

## About this report

During March and April 2018 Partnerships conducted a survey of service providers who participated in the annual accountability process for the 2016-17 financial year.

The survey attracted a strong response rate and its results will be used to guide and enhance the 2017-18 accountability process.

This report summarises what we heard from you.

## Summary

There was a very good response rate to the service provider survey of 44% (324 responses in total) compared to a survey industry benchmark of a 30-40%.

Over 51% of a total of 252 respondents reported providing services in regional NSW, with over a fifth of respondents (22%) working within the FACS Hunter New England district. A significant percentage of responses were from staff working in the South East Sydney, Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains and South West Sydney districts.

Approximately 94% (of 259 respondents) reported delivering services targeted to children and families at risk, with approximately 68% working on programs contracted under Targeted Early Intervention (TEI).

In general, respondents were positive about the revised accountability process and provided constructive feedback on how training and communications around the accountability process could be improved, and where resources might be allocated to enhance user experience.

Responses to the survey have been grouped into six common themes.

## Your key messages

### For the process

- 63% of respondents found the accountability process easy to follow.
- 66% had a good understanding of what they needed to do as part of the accountability process.

### For communication

- 59% of respondents thought the accountability process was effectively communicated.
- 63% of respondents said contract managers were able to help effectively with questions about the process.
- Respondents called for consistent, clear, simplified information provided in advance or in 'a timely manner'.

### For training

- 74% of service provider staff reported not participating in accountability process webinar training.

- 42% stated they were unaware of training or had other commitments at the scheduled times.

### For materials

- Generally respondents indicated that the accountability online resources were helpful in learning about the new process.
- 61% said they could locate materials and resources easily.

### For timeframe

- Accountability documents were required to be submitted by 31 October 2017.
- 74.5% of respondents were able to submit their accountability documents by deadline.

### For systems

- There was no specific question in the survey about the FACS Contracting Portal, but there were a number of comments about it. Generally, respondents found the portal clunky, confusing and difficult to use; or just too limited in its potential capacity.
- A consistent theme in these responses was the need to review or upgrade the portal in order to simplify and streamline accountability reporting processes.

## Your suggestions

These were your additional suggestions:

- Extra appropriately qualified and experienced FACS staff should be available during the accountability process period.
- Better training of FACS staff assessing accountability, particularly in accountancy/financial processes and relevant regulations.

- Improved communications about the process and about the existence of the help line.
- Communications should be designed to account for a range of knowledge and experience levels.
- Communications should be staged - in advance of the accountability process and periodic reminder emails.
- Pre-recorded webinars should be available for self access.
- Face to face training should be offered.
- New support documents, including process flowcharts would assist.
- More understanding of the barriers to timely submission, including the timing of AGMs and sign off requirements, and the incompatibility of financial systems.

## What happens next

The outcomes of this survey will influence how the accountability process will be managed for the 2017- 2018 financial year.

FACS Partnerships has established a Service Provider Working Group to guide enhancements to the Funded Contract Management Framework and associated processes from the service provider perspective.

Clear focuses for FACS for the 2017-18 accountability process will include:

- Improvements in what, when and how FACS communicates with service providers about the process.
- Improved training opportunities for FACS staff, so they are better able to support service providers.

- Improved training, support materials and processes for service provider staff, including more communications about pre-recorded webinars.
- Revision of Good Practice Guidelines for service providers.
- Introduction of the new portal - Partner Community to replace the Contracting Portal.