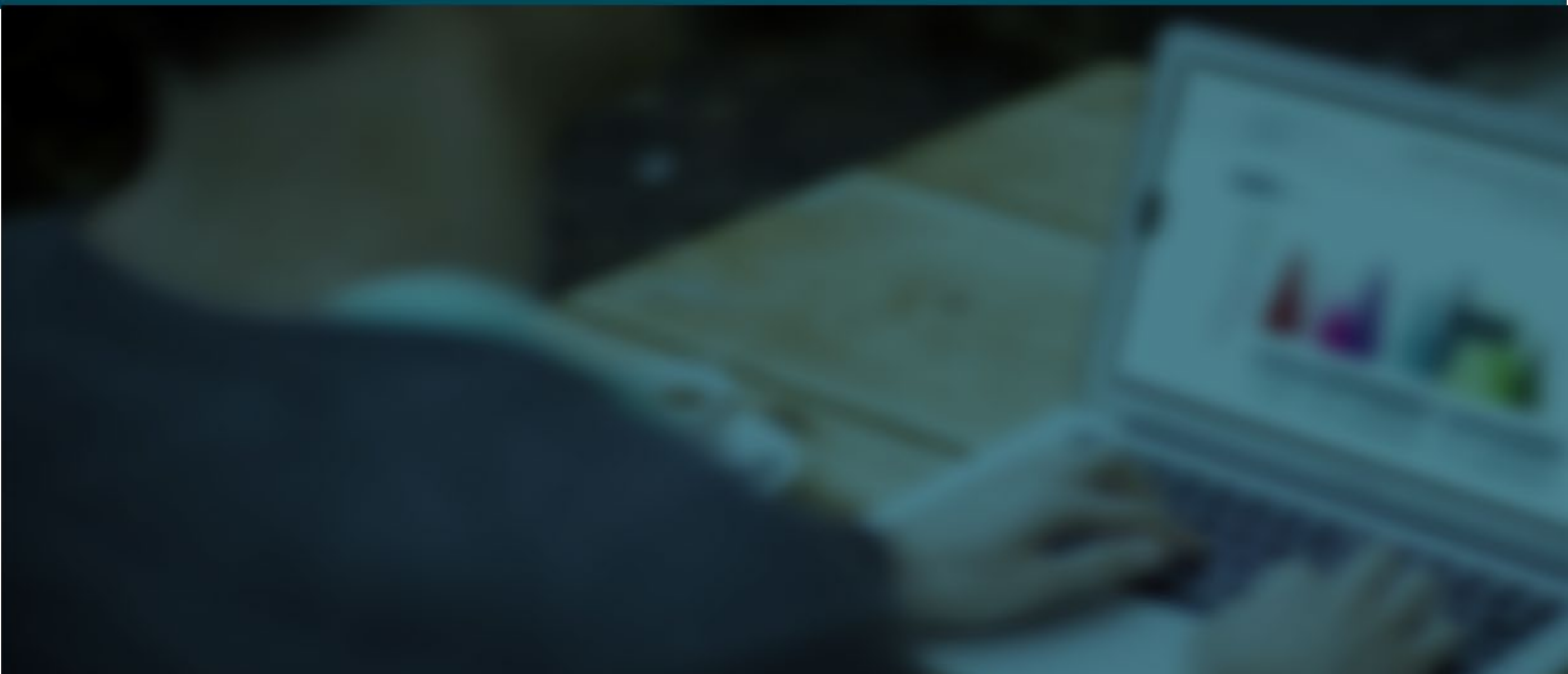Australian Government

Program Specific Guidance for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry programs in the Data Exchange

Version dated 1 August 2023

Introduction

The Program Specific Guidance

The Program Specific Guidance assists service providers on entering data into the Data Exchange in a consistent way that best reflects the program activity being delivered.

Purpose of this document

This document provides policy guidance on entering data into the Data Exchange for activities funded by the **Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with:

- Data Exchange Protocols

- Your funding agreement

- Your program guidelines

- The task cards and e-Learning modules available on the Data Exchange website

Intended Use

The **Program Specific Guidance** is intended to provide practical information for managers and front-line staff to better understand the data expected for their program. It also assists them in integrating Standard Client/Community Outcome Reporting (SCORE) outcomes and partnership data collection into existing service and administrative practices.

Additionally this guide aims to provide consistency on how program data is interpreted within program activities, and support a consistent interpretation of the Data Exchange protocols across commonly funded organisations.

This document will be periodically updated to provide more detailed guidance on questions as they arise and as new programs come on board to the Data Exchange. Users of this document are encouraged to provide feedback where further guidance related to their program activity is needed.

All resources associated with the Data Exchange are available on the Data Exchange website.

The Program Specific Guidance for Commonwealth-funded programs was formerly published as:

- Protocols – Appendix B

- Program Specific Guidance for Commonwealth Agencies in the Data Exchange

Contents

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

Rural Programs

The following program activities are included in Rural Programs:

- Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS)

Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS)

Description

The Rural FCS program is an Australian Government initiative that provides free and independent financial counselling to eligible farmers, fishers, foresters and small related enterprises who are experiencing, or at risk of, financial hardship.

Australian primary producers operate in volatile market and environmental conditions. Many small to medium sized enterprises are more susceptible to these shocks, often due to, lower financial capability, delayed decision-making and attitudinal factors.

The program aims to drive behavioural change, helping these primary producers to make positive changes to their financial situation that result in financial self-sufficiency—either by improving the businesses finances, or their business or exiting the industry through the sale of assets or implementing succession plans.

While the RFCS assists in transactional activities, the primary form of engagement should be extensive case management to meet the client's needs and therefore the program objectives.

Who is the primary client?

Primary producers who are experiencing, or who are at risk of financial hardship.

What are the key client characteristics?

Primary producers who are experiencing, or at risk of financial hardship.

This may also include:

- Persons and families who are financial distress
- Persons receiving government payments and allowances
- Persons residing in a rural or remote area

Who might be considered 'support persons'?

Recording support persons is **not required**, however staff can record support persons if they feel it is relevant. Instructions on how to record them in the web-based portal can be found on the Data Exchange website.

For this program activity, support persons may include families of clients, case/support workers, parents/guardians of clients, and legal representatives of clients.

Should unidentified clients be recorded?

Rural Financial Counselling Service provides face-to-face support where clients are known to the service, therefore it is expected that **zero clients** would be recorded as unidentified clients for this activity.

How should cases be set up?

There is no formal case structure recommended for this program activity. Organisations should create cases that reflect their own administrative processes.

To protect client privacy, the case identity (ID) should not contain any personal information, such as any part of a client's first or last names.

The partnership approach

For this program activity, all organisations are required to participate in the partnership approach. As part of the partnership approach, organisations record participant outcomes through the 'Standard Client/Community Outcomes Reporting' (SCORE). The partnership approach also includes the ability to record an extended data set.

It is expected that, where practical, you collect outcomes data for all case managed clients. However, it is noted that you should do so within reason and in alignment with ethical requirements.

Organisations record client outcomes through Standard Client/Community Outcomes Reporting (SCORE). A client SCORE assessment is recorded at least twice - near the beginning of the client's service delivery, and again towards the end of service delivery. In addition, you should also collect additional SCORE assessments at the point when a client moves between case management stages as defined in the RFCS program logic.

What areas of SCORE are most relevant?

For this program activity, organisations must collect and record SCORE assessment in the following domains:

Circumstances	Goals	Satisfaction	Community
▪ Education and skills training ▪ Mental health, wellbeing and self-care ▪ Financial resilience	▪ Changed behaviours ▪ Changed knowledge and access to information ▪ Changed skills ▪ Empowerment, choice and control to make own decisions ▪ Engagement with relevant support services	▪ I am better able to deal with the issues that I sought help with ▪ I am satisfied with the services I have received ▪ The service listened to me and understood my issues	▪ None of the Community outcomes are relevant for this program activity

Collecting extended data

For this program activity, it is expected organisations collect and record the following additional data fields:

Case level data	Session level data	SCORE level Data
▪ Referral in (source) ▪ Referral in (source and reason for seeking assistance) ▪ Agricultural business type ▪ Exit reason	▪ Referral out (type and purpose) ▪ Hardship (if applicable, see Rural Financial Counselling Specific Fields) ▪ External referral destination	▪ Assessed by

You may record other outcomes and extended client details, if you think it is appropriate for your program and for your clients to do so.

For this program activity, when should each service type be used?

Service Type	Example
Case managed - Intake	Initial meeting with a client during which the organisation gathers information on the client's needs and matches them to services available, and/or assesses a client's eligibility for participation in a particular service and formalises case management. This is usually (but not limited to) the first session a client attends. An additional mandatory field, **Hardship,** will be required for completion upon selecting this service type. Organisations must provide the relevant hardship reason for the client accessing the service.
Case Managed – FHA	Client is being case managed. Record this as a service type where: client has been referred by Services Australia as part of their Farm Financial Agreement or attends a joint appointment with Farm Household Case Officer or discussing or applying for Farm Household Allowance (FHA).
Case Managed – RIC	Client is being case managed. Record this service type if the interaction involves discussing or applying for Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) loan products, including undertaking the necessary financial assessments and risk and business planning.
Case managed – State government	Client is being case managed. Record this service type if the interaction involves discussing or applying for state government assistance.
Case managed - Other	Client is case managed. Record this service type if the interaction is not specified in 'service type' list.
Transactional - Intake	Initial meeting with a client during which the organisation gathers information on the client's needs and matches them to services available, and/or assesses a client's eligibility for participation in a particular service. This is usually (but not limited to) the first session a client attends. Assistance is limited to determining eligibility and applying for other types of support e.g. applying for Farm Household Allowance or RIC loans. An additional mandatory field, **Hardship,** will be required for completion upon selecting this service type. Organisations must provide the relevant hardship reason for the client accessing the service.
Transactional – FHA	Client is transactional. Record this service type if the interaction involves discussing or applying for FHA or completing the FHA Farm Financial Assessment.
Transactional – RIC	Client is transactional. Record this service type if the interaction involves discussing or applying for RIC loan products, including undertaking the necessary financial assessments and risk and business planning.

Service Type	Example
Transactional – State government	Client is transactional. Record this service type if the interaction involves discussing or applying for state government assistance.
Transactional - Other	Client is transactional. Record this service type of the interaction is not specified in list.
Debt Mediation	Client is case managed. Record this service type if the interaction involves discussing, assisting, or attending debt mediation with financial institution.
Exit Interview	Client is transactional or case managed. Record this service type when client exits the RFCS
Service Review	Client is transactional or case managed. Record this service type when undertaking ongoing eligibility and general assessments, e.g. eligibility checks, SCORE assessments for case managed clients.
Service Transition	Client is transactional and agrees to be case managed. Record this service type if the interaction involves formalising a client's case management. An additional mandatory field, **Hardship,** will be required for completion upon selecting this service type. Organisations must provide the relevant hardship reason for the client accessing the service.
Succession planning	Client is case managed. Record this service type if the interaction involves discussing and planning a client's succession plan, including referrals to professional third party advice.

Rural Financial Counselling Specific Fields

Field	Description and examples
Agriculture Business Type	Record the business type indicated by the client, which has generated more than **50 per cent** of the client's income over the last three years. A list of values is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics **Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing** Division of the [Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC)](#).
Hardship	'Hardship' is used to indicate the client's primary cause of difficulty or concern affecting their business. 'Hardship' must be recorded for all Sessions where an intake Service Type is selected. These include: - Case managed – Intake - Transactional – Intake - Service Transition *Refer to the Data Exchange [Protocols](#) for a full list of the Hardship categories.*
External Referral Destination	'External Referral Destination' is used to describe a client's referral to another service from the Rural Financial Counselling Service. 'External Referral Destination' must be recorded for all sessions in which you refer a client to another service. *Refer to the Data Exchange [Protocols](#) for a full list of the External Referral Destination categories.*

Version History

Version 1, August 2023

First publication and release of document.

This document was detached from the previous **Program Specific Guidance for Commonwealth Agencies** based on department and outcome type.

Rural programs have migrated from National Emergency Management Agency to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.