



Settlement Services Grants Evaluation

Settlement Council of Australia Briefing Paper – February 2017

The government has recently commenced a comprehensive evaluation of the Settlement Services Grants Program. Conducted by the University of New South Wales Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), the evaluation is multi-faceted, including interviews with key stakeholders and roundtable sessions with some service delivery agencies. The SPRC is also preparing an online survey which SCoA understands will be sent to service providers.

Along with other developments in the sector, such as the design and tendering of the Humanitarian Services Program (HSP) and the commencement of a Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes, SCoA views this evaluation as a crucial opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of settlement services in Australia and the successes of those who deliver them.

A brief overview of Settlement Services Grants

Settlement Services grants provide support for humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants in their first five years of life in Australia, with a focus on fostering social and economic participation, personal well-being, independence and community connectedness.

Settlement Services grants are predominantly targeted at migrants from a refugee background, but may also include permanent residents who have arrived in Australia during the last five years as:

- humanitarian entrants;
- family stream migrants with low levels of English proficiency; or
- dependents of skilled migrants in rural and regional areas with low English proficiency.¹

Settlement Services grants are an important element of the government's broad commitment to settlement services, and are designed to provide a varied range of projects aimed at assisting migrants as they settle into their new homes. The grants provide one, two or three year support for initiatives in the following areas²:

1. *Welcoming Communities*: Work in communities to support responsive local services, build capacity and community connections and create welcoming environment.
2. *Connected Individuals*: Work with individuals through provision of casework and other services to connect to mainstream services and improve participation.

¹ DSS (2013), *Settlement Grants Program 2013-14 Application Information Booklet*, p11.

² For further information about these service areas and the stated aims of the program, see <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settlement-services/settlement-grants/what-is-settlement-grants/settlement-grants-snapshot>

3. *Connected Government*: Promote access and equity by playing a brokerage and advocacy role with government agencies for new communities
4. *Ethno-Specific Support*: Funding to ethno-specific organisations and ethno-specific peak bodies representing arrivals in new and emerging communities.

More specifically, this program provides funding for settlement services and activities that will:

- Provide a range of services to eligible clients to meet their settlement needs;
- Provide targeted support for individuals and/or families to help their settlement and increase their integration into Australian society;
- Provide targeted support for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to help with their settlement;
- Help new arrivals to make social connections through community coordination and development;
- Build the capacity of new communities;
- Provide training, mentoring and advocacy for emerging community leaders or organisations; and
- Engage with government agencies and other settlement services providers to facilitate access to services.³

Strengths of the Settlement Services Grants Program

SCoA has witnessed, through its members, the strengths of this program in meeting the needs of recently arrived settlement communities. Our February 2017 newsletter highlights some positive examples of programs and initiatives funded through settlement services grants which are having a real impact on the lives of migrants.

The program has evolved and been refined over many years resulting in a robust grants program that is closely aligned to client needs and which successfully leverages the strong connections agencies have within their communities. The specialist knowledge of agencies and staff has been built up over time resulting in settlement agencies generating significant expertise in program delivery and risk management.

The program has developed within an environment where client demographics and needs change considerably over time. This has resulted in a flexible and dynamic range of programs and initiatives.

SCoA considers that these particular attributes have resulted in an efficient and effective grants program that encourages innovation and delivers excellent value for money.

The focus of the evaluation

As mentioned above, UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) has commenced an evaluation of the Settlement Services Grants Program in which they will consider:

- *Appropriateness*

³ Ibid.

How well is the program focussing on the broad range of settlement needs and on the priority areas of English language proficiency, employment outcomes and engagement in education?

- Effectiveness
How effectively is the program engaging its target population, achieving the desired goals and outcomes and encouraging innovation?
- Efficiency
Does the program represent value for money?

Next steps

SCoA understands that many of our members have been contacted and requested to participate in focus groups and/or telephone interviews. Additionally, all service providers will be given an opportunity to contribute to the online survey.

SCoA encourages members to take any opportunity given to you to contribute to this evaluation, and provide specific information that clearly demonstrates the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of initiatives supported by Settlement Services Grants, including:

- Detailed examples of successful and cost-effective initiatives funded through this program and how these have delivered positive results for refugees and other eligible clients;
- Innovative and new initiatives that have been supported by this program that otherwise may not have proceeded; and
- your track-record and capacity to deliver on government priorities such as English language proficiency, employment and education outcomes, without losing sight of the bigger picture of settlement.

SCoA acknowledges that the beginning of 2017 has been an extremely busy time for our members. However the opportunity to participate in evaluations such as this, and to provide critical input to the government should not be underestimated.

SCoA welcomes the government's ongoing commitment to crucial settlement services, and hopes that our members will take this opportunity to demonstrate just how effective that commitment has been in delivering the best possible settlement outcomes.

For further information contact SCoA National Office on 02 6282 8515 or info@scoa.org.au.