



Overview of the Standards for Community Services



About the standards

Community-based organisations provide valuable services to Queenslanders every day. These range from family support and domestic violence prevention services through to neighbourhood centres, childcare services and support for seniors, young people and homeless people. Many such services are funded by the Queensland Department of Communities.

The Standards for Community Services outline what is expected of organisations providing services with funding from the Department of Communities. They set minimum requirements for the ways in which organisations plan and manage client services, recruit and support staff, and meet their governance responsibilities.

What do the standards cover?

The eleven Standards for Community Services are organised into three focus areas:

- **People using services:** ensuring that clients receive individually tailored, culturally sensitive services delivered with respect for their individual rights
- **People working in services:** ensuring that client services are provided by staff and volunteers who are appropriately selected, competent, and supported in performing their roles
- **Governance:** ensuring that client services are based on a clear vision and set of organisational values, and strong governance arrangements.

What does implementing the standards involve?

Organisations need to gather and examine evidence about their activities and performance in relation to each standard so they can assess the extent to which they currently meet that standard. There are four main types of evidence that organisations need to compile as part of their implementation of the standards:

- **guiding documents:** documents that outline the way the organisation conducts particular areas of its business — policy and procedures documents
- **staff awareness:** the degree to which staff members are aware of, understand and put into practice the processes outlined in guiding documents
- **records:** documentary evidence of staff implementing processes in the guiding documents
- **client feedback:** feedback from clients about their levels of satisfaction with service quality.

What does this overview contain?

This overview outlines the requirements of the standards and areas to focus on when gathering evidence for implementation. It includes a full set of the Standards for Community Services, along with:

- a brief explanation of each standard
- areas of an organisation's core business relating to the standard.

Focus on people using services

People using services secure sustained benefits from individually tailored and culturally sensitive services, which respect their rights and enhance their wellbeing.

1. Standard for accessibility of services

The organisation makes its services accessible to all people within the agreed target group for the services.

This standard is about the ways in which a funded organisation makes itself open and available to the people who use, or may need to use, its services or activities. The key is to be actively oriented to the needs, culture and outlook of the people using services, so that they experience an organisation that is as open and engaging as possible.

Areas of the standard

Access: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures that deal with access, so that any barriers to access can be identified and removed.

Eligibility: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures (consistent with the service agreement) that deal with eligibility including a clear statement of the criteria the organisation uses to decide who is eligible to use its services.

Service requests and referrals: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures that deal with how it accepts service requests and referrals, and how referrals to other services are made, including when clients, for any reason, cannot obtain services from the organisation.

2. Standard for responding to individuals, families and communities

The organisation delivers services and activities that are attentive to the needs and strengths of people, families and communities using the services.

This standard is about how funded organisations approach what they do in a responsive way, whether it is service delivery or community development. Organisations have a systematic approach to identifying and understanding cultural issues, assessing needs, planning their responses, and undertaking activities in collaboration with other organisations.

Areas of the standard

Service delivery: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures to involve clients in an assessment of their needs; plans and delivers services to meet these needs; and regularly reviews these needs.

Allocation: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures for how decisions are made about the needs of clients and their priority for receiving services in situations where there is a shortage or waiting time for services.

Ending service delivery: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures for managing the process of ending service delivery to individual clients, and assists them to move to where their current needs will be best met.

Collaboration: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures for working with other organisations, including government agencies, to provide the range of services required by a client.

Community development and community education: The organisation develops, implements and reviews a practice statement or policy and procedures for how community development and/or community education is to be undertaken, where this is a funded activity.

3. Standard for participation and choice

The organisation promotes the rights and responsibilities of people using its services by:

- giving clients information about the services provided to them
- assisting clients to take part in making decisions that are relevant to them
- providing opportunities for clients to participate in service planning, development, delivery and evaluation
- promoting, encouraging and empowering clients to express their views, and valuing and using their perspectives to improve services at all levels.

This standard is about empowering people who are using services. The aim is to assist people to be aware of, and take responsibility for, choices over their lives and, where appropriate, to move towards self-reliance. It also means drawing on the unique perceptions and experiences of clients, including their input into how policies and services are developed, provided, monitored, evaluated and improved.

Areas of the standard

Client service charter: The organisation develops, implements, distributes and reviews a client service charter.

Choice and self-reliance: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures that provide opportunities for clients to make choices regarding services and participate in the development and review of services to meet their individual needs.

Participation: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures that provide opportunities for clients and representatives to participate in the development, evaluation and improvement of services.

4. Standard for confidentiality and privacy

The organisation promotes the rights and responsibilities of people using its services by protecting clients' rights to confidentiality and privacy, taking into account relevant privacy and other legislative requirements.

This standard is about how organisations protect client privacy and confidentiality (how information about clients is written, spoken about and shared) and about the circumstances where the right to confidentiality may be overridden by other considerations.

Areas of the standard

Privacy: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures for protecting the privacy of clients, consistent with privacy and other legislative requirements.

Record keeping and disposal: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures for how the organisation keeps records of clients secure and up to date, and transfers and disposes of them appropriately.

Confidentiality: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures about the obligations of employees, volunteers and executive officers in relation to confidential information. It also covers the circumstances where the right to confidentiality may be overridden by other considerations.

Client access to their confidential information: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures for how clients may access their confidential information, and how they are informed of their right to access this information.

5. Standard for feedback and complaints

The organisation promotes the rights and responsibilities of people using its services by:

- **promoting opportunities for clients and other stakeholders to provide feedback**
- **using feedback to improve services**
- **providing information to clients about internal and external mechanisms for making a complaint**
- **acting fairly and appropriately when a complaint is received.**

This standard is about how an organisation listens to people using services and takes on feedback, both positive and negative, as a source of ideas for improving services and other activities.

Areas of the standard

Feedback: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures about how opportunities are provided to clients and stakeholders to provide feedback, and how feedback is responded to and used as a source of information for improving services.

Complaints by clients: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures for how complaints are dealt with and resolved, how decisions are reviewed by the organisation, and how clients can take complaints further, including taking them to the Department of Communities.

6. Standard for protecting safety and wellbeing

The organisation provides services in a manner that protects the safety and wellbeing of people using its services.

This standard is about how an organisation identifies, records and deals with incidents of harm or potential harm (including a risk of suicide) to people who use the service. It also identifies what people working in the service must do if potential harm or harm arising elsewhere (outside of the organisation) is disclosed.

Areas of the standard

Harm prevention: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures for minimising the risk of harm to clients.

Harm response: The organisation develops, implements and reviews policies and procedures for responding to potential or actual harm that may occur for clients.



Focus on people working in services

Organisations achieve sustainable benefits for their clients through ensuring staff and volunteers are appropriately selected, competent and supported to perform their roles.

7. Standard for recruitment and selection processes for people working in services

The organisation ensures that its employees and volunteers are suitably qualified or experienced people who are competent and appropriate to undertake their roles within the organisation.

This standard is about making sure that employees and volunteers in funded organisations are fairly assessed and properly recruited.

Areas of the standard

Employee recruitment: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures for how it recruits employees.

Volunteer selection: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures for how it recruits volunteers.

8. Standard for induction, training and development of people working in services

The organisation ensures that:

- **its employees and volunteers are suitably oriented to the organisation's vision and values and its service delivery and management processes**
- **its employees have access to ongoing training and development opportunities appropriate to their roles within the organisation.**

This standard is about making sure that the employees and volunteers in funded organisations are well prepared for what they are required to do, and have opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills over time.

Areas of the standard

Employee and volunteer induction: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures and resources for inducting employees and volunteers into the organisation.

Employee and volunteer training and development: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures for meeting the training and ongoing development needs of employees and volunteers.

9. Standard for employee and volunteer support

The organisation ensures that its employees and volunteers are appropriately managed and supported to effectively undertake their roles within the organisation.

This standard is about making sure that employees and volunteers in funded organisations are supported in what they do. This means ensuring regular feedback and an effective avenue for resolving complaints by staff and volunteers.

Areas of the standard

Employee performance and support: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures for how employee performance is monitored, managed, developed and supported.

Volunteer performance and support: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures for how the performance of volunteers is monitored, managed, developed and supported.

Dispute resolution for employees and volunteers: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures for how disputes involving employees and volunteers are managed and resolved.

Focus on governance

Organisations ensure that their visions and values are underpinned by effective governance arrangements and reporting and planning mechanisms, to support clients to achieve sustainable benefits.

10. Standard for organisational alignment

The organisation has a clearly articulated vision, set of values and philosophy and delivers services consistent with these and contractual agreements.

This standard is about how processes for decision making and reporting in an organisation line up with its values, vision and funded outputs. It requires a clear statement about how service models and practice will work to achieve the required outcomes.

Areas of the standard

Vision, values and planning: The organisation has a statement of its vision, values and objectives, and processes for planning to achieve these objectives.

Organisational authority: The organisation documents and implements a set of decision-making processes, including who has authority to make decisions, and how authority is delegated.

Performance monitoring and reporting: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures for how it monitors and reports on its obligations under the service agreement and its progress according to operational and strategic plans.

11. Standard for governance and accountability

The organisation maintains governance arrangements to meet its legal, contractual and administrative requirements.

This standard is about how the management committee or the board members, and other organisational leaders, ensure internal and external accountability for what the organisation does. It covers the election, induction and ongoing training of committee or board members, together with processes for ensuring proper financial and asset management and for managing conflicts of interest when they arise.

Areas of the standard

Election or appointment of governing body and executive officers: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures for the election or appointment of its governing body and executive officers.

Induction of governing body and executive officers: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures, strategies and resources for the induction of its governing body and executive officers.

Training and development for governing body and executive officers: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures and strategies to ensure management committee members and executive officers are adequately skilled and prepared to carry out their roles.

Conflict of interest: The organisation develops a set of guiding principles and implements a set of procedures for dealing with conflicts of interest.

Asset management: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures for managing assets used in the delivery of services funded by the Department of Communities.

Financial management and delegations: The organisation has clearly defined financial delegations and internal controls and develops, implements and reviews procedures for financial management, including insurance management and management of service agreements.

Budget: The organisation develops, implements and reviews procedures for the development, monitoring and review of its budget.

Other resources

A range of additional resources will be provided to support implementation of the standards, including:

- a booklet that expands on the information in this overview and provides key points that organisations can consider when gathering evidence for implementation of the standards
- a manual outlining the Standards for Community Services and the process for self-assessment
- a workbook for recording evidence that includes step-by-step guidelines to conduct a self-assessment
- online guides and templates to assist funded non-government organisations to develop and implement policies
- small grants available from the Department of Communities to assist organisations to conduct self-assessments and implement improvement plans
- sector-based support workers through the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS).

Further information

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