes into account the men's existing trauma from recent events in Afghanistan as well as their migration journey supporting additional groups to be run. The group discusses expectations of relationships and challenges their choice to use violence. In addition, the funding supported:

- Delivery of 4 professional development sessions for professionals working with men who use violence, building their capability to work with men from migrant and refugee backgrounds. A total of 377 professionals participated in these sessions.
- Delivery of 2 community sessions about Respectful Relationships held in rural Victoria- Geelong and Shepparton. Approximately 100 people, both men and women, from the local Afghan community attended each day. By community request there were separate sessions for men and women, as well as combined sessions.

Legal Centre

The inTouch Legal Centre is a specialist Community Legal Centre (CLC) utilising an integrative practice model to provide legal advice and representation to clients who are already receiving support from inTouch case managers. Our Legal Centre was established following research funded by the Victoria Law Foundation in 2012, which identified that navigating the justice system is a particularly challenging process for migrant and refugee women who experience family violence.

As a CLC, the inTouch Legal Centre receives funding through the NLAP and State funding streams that supports delivery of legal and non-legal services. This consists of limited core funding and several fixed term grants. In 2021-22, our Legal Centre supported 701 women, offering the legal and migration information and assistance they urgently needed. Notably, this included 132 women who successfully obtained permanent residency as a result of family violence provisions.⁵

inTouch extends its case management and legal services, which are tailored to address cultural and linguistic needs, to: women and gender non-binary clients who consent to support from a women's service, are migrants and/or refugees, are aged 18 years and older, reside in Victoria and are currently or continually affected by family violence.⁶

Given the need to triage and prioritise cases, all clients referred to the inTouch Legal Centre initially receive legal advice through the weekly Advice Clinics. Unlike many CLCs, we also offer ongoing legal representation and regularly appear in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (FCFCOA) in parenting and property litigation matters.

Our expert team of lawyers and migration agent provide the following services:

- protection from family violence through intervention orders
- family law dispute resolution and representation in areas such as parenting, small property settlements, and spousal maintenance
- immigration and visa assistance
- support for Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) applications
- divorce clinics
- Health Justice Partnership outreach clinics and
- secondary consultations.

Sector & Community

inTouch's Sector and Community unit combines the unique expertise derived from our client services team with a wide scope of dynamic partnerships and collaboration, transforming organisational and community responses to family violence via capability strengthening initiatives.

Aligning with the broader principles of inTouch's work, our Sector and Community unit draws insight from the lived experiences of migrant and refugee women impacted by family violence and is responsive to the specific needs of social services, the family violence sector and multicultural communities. We strengthen the capability of organisations to engage with clients from culturally-diverse communities through our training and impact programs, workshops, co-case management, community of practice facilitation and project management.

In 2023, key projects have included:

- Strengthening the Capacity of Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program (SETS) Providers in Domestic and Family Violence
- Women on Temporary Visas in Refuge Service Strengthening
- Supporting Migrant and Refugee Women in Rural and Regional Victoria, and
- Working Together: Strengthening Partnerships to Support Women in the West.

Expertise and capability strengthening has ranged from national, regional, place-based, sector-specific to multicultural-led Training & Impact.

Training & Impact

The Training and Impact team draws on the expertise of our trainers, case managers, legal centre, the Motivation for Change program, NOOR Family Violence Survivor-Advocates and feedback from our clients as well as previous training participants to develop and tailor professional development opportunities for a range of organisations.

Culturally responsive practice is at the core of all our training content, as we seek to advance good practice in applying intersectionality, cultural humility, cultural responsiveness and anti-racism for accessible, safe and effective services to migrant and refugee communities.

inTouch offers a comprehensive suite of evidence- and practice- based training that is informed by the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) and can be tailored to fit the needs of the organisations or communities we work with. Our training focuses on subjects relevant to early career practitioners, like

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The inTouch Legal Centre: Referrals and General Information and Service Guidelines set out the process for client and details on our operation. These documents can be accessed here: https://intouch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/inTouch-Legal-centre-referral-guide_WEB.pdf and <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#label/Consulting/FMfcgzGwHLMGkKvkgHhcmHjPdmsQtsz?projector=1&messagePartId=0.1>

intersectionality and culturally responsive practice, through to more complex issues like migration and systems abuse and curated discussions informed by collaboration with our expert team as well as inTouch's position papers and policy submissions.

As such, we focus on a variety of subjects including:

- Understanding and responding to family violence in multicultural communities
- Culturally responsive practice and intersectionality
- How culture and migration history impacts client capacity to seek and sustain support
- Working with women on temporary visas
- Complex family dynamics
- Cross-cultural engagement, and
- Risk assessment and safety planning for culturally diverse clients.

Our team is continuously updating existing and building new training modules and practices to strengthen capability with diverse practitioners and multicultural communities.

1. Giving the sector a meaningful voice

- 1.1 What would a partnership between Community Service Organisations (CSOs) and the government that achieves outcomes for Australians being supported by the community sector look like?
- 1.2 How can CSOs and government streamline the 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

Fostering collaborative engagement requires investment

Robust partnerships between CSOs and government must be characterised by collaborative planning, resource-sharing and a commitment to achieving tangible outcomes. Meaningful engagement requires truly open communication channels where CSOs can contribute their frontline expertise and insights to inform government policies and shape funding agreements and grant allocation processes. In turn, government would provide essential funding and access to broader resources to support the efficacy of CSO's collaboration.

Forward planning and coordination are essential for meaningful co-design processes

As the Issues Paper notes, meaningful co-design processes can provide a foundation for public participation in problem-solving and generation of solutions. However, in order to truly achieve this, approaches to co-design must be strengthened to better recognise and account for the significant workforce and capacity challenges facing CSOs.

Simple process changes and forward planning for co-design opportunities, combined with stronger engagement across government departments and governance fora at a national and state level would allow CSOs to better prepare for, allocate resources and participate in co-design opportunities. This is particularly critical to enable effective intersectional needs analysis.⁷

While inTouch support the principles and opportunities for engagement through co-design, providing meaningful co-design opportunities that best leverage our expertise and experience would require:

⁷ Intersectionality provides a framework that underpins the challenges faced by migrant and refugee women as they navigate the complexities of the service system. Intersectionality recognises that individuals can experience an intersection of multiple forms of systemic discrimination that produces greater disadvantage for cohorts that do not have the same access to power and privilege as the dominant group. In the case of migrant and refugee women, the intersecting factors that determine the disadvantages they face include gender, migration status, language barriers, family violence, financial hardship, and in many cases, homelessness, mental illness or disability.

Position Statement on Intersectionality, 2020, Harmony Alliance: Migrant and Refugee Women for Change.

<https://harmonyalliance.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Intersectionality-Position-Statement-Final.pdf>

- Establishing a coordinated approach and forward plan across the whole of the Commonwealth government for policy and legislative co-design opportunities that seek CSO and lived-experience participation.
- Providing advance notice and communication about co-design processes and ensuring appropriate timeframes for co-design inputs are established.
- Provision of funding to enable CSOs to resource engagement within the footprint of their workforce, ensuring they can collect evidence, collate positions and consult to support the co-design process.
- Utilising existing governance and collaborative practice forums to participate in co-design processes, such as established victim-survivor advocacy groups.

Compressed timeframes for submissions work against best practice engagement

Additionally, under current processes, there is consistently very limited time between funding calls and submission of proposals, working against good practice and collaborative design approaches. Establishing strong principles across the government's engagement processes of advance notice and coordinated forward planning would allow organisations to prepare for high-quality, collaborative design processes that provide a foundation for productive and empowering partnerships.

Frequently there is also a short timeframe between the announcement of successful grants and the implementation dates, limiting the ability to implement further co-design opportunities which may emerge after the original application is submitted.

Funding could support strong co-design processes by applicant organisations. Alternatively, this approach could be recognised in assessment criteria, emphasising the importance of good codesign processes and supported by longer timeframes, allowing for better quality collaboration.

Leveraging the expertise of advisory groups is critical

Organisations such as inTouch have unique expertise that they can contribute to co-design but to have a truly intersectional approach to program and policy development and funding allocations, a range of expertise and lived experience must be incorporated. Leveraging the capabilities of existing resources within CSOs provides a strong foundation for this type of engagement.

The NOOR Family Violence Survivor Advocates group provides a positive example of this type of engagement opportunity. The group was created in 2018 with support from inTouch in response to the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence. NOOR's purpose was to raise the voices of migrant and refugee women who have experienced family violence and comprises women from a range of cultural, linguistic and professional backgrounds. They provide expert advice on a variety of issues relating to their own experiences of family violence, migration, culture and work to ensure the perspectives of migrant and refugee women are captured in policy, legislation, services and the media.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a coordinated approach and forward plan across the whole of the Commonwealth government for policy and legislative co-design opportunities that seek CSO and lived-experience participation.
2. Provide advance notice and communication about co-design processes and ensure appropriate timeframes for co-design inputs are established.
3. Provide adequate funding to enable and support CSOs to resource engagement within the footprint of their workforce, ensuring they can collect evidence, collate positions and consult to support the co-design process.
4. Utilise existing governance and collaborative practice forums to participate in co-design processes, such as established victim-survivor advocacy groups.
5. Ensure transparency in the criteria for determining CSO involvement in advisory groups and co-design processes with broad opportunities to express interest in participating.
6. Prioritise contributions from organisations that bring strong expertise in an intersectional approach to policy and program design.
7. Enable advisory groups to also operate as a feedback mechanism to proactively identify trends and emerging issues for consideration in partnership, rather than

2. Grants that reflect the real cost of delivering quality services

- 2.1 What would adequate and flexible funding look like?
- 2.2 What administrative and overhead costs are not being considered in current grant funding?
- 2.3 How are rising operational costs impacting the delivery of community services?
- 2.4 What have been your experiences with and reflections on the supplementation and change to indexation?
- 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?
- 2.6 How can government streamline reporting requirements, including across multiple grants, to reduce administrative burden on CSOs?

A holistic and transparent funding approach is required

Addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by CSOs in obtaining adequate and flexible funding while managing administrative overhead costs is paramount for sustaining effective community services. A holistic approach that blends flexibility, transparency and strategic alignment between CSOs and government is essential to navigate these challenges effectively.

In order to achieve this, innovative funding models, a comprehensive understanding of operational expenses and collaborative efforts to streamline administrative processes is required. Such collaboration has the potential to better support equitable distribution of funds and alleviate the administrative burden faced by CSOs, creating a more sustainable provision of community services.

Adequate funding streams must reflect the true cost of service delivery

As the Issues Paper highlights, existing grant and funding arrangements do not adequately cover administrative and resourcing costs for CSOs and fall far short of meeting community demand for services.

Key to ensuring grants adequately enable service delivery is appropriate resourcing of staffing costs, to achieve expected outcomes. Staff play a pivotal role in direct service provision, as well as the program development and community engagement that enables successful delivery of services. Adequate funding that sustains competitive wages, enables staff training and development and ensures fair compensation for their dedicated work is critical. Insufficient funding for staff costs not only jeopardises the retention of skilled professionals but compromises the quality and continuity of services provided to the community.

Where project grants are time-limited (for instance one-year) and focus on project deliverables, they often do not factor in the human resources, including “back of house” staff, eg finance, business operations etc required to achieve the expected

project outcomes. This leads to challenging decisions about the quality of activities. For instance, inTouch has found that funding for the creation of new training modules is rarely reflective of the effort required to deliver the project, with the true cost of development rarely costed accurately or funded appropriately. The impact is that government funding does not fully meet actual delivery costs and organisations are compelled to compromise on the organisational fee model or subsidise the true training costs with core revenue or in-kind support.

While inTouch recognises that funding for national initiatives is a powerful opportunity to drive the sharing of good practice and learning across the country and foster national coordination, national funding needs to account for and provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate the resourcing required to tailor activities to different state contexts. This is demonstrated in the following case study: Provision of adequate funding.

Case Study: Provision of adequate funding Needs Analysis & Training for Settlement Providers

Funding was provided by the Commonwealth Government to facilitate a community of practice (CoP) for the 112 lead settlement service providers delivering the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program (SETS). The purpose of the SETSCoP is to facilitate ongoing engagement, capability strengthening and the sharing of best practice to improve outcomes for migrant and refugee communities.

Through this process, inTouch was allocated Federal funding over two years to deliver a national training package tailored for settlement service practitioners. The training covered understanding family violence and identifying risk factors; principles of culturally responsive practice and intersectionality; understanding systemic barriers to seeking support; and responses to disclosures, safety planning and referrals.

To deliver the training, inTouch conducted an extensive needs analysis, ensuring that the program met family violence sector standards with a strong focus on trauma informed, culturally responsive practice. In this instance, inTouch undertook extensive further work to accommodate the differing approach to family violence risk assessment across jurisdictions, tailoring the project to the context of each state's training and development of centralised resources and tools for settlement workers— an element that needed greater consideration or factoring into the national funding mechanism.

Case Study: Unmet Demand Motivation for Change

Motivation for Change Program (MFC) received government funding to support 82 men from South Asian and Afghan backgrounds per year. The majority of men referred to the MFC are not eligible for mainstream Men's Behaviour Change Programs (MBCP), where the ability to speak English well enough to actively engage in group conversations in English is a primary requirement.

Current funding for the MFC program does not meet the demand for this program for the client cohorts we work with. There is also significant unmet demand from men from other cultural backgrounds.

Key feedback was provided from one participant who had completed a mainstream MBCP was although he spoke English well enough to participate the content was not culturally relevant, which impacted his ability to apply the concepts presented.

The core purpose of Men's programs such as MFC is to increase the safety of women and children. As such, the provision of family safety work is a key requirement of the No to Violence standards. However, this component of Men's programs is not specifically funded, and either needs to be absorbed into the overall program costs or funded through another program within the organisation. Currently at inTouch family safety work is undertaken, and primarily funded by, our Direct Services Team, which provides case management services for victim survivors.

Recommendations:

8. Adequate funding for CSOs must appropriately incorporate staffing costs, and recognise that these extend beyond service delivery professionals to include program design, community engagement and broader operational overheads.
9. Program outcomes and metrics must be determined relative to the funding available to prevent organisations absorbing costs.
10. inTouch supports improved timeliness and transparency in indexation and how this is applied to CSOs to support retention and attraction of staff through adequate

Flexibility in grant allocations and improved government collaboration will support efficiencies

The lack of flexibility in the way grants are applied limits the effectiveness and efficiency of the service delivery CSOs can achieve at a local level. Likewise, limited coordination across government, including within single departments, creates inefficiencies and duplication and restricts CSOs' ability to apply funding most effectively.

For instance, inTouch has led work on the development of a Working with Women on Temporary Visa training program, however in order to adequately resource this, funding from a range of sources was utilised. One funding stream established the pilot while another source was used to further implement additional pilot training, testing and refinement.

Stronger understanding within government of the ways in which organisations leverage limited funding is required and supports a broader picture of how multiple funding streams can build on one another and how the development of resources for one project can have flow on benefits to other programs and projects. . A simple value for money assessment of cost-per-head rarely takes this into account.

As a consequence, there is a missed opportunity to look more broadly at work across government, at both a state and federal level, to avoid duplication, identify synergies and opportunities to align grants with a focus on outcomes rather than individual program deliverables.

Section 5 also outlines areas where inTouch sees efficiencies and funding allocations by better leveraging and scaling existing programs rather than the tendency to focus on grants for pilot programs. Outcomes of two highly successful programs, Motivation for Change and inSpire are detailed in the case studies setting out client experiences.

Recommendations:

11. Community outcomes must be at the centre of funding allocation decisions, across grant programs at all levels of government, to enable a more holistic and flexible approach that supports service delivery rather than a focus on individual programs.

Streamlining reporting requirements will have a positive impact on resourcing and service delivery

By simplifying and rationalising reporting processes, CSOs will be able to redirect valuable time and resources towards their key purpose of delivering impactful services to the community. A reduction in administrative burdens not only fosters a more efficient use of resources, but promotes transparency, enabling CSOs to

allocate their efforts towards maximising service delivery impact rather than excessive administrative tasks.

Current reporting requirements strongly prioritise compliance over learning and do not build an understanding of current needs and meaningful future service design. There is an overreliance on logframes and quantitative indicators, rather than exploratory qualitative reporting and analysis that helps to identify the strengths and gaps in systems and provide foundations for future growth and development.

If organisations are supported to tell the story behind its data, and focus on the outcomes and impact of their work, it would improve learning across the sector as a whole, while also supporting the more flexible allocation of grants, as outlined above.

As an example, inTouch has been funded to deliver a regional co-case management project. An emphasis on the quantitative data (that is, the number of clients co-case managed), would assess this project as a failure. However, in context, the data tells a story that highlights gaps and current place-based needs allowing us to address barriers to equitable access of services, faced by culturally and linguistically diverse communities within regional settings, and the impact of family violence reform on workforce and sector for service providers. When taken as a whole, the quantitative and qualitative data together point to successes in terms of changes to approach and capacity. It reflects the fact that partnerships take time, learning and adjustment is essential. Reporting that focuses only on compliance misses the bigger picture and understanding that can be gained.

One option to reduce the reporting burden on CSOs would be for Government to consider accepting single reports into one department from organisations receiving funding across different streams. For instance, at a state-level, inTouch currently have three projects funded from a single department, each with different reporting requirements, timelines and templates, creating an administrative burden that is not considered when looking at a project in isolation. A single report would reduce this burden and enable more resources to be directed to program delivery.

Additionally, contract-based reporting entrenches silos and does not place victims at the centre of service delivery. It incentivises services and government to focus on individual service offerings, rather than taking a client-centred approach that focuses on the broader and holistic provision of services.

Such reporting would also support a true partnership rather than the current project and contract management approach. In addition to multiple reporting requirements, where funding is received across different streams from within the one department, multiple contract managers for each source of funding adds inefficiencies, reinforces siloes and limits information sharing and learnings. A partnership approach at an organisational level would not only enable better relationships and efficiencies, it would support learning and flexibility across projects and funding streams.

Recommendations:

12. A partnership approach to funding oversight and reporting, rather than individual contract management for separate funding streams, would reduce administrative burdens and support flexibility.
13. Outcomes based reporting frameworks should be utilised to prioritise learning and program evolution and reduce administrative burdens.
14. Consortia funding should adequately fund the lead agency to cover costs associated with administrating arrangements and meeting obligations.

3. Providing longer grant agreement terms

- 3.1 What length grant agreements are CSOs seeking to provide certainty and stability for ongoing service delivery?
- 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?
- 3.3 What funding flexibility do CSOs require to enable service delivery and innovation?
- 3.4 What flexibility is required by CSOs in acquittal processes to support and encourage sector innovation?
- 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?

Longer-term agreements are essential for sustained and impactful service delivery

Extended grant agreements provide stability and allow CSOs to strategically plan and embark on more ambitious projects that truly incorporate meaningful time for development, implementation and evaluation.

Additionally longer-term agreements allow for greater investment in capability strengthening, staff training and resource development, ultimately ensuring a more resilient and adaptable organisational structure.

Organisations working in the space of social change are particularly challenged by annual funding cycles. inTouch works to shift power, norms, beliefs and practices in the community and across the family violence and social services sectors. This work is long-term and requires flexible, core funding to enable the implementation of a multi-year strategy that delivers transformative change. For inTouch, this would enable a more holistic, wrap around approach to service delivery, supporting a breadth of work across prevention, early intervention, response and recovery and empowerment – rather than the current focus on meeting demand and responding at the point of crisis.

For instance, with greater funding certainty, inTouch would be able to commit to and strengthen relationships with community partners such as ethno-specific and faith-based organisations to substantially shift community norms through prevention work.

Additionally, longer-term funding is essential for organisations such as inTouch to enable attraction and retention of staff, enabling the provision of job security in addition to growth and development opportunities.

Longer term funding is an important component of sector capacity building. There is significant interest and genuine commitment from organisations wanting to invest in building the capacity of their workforce to provide culturally safe and appropriate

services to clients from migrant and refugee communities. Unfortunately, with fixed term funding for training and capacity building and high staff turnover in the sector it is difficult to establish long term competencies within organisations.

Case Study: Establishing collaborative practice to strengthen capability of specialist family violence responses

Working across jurisdictions, inTouch have developed a proposed partnership model that would deliver a comprehensive response to strengthen capability of specialist domestic violence responses in states other than Victoria.

Key elements of this proposal include:

- An uplift in specialist domestic violence workforce who work with migrant, refugee and temporary visa women
- An uplift in skills, knowledge and understanding of the risks and responses for migrant, refugee and temporary visa holders who experience family violence
- The introduction of an integrated community legal response embedded in specialist family violence services, and
- A partnership that brings together the expertise of specialist family violence services, multicultural communities and inTouch.

A key component of the proposed integrated response is the growth in specialist Migrant Women's Program and Case Management workforce. If funded, this program would expand the provision on two key elements – community outreach and referral pathways, and case management, crisis and legal support.

If implemented this proposal would create a holistic response to supporting temporary visa, migrant and refugee women and their children who experience domestic and family violence in jurisdictions beyond Victoria and would lead practice locally and nationally.

Recommendations:

15. Multi-year funding for a minimum of 3 years, but ideally 5 years, will positively impact innovation, service delivery efficiencies and staff wellbeing and retention.
16. At minimum, final outcomes and grant variations and extensions should be advised 3 to 4 months before a grant ceases.
17. Multi-year funding supported by annual work plans provides flexibility and ongoing opportunities to reflect learnings and project evolution.

4. Grant funding to a diversity of Community Service Organisations

- 4.1 How can the government ensure opportunities are available for new and emerging organisations to access funding?
- 4.2 What programs, supports and information are already available for smaller CSOs to help build capacity of the organisation? Are these working?
- 4.3 How could larger CSOs support smaller CSOs? What are the barriers to providing this support What length grant agreements are CSOs seeking to provide certainty and stability for ongoing service delivery?

Emerging and small CSOs must be recognised to ensure a dynamic community service sector

Navigating the landscape of community service funding involves addressing critical aspects that shape accessibility, sustainability and capability-strengthening initiatives, particularly for smaller and emerging CSOs.

Opportunities for dedicated funding for emerging organisations, with clear criteria and caps (such as years of operation, staff profile, lived experience, etc) and recognition of the need for additional organisational developmental funding would enable emerging or smaller CSOs to demonstrate their ability to deliver services against relevant criteria rather than in competition with larger, more practiced organisations. This approach would ensure diversity, support innovation and encourage evolution in the community service sector and prevent smaller organisations from being subsumed during funding submission processes.

Additionally, funding that supports organisational growth whether through base-funding or provision of organisational development funds will enable newer and small organisations to build an evidence-base that will support them to access project or core funding. This may include specific funding allocations for research grants, technical support for community needs analysis or supporting partnerships and alliances.

A funding stream targeted to emerging and smaller CSOs should also account for different reporting requirements, reflecting the fact that the burden of reporting and acquittal requirements addressed in Section 3, are proportionally more significant and cumbersome for small organisations that do not have the workforce, data collection expertise or established evidence base.

Encouraging partnerships with emerging organisations will grow their long-term viability

Establishing funding streams that require larger CSOs to partner and engage with newer or smaller organisations to develop and deliver programs and services will support growing organisations to strengthen their sustainability and opportunities for longer-term growth. This could be facilitated through specific budget requirements for capacity investment and outcomes related to relationship and network development as well as incentives for demonstrated support and engagement, recognising that successful partnerships require significant investment of time and money.

Current approaches to funding allocation entrench competition and favour large organisations

Limited time for meaningful project design and short-term funding structures reinforce barriers that prevent good partnership practice between CSOs. The competition for limited funding and siloed approach to programs prevents organisations from working together effectively while failing to facilitate end-to-end value and does not put clients at the centre of service delivery. Good partnership practice must be appropriately resourced. This means providing smaller organisations with adequate funding for workforce and long-term staff retention and building in expectations of good partnership practice and brokering for larger CSOs to strengthen partnership approaches.

Investment in resources and support for the sector to strengthen capability in partnerships and engagement at larger CSOs will ultimately assist and create impact for smaller CSOs in the long term.

Recommendations:

17. Dedicated funding streams for small and emerging CSOs, that incorporate organisational development funding, are required to build capacity and diversity across the sector.
18. Investing in strengthening partnership capabilities of larger CSOs and building partnership requirements and incentives into funding models will enable growth

5. Partnering with trusted community organisations

- 5.1 What is your experience with and reflections on place-based funding approaches?
- 5.2 What innovative approaches could be implemented to ensure the grant funding reaches trusted community organisations with strong local links?
- 5.3 Which areas do you consider have duplicative funding or gaps you think need to be addressed, and what is the evidence?
- 5.4 Where there is a community-led change initiative, could share accountability to community and funders (government) strengthen service delivery?

Place-based funding approaches have potential to foster tailored solutions for communities

Place-based funding emphasises the importance of community engagement and collaboration, empowering local stakeholders to actively participate in decision-making processes. It facilitates a more holistic understanding of community needs and fosters ownership and collaboration. For organisations such as inTouch, this is critical when working with vulnerable communities with many intersecting and specific needs.

However, successful implementation of place-based funding requires nuanced understanding of need, ongoing relationship building and flexibility to adapt to local dynamics and the requirements of communities. There is a critical need for this type of engagement, but it requires CSOs to operate in new ways that are not common practice. This includes building better local relationships, working across sectors and establishing trust and an understanding of key players to effectively operate. Partnerships need to be embedded in organisational practice to allow for the partnership to be sustainable and ongoing, and adaptable to change, such as key parties leaving their respective organisations.

As a state-based organisation, inTouch has built experience working with family violence stakeholders across regional Victoria. However, in a recent project it took over 18 months to build strong relationships, share skills and create meaningful engagement to tackle family violence affected migrant and refugee communities in regional and rural locations. In all instances, the success is entirely dependent on the individuals working in any one location and once the relationships were established, due to the short-term funding cycle, financing for localised projects had finished.

In order for place-based engagement to be effective, there must be a focus on systems change in a location. This requires multi-year, flexible funding that accounts for the significant period of time required at the commencement of an initiative to build the foundations required to assess local dynamics, build relationships and trust and establish quality program design. This includes flexibility in defining outcomes in

the first year of an initiative and capacity to adapt as the understanding of local dynamics evolves and change becomes recognised and valued by the local community.

Where inTouch has seen demonstrated success in engagement and collaboration between services to deliver place-based approaches, is work across specialist family violence organisations and multicultural communities. The expertise of inTouch across both sectors has been instrumental in facilitating these relationships and is outlined in the following case study: prevention and early intervention in multicultural communities.

Case Study: Prevention and early intervention in multicultural communities

Migrant and refugee communities face unique challenges that compound the drivers of family violence and the accessibility of services to prevent and respond to it. Family violence prevention and early intervention requires close collaboration between specialist family violence organisations and multicultural communities drawing on their collective expertise.

One example of this type of engagement which can be scaled to more communities and locations is inTouch's collaboration with a Vietnamese and an East African community organisation and a sports club in Melbourne's Western suburbs over the past 10 months to work together to prevent and respond to family violence.

The initiative has involved training, community events and case coordination to enable community awareness of the drivers and dynamics of family violence and how to respond and access assistance. Over 750 people have been involved in sporting and family activities and community events providing family violence primary prevention messaging. It has also strengthened their family violence support system through training community organisation staff in culturally responsive practice in recognising, responding, and responding to cases of family violence.

inTouch co-located a Vietnamese case manager at one of the organisations to provide coaching to staff and direct case management service provision to women needing assistance. This relationship has been particularly important to enable better responses to complex legal cases involving women on temporary visas.

One of the staff at the Vietnamese community organisation commented,

"I have learned how to respond to different cases and have accessed more advice and case consultation from [inTouch's Case Manager] on her co-location days. I learned the way of speaking with clients and the questions to ask. Now I'm giving better referrals to the right agencies for legal or visa advice and other support. Our partnership makes the work more effective. We can refer to the right services and stop clients going around in circles. It makes them feel confident that they can get help."

Overall, the collaboration has resulted in greater public discussion of family violence among these community groups, awareness of support services available and safer, culturally responsive case responses. In our multicultural society, there is significant need for these types of collaborations across sectors to enable more effective and culturally responsive prevention and early intervention services across diverse communities.

Duplicative funding of services is common, but gaps remain in critical areas of service delivery

inTouch has experienced many examples of duplicative funding arrangements, but has identified multiple occasions where government has funded organisations to deliver training or services that inTouch is already effectively providing. Similarly, our family violence clients are often referred to us via multiple services where they have received similar supports, but none have addressed core problems the client has identified as critical to them. For instance, a recent client referred to inTouch had received housing assistance via three different services, but was not allocated the mental health support for herself and her children she had repeatedly asked for because of the way funding and service agreements required organisations within the sector to engage with the client.

This duplication is not only an inefficient use of resources, duplicating work, it fails to put the client at the centre of service delivery exposing them to potential retraumatisation, it also affects trust and relationships between organisations and dilutes the impact of the support and services any one individual CSO can provide.

While there is extensive duplication across the system, there remain significant gaps in service delivery. Broadly, racism and a lack of cultural responsiveness is a critical barrier affecting migrant and refugee people's access to social services. This could be addressed through funding incentives that require organisations delivering services to ensure intersectional, anti-racist and culturally responsive approaches through all services and policy engagement. The impact of this gap in service delivery is evidenced by the experience and feedback provided by inTouch clients about the support they received prior to engaging with us, inTouch's sector needs assessments and responses to pre-training questionnaires from inTouch's training participants. inTouch has aspirations to develop an organisational assessment tool and approach to enable organisations to assess their status regarding cultural responsiveness and safety and identify opportunities to improve organisational culture, systems and service quality. With appropriate resourcing, inTouch would be well-placed to support government to address this critical gap in service delivery across the CSO sector.

Established programs provide a strong foundation to address critical gaps in service delivery

Grant and funding opportunities that support CSOs to pilot new and innovative programs are critical and a key way to ensure a dynamic and responsive community service sector that responds and adapts to community needs.

However, there are also many examples, across all sectors of community services, where successful programs that are responding to service delivery gaps, are already in operation. Ensuring funding opportunities that support and target these types of programs is essential to building a strong foundational service offering and working to meet gaps in demand. This is an efficient way to ensure value for money and provides opportunity to fund areas where typically limited funding has been available by leveraging and scaling existing programs.

inTouch is committed to strengthening our client-centred approach and continuing to grow our family violence services across the spectrum of prevention, early intervention, response and recovery and empowerment. However, almost all government funding is concentrated in the response phase, enabling support for people in crisis, but failing to prevent family violence or support women to fully heal and recover from their experiences. We deliver many exceptional programs that have been demonstrated through independent evaluations to provide positive outcomes for migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence, including in prevention and recovery and empowerment. The following case studies on Motivation for Change and inSpire, provide real client experiences of these programs and the impact they have had on their lives.

Case Study: Prevention

Motivation for Change

██████ is originally from Afghanistan and has been in Australia since ██████, sponsored by his fiancée, ██████. Due to the recent takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, ██████ is deeply concerned for the safety of his remaining family and wants to bring them from Kabul to Australia.

COVID lockdowns had resulted in loss of income because ██████ has been unable to go to his casual job as a construction worker. He feels frustrated and has started becoming abusive towards ██████ and their newborn child. The police attended ██████ and ██████ home after the neighbours reported loud shouting and noises. An interim IVO was put in place, which resulted in ██████ staying in a hotel until the court date.

After speaking to the Men's Referral Service via an interpreter, he was referred to Motivation for Change's in-language group and case management program. ██████ agreed to an online assessment and interview with a case manager, who inducted him into the program and provided technical support so ██████ could attend online group sessions conducted in Dari every Saturday.

After five weeks, ██████ expressed that he was finding the group to be beneficial and enjoyed sharing his thoughts with other men who understood his background and challenges as well as his concerns for his family in Afghanistan. At the end of the program, ██████ expressed interest in participating further group work as he found the program and connection with other men beneficial for himself and his family.

Case Study: Recovery and Empowerment inSpire

██████████ is a victim-survivor of family violence, a recent university graduate and a mother ██████████. Prior to engaging with inTouch's services and the inSpire Program, she faced multiple challenges as her children's sole carer and finding employment with no Australian work experience.

After relocating to an unfamiliar region in Melbourne with her children for safety reasons, she struggle to find employment and felt isolated from being so far from her community. ██████████ expressed interest in our employment skills program and joined our career mentoring program. Her participation in these programs increased her confidence and sense of autonomy, setting her on a clear, supported path to healing and recovery.

██████████ gained employment as a part-time teacher but soon recognised that she had the drive and capacity to do more. She continued in her search to find a role that offered more secure hours to increase her income and allow time for additional professional development.

██████████ persistence, diligence and hard work paid off, securing her a second job with her local council as an employee. She has also recently joined ██████████ ██████████ an opportunity to use her lived experience to inform and influence policy, service development and media discussions around family violence in culturally diverse communities.

Recommendations:

19. Successful place-based service delivery requires flexible, multi-year funding that prioritises and enables the establishment of trusted relationships at a local level as a key outcome.
20. Racism and cultural responsiveness remain critical barriers for individuals to access social services, and funding to support organisations to identify and address this gap in service delivery is essential.
21. Ensuring baseline and consistent funding in existing programs is an efficient and effective way to address gaps in service delivery. National investment in family violence prevention programs working with men with migrant and refugee backgrounds who use violence, as well as programming to support the recovery and empowerment of women with migrant and refugee backgrounds who have experienced family violence are examples of existing services that address critical demand and service gaps.

Contact

[REDACTED]
Executive Manager, Sector and Community
[REDACTED]

GPO Box 2905
Melbourne Victoria 3001
03 9413 6500
admin@intouch.org.au
www.intouch.org.au

**If you are experiencing family violence and need immediate support,
please call 1800 RESPECT on 1800 737 328**