

FUNDING AND CONTRACTING SERVICES SPECIAL EDITION BULLETIN

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Welcome to this special edition of the FaCS Bulletin.

New funding certainty for service providers

The State Government recognises that the community services sector delivers valuable services to the State's most vulnerable individuals, families and communities, and that demand for these critical services is likely to increase during the COVID-19 pandemic. Service providers will be placed under unique pressure due to the nature of community services.

The Government had previously advised that no service providers will be penalised for failure to deliver services due to workforce issues caused by COVID-19, until 30 June 2020.

Government agencies will now contact service providers whose service agreements are due to expire prior to 30 June 2021 to offer variations to extend service agreements until at least that date under current contract conditions. Government agencies are each responsible for ensuring costs associated with their respective contract extensions are met (for the duration of the extension).

Service providers can continue to negotiate their contract extensions with government agency contract managers, working through issues in delivering services, as the situation develops. Service providers are exploring alternative ways to ensure the safety of their staff and clients, and to enable service continuity (where practical) during the pandemic. The Government supports the efforts of service providers to ensure continuous, flexible and safe delivery of services during this ongoing and unprecedented situation.

Effective immediately until 30 June 2021, service providers who remain in operation will not have payments withheld for failure to deliver services due to COVID-19. Service providers are urged to notify their contract manager as soon as they become aware of disruptions to service provision due to COVID-19. Contract managers can then record it as a Force Majeure event and work with the service provider to maintain continuity of critical services as much as is practicable.

While extending contracts under current contractual conditions, such as price, may not be ideal for all providers, the service agreement extensions are designed to provide certainty during these uncertain times. The new taskforces being established by the Department of Communities and the Mental Health Commission are the mechanism for the sector to address increased demand for essential services. For more information about what is considered an essential service or the newly established taskforces please contact sectorsupport@communities.wa.gov.au.


ERO supplementary funding

FaCS previously reported that the State Government has approved a provisional financial allocation to provide [supplementary funding for the Equal Remuneration Order \(ERO\)](#), targeted at contracts that were established prior to 1 July 2013, acknowledging that the ERO was announced in June 2012.

We have received queries about whether the new challenges posed by COVID-19 will interfere with the rollout of this funding. FaCS is happy to confirm that the supplementary funding is on track to be received by line agencies in April 2020.

Service agreements eligible for supplementation include those awarded under the Delivering Community Services in Partnership (DCSP) Policy, before 1 July 2013, with staff on an award affected by the ERO receiving partial or full funding from the State Government.

Service providers who aren't eligible for supplementation but have concerns about the sustainability of their services should contact their government agency contract managers to discuss options for addressing these concerns.



Reducing the administrative burden for service providers

Government agencies are taking a number of actions to ease the administrative burden on service providers dealing with increased demand for services and unique challenges in the new, quickly evolving environment.

Some of the actions a government agency can take now to reduce the burden on service providers include:

- Immediately cease service reviews and all non-essential contractual compliance requirements to free up service provider capacity.
- Avoid advertising Requests for community services where possible right now. Extend current arrangements for critical services; delay advertising non-critical services.
- Extend advertising periods for Requests that are currently advertised; understand that service providers are stretched and will require considerably more time to develop Offers.
- Partner with the not-for-profit sector to engage in service continuity planning activities.
- Provide honest and respectful advice to internal and external stakeholders regarding the decisions government agencies must make in order to support the not-for-profit sector. Internal requirements and timeframes may have to be set aside to enable service continuity.

(Continued on page 3)

Reducing the administrative burden for service providers *(continued)*

Government agencies must approach service provision with flexibility and understand that service providers are making quick decisions about how best to redirect services and resources to the areas of critical need.

Service providers who remain concerned about flexibility of service provision or their contracting burden after engaging with their government contract managers can contact [FaCS](#) for assistance.

Government agencies who would like assistance with implementing any of these actions, please contact [FaCS](#).



Working in Partnership - the COVID-19 Working Group

The Working in Partnership – COVID-19 Working Group (Working Group) continues to meet weekly to address issues relating to the delivery of community services as a result of COVID-19.

The Working Group brings together peak organisations, central agencies and line agencies to raise problems and agree solutions. At its most recent meeting, consideration was given to infection control measures for service providers who do not have access to personal protective equipment; Lotterywest funding for critical services; a Finance grant to the Western Australian Council of Social Service to provide not-for-profit business continuity planning; and the rising cost of essential supplies for service provision, among other key areas of concern.



Seeking EOIs: Emergency accommodation

The Government is currently seeking expressions of interest to provide accommodation for individuals required to undergo mandatory isolation as a result of COVID-19.

If your organisation has a building that is not currently in use and could be used for this purpose, please fill in the [online form](#). For further information, please contact emergencyaccom@finance.wa.gov.au.






For more information on COVID-19

The Western Australian Government is prepared and has taken precautions and implemented measures to minimise potential impacts to the community. The WA Government Pandemic Plan has been updated and sets out arrangements for protecting the community. The Plan includes practical advice for government agencies, private businesses, the community, households and individuals. The Plan is available at <http://www.wa.gov.au/covid19>.

Members of the public can telephone the COVID-19 Health Information Line on 1800 020 080 for advice and find more information, including specific clinic locations, by visiting <http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au>.

Please contact [Funding and Contracting Services](#) at the Department of Finance if you have any contract-specific enquiries.



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