

Developing a Service Level Agreement: Support Material for Providers

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) and Job Services Australia (JSA) Providers for the development of Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

Employment Services, CDEP and IEP Reforms

Reforms to Job Services Australia, CDEP, and the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) commence from 1 July 2009. These changes are key to meeting the Government's target of halving the employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians over the next decade.

Under these reforms, all providers are encouraged to work together in partnership to coordinate assistance and services at the local level, and maximise training and employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Service Level Agreements

To support local partnerships, JSA and CDEP providers are required to enter into an SLA in areas where they both operate. The SLA will set out how the two providers intend to work at a local level to maximise Indigenous work readiness and employment outcomes. These outcomes will flow from more efficient and effective service delivery and improved engagement with the individual.

The SLA will be agreed, documented, signed and kept as part of both providers' records. The SLA document will be available on request to relevant DEEWR and FaHCSIA staff. The initial SLA must be entered into by 31 July 2009. DEN and VRS employment services providers will be encouraged to enter into an SLA with CDEP providers, but will not be required to do so before reformed disability employment services are introduced on 1 March 2010.

Wherever possible, providers should develop the Service Level Agreements jointly and involve local community organisations or members. The planning process is a way of ensuring that providers' activities are complementary and that the use of resources is maximised.

What to cover in the Service Level Agreement

An effective SLA should include elements related to local and regional linkages; open communication and cooperative working arrangements; monitoring and reporting; and mechanisms for resolving any disputes. A sample agreement, see **Attachment A**, has been provided, but there is nothing to prevent an existing agreement being used if it includes these elements.

If the JSA and CDEP providers are part of the same organisation, an SLA must still be developed between the employment service and CDEP management arms of the organisation at the local level.

Note that SLAs are not intended to be a mechanism for reporting financial or subcontracting arrangements or to guarantee any level of business allocation or referrals.

Planning for local/regional linkages

Objective: to provide integrated services appropriate to local needs that maximise employment of Indigenous Australians by drawing on existing community plans and contributing to further local planning

How providers will:

- work with each other, communities, employers, community service organisations and IEP providers
- map out local (and regional) employment opportunities and barriers to employment
- develop a local Indigenous workforce
- provide a transparent means of community engagement and input to ongoing service delivery for both providers

Examples:

- sharing facilities to reduce overheads whilst improving participant engagement;
- developing a joint relationship with a training provider
- sharing transport
- conducting joint information sessions for the community and participants

Open Communications

Objective: to facilitate regular, open and clear communication

How providers will:

- share information about participants (with the consent of the participant)
- work together to monitor participant participation in programs
- maintain open lines of communication regarding participants and projects

Examples:

- sharing information about the activities the participant is undertaking as part of their Employment Pathway Plan (EPP)
- working together to identify employment and training opportunities
- sharing information about opportunities for participants
- holding regular meetings

Cooperative Working Arrangements and Referrals

Objective: to facilitate a cooperative working relationship, that includes establishing referral processes.

How providers will:

- decide whether a person will be assisted by CDEP or by Job Services Australia
- make referrals to the other organisation

Examples:

- developing protocols for managing participant assessment and referral in instances when the Job Services Australia or CDEP provider is not immediately accessible
- Job Services Australia provider discussing proposed referrals with the CDEP provider before the referral is made on the IT system

Notes on Referrals:

It is expected that JSA Providers will facilitate referrals to CDEP where appropriate, and will establish an ongoing presence in the remote communities they are servicing

A person's referral to CDEP by a JSA Provider will include sharing information about the activities the person is undertaking which are detailed in their EPP. When this occurs, the JSA Provider will include a CDEP activity in the EPP. At this point, the JSA Provider should also ask the participant for their consent for the EPP to be shared with their CDEP provider. If consent is not given, the JSA Provider should still discuss how they intend to jointly service the participant with the CDEP provider. When a participant commences on CDEP and has signed a Participant Acknowledgement Form, which includes consent for the CDEP provider to receive a copy of the EPP, the JSA provider should provide the EPP to the CDEP provider.

If given a copy of the person's EPP, the CDEP provider must ensure the information remains confidential and secure and is only used to assist in the tailoring of the person's CDEP activities. If CDEP providers believe the EPP needs to be reviewed or updated, they should contact the JSA Provider to discuss.

Monitoring and Reporting

Objective: to enable each party to monitor their activities to ensure effective services to CDEP participants.

How providers will:

- share information about participants, participation and outcomes
- process to ensure confidentiality

Examples:

- when and how CDEP providers will notify JSA Providers when CDEP participants with participation requirements do not meet these requirements
- agreeing processes and information about who to contact, how and when

Dispute Resolution and SLA review mechanisms

Objective: to enable providers to resolve quickly any issues as they arise and to change the SLA as required

How providers will:

- resolve any disagreements about the SLA or about the servicing of particular participants
- monitor whether agreed arrangements are being adhered to
- review and amend the SLA in response to changing circumstances

Examples:

- holding regular meetings to review specific SLA arrangements
- including processes for dispute resolution if regular meetings are ineffective, such as involving Contract Managers

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT EXAMPLE¹

BETWEEN:

Name:
Address:

CDEP provider

AND

Name:
Address:

Job Services Australia Provider

The purpose of this Service Level Agreement (Agreement) is to outline the responsibilities, contributions and roles of the Parties. The Agreement is not intended to be legally binding, or meant to create any legally enforceable rights or obligations between the Parties involved. However, the making of the Agreement reflects the serious intention and commitment by the Parties to adhere to all of the provisions of the Agreement.

This Agreement sets out how partnership arrangements will work at the local level to maximise Indigenous work readiness and employment outcomes.

Planning for local/regional linkages

Outline of agreed strategies to create and maintain local links to maximise local Indigenous employment

¹ This Agreement provides an example of the content of a Service Level Agreement; however, it is not a template that must be followed. Providers can decide on their own format of the SLA but should include the elements contained within:

- this Agreement;
- Developing a Service Level Agreement: Support Material for Providers; and
- any relevant conditions of the CDEP Funding Agreement and Employment Services Deed 2009-2012.

Communications and Cooperative Working Arrangements

Outline of cooperative working arrangements to ensure integrated service delivery including jointly developing or contributing to plans to help participants find employment and/or take up training opportunities. This should include the articulation of the spirit of cooperation and collaboration between providers to ensure the highest quality service to the participant.

Referrals to CDEP

Providers will need to agree to share information about the person being referred to CDEP (with the consent of the individual or if otherwise provided for under the *Privacy Act 1988*). This will include the Job Services Australia Providers giving a copy of the individual's Employment Pathway Plan (EPP) to the CDEP provider as well as other information that may be relevant.

Reporting

Providers to agree on protocols for reporting data requirements under their respective CDEP Funding Agreement or Employment Service Deed.

Monitoring/review and dispute resolution

Providers to agree on protocols for monitoring how effectively SLA arrangements are working

Regular provider meetings

The Parties agree to meet.....

Arrangements for review of this SLA

Parties agree on a mechanism to review and/or amend Agreement

Suggested provision for varying the Agreement:

This Agreement can only be varied by the Parties written agreement.

We the undersigned, declare that we understand and agree to implement and adhere to all undertakings, procedures and principles as provided for in this Agreement.

SIGNED:

Parties:

Name:

Organisation:

Date:

Name:

Organisation:

Date: