

**West Pilbara Communities for Children
Community Partner Funding Application
1st July 2022 – 30th June 2023**



Department of Social Services' Data Exchange

The Australian Government's Department of Social Services (DSS) is implementing the *DSS Data Exchange*, which reflects the two-way focus on both smarter and more efficient ways of collecting data from service providers, and more useful reporting back of data about the outcomes achieved for individuals, families and communities.

The WPC4C's Community Partners are required to submit their performance reports via the *DSS Data Exchange* from 1st July, 2015. All data will be input by Community Partners themselves through the *DSS Data Exchange* web portal.

WPC4C staff will be providing detailed training to all Community Partners on the *DSS Data Exchange* once contracts are awarded. The below information is provided to WPC4C funding applicants, so your organisation is aware of the reporting requirements and if this impacts your planned programming. Please contact WPC4C should you have any questions regarding the *DSS Data Exchange* during your Community Partner proposal development.

The *DSS Data Exchange Framework* is underpinned by three principles that have guided all aspects of development and implementation.

1. Service providers will spend less time collecting and reporting administrative data and more time helping clients.

In practice, this means collecting fewer data items, collecting and reporting them in a way that is less onerous than previous performance reporting requirements, and feeding back submitted data in ways that are meaningful to service providers. Reporting cycles will be standardised to two six monthly periods, with a 30 day closure period.

Providers who do not have their own case management tools can now access a free, simple IT system (the *DSS Data Exchange* web-based portal). This allows for recording client, service and outcomes data that meets all the DSS programme performance data requirements and allows providers to confidentially manage their core client and case information.

2. Data collection will focus on client outcomes.

The Framework is designed to shift the focus of data collection away from collecting data on service activity outputs to a focus on the outcomes these services achieve for clients. DSS is mindful of the challenges of measuring client outcomes in ways that are relevant, proportionate and rigorous—recognising that service providers are not funded to be specialist researchers or to spend disproportionate amounts of time measuring client outcomes.

The **mandatory priority requirements** are a small set of data items that allow for an understanding of who is accessing programme activities, how often they are attending, where they are attending, what they are attending and what outcomes are being achieved.

**West Pilbara Communities for Children
Community Partner Funding Application
1st July 2022 – 30th June 2023**



The first part of the mandatory *priority requirements* cover data items to uniquely reflect the client and their key demographic characteristics. This provides an understanding of the pathways of each client over time, remembering that this is achieved on a de-identified basis.

Client records are reported for all individuals who receive a service as part of a funded activity. These records are the basic ‘building blocks’ of the *DSS Data Exchange Framework*—and are used to unambiguously answer standard questions about ‘how much did we do’:

- How many clients were assisted?
- How many clients had previously been assisted?
- How many clients also received assistance under a different funded activity that your organisation delivers?
- How many clients also received assistance from a funded activity delivered by a different service provider?
- How many clients receiving assistance were from vulnerable target population groups (for example age, gender or ethnicity profile)?

Answers to these questions will help tell the broader story about the outcomes being achieved, by providing an understanding of **who** these outcomes are being achieved for and **when**.

Sample responses to client’s frequently asked questions

Why are you asking me these questions? We only collect information that we need to better understand who we assist. We and our funding body (DSS) want to understand the profile of clients coming to our service. We use this information to help improve our service and to make sure it is easy to access and delivering good outcomes for the community.

The second part of the mandatory *priority requirements* are to share client outcomes data with DSS in exchange for regular and relevant reports. Reports back to service providers will be outcomes focused and include a rich set of information to help inform service delivery using programme performance, client survey and government data. They will be available in an interactive and static format.

3. Client personal information and privacy will be protected

Administrative data provided by funded services through the *DSS Data Exchange*, will be de-identified or encrypted so that no personal client information will be accessed by DSS.

When reporting client-level records, service providers will enter client details into the *DSS Data Exchange*, either through the web-based portal, bulk uploading of files, or a system-to-system transfer. The *DSS Data Exchange* will automatically de-identify client information using a SLK.1

The SLK allows records to be matched on a de-identified basis, while protecting a client’s identity. For instance John Smith (male, born 15 April 1960) will never be identified to DSS staff. He will instead be reflected as MTH0H150419601.

**West Pilbara Communities for Children
Community Partner Funding Application
1st July 2022 – 30th June 2023**



DSS will not access the names of individual clients and will not link the names of individual clients with their case information. This means that DSS will not match a submitted data record back to an individual client. Instead, the client-level unit records submitted by the service provider will contain an automatically generated 'statistical linkage key' that allows client outcome data to be matched over time and across programmes—without ever disclosing the identity of the individual client.

DSS will work with service providers so that clear communication and information is available to clients to assure them that only de-identified data will be accessed by DSS. Further details about protecting personal information are outlined in the *DSS Data Exchange Protocols*.



An Australian Government Initiative

