Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Feedback for Applicants

Children and Family Intensive Support (CaFIS)

Overview

The CaFIS grant opportunity will fund services to vulnerable children and families in the Northern Territory and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands so that these children are growing up strong in families and communities that are safe and nurturing.

CaFIS will provide services that build on the strengths of families and communities to care for children in their culture. It will support parents and family members to develop their confidence and capability to bring children up strong, support co-ordinated services to meet the needs of families and address areas of concern that impact on children's safety and wellbeing.

CaFIS is a voluntary service that works in partnership with families to achieve their goals and help keep children safe and strong.

The application period opened on 11 June 2021 and closed on 16 July 2021. Up to $48 million (GST exclusive) over 5 years is available for this grant opportunity, starting from November 2021 and finishing in June 2026. A total of 19 applications were received, of which 19 were eligible, making the selection of successful grant recipients competitive. After assessment, 15 applications were selected for funding, totalling $46.272 million. Successful applicants may have received less funding than requested.

The feedback provided below on behalf of the Department of Social Services is to help grant applicants understand what generally comprised stronger and weaker responses to the assessment criteria for this grant opportunity, and how to strengthen future applications. It should be noted that application quality and comprehensiveness was one of a range of considerations that informed panel deliberations.

Future grant opportunities may be available for this program though none are currently planned. You can find out about new grant opportunities on GrantConnect.

Selection Process

A targeted competitive selection process was undertaken, allowing a range of organisations that met the eligibility criteria to apply.

Applications were first screened for eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. Eligible applicants needed to be one of the listed invited organisations and have received an invitation to apply through GrantConnect **OR** a lead organisation in a consortia/consortium which includes one of the invited organisations as a member of the consortia/consortium. All eligible and compliant applications were then assessed and moderated by the Department of Social Services against the seven assessment criteria.

A Department of Social Services Selection Advisory Panel, with a mix of relevant policy, program and delivery expertise, assisted by an Expert Panel with a mix of subject matter and cross agency input, then made funding recommendations to the Department of Social Services' Decision Maker. The recommendations were based on the strength of responses to the assessment criteria, the applicant's ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines and other considerations including the availability and appropriateness of other services in the relevant location so that CaFIS can leverage off and provide comprehensive support for vulnerable families with complex needs, ensuring reduction of duplication of similar services, current and emerging need for services, community readiness, the appropriateness of the service and value for money. The Selection Advisory Panel considered the need for a mix of providers across locations.

The Selection Advisory Panel considered all applications and their assessment results and made recommendations on applications having regard to:

- whether it provides value with relevant money
- the spread of services and reduction of the duplication of similar services
- current and emerging need for services
- community readiness for services.

When assessing the extent to which the application represents value with relevant money, the Selection Advisory Panel will have regard to:

- the overall objectives to be achieved in providing the grant
- the relative value of the grant sought
- extent to which the geographic location of the application matches identified priorities
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives
- how the grant activities will target groups or individuals
- how it compares to other applications.

The Department of Social Services' Decision Maker approved funding to the successful grant recipients.

The successful applicants proposed activities that were eligible, appropriate and considered effective for achieving the program objectives and contributed to the overall intent to achieve a coordinated approach to funding family support services in the Northern Territory. They demonstrated their suitability for public funding, value for money and met all of the eligibility requirements in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

General feedback

Overall the calibre of applications was good. They generally reflected an understanding of the Grant Program's objectives and consideration of these was usually apparent in the responses. Most supporting claims were relevant and current and usually linked back to the policy objectives. All applications contained all required attachments. Some applications contained inadmissible attachments which were not able to be reviewed as part of the assessment process. All applications addressed all criteria and there were no incomplete applications.

Criterion 1

Describe the locations/communities where you would provide CaFIS services and why there is a need for family support in these location/communities.
Successful applications clearly:
▪ Identified and evidenced the communities and clients to be supported and why support was needed ▪ Explained benefits / outcomes for the communities and clients and the readiness and acceptance for delivery of the services ▪ Outlined their proposed strategies to overcome the challenges and issues faced in delivering proposed services
Stronger responses clearly:
▪ Clearly articulated community and client specific need and supported with relevant, recent evidence from a range of sources. ▪ Outlined the benefits for communities and clients in relation to the articulated and the link between need and benefits the proposed services could provide. ▪ Evidenced the readiness and acceptance for delivery of the services including for the applicant to deliver the proposed services. ▪ Described the challenges and issues faced in delivering the proposed services and the strategies they intended to apply to address these.

Describe the locations/communities where you would provide CaFIS services and why there is a need for family support in these location/communities.
Weaker responses did not clearly:
▪ Identify and evidence need for specific communities ▪ Explain the benefits / outcomes or evidence community readiness for services ▪ Outline the challenges or proposed strategies to overcome these

Criterion 2

Tell us about your previous experience successfully delivering similar programs
Successful applications clearly:
▪ Articulated experience or understanding of delivering trauma informed services ▪ Provided information on the previous/current clients supported, their needs and the activities undertaken to support these clients
Stronger responses clearly:
▪ Were able to clearly demonstrate, often by drawing on current and recent relevant experience, their understanding on delivering trauma informed services including to similar clients in similar settings ▪ Described client characteristics and needs and demonstrated the benefits and outcomes achieved through relevant activities undertaken to support these clients
Weaker responses did not clearly:
▪ Articulated experience or understanding of delivering trauma informed services ▪ Provide information on current or previous clients and activities and services provided to support these clients

Criterion 3

Provide a description and evidence of your organisation's cultural governance, links to cultural authority groups and community support to deliver CaFIS to the communities you have listed. If you do not have this, explain how you plan to have this before activities begin in November 2021
Successful applications clearly:
▪ Outlined the community members/organisations to be engaged including how and how often this would occur ▪ Provided evidence of support from the community (e.g. a letter of support from a cultural authority group) and explained why the organisation providing the letter was appropriate to provide this letter of support ▪ Articulated how the organisation provided cultural security for staff and families
Stronger responses clearly:
▪ Identified key community members in relation to cultural governance for the communities where they were proposing to deliver services. ▪ Evidenced that the identified key community members held cultural authority and that these key members/organisations were supportive of the proposed services to be delivered by the applicant organisation. ▪ Evidenced community acceptance and support for the delivery of services by the applicant organisation. ▪ Articulated how the organisation provided cultural security for staff and clients. Responses that identified embedded strategies, mechanisms, policies and practices spanning all aspects of organisations from board, through CEO and senior management to staff and community were the strongest.
Weaker responses did not clearly:
▪ Evidence their cultural authority or the community acceptance for their delivery of services to proposed communities. ▪ Outline how they provide cultural security to staff and families.

Criterion 4

Grant agreements will cover up to 5 years. If you were selected to deliver these services, what would you do to make sure the communities in your region are the most appropriate communities to service and that your services remain the most suitable?
Successful applications clearly:
▪ Outlined who they would engage with, how often and how, in order to get information to ensure service locations and services remained the most suitable over the life of the grant agreement ▪ Outlined how they could adapt services to meet changes in need
Stronger responses clearly:
▪ Articulated who, why, how and how often engagement would occur and linked this to actually ensuring service locations and services remained the most suitable over the life of the grant agreement ▪ Once they had articulated the above, they outlined how they could adapt services for example how they could pivot service delivery to different emerging communities of need or adapt service delivery models and activities to address emerging issues of concern over the life of the grant agreement. These will be important aspects to be reflected in ongoing Activity Work Plans.
Weaker responses did not clearly:
▪ Describe the approaches to ensuring their services remained the most appropriate for the duration of the grant agreement.

Criterion 5

Tell us about your successful relationships with other key service providers and your ability to participate in shared case planning and management.
Successful applications clearly:
▪ Provided examples of past experience participating in shared case planning and management (for example, with child protection authorities) or were able to tell us who they would engage with and how.
Stronger responses clearly:
▪ Outlined recent, relevant instances where they had participated in case planning with other organisations specifically in relation to delivery of family support programs. They identified mechanisms and processes to link with external agencies including child protection. Where organisations are not currently or recently delivering family support services, they were able to describe the organisations in their current networks and other organisations and mechanisms they would expand to include if funded for these services.
Weaker responses did not clearly:
▪ Describe current, recent examples of family support service where they have participated in shared case planning or if no examples available because this is a new aspect of service delivery, did not describe how they would do this if funded.

Criterion 6

Describe the governance procedures you have in place.
Successful applications clearly:
▪ Articulated how decisions were made in their organisation ▪ Explained how senior management and board (or other decision making body) share responsibility and information ▪ Outlined how policies and procedures are developed and reviewed
Stronger responses clearly:
▪ Outlined how decisions were made including the development and review of policies and procedures to support these. Responses which reflected a comprehensive 'whole of organisational approach' and input mechanisms beyond a 'top down' approach that included engagement beyond the organisations into communities were able to support claims against this criterion and other criterion.
Weaker responses did not clearly:
▪ Describe how decisions and policies and procedures were made and reviewed and how responsibility and information was shared.

Criterion 7

Tell us about how you recruit and support your staff. Tell us how you would ensure staff have housing and office space.
Successful applications clearly:
▪ Described how many staff they currently have, how many Aboriginal and CALD staff and the staff turnover they experience ▪ Explained how they attract staff and minimise staff turnover ▪ Provided information on housing and office space available from November 2021 and if this was not available, explained when it would become available and how service delivery would be supported until the infrastructure became available. Though optional, some applicants attached photos of proposed housing and office space.

Stronger responses clearly:
▪ Outlined the staff they had not only across the organisation but specifically in relation to the locations where service delivery was proposed. Responses that included a range of recruitment approaches to address different recruitment circumstances e.g. ‘locally engaged’ and ‘attract from outside the community’ were more comprehensive. Some strong applications outlined support strategies to minimise staff turn-over which encompassed ‘employer of choice’, training and development and cultural security aspects. ▪ Described infrastructure in place to support delivery of services including housing and office resources in communities.
Weaker responses did not clearly:
▪ Describe specific staff relevant to the proposed service locations or explain how they recruit and retain staff ▪ Outline specific infrastructure available in specific proposed service locations.