



Homelands Engagement Strategy

Background

Approximately 8 000 Aboriginal Territorians live on or utilise more than 500 homelands/outstations and communities across the Territory

Homelands and outstations are generally small Aboriginal communities where residents live in family groups on culturally significant land. The function of homelands/outstations can vary including: permanent residence (seasonal or year round), hunting, camping, tourism, business ventures, cultural, or for programs such as youth diversion.

The Department of Community Services (DoCS) administers grants under the Homelands Program to assist those residents who reside on homelands, either permanently or seasonally, with the cost of municipal and essential services and housing maintenance. The grants are paid to service providers who provide the services to homelands.

'The Homelands – A Shared Responsibility' policy encourages residents to participate in looking after their homeland by increasing accountability and transparency on how funding money is allocated and expended. This increased accountability and transparency will allow residents to be aware of what can be achieved with the funding, how they can participate in looking after their homeland and gaining the most of the funding opportunity available. The mechanism for this process will be the development of a Service Delivery Plan for each eligible homeland.

Summary

The Homelands Engagement Strategy will be used to outline the way in which homeland residents can collaborate in the development of their service delivery plan and to better understand their allocated funding and service performance.

The Homelands Engagement Strategy takes into account the difficult circumstances faced when trying to engage a population that is geographically dispersed throughout the Northern Territory, often in small, remote communities, and places expectation on contracted service providers to ensure compliance with engagement requirements under their funding agreements.

Evidence from the first year of reporting under the new program guidelines shows that service providers generally attend these communities more than the minimum required under the program, and are actively carrying out maintenance in the communities. It is important that engagement of residents forms a required & documented component of these visits.

In addition, culturally and regionally, service providers are best placed to reach homeland residents with 29 of the 36 service providers being indigenous organisations that have strong representation by homeland residents as members



and directors. Apart from service providers, other indigenous representative bodies such as the Land Councils and advocacy groups will be kept informed of the program and efforts will be made to utilise their communication networks.

Although it is important to engage with the residents and encourage the opportunity to take advantage of the Homelands Program, it is also important to recognise the diversity of residents and attitudes towards the homelands/outstations. Feedback has shown that not all residents want to be personally involved to the extent of active participation or contribution. It is necessary to respect the desire of residents and not push unwanted ideas or information onto them. In this regard, the Homelands Program strives to present an opportunity and encourage participation in the development of service delivery plans. Residents may choose not to take up this opportunity.

Engagement and Reporting Requirements

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Stronger Futures (NPASF) in the Northern Territory, there are four Performance Indicators (PIs) against which reporting is required in order to qualify for funding. Of the four PIs, two are based on engagement with homelands residents.

In addition, in order to qualify for payments, part of the third annual milestone requires a 'homelands engagement strategy'.

Homelands Engagement and Reporting Requirements

With regard to engagement, the following Reporting is required:

PI2: Percentage of eligible homeland communities engaged in the development of service delivery plans.

PI4: Percentage of eligible homelands that receive regular, clear and transparent information on funding and service performance.

38(a) The number of eligible homeland communities engaged in the development of service delivery plans.

Other reporting requirements relate to the provision and standards of services. Reports are required 6 monthly.

The NPASF Schedule G Section 10 describes the expected engagement levels:

10. Both governments are committed to ensuring that:

- a) Homeland communities will be engaged and consulted on a regular basis with regard to funding allocations, services to be provided, how these services will be provided and who will provide them, as well as information on service quality as it relates to respective communities;*
- b) Information on intended service delivery will be made publicly available at the start of each year as set out in Table 8;*
- c) Information on funding expended, service delivery and performance achievement will be made publicly available as set out in Table 9; and*
- d) All publicly released information and reports will be easily accessible and available.*



Table 5 in Schedule G outlines 3 annual milestones with associated timeframes that must be met by the NTG in order to secure the Municipal and Essential Services (MES) funding.

Milestone 3 includes requirement of:

- *Joint agreement to a homelands engagement strategy for the upcoming year by 1 July annually.*

Outcomes and Objectives

The Homelands Engagement Strategy Outcomes and Objectives align with the engagement levels required under the MES IP and provide for the required engagement benchmarks.

Homelands Engagement Strategy Objectives include:

- Homeland residents engaged in the Homelands Program
- Increased accountability and transparency into service delivery

The HES will also achieve the following outcomes:

- Regular consultation with Homelands residents will provide the opportunity to participate in service delivery planning and be involved in the maintenance of their homelands
- Homelands residents and other stakeholders will have access to clear and transparent information on funding levels, service level expectations and service delivery performance

Homelands Engagement Strategy Implementation

In order to implement the attached strategy, the following will be undertaken:

- Scheduled service provider forums will include a one hour component outlining the new engagement & reporting requirements.
- The development of a 'Toolkit' to support engagement including:
 - clear and current web information on program and guidelines
 - information poster templates suitable for homelands
 - service delivery plan templates
 - engagement reporting templates
 - 3 monthly newsletters

For 2014/15, and based on the International Association of Public Participation Spectrum (IAP2) the HES includes two engagement goals based on the levels of Inform and Consult.

Responsible Agency	Stakeholder	Engagement Goal	Engagement Promise	Activities	Message	Reporting
Funded service providers	Homelands residents	Inform – to provide residents with information on allocated funding for their homeland and possible scope of works under funding guidelines	We will keep you informed	Minimum of 6 monthly visits with homelands residents; website; information posters in each homeland	Funding allocated to each homeland and service delivery expectations clearly explained	Visit and meeting documented including numbers of attendees
Funded service providers	Homelands residents	Consult – to provide residents with the opportunity to discuss and provide feedback on a service delivery plan for their homeland	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge what you tell us and let you know how you influenced the service delivery	Meetings with homelands residents during scheduled visits to develop service delivery plan	Service Delivery Plan identifying required service levels and proposed applications for additional funding e.g. MES Special Purpose Grant	Copy of Service Delivery Plan

Responsible Agency	Stakeholder	Engagement Goal	Engagement Promise	Activities	Message	Reporting
NTG DoCS	Indigenous representative bodies; Regional Councils; NGOs & philanthropic organisations	Inform – to provide clear information on Homelands Program & funding allocations	We will keep you informed	Website; forums; newsletter; 1800 number; Darwin & regional shows	Funding allocated to each homeland; funding guidelines & engagement plan	Identify & record information outlets and opportunities taken
NTG DoCS	Indigenous representative bodies; Regional Councils; NGOs & philanthropic organisations	Consult – to obtain feedback on program delivery effectiveness	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge what you tell us and provide feedback on how you influenced the program delivery	Formal & informal discussions; website; forums; newsletter; 1800 number; Darwin & regional shows	Requesting constructive feedback on program delivery	Identify & record information outlets and opportunities taken
NTG DoCS	NTG Agencies	Inform – to provide clear information on homelands policy, program & funding	We will keep you informed	Website; newsletter; Regional Coordination Committee meetings	Funding allocation formula, policy and funding guidelines & engagement plan	Identify & record information outlets and opportunities taken

Responsible Agency	Stakeholder	Engagement Goal	Engagement Promise	Activities	Message	Reporting
NTG DoCS	NTG Agencies	Consult – to obtain feedback on program delivery effectiveness	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your comments and provide feedback on how you influenced the program delivery	Website; newsletter; Regional Coordination Committee meetings	Requesting constructive feedback on service delivery	Identify & record information outlets and opportunities taken
NTG DoCS	Australian Government including PM&C, Parks Australia and others	Inform – to provide clear information on homelands policy, program & funding	We will keep you informed	Reporting process, informal and formal meetings with stakeholder representatives, website, newsletter	Performance Indicators achieved	Formal MES reports
NTG DoCS	Australian Government including PM&C, Parks Australia and others	Consult – to obtain feedback on program delivery effectiveness	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your comments and provide feedback on how you influenced the program delivery	Formal and informal discussions relating to service delivery	Requesting constructive feedback on service delivery	Formal MES report

Responsible Agency	Stakeholder	Engagement Goal	Engagement Promise	Activities	Message	Reporting
NTG DoCS	Homelands residents	Inform – to provide clear information on homelands policy, program & funding	We will keep you informed	Face to face meetings	Funding allocated to each homeland and service delivery expectations clearly explained	Record of visits undertaken
NTG DoCS	Service Providers	Consult – to obtain feedback on program delivery effectiveness	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your comments and provide feedback on how you influenced the program delivery	Service provider forums and face-to-face meetings	MES program, service delivery, reporting	Record of visits undertaken and attendance at forums