



Australian Government

Department of Social Services

National Panel of Assessors (NPA)

Request for Tender (RFT)

Public Briefing

Monday 21 October 2024

 DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au

Acknowledgement of Country



The Department of Social Services acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community.

We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

Probity Statement

The Department of Social Services is committed to conducting a fair, honest, and transparent process for the design and implementation of the National Panel of Assessors (NPA) program and related services.

For today's event, this means:

- this presentation will be made publicly available on engage.dss.gov.au
- Q&A and comments will not be open for this event
- any questions in relation to the RFT must be submitted to DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au and may be published (with the identity of the person or organisation asking the question removed).

Industry Briefing Overview

Key Topics

1. Indicative timeline and overview of the RFT
2. Summary of the new NPA program
3. Key changes from the Exposure Draft
4. Lodging a response to the RFT



**The NPA program
commences
1 July 2025**

Indicative Timeline

Date	Key element
Wednesday 16 October 2024	Release of the Request for Tender for the NPA program.
Monday 21 October 2024	NPA RFT Industry Briefing.
Monday 4 November 2024 at 5.00pm AEDT	Deadline for Respondents to submit any questions or requests for clarification about the RFT.
Monday 11 November at 12.00pm AEDT	Closing date and time for responses to the NPA RFT.
March 2025	Notification of tender outcomes.
April 2025	Commencement of the transition period to the new NPA.
1 July 2025	The NPA program commences.

Overview – Request for Tender

- The NPA program will provide a range of Assessment Services to support the needs of people with disability in the workplace. The new program will be delivered in 111 Employment Services Areas across Australia.
- Deeds for the NPA program are for an initial term of **three years** — from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2028 — with the option to offer discretionary extensions for up to additional 3 years.
- All Respondents must meet the conditions for participation and minimum content and format requirements if they wish to submit a tender for the NPA program.
- The Contact Officer is the only means of contact between the Department and Respondents during the RFT period.
- The Contact Officer can be contacted via email at DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au.

National Panel of Assessors (NPA) program - Overview

NPA Providers will continue to deliver three types of Assessment Services:

Supported Wage System
(SWS) Assessments

Ongoing Support
Assessments (OSA)

Workplace Modifications
Services (WMS)
Assessments

Respondents will be required to have:

- ✓ an understanding of employment supports for people with disability, including people with high support needs
- ✓ qualified and experienced Assessors (as per the mandatory qualifications and skills)
- ✓ strong communication skills to ensure high quality Assessment services.

Supported Wage System (SWS) Assessments

- The SWS is an industrial relations mechanism that has been in place since 1994.
- The SWS enables employers to pay a productivity-based wage to people whose work productivity is reduced because of disability.
- This Assessment can only be undertaken by a qualified independent NPA Assessor.

Ongoing Support Assessments (OSA)

An NPA Assessor will undertake an Assessment of a new specialist disability employment program Participant to determine:

The level of support they require in employment, which could be:

- None – where the OSA recommends the NSDEP Participant does not require Ongoing Support
- Flexible Ongoing Support
- Moderate Ongoing Support
- High Ongoing Support

The review interval for the next Assessment (1, 2 or 5 years)

Workplace Modification Services (WMS) Assessments

NPA Assessors conduct WMS Assessments for people with disability to identify barriers to accessing or performing their work

WMS Assessments will recommend equipment, modifications and other support, funded through the Employment Assistance Fund, to remove the identified barriers

Fees

	Payment Type	Amount (GST Inclusive)
OSA	OSA fee	\$475.36
	SWS Assessment fee	\$679.10
SWS	Additional SWS Assessment payment if the assessment is conducted in a Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program region	\$475.36
	Approved additional fee for Assessments that exceed 5 hours	\$135.82 per additional hour up to a maximum of 4 additional hours
	Approved additional fee for SWS Assessments conducted in a Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program region that exceed five hours	\$230.89 per additional hour up to a maximum of 4 additional hours
	WMS Assessment fee	\$135.82 per hour up to a maximum of 5 hours
WMS	Approved additional fee for Assessments that exceed 5 hours	\$135.82 per additional hour up to a maximum of 4 additional hours
	Additional travel costs (for which travel time will not include time used for Assessment or reporting services)	\$56.59 per hour for travel time, up to a maximum of 8 hours per day, where a return trip exceeds 200 kilometres

Note: Fees are indicative and based on 1 July 2024 fee amounts. Fees will change from 1 July 2025.

RFT reference: **3.9** Fees for the National Panel of Assessors

Key changes from the Exposure Draft 1/2

- **The introduction of a cap of up to 10 providers per Assessment type in each Employment Services Area (ESA)**
 - ❖ Addresses feedback of oversaturation and ensures a balance of large and small providers in the market.
 - ❖ The number of NPA Providers in each ESA will not exceed 10 Providers for each Assessment type.
 - ❖ Some ESAs may have less than 10 providers per Assessment type, depending on the size and characteristics of the ESA.
- **The introduction of greater flexibility for eligible qualifications across the three types of NPA Assessment Services**
 - ❖ To increase flexibility and attract Assessors with appropriate skills, the Department will provide a single qualification list for all Assessment types which cover all three Assessor categories.
 - ❖ WMS Assessors will continue to require a full (not provisional or restricted), up to date, qualification that is registered, accredited or recognised with the relevant association (such as the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency).
 - This does not apply to Assessors conducting OSAs or SWS Assessments.

Key changes from the Exposure Draft 2/2

➤ **The removal of 'specialist' WMS Assessment Providers**

- ❖ This allows providers more flexibility to engage Assessors with specific areas of expertise, aligning with the mandatory qualifications required of Assessors.
- ❖ This may also broaden the scope of WMS Assessors working across ESAs, which can go to ensuring the participant receives a quality Assessment from an Assessor who has skills in a particular disability type or area of expertise.
- ❖ This will not limit a respondent's application as an organisation who only offers one type of specialist Assessment e.g. vision impairment.

➤ **The introduction of the Capacity Building Fund**

- ❖ Eligible NPA providers can apply for up to \$25,000 in financial support to meet costs associated with obtaining their Right Fit For Risk (RFFR) accreditation or certification against the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS).

Mandatory Qualifications and Skills 1/2

Skills

- Strong communication skills with the ability to consult and provide sensitive advice
- the ability to complete Assessments to a high standard
- the ability to produce detailed written reports on completion of Assessment
- the ability to assess barriers and negotiate solutions to meet the needs of people with disability, and
- technical skills related to the relevant process of Assessment.

Mandatory Qualifications and Skills 2/2

Mandatory qualifications

- Rehabilitation counsellor
- Occupational therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Nurse
- Medical practitioner
- Psychologist/Psychiatrist
- Orthoptics/Optomety
- Audiologist
- Exercise physiologist
- Vocational training, or
- other diploma or higher-level qualification which the Provider considers is relevant to providing the required Assessments (and as approved by the Department).

Approving NPA Assessors

Under the new program, it is the responsibility of the NPA Provider to approve their individual Assessors.

NPA Providers must gain approval from the Department in writing if a potential Assessor has qualifications that are not on the approved list of qualifications.

NPA Providers will be subject to performance assurance activities by the Department, including activities to ensure:

- Assessors are suitably qualified, and
- Assessors are not undertaking Assessments where there may be a conflict of interest.

Performance Management

NPA Providers will be required to adhere to:

- ✓ the NPA performance framework
- ✓ the *Disability Services and Inclusion (Code of Conduct) Rules 2023*
- ✓ Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- ✓ the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS), and
- ✓ performance discussions with the Department.

Request for Tender (RFT) process – Considerations for Lodging a Response

Conditions for Participation

Minimum
Content and
Format
Requirements

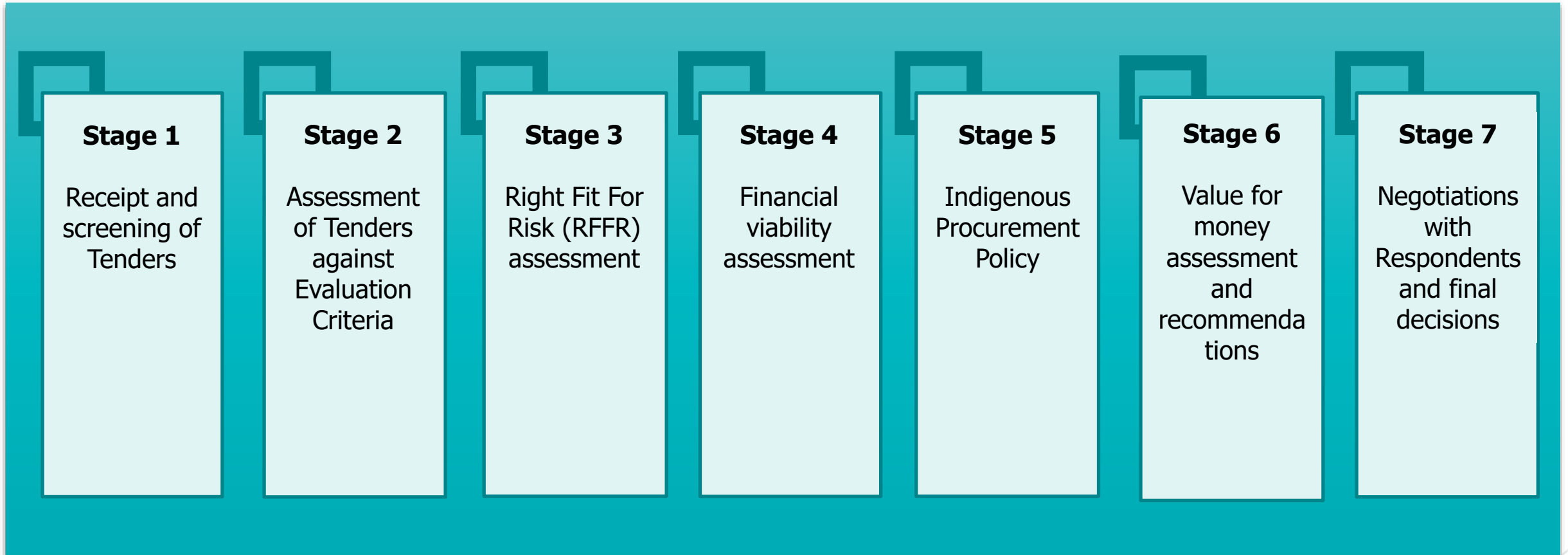
Employment
Services
Areas

Coverage

Evaluation
Criteria

Request for Tender (RFT) process – Evaluation of Responses

Staged approach to evaluation:



Request for Tender (RFT) process

– Indigenous Procurement Policy

- The Indigenous Procurement Policy helps stimulate Indigenous entrepreneurship and business development, providing Indigenous Australians with more opportunities to participate in the economy.
- Mandatory Set Aside requirements will apply to this Request for Tender.
- Any Tenders for the 9 ESAs listed in section 6.3.5 of the RFT, from Indigenous small to medium enterprises (SMEs) will be considered for offers of business before Tenders from other Respondents (that are not Indigenous SMEs) for those ESAs.

How will tenders be assessed?

Evaluation Criteria

Weighted Evaluation Criteria (Selection Criteria)

1. Organisational Capability and Capacity
2. Quality

Unweighted Evaluation Criteria

- Evaluation of Risk
- Benefit to Australian economy
- Response to Modern Slavery practices
- Response to environmental sustainability statement
- Response to multicultural access and equity

Organisational Capability (SC1)

The extent to which the Respondent has demonstrated that its organisation has the capability and capacity to deliver OSAs and SWS Assessments, and/or WMS Assessments, (as applicable).

Quality (SC2)

The extent to which the Respondent has demonstrated that its organisation will provide quality Services, including any Services provided by Subcontractors (if applicable).

Unweighted Evaluation Criteria

- Evaluation of Risk
- Modern Slavery
- Environmental sustainability
- Multicultural access and equity
- Benefit to the Australian economy

Financial viability and other checks



Financial
viability
information



Credentials
checks

Legal and other matters

Information
Technology

Legal and Policy
requirements

Conditions
of Lodgment

Probity

Procurement Process

16/10/2024

RFT released on AusTender website
tenders.gov.au

Respondents must access and register with AusTender.

04/11/2024

Deadline for Respondents to submit RFT questions and requests for clarification is Monday 4 November 5.00pm AEDT.

11/11/2024

Tender Closes at 12 noon AEDT.

Tenders must be lodged via AusTender in the format described.

March 2025

Notification of tender outcomes

April 2025

Transition period to the New Program commences

01/07/25

New Program commences

All Tender questions must be submitted through the Contact Officer via
DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au

Tender Lodgement

- Tenders must be submitted through AusTender by the Closing Time of Monday 11 November 2024 12pm noon AEDT
- No late Tenders will be accepted
- The Department will accept Tenders lodged in Microsoft Excel 2010 (or above) in the format provided as the response template.

Thank You!

Get in touch



www.dss.gov.au



DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au
