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# Financial Wellbeing and Capability Activity - Emergency Relief

## Feedback for applicants

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The Department of Social Services (the department) has provided the following general feedback for applicants of the Financial Wellbeing and Capability (FWC) Activity - Emergency Relief (ER) grant opportunity.

Assessment of applications was in accordance with the procedure detailed in the grant opportunity guidelines (the guidelines) and outlined in the selection process below.

### Overview

The application submission period opened on 22 October 2024 and closed on 2 December 2024.

Through the FWC Activity, funding is provided for the ER grant opportunity. ER contributes to FWC Activity outcomes by providing immediate financial or material aid to eligible people experiencing financial crises. Material aid refers to practical, physical items (such as clothes or bedding). Financial aid is financial assistance (for example, vouchers for supermarkets, utilities or petrol) and advice.

ER is available to people who are not able to pay a bill or who are at imminent risk of being unable to do so. Successful organisations will be required to engage with potential clients to determine if they meet the eligibility criteria. This will provide an opportunity to identify underlying issues which are contributing to an individual's financial crisis (such as family and domestic violence, mental health issues, housing instability or addiction), undertake triage processes, and facilitate referrals to other support services, where appropriate.

The objectives of the grant opportunity are to:

- assist people to manage their immediate crisis situation
- deliver services in a way that maintains the dignity of the individual and their family
- refer people to other relevant services, to help them pay bills or reduce the risk of being unable to pay their bills
- encourage greater self-reliance, through empowering people in immediate financial crisis.

The program will run over 5 years, from 2025–26 to 2029–30.

### Selection Process

The Community Grants Hub (the Hub) undertook the initial screening for organisation eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the guidelines. This information was provided to the department's grant opportunity delegate for final decisions on whether an application met the eligibility and compliance criteria.

The Hub undertook the preliminary assessment on all applications through an open competitive grant process. Applications which underwent preliminary assessment were provided to the department's selection advisory panel (panel) for deliberation.

The panel established by the department, comprised of subject matter experts who assessed applications and provided advice to inform the funding recommendations to the Financial Delegate.

The panel's consideration of assessed applications was based on:

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- meeting the compliance requirements outlined in the guidelines
- meeting the eligibility requirements outlined in the guidelines
- how well the responses met the assessment criteria
- the volume of applications received and the extent to which applications compared against other applications
- the provision and appropriateness of the requested attachments
- whether the project demonstrated value with relevant money
- identified risks and the proposed mitigation strategies for the department and the Commonwealth.

## Selection Results

There was a strong interest in the grant opportunity and applications were of a high standard. The preferred applicants demonstrated their ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the guidelines based on the strength of their responses to the assessment criteria.

The Hub notified applicants of the outcome in writing, where their applications did not meet the requirements outlined in the guidelines.

This feedback is provided to assist grant applicants to understand what comprised a strong application and what was quality responses to the assessment criteria.

### Criterion 1

#### **Demonstrate your organisation's capability and capacity to deliver ER services to people in crisis.**

Applicant's responses included information:

- outlining their organisation's track record, proposed governance structure, and proposed model for delivering ER services in the target area (such as type of services, outlet locations, hours of operation, proximity to transport, size, case management approach, approach to servicing rural and remote locations, brokerage and/or partnership arrangements)
- outlining how their organisation would assess clients to determine they are eligible (see client eligibility information under section 2) to receive services under ER and provide services within a framework of engagement
- outlining their organisation's service delivery locations (noting there should be at least one physical ER outlet in each SA4 service area where the organisation is seeking funding), including a description of their accessibility (for example via nearby public transport)
- outlining how their organisation intended to respond to increased demand arising from unforeseen crisis events, for example natural disasters
- detailing how their organisation's financial viability would leverage other sources of funding, resources and/or support to address the need for ER services
- where relevant, outlined the responsibilities of their consortia partners in delivering the activity.

#### **Strong applications:**

- provided a detailed description of the applicant's capability and capacity to deliver ER services, including by:
  - clearly outlining the applicant's history of ER delivery, backed by strong examples and/or data (for example, by outlining the number of people supported across recent years, and the outcomes achieved for clients)
  - clearly outlining the applicant's proposed ER governance structure, with a strong focus on layers of accountability (for example, by outlining the specific role of the

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Chief Executive Officer and board in relation to the management of ER service delivery)

- clearly outlining the skills and experience of ER staff, backed by examples and/or data (for example, by outlining the qualifications/training of key ER staff)
- clearly identifying the types of support (for example, case management, material aid, and referrals) that would be offered to ER clients
- clearly identifying the methods by which ER would be delivered to clients (for example, via a mix of in-person, telephonic, and online methods)
- provided a clear description of the intake and assessment processes that would be used to assess individuals' eligibility for ER support
- provided a detailed overview of proposed physical service delivery locations (including any proposed outreach locations), including their accessibility via public transport and/or private means of travel
- outlined cogent plans to respond to increased demand arising from unforeseen crisis events
- provided examples of experience and expertise in responding to increased demand arising from unforeseen crisis events (for example, by outlining approaches undertaken in response to the coronavirus pandemic or recent natural disasters)
- often included extra detail regarding the applicant's expertise in assisting specific at-risk cohorts, such as people experiencing homelessness, or people escaping Family and Domestic Violence
- generally made full and effective use of the available word/character limit (for example, by including concise, but strong examples to back up key claims)
- where relevant, provided a detailed overview of the proposed role and expertise of all consortia partners in relation to the assessment criteria.

### Criterion 2

#### **Explain how your organisation will work to engage and support vulnerable people with complex needs.**

Applicant's responses included information:

- detailing their organisation's expertise in maintaining or developing strong collaborative relationships with local support services (such as family relationship services, job active providers, refugee services, domestic violence services, emergency services, mental health, housing programs and other financial wellbeing and capability services), including in response to natural disasters and other crisis events
- outlining how the activity would benefit effective referral pathways that look beyond the client's need for immediate financial assistance either internally and/or with local support services to address underlying causes of financial stress (such as mental health, housing, substance abuse, gambling)
- outlining their organisation's expertise in complex case management (provision of information, referrals to specialist services and other supports, client advocacy and negotiation)
- where relevant, outlined the responsibilities of their consortia partners in delivering the activity.

#### **Strong applications:**

- demonstrated an awareness that collaborative relationships with other support services are central to the effective delivery of ER
- provided a detailed overview of the applicant's history and expertise in developing or maintaining collaborative relationships with other local support services to the benefit of clients, backed by specific, strong examples (for example, by showing how a collaborative

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relationship with a local financial counselling organisation has ensured ER clients in serious debt can access the financial advocacy and advice they need)

- provided a comprehensive overview of the applicant's proposed and/or existing internal and external referral processes, backed (where possible) by strong, specific examples
- generally cited specific internal programs and/or external organisations to which clients requiring complementary supports would be referred
- clearly outlined the applicant's history and expertise in complex case management, including through examples that demonstrated the applicant's ability to achieve positive outcomes for clients through its case management approach
- often described the training and/or qualifications and experience of case managers
- generally made full and effective use of the available word/character limit (for example, by including concise, but strong examples to back up key claims)
- where relevant, provided a detailed overview of the proposed role and expertise of all consortia partners in relation to the assessment criteria.

### Individual feedback

Individual feedback will not be provided for this grant opportunity.