

Family Relationships Services Programme (FRSP) Guidelines

Programme Objective

The objective of the Family Relationships Services Programme (FRSP) is to improve the wellbeing of Australian families, particularly families with children, who are at risk of separating, or who have separated.

Legislative Authority

The legal basis for the funding provided under the FRSP is the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* and the *Financial Framework Legislation Amendment Act (No.3) 2012, Section 32B, Schedule 1AA, Item No. 402.008* (subject to Parliamentary appropriation).

Programme Structure

The FRSP consists of three sub-programmes that provide funding to underpin this objective.

All decisions about funding allocations across the sub-programmes are the responsibility of the Attorney-General. The sub-programmes are:

1. Family Law System Projects

Funding may be provided to support a range of projects that build on and support the capacity of the family law system, including:

- research, evaluation, policy development
- resources for family law system professionals
- improving access by families to family dispute resolution and other related support services; and
- one-off funding to family law services to address location-specific need

The information contained in these guidelines pertains to this sub-programme.

The other sub-programmes are:

2. Family Law Services

Family Law Services are funded under the programme guidelines for the Family Support Programme administered by the [Department of Social Services online](#).

Historically, over 90% of the FRSP appropriation is directed to the funding of family law services.

3. Family Law Pathways Networks

Family Law Pathways Networks (Networks) are funded under separate programme guidelines [available online](#).

Guidelines for Family Law System Projects

With the aim of enhancing the family law system's capacity in responding to the needs of separating and/or separated families, and in line with family law priorities determined by Government policy, AGD is responsible for identifying family law system projects considered suitable for funding under this sub-programme.

In deciding whether to proceed with a project, AGD will determine the type of process to be applied, taking into account the requirements of the project. Processes could include a direct approach to an organisation (such as to pilot a particular response to a family law priority), a competitive merit-based selection process where applications are invited from organisations (where the project requires a testing of the market) or through a formal procurement process in line with the Commonwealth's Procurement Rules (such as for projects involving research and/or evaluation).

There may also be projects funded where an organisation approaches the Attorney-General or the Department directly with a proposal in response to a family law priority. Where this occurs, the assessment criteria detailed below will apply to such proposals in the same way the criteria is applied to all other projects. Funding can be provided on a one-off, on an annual basis or can be multi-year funding, depending on the project requirements. Funding provided as grants under this sub-programme will only be provided to recipients who have an ABN/ACN.

Funded projects will vary from year to year, depending on the family law priorities and the parliamentary appropriation in any given year. For example, previous projects funded included: a grant of \$50,000 for the drafting of an operational framework for a family law service type; a grant of \$120,000 for scholarships for individuals from an Indigenous or CALD background to obtain qualifications as a family dispute resolution practitioner; and \$1m for undertaking a longitudinal research study. All projects funded under the FRSP are approved either by the Attorney-General or by the relevant departmental delegate.

Funding for approved projects will only be provided under either:

- a signed grant agreement between the Department and the grantee,
- a signed contract (such as for procurement) between the Department and the approved provider, or
- a signed memorandum of understanding between the Department and another Commonwealth agency.

All projects are assessed against the selection criteria set out below.

Assessment process

AGD will undertake an assessment process to assess the degree by which the project meets the programme objective using the assessment criteria outlined below. The outcome of this assessment will be used to inform the recommendation to the Attorney-General.

Assessment criteria

Each of the following criteria has equal weighting:

- 1) *Programme Objective*—projects must demonstrate their alignment to the FRSP programme objective.
- 2) *Value for Money*—projects must demonstrate value for money.
- 3) *Government priorities*—projects must be consistent with government priorities for the family law system, in addition to broader government priorities and policies.
- 4) *Capacity of the organisation*—projects must include information that demonstrates management capacity, including financial, reporting and risk management processes.

Grant Publication Requirements

The Department is required to publish information about a successful grant on its website. If the recipient of a grant has concerns about grant information being published, it should raise these concerns with the Department directly by emailing familylawunit@ag.gov.au.

Role of the Attorney-General's Department in relation to funding provided under the FRSP

The role of the AGD is to administer the funding provided to organisations funded under the FRSP. The Department also provides policy advice to the Government on the effectiveness of the projects funded under the FRSP in furthering the FRSP objective of helping separated or separating families and the priorities in the family law system.

Recipient responsibilities and accountabilities

Reliable, timely and adequate evidence is required to demonstrate that funds have been expended in accordance with the terms of the funding agreement, contract or MOU. The funding agreement, contract or MOU will include details about what reporting and evidence of acquittal is required from an organisation. Requirements may include, but not limited to, providing to the Department periodic progress reports, a final report upon completion of the project detailing achievements and a

signed statement indicating the funding was spent in accordance with the funding agreement.

Evaluation

Due to the variable nature of family law system projects, AGD will periodically undertake or commission evaluations or reviews to ensure the sub-programme is contributing to the objective of the Family Relationships Services Programme. This process will also consider any updates required for the FRSP Programme Guidelines. Organisations that receive funding for family law system projects may be required to participate in evaluation or review activities.

Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Department, including those in relation to the programme, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act). Funding recipients may also obtain details about freedom of information from the website of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet [available online](#).

Privacy

Any personal information collected by the Department is protected by the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*. Generally, the Department collects personal information to carry out its functions properly and efficiently, and only uses personal information for the purposes for which it was given to the Department and for directly related purposes (unless otherwise required by, or authorised under, law).

Taxation

Information on taxes, duties and government charges are contained in funding documentation. The Department does not provide advice on GST matters. All funding recipients are advised to seek advice from a qualified professional or the [Australian Taxation Office](#).

Conflict of Interest

Funding recipients must identify any potential conflicts of interest that are likely to arise during the implementation of their projects as well as mitigation strategies. Should a conflict of interest situation arise at a later date, recipients must advise the Department in accordance with their funding agreements. A conflict of interest may exist, for example, if a recipient or any of its staff has a relationship (professional, commercial or personal) with a party who is able to influence the implementation or operation of the project.

Departmental officers involved in the assessment of projects are required to declare whether they have a conflict of interest. Where conflicts of interest arise, they are managed according the Departmental policy document *Guidelines for Managing Conflicts of Interest in the Attorney-General's Department*.

Complaints mechanism

The Department regards complaints as a way of both assessing and improving our performance. The Department will endeavour, where possible, to ensure that complaints are resolved promptly, fairly, confidentially and satisfactorily and that our procedures are improved as a result.

Complaints regarding funding under this programme should first be made in writing to:

Assistant Secretary
Family Law Branch
Attorney-General's Department
3-5 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600

All complaints will be handled according to the Attorney-General's Department Complaint Management Process, [available online](#).