

# REFERENCE PAPER: SERVICE OUTCOMES FOR PEAK BODIES

*This document aims to, in consultation with Peak organisations provide guidance to Human Service Agencies in negotiating the activities and service outcomes that may be funded by Human Services Agencies.*

*This document sets the broad context and position, which would be used as a starting point by individual agencies for developing their Service Specifications for Peak organisations. It has been developed by the HSCEOs NGO Development & Support Working Group in consultation with Peak Bodies.*

## **CONTEXT**

The *Working Together for NSW Agreement* recognises that an independent, diverse non-government sector is an essential component of a democratic, socially inclusive society. It acknowledges that NGOs are free to pursue their goals, including advocating for changes in Government policies and practice.

Peak organisations play an important role in supporting both Human Services Agencies and the sector in getting the best services and outcomes (results) for individuals, children, young people, families and communities.

Peaks are accountable to their members for the operation of their organisation. Peak Bodies may generate income through membership fees to support their activities. The capacity to generate this income is different for each organisation.

Peak Bodies may also receive Government funding to undertake policy and advocacy, sector development, community development and capacity building, consultation and other activities. Where this occurs, Peaks are responsible to Government for their performance in relation to the service or initiative being funded.

The work Human Services Agencies fund Peaks to undertake may include activities that assist the work of Human Services Agencies as well as further the interests of members, the sector and the broader community. The activities of peak organisations are a significant factor in building social capital and that is highly valuable to the work of government.

The work funded by Human Services Agencies, needs to be clearly defined and agreed through Service Specifications. Service Specifications need to be results based, in line with the trend in government funding towards a results focus for all funded programs.

The activities and service outcomes presented in the Reference Paper are compatible with the Friedman 'Results Based Accountability' Framework adopted by NSW Human Services Agencies, but could be applied to any other similar outcomes based framework.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

Any agreement between Peak organisations and a Human Service Agency would be based on the principles outlined in the *'Working Together for NSW'* Agreement. including integrity, accountability, independence, cooperation, respect, an outcomes focus and a commitment to open communication and consultation."

In addition, Peak organisations receiving Government funding would be expected to pursue the following general objectives when utilising such funding:

- **Cooperative Working Relationships**

Peak Bodies recognise that an effective relationship between Human Services Agencies and themselves will assist in achieving the goal of sector capacity building. An effective relationship between Human Services Agencies and Peak Bodies will be characterised by a constructive approach to identifying and resolving issues, timely and fully communication and mutual respect for each other's points of view.

- **Comprehensive Representation**

Peak Bodies reflect the diversity of views in their sector, membership or constituency including but not restricted to: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) groups and individuals, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) groups and individuals, the elderly, children and young people, people with a disability, carers, Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Inter-sex people; and groups and individuals based in rural, regional or remote areas. Those Peak bodies that are issues based, or location/regionally based rather than population group based are also comprehensive in representation of views on issues or in the region.

- **Efficiency and Value for Money**

Peak Bodies strive to achieve outcomes in a cost-effective manner, that is, they ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved within the available funding. Realistic and achievable results against the level of funding are negotiated between the Human Service Agency and the Peak Body.

## **OUTCOMES/ RESULTS**

Specific outcomes and results will need to be negotiated with each Peak Body based on the types of activities they plan to undertake. However there are a number of generic outcomes that Peak Bodies would work to achieve. Peak bodies may work towards some or all of these outcomes, depending on their organisational objectives and level of funding.

- **Sound Public Policy**

Peak bodies provide

- Input into government policy development processes; and
- advice and comment on broad policy directions, draft policies, plans and discussion papers developed by the government.

Peak bodies are also recognised as undertaking proactive policy and advocacy work including the research, development and putting forward of new policy proposals.

- **Well Informed Sector, able to effectively engage with Human Service Agencies**

The Peaks role is to act as a link between Human Services Agencies, member organisations, the sector and the community. This may include: disseminating information about Human Service Agencies' Corporate Directions and policies, and of changes and developments within the sector.

- **Results Driven Service Sector**

Peaks promote the availability, development and sustainability of high quality, outcome based services in the sector.

In addition, Peaks strengthen the capacity of the sector to deliver integrated, effective services that deliver results to communities and individuals.

The peaks role in service system development is to assist the sector in responding to change, put forward new approaches to sector development to the sector and to government, and to support Human Services Agencies' initiatives in this field where reforms have been negotiated and agreed.

## **OUTPUTS**

Regular progress reports against each service specification or funding agreement (in line with performance indicators agreed in the service specification).

The government is moving towards a results focus for performance monitoring, however there are still a number of output based measures that will help inform both the Peak organisations and Human Services Agencies as to how implementation of the agreement is progressing. These may include:

- Workshops, training material and resources provided to the sector in response to current and emerging issues that may affect the sector. (for example, KPI = Number and reach<sup>1</sup>)
- Regular and formal information updates provided to the sector. (for example, KPI = Number and reach)
- Strategic consultation mechanisms developed and implemented (for example KPI = Number and reach)
- Responses and representation provided at relevant consultations and working groups with Human Service Agencies. The methodology for this representation may be different in different organisations (for example KPI = Number of submissions/responses, list of working groups etc)
- Sector development initiatives including demonstration projects; resource networks; new partnerships and practical assistance with transition that produces sustainable, integrated and results focused service networks (for example KPI = number and on time, within budget completion)
- Identification of research topics for issues that may impact upon the sector and member organisations. (for example KPI = number)

Clearly Peaks and Agencies will need to undertake further discussion and analysis to be able to identify the best set of KPIs for their particular agreements.

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<sup>1</sup> Reach will be defined commensurate with the geographic, resource and issue parameters, eg. percentage of NGOs (or NGO staff) participating in a given location.

## **KEY ACTIVITIES**

Peak Bodies will initiate a range of strategies and activities in order to achieve the agreed outcomes. The following is a list of activities some of which the Peak Bodies would be expected to undertake as part of their service agreements.

### **1. Capacity Building Contributing to Sector Development**

Developing projects and partnership building initiatives that facilitate the development of the service capacity of the sector. Capacity building may include some or all of the following:

- workforce development as well as learning and development services;
- development of resource documents, tools and the delivery of intensive support to members;
- coordinating or piloting demonstration projects;
- assisting member organisations to increase their service delivery capacity;
- Provision of auspicing and/or management support to member organisations where needed on an interim basis, for example if issues of governance begin to affect operation of a member organisation. The Peak Body may offer management support or negotiate to take control of the project's administration altogether, if necessary and appropriate, on an interim basis<sup>2</sup>.
- Promoting the development of a consistent evaluation culture and practice amongst members

### **2. Promoting Partnerships and Cooperation**

Developing projects and partnership building initiatives that facilitate the ongoing development of their sector and assist the further development of the sector to a more effective and integrated, outcomes focused and efficient service system.

Partnership building may also assist in developing the viability and sustainability of organisations and their participation in a more competitive market.

Developing resources and support to embed best practice in the sector.

### **3. Policy Development and Advocacy**

Providing informed advice to Human Services Agencies regarding issues impacting on their sector, the service system and the community. This will include information and advocacy specific to current and emerging social, systemic and operational issues.

Conveying advice and contribute to policy development through participation on established government reference groups, meetings, consultations and formal policy submissions initiated by Government.

Undertake research on key issues in the sector as an input to policy development.

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<sup>2</sup> This is at the discretion of Peak bodies, that is, Peak bodies will only be asked to auspice another organisation if the Peak considers it to be appropriate.

#### **4. Consultation**

Undertaking effective consultation to ensure that the views of member organisations and constituents are equally and fully represented including:

- Developing and implementing appropriate consultation methods that will identify, collate and channel issues and information to Human Services Agencies, the sector and the community in a timely and effective manner.
- Communicating widely with members to gain sector feedback on policy and operational issues affecting service delivery.
- Identifying any systemic issues that may be impacting on the client group or service system and taking action as deemed appropriate. This may include bringing the issue(s) to the attention of Government.
- Developing consultation methods with an emphasis on consultation appropriate to representatives, members and/or constituents from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds, the elderly, children and young people, people with disabilities and, for state-wide peaks, people from rural, regional and remote locations.
- Providing advice and information collected through consultation to Human Services Agencies as appropriate. Peak Bodies should ensure that this advice is based on a rigorous analysis of information provided during consultation and that it is as representative as practicable of the relevant sector, membership or constituency.

#### **5. Research**

Research with the aim of addressing gaps, assist in identifying and resolving issues that impact upon the representative groups and contribute to policy development and evaluation.

- Conduct or contribute to research into current and emerging issues that may impact upon the operation of the sector and its member organisations to facilitate the development of the sector's and Human Service Agency's capacity to address these issues.
- As far as possible, pursue collaboration with other research organisations to avoid duplication and to facilitate more in-depth and robust research.
- Build an evidence-based culture that encourages the sector to adopt robust evaluation methodologies for Human Services Agencies' funding programs.

#### **6. Provision of Advice and Information**

- Employ appropriate processes and mechanisms to disseminate information relating to service delivery, the service system, policy development and operational development between Human Services Agencies and their members in a timely and effective manner.
- Ensure that consultation collected from their sector is used to alert Human Services Agencies to existing and emerging policy and operational issues.