



Community Drought Support

Program Guideline: Service and Reporting Specification

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1. Introduction

The Community Drought Support Program is provided as part of the Queensland Government Drought Relief Assistance Package (the Package). The Package provides a range of measures across Government such as freight subsidies for water and fodder, land rent rebates and water licence waivers, relief from electricity charges and drought preparedness activities.

In response to the direct and immediate impact drought has on farm households and related small business in local communities, the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (the department) Community Drought Support Program (the Program) aims to provide community support measures that support the wellbeing of local communities including direct assistance with meeting basic living costs for families and individuals.

1.1 Purpose

The Program Guidelines (Guidelines) provide information on the service delivery context and expected outcomes including reporting requirements for the Program.

The Guidelines are intended to complement, but do not replace, the Service Agreement and *Community Investment Specification Version 3* which take precedence.

The Guidelines are a reference tool for funded organisations and service providers. The document sets out the department's requirements on how funded organisations should implement the program and the efficient administration of the Program funding grants.

The Program Guideline does not replace an organisations' own operational guidelines or procedures but can be used to inform local practice in delivering grant funding.

2. Overview of the Community Drought Support Program

2.1 Intent

The Community Drought Support Program aims to provide immediate household support to persons impacted by drought and support opportunities for community wellbeing and social connection.

The intended outcomes for the Program are to:

- provide drought-affected Queenslanders with assistance that alleviates household hardship and cost of living pressures; and
- enable place-based community focussed events, activities and initiatives that aim to address the psychosocial impact of prolonged drought on individuals, families, and communities

The Program is delivered through grant funding to organisations to deliver:

- Flexible Financial Hardship, and
- Community events and activities.

Due to the drought declaration processes, funding is allocated based on Local Government Area localities.

The level of funding available for each local government area has been allocated based on a rating system which considers:

- the total length of time a local government area has been drought-declared; and
- total population including percent of population employed in the agricultural sector.

2.2 Access and Eligibility

The Program is delivered in communities where those Local Government Areas are drought declared as defined by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Support can be provided to individuals and households that rely on regional economies and the agriculture that underpins these economies and whose primary income has been negatively impacted due to drought conditions.

This includes farming households as well as households where their primary income is reliant on the agricultural sector (such as tradespeople, labourers, contractors and retail operators) that rely on regional economies and the agriculture that underpins these economies to earn an income.

A drought declaration is an official acknowledgment by government that an area or individual property is affected by poor seasonal conditions. In Queensland, a declaration can be either:

- an area, shire or part-shire declaration
- an Individually Droughted Property (IDP) declaration.

An area or shire drought declaration is made by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, based on the advice of local drought committees.

An area or shire drought declaration is only revoked after widespread rainfall, on the recommendation of a local drought committee. In making its recommendation, the local drought committee takes into consideration seasonal conditions, pasture growth and water availability.

Information about drought declarations and revocations are available at:

<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/rural-disaster-recovery/drought>

The Queensland Drought Situation is a map identifying the latest drought situation including partly drought-declared areas; fully drought-declared shires; areas that are not drought-declared; and individually droughted properties. The Queensland Government regularly reviews and updates the drought situation.

More information is available at: <https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/drought/drought-declarations/>

2.3 Program Access for Individual Drought Declared Properties

While funding is allocated and contracted based on the Drought Declaration status of a Local Government areas, it is recognised that there are Individual Drought Declared Properties (IDP's) that are often in adjoining LGA's to those still in a LGA wide declaration status.

Where a funded provider identifies an individual or household with a current IDP status and where there is an immediate need for Flexible Financial Hardship support, this support can be provided, even though the individual/household is located outside the contracted service delivery area for that provider.

2.4 Program Access following changes to drought declaration status

Grant funding is made available to local communities who are Drought Declared at the time the Grant funding round is open for applications.

As a drought status revocation is based primarily on seasonal weather conditions, the Program can continue to be delivered in locations where it has already been funded even if the drought declaration has been revoked. This continuation of support recognises the ongoing impact that successive years of drought have on the economic, social, and emotional resilience of communities, and that support may be needed beyond the period of declaration revocation.

Funded organisations should work collaboratively with their local community/ies and provide support to individuals, households, and events based on the identified residual support need in the local community.

3. Eligible activities

3.1 Flexible Financial Hardship

Flexible Financial Hardship (FFH) support provides direct and in-direct assistance to households to assist in alleviating cost of living pressures resulting from reduced household income due to drought.

Funded organisations are expected to develop and implement locally appropriate processes that provide access to financial hardship support for individuals and households who require assistance with their cost-of-living pressures.

This should include appropriate engagement with local community groups or individuals currently engaged with drought impacted households and may include but not be limited to services such as Rural Financial Counselling Services, Local Government, Royal Flying Doctor Service, Neighbourhood Centres, Health Services, or local Service Clubs.

Recognising that some individuals and families may be reluctant to request support or have limited experience with income and social support systems, these processes should be sensitive and respectful to individual's needs and facilitate ease of access to supports.

Diverse payment mechanisms are encouraged so that the payments reach all impacted persons in need. This can include but not limited to:-

- Payment to creditors on behalf of an individual (for example rates, electricity, telecommunications)

- Direct payments
- Provision of pre-paid debit cards (for example Prepaid Visa cards)
- Vouchers for use at local shops and businesses.

Where possible, payments should be provided in a way that allow individual and household autonomy to determine how the funds best meet their needs.

The department encourages funds to be used to support the local economy through 'shopping local', while recognising that this may not always be the most appropriate option to meet individual household needs.

Supporting existing community activities through indirect FFH support

While it is expected that the primary mechanism for the delivery of FFH will be to individuals and families, it is recognised that existing community events or group can provide a useful indirect way to provide support to those who may for a range of reasons no access direct support.

Accordingly, it is reasonable for FFH funding to be made available to community groups or to support activities to provide support to identified impacted groups of persons within the community. For example, via Parent & Citizens Associations, community kindergartens, local clubs, or care and support services for seniors.

Where this type of indirect support is provided it is to be for an identified activity or purpose and cannot be used to meet general-purpose operating costs of another organisation.

Examples of this type of indirect support could be: -

- Funds to purchase the Santa gifts for children attending the community kindergarten or Christmas Street Party, so all children are included in the gift giving event
- Provision of BBQ or morning tea supplies for a local sporting, social or community club to encourage and support members to meet through what be their normal off-farm social event/s
- Provision of a 'summer holiday activity pack' at the end of year school break up

Where funding is provided to Parent & Citizens Associations it can be used at the discretion of the local P&C to meet the needs of the local school and its students. It can include:

- purchase (or subsidised purchase) of school uniforms,
- purchase of stationery/textbooks (not otherwise provided by Education Queensland),
- purchase (including replacement) of tuckshop equipment such as toasters, blenders, fridge/freezers, and other minor equipment to support the provision of meals at school including breakfast or lunch programs
- assist in meeting costs that provide opportunities to participate in additional activities such as local sporting lessons, events or activities.

When this type of indirect support is provided it is expected that the total amount of funding distributed in this way should be no more than 10% of the total FFH funding the organisation administers.

3.2 Community events and activities

This funding is provided to support locally focussed community events and activities that seek to: -

- revitalise existing community support mechanisms
- utilise existing community events to increase access to and participation in direct support services
- aim to negate the psychosocial impacts of prolonged drought
- improve the individual and community wellbeing, and
- provide enhanced community and social connectedness.

Funding for events and activities is provided as a contribution to the cost and will not cover the full cost of the event or activity.

In planning events, or determining funding allocations to individual events and activities, funded organisations should ensure that funded activities: -

- demonstrate benefit primarily to members of the community impacted by drought
- support inclusive participation for members of the community impacted by drought
- provide opportunities for community connectedness
- provide opportunities for participants to link with other support mechanisms and networks and raise awareness of relevant issues
- use methods of engagement appropriate and/or relevant to the target user group.

When providing 'subsidised' events, organisers need to ensure that processes are in place to overcome barriers to inclusion for individuals and households experiencing severe financial hardship where there are other significant costs involved in attending.

Where grant funding has been provided to support events and activities, funds can be used to support the reasonable purchase of:

- items to support the community event(s) and/or activity(ies) e.g. decorations, disposable crockery/cutlery, hire of equipment, and perishables
- small assets such as gas bottles, barbecues, shade cloths and eskies; and
- advertising costs to promote the community event(s) and/or activity(ies).

3.3 Program administration costs

Funded organisations can allocate up to 15 per cent of total funding allocated to meet organisational operating costs where those costs are directly related to delivery of the program. This includes:

- salary-related costs for staff directly involved in the provision of hardship payments and supports
- salary-related costs for staff directly involved in planning and delivering events and activities
- administration costs

3.4 Ineligible expenditure

Ineligible expenditure items that the department has determined not in-scope and may not be purchased with one-off grant funding includes:

- costs other than those listed above
- costs related to building and construction and repairs
- Capital equipment purchases over \$3 000
- recurrent costs; and
- the purchase of vehicles.

3.5 Variations to planned expenditure

In the event a funded organisation is unable to begin/continue delivering planned services and events, please contact the relevant Contract and Service Development Officer to discuss options and alternative strategies.

Organisations may be required to submit a grant funding variation request for approval.

Funded organisations should ensure events are planned in consideration of relevant health advice regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19). Access to information including the latest health advice from both the Queensland and Australian Governments can be accessed at the following websites:

- Queensland Health - <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Australian Government - <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

4. Funding

Funded organisations are accountable for the expenditure of Queensland Government funding. Funding for the Program must be spent in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Service Agreement.

Funded organisations are expected to take a place-based approach to service delivery to optimally meet local community needs.

Where organisations are contracted to deliver Flexible Financial Hardship to more than one Local Government Area (LGA) within a single contract, the funded organisation may use their local knowledge and discretion to distribute funding to best meet the needs of local communities across the full breadth of contracted LGAs.

This includes flexibility to use funding across their entire geographic area for which the total grant is provided.

Where an organisation has more than one Funding outlet providing the Program, the funding provided for each outlet is not intended to be transferred between service outlets.

4.1 Unspent funds

Funded organisations should ensure that the Program funding is spent or committed within the term of the contract dates.

Grant funding provided under the Service Agreement can only be used for the delivery of the service(s) specified in the Agreement and are not transferable between programs or for use for activities out of scope of the program intent.

The department will use a funded organisation's financial statements to identify any remaining funding and the funded organisation will be required to explain the reasons for any remaining funds.

If the department identifies any remaining funds, it will notify the funded organisation about how to manage this.

4.2 Overspends

A funded organisation is expected to incur the cost of any overspends and work within the stipulations of the Service Agreement and contracted level of funding. The department will not fund any overspends.

5. Reporting

5.1 Online Reporting System

Funded organisations are required to lodge all reporting through the department's online reporting system.

The department's online reporting system is designed to make it easier for funded organisations to update records, submit financial acquittals and performance information and access reports relating to this information.

The online reporting system will be used to collect information on public investment for the Community Drought Support Program one-off grants.

Reporting is mandatory for most Service Agreements and the reporting system is the preferred method of reporting for all services funded under the *Community Services Act 2007*.

5.2 Financial Reports

Funded organisations are required to submit financial reports as specified in the Service Agreement.

5.3 Milestone Reports

Funded organisations are required to submit Milestone Reports as specified in the Service Agreement.

For Flexible Financial Hardship, Milestone reports will include:

- Expenditure summary

- Expenditure details (description of types of payments distributed, quantity or number of people receiving payments and/or goods, and total payments)
- Support outcomes (estimated number and impact or outcome for the individual, family, community)

For Community Events and Activities, Milestone reports will include:

- Expenditure summary
- Event and expenditure details: (name, date and description of event/activity, details of goods/services purchased, and total costs incurred)
- Support outcomes (estimated number of attendees; outcomes of the event; benefits and impact the event has had to individuals, families and the community impacted by drought; and a de-identified case study or good news story with photographs if appropriate with consent provided)

Reporting templates are provided at the time contracts are issued and available from your Contract and Service Development Officer.

6. Privacy and consent

Service Users have the right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality. Funded organisations must comply with all relevant legislation and policies regarding:

- collection, use and disclosure of personal information; and
- Service Users' rights to access their personal information.

Organisations must have policies and procedures that support privacy and confidentiality. These include:

- respect for each service user's right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality
- consideration of special needs groups
- staff/volunteers being aware of and respecting service users' right to privacy.

The Service Agreement Standard Terms – clause 18 sets out the obligations in regard to the protection of personal information.

7. Governance

7.1 Accountability

The Community Drought Support Program funding is declared under the *Community Services Act 2007*, Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors Funding Declaration July 2019, and administered in accordance with the *Community Investment Specification Version 3.2*.

Funded organisations must adhere to the relevant provisions of the *Community Services Act 2007*. Additionally, funded organisations are accountable to the department under the conditions of funding prescribed in the Service Agreement.

8. Contact

Please contact the department's State-wide operations team on (07) 3097 0106 or your relevant Contract and Service Development Officer if you have any questions in relation to your Service agreements, funding or general enquiries in delivering the Program.

9. Additional resources

There are a range of resources and support options for persons experiencing hardship or distress. Please note this is not an exhaustive list and contact information and details are current at time of publication.

- Queensland Government Drought Assistance Program
<https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/agriculture/disaster-recovery/drought>
- BeyondBlue
1300 22 4636 – anytime from anywhere in Australia
- DVConnect Womensline for women impacted by domestic and family violence.
1800 811 811 – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week <https://www.dvconnect.org/womensline/>
- DVConnect Mensline for men impacted by domestic and family violence
1800 600 636 – 9am to 12 midnight, 7 days a week or
<https://www.dvconnect.org/mensline/>
- Elder Abuse Helpline
1300 651 192 – 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday
<https://www.eapu.com.au/>
- Family Relationship Advice Line
1800 050 321 – 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, and 10am to 4pm on Saturday, except national public holidays.
- Kids Helpline
1800 55 1800 – anytime from anywhere in Australia
- Lifeline
13 11 14 – anytime from anywhere in Australia
- National Debt Helpline
1800 007 007 9:30am – 4:30pm Mon- Fri
<https://ndh.org.au/>
- Farmer Assistance Helpline
13 23 16
- Mental health support for rural and remote communities, and farmers:
<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/mental-health/rural>
- Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS):
<https://recovery.gov.au/rural-financial-counselling-service>