Disability Employment Services Program National Panel of Assessors

Feedback for applicants

Overview

This grant opportunity is for membership to the Disability Employment Services (DES) National Panel of Assessors (NPA). The Department of Social Services will establish the Government's panel of independent Assessment Service providers to assist with the needs of people with disability in the workplace under the DES program. The DES-NPA is an ancillary program of the DES program, announced as part of the Department of Social Services Portfolio Outcome 3: Disability and Carers.

The NPA will provide a range of Assessment Services to assist with the needs of people with disability in the workplace.

The outcomes of the DES-NPA 2018 program are:

- to ensure that DES Participants, Providers and Employers are supported by independent assessors trained and qualified in providing disability employment Assessment Services

- to provide sufficient and timely delivery of three types of Assessment Services across all Employment Service Area (ESA) locations:
  - o Ongoing Support Arrangements (OSA)
  - o Supported Wage Scheme (SWS)
  - o Workplace Modifications Scheme (WMS); and

- to supplement the DES program by providing assessment services for the benefit of people with disability in the workplace, employers, DES Participants and DES Providers.

The delivery of Assessment Services is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- employment participation by people with a disability

- support services provided to people with disability in the workplace

- access to employment by people with disability; and

- provision of fair and accurate assessments of workplace productivity.

Approved NPA Providers will provide a range of Assessment Services to assist with the needs of people with disability in the workplace. No funding is provided to NPA Providers on appointment to the National Panel of Assessors. The successful applicants will be invited to become NPA Providers and will be required to enter into a Grant Agreement with the Department of Social Services. Assessment Services will be allocated to NPA Providers as required by the Department of Social Services. There is no guarantee on the amount of Assessment Services that will be allocated to the successful applicants. The NPA is a non-exclusive arrangement.

Selection Process

The Community Grants Hub used an open non-competitive selection process to select 96 providers for membership to the Disability Employment Services National Panel of Assessors.

The Community Grants Hub received 112 applications for funding, each of which was required to address the following four selection criteria:

- Criterion 1. Describe your understanding of the barriers to employment participation experienced by people with disability, and the available disability employment services and other program supports

- Criterion 2. Describe your organisation's capability to deliver OSA/SWS and/or WMS (as applicable) Assessment Services or similar services

- Criterion 3. Describe how your organisation will deliver OSA/SWS and/or WMS (as applicable) Assessment Services or similar services; and

- Criterion 4. Describe how your organisation will recruit and retain suitably qualified assessors.

In addition, applicants intending to deliver Specialist WMS Assessment Services were required to address the following additional selection criterion:

- Criterion 5. Describe the need for and your organisation's capability to deliver Specialist WMS Assessment Services or similar services.

Applicants were also required to complete the following two mandatory attachments:

- Attachment A - Coverage of Service Template; and

- Attachment B - Assessor Qualifications Template.

Selection Results

96 organisations were selected for membership to the Disability Employment Services Program National Panel of Assessors.

The selected organisations provided strong responses to the selection criteria and demonstrated their ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the Disability Employment Services National Panel of Assessors Guidelines. Further detail about what constituted a strong response to each criterion is provided below.

Criterion 1: Describe your understanding of the barriers to employment participation experienced by people with disability, and the available disability employment services and other program supports.

Your response should describe your understanding of:
- the key barriers to employment participation for people with disability; and
- the ways these barriers can be resolved, with reference to the assistance available from disability employment services and other program supports

Strength	Example

Strong applications clearly demonstrated an understanding of the key barriers to employment participation for people with disability.	Strong responses provided:
	• detailed examples of barriers to employment for people with disabilities such as structural, physical, individual and employer related
	• examples of these barriers included, but were not limited to:
	  o ongoing pain issues that may interfere with a person's ability to work
	  o transport issues that create difficulty in getting to & from work
	  o people with disabilities experiencing a lack of confidence in their own ability to make a positive contribution in the work place
	  o the requirement to obtain regular treatments or attend appointments
	  o negative perceptions of people with disabilities and their ability to undertake work

Strong applications clearly demonstrated an understanding of the ways these barriers can be resolved, with reference to the assistance available from disability employment services and other program supports.	Strong responses provided: • specific information about how the barriers to employment identified can be addressed and overcome. For example, liaising with specialists or GP's to determine treatment schedules that assist in allowing regular attendance in the workplace • details about the types of assistance available from Disability Employment Services and other program supports. Examples included, but were not limited to:

Strength	Example
	o services such as transport to and from the place of employment to support the person with disability in maintaining ongoing employment o pain management services to assist people with disabilities participate in employment

Criterion 2: Describe your organisation's capability to deliver OSA/SWS and/or WMS (as applicable) Assessment Services or similar services.

Your response should describe:
- your organisation's experience and performance in delivering services that are consistent with those required for the delivery of OSA/SWS and/or WMS (as applicable) Assessment Services or similar services; and
- how you propose to develop and maintain cooperative relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders, including people with disability and mental illness, employment service providers, health professionals, employers and union representatives

Strength	Example
Strong applications clearly demonstrated the organisation's experience and performance in delivering services that are consistent with those required for the delivery of OSA/SWS and/or WMS (as applicable) Assessment Services or similar services.	Strong responses provided: • details about the range and type of relevant services (including specific examples) the organisation has previously delivered • an explanation of how (if the applicant had not previously delivered NPA Assessment Services) their stated experience is relevant to the delivery of assessment services • evidence of performance outcomes, including measures of success such as the number of relevant activities completed, performance percentages, rankings or other evidence including awards or testimonials

Strong applications clearly demonstrated how the organisation proposes to develop and maintain cooperative relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders, including people with disability and mental illness, employment service providers, health professionals, employers and union representatives.	Strong responses clearly described:
	
	• how the organisation maintains relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders. Examples included, but were not limited to:
	    ○ hosting and attending regular meetings with community organisations, educational facilities, employer groups, health professionals and other professional associations
	    ○ ensuring all parties requiring information (including the DES provider, DSS, employer and client) receive it in a timely manner; and

Strength	Example

	• the types of activities the organisations undertake to establish new relationships with stakeholders. Examples included, but were not limited to:
	    ○ preparing a stakeholder identification and engagement plan, and being proactive in engaging with key stakeholders with whom the organisation does not have an existing relationship
	    ○ providing workplace placements via educational facilities

Criterion 3: Describe how your organisation will deliver OSA/SWS and/or WMS (as applicable) Assessment Services or similar services.

Your response should describe:
- how you will deliver OSA/SWS and/or WMS (as applicable) Assessment Services or similar services
- how your Assessment Services will be independent and not unduly influenced by relationships with other agencies, including where your organisation or a related organisation is providing Disability Employment Services; and
- the governance arrangements, communication strategies, organisational management and accountability structures that your organisation has in place to ensure it can comply with the Grant Agreement

Strength	Example
Strong applications clearly demonstrated how the organisation will deliver OSA/SWS and/or WMS (as applicable) Assessment Services or similar services.	Strong responses clearly described: • how the organisation will manage workflows (including new work orders), and the process to be followed in delivering the services • how the organisation will ensure compliance with DSS guidelines and the Grant Agreement terms and conditions

Strong applications clearly demonstrated how the organisation's Assessment Services will be independent and not unduly influenced by relationships with other agencies, including where the organisation or a related organisation is providing Disability Employment Services.	Strong responses clearly described:
	• how the organisation will identify and manage actual and perceived conflicts of interest. Examples included, but were not limited to:
	   o where a relationship with a DES provider exists ensuring the NPA team has different management and reporting lines to the DES team, and records are stored on different IT systems/file structures to prevent unauthorised access
	   o new work orders will be reviewed, and rejected if a conflict of interest is identified
	• how training will be provided to assist the organisation's employees identify and address conflicts of interest and bias

Strong applications clearly demonstrated the governance arrangements, communication strategies, organisational	Strong responses clearly described: • the governance arrangements, communication strategies,

Strength	Example

management and accountability structures that the organisation has in place to ensure it can comply with the Grant Agreement.	organisational management and accountability structures that are in place to ensure compliance with the Grant Agreement. Examples included, but were not limited to:
	
	    o a Governing Board of Directors with independent directors, and stated responsibilities such as audit and compliance, strategic direction and financial control
	    o ISO9001:2015 accreditation
	    o regular reviews and updates to policies and procedures, and audit and compliance processes to ensure policies and procedures are adhered to
	    o financial accounting structures to ensure accountability for the use of funds.
	
	• planning, risk and compliance activities undertaken by the organisation.
	• how the organisation has successfully delivered previous grant activities

Criterion 4: Describe how your organisation will recruit and retain suitably qualified assessors.

Your response should describe:
- how you propose to recruit and retain suitably qualified and experienced staff to ensure you maintain accredited assessors in your nominated ESA's, including attracting experienced local staff who have held positions with outgoing providers; and
- how your organisation ensures staff remain qualified and trained to deliver high quality Assessment Services

Strength	Example
Strong applications clearly demonstrated how the organisation proposes to recruit and retain suitably qualified and experienced staff to ensure they maintain accredited assessors in their nominated ESA's, including attracting experienced local staff who have held positions with outgoing providers.	Strong responses clearly described: • the organisation's recruitment and selection processes, including details about the various platforms and media vacancies are communicated through, and how they utilise existing links and relationships to source suitably qualified and high quality candidates • the process for attracting experienced local staff that were employed in unsuccessful outgoing providers • staff retention strategies, including salary and non-salary benefits, training and career development opportunities

Strong applications clearly demonstrated how the organisation ensures staff remain qualified and trained to deliver high quality Assessment Services.	Strong responses clearly described:
	
	• the organisation's training and professional development policies and activities, for example job sharing and secondments to enhance skills and experience
	• the types of training undertaken, and an acknowledgement of the need for both informal (on the job) and formal training. Examples included, but were not limited to:
	    o induction training programs for new employees
	    o professional development programs that are offered to employees, allowing them to develop and acquire new skills
	    o provision of workshops run by external or internal "champions" on specific skills that employees are required to possess

Strength	Example
	○ providing access to external accredited training courses • the staff appraisal process, which in addition to ensuring consistent performance, assists in identifying any gaps in knowledge or skills • methodologies for ensuring activities are being undertaken in line with processes (e.g. audits), and providing training where expectations are not met

Criterion 5: Describe the need for and your organisation's capability to deliver Specialist WMS Assessment Services or similar services. [Only applicants interested in delivering Specialist WMS Assessment Services will be required to address criterion five. Applicants not applying to deliver Specialist WMS Assessment Services must respond to criterion five and enter 'not applicable' in the application form.]

Your response should describe:
- the specialist cohort you will provide WMS Assessment Services or similar services to
- the need for the specialised Assessment Services; and
- your experience and performance in delivering specialised WMS assessments or similar services

Strength	Example

Strong applications clearly demonstrated the specialist cohort the organisation will provide WMS Assessment Services or similar services to.	Strong responses clearly described:
	 • the specialist cohort/s that the organisation intends to provide WMS assessment services to. These descriptions were specific in identifying the cohort/s. Examples of specialist cohorts included, but were not limited to people with:
	    o sensory Impairment
	    o Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds
	    o spinal cord injuries
	    o Acquired Brain Injuries
	    o amputations

Strong applications clearly demonstrated the need for the specialised Assessment Services.	Strong responses clearly described: • the need for the specialised Assessment Services by providing information such as the population of the cohort/s (eg numbers by age and location), the estimated volume of assessments for the cohort/s that would be required, and their current workplace participation levels • the current unmet needs of the specialised cohort/s
Strong applications clearly demonstrated the organisation's experience and performance in delivering specialised WMS assessments or similar services.	Strong responses clearly described: • the organisation's specific experience in delivering specialised WMS assessments or similar services to the specific cohort/s

Strength	Example
	• the organisation's prior performance in delivering these services, including information about volumes and performance indicators

Note: Some applicants appear to have misinterpreted the concept of specialist services and instead identified their experience as specialised. As a result these applicants were unable to clearly define the specialist cohort and did not adequately demonstrate the need for specialist services.