



Grant Communications Activities (19 June 2014)

Previously tabled to the Senate Community Affairs Committee on 5 June 2014

The Department has a range of communication tools and resources to assist existing and potential service providers to understand the changes to grants, and support them in applying for funding. This includes:

- Emails and letters to existing service providers about extensions and renewals.
- DSS Grants Website - information, fact sheets, program information, application packs and FAQs.
- Email subscription – automatic notification alerts when new information becomes available online.
- DSS Grants Hotline and grants@dss.gov.au inbox – providing personalised responses to questions by phone and email.
- Newspaper advertisements on 17 May and 7 June 2014.
- Information Sessions – 15 town hall meetings with interested service providers.
- Targeted engagements – with peaks and key stakeholders.
- Support materials for applicants.

Grant Extensions and Renewals

- Around **4,200** grant agreements across DSS programmes are due to cease on 30 June 2014. Of these grants:
 - **1250** are concluding on 30 June 2014 (one off grants; projects; non-ongoing funding).
 - **1446** are receiving six month extensions.
 - **1452** are receiving 12 month extensions.
 - **380** existing grants will be reoffered as part of five year arrangements.
- To ensure service continuity, DSS will be offering extensions as below:
 - **12 month extensions** will be offered for **Aged Care** programmes and programmes transitioning to the **NDIS**.
 - **Six month extensions** will be offered for most other ongoing activities.
 - **Five year agreements** will be offered for most Family and Relationship Services, Communities for Children Facilitating Partners, and Family Law Services.
- Letters of Offer are being distributed, with a large majority of organisations having been contacted regarding their specific funding arrangements.
- To date, more than **2,000** offers of extended funding have been made to organisations.

Email to providers about extensions and new grant arrangements

- An email was sent on **14 May 2014** and **15 May 2015** to providers receiving extensions.
- **2,568** grant recipients were contacted:
 - **2,516** emails were sent successfully.
 - Many of these organisations had multiple grants with DSS but received a single email outlining the extensions to existing grant funding.
 - About **44%** of recipients sent an optional read receipt.
 - **52 copies** of this email were sent by post where no email address was available, or where there was a bounce back or email failure notice.
- The information contained in the extensions email was also published on the DSS Grants Homepage.
- A list of recipients was tabled with the Committee on 5 June 2014.
- Grant Agreement Managers in State and Territory Offices, and Policy branch representatives further distributed this email to additional contacts within identified organisations based on local intelligence and ongoing relationships with these organisations. The data of this distribution is not available.

Email to all current DSS grant recipients

- A second email was sent by the Department on 19 May 2014 to all providers currently in receipt of DSS grant funding (at 8 May 2014) to provide a letter outlining the new arrangements for DSS grants.
- **10,350** grant recipients were contacted:
 - **10,024** emails were sent successfully.
 - Many of these organisations had multiple grants with DSS but received a single email outlining the new arrangements.
 - About **40%** of recipients sent an optional read receipt.
 - **326 copies** of the letter were sent by post where no email address was available, or where there was a bounce back or email failure notice.
- A copy of the letter was also published on the DSS Grants Homepage and subscribers to the email alerts were made aware of this addition through the subscription service.
- A list of recipients was tabled with the Committee on 5 June 2014.

Identification of email addresses

- Where possible, email addresses were extracted from FOFMS.
- Aged Care contacts were drawn from FOFMS, Interim Grants Management System and Programme Information Management System.
- Settlement Services and Multicultural Affairs provided a manually maintained list of contacts, as their grants are not yet stored in FOFMS.
- A consolidated distribution list was created, removing duplicate email addresses, and identifying where alternate contact arrangements were required.
- The distribution list was then validated by the State and Territory Offices and relevant policy areas.

Grants Website

- The DSS grants website (dss.gov.au/grants) is the **key source of information** and contains everything needed to apply for funding to ensure all organisations have equitable access to information.
- The website went live following the Budget broadcast on Tuesday, **13 May 2014**.
- Information pertaining to the application process was published on Thursday, **19 May 2014**, including application packs and guidance in applying for funding.
- Questions received and/or answered through the DSS Grants Hotline, information sessions, or grants inbox are being **published on the website** for probity purposes.
- As at 17 June 2014, the DSS grants homepage had received over **38,500 views**.
- **3,995 people** have subscribed to receive **email alerts** each time the grants homepage is updated. This number is steadily increasing.
- The website will continue to be updated regularly, and the subscription alert service will be used to inform subscribers of key updates to the site.

Email enquiries to grants@dss.gov.au

- The DSS Grants mailbox was established on 14 May 2014.
- **297** email enquiries have been received as at **18 June 2014**.
- **247** have already been answered and **50** responses are currently being drafted.
- The majority of questions relate to the new selections processes opening 19 June.

DSS Grants Hotline (1800 625 136 / TTY 1800 555 677)

- The DSS Grants Hotline opened on Wednesday 14 May 2014. It operates between 8am and 5pm local time during weekdays. It will remain in operation until at least 28 July 2014.
- Applicants can ask general questions about the new arrangements, or receive technical assistance with lodging applications.
- The Department of Human Services is the external hotline provider, and provides responses to questions in line with a script developed by the Department. This script is progressively updated as new information becomes available.
- As at COB Tuesday **17 June 2014**, the hotline has received **688 calls**.
- **Most popular topics:**
 - 42% of calls were about grant renewals
 - 22% of calls about information sessions
 - 30% of calls the new programme suite

Newspaper Advertisements

- On 17 May 2014, a newspaper advertisement was placed in national and major regional newspapers to inform grant recipients of the information sessions and upcoming application process.
- On 7 June 2014, a second newspaper advert was placed in national, major regional, and ethnic papers to further promote the application phase dates and gave detail on which programmes have selection activities.

Information sessions

- 15 Information sessions were held in 13 locations between **23 May and 6 June 2014**.
- A **second information session** was opened in Melbourne, as well as an **expanded number of spaces** in the **Brisbane** session, due to a significant amount of interest in these locations. Waiting lists were established for fully ticketed information sessions.
- The information session presentation was published on the DSS grants website, including a voice over of the presentation given in the sessions.
- 2395 of the 2660 available information session places were reserved (**90%**).
- Attendance was high. Registrations details are provided on the following page.
- **297** questions were taken on notice during the information sessions. Answers to **all** of these questions have been published on the website.

INFORMATION SESSION	DATE	STATUS	REGISTRATIONS
Alice Springs	26/05/2014	Completed	22/30
Canberra	26/05/2014	Completed	137/150
Darwin	27/05/2014	Completed	82/100
Hobart	27/05/2014	Completed	80/100
Brisbane	27/05/2014	Completed	370/370
Mildura	28/05/2014	Completed	29/100
Townsville	28/05/2014	Completed	53/60
Perth	29/05/2014	Completed	129/130
Perth	30/05/2014	Completed	129/130
Sydney	30/05/2014	Completed	400/400
Melbourne	30/05/2014	Completed	250/250
Melbourne	30/05/2014	Completed	240/240
Adelaide	03/06/2014	Completed	352/400
Coffs Harbour	04/06/2014	Completed	86/100
Dubbo	06/06/2014	Completed	36/100
		TOTAL	2395 / 2660

Support materials for applicants

- The Department is focused on providing information to help organisations understand the requirements of the application process and provide web-based resources to assist the development of applications, this will include:
 - Guidance on **what makes a good application**
 - A **checklist for applicants** to ensure they meet their requirements when applying for funding
 - A guide to assist providers **identify where different services fit** in the DSS grants profile
 - **Timeline of key dates and milestones**
 - Advice targeted to **smaller organisations** on how to identify opportunities for collaboration.
- General support documentation (including **checklists** and **process timelines**) were made available on the website on **19 June 2014**. More detailed and targeted resources will be made available throughout the early stages of the application process.
- The current communications focus is about providing:
 - Greater clarity for providers about the new arrangements for grants
 - Information on the types of funding available, and how services fit within the new grant arrangements
 - Fair and equitable access to information to support the Department's strong commitment to probity throughout the process.
- The Department is monitoring the types of applicant enquiries received during the application phase and additional support materials may be made available on the Department's website during this phase to further support applicants.
- A detailed communications and engagement approach is being developed for the post application phase beginning **24 July 2014**.