

# Questions and Answers

## National panel of Assessors 2017-1064

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### 1. What is the closing time and date for applications?

The Application Form must be submitted by **2.00pm Canberra local time AEDT on 24 October 2017**. It is recommended that you submit your application **well before the closing time and date**.

### 2. If I am not able to submit my application by the due time and date, can I be granted an extension?

No, extensions will not be given.

If an application is late or the Community Grants Hub is requested to approve a lodgement after the closing date the [late application policy](#) available on the Community Grants Hub website will apply.

### 3. How much funding is available for this Program?

This Grant Opportunity is for membership of the National Panel of Assessors (NPA). Approved NPA Providers will receive grant payments on a fee-for-service basis for providing a range of Assessment Services to assist with the needs of people with disability in the workplace.

### 4. Is the funding on-going?

Membership for the National Panel of Assessors will be from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2023.

### 5. When will I know the outcome of my application?

You will be notified of the outcome of your application at the end of the selection process. For probity reasons, to treat all applicants fairly and equally, it is not possible to give you information about the status of individual applications during the assessment process.

### 6. Where should I go for further information?

Please email your enquiries to [support@communitygrants.gov.au](mailto:support@communitygrants.gov.au)

### 7. What is happening with the National Panel of Assessors (NPA) contracts

Members of the NPA support DES by providing independent assessments for the Ongoing Support element of DES, the Supported Wage System and workplace modification assessments for the Employment Assistance Fund. NPA services will remain largely unchanged and the current NPA contracts will be extended from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 to align with the end of the current DES Deed.

To streamline NPA application assessments, the purchasing process is expected to be conducted concurrently with the DES Grant Application process.

**8. We are currently providing NPA services within the current DES contract. Do we need to complete the Registration of Interest process?**

Only providers seeking to deliver DES were required to register through an unrestricted Registration of Interest process, as outlined in the DES Reform 2018 Industry Information Paper.

**9. Are fees for NPA services being reviewed to include travel as part of the DES Reforms?**

Information about the application process and fee structure for the new National Panel of Assessors (NPA) Standing Panel is available on the National Panel of Assessors Industry Information Paper, published on the Department of Social Services DSS Engage website [engage.dss.gov.au](http://engage.dss.gov.au).

**10. The new National Panel of Assessors (NPA) selection process is called a grant Application process. What does this mean?**

The NPA grant application process will be for membership of the NPA 2018 standing panel of NPA Assessment Services. The grant application process will be administered by the Community Grants Hub on behalf of the Department of Social Services under a Whole of Australian Government initiative to streamline grant processes across agencies.

**11. The Disability Employment Services Reform 2018 Industry Information Paper (June 2017) states that: “A refresh of the National Panel of Assessors (NPA) will occur at the same time as the new DES program takes effect from 1 July 2018” and “The service will remain largely unchanged” If it is to “remain largely unchanged” what does “refresh” actually mean?**

The Refresh refers to the creation of a new contracting period from 1 July 2018. NPA assessment services will continue to be Ongoing Support Assessment (OSA), Supported Wage System (SWS) and Workplace modifications assessments.

**12. The SWS has been in existence for many years and remains largely unchanged from its original model. Are there any plans for a major review, including consultation with NPA providers and their SWS assessors to address inefficiencies, performance issues, quality controls and poor knowledge of SWS amongst a significant number of DES providers?**

There are no plans for a major review of SWS at this time. All DES providers will be expected to understand and use available programs and support, including SWS, to assist eligible DES participants into employment.

**13. At some stage in the future, will SWS assessors also be conducting SWS assessments for all ADE supported employees? Has a decision been made about a modified SWS assessment tool for ADEs and a requirement for all ADEs to have their workers with disability assessed by an independent SWS assessor – rather than continue using one of the many DSS approved wage assessment tools that are currently under scrutiny?**

On 19 June 2017, parties engaged in a Fair Work Commission (FWC) conciliation process agreed to a proposal by the unions to amend the Supported Employment Services Award 2010 (SES Award) to include variations to the way the SWS operates in Australian Disability Enterprises

(ADEs) which choose to use the SWS under the SES Award. The variations to the SWS seek to provide a more accurate and fair assessment of productivity using the SWS in ADE settings.

The amendments will vary the operation of the SWS under the SES Award only. The operation of the SWS will not change in open employment.

The proposal will be formally submitted by the parties for the consideration of the Full Bench of the FWC in August and September 2017. If agreed by the Full Bench, the amendments will not require ADEs to stop using other wage assessment tools. ADEs can continue to use any approved wage assessment tool under the SES Award, as long as those tools remain in the Award.

Parties in the FWC have not been able to agree on the application of the unions to remove all wage tools with competency-based components from the SES Award and have asked the FWC to arbitrate this matter.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) administers the SWS only. Other approved wage tools under the SES Award are not owned or administered by DSS. Employers make independent industrial decisions about the wage assessment tools they use.

#### **14. Our organisation has submitted an ROI for the DES Registration of Interest and I am confused if we are to submit the NPA ROI as well.**

There is no Registration of Interest (ROI) for NPA.

Organisations who submit an ROI for DES do not have to submit an ROI for NPA.

Information about the application process is outlined in the NPA Industry Information paper published on the [Engage.dss.gov.au](http://Engage.dss.gov.au) website.

#### **15. I am a current NPA provider. I would like to nominate new assessors – am I restricted in applying for them to only cover my current NPA Employment Service Areas (ESAs), or can I apply to have them deliver assessment services in other ESAs or indicate that they will perform national coverage, as an indication of future intentions?**

Any new assessors you wish to nominate now must be to deliver services within your existing ESA coverage. You may wish to change their service delivery location in the future if your organisation's ESA coverage changes.

#### **16. Will the application require nomination of ESAs where work orders will be accepted by a panel provider?**

The application will require organisations to nominate either National coverage, or to identify which ESAs they wish to deliver services to. ESA maps will be included as part of the grant opportunity documents.

**17. I note that the fees for the OSA, SWS and hourly rate for the WMS remain unchanged from the current fees and these have been unchanged since 2010. Is there any opportunity that these will be revised prior to the Grant Application? I would appreciate feedback on how this structure was arrived at.**

While the funding structure outlined in the Industry Information Paper will not be revised prior to the Grant Application, the Department, in its absolute discretion, may index the Grant Payments annually on 1 July. The first indexation point will not be before 1 July 2019. The indexation value is at the Department's absolute discretion, but will be based upon the Disability Employment Services funding envelope which is provided to the Department annually from the Department of Finance.

**18. For providers currently not delivering the National Panel of Assessors, can the following information or links to this information be provided:**

- List of current National Panel of Assessors and the Assessments they complete
- Data on the volume of Assessments completed by Assessment Type

**This information is useful for providers as part of the approval process to submit an application.**

A list of current NPA providers is attached to the Supported Wage System (SWS) Handbook, which can be found on [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au).

**NPA assessments completed in 2016-17**

<b>Assessment type</b>	<b>2016-17</b>
Ongoing Support Assessments	11,340
Supported Wage System Assessments	6,577
Workplace Modifications Assessments	1,178

New Question and Answer added 21 September 2017

**19. As the new DES is about client choice, providers are required to attract clients. Will this be the same for NPA providers, can DES providers and their clients be given a list of NPA members and / or assessors names?**

The National Panel of Assessors (NPA) delivers independent assessment services for people with disability in the workplace. The Department will continue to allocate assessments equally to NPA organisations which are available within the applicable Employment Service Area.

New Question and Answer added 22 September 2017

**20. Can you please provide clarity regarding the specialist WMA services. We currently provide tailored WMAs based on a client's disability (for example specific recommendations for people with a hearing impairment). Does this constitute specialist WMA services? If not, are you able to provide an expanded list of examples (in addition to building construction and audiology modifications?). This will inform our decision to complete Criterion 5.**

Criterion 5 requires applicants to demonstrate the need for specialised Workplace Modification Assessment Services. Applicants may consider delivering specialist services to any specialist client group.

New Question and Answer added 27 September 2017

**21. Does the limit of 10 pertain to sub-contractors only or also to listed assessors on Attachment B – Assessor Qualifications Template?**

Up to 10 consortium members/Subcontractors can be included in the Application Form. If assessors to be engaged by the applicant are considered Subcontractors, they may be listed on Attachment B – Assessor Qualifications Template.

New Question and Answer added 11 October 2017

**22. All assessors must have a full (non-provisional or restricted) qualification that is registered with Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) or a qualification recognised or accredited with one of the following associations before they can undertake assessments: Up to 10 consortium members/Subcontractors can be included in the Application Form. If assessors to be engaged by the applicant are considered Subcontractors, they may be listed on Attachment B – Assessor Qualifications Template. Please clarify if accreditation and qualification requirements apply to both WMA assessors and OSA/SWS assessors.**

Yes, accreditation and qualification requirements apply to both WMA and OSA/SWS assessors.