



Australian Government

Department of Social Services

Family Support Program

Royal Commission community-based support services
Restricted Selection Guidelines

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1 Program Overview

The Australian Government helps to support families, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged families, to improve child wellbeing and development, safety and family functioning. This is achieved through the provision of integrated support services, family payments and child support policy.

The Family Support Program (FSP) funds a range of non-government organisations to provide preventative and early intervention services and support focussing on family relationships, parenting and family law services and to help families who are vulnerable to poor outcomes to build their resources and capabilities to enable more positive family functioning.

The FSP provides broad-based services that complement other Australian Government programs such as family payments. The FSP also provides more intensive assistance in disadvantaged areas that complements the important role of other programs and agencies including the statutory responsibility for child protection held by the states and territories. It complements the family law system, including legal services and child support arrangements.

1.1 Program Outcomes

The overall outcome for Family and Children Services is improved child development, safety and family functioning through support services for all Australians, payments for low and medium income families with children and child support policy.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the FSP are to support families, particularly those who are vulnerable or living in disadvantaged communities, improve children's wellbeing, development and safety and enhance family functioning.

The FSP comprises two streams – Family and Children Services and Family Law Services.

Family and Children Services

The activities delivered under Family and Children Services are:

- Communities for Children Services, which design and deliver services tailored to the needs of the local community, with a focus on supporting families with young children;
- Family and Relationship Services, which provide professional counselling services to families experiencing challenges or transitions;
- Specialist Services, which provide support to vulnerable children and their families affected by drugs, violence and trauma; and
- Community Playgroups, which strengthen parents' relationship and interactions with their young children.

2 Activity Overview

Royal Commission

On 11 January 2013, the then Prime Minister announced the appointment of a six-member Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission) and the release of the Terms of Reference.

The Royal Commission is inquiring into how institutions with a responsibility for children have managed and responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse and related matters. It is investigating where systems have failed to protect children. It will make recommendations on how to improve laws, policies and practices to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse in institutions.

The Commissioners can look at any private, public or non-government organisation that is, or was in the past, involved with children, including government agencies, schools, sporting clubs, orphanages, foster care, and religious organisations. This includes where they consider an organisation caring for a child is responsible for the abuse or for not responding appropriately, regardless of where or when the abuse took place.

The Commissioners will prepare an interim report by no later than 30 June 2014. In the interim report, the Commissioners will also identify when their final report will be completed. The final reporting date has been set initially at the end of 2015, but this will be subject to advice from Commissioners in their interim report.

Support services

Following the announcement of the Royal Commission, existing community-based support services reported a significant increase in demand for their services. To help meet this demand, the Government provided \$45 million (until 30 June 2016). The Department of Social Services (DSS) ran an open competitive selection process for services, including counselling, support and case management to individuals and family members affected by the Royal Commission. Since July 2013, 28 organisations across Australia have been funded to deliver Royal Commission community-based support services.

The open competitive selection process did not identify any suitable applicants to deliver specialist services specifically focussing on the needs of to people living with disability, Indigenous Australians or people who have suffered abuse from religious organisations or clergy.

To determine the best way to ensure these groups have access to appropriate support services, DSS conducted consultations with 37 relevant service providers and peak bodies. Based on evidence from the consultations, DSS is undertaking a restricted selection process to approach organisations that are skilled, experienced and trusted to work with these vulnerable populations.

There is a total of \$5.9 million of funding over three years (until 30 June 2016) allocated to fund specialist services for people with a disability, Indigenous Australians and people who experience religious/clergy abuse.

This activity will work to ensure specialist organisations have access to funding to provide assistance to the target group (see **2.3**) as they participate in the Royal Commission process. The activity also aims to ensure there are supports tailored for people from a diverse range of backgrounds, specifically Indigenous Australians, people living with disability and people who experience religious/clergy abuse, and their family members.

Services to be funded through this restricted selection process are designed to complement and align with support provided by the Royal Commission and the Attorney-General's Department.

Note that organisations applying for funding do not need to provide all of these services. Organisations should identify which services they can provide in the Application Form.

Support services include but are not limited to:

1. Supporting people with a disability, Indigenous Australians and people who experience religious/clergy abuse (and other family members) to engage with the Royal Commission process, including:
 - case management throughout the process;
 - warm referrals to the Royal Commission and other agencies throughout the process;
 - providing information and advice about what to expect from the process;
 - providing accessible information on the Royal Commission process throughout the person's engagement with the process;
 - accessing interpreting or cultural translation services;
 - de-briefing and counselling immediately after giving evidence; and
 - warm referral to appropriate longer-term therapeutic supports.
2. Providing comprehensive therapeutic support for people with a disability, Indigenous Australians and people who experience religious/clergy abuse (and other family members) engaged with or affected by the Royal Commission process, including:
 - face-to-face counselling/social worker support;
 - telephone counselling; and
 - provision of case managers/counsellors at Commission hearings, where requested.
3. Providing guidance to other organisations involved in supporting those engaged with the Royal Commission process, including:
 - developing and disseminating best practice standards; and
 - providing specialist training and professional development to other organisations, particularly in regard to the treatment of complex trauma and trauma-informed care and service delivery.
4. Responding flexibly to the needs of people with a disability, Indigenous Australians and people who experience religious/clergy abuse (and other family members) affected by the work of the Royal Commission.

Services funded under this activity should adhere to the following service delivery design principles:

- client-centred service design;
- respectful of the different histories and needs of individuals engaging with the Royal Commission;
- independence from past providers of care;
- promoting self-determination;
- offering flexibility and choice;
- creating accessibility to services;
- staffed by people with appropriate specialist skills to deliver the service;
- providing referral to, and linking to, mainstream services to create holistic service delivery; and

- complements and enhances in-house support services offered by the Royal Commission and existing state-funded support services.

It is anticipated successful organisations will receive initial funding to provide these services from December 2013 to 30 June 2016. Funding will be provided to successful organisations through a Grant Agreement and as a fixed annual payment.

2.1 Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of this activity are:

- to provide case management and support for survivors of child sexual abuse with a disability, Indigenous Australians and people who experience religious/clergy abuse (and other family members) who engage in the Royal Commission process;
- to provide existing support services with appropriate resources to enable them to meet the increased demand to assist people participating in the Royal Commission;
- to give people the opportunity to access support through established and trusted professional relationships informed by specialist trauma-informed approaches and understanding of the impact of child sex abuse;
- to deliver a network of support services to provide people with access, flexibility and choice; and
- to ensure that the selected support services complement and align with the support services offered in-house by the Royal Commission.

2.2 Applicant eligibility

The following entity types meet the eligibility requirements to be invited to apply for a grant for this activity:

- a. Incorporated Associations (incorporated under State/Territory legislation, commonly have 'Association' or 'Incorporated' or 'Inc.' in their legal name);
- b. Incorporated Cooperatives (also incorporated under State/Territory legislation, commonly have 'Cooperative' in their legal name);
- c. Companies (incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* – may be a not-for-profit or for-profit proprietary company (limited by shares or by guarantee) or public companies);
- d. Aboriginal Corporations (incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*);
- e. Organisations established through a specific piece of Commonwealth or state/territory legislation (public benevolent institutions, churches, universities, unions etc.);
- f. Partnerships; and
- g. Trustees on behalf of a Trust.

2.3 Participants/clients/recipients/target group

Broadly, the target group for Royal Commission community-based support services is individuals who experienced sexual abuse as children (under 18) in institutional contexts.

For this activity, the primary target group is survivors of institutional child sexual abuse with a disability, Indigenous Australians and/or people who experience religious/clergy abuse. A secondary target group is people who are affected through their engagement with the Royal Commission, without having been exposed directly to abuse, such as family members of survivors or employees of institutions or organisations where abuse took place.

Among those expected to give evidence at the Royal Commission are members of the Stolen Generations, who tend to experience a higher burden of ill health, including mental health problems, than other Indigenous Australians. Many members of the Stolen Generations find it traumatising to repeat their story. Working with members of the Stolen Generations requires a sympathetic understanding of the mistreatment and loss they experienced during childhood and how this trauma impacts on them as adults.

Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage is a national priority and progress towards achievement of the six closing the gap targets is being monitored by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). Through the National Indigenous Reform Agreement all governments have committed to service delivery principles that guide the design and delivery of services for Indigenous people. Engagement with Indigenous men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services. Programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs.

Service providers should ensure these principles are taken into account in developing and delivering services and programs.

2.4 Funding for the activity

In April 2013, the Australian Government committed \$45 million over four years (to 2016) for DSS to fund Royal Commission community-based support services. **There is a total of \$5.9 million available in this restricted process for specialist disability, Indigenous and clergy abuse support services.**

Successful organisations will receive funding to provide activities from December 2013 to 30 June 2016.

Funding will be granted on the basis of:

- a. ratings against the selection criteria;
- b. value with public money in the context of the objectives and outcomes (including appropriateness of proposed budgets);
- c. the capacity of the proposed service;
- d. any identified risks; and
- e. whether services offered meet a particular identified need.

2.5 Eligible and in-eligible activities

Funding may be used for the following:

- staff salaries and on-costs for project implementation and ongoing management;
- staff training;
- materials and equipment directly related to the implementation of the activity;
- operating expenses directly related to the implementation of the activity such as office materials, utilities, insurances, vehicle leases, telephones, bookkeeping, and audit;
- economy class travel within Australia related to the activity; and
- delivery of the activity to standards as indicated in the Program Guidelines.

Funding will not be provided for the following categories of costs:

- costs that are not directly and specifically related to the activity, e.g. ongoing staff wages, rent, overheads and administrative costs of existing operations that would be incurred regardless of the project;
- overseas travel;
- relocation costs; and
- costs incurred prior to the commencement of the funding agreement, including costs incurred in the preparation of this application.

2.6 Activity links and working with other agencies and services

Royal Commission community-based support services complement other government and non-government programs and initiatives. Effective links with other agencies and services provide the opportunity to raise awareness broadly and on specific issues.

In delivering Royal Commission community-based support services, organisations must develop and maintain effective relationships with a broad network of relevant organisations to assist in making appropriate referrals and co-ordinating services with a view to improving client outcomes.

Organisations funded under the FSP are required (where appropriate and geographically possible) to work collaboratively with state and territory funded services, other organisations providing FSP services and organisations that support individuals and families.

2.7 Specialist requirements (e.g. Legislative requirements)

The providers of Royal Commission community-based support services must comply with all relevant Commonwealth and state/territory legislation and regulations.

2.8 Information technology

Royal Commission community-based support services must meet the following minimum information technology standards prior to commencing service delivery to enable them to meet data collection and reporting obligations.

Minimum standards:

- Operating System: Windows SP
- Web Browser: Internet Explorer 5.5 min. or latest version, Firefox 2.0.0.4 min. or latest version
- Screen Resolution: 1024 x 768

2.9 Performance management and evaluation

Service providers are encouraged to undertake internal evaluations of their own accord in order to promote quality service delivery.

DSS periodically undertakes evaluations and reviews to ensure projects are high quality, effective, efficient and appropriately targeted to the needs of children and their families. DSS will notify funding recipients of:

- the intention to conduct an evaluation;
- the purpose of the evaluation;
- who is conducting the evaluation;
- the time frame in which it is to be conducted; and
- any involvement sought from the service provider.

2.10 Activity performance and reporting

The purpose of the Performance Framework (Framework) is to define a consistent approach to monitoring and reporting performance across the FSP – drawing on a common set of high-level results and performance indicators.

The FSP Framework was implemented from July 2011. The Framework asks four key questions about service delivery.

- Did we make a lasting difference? (intermediate outcomes/impacts);
- Did we make an immediate difference? (immediate outcomes/impacts);
- How well have we done it? (service delivery quality); and
- How much did we do? (service outputs).

Specific performance and reporting requirements, developed from the above indicators will be prescribed in the funding agreement.

Successful organisations will be required to provide Performance Reports on a monthly basis reporting on, including but not limited to:

- Monthly statistical report containing:
 - number of contacts received as a result of the establishment of the Royal Commission;
 - daily and cumulative totals.
- type of contact, including but not limited to:
 - telephone;
 - email;
 - face-to-face; and
 - letter.
- issues raised and type of assistance delivered, including but not limited to:
 - counselling/support;
 - information about the Royal Commission;
 - assistance with completing a submission / giving evidence to the Royal Commission; and
 - referral to other service.

Provide an independently audited financial acquittal report for each financial year of the agreement period verifying that funding has been appropriately utilised.

2.11 Financial Reporting

The activity will be managed to ensure the efficient and effective use of public monies. This will be consistent with best value in social services principles, DSS's Grant Agreement and will aim to maintain viable services and act to prevent fraud upon the Commonwealth.

Funding must only be used for the purposes for which it was provided.

2.12 DSS responsibilities and accountabilities under the activity

DSS will:

- meet the Government's terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement established with organisations;
- ensure that services provided under the Program are accountable to the Australian Government under the terms and conditions agreed in the Grant Agreement;
- administer the operation of the activity in a timely manner;
- identify suitable providers to deliver the activities required as per the Grant Agreement;
- work in partnership with the provider to ensure the program is implemented and will provide the service provider with constructive feedback; and
- ensure the outcomes contained within the Program Guidelines are being met and evaluate the provider's performance against the program outcomes.

2.13 Grant recipients responsibilities and accountabilities under the activity

In entering into a Grant Agreement with DSS, the grant recipient must comply with all requirements outlined in the suite of documents that comprise the Agreement including these Program Guidelines, the Grant Agreement and the Standard Agreement Terms and Conditions (available at: <http://www.dss.gov.au/grants-funding/general-information-on-funding/terms-and-conditions-standard-funding-agreement>).

Grant recipients are responsible for ensuring:

- the terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement are met;
- service provision is effective, efficient, and appropriately targeted;
- highest standards of duty of care are applied;
- services are operated in line with, and comply with the requirements as set out within all state and territory and Commonwealth legislation and regulations.
- ensuring Indigenous Australians have equal and equitable access to services;
- working collaboratively to deliver the program; and
- contributing to the overall development and improvement of the program such as sharing best practice.

2.14 Special Conditions applying to this Activity

There are no special conditions applying to this activity.

3 Application Process

3.1 Overview of the Application Process

The process will be a **restricted** selection process.

A restricted selection process is used where there are few providers available due to highly specialised services being required, there are geographical considerations, specific expertise is required or there are time constraints. A restricted funding round is a competitive process open to identified potential grant recipients based on the specialised requirements of the granting activity or project under consideration. Potential grant recipients are usually invited to apply. Their application will be assessed against nominated selection criteria.

3.2 Selection Criteria

The equally weighted selection criteria are:

1. **Organisation Experience and Expertise** (limit 1000 words):

- Outline your experience in working with the specific target group and knowledge of particular issues they face, particularly with regard to the Royal Commission.
- Overview of your organisation, including governance structures, geographical coverage and networks/collaboration that strengthen your organisations ability to respond to the needs of the target group.
- Provide information about any potential conflicts of interest (actual or perceived) with the Royal Commission's work and demonstrate independence from institutions, organisations or individuals that may be the subject of inquiry by the Royal Commission.

2. **Service Delivery Model** (limit 1000 words):

- Describe how you propose to deliver services to the specific target group to achieve positive outcomes.
- This may include services such as support, counselling, case management, advocacy, brokerage or providing training and information to increase the capacity of other Royal Commission community-based support services to improve support to the specialist group you work with.
- Detail the experience and/or qualifications of staff who will deliver services and how you will ensure they are appropriate skilled and supported.
- Describe how you propose to collaborate and link with other organisations to delivery of services across the country.

3.3 How to submit an application

To apply under this process, applicants will need to complete the Application Form and respond to selection criteria as detailed above. Applications must be received by the closing date and time as detailed at **3.8**.

Applicants must respond fully to the Selection Criteria in the Application Form and provide the information required in the format and to the extent specified.

Applications can only be submitted during the application period for the Program and for the locations or sites as defined in the Application Form.

An application is not an agreement or contract. Meeting the selection criteria does not guarantee funding. Funding is limited and applications will be assessed and prioritised according to the extent to which they meet the selection criteria. Only applications meeting the selection criteria to a high degree are likely to be considered for funding. All information requested on the application must be provided to enable your application to be fully considered.

DSS will **not** issue Application Forms or accept completed applications by facsimile.

3.4 Applicant's Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the Application Form is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information to DSS is a serious offence, applicants or their partners who do so may be prosecuted under section 137.1 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.

Make sure you keep a copy of your application and any supporting papers, either electronically or in hard copy, for your own records.

Only one application per organisation will be assessed. If more than one application is submitted, only the latest application will be considered.

3.5 What needs to be included?

DSS will not assess applications that do not contain all the required information and/or attachments requested in the Application Form.

3.6 What should not be included?

Any attachments to the Application Form which are not specifically requested in the Application Form will not be considered as part of the assessment process.

3.7 What happens if you provide more than the specified number of words?

The Application Form specifies a word limit for each selection criteria, text beyond the word limits will not be considered as a part of the assessment process.

3.8 Closing date and time

Applications will open on 11 November 2013 and close on 29 November 2013 at 2pm AEDST.

The application must be received by DSS within the application period to be considered. In order to be received by DSS the application must be submitted in full via the method prescribed in **3.3**.

The application must be received by DSS within the application period to be considered.

3.9 Late Applications

DSS may reject any application lodged after the closing date. If an application is late, DSS may determine there were exceptional circumstances beyond the applicant's control that meant the deadline could not be met. The applicant will need to supply documentary evidence to support any exceptional circumstances.

DSS has no obligation to accept a late application. Any decision by DSS to accept or not accept a late application will be final.

3.10 Questions and answers during the application period

A 'Questions and Answers' facility for the Royal Commission community-based support services is available. You can email questions to rctsupportservices@dss.gov.au. DSS will respond to emailed questions within five working days.

DSS will only respond to requests for information that seek clarification of issues to allow them to better understand the requirements of the Application Form and Program Guidelines.

3.11 Questions after the application period

DSS will **not** accept or respond to any applicant's requests for information or correspondence about the status or progress of their application during the assessment phase.

3.12 Application Acknowledgement

Unless prior agreement has been reached with DSS, an application will not be considered lodged until it is received by DSS. The applicant will receive email notification from DSS within 48 hours of an application being lodged correctly. If the applicant has not received notification in this timeframe, the applicant should contact DSS to confirm that the form has been lodged correctly.

3.13 Conflicts of Interest

Applicants must identify, in their application, any potential or actual conflicts of interest they believe will or may arise from submitting the application. They should address their responsibilities to the Australian Government and other parties in the course of the activity.

A conflict of interest can arise when an applicant's integrity, objectivity or fairness in performing the services is at risk due to a pecuniary interest of a person or organisation associated with the applicant or a conflicting business arrangement.

Applicants must specify in their applications how any actual or perceived conflict of interest will be addressed and monitored to ensure it does not compromise the outcomes desired for this funding process.

DSS reserves the right to assess the potential impact of the conflict or perceived conflict and what plans, if any, are proposed to address the conflict of interest in relation to the application for funding.

DSS may reject an application if DSS is not satisfied that there are arrangements in place to appropriately address/manage a perceived or actual conflict of interest.

DSS also has mechanisms in place for identifying and managing potential or actual conflicts of interest such as requiring assessment staff to sign conflict of interest declarations prior to undertaking the assessment of applications.

For more information on the Conflict of Interest Policy for DSS employees and contractors go to:

<http://www.dss.gov.au/about-dss/doing-business-with-dss#conflict>

4 Assessment Process

Following the application closing date, DSS will conduct an assessment of all applications. Decisions on the parameters and methodology for assessment of applications will be final.

4.1 Stages in the assessment process

- Stage 1 – Receipt and registration of applications, initial screening for compliance
- Stage 2 – Assessment of applications against the Selection Criteria
- Stage 3 – Financial Viability Assessment (if required)
- Stage 4 – Selection of Preferred Applicants and
- Stage 5 – Offer / Agreement of Funding

Stage 1 - Receipt and Registration of Applications, Initial Screening for Compliance

Following the receipt and registration of applications, there will be an initial screening of applications to ensure:

- eligibility of applicants;
- applicants comply with the Terms and Conditions detailed in the Program Guidelines; and
- complete information has been provided in the Application Form to enable a fully informed assessment to be made.

Stage 2 - Assessment of applications against selection criteria

The Assessment Team will include individuals from FSP who collectively provide the following expertise:

- the program; and/or
- the site/area or location; and/or
- local issues or issues affecting the program/activity target group.

The application will be considered by a panel of DSS staff following the application closing date.

Consideration will be given to any conflict of interest that may impact and whether there are appropriate conflict of interest management strategies in place.

All undertakings of the panel will be in line with APS Code of Conduct and DSS's Chief Executive's Instructions. The Chief Executive's Instructions are instructions issued by the Secretary of DSS which set out the requirements that must be followed by DSS staff in order to ensure DSS's compliance with the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* and the Financial Management and Accountability Regulations 1997 (collectively known as the FMA legislation).

Assessment Teams will undertake assessment of applications and will consider the applicant's:

- response to each Selection Criterion against a 6-point (0 to 5) scale (see **Table 1** below);
- ability to achieve value with public money in the context of the objectives and outcomes (including appropriateness of proposed budgets);
- capacity to provide the proposed service;
- identified risks; and
- proposed services meet a particular identified need.

Applicants will be rated and recommended as either 'Suitable' or 'Not Suitable' for funding.

Table 1: Six-point rating scale for selection criteria

Rating		Score
Suitable	Excellent quality —excellent claims against the criterion, exceeds expectations, supporting information confirms consistent superior performance	5
	Very good quality —very good claims against the criterion, meets all expectations to a high standard with complete and comprehensive supporting information	4
	Good quality —good claims against the criterion, meets all expectations with convincing supporting information	3
	Satisfactory quality —adequate claims against the criterion, mostly meets expectations, but may be lacking detail and/or supporting information	2
Not Suitable	Marginal or poor quality —poor claims against the criterion, does not meet expectations, has deficient supporting information	1
	Does not meet criterion at all	0

DSS will assess applicants for funding primarily on the basis of the information provided in the Application Form. DSS **may** use information about an applicant that is, or becomes known to DSS in the course of DSS’s business, as well as any publicly available information.

As part of the Selection Process, DSS may undertake further checks of applicants. DSS may also conduct checks for non-disclosure of any relevant information.

In addition, any debts the applicant has accrued to DSS or other Australian Government agencies may be taken into account when making a decision to offer funding.

DSS reserves the right to use information from:

- DSS’s databases;
- other Australian Government agencies, such as the Australian Taxation Office and Australian Securities and Investments Commission;
- state or territory agencies;
- law enforcement agencies;
- credit reference agencies;
- courts or tribunals; or
- any other appropriate organisation or person reasonably required as part of these checks.

Information obtained from checks on applicants described in this section may be taken into account during the assessment of applications or in making the final decision to offer funding.

Applicants will also be assessed on the extent to which they offer the Australian Government value with public money. DSS considers achieving value with public money as an integral part of the assessment and ongoing management of programs.

Value with public money in DSS’s selection requires:

- encouraging competitive and non-discriminatory processes;
- using Commonwealth resources in an efficient, effective, economical and ethical manner that is not inconsistent with the policies of the Commonwealth;
- making decisions in an accountable and transparent manner considering the risks; and
- conducting a process commensurate with the scale and scope of the selection.

The price of the services is not the sole determining factor in assessing value with public money. A comparative analysis of the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of alternative solutions throughout the selection will inform a value for money assessment. Factors considered include:

- fitness for purpose;
- a potential funding recipient's experience, performance history and financial viability; and
- an appropriate spread of services/projects resulting from a selection process.

Stage 3 – Financial Viability and Provider Capacity Risk Assessments

Applications may be subject to Financial Viability Assessments. In addition to the Financial Viability Assessment, DSS will undertake Provider Capacity Risk Assessments in relation to applicants that it is recommending for funding to determine any controls to include in Grant Agreements. If an applicant has been assessed as low risk in a Provider Capacity Risk Assessment undertaken by DSS within the last twelve months for other grant programs, no new risk assessment will be conducted.

Notes: Information required from applicants for the Financial Viability Assessment is usually gathered via the information requested in the Application Form, however, DSS may not fund applicants that are assessed as high-risk in terms of Financial Viability.

Stage 4 – Selection of Successful Applicants

DSS will prepare a list of recommended applicants following assessment against the Selection Criteria and consideration of the Financial Viability Assessment.

DSS's decision relating to successful applicants will be finalised when the Minister or his Delegate indicate their acceptance of the final list of successful applicants.

Stage 5 - Entering into Grant Agreements

Successful applicants are then invited to enter into Grant Agreements with DSS. See **Section 6 Financial Arrangements** for more details.

4.2 Process for advising outcomes

Applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of the assessment process. Applicants will be advised no later than 5 December 2013. Information on the grants entered into will be published on the DSS website (<http://www.dss.gov.au/grants-funding/grants-funding>) within 14 days of the signing of the Grant Agreement or the grant taking effect.

4.3 Opportunity for feedback

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be offered feedback on their application.

5 Terms and Conditions applying to Applications

5.1 Liability issues

DSS is not liable to the applicant in relation to the selection process, including without limitation, when DSS:

- varies or terminates all or any part of the selection process or any negotiations with the Applicant;
- decides not to acquire any or all of the services sought through the selection process;

- varies the selection process; or
- exercises or fails to exercise any of its other rights under, or in relation to the Program Guidelines.

5.2 DSS's rights

DSS reserves the right to amend the Program Guidelines by whatever means it may determine in its absolute discretion and will provide reasonable notice of these amendments.

DSS reserves the right to mark any application 'non-compliant' if it has concerns about the genuineness of the information provided or where it feels the application has not been submitted in the spirit of the program as outlined in this document.

5.3 Disclaimer

DSS and its officers, employees, agents and advisors:

- are not, and will not be, responsible or liable for the accuracy or completeness of any information in or provided in connection with the Program Guidelines;
- make no express or implied representation or warranty that any statement as to future matters will prove correct;
- disclaim any and all liability arising from any information provided to the applicant, including, without limitation, errors in, or omissions contained in, that information;
- except so far as liability under any statute cannot be excluded, accept no responsibility arising in any way from errors or omissions contained in any information in this document and the Application Form; and
- accept no liability for any loss or damage suffered by any person as a result of that person, or any other person, placing reliance on the contents of these documents, or any other information provided by DSS.

5.4 Fraud

DSS is committed to the Commonwealth Fraud Control Policy and Guidelines. Applicants should familiarise themselves with DSS's Fraud Control Policy Statement <http://www.dss.gov.au/grants-funding/dss-fraud-policy-statement> which also underpins their respective fraud and risk minimisation responsibilities when dealing with DSS. One key responsibility outlined in DSS's Fraud Control Policy Statement is to report all fraud concerns by:

- leaving an anonymous voicemail message on the DSS Fraud Hotline (1800 133 611); or
- emailing fraud@dss.gov.au.

5.5 Personal Information

Any personal information you provide is protected under the *Privacy Act 1988*. It can only be disclosed to someone else if you have been given reasonable notice of the disclosure; where disclosure is authorised or required by law or is reasonably necessary for the enforcement of the criminal law; if it will prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to a person's life or health; or if you have consented to the disclosure.

If you have questions or concerns about how your personal information is handled you can contact the Privacy Officer at DSS on 02 6146 3593, the Privacy Commissioner on 1300 363 992 (local call cost, but calls from mobile and pay phones may incur higher charges) or the Australian Government Privacy Officer by emailing: privacy@privacy.gov.au.

5.6 Freedom of Information

All documents in the possession of DSS including those in relation to the Program are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act).

The FOI Act creates a general right of access to documents in the possession of DSS and this right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary for the protection of essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

Decisions regarding requests for access under the FOI Act will be made by an authorised decision-maker in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act.

All FOI requests are to be referred to the FOI Coordinator, Public Law Branch, in DSS.

By mail:

FOI Coordinator
DSS
Public Law Branch, TOP CW2
PO Box 7576
CANBERRA BUSINESS CENTRE ACT 2610

By email:

foi@dss.gov.au

For more information on making a request for access to documents in the possession of DSS under the FOI Act, go to <http://www.dss.gov.au/contact/freedom-of-information>

6 Financial and Other Arrangements

6.1 Financial arrangements

DSS uses standard Grant Agreements. Funding will only be provided in accordance with an executed Grant Agreement. The terms and conditions of DSS's Grant Agreements cannot be changed.

The Grant Agreement will contain the entire agreement between the parties. There is no binding agreement on any parties until the Grant Agreement is agreed to and signed by the Delegate and the applicant's Authorised Representative.

The Grant Agreement is the legal agreement between DSS and the grant recipient over the funding period. In managing funding provided, the grant recipient must comply with all the requirements of the Grant Agreement.

Grant recipients are responsible for ensuring:

- the terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement are met;
- service provision is effective, efficient, and appropriately targeted;
- highest standards of duty of care are applied; and
- services are operated in line with, and comply with the requirements as set out within all State and Territory and Commonwealth legislation and regulations.

Grant recipients should also be aware of any case based law that may apply or affect their service delivery.

7 Complaints

7.1 Applicants/Grant Recipients

Applicants and grant recipients can contact the complaints service with complaints about DSS's service(s), the selection process or the service of another of DSS's grant recipients. Details of what constitutes an eligible complaint can be provided upon request by DSS.

Applicants and grant recipients can lodge complaints through the following channels:

Telephone: 1800 634 035
Fax: (02) 6204 4587
Mail: DSS Complaints
PO Box 7576
CANBERRA BUSINESS CENTRE ACT 2610

If an applicant or grant recipient is at any time dissatisfied with DSS's handling of a complaint, they can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman at www.ombudsman.gov.au or 1300 362 072.

7.2 Client/Customer

It is a requirement of your funding agreement to have a **transparent and accessible** complaints handling policy. This policy should acknowledge the complainant's right to complain directly to you, outline the process for both dealing with the complaint and provide options for escalation both within your organisation and to DSS if necessary. Ensure that you provide information about your complaints handling policy and processes in all correspondence to guarantee it is readily available to the public.

8 Contact information

DSS National Office is responsible for overall program management and ongoing policy development of the Family Support Program. A list of general DSS state/territory office network and National Office contact details is available from the DSS website at www.dss.gov.au under the 'Contact' tab.

There is also a program mailbox in place for this funding application process. Emails can be sent to rcsupportservices@dss.gov.au. Also, refer to **2.10** and **2.11** of this document.

9 Glossary

DSS – Department of Social Services
FOI – Freedom of Information
FSP – Family Support Program