

DSS Grant Assessment Centre

Application Helpdesk

The helpdesk will provide technical support for applications and manage queries. Support will largely be script based. Where applicants have policy questions they will be referred to the Assessment Manager who will liaise with the Expert Panel and the Probity Advisor. Questions and answers will be posted on the DSS website for probity purposes.

Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance Advisor will provide independent assessment of the selection process.

They will:

- Consider critical decision points and their appropriateness and correct application;
- Compliance with key controls and processes;
- Risk identification and mitigations and whether these have been escalated appropriately; and
- The effectiveness of governance and communication mechanisms.

Advisory Board *Strategic Policy and Locational Advice*

The Advisory Board comprises three policy branch managers and three state managers and will be chaired by the Programme Office Group Manager. They will provide strategic oversight of the assessment, reviewing outcomes and providing policy and locational specific advice on issues such as grant recipient/ sector mix, potential market failure, innovation and opportunities for joined up service delivery. They will ensure funding recommendations meet policy and locational requirements and are aligned with overall policy objectives prior to escalation to the delegate for approval. The Board will meet weekly during the assessment phase and be provided with regular reports from the Assessment Team on the status of processes and rankings. All advice to decision makers will be clearly documented, as per the recommendations of the ANAO report on Building Better Cities.

Expert Panel *Policy and Locational Advice*

The Expert Panel comprises Executive Level staff from Policy, Delivery and Programme Office with expertise and knowledge regarding specific policy objectives and service delivery. It will be chaired by a Programme Office Branch Manager. The Expert Panel will provide advice on request to assist assessors understand responses against selection criteria for example innovative and/or forward thinking proposals for service delivery. Some states may require multiple representatives to ensure programmes have appropriate coverage.

Assessment Moderation *Ensuring consistent and quality assessment*

The Assessment Moderation is a quality assurance process, used to review the Assessment Team's judgement to ensure valid, reliable and consistent summary write-ups and scoring of applications. Assessment Moderators will provide an independent perspective on assessments and manage any queries or issues escalated from the Assessment Teams.



National Office Assessment Centre and State Based Assessment Hubs *Application assessment against eligibility and selection criteria*

The Assessment Teams comprise of a central National Office centre and State based hubs. The Assessment Teams will assess suitability and rank applicants against selection criteria and will also conduct financial viability assessments and seek referee reports. The team members may also provide expertise in the programme, location and local issues affecting the activity or target group.

Probity

The Probity Advisor will be in place in the Programme Office until December 2014.

They will:

- Ensure that selection process actions and decisions do not advantage or disadvantage any applicant;
- Provide live advice to ensure fair, equitable and transparent outcomes;
- Ensure a clear line of sight from the programme outcome to the grant, ensuring it is aligned with the policy intent;
- Help minimise Ministerial and Departmental exposure to claims of adverse selection outcomes; and
- Develop an evidence base, documenting information on the appropriateness of decisions and controls for future review.

DSS Grant Funding – Selection Process – Open Funding Rounds 2014

The selection process is used when the Department is looking to fund a provider to deliver services on behalf of the Australian Government. The aim of a selection process is to ensure applications for funding are assessed in a consistent, fair and unbiased manner and to provide the delegate or decision maker with clear recommendations. DSS Selection Processes are designed to ensure officials and Ministers comply with the Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines (CGGs) and accordingly, the FMA Act and FMA Regulations and, after 1 July 2014 PGPA and associated Rules.

Seek Applications 19 June – 23 July 2014	Assess Applications 24 July – 25 Sept 2014	Make Recommendation 29 Sept – 3 Oct 2014	Approval of Spending 6 – 23 Oct 2014	Negotiate Agreement 27 Oct – 14 Nov 2014	Execute 17 Nov – 12 Dec 2014
Probity Advisor in place - transparency, fairness and equity of the selection process.					
Quality Assurance Advisor in place - independent assurance of the end to end process.					
Financial Viability Advisor – development and training on financial ratio analysis formula and desk-top analysis of applicant's financial returns where necessary.					
<p>Applications Open – 9am 19 June 2014</p> <p>Applications from potential applicants are sought and received.</p> <p>The Application Packs are released on the Department's website, detailing the service delivery needs and selection.</p> <p>Packs for each individual selection activity include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Guidelines Overview Application Form Funding Round Summary (\$ avail) Shell Grant Agreement Operational Guidelines (only some activities). <p>Application Process</p> <p>Organisations register once online and complete one application form for each activity directly into FOFMS via an online form.</p> <p>Eligibility is advised immediately.</p> <p>Questions from applicants are answered and shared with all potential applicants via the DSS website.</p> <p>Applications Close 2pm 23 July 2014</p>	<p>Applications assessed</p> <p>Assessment Governance Arrangements and Quality Assurance processes implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selections Board SES officers - strategic oversight and outcomes review. - Expert Panel - policy and locational advice to Assessment Teams and Selections Board. - Assessment Centres (Assessors and Moderators) - Quality Assurance Advisor - Probity Advisor - Financial Viability Advisor <p>The Assessment process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applications are assessed and scored, referee checks undertaken. 2. The Moderator does a Quality Assurance check. 3. Applications are assessed as 'suitable to fund' or 'not suitable to fund' and ranked and shortlisted as preferred applicants. 4. Financial Viability Assessments are undertaken. 5. Shortlist is reviewed. 6. The Assessment Report is prepared. 	<p>Information to Approver</p> <p>A Funding Minute is prepared to provide the Approver¹ with sufficient information to make an informed decision.</p> <p>The Funding Minute may include a request to seek approval to commit outyear spending (i.e. five year funding agreements).</p>	<p>Approval</p> <p>The Approver considers the advice in the Funding Minute and approves the spending proposal.</p> <p>Outcomes Advised</p> <p>The outcomes of the selection process are communicated to successful applicants.</p>	<p>Grant Agreement</p> <p>The Grant Agreement is created.</p> <p>Negotiation:</p> <p>Successful applicants are provided with a Grant Agreement – the following areas may be negotiated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovation funding (up to 10%) - Flexibility – Service Areas and Locations - Programme Performance Reporting (the DSS Data Exchange) 	<p>Grant Agreement Execution</p> <p>Grant is signed by grant recipient and the Department.</p> <p>Publishing grants</p> <p>Successful grants will be published on the DSS website not later than fourteen working days after the grant agreement for the grant takes effect.</p>

¹ The Approver may be the Minister, a Chief Executive or an DSS official if the Minister has chosen not to exercise their role as spending proposal approver (in writing)