



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

The Data Exchange Protocols

Effective from 1 March 2026

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

This document provides operational guidance to users of the Data Exchange across the full range of grant funded services, such as those associated with the Community Grants Hub and hosted by the Department of Social Services (DSS).

The Data Exchange Protocols (the protocols) should be read in conjunction with the:

- Data Exchange Framework which outlines the principles and vision underpinning the Data Exchange
- Program Specific Guidance for organisations, which outline specific reporting requirements for each program
- organisation's funding agreement
- task cards and e-Learning modules for users of the Data Exchange web-based portal
- Data Exchange technical specifications for all users submitting their data through system-to-system transfer or bulk upload from their own case management software.

The protocols are not intended to prescribe how organisations should run their business or collect data; they are intended to provide practical information for managers and front-line staff to help them integrate the Data Exchange data definitions and requirements into existing service and administrative practices. The protocols are periodically updated to provide current and accurate guidance.

1.2 The Data Exchange Framework

The Data Exchange Framework represents the program performance reporting approach for client facing funding agreements. The Department of Social Services (DSS) progressively introduced standardised, prioritised, and collaborative reporting processes across grants programs from 1 July 2014. From 1 July 2016, the Data Exchange was expanded as part of the Commonwealth Government's [Community Grants Hub](#).

Collecting and reporting data about clients and services helps funding agencies and organisations to improve the well-being of Australians accessing our services.

- Data provides a comprehensive picture of the programs we deliver and helps us measure the impact we are making in Australian communities over time.
- Funding agencies use these insights to shape programs, ensuring they are resourced to better support vulnerable Australians and respond to emerging needs effectively.
- High-quality data helps funding agencies and organisations maintain a clear vision of the changes needed to achieve and track progress toward those goals.
- It enables funding agencies and organisations to identify what is working, address what is not, and foster accountability and collaboration.

The requirements of the Data Exchange are divided into two parts: a small set of mandatory priority requirements that all organisations report, and an extended data set, known as the partnership approach. As part of the partnership approach, organisations are encouraged to collect the Standard Client/Community Outcome Reporting (SCORE) information for as many clients as practical.

This approach to reporting is streamlined, automated and includes a shift in focus of performance measurement from 'outputs' to more meaningful information about service delivery 'outcomes' through:

- **Streamlined reporting arrangements**—A standard client level data record (the priority requirements) applies across the broad suite of government funded client-based programs, replacing aggregate data reports, 'smart forms' and multiple IT reporting systems.

- **Free access to a web-based portal**— Organisation can access a free IT system to manually input client data. This helps record clients, service and outcomes data that meet funding agreement performance data requirements and allows organisations to confidentially manage their core client and case information.
- **Bulk uploading and system-to-system transfers**—The Data Exchange supports organisations who have a compatible case management software to transfer information directly from their own systems through bulk uploading and system-to-system transfers.
- **Promoting a partnership approach to reporting**—Organisations participating in the partnership approach to share client outcomes data with their funding agency in exchange for relevant reports. These reports are outcomes focused and include a rich set of added information to help inform service delivery using program performance, client survey and government data.

Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) for more information about the Data Exchange’s policy principles and program specific guidance.

2 Data Exchange organisation and user responsibilities

Organisations reporting into the Data Exchange are responsible for implementing appropriate controls and processes to:

- promote awareness of, and compliance with, the Data Exchange Protocols by users within the organisation; and
- obtain accurate, complete, unbiased and secure collection and recording of client, service delivery and outcome (where relevant) data in the Data Exchange.

Taking obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) into account, organisations and users must make best endeavours to ensure data entered in the Data Exchange is, to the best of their knowledge:

- **Accurate** and up to date - it is the user’s responsibility to correct or delete any incorrect data where possible, as soon as practicable, after becoming aware of any issues
- **Complete** – organisations should make best efforts to collect required data from clients and ensure all collected data is correctly entered into the Data Exchange
- **Unbiased** - data entered should:
 - be representative of the client population and free from avoidable sampling bias (for example, if 50% of clients identify as male, then close to 50% of SCORE assessments should be for male clients)
 - be objective and free from observer bias (for example, SCORE assessment data should reflect the most objective view of the client’s circumstances possible and be free, as possible, from the assessor’s personal opinion).
- **Secure** – client information should be protected from unauthorised use or disclosure, in accordance with [Chapter 5](#) of the protocols.

Processes and controls implemented by organisations to ensure users meet their Data Exchange responsibilities may include (but are not limited to):

- Staff who use Data Exchange have read and agreed to adhere to the Data Exchange Protocols
- Staff who use Data Exchange have completed relevant online Data Exchange training
- Data entry and access rights to Data Exchange (and any third-party software product used to transfer data to Data Exchange) are periodically reviewed and remain appropriate
- Processes (e.g. written guidance to support how data is collected and recorded) have been established to ensure mandatory Data Exchange data is collected and accurately recorded (in any third-party software product or directly into the Data Exchange web-based portal)

- Processes (e.g. written guidance to support how data is collected and recorded) have been established to ensure SCORE data is accurate, complete and unbiased when recorded in Data Exchange
- Quality assurance processes have been established to confirm data transfers/uploads into Data Exchange are completed successfully (and any upload errors rectified)
- Any other processes and controls relevant to promoting compliance with the Data Exchange Protocols and data integrity.

Organisations may be required, upon request by DSS, to provide evidence of processes and controls used to meet their Data Exchange responsibilities. DSS or funding agencies may request to visit organisations' premises to observe these processes in practice. Funded organisations are responsible for ensuring any delivery partners (such as subcontractors, community partners, consortium members or brokers) using the Data Exchange also meet their Data Exchange responsibilities. This includes ensuring that they are complying with any applicable legislation such as the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).

3 Recording client level data

This section describes the important concepts and terminology associated with collecting and reporting client level data. It is important that managers and front-line staff understand these concepts because they underpin the framework of the Data Exchange.

3.1 Client level data

Client level data refers to data collected and reported on each individual client rather than as summary (aggregate) data. The Data Exchange is designed to capture individual client level data. However, where collecting client data is not practical or possible, such as community sessions involving a large group of people, aggregate reporting is still accommodated by the system.

The main advantages of client level data are the:

- flexibility to analyse and report administrative data in multiple formats for different audiences, without burdening organisations with multiple data requests
- improved reliability of administrative data, as all organisations collect the same raw data records without the need to apply complex counting rules
- improved usefulness of administrative data, due to the use of a Statistical Linkage Key (SLK) allowing for the matching of de-identified data records across funded activities
- improved capacity for reporting data back to organisations, as the de-identified administrative data is held within a common data repository.

Organisations must use best efforts to request collection of client-level data from clients directly receiving services. The organisation must then report the responses received to the Data Exchange in accordance with sections 5.2 and 5.3.

Organisations must seek a client's consent to collect, use, disclose or store their personal information. Where a client chooses not to provide enough information to create a client record, the client should be reported as an unidentified client, in accordance with section 3.8.

Client level data provided through the Data Exchange is de-identified so that no identifiable client information is used by an organisation's funding agency.

Data Exchange staff work with organisations to ensure clear information is available to clients to affirm that only de-identified data is captured as part of program performance reporting and used for the purposes of policy development, grants program administration, research and evaluation.

Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) and Section 5 of this document for more information about privacy. Program specific guidance on clients, support people and other client level data items is available on the [Data Exchange website](#).

3.2 Who is a client?

When delivering program activities the term 'client' is used in many different ways, covering individuals, families, groups, other organisations and whole communities; as well as casework, participants, audiences and one-off contact. While this flexibility appropriately reflects the diverse strategies used to deliver services, we recognise that it may also create particular challenges for program performance reporting.

The Data Exchange uses a specific definition of 'client' to ensure comparable information is reported for the number of individuals that have received a service within a reporting period. This means that 'apples with apples' comparisons are possible within and across activities.

For the purposes of recording a 'client' record in the Data Exchange, a client is defined as:

An individual who receives a service as part of a funded activity that is expected to lead to a measurable outcome.

This definition includes a number of components that must be met in order to count a person as a client. These components are program and context specific and involve determining whether the individual in their own right is expected to achieve an outcome that is linked to a program specific objective.

Many different types of outcomes are achieved as part of service delivery. Outcomes are not limited to high-level, life changing events. Client outcomes can also be as simple as learning a new skill, receiving a service that is required, or gaining increased knowledge about other services that are appropriate and available. These outcomes should be recorded within the Data Exchange.

In cases where an organisation is funded to provide training, support and skills development of organisation's staff, the staff member is considered a 'client' for the purposes of reporting in the Data Exchange.

3.3 Who is a support person?

At times, there may be other people present at a service who do not meet the definition of a client. This could include carers of clients, family members or children who attend to support the client. Paid employees of an organisation are not counted as support people. The support person is not expected to achieve a direct outcome through this service interaction and is *not* counted as a client.

There are no requirements to record the details of support people in the Data Exchange, however if an organisation wants, they can create an individual record for these people and record them as support people at the session level.

3.4 Services for children

A child is recorded as a client in the Data Exchange if the child directly received the service and meets the above definition of an individual client. When children are recorded within the Data Exchange the organisation should seek consent from a child's parent or guardian, except in circumstances where the organisation considers that the child is a mature minor and is able to provide informed consent on their own. Refer to section 5.2.4 for more information on obtaining consent from children.

3.5 Services for couples, families and households

The Data Exchange captures information about individual clients, however there are some funded activities where multiple individuals are assisted as part of the same 'case', 'family' or 'group'. In these instances, a client record should be created for each individual client and grouped together using a 'case' record.

Table 1. Example of a client and support person

Activity/Service Context	Who is the client?
Helping a couple at risk of homelessness to manage their finances in order to prevent a future accommodation crisis.	Both people in the couple are considered clients, as they are both receiving the service, benefit from that service, and meet the definition of a 'client' as per the program activity guidelines. Two client records should be created and used within the Data Exchange.
A youth attends counselling and their parent/carer is in the room during the counselling session.	The youth is counted as the client as they have received the service and will achieve an outcome. The parent/carer is not recorded as a client as no measurable outcome is achieved on this occasion. The parent/carer could be recorded as a support person, however this is not mandatory. If the parent/carer attends a session and participates directly (achieving their own outcome) they would be recorded as clients.

3.6 Group session

A group session means a session where services are delivered directly to three or more clients who attend together. A measurable outcome is expected to be achieved for each of those clients.

A group session can be made up of a family group, clients that are known to each other, or strangers. This definition does not count a support person or practitioner as a member of that group.

Examples of group sessions may include family group counselling sessions, family capacity building activities, group training, mentoring/peer support groups, playgroups, breakfast clubs or school holiday activity groups.

Organisations must use best efforts to request collection of client-level data from clients attending group sessions and record data collected in the Data Exchange in accordance with section 5.2 and 5.3.

Where it is impractical to collect client-level data, or a client chooses not to provide enough information to create a client record, clients should be reported as unidentified clients, in accordance with section 3.8.

3.6.1 Group session census

At a minimum, organisations delivering eligible funded activities are required to request collection of client-level data from all clients attending group sessions in the months of April and November and record data collected in the Data Exchange.

Eligible funded activities include all DSS-funded activities that end after 30 June 2026.

This approach is known as the group session census and aims to increase the reporting of client-level data for clients attending group sessions for eligible funded activities. Where organisations have established reporting practices that exceed the above minimum requirements, they are encouraged to continue with those practices.

3.7 Community session

Some organisations deliver sessions to large groups in the community. A community session means a session where a large group of people attend and services are not delivered directly to individuals.

The purpose and delivery of this work differ across activities but can include community outreach, early intervention and prevention, education and awareness raising, and community capacity building activities.

Examples of community sessions may include community information sessions, running stalls at community fairs, presentations at school assemblies, handing out pamphlets or other public events.

Organisations are not generally required to request collection of client-level data from attendees at community sessions. However, client-level data should be requested if clients sign up for ongoing services with the organisation and a measurable outcome is expected to be achieved for those clients.

For organisations participating in the partnership approach, the outcomes achieved from community sessions are recorded through the Community component of the Standard Client/Community Outcome Reporting (SCORE).

3.8 Recording unidentified clients

An unidentified client is a client for whom no client-level data is collected.

Organisations may report aggregated counts of unidentified clients:

- for attendees at community sessions
- where it is impractical to collect client-level data from clients attending group sessions
- where clients choose not to provide enough information to create a client record.

Reporting unidentified clients demonstrates how many people attended sessions but does not include any other information about the people who attended (such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background, age groups).

Counts of unidentified clients are reported as:

- 'Total number of unidentified clients associated with case' at the case level and
- 'Number of unidentified clients attended session' at the session level.

Unidentified client numbers captured at the case level estimate the total number of unidentified clients who are anticipated to attend services. In contrast, the unidentified client attendance numbers captured at the session level records how many unidentified clients actually attended that instance of service.

Cases and sessions can contain a mix of unidentified clients and clients with client records. Clients with client records are linked to the case and session. Counts of unidentified clients are reported separately, using the above fields.

Table 2. Example of when to record unidentified clients

Activity/Service Context	Can unidentified clients be recorded?
Mental health awareness event for carers and families in the community. These were individuals attending information and advisory workshops.	Yes. As anonymous members of the public, these 25 people are recorded as an aggregate count (unidentified clients) because it is not practical to record individual client details or measure individual client outcomes.
A group attends a public event in the community. These were individuals attending an event for help with parenting issues and to find relevant programs in the service.	<p>Yes. Before the event, the service will create a case record to indicate the number of expected participants.</p> <p>After the event, the service will report the actual participants at the session level.</p> <p>Of these participants, some signed up for programs offered by the service and are expected to achieve a measurable outcome in their parenting skills. A client record is created for these participants.</p> <p>The other participants have no further relationship with the service and are recorded as unidentified clients.</p>

4 Linking client data to service delivery

4.1 What is a service?

The Data Exchange framework has a specific definition of a service based on service delivery concepts. These concepts ensure that an instance of service is consistently applied across varying funded activities and service delivery contexts that are reported in the Data Exchange. For the purposes of the Data Exchange, a service is defined as:

One or more individual instances or episodes of assistance (known as sessions) within a reporting period that are delivered within a distinct case.

The concept of a 'case' and 'session' are integral to the Data Exchange as they maintain a consistent way for organisations to record information about the different activities clients are accessing, how they are being delivered and the location from which they are being delivered. These concepts are discussed below and in further detail at Section 6 of this document.

Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) for program specific guidance for more information on cases and sessions.

4.2 What is a case?

Cases act as containers, linking client and session data to location and program activity information. A case is defined as:

A method to capture one or more instances of service (known as sessions) received by a client or group of clients that is expected to lead to a distinct outcome. A case may contain between one and an unlimited number of sessions.

A case record helps understand what funded activity is being delivered, the location it is being delivered from, the reason clients came to the service and the number of clients receiving a service.

Each organisation can create cases in a format that best suits their needs. However, a case cannot exceed 1000 (one thousand) individual clients.

For users of the web-based portal, cases facilitate navigation and hold clients and sessions together.

- A case can operate over multiple reporting periods, for instance if a client returns to receive the same service.
- Depending on the nature of the service, a case can contain an individual, a couple, a family, or an unrelated group of individuals, such as a regular weekly or monthly group meeting.
- If a client attends a number of different funded activities, each of these is treated as a separate case.
- If a client receives the same services from a number of different locations (known as outlets) managed under the same program activity, each of these is treated as a separate case.
- To report a case, details are recorded about the activity, the location (or outlet) where the service occurred, and the client who will receive the service associated with that case record.

4.3 What is a session?

In the Data Exchange, a session is defined as:

An individual instance or episode of service, stored within a case, which is 'related' to other sessions (when/if they occur).

A session record includes the date the service occurred, the kind of service the client(s) received (known as service type) and which of the clients associated to the case were present. For organisations participating in the partnership approach, client pathways information (referrals out) is recorded at a session level. More information about the extended data set is found in Sections 7 and 8 of this document.

4.4 Counting rules for clients, cases and sessions

A **client** is counted against a reporting period if the client was recorded as attending at least one session within that reporting period.

A **case** is counted against a reporting period if at least one session is recorded under the case within that reporting period.

A **session** is counted against a reporting period if the date of the session fell within the reporting period and at least one client is attached.

4.5 What is an outlet?

For the purposes of the Data Exchange, an outlet is defined as:

The physical location from where a service is primarily being delivered.

- The organisation identifies the program activities each outlet delivers.
- Each outlet can have different staff, service information, program activities, and contact details.
- Where the service is mobile in nature, the outlet used should be the nearest administrative premises where staff are based, and where they are likely to be travelling from to deliver the service.
- Creating multiple outlets for services delivered from the same address must be avoided.
- Post office boxes cannot be used in place of a physical location.
- An outlet should never be created for a client's residential address, if a service is delivered in a client's home, or a sensitive/protected location such as a refuge.
 - In the instance of service delivery at a residential address, the outlet should reflect where staff are based or travelling from. This information is captured with the session details under the service setting field.
 - In the instance of service delivery at a protected address or refuge, the outlet can use an address of a non-identifiable public place nearby, such as a post office, police station or shopping centre.

4.6 Delivery partnerships and consortium arrangements

Organisations make different choices when it comes to setting up their delivery partners and outlets. As these decisions will affect who can enter, view and report data in the Data Exchange, set up needs to happen in agreement between the two parties, e.g. lead/facilitating and delivery partners. Particular attention needs to be paid to the naming of outlets, outlet addresses, the visibility of data and the protection of client privacy and personal information.

Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) training resources for guidance on partnerships and consortium arrangements.

4.6.1 Funding received from multiple sources

The Data Exchange Framework is intended to capture client outcomes from services funded through programs in scope for the Data Exchange. Where an organisation receives funding from multiple sources to help the delivery of an activity, the following guidance should be considered:

- (a) Where organisations deliver activities that are funded through multiple sources, the data reported should reflect the client's interaction with in-scope programs over the whole funding or reporting period (as opposed to only seeing a snapshot over a shorter period).
- (b) If Data Exchange related funding is only provided for a specific aspect of the service offering, such as in a certain location or to a specific client group, it is acceptable to only report on those clients or that specific outlet.
- (c) When an organisation distributes a voucher or other specific items (such as Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) vouchers) and these items are acquitted in relation to the agency that provided the item and this agency is not reporting through the Data Exchange, this is not recorded in the Data Exchange.

5 Protecting a client's personal information

The Data Exchange Framework is designed to keep client information safe and follow the rules of the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), including the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs).

Under the Privacy Act, personal information is information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable:

- a) whether the information or opinion is true or not; and
- b) whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.

In the Data Exchange, a client's record is considered personal information if it includes their **name** (or **pseudonym**) and **street address**. This information can only be stored if the client gives clear consent. It is important to note that organisations cannot make it mandatory for clients to provide personal information. Clients must provide consent for their personal information to be collected, used, disclosed or stored by an organisation and DSS.

5.1 Data Exchange privacy protocols

Everyone using the Data Exchange must follow the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). This means:

- Staff should only access records if they have a real reason or 'need to know'.
- Organisations must take reasonable steps to ensure client details are correct and up to date.
- Organisations must fix or delete incorrect information as soon as they become aware of the error or mistake.
- Organisations must keep records secure at all times.
- Organisations must seek client consent and provide a privacy collection notice before storing their name (or pseudonym) and/or street address.

If an organisation enters personal information, only that organisation can see it. Strict IT security protocols prevent DSS staff accessing personal details except to check that privacy rules are working properly, or when assisting organisations to understand error and warning messages received when entering data into Data Exchange. Staff from other funding agencies do not have access personal information.

Funding agencies use anonymous (de-identified) data from the Data Exchange for program management, policy development, research, and evaluation. DSS uses strict methods to make sure clients cannot be re-identified.

For more details, visit the [Data Exchange website](#) to read the Privacy Impact Assessment by the Australian Government Solicitor.

5.2 Organisations' obligations when storing personal information in the Data Exchange

If an organisation wants to store a client's **name** (or **pseudonym**) and/or **street address** in the Data Exchange, they must:

- Tell the client how and why DSS collects their information (verbally or in writing) using the standard privacy notice or their own.
- Get the client's consent before entering the information.

Organisations can also refer clients to the "Information for clients on privacy" page on the [Data Exchange website](#), which explains privacy in plain English.

5.2.1 Standard privacy notice

Organisations using the standard privacy notice should use the below words in their registration forms:

"We collect some personal details from you on this form. Your personal information is protected by law, including by the Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) (Privacy Act).

How we use the Data Exchange

We use an IT system called the 'Data Exchange' to manage your details and the services we provide to you. This system is run by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). DSS stores your personal information in the Data Exchange and only shares it with us so we can manage your services.

Your record in the Data Exchange can include your name and address, which helps us manage your details. However, you do not need to provide this information to DSS. If you choose not to, it will not affect the services you receive. You can also ask for this information to be removed from the Data Exchange at any time.

How DSS uses your information

DSS uses your de-identified (anonymous) information in the Data Exchange for things like policy development, managing grants, research and evaluation. DSS may share this anonymous data with other organisations for reporting and research purposes. Your personal details are removed before this happens so you cannot be identified.

DSS collects information in the Data Exchange so that government agencies can understand and improve how services are helping Australians. By agreeing to have your information shared in the Data Exchange you are supporting understanding and improvement of the services that you use.

More information

To learn more about how DSS manages your personal information, including how you can access or correct your details or make a privacy complaint, visit the [DSS website](#) and read their privacy policy."

5.2.2 Alternative notification on privacy

Organisations using their own privacy notice must ensure the client is aware of the following matters (as outlined in APP 5.2):

- (a) the Data Exchange is an IT system that is hosted by DSS
- (b) the organisation is using the Data Exchange for recording client information, and the client's personal information is stored on the Data Exchange for this purpose only
- (c) the client's personal information, which is stored by DSS on the Data Exchange, is only visible to the organisation that collected the information for the purposes of managing the client's case

- (d) DSS de-identifies and aggregates personal information that is stored on the Data Exchange to produce information for policy development, grants program administration, research and evaluation purposes, and this will not include information that identifies the client, or re-identifies the client, in any way
- (e) [DSS's privacy policy](#) is published on its website. The website contains information about how the client may access or correct the personal information that is stored on the Data Exchange; complain about a breach of the APPs by DSS, and how DSS will deal with the client's complaint. The privacy policy also contains information about the circumstances in which DSS may disclose personal information to overseas recipients
- (f) the consequences if personal information is not collected from the client.

Please see the [Office of the Australian Information Commissioner's website](#) to ensure that the privacy notice captures all matters it is required to under APP 5.

DSS will not review, approve or store an organisation's registration forms.

5.2.3 Consent to collect and store personal information

If an organisation wants to store a client's name (or a pseudonym) and/or street address in the Data Exchange, the client must give consent first. DSS will not store this information without consent. This consent must be clear and obvious, either verbally or in writing. Importantly, for consent to be valid it must be informed, voluntary, specific and the individual must have capacity.

After giving the privacy notice, the organisation must:

- Get the client's explicit consent (on behalf of DSS) to collect and store their personal information in the Data Exchange.
- Record the consent in the system by:
 - Ticking the consent box in the web portal, or
 - Indicating consent in a system-to-system transfer or bulk upload.
- Tell the client they can withdraw consent at any time.

If a client withdraws consent:

- Record this in the system by:
 - Unticking the consent box in the web portal, or
 - Indicating consent has been removed in a system-to-system transfer or bulk upload.
- DSS will then remove the client's name (or pseudonym) and/or street address from the Data Exchange.

For more details, organisations should check "Information for organisations about consent" on the [Data Exchange website](#) which explains consent in plain English.

5.2.4 Obtaining consent from children and individuals with compromised capacity

If the client is a child (i.e. under the age of 18), it's best to get consent from their parent or guardian.

However, if the organisation believes the child is mature enough to understand what's being asked, the child can give consent themselves.

As a general rule:

- Children **15 or older** are usually considered able to give consent, unless there's a reason to think otherwise.
- Children **under 15** are assumed not able to give consent.

If a client may not be able to give consent (for example, because of a physical or mental disability), the organisation should take special steps.

This might include finding someone who can give consent on the client's behalf, such as:

- A legal guardian
- Someone with an enduring power of attorney
- A person recognised under relevant laws (e.g., a “person responsible” under the *Guardianship Act 1987 (NSW)*)
- Someone the client nominated in writing when they were able to give consent

5.3 Organisations' obligations when NOT storing personal information in the Data Exchange

If an organisation chooses NOT to store a client's name (or pseudonym) and/or street address in the Data Exchange, the consent and notification requirements in section 5.2 do NOT apply.

In this case the organisation should:

- Leave the consent box unticked in the web portal, or
- Indicate consent has not been provided in a system-to-system transfer or bulk upload

DSS will use the client's name (or pseudonym) to create a Statistical Linkage Key and then delete it. The client record stored in the Data Exchange will not include the client's name, pseudonym, or street address.

5.4 De-identified data

DSS protects client privacy when using DEX data for reporting purposes by removing identifying details and using a special code (called a statistical linkage key) to link data safely.

5.4.1 DSS Statistical Linkage Key (SLK)

The Data Exchange uses a Statistical Linkage Key (SLK) to remove personal details while still linking records that belong to the same person. This unique code lets DSS link a client with the services they received, even if those services came from different organisations.

The SLK combines part of a person's name, date of birth and gender:

- 2nd, 3rd, and 5th letters of the family name
- 2nd and 3rd letters of the given name
- Day, month, and year of birth
- Gender

For example, John Smith, a male born on 14th February 1971 has an SLK of: **MIHOH140219711**

Organisations cannot see the SLK in the Data Exchange. Only a very small number of DSS staff can see it, and only for technical tasks like system maintenance or data analysis.

For organisations using the web portal, the SLK is created automatically. For organisations using bulk uploads or system-to-system transfers, the SLK can be generated using the algorithm above. The SLK should not use nicknames, shortened names, or anything that could identify the client.

Go to [Data Exchange website](#) for help configuring systems to push the SLK across to the Data Exchange.

5.4.2 Client ID

Each client record in the Data Exchange includes a client ID that must remain unique to that client in all circumstances while connected to the funded organisation. This is different to the SLK described above.

The client ID is made up of a series of alphanumeric text, either inputted by the organisation or created by the Data Exchange web-based portal.

Where an organisation enters their own client ID (as described below), this should be alphanumeric or numeric text only. This Client ID must not include shortened versions of a client's name, nickname or any

variations of their full name, or any other information that could identify a client, such as the client's My Aged Care ID, Centrelink Customer Reference Number (CRN), or DVA Card/ID number, under any circumstances

Web-based portal

- Organisations have the option of entering their own client ID (an ID used internally by the organisation), which must **not** include any information that could identify the client, or
- leave the field blank, where the portal will generate a client ID that is used by organisations to search for their record later.

Bulk upload or system-to-system transfer

- For organisations using their own client management system and uploading their data to the Data Exchange, the client ID becomes a mandatory field from their own system and used to cross-reference the record between the two systems in future interactions.

Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) for technical specifications.

5.5 Consent for follow up research, surveys and evaluations

Funding agencies and universities may want to do research in the future to better understand client needs and improve services. Such research would involve contacting clients to seek an update on their situation. Getting client consent now will create a list of people who are willing to take part in these studies later.

As part of the priority requirements, organisations must:

- Get the client's consent to participate in follow up research, surveys and evaluation.
- Record the consent in the system by:
 - Ticking the future research consent box in the web portal, or
 - Indicating consent in a system-to-system transfer or bulk upload.
- Tell the client they can withdraw consent at any time.

If a client withdraws consent:

- Record this in the system by:
 - Unticking the future research consent box in the web portal, or
 - Indicating consent has been removed in a system-to-system transfer or bulk upload.

When there is a research project:

- The project will be approved by a recognised ethics committee
- Researchers will contact organisations before the project starts
- The organisation will work with researchers to contact clients about the project and help them understand why research is important and what it means to participate.

5.6 Organisational privacy considerations

Once a client record is created, all Data Exchange users within the organisation can see it.

Organisations must have processes and controls in place to keep this information safe and prevent unauthorised access.

Records should only be accessed by authorised staff who need the information to deliver services to the client. Organisations must **never** share a client's personal information with DSS or funding agencies by phone or email (for example, when contacting the Data Exchange Helpdesk)

If an organisation becomes aware of a cyber security incident or a possible data breach, they must notify DSS and their funding agency as soon as possible.

5.6.1 Cyber Security Incidents

According to the Australian Cyber Security Centre's (ACSC) [Guidelines for Cyber Security Incidents](#), a Cyber Security incident is:

A cyber security incident is an unwanted or unexpected cyber security event, or a series of such events, that either has compromised business operations or has a significant probability of compromising business operations.

Unauthorised access to the Data Exchange system is a possible cyber security incident.

Organisations should have processes and controls in place to prevent and manage cyber security incidents for the Data Exchange. For example, ACSC's [Small Business Cyber Security Guide](#) recommends organisations:

- make an **emergency plan**, including processes for staff to report potential cyber security incidents
- **educate employees** on cyber security issues, including:
 - encouraging employees to visit [cyber.gov.au/learn](https://www.cyber.gov.au/learn)
 - adding cyber security training or practices into the induction process
 - encouraging positive security habits in staff
- implement Data Exchange **access controls**, including ensuring:
 - users have the bare minimum permissions they need to perform their work
 - revoking access from staff who leave the business.

All users with access to DSS IT resources have particular responsibilities in respect of:

- Password security. No-one is to attempt to bypass or defeat DSS' IT security system.
- Everyone is responsible for maintaining the integrity of software and hardware under their ownership and ensuring that its condition does not prejudice the integrity of DSS' propriety or licensed software or hardware.

The following resources may assist organisations in meeting their Data Exchange cyber security responsibilities:

- ACSC's [Resources for business and government](#) at <https://www.cyber.gov.au/>
- Australian Charities and not for Profit Commission's (ACNC) [Governance Toolkit: Cyber Security](#) at <https://www.acnc.gov.au/>.

5.6.2 Data Breaches

According to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC):

A data breach happens when personal information is accessed, disclosed without authorisation, or is lost.

If client's record in the Data Exchange is shared with or accessed by an unauthorised person, this is a possible data breach under the Privacy Act. A data breach may occur as part of a cyber security incident.

Organisations should have processes and controls in place to prevent and manage data breaches for the Data Exchange. For example, Office of the Australian Information Commissioner's (OAIC) [Protecting customers' personal information](#) recommends organisations:

- have personal information handling processes and procedures, and ensure staff undertake regular privacy training
- ensure staff access personal information on a need-to-know basis

- have policies on information security, including ICT security, physical security and access security take care when handling sensitive information
- have a data breach response plan.

The following OAIC resources at <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/> may assist organisations in meeting their Data Exchange privacy and data breach responsibilities:

- [Privacy guidance for organisations and government agencies](#)
- [Data breach preparation and response](#) guide.

6 Collecting the priority requirements

The priority requirements are a small set of mandatory data items. These data items capture the demographics of clients accessing program activities, how often clients are attending, where they are attending and what program activities they are attending.

In summary, the priority requirements reflect the collection of information about client details, case and session details, and client consent to participate in follow-up research.

This section presents practical information about each of these concepts to support managers and frontline staff to consistently and accurately collect the required data.

Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) for more information on configuring systems and service delivery information such as how to use cases, sessions and service types. The data values are listed in Section 12 of this document.

6.1 Client level data

Client-level priority requirements capture client details and demographic characteristics. This provides an understanding of each client's pathways over time, on a de-identified basis.

Organisations must use best efforts to request collection of priority requirement client-level data from clients directly receiving services. The organisation must then report the responses received to the Data Exchange in accordance with sections 5.2 and 5.3.

Organisations must seek a client's consent to collect, use, disclose or store their personal information. Where a client chooses not to provide enough information to create a client record, the client should be reported as an unidentified client in accordance with section 3.8.

A client record only needs to be created once. It can then be maintained, updated and edited at any time.

Client records are the basic 'building blocks' of the Data Exchange Framework and are used to answer standard questions such as:

- how many clients were assisted?
- how many clients were assisted in previous reporting periods?
- how many clients received assistance under different funded activities?
- how many clients received assistance from a funded activity delivered by a different organisation?
- how many clients receiving assistance were from vulnerable target population groups?

Answers to these questions will help tell the broader story about the outcomes being achieved, by providing an understanding of **who** these outcomes are being achieved for and **when**.

6.1.1 Collecting client given and family names

Collecting a client's name would typically occur the first time that a client accesses any funded activity from an organisation, either in a registration form or in an intake interview. Organisations are free to gather this information in accordance with their standard practices.

A client's given name and family name are recorded because they form part of the SLK used to uniquely identify clients without disclosing personal information. **Given name** is typically a client's first name, but it may include one or more middle names. Ideally, the given name should be recorded exactly as it is on key identification documents such as a passport or driver's license.

Family name is typically the client's last name, or surname, and ideally should be recorded exactly as it is spelled on key identification documents.

Where clients are known by more than one name, or prefer to be called by a particular name, for example Joe rather than Joseph, their given and family names should reflect the name the client offers.

Where a client does not have identification documentation or chooses not to disclose their identifying information, the organisation should record the given and family name that is most commonly used or preferred to be used by the client.

Where a client does not wish to disclose their 'real' name, the organisation should indicate that a pseudonym is being used and record a pseudonym that ideally is used again if the client returns for other services. Where a client only has one name, this would be entered as their first and last name.

6.1.2 Date of birth

A client's date of birth is recorded for two reasons: it forms part of the SLK and provides a direct means of calculating the client's age.

Age groups demonstrate part of the standard demographic profile for clients required by many government programs and is of particular importance to programs that target age-specific cohorts.

Where a client does not know their date of birth or does not wish to disclose it, it is acceptable for an estimated date of birth to be used. An estimated date of birth indicator is in the Data Exchange and should be used to flag when this occurs. For example, if a client thinks they are approximately 30 years old (and it is 2019), the estimated date of birth indicator is flagged and the year of birth is recorded as 1989.

6.1.3 Gender

A client's gender is recorded because it forms part of the SLK and is recorded based upon how the client self-identifies. Please note that gender is different to sexuality and sexual orientation, which are not recorded in the Data Exchange.

The Data Exchange uses standard data definitions for gender developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) under their new [Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables, 2020](#), with five options::

- Man or Male
- Woman or Female
- Non-binary
- Different term [Free text field up to 100 characters]
- Prefer not to answer

The 'Non-binary' response is used where a client does not identify as male or female. Should a client use a term that does not align with the term listed, the term can be described under 'Different term'. If a client chooses not to disclose their gender, it is acceptable to record 'Prefer not to answer'.

6.1.4 Residential address

Information about where clients live can assist with understanding if services are located in the right area.

A client's residential address can also be compared to an outlet address to understand how far the client may be travelling to access a service, or how far staff may be travelling to deliver a service to a client.

A client's residential address can also be linked to other useful information to help understand a client's circumstances, such as the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) rankings and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) community profiles.

Within the Data Exchange, there is the capacity to record a full residential address for each client (street level, suburb, state and postcode). At a minimum, a client's state, suburb and postcode are considered part of the priority requirements and must be recorded to create the client record.

The identity of clients consenting to the reporting of their full residential address is protected by converting the data to the Australian Statistical Geography Standard. This means that a geography code is recorded in place of the client's address, which de-identifies the record.

In exceptional circumstances, it may not be appropriate to record the client's full residential address, such as where the client is experiencing domestic violence and does not wish to provide even their suburb, state and postcode due to fears for their personal safety. In these circumstances, the service outlet suburb, state and postcode should be recorded instead.

6.1.5 Recording a homeless client's residential address

If a client is homeless or of no fixed address, the client or organisation can determine the most appropriate address to be recorded. This may be the suburb, state and postcode of where the client usually spends the night, or suburb, state and postcode of the outlet where the client is seeking assistance. A flag to indicate the client is currently homeless is in the extended demographics section of the Data Exchange.

6.1.6 Indigenous status

A client's Indigenous status is recorded to provide an important understanding of whether clients who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin are accessing services. Under standard data collection definitions used by the AIHW, five options are available to record a client's Indigenous status.

Indigenous status is part of the standard demographic profile for clients of many government programs and is of particular importance in ensuring Indigenous people and communities have appropriate access to funded services.

Where a client chooses not to disclose their Indigenous status, it is acceptable to record 'Not stated/Inadequately described'.

6.1.7 Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD)

A client's CALD background is recorded to provide an important understanding of whether CALD clients are accessing services. Under standard data collection definitions used by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), two questions are used to record a client's CALD status:

(a) Country of birth

- Record the country of birth indicated by the client
- A list of values is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics [Standard Australian Classification of Countries \(SACC\), 2016](#)

(b) Main language spoken at home

- Record the main language spoken at home indicated by the client.
- A list of values is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics [Australian Standard Classification of Languages \(ASCL\), 2016](#)

More detailed information about a client's CALD background such as ancestry is collected in the extended demographics section of the Data Exchange.

CALD status is part of the standard demographic profile for clients of many government programs and is of particular importance to ensure CALD clients and communities have appropriate access to funded services.

This information can also be beneficial for organisations in determining whether the engagement of translating services or bilingual staff may assist in better service delivery for their clients. Where a client chooses not to disclose their CALD status, it is acceptable to record 'Not stated/Inadequately described'.

6.1.8 Disability, impairment or condition

Clients are asked to self-identify whether they have a disability, impairment or condition because it is important for organisations and funding agencies to know whether clients with disability are accessing services.

Under standard data collection definitions used by the AIHW, disability is recorded in groupings that most clearly express the experience of disability by a person. Disability groupings constitute a broad categorisation of disabilities in terms of the underlying health condition, impairment, activity limitations, participation restrictions, environmental factors and support needs. Categories in the Data Exchange include:

- **Intellectual/learning:** associated with impairment of intellectual functions which limit a range of daily activities and restrict participation in a range of life areas, for example, but not limited to; dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyslexia.
- **Psychiatric:** associated with clinically recognisable symptoms and behaviour patterns frequently associated with distress that may impair personal functioning in normal social activity, for example, but not limited to; Asperger syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, behavioural disorders, bipolar, depression, eating disorders, epilepsy, manias, phobias, schizophrenia, somnias.
- **Sensory/speech:** including vision disability (blindness, vision impairment); hearing disability (deafness, hearing impairment that cause severe restrictions in communication); deaf-blind (dual sensory impairments causing severe restrictions in communication); speech disability (speech loss, impairment which causes severe restrictions in communication).
- **Physical/diverse:** associated with the presence of an impairment, which may have diverse effects within and among individuals, including effects on physical activities such as mobility. This grouping includes physical disability, for example; paraplegia, quadriplegia, muscular dystrophy, motor neurone disease, neuromuscular disorders, cerebral palsy, absence or deformities of limbs, acquired brain injury, neurological disability (including epilepsy, dementias, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson disease).
- **None:** no disability, or no disability, impairment or condition are identified by the client.
- **Not stated/inadequately described.**

When recording data about disability, impairments or conditions clients should self-identify, and can identify with more than one group, for example physical/diverse and intellectual/learning.

Data about disability status is part of the standard demographic profile for clients of many government programs and is of particular importance to ensure people with a disability have appropriate access to funded services. Where a client chooses not to disclose if they have a disability, impairment or condition, it is acceptable to record 'Not stated/Inadequately described'.

6.2 Service delivery information

The concept of a case and session are integral to the Data Exchange as they maintain a consistent way to link a client with instances of service and to help tell the 'story' about outcomes achieved for clients.

Once a client record is created in the Data Exchange, it must be linked to the program and activities the client is participating in. This is captured using the case and session records. A case is the first step in recording service delivery information within the Data Exchange.

6.2.1 Case details

The second tier of the priority requirements is a case record, which includes a case ID, program activity, and outlet information. A case record is only created once for each unique case and is used over multiple reporting periods.

Each case record includes:

- **Case ID:** an alphanumeric code or title that uniquely identifies the case, and which is named in a way that is meaningful to the user. The case ID business rules are the same as those for the client ID: the case ID must be unique within the organisation and not include any identifiable information, such as a client's name or their Centrelink Customer Reference Number. Users of the Data Exchange web-based portal may leave the field blank, in which a case ID is automatically generated (numeric only). The field is mandatory for those uploading data through the bulk upload or system-to-system methods.
- **Program activity:** the funded activity that the case is being delivered under.
- **Outlet:** the location where the case is primarily being delivered. A case cannot have more than one outlet.
- **One or more client records:** links one or more clients to a case (or in limited circumstances an aggregate number of unidentified clients).

The number of case records an organisation creates will depend on the type of funded activity(ies) they deliver and the way these services are delivered. For example, if providing counselling to couples or families it would make sense to create a case for each couple/family. This would allow a user to see and reflect on the family composition of each couple/family, easily navigate the portal for efficient data entry, and potentially count the total number of cases as the number of couples/families accessing services.

In contrast, for organisations delivering activity-based services, it may be better suited to create a case for each of the locally run activities delivered in the community, such as a breakfast club or education course.

For organisations using the bulk upload or system-to-system method, the concept of a case is a node that allows all three tiers of the Data Exchange data (clients, cases and sessions) to be effectively uploaded.

6.2.2 Session details

The third tier of the priority requirements is a session record. A session record captures the types of services being delivered under the relevant case, which clients attended, and the dates of service. Sessions also indicate that a case was active within a reporting period. Each session record consists of:

- **Session ID:** a numeric code or title that identifies a particular instance/ episode of service. The session ID must be unique within the case and cannot include identifiable client information. Users of the Data Exchange web-based portal may leave the field blank, and a session ID is automatically generated (numeric only). The field is mandatory for those uploading data through the bulk upload or system-to-system methods.
- **Session date:** the date the instance/episode of service occurred.
- **Service type:** the main focus for the session delivered. If a session covered multiple service types, the most relevant one should be chosen, either based on the majority of time spent or the main way an outcome was achieved.
- **Client attendance:** recorded for each client that was present at the session.
- **Unidentified client attendance:** the aggregate number of unidentified clients who attended a session. This should be limited to large groups where the collection of client level information is not feasible. Unidentified client attendance at a session must be less than or equal to the number of unidentified clients against the case.

When recording a session, organisations should select the service type, which best reflects the nature of service delivery in that particular session. Different service types are associated with different funded activities. Within the Data Exchange web-based portal, only the relevant service types are available for a user to choose.

For organisations using the bulk upload or system-to-system method, sessions are a node that complete all three tiers of Data Exchange data (clients, cases and sessions) being effectively uploaded.

6.3 Program specific mandatory fields

The Data Exchange Framework establishes streamlined and standardised program performance reporting to inform priority requirements. A small number of funded activities require additional mandatory data items to be reported, as listed below. Go to Section 12 of this document for a comprehensive list of the field values.

6.3.1 Commonwealth Home Support Programme mandatory fields

The following items are required and will only present if the client is participating in the Commonwealth Home Support Programme activity:

- **Accommodation setting:** organisations are asked to record the accommodation setting category that best describes that of the client.
- **Living arrangements:** this is required for this program activity as it provides important information about a client's presenting context. Living arrangements and its categories are adapted from the data collection definitions used by the AIHW. This information can also be collected as 'household composition' in the partnership approach.
- **DVA card status:** a client's Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) card status is collected.
- **Existence of a Carer:** this field is required to determine how many clients have care arrangements in place. This question is a yes/no response.
- **Amount of assistance provided:** measured as hours and minutes, quantity, cost and/or type. These data fields will only present once the service type is selected in the session. For more information go to the program specific guidance on the [Data Exchange website](#)
- **Fees charged:** this item is captured at the session level. It allows organisations to report whether the participants of the session were charged a fee to attend the service and reflects the program activity policy regarding fee collection. This item is captured as a dollar figure.
- **Exit reason:** users can record the reason a client exited a service.

6.3.2 Family Law Services mandatory fields

The following items are required and will only present when a relevant Family Law Service is selected at the case and session creation level:

- **Parenting agreement reached:** this item is captured at the case level. It supports the measurement of an important program specific outcome, reflecting if a parenting agreement was reached between parties. The response options are Full agreement, Partial agreement, or No agreement.
- **Date of parenting agreement:** records the date the parenting agreement was agreed or reached.
- **Did a legal practitioner assist in parenting mediation sessions:** This yes/no question is also related to the above questions, indicating if a legal practitioner is present and participates in parenting mediation session. It must be completed.
- **Section 60(I) certificate type:** this item is used to record a section 60(I) certificate.
- **Date of certificate issued:** this item is related to the Section 60(I) certificate data field and records the date the Section 60(I) certificate was issued.

- **Property agreement reached:** this item is captured at the case level. It supports the measurement of an important program specific outcome, reflecting if a property agreement was reached between parties. The response options are Full agreement, Partial agreement, or No agreement.
- **Date of property agreement:** records the date the property agreement was agreed or reached.
- **Did a legal practitioner assist in property mediation sessions:** This yes/no question is also related to the above questions, indicating if a legal practitioner is present and participates in property mediation session. It must be completed.
- **Fees charged:** this item is captured at the session level. It allows organisations to report whether the participants of the session were charged a fee to attend the service and reflects the program activity policy regarding fee collection. This item is captured as a dollar figure.

6.3.3 Financial Wellbeing and Capability mandatory field

The following items are only required for the Commonwealth Financial Counselling and Financial Capability, and Money Support Hubs program activities where it is part of the session creation process. When the service type 'Education and Skills Training' is selected, the following field becomes mandatory:

- **Money management course delivered:** this item is captured at the session level. The field contains the workshop types able to be delivered under this program activity and allows organisations to show that clients have undertaken the required training.

6.3.4 National Disability Advocacy Program mandatory fields

The following items are only required for the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) program activities where it is part of the session creation process. The following question is mandatory.

- **Topic:** this item is captured at the session level. This field allows organisations to select the reason why a client is accessing a service.

6.3.5 Rural Financial Counselling Service mandatory fields

The following items are only required for the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) program activities where it is part of the case and session creation process.

- **Agriculture Business Type:** this item is captured at the case level. This field allows organisations to record the business type indicated by the client, which has generated more than 50% of the client's income over the last three years.
- **Hardship:** this item is captured at the session level. This field is used to indicate the client's primary cause of difficulty or concern affecting their business. Hardship is a mandatory field that must be recorded for all sessions where an intake service type is selected. That is, when either Case managed – Intake, Transactional – Intake, or Service Transition is selected.
- **External Referral Destination:** this item is used to describe a client's referral to another service from the Rural Financial Counselling Service.

7 Collecting partnership approach data

The partnership approach is a collection of extended data items as well as Standard Client/Community Outcomes Reporting (SCORE) data items. Organisations participating in the partnership approach report an extended data set, in exchange for access to additional self-service reports.

The partnership approach is required for a funded activity when stipulated in the funding agreement and/or Program Specific Guidance. Where the partnership approach is not required, organisations may nonetheless choose to opt in.

This section presents practical information about collecting and reporting the extended data items under the partnership approach. Go to Section 8 of this document for detailed information about collecting and reporting SCORE and Section 12 for a list of data values.

The extended data items under the partnership approach include information about a client's presenting needs and circumstances, such as the reason for seeking assistance, referrals (in and out), household composition and income status. Unless specified as a requirement in the Program Specific Guidance, extended data item reporting is optional.

7.1 Client needs and presenting context

Organisations participating in the partnership approach report additional data items about client needs and presenting circumstances where they already collect such data, or where they consider this information to be relevant and are able to collect it.

There are eleven data categories, set out below, which identify client needs and presenting circumstances. For many organisations, this information is already collected as part of internal service planning. Other items (such as migration visa) may only be relevant for specific funded activities. An organisation can choose to record some or all of the additional items, selecting those that are relevant to their clients and services.

Unless specified as a requirement in the Program Specific Guidance, all of the following listed items are optional.

7.2 Reasons for seeking assistance

Data about the reason clients sought assistance is collected to inform service planning to better respond to presenting needs. The optional categories for describing the reason for seeking assistance are standardised to reflect the SCORE outcome domains that cover the range of funded activities captured as part of the Data Exchange Framework. For each client, data is recorded about the main reason for seeking assistance and, if relevant, a secondary reason for seeking assistance. Reasons for seeking assistance are recorded at the case level, to allow organisations to reflect that clients go to different activities to address different needs. This field is optional.

The categories describing the reason for seeking assistance are:

- **Age-appropriate development:** where the client is seeking to improve age-appropriate development.
- **Community participation and networks:** where the client is seeking to change the impact of poor community participation and networks on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Family functioning:** where the client is seeking to improve family functioning and change its impact on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Financial Resilience:** where the client is seeking to improve financial resilience and change its impact to improve the client's independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Employment:** to change the impact of a client's lack of employment on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Education and skills training:** where the client is seeking to engage with education and skills training to improve their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Material wellbeing and basic necessities:** to address the client's immediate lack of money and basic items needed for day-to-day living and to improve their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Housing:** where the client is seeking to improve their housing stability or address the impact of poor housing on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Mental health, wellbeing and self-care:** where the client is seeking to change the impact of mental health issues and self-care issues on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Personal and family safety:** where the client is seeking to change the impact of personal and family safety issues on their independence, participation and wellbeing.

- **Physical health:** where the client is seeking to change the impact of their physical health on their independence, participation and wellbeing.

Many clients' needs are complex and change over time. The 'real' reason for seeking assistance is often not apparent until after a client initially engages with the organisation. While recognising these limitations, data about the reasons for seeking assistance is recorded towards the start of the service to provide a high-level indication of the presenting need—within one of the standard circumstance outcome domains.

Reasons for seeking assistance is recorded as either the:

- **Primary reason for seeking assistance:** the main reason for seeking assistance, classified as one of eleven possible categories.
- **Secondary reasons for seeking assistance:** the secondary reasons for seeking assistance, if relevant select another reason from the eleven possible categories. In most cases, this should be limited to one or two.

7.3 Referral source

Referral source is the person or agency responsible for referring a client to an organisation. The source of referral is important in mapping client pathways and access points. This optional field helps organisations to identify the main avenues their clients come through to reach their services. This information is used to help target networking and communication strategies to increase client engagement with a particular funded activity if desired. This field is optional.

Based on the data collection definitions used by the AIHW, referral source is classified into three standard categories (agency/organisation, non-agency, not stated). This information is recorded at the case level and allows organisations to reflect that clients are referred from different sources for each case.

Agency/organisation

- Health agency
- Community services agency
- Educational agency
- Internal
- Legal agency
- Employment/job placement agency
- Lender/financial agency
- Accounting agency
- Centrelink
- My Aged Care Gateway
- Linkages Program
- CoS Program
- Local Area Coordinator (LAC) Referral
- NDIS Referral
- Humanitarian Settlement Program
- Other agency

Non-agency

- Self
- Family
- Friends
- General Medical Practitioner
- Other party
- Not stated/inadequately described

7.4 Referrals to other services

Data is recorded about referrals made to other services to reflect a client's need for help outside the scope of the funded activity. Referrals are recorded at the session level and can include one internal and one external type of referral per session record. Where more than one referral of each type is made, they are recorded in a separate session.

Two data items are recorded to reflect referrals to other services:

Referral to other service

- **Internal:** made to another service offered within the same organisation
- **External:** made to a service that is provided by a different organisation

Referral purpose

- **Physical health:** the client is referred to assist with the impact of their physical health on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Mental health wellbeing and self-care:** the client is referred to help the impact of client's mental health and self-care issues on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Personal and family safety:** the client is referred to help with the impact of personal and family safety issues on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Age-appropriate development:** the client is referred to help improve age-appropriate development.
- **Community participation and networks:** the client is referred to help with the impact of poor community participation and networks on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Family functioning:** the client is referred to improve family functioning and change its impact to improve the client's independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Financial Resilience:** the client is referred to help improve financial resilience and change its impact to improve the client's independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Employment:** the client is referred to help with the impact of a client's lack of employment on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Education and skills training:** the client is referred to help with the impact of a client's inability to engage with education and skills training on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Material wellbeing and basic necessities:** the client is referred to help with the impact of the client's immediate lack of money and basic items needed for day-to-day living to improve their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Housing:** the client is referred to improve their housing stability or address the impact of poor housing on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Support to caring role:** the clients is referred to help with their caring responsibilities.
- **Other:** the referral purpose is not captured in the list provided.

7.5 Household composition

Data is reported about household composition as it provides important information about a client's presenting context. Household composition is classified into standard categories that are adapted from the data collection definitions used by AIHW. Household composition is adapted to include data on whether the client is homeless. This field is optional.

7.6 Highest level of education/qualification

Data is reported about highest educational achievement a person has attained. It lists qualifications and other educational attainments regardless of the particular field of study or the type of institution in which the study was undertaken. This field is optional.

7.7 Employment status

Data is reported about a client's employment status. Employment status is classified into standard categories that are adapted from the data collection definitions used by Disability Employment Services. It is important to note a client's employment status can also include being a carer.

7.8 Income

7.8.1 Main source of income

Data is reported about main source of income to provide important information about a client's presenting needs. Main source of income is classified into standard categories, based on the data collection definitions used by the AIHW. This field is optional. Go to Section 12 for a list of these categories.

7.8.2 Approximate gross income

Data is reported about approximate income as it provides important information about a client's presenting context. Data is recorded as a numerical value for the estimated dollar amount of the client's gross income (earnings before tax). This is based on what is reported by the client and no evidence of income is required.

As clients can receive their income at different frequencies, the Data Exchange web-based portal allows estimated gross income to be provided as either a weekly, fortnightly, monthly or annual figure. Income frequency must be recorded in order to be able to record the approximate gross income. This field is optional.

7.9 Expanded CALD indicators

Additional information on CALD background provides important context about clients' circumstances. This includes:

- **Date of first arrival in Australia:** records the date a client first arrived in Australia where appropriate for a funded activity. This field is primarily included as an eligibility indicator for the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program. It can also be used as a potential indicator of disadvantage for other program activities.
- **Migration Visa category:** records the Visa category the client arrived on, where appropriate for a funded activity. This field is primarily included as an eligibility indicator for the SETS Program. It can also be used as a potential indicator of disadvantage for other program activities.
- **Ancestry:** records a client's ancestry if relevant. The list of values is drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics [Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups \(ASCCEG\), 2016](#).

7.10 Homeless indicator

Data is reported about a client's housing situation. Noting the values for the homeless indicator are Yes, No or At Risk, a person is homeless if they do not have suitable accommodation alternatives and their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations

A person may be at risk of homelessness in a number of situation including living in housing with major structural problems, residents are in constant threat of violence, living in crowded or improvised dwellings, or persons who are marginally housed in caravan parks.

The response should be based solely on what is reported by the client. This field is optional.

7.11 Attendance profile

Data is reported to better understand the relationship between clients within a case. This should be based on the relationships self-reported by the client and other attendees. The different data items that can be selected are family, community event, peer support group, couple and cohabitants.

In the Data Exchange a family is defined as two or more people, one of whom is at least 15 years of age, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who are usually resident in the same household.

A couple is defined as two people usually residing in the same household who share a social, economic and emotional bond who consider their relationship to be a marriage or marriage like union. This relationship is identified by the presence of a registered marriage or de facto relationship.

Cohabitants are people in residence together who are not related or in domestic relationship. Peer support groups are a planned and structured service.

A community event is a large-scale, locality-based event where attendees generally do not register and are not identified. This field is optional.

7.12 Carer Status

Data is reported on the client's self-report status as a carer. A carer is defined as a person who provides unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are frail aged. Data in this field is based on the client's reported caring situation. This field is optional.

7.13 NDIS eligibility

Data is reported on the NDIS eligibility of a client, and if they have an application in progress. This field is optional.

7.14 Service setting

Data is reported to help differentiate where services are provided. The service setting categories in the Data Exchange are:

- **Organisation outlet/office:** the organisation's outlets as recorded in the Data Exchange
- **Client's residence:** the client's usual place of residence. Please refer to the section residential address for more information
- **Community venue:** a venue that is available to the general public and is hired away from the organisation's usual offices. Examples include community halls, public libraries or parks
- **Partner organisation:** another organisation's facilities (whether there is a formal or informal arrangement) to deliver a service
- **Healthcare facility:** doctor's office, hospital, mental health facility, aged care facility
- **Education facility:** school, university
- **Justice Facility:** correctional facility (jail, prison), police station, court of law
- **Telephone:** person-to-person contact provided to clients via telephone or voice chat that are interactive and have two-way engagement between the client and practitioner.
- **Video:** person-to-person contact provided to clients via a video service such as FaceTime, Zoom, Skype, etc. and have two-way engagement between the client and practitioner.
- **Online service:** services provided virtually, usually without two-way engagement. Examples include self-service, e-Learning, webinars, online training, non-interactive electronic resources, and online chat.

A fact sheet has been developed to provide information to assist organisations on how to record telephone, virtual or remote service delivery in the Data Exchange. Detailed examples of the different types of alternate service delivery methods, along with recommendations on how to record these into the Data Exchange if appropriate have been included.

Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) to read the fact sheet.

7.15 Interpreter present

Data is reported on whether an interpreter was present for the instance of service to assist with translation and facilitation. This could be an interpreter provided by the organisation or someone the client has brought along to help them. This field is optional.

7.16 Exit Reason

This data provides information about the circumstances surrounding the ending of a client's relationship with a case. This contributes to a general understanding of the patterns of client interaction with a program and gives indications as to reason a client might disengage with a service. The Exit Reason categories in the Data Exchange are:

- **Client no longer requires assistance:** the client is now able to manage without any formal assistance. For example, if the client is managing on their own, or with the help of family or friends, or if they only needed temporary assistance. This may be used where a client's circumstances have improved to the point that they no longer require assistance, but not necessarily because the service met their needs.
- **Service unable to provide assistance:** the organisation has ceased delivering services to the client because of the organisation's resource limitations, or because the organisation no longer considers it safe or appropriate for staff or volunteers to continue to assist the client.
- **Client now requires higher level of care:** the client's increasing dependency or need for assistance has reached the point where the organisation can no longer provide the necessary assistance, and the client is referred to a more appropriate source of care.
- **Client has moved out of area:** the organisation is no longer able to assist the client because their residential location has changed and is out of the geographic area of coverage of the organisation.
- **Client terminated the service:** the client chose to cease services or refuse further assistance from the organisation.
- **Client died**
- **Client no longer eligible:** the client no longer meets the eligibility criteria of the program to receive the service. For example, a program's eligibility might be for children aged 6 – 16, and once the client has turned 17, they are no longer eligible for the service.
- **Client needs have been met:** the client no longer needs assistance from the organisation because their circumstances have improved as a result of the reason they sought assistance and the service they received.
- **None of the above:** the circumstances do not reasonably fit any of the above.

8 Recording client and community SCOREs

The main focus of the partnership approach is collecting information about outcomes achieved for individuals accessing funded activities using SCORE. SCORE is required for a funded activity when stipulated in the funding agreement and/or Program Specific Guidance. Otherwise, organisations may choose to opt into SCORE.

Outcomes are achieved in different ways and progressively over different periods of time. They range from immediate short-term outcomes to longer-term changes that positively affect a client's life circumstances.

SCORE is designed to capture outcomes consistently, in ways that do not impose additional administrative costs on organisations, recognising that organisations are not funded to be specialist researchers or to spend disproportionate amounts of time measuring outcomes.

There are four different types of outcomes measured through SCORE that help tell the story of what was achieved; three for individual clients (their circumstances, goals and satisfaction) and one for a group/community:

- **Circumstances:** changes in client circumstances, such as mental/physical health, material wellbeing and situation.
- **Goals:** progress in achieving specific goals, such as behaviours, skills for lessening the impact of a crisis.
- **Satisfaction:** did the client feel the service met their needs?
- **Community:** changes in group, organisation, and community capacity to address identified needs.

SCOREs are captured at the session level and are reported using a five-point rating scale. This provides a consistent and comparable way to translate outcomes across programs using the Data Exchange.

Unless otherwise specified in the Program Specific Guidance, organisations reporting SCORE agree to the following minimum requirements for SCORE data:

- Report an initial and at least one subsequent Circumstance SCORE for at least 50 per cent of clients that have client records
- Report an initial and at least one subsequent Goals SCORE for at least 50 per cent of clients that have client records
- Report satisfaction SCOREs for at least 10 per cent of clients that have client records.

A client Circumstances and Goals SCORE assessment should be recorded at least twice – towards the beginning of service delivery (pre-SCORE) and again towards the end (post-SCORE). Where practical, organisations should record a SCORE assessment every six months to track how the client's outcomes change over time. For short term service delivery, pre-SCOREs and post-SCOREs can be recorded across a shorter period, including in the same session for one-off service delivery.

Satisfaction SCOREs should be recorded at the end of service delivery.

Organisations may also report Community SCORE.

Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) for Program Specific Guidance information on SCORE and the Translation Matrix

8.1 How to collect and report SCORE

Organisations have the flexibility to record outcomes directly into SCORE, or to use externally validated instruments or internally developed tools.

Many organisations use a diverse range of instruments and methods for measuring and assessing client and community outcomes, often linked to organisational and sector specific priorities. The SCORE tool allows organisations to measure outcomes using existing validated outcomes tools but report them through SCORE so as to be captured in a consistent and comparable way.

A validated outcomes tool is psychometrically tested for reliability (the ability of the instrument to produce consistent results), validity (the ability of the instrument to produce true results), and sensitivity (the probability of correctly identifying a client with the condition). A translation matrix was developed to help organisations convert results from common validated outcomes tools (such as Kessler 10) into SCORE. Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) for the Translation Matrix.

The translation matrix may also be used to translate other existing outcomes measurement tools used by the organisation to SCORE. For example, if an organisation is using an outcomes measurement tool that is used and reported on by other evaluators and researchers to measure changes in client or community circumstances on a numerical scale, they can create a 'concordance' table to report these outcomes as part of the Data Exchange.

If the organisation does not use existing validated outcomes tools, they can use SCORE as an outcomes measurement tool. Alternatively, organisations may prefer to adapt the SCORE scales and domains to create their own generic outcomes measurement tool that is adjusted for their service.

A SCORE may be determined by the practitioner's professional assessment, a client's self-assessment, a joint assessment between the client and practitioner, or an assessment by the client's support person (such as a carer).

When reporting SCORE information into the Data Exchange, the 'Assessed by' field captures whether a validated tool was used, and who made the assessment. Where an organisation uses:

- a validated outcomes tool, they should select 'Validated outcomes tool' along with who made the assessment
- SCORE (or their own generic) outcomes measurement tool, they should select 'SCORE directly' along with who made the assessment.

While 'Assessed by' is a voluntary field, it is recommended organisations report who conducted the assessment and the type of tool used.

Organisations are encouraged to collect SCORE in a way that best suits their own unique service delivery context.

8.2 Collecting and reporting client Circumstances SCOREs

Unless otherwise specified in the Program Specific Guidance, organisations who participate in the partnership approach agree to report an initial and at least one subsequent Circumstances SCORE of the relevant domain(s) for at least 50 per cent of clients that have client records.

It is valuable to have multiple SCOREs for all clients; however, it is recognised that there are a range of situations where this may not be possible. For example, subsequent SCOREs may not be able to be recorded due to clients unexpectedly exiting a service.

8.2.1 Circumstance domains

The Circumstance SCORE is linked to eleven outcome domains. The type of outcome domain that is relevant to each client depends on the context of the funded activity being delivered.

Providers are, at a minimum, required to report SCOREs for Circumstance domains listed in the Program Specific Guidance, as relevant to the services delivered. Organisations should otherwise report a rating against the domain(s) that are most relevant for their client and the outcomes they are aiming to achieve.

The Circumstance domain descriptions are:

- **Physical health:** the funded activity is seeking to change the impact of a client's physical health to improve their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Mental health, wellbeing and self-care:** the funded activity is seeking to change the impact of a client's mental health and self-care, to improve their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Personal and family safety:** the funded activity is seeking to change the impact of personal and family safety issues to improve the client's independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Age-appropriate development:** the funded activity is seeking to improve a client's age-appropriate development to improve the client's independence, participation and wellbeing.

- **Community participation and networks:** the funded activity is seeking to change the impact of poor community participation and networks to improve a client's independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Family functioning:** the funded activity is seeking to improve family functioning and change its impact, so it enhances the family's independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Financial Resilience:** the funded activity is seeking to change the impact of poor money management to improve the client's independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Employment:** the funded activity is seeking to change the impact of a client's lack of employment on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Education and skills training:** the funded activity is seeking to change the impact of a client's ability to engage with education and skills training on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Material wellbeing and basic necessities:** the funded activity is seeking to change the impact of the client's immediate lack of money and basic items needed for day-to-day living to improve their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Housing:** the funded activity is seeking to improve the client's housing stability or address the impact of poor housing to improve their independence, participation and wellbeing.

8.2.2 Circumstance rating scale

A five-point rating scale is used to report changes in client outcomes when using SCORE. For Circumstances SCOREs:

- 1:** is used to report that the client's current circumstances are having a significant **negative impact** on their independence, participation and wellbeing. For example, a significant negative impact may be a lack of safe housing on an individual's independence, or poor family functioning that impacts on the client's wellbeing.
- 2:** is used to report that the client's current circumstances are having a **moderate negative impact** on their independence, participation and wellbeing—for example, a moderate negative impact of poor physical health that impacts on their independence; or a moderate negative impact of family functioning on the client's wellbeing.
- 3:** is used to report that the client's current circumstances are in a '**middle ground**' between the significant/moderate negative impacts (indicated by Ratings 1 and 2) and the adequate circumstances over the short and medium term (indicated by Ratings 4 and 5). For example, progress towards improving a client's community participation without having reached a point where the client's current circumstances are adequate over the short or medium term.
- 4:** is used to report that the client's current circumstances are **adequate over the short term** to support their independence, participation and wellbeing—for example, adequate access to money to meet basic needs in the short-term; adequate family functioning to support the family's wellbeing in the short-term.
- 5:** is used to report that the client's current circumstances are **adequate and stable over the medium term** to support their independence, participation and wellbeing—for example, adequate and stable money management to support an individual's independence; adequate and stable family functioning to support the family's wellbeing.

To record a client SCORE, organisations need to record a rating between 1 and 5 against a relevant domain.

A summary of the scale for the Circumstance SCORE is:

Table 3. Circumstances SCORE domains

Circumstance SCORE domain	1: Negative Impact	2: Moderate negative impact	3: Middle ground	4: Adequate over the short term	5: Adequate and stable over the medium term
Physical health	Significant negative impact of poor physical health on independence, participation and wellbeing	Moderate negative impact of poor physical health on independence, participation and wellbeing	Progress towards improving physical health to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Sustained initial improvements in physical health to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate ongoing physical health to support independence, participation and wellbeing
Mental health, wellbeing and self-care	Significant negative impact of poor mental health, wellbeing and self-care on independence, participation and wellbeing	Moderate negative impact of poor mental health, wellbeing and self-care on independence, participation and wellbeing	Progress towards improving mental health, wellbeing and self-care to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate short-term mental health, wellbeing and self-care to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate ongoing mental health, wellbeing and self-care to support independence, participation and wellbeing
Personal and family safety	Significant negative impact of poor personal and family safety on independence, participation and wellbeing	Moderate negative impact of poor personal and family safety on independence, participation and wellbeing	Progress towards improving personal and family safety to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate short-term personal and family safety to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate ongoing personal and family safety to support independence, participation and wellbeing
Age-appropriate development	Significant negative impact of poor age-appropriate development on independence, participation and wellbeing	Moderate negative impact of poor age-appropriate development on independence, participation and wellbeing	Progress towards improving age-appropriate development to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate short-term age-appropriate development to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate ongoing age-appropriate development to support independence, participation and wellbeing
Community participation and networks	Significant negative impact of poor community participation and networks on independence, participation and wellbeing	Moderate negative impact of poor community participation and networks on independence, participation and wellbeing	Progress towards improving community participation and networks to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate short-term community participation and networks to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate ongoing community participation and networks to support independence, participation and wellbeing
Family functioning	Significant negative impact of poor family functioning on independence, participation and wellbeing	Moderate negative impact of poor family functioning on independence, participation and wellbeing	Progress towards improving family functioning to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate short-term family functioning to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate ongoing family functioning to support independence, participation and wellbeing

Circumstance SCORE domain	1: Negative Impact	2: Moderate negative impact	3: Middle ground	4: Adequate over the short term	5: Adequate and stable over the medium term
Financial resilience	Significant negative impact of poor financial resilience on independence, participation and wellbeing	Moderate negative impact of poor financial resilience on independence, participation and wellbeing	Progress towards improving financial resilience to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate short-term financial resilience to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate ongoing financial resilience to support independence, participation and wellbeing
Material wellbeing and basic necessities	Significant negative impact of lack of basic material resources on independence, participation and wellbeing	Moderate negative impact of lack of basic material resources on independence, participation and wellbeing	Progress towards stability in meeting basic material needs to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate short-term basic material resources to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate ongoing basic material resources to support independence, participation and wellbeing
Employment	Significant negative impact of lack of employment on independence, participation and wellbeing	Moderate negative impact of lack of employment on independence, participation and wellbeing	Progress towards improving employment to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate short-term employment to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate ongoing employment to support independence, participation and wellbeing
Education and skills training	Significant negative impact of lack of engagement with education and training on independence, participation and wellbeing	Moderate negative impact of lack of engagement with education and training on independence, participation and wellbeing	Progress towards improving engagement with education and training to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate short-term engagement with education and training to support independence, participation and wellbeing	Adequate ongoing engagement with education and training to support independence, participation and wellbeing
Housing	Significant negative impact of poor housing on independence, participation and wellbeing e.g. 'rough sleeping'	Moderate negative impact of poor housing on independence, participation and wellbeing e.g. living in severe overcrowding; or at significant risk of tenancy failure	Progress towards housing stability to support independence, participation and wellbeing e.g. supported transitional housing	Adequate short-term housing stability to support independence, participation and wellbeing e.g. supported transitional housing	Adequate ongoing housing stability to support independence, participation and wellbeing e.g. stable private rental or social housing

A client friendly, plain English version of the Circumstances SCORE domains has been developed to help organisations present SCORE to clients. Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) for How to use SCORE with clients.

8.3 Collecting and reporting client Goals SCOREs

Unless otherwise specified in the Program Specific Guidance, organisations who participate in the partnership approach agree to report an initial and at least one subsequent Goals SCORE of the relevant domain(s) for at least 50 percent of clients that have a client record.

It is valuable to have multiple SCOREs for all clients however, it is recognised that there are a range of situations where this may not be possible. There are occasions where follow-up SCOREs may not be able to be recorded due to clients unexpectedly exiting a service.

A client Goals SCORE is a measure of the extent of achievement of a client's individual goals. The term 'goal' is used very broadly. In some service contexts, goals refer to planned objectives that are documented in the client's case plan. In other situations, goals are better described as simply the things clients want help with. In both scenarios, the client Goals SCORE is used to measure the goal attainment or extent to which the organisation is able to address the things a client sought help with.

8.3.1 Goals domains

The Goals SCORE is linked to six outcome domains. The type of outcome domain relevant to each client depends on the context of goals a client wants to achieve and the funded activity being delivered.

Organisations are, at a minimum, required to report SCORE ratings for Goals domains listed in the Program Specific Guidance, as relevant to the services delivered. Organisations should otherwise report a rating against the domain(s) that are most relevant for their client and the outcomes they are aiming to achieve.

The goal domain descriptions are:

- **Changed knowledge and access to information:** the funded activity is seeking to change a client's knowledge and understanding of issues to improve their independence, participation and wellbeing or to improve their access to relevant information about these issues.
- **Changed skills:** the funded activity is seeking to enhance a client's skills set to improve their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Changed behaviours:** the funded activity is seeking to change a client's behaviours to improve their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Empowerment, choice and control to make own decisions:** the funded activity is seeking to enhance a client's confidence, choice and control to make their own decisions and take empowerment on issues that impact on their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Engagement with relevant support services:** the funded activity is seeking to improve a client's engagement with services to support their independence, participation and wellbeing.
- **Changed impact of immediate crisis:** the funded activity is seeking to address or reduce the impact of an immediate crisis to improve the client's independence, participation and wellbeing.

8.3.2 Goals rating scale

A five-point rating scale is used to report changes in client outcomes when using SCORE. For Goals SCOREs:

- 1: is used to report that the client has made **no progress** in achieving their individual goals within the selected goal domain.
- 2: is used to report that the client has made **limited progress** in achieving their individual goals within the selected goal domain but there is **emerging engagement** in addressing the issues they sought assistance with.
- 3: is used to report that the client has made **limited progress** in achieving their individual goals within the selected goal domain but there is **strong engagement** in addressing the issues they sought assistance with.

4: is used to report that the client has made **moderate progress** in achieving their individual goals within the selected goal domain.

5: is used to report that the client has **fully achieved** their individual goals within the selected outcomes domain.

To record a client SCORE, organisations need to record a rating between 1 and 5 against a relevant domain. A summary of the scale for the Goals SCORE is:

Table 4. Goals SCORE domains

Goal SCORE domain	1: No progress	2: Limited progress with emerging engagement	3: Limited progress with strong engagement	4: Moderate progress	5: Fully achieved
Knowledge and access to information	No progress in increasing access to information and knowledge in areas relevant to clients' needs and circumstances	Limited progress to date in achieving information/knowledge goals—but emerging engagement	Limited progress to date in achieving information/knowledge goals—but strong engagement	Moderate progress to date in achieving information/knowledge goals	Full achievement of goals related to increasing access to information and knowledge in areas relevant to client's needs and circumstances
Skills	No progress in increasing skills in areas relevant to client's needs and circumstances	Limited progress to date in achieving skills goals—but emerging engagement	Limited progress to date in achieving skills goals—but strong engagement	Moderate progress to date in achieving skills goals	Full achievement of goals related to increasing skills in areas relevant to client's needs and circumstances
Behaviours	No progress in changing behaviours in areas relevant to client's needs and circumstances	Limited progress to date in achieving behaviour goals—but emerging engagement	Limited progress to date in achieving behaviour goals—but strong engagement	Moderate progress to date in achieving behaviour goals	Full achievement of goals related to changing behaviours in areas relevant to client's needs and circumstances
Empowerment, choice and control to make own decisions	No progress in increasing confidence and exercising choice/control in making decisions that impact client's needs	Limited progress to date in achieving empowerment, choice and control goals—but emerging engagement	Limited progress to date in achieving empowerment, choice and control goals—but strong engagement	Moderate progress to date in achieving empowerment, choice and control goals	Full achievement of goals related to increasing confidence and exercising choice/control in making decisions that impact client's needs
Engagement with support services	No progress in increasing engagement with support services relevant to client's needs and circumstances	Limited progress to date in achieving engagement goals—but emerging engagement	Limited progress to date in achieving engagement goals—but strong engagement	Moderate progress to date in achieving engagement goals	Full achievement of goals related to increasing engagement with support services relevant to client's needs and circumstances

Goal SCORE domain	1: No progress	2: Limited progress with emerging engagement	3: Limited progress with strong engagement	4: Moderate progress	5: Fully achieved
Impact of immediate crisis	No progress in reducing the negative impact of the immediate crisis	Limited progress to date in achieving goals to reduce the negative impact— but emerging engagement	Limited progress to date in achieving goals to reduce the negative impact— but strong engagement	Moderate progress to date in achieving goals to reduce the negative impact	Full achievement of goals related to reducing the negative impact of the immediate crisis

A client friendly, plain English version of the Goals SCORE domains has been developed to help organisations present SCORE to clients. Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) for How to use SCORE with clients.

8.4 Collecting and reporting client Satisfaction SCOREs

Unlike the other areas of SCORE, satisfaction is only measured at the end of service delivery. Unless otherwise specified in the Program Specific Guidance, organisations who participate in the partnership approach agree to report client Satisfaction SCOREs for a small sample of their clients (at least 10 per cent per reporting period).

It is valuable to have Satisfaction SCOREs for all clients, however this may be time consuming for some organisations to collect. There can also be situations where SCOREs cannot be collected, such as clients unexpectedly exiting a service.

8.4.1 Satisfaction domains

The Satisfaction SCORE relates to three key questions about a client's perceptions of the responsiveness and value of the service received:

- The service listened to me and understood my issues
- I am satisfied with the services I have received
- I am better able to deal with issues that I sought help with.

8.4.2 Satisfaction rating scale

A five-point rating scale is used to report changes in client outcomes when using SCORE. This scale is used for all four SCORE components (Circumstances, Goals, Satisfaction and Community):

- 1: is used to report that the client **disagrees** with the statement about the service (for example, disagrees that the service listened to them and understood their issues).
- 2: is used to report that the client **tends to disagree** with the statement about the service (for example, tends to disagree that the service listened to them and understood their issues).
- 3: is used to report that the client **neither agrees or disagrees** with the statement about the service (for example, neither agrees nor disagrees that the service listened to them and understood their issues).
- 4: is used to report that the client **tends to agree** with the statement about the service (for example, tends to agree that the service listened to them and understood their issues).
- 5: is used to report that the client **agrees** with the statement about the service (for example, agrees that the service listened to them and understood their issues).

To record a client SCORE, organisations need to record a rating between 1 and 5 against a relevant domain.

A summary of the scale for the Satisfaction SCORE is:

Table 5. Satisfaction SCORE domains

Satisfaction SCORE domain	1: Disagree	2: Tend to disagree	3: Neither agree nor disagree	4: Tend to agree	5: Agree
The service listened to me and understood my issues	Disagrees that the service listened to me and understood my issues	Tend to disagree that the service listened to me and understood my issues	Neither agrees nor disagrees that the service listened to me and understood my issues	Tends to agree that the service listened to me and understood my issues	Agrees that the service listened to me and understood my issues
I am satisfied with the services I have received	I am not satisfied with the services I have received	Tends to disagree that I was satisfied with the services I have received	Neither agrees nor disagrees that the services listened to me and understood my issues	Tends to agree that I was satisfied with the services I have received	I am satisfied with the services I have received
I am better able to deal with issues that I sought help with	Disagrees that I am better able to deal with my issues	Tend to disagree that I am better able to deal with my issues	Neither agrees nor disagrees that I am better able to deal with my issues	Tends to agree that that I am better able to deal with my issues	Agrees that that I am better able to deal with my issues

A client friendly, plain English version of the Satisfaction SCORE domains has been developed to help organisations present SCORE to clients. Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) for How to use SCORE with clients.

8.4.3 Satisfaction SCORE data collection methods

Given that Satisfaction SCOREs are intended to be collected as part of good practice service delivery, each organisation is responsible for ensuring that the data collection process is ethical and reliable.

It is important that client satisfaction feedback is voluntary and that it does not cause discomfort or anxiety for clients. In particular, the pre-existing relationship between clients and the organisation may bias client results. A number of measures are taken to ensure that clients understand the nature of participating and their options:

- All participants are provided with information that makes it clear that completing the survey to measure their outcomes is voluntary.
- Participants are provided with information that makes it clear that the purpose of collecting the client feedback is to improve services.
- Participants should be encouraged to share their honest views and to make constructive suggestions if they think the service could be improved.

8.4.4 Client confidentiality

It is important that clients can provide feedback anonymously. There is a range of ways to achieve this, for example:

- The client feedback is collected by a person not directly involved in service delivery.
- Using a survey so that clients can complete and submit without showing the organisation their response.
- If paper-based forms are used, consider using sealed envelopes for returning completed surveys

8.5 Collecting and reporting Community SCOREs

Organisations who participate in the partnership approach agree to report Community SCOREs for the majority of group or community sessions where it is not feasible to record the changes for individual clients.

8.5.1 Community domains

The Community SCORE is linked to four domains that reflect changes that may occur for a group or community rather than individual clients:

- Group/Community knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours for a group of clients or community members participating in the service (where it is not feasible to record the changes for individual members of the group or community)
- Organisational knowledge, skills and practices to better respond to the needs of targeted clients or communities.
- Community infrastructure and networks to better respond to the needs of targeted clients and communities.
- Social cohesion to demonstrate greater community cohesion and social harmony.

Organisations are, at a minimum, required to report SCOREs for Community domains listed in the Program Specific Guidance.

8.5.2 Community rating scale

A five-point rating scale is used to report changes in community outcomes when using SCORE. For Community SCOREs:

- 1: is used to report **no change** in the group/organisation/community capacity to address or respond to their own needs or the needs of targeted clients and communities.
- 2: is used to report **limited change** in the group/organisation/community capacity to address or respond to their own needs or the needs of targeted clients and communities, but there is **emerging engagement** in addressing the issues.
- 3: is used to report **limited change** in the group/organisation/community capacity to address or respond to their own needs or the needs of targeted clients and communities, but there is **strong engagement** in addressing the issues.
- 4: is used to report **moderate change** in the group/organisation/community capacity to address or respond to their own needs or the needs of targeted clients and communities.
- 5: is used to report **significant change** in the group/organisation/community capacity to address or respond to their own needs or the needs of targeted clients and communities.

To record a Community SCORE, organisations need to record a rating between 1 and 5 against a relevant domain. A summary of the scale for the Community SCORE is:

Table 6. Community SCORE domains

Community SCORE domain	1: No change	2: Limited change with emerging engagement	3: Limited change with strong engagement	4: Moderate change	5: Significant change
Group/community knowledge, skills, attitudes behaviours	No change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours	Limited change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours—but emerging engagement	Limited change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours—but strong engagement	Moderate change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours	Significant positive change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours
Organisational knowledge, skills and practices	No change in organisational knowledge, skills, practices to respond to the needs of targeted clients/communities	Limited change in organisational knowledge, skills, practices—but emerging engagement	Limited change in organisational knowledge, skills, practices—but strong engagement	Moderate change in organisational knowledge, skills, practices	Significant positive change in organisational knowledge, skills, behaviours to better respond to the needs of targeted clients/communities
Community infrastructure and networks	No change in community infrastructure/networks to respond to the needs of targeted clients/communities	Limited change in community infrastructure/networks—but emerging engagement of community networks	Limited change in community infrastructure/networks—but strong engagement of community networks	Moderate change in community infrastructure/networks	Significant positive change in community infrastructure/networks to better respond to the needs of targeted clients/communities
Social cohesion	No change in demonstration of greater community cohesion and social harmony	Limited change in demonstration of greater community cohesion and social harmony—but emerging engagement in issues	Limited change in demonstration of greater community cohesion and social harmony—but stronger engagement in issues	Moderate demonstration of greater community cohesion and social harmony	Significant positive demonstration of greater community cohesion and social harmony

9 Program specific surveys

As the host of the Data Exchange, the department is looking at additional ways to better understand how funded services are achieving outcomes for individuals and communities.

Asking clients if they would like to participate in follow-up research, such as surveys and evaluation, forms part of the Data Exchange priority requirements—the standardised core set of mandatory reporting that applies to all Data Exchange in-scope programs.

Following a survey pilot in 2016 and extensive consultations with organisations and other stakeholders, DSS has decided to implement program specific surveys, rather than a generalised outcomes survey for all Data Exchange clients.

9.1 Client surveys

In 2018, the department commenced a program specific survey for the Try Test and Learn Fund. All organisations funded to deliver the Try Test and Learn Fund are required to offer clients the program specific survey, as part of the Try Test and Learn Fund evaluation.

In 2022, the department engaged Australian Survey Research Pty Ltd (ASR), to develop and host a client survey. The primary purpose of the survey is to collect valuable feedback from clients about the DSS funded services they are receiving. The results from the client survey provided an additional data source to inform targets and support decision-making and service delivery. Programs involved in the Client Survey were Families and Children program activities, Financial Wellbeing and Capability program activities and National Disability Advocacy program activities.

10 Data Exchange reports

As part of the Data Exchange, all organisations that use the Data Exchange will have access to their own set of reports, which reflect the information submitted by their organisation. All available reports are accessed via the Data Exchange web-based portal. The ability to access the data and run reports will reflect the level of user access within the organisation.

Go to the [Data Exchange website](#) for detailed information on this topic and access to related information.

10.1 Report types

Standard self-service reports

These reports cover the mandatory priority data submitted by the organisation during a particular reporting period. For a current open reporting period the report will refresh every 24 hours to allow near real-time access to the information transmitted.

Partnership approach reports

Organisations participating in the partnership approach have access to a sophisticated suite of additional reports. Using both priority requirement data and extended partnership data, combined with government and population data sets, these reports provide valuable insights into service delivery and client outcomes.

10.2 Benefits of reports

Reports make the data entered visible and enables verification of data quality and integrity. They also provide organisations with an evidence base for evaluation and to inform best practice. The Data Exchange uses de-identified, aggregate information to look at both short- and long-term outcomes achieved for clients across the broad suite of in-scope programs. The reports allow for an understanding of the collective impact of service provided and what combinations of services deliver the best outcomes for clients.

10.3 Access and visibility of reports

Within the Data Exchange, access and visibility of reports will depend on the way organisations set up their outlets and delivery partners.

By default, organisations cannot see a delivery partner's data. However, the 'handshake' allows the sharing of reports data in the form of de-identified, aggregate information. The handshake is a virtual agreement between a lead organisation and their delivery partner(s), to share data from the delivery partner to the lead organisation for their activity. Under a handshake, a lead organisation can only access data reported by the delivery partner for the agreed program(s).

11 Administrative matters

11.1 In-scope program activities for the Data Exchange

A list of program activities in-scope for the Data Exchange can be found in the program specific guidance material located on the [Data Exchange website](#). This list is updated on a regular basis as new program activities start using the Data Exchange.

11.2 Access and set-up

In order to use the Data Exchange, an organisation must complete a number of access and set-up steps before client and session information is entered into the system. Organisations are strongly encouraged to complete these steps as early as possible in the reporting period.

They include:

- applying for Digital ID online
- submitting a User Access Request to the Data Exchange Helpdesk
- accessing the Data Exchange web-based portal to set up their organisation
- create Outlets
- add program activities to Outlets
- add delivery partner details (if required)
- create additional users (if required)
- setting up bulk uploads (if required).

Go to the 'Quick Start Guide' on the [Data Exchange website](#).

Completing access and set-up steps in a timely manner is the responsibility of the organisation as part of their funding agreement obligations.

If these steps are completed too close to the end of a reporting period, the department may not be able to process access and set-up requests with sufficient time remaining for the organisation to complete their data reporting before the due date.

11.3 Reporting periods and deadlines

The Data Exchange has two standardised six-monthly performance reporting periods each year:

1 January to 30 June

30 day close-off period – ends 30 July

1 July to 31 December

30 day close-off period – ends 30 January

Users of the Data Exchange have an extra 30 days at the end of each reporting period, known as the 'close-off period', to allow time to quality check their data and make amendments to reported data. After the 30-day close-off period the Data Exchange automatically closes and no longer accepts uploads for that reporting period.

Organisations can enter data at any time within a reporting period and are encouraged to do so regularly to make best use of the self-service reports and avoid unnecessary backlog or 'crunch' periods. Organisations new to the Data Exchange, in particular, need to plan for and allow sufficient time for access, set-up and other lead times, in order to meet reporting deadlines.

Once a reporting period has closed, data relating to that period of time will no longer be able to be recorded. Data outside of a reporting period may only be entered if an organisation has sought and is granted a system re-opening.

11.4 Compliance issues and system re-open requests

If an organisation experiences a crisis or event outside of their control that will impact their ability to meet performance reporting requirements, they can request a re-opening of the system.

System re-opening requests are submitted via the 'Request to re-open the Data Exchange form' on the [Data Exchange website](#), however organisations should also consult with their Funding Arrangement Manager or funding agency contact.

System re-openings will only be granted under exceptional circumstances following consultation with Funding Arrangement Managers. Submission of a request does not guarantee a system re-opening will be granted.

11.5 Flexible ways to transmit data

Users can transmit their data to the Data Exchange in one of three ways; system-to-system transfer, bulk file upload, or manual entry into the web-based portal. It is recommended to select one of these as the main transmission method for the longer term. However, in some circumstances, such as the period of initial transition into the Data Exchange, manual entry may need to be used in combination with another transmission method.

Digital ID is a safe, secure and convenient way for Australians to prove who they are online. You can also link your Digital ID to an Australian business to act on its behalf. Digital ID allows you to verify your identity, much like a digital version of a 100-point ID check.

Once set up your Digital ID, you can reuse it whenever you are asked to prove who you are to access a range of government online services for both personal and business matters. More information about Digital ID can be found [here](#).

At least one person within each organisation will need to complete and submit the Data Exchange User Access Request Form to have Org Administrator access to the Data Exchange. We recommend multiple employees of each organisation hold a Digital ID. The User Access form is on the [Data Exchange website](#).

NOTE: Digital ID is DSS' preferred way to log into DEX. To discuss other options for accessing DEX, please email the Data Exchange Helpdesk.

11.5.1 System-to-system transfers

Organisations with their own client management software systems capable of pushing data via web services through to the Data Exchange can continue using this software to collect and transfer their performance data. Organisations will need to make a one-off adjustment (or 'enhancement') to their application in accordance with the Data Exchange Web Service technical specifications. The technical specifications are updated periodically to reflect enhancements to the Data Exchange system and are on the [Data Exchange website](#)

11.5.2 Bulk File Upload

Organisations with their own client management software systems capable of creating and exporting XML files can continue using this software to collect and transfer their performance data. Organisations will need to make a one-off adjustment (or 'enhancement') to their application in accordance with the Data Exchange bulk upload technical specifications. The technical specifications are updated periodically to reflect enhancements to the Data Exchange system and are on the [Data Exchange website](#).

11.5.3 Free web-based portal

Organisations can use the Data Exchange web-based portal to manually input their data. Once saved in the portal, data is automatically submitted to the Data Exchange. The web-based portal can be used to directly input client data that is relevant to performance reporting. This option is available for organisations who do not have a system or whose systems cannot accommodate the requirements to submit data through system-to-system transfers or bulk file upload

The Data Exchange web-based portal collects the data requirements set out in this document and is available to all organisations funded to deliver in-scope program activities.

Organisations that already have their own case/client management system and submit their data by system-to-system transfers or bulk upload can access the web-based portal to use the Data Exchange functionality. For example, organisations who report information (consistent with the priority requirements) via a system-to-system transfer or bulk upload, may also use the web-based portal to record SCORE information about changes to their client's circumstances, goals and outcomes (consistent with the extended data items in the partnership approach). This approach is useful where the functionality for recording and reporting the extended data items is not available within an organisation's existing client management system.

Organisations who choose to report using both their client management systems (i.e. via a system-to-system transfer or bulk upload) and the web-based portal are able to view the records of their clients from the web-based portal to monitor and manage the services they provide to these clients.

11.6 Organisations no longer reporting via the Data Exchange

Organisations that report performance data in the Data Exchange are able to receive self-service reports on the data submitted for that period. They will not be able to enter any additional data for a period that has closed or for any periods where they do not have an active funding agreement.

If an organisation is continuing to report on other active activities in the Data Exchange, they will have access to Data Exchange reports for all activities they are funded to deliver. Organisations retain access to the Data Exchange portal and self-service reports for at least one full reporting period (six months) after their last activity has ceased.

11.7 Training materials and help

Users of the Data Exchange web-based portal can access self-guided training material on the [Data Exchange website](#)

Task cards

Task cards take users step-by-step through the processes required to create and manage records in the Data Exchange web-based portal.

e-Learning modules

Users of the Data Exchange can also access a suite of training videos known as e-Learning modules. These videos are on the [Data Exchange website](#).

The Data Exchange Helpdesk

The Helpdesk is available to provide technical help to users of the Data Exchange.

You can contact the Data Exchange Helpdesk by email to dssdataexchange.helpdesk@dss.gov.au...

12 List of data values

Table 7. Priority requirements: client level data

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Client ID	5.6.3	Free text limit of 50 characters. If left blank a system generated number is assigned in the web-based portal, beginning at 001.
Given name *	6.1.1	Free text limit of 30 characters
Family name *	6.1.1	Free text limit of 30 characters
Date of birth *	6.1.2	Date format of dd/mm/yyyy
Estimated date of birth *	6.1.2	Tick box
Pseudonym used	6.1.1	Tick box
Gender *	6.1.3	Man or male Woman or female Non-binary [I/They] use a different term (please specify) Not stated
Residential address	6.1.4	Residential address line 1 (optional) Address line 2 (optional) Suburb (mandatory) State (mandatory) Post code (limit of 4 digits) (mandatory)
Indigenous status	6.1.6	No Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Not stated/inadequately described
Cultural and Linguistic Diversity: Country of Birth	6.1.7	Drop-down list of values based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC), 2016
Cultural and Linguistic Diversity: Main language spoken at home	6.1.7	Drop-down list of values based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL), 2016

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Disability, impairment or condition indicator	6.1.8	Intellectual/learning Psychiatric Sensory/speech Physical/diverse None (no disability) Not stated/inadequately described
Consent to have personal information stored in the web-based portal	5.2.3	Tick box
Consent to participate in follow up research, surveys and evaluation	5.4	Tick box

*These fields generate a Statistical Linkage Key (SLK).

Table 8. Priority requirements: case level data

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Case ID	6.2.1	Free text limit of 50 characters. If left blank a system generated number is assigned.
Outlet	6.5	In the web-based portal: to be selected from a list of options in the drop-down.
Program Activity	6.2.1	In the web-based portal: to be selected from a list of options in the drop-down. The drop-down will only display program activities that are assigned to the outlet selected.
Unidentified client count	3.8	Free text number only with limit of 999
Attach clients	3.2	In the web-based portal: to be selected from a list of options in the drop-down. The drop-down provides a mechanism to associate one or more client records to the case.

Table 9. Priority requirements: session level data

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Session ID	6.2.2	Free text limit of 50 characters. If left blank a system generated number is assigned.
Session date	6.2.2	Date format of dd/mm/yyyy
Unidentified clients attending this session (optional)	6.2.2	Number field. The default value is 0, maximum 999 (however cannot exceed the value specified at the Case level).
Client attendance	6.2.2	Record for each case clients present at the session.
Service type	6.2.2	The number and variety of service types will depend on the program activity selected. The full list of values relevant to the program is in the program specific guidance document on the Data Exchange website.

Table 10. Commonwealth Home Support Programme: client level data

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Accommodation setting	6.3.1	Boarding house Crisis, emergency or transition Independent living unit Indigenous community/settlement Institutional setting (i.e. residential aged care, hospital) Private residence—client or family owned/purchasing Private residence—private rental Private residence—public rental Public shelter Supported accommodation Other Not stated
Living arrangements	6.3.1	Single (person living alone) Sole parent with dependant(s) Couple Couple with dependant(s) Group (related adults) Group (unrelated adults) Homeless/no household Not stated or inadequately described

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
DVA card status	6.3.1	DVA Gold Card DVA White Card DVA Orange Card or other No DVA entitlement
Existence of Carer	6.3.1	Yes No
Client exit reason	6.3.1	Client no longer requires assistance Service unable to provide assistance Client now requires higher level of care Client has moved out of area Client terminated the service Client died Client no longer eligible Client needs have been met None of the above

Table 11. Commonwealth Home Support Programme: session level data

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Amount of assistance provided	6.3.1	The information required for this field will depend on the service type selected. Go to the program specific guidance documents on the website to determine which fields apply to each service type: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hours/minutes ▪ Quantity ▪ Cost ▪ Type
Fees charged	6.3.1	Number field (whole dollars only) appears where applicable

Table 12. Family Law activities: case/session level data

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Fees charged	6.3.2	Number field (whole dollars only) appears where applicable
Was a parenting agreement reached?	6.3.2	Appears, where applicable when a case is created. The values are: Full Partial Not reached
Date of parenting agreement	6.3.2	Date format of dd/mm/yyyy
Did a legal practitioner assist in parenting mediation sessions?	6.3.2	Yes No
Section 60(l) certificate type	6.3.2	Attended—genuine effort Attended—not genuine effort FDR began—considered inappropriate to continue Matter inappropriate for resolution Not held due to refusal or failure of other person to attend
Date issued (Section 60(l) Certificate)	6.3.2	Date format of dd/mm/yyyy
Was a property agreement reached?	6.3.2	Appears, where applicable when a case is created. The values are: Full Partial Not reached
Date of property agreement	6.3.2	Date format of dd/mm/yyyy
Did a legal practitioner assist in property mediation sessions?	6.3.2	Yes No

Table 13. Financial Wellbeing and Capability: session level data

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Which money management course was delivered?	6.3.3	<p>This question only appears if an applicable activity and service type is selected when the case and session is created. Applicable values are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshop 1 - Making Money Last Until Payday ▪ Workshop 2 - Planning For the Future ▪ Workshop 3 - How Can Banks Help ▪ Workshop 4 - Internet and Phone Banking ▪ Workshop 5 - Credit Can Be a Hazard ▪ Workshop 6 - Money Loans Sharks and Traps ▪ Workshop 7 - A Roof Overhead – Home Ownership ▪ Workshop 8 - A Roof Overhead Tenancy ▪ Workshop 9 - Managing Paperwork ▪ Other workshop

Table 14. National Disability Advocacy Program: session level data

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Topic	6.3.4	<p>Abuse/Neglect/Violence</p> <p>Access to non-NDIS service</p> <p>Child Protection</p> <p>Community Inclusion—Social/Family</p> <p>Disability services complaints</p> <p>Discrimination/rights</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Employment</p> <p>Equipment/aids</p> <p>Finances</p> <p>Government payments</p> <p>Health/ Mental Health</p> <p>Housing/Homelessness</p> <p>Legal/Access to Justice</p> <p>NDIS—Internal Review</p> <p>NDIS—Access/Planning</p> <p>NDIS—Support implementing plan/Accessing services</p> <p>Other</p> <p>Physical access</p> <p>Transport</p> <p>Vulnerable/isolated</p>

Table 15. Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) Program: case/session level data

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Agriculture Business Type	6.3.5	Drop-down list of values based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Division of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC)
Hardship	6.3.5	Biosecurity risks/ events Industry shock Decrease in commodity values Drought (rainfall deficiency) Decrease in asset/ property values Education level and skills Increasing debt Natural disasters Poor business practices Poor business model Poor financial decisions Signification increase in input costs Social/ personal reasons Unforeseen debt/ expenses Other
External Referral Destination	6.3.5	Health professional Financial institution Legal aid/ solicitor Accountant/ financial advisor Real estate agent Agronomist Succession planner Social support group Training organisation Other government agency Asset agent Other

Table 16. Partnership approach: client level data

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Homeless indicator	7.10	Yes No At Risk
Household composition	7.5	Single (person living alone) Sole parent with dependant(s) Couple Couple with dependant(s) Group (related adults) Group (unrelated adults) Homeless/No household Not stated or inadequately described
Highest level of education/qualification	7.6	Pre-primary education Primary education Secondary education Certificate level Advanced diploma and diploma level Bachelor's degree level Graduate diploma and graduate certificate level Postgraduate degree level Other education
Employment status	7.7	Paid work full-time Paid work part-time Unpaid work (includes volunteering) Not working and not looking for work Unemployed (not working but looking for work) Studying full-time Studying part-time Caring Parenting
Main source of income	7.8.1	Nil income Employee salary/wages Other income including superannuation and investments Self-employed (unincorporated business income) Government payments/pensions/allowances Not stated/Inadequately described

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Income frequency	7.8.2	Weekly Fortnightly Monthly Annually
Approximate gross income	7.8.2	Number field (whole dollars only)
Month of first arrival in Australia	7.9	Drop-down menu of twelve-month calendar year
Year of first arrival in Australia	7.9	Drop-down menu of year in chronological order
Visa type	7.9	Humanitarian Family Skilled Other
Ancestry	7.9	Select from the list of values which is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG), 2016
Is client a carer	7.12	Yes No
NDIS eligibility	7.13	NDIS in-progress access request NDIS eligible NDIS ineligible

Table 17. Partnership approach: case level data

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Attendance profile	7.11	Family Community event Peer support group Couple Cohabitants

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Reason for seeking assistance	7.2	Physical health Mental health, wellbeing and self-care Personal and family safety Age-appropriate development Community participation and networks Family functioning Financial resilience Employment Education and skills training Material wellbeing and basic necessities Housing
Referral source	7.3	Health agency Community services agency Educational agency Internal Legal agency Employment/job placement agency Lender/financial agency Accounting agency Centrelink/Department of Human Services (DHS) Other Agency Self Family Friends General Medical Practitioner My Aged Care Gateway Linkages Package Continuity of Support (CoS) Programme Humanitarian Settlement Program LAC Referral NDIS referral Other party Not stated/inadequately described

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Client exit reason	7.16	Client no longer requires assistance Service unable to provide assistance Client now requires higher level of care Client has moved out of area Client terminated the service Client died Client no longer eligible Client needs have been met None of the above

Table 18. Partnership approach: session level data

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Service setting	7.14	Organisation outlet/office Clients' residence Community venue Partner organisation Telephone Video Online service Healthcare facility Education facility Justice facility
Interpreter present	7.15	Yes No
Referral type	7.4	Internal - made to another service offered within the same organisation External - made to a service that is provided by a different organisation

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Referral purpose	7.4	Physical health Mental health, wellbeing & self-care Personal and family safety Age-appropriate development Community participation & networks Financial Resilience Family functioning Employment Education and skills training Material wellbeing and basic necessities Housing Support to caring role Other
Circumstance SCORE domains	8.2.1	Physical health Mental health, wellbeing and self-care Personal and family safety Age-appropriate development Community participation and networks Family functioning Financial resilience Employment Education and skills training Material wellbeing and basic necessities Housing
Goals SCORE domains	8.3.1	Changed knowledge and access to information Changed skills Changed behaviours Empowerment, choice and control to make own decisions Engagement with relevant support services Changed impact of immediate crisis
Satisfaction SCORE domains	8.4.1	I am satisfied with the services I have received The service listened to me and understood my issues I am better able to deal with issues that I sought help with
Community SCORE domains	8.5.1	Community infrastructure and networks Organisational knowledge, skills and practices Group/community knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours Social cohesion

Data Field	Protocols Section	Field Values
Assessed by	8.1	SCORE directly – client SCORE directly – practitioner SCORE directly – joint SCORE directly – support person Validated outcomes tool – client Validated outcomes tool – practitioner Validated outcomes tool – joint Validated outcomes tool – support person

13 Version history

Version 13, Effective from 1 March 2026, published 2 February 2026

The department released version 13 to clarify reporting requirements for client-level data, explain privacy protocols in plain English and improve understanding of SCORE.

- **Chapter 1 – Introduction**
 - Outlines the benefits of DEX data collection and reporting
- **Chapter 2 – Data Exchange organisation and user responsibilities**
 - Requires organisations and users to comply with applicable legislation, including the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- **Chapter 3 – Recording Client Level Data**
 - **Section 3.1** – Clarifies requirement for organisations to request collection of client-level data from clients directly receiving services, noting clients must consent to the collection.
 - **Section 3.6** - Definition of group session and requirements for collecting and reporting client-level data clarified
 - **Section 3.6.1** - Group session census requirements added as a minimum requirement for collecting and reporting client-level data for group sessions. The Group session census applies to eligible DSS programs, only.
 - **Section 3.7** - Definition of community session added
 - **Section 3.8** – Clarifies definition of unidentified client and circumstance in which unidentified clients may be reported.
- **Chapter 5 - Protecting a client's personal information**
 - Updates throughout aim to explain privacy protocols in plain English. Reordering of sections to improve flow.
 - **Section 5.2.1** – Standard privacy notice updated
 - **Section 5.4.2** – Clarified that the Client Id should not contain identifying information, such as the My Aged Care Id
 - **Section 5.5** – Clarified consent requirements for follow up research
- **Chapter 7 – Collecting partnership approach data**
 - Notes the Partnership approach is required for a funded activity when stipulated in the Program Specific Guidance
- **Chapter 8 – Recording client and community SCOREs**
 - Updated for readability and consistency
 - Notes the SCORE is required for a funded activity when stipulated in the Program Specific Guidance
 - Notes Circumstance and Goals SCOREs are now required for 'at least 50% of clients with a client record'.
- **Chapter 11 – Administrative Matters**
 - Minor changes to reflect the change of Digital Identity to Digital ID

Version 12, August 2024

The department released version 12 to clearly define organisations' responsibilities (and recommended processes and controls) for:

- promoting awareness of, and compliance with the Data Exchange Protocols within their organisation and
- obtaining accurate, complete, unbiased and secure collection and recording of data in the Data Exchange.

Upon request from the department, DSS-funded providers may be required to attest to and/or provide evidence of processes and controls used to meet the above responsibilities. DSS may request to visit organisations' premises to observe these processes in practice.

- **Chapter 2** – New chapter, Data Exchange Organisation and User Responsibilities, replacing the former section, Data Exchange User Responsibilities
- **Section 5.17** – New section, Cyber Security and Data Breaches, outlines organisation responsibilities (and suggested processes and controls) for preventing and responding to cyber security incidents and data breaches.

Version 11, March 2024

The department released version 11 to reflect changes in the gender values recorded in the Data Exchange. Addition changes included simplification of language

- **Chapter 1** – referencing the Program Specific Guidance added as a support document to the protocols
- **Section 3.3** – simplified language on recording extended data items at a session level

- **Chapter 4** – clarification on the definition of personal information, when it is appropriate to store personal information on the Data Exchange and when client notification and consent requirements should be applied.
- **Section 5.1.3** – gender details have been updated in response to system change
- **Chapter 6** – clarification on what is the Partnership Approach.
- **Chapter 7** – minor edits to clarify how SCORE assessments are paired.

Version 10, April 2023

The department released version 10 following a review of the protocols and in response to a change in the Data Exchange Helpdesk operating hours. The changes are:

- **Section 1.2** – updated text describing the free access to a web-based portal
- **Section 2.3** – updated definition of a support person
- **Section 3.2** – clarification of case limits reported into the Data Exchange
- **Sections 4.2, 4.2.2, 10.5.3 & 10.6** – removal of reference to the Data Exchange being a client management system
- **Sections 4.2.1 & 4.2.3** – amended the standard notification on privacy to include verbal consent wording
- **Section 4.2.2** - removal of reference to the Data Exchange being a client management system
- **Section 4.7.1** - removal of broken SLK581 hyperlink
- **Section 8.1** – added information on the 2022 Client Survey
- **Section 10.8** – removed reference to the Data Exchange Helpdesk operating hours

Version 9, July 2022

Minor changes to reflect continuing implementation of the trusted digital identity framework through myGovID. The changes are:

- **Section 10.2** – updated one of the steps that reflect applying for a Digital Identity online
- **Section 10.5** – replaced myGovID wording with Digital Identity and added link to Digital Identity website

Version 8, June 2021

The department released version 8 of the protocols to capture the introduction of program specific fields for Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS). The changes are:

- **Section 5.3.5** – addition of program specific fields for Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) Program
- **Section 6.3** – addition of new Referral sources, 'Lender/financial agency', and 'Accounting agency'
- **Section 11** – added and updated data values for above fields

Version 7, January 2021

The department released version 7 of the protocols to capture the 'Exit Reason' field changing from being a program specific data item to an optional partnership approach field, the introduction of program specific 'property agreement' fields for Family Law Services, and the expanded values for 'Service Setting'. The changes are:

- **Section 5.3.2** – addition of program specific fields for Family Law Services Program
- **Section 6.8** – updated section name 'Household Income' to 'Income'
- **Section 6.14** – addition of 'Video' category, and the description of 'Digital' updated to 'Online Service' for the Service Setting field.
- **Section 6.16** – addition of 'Exit Reason' partnership approach field
- **Section 11** – updated data values for above fields

Version 6.1, September 2020

Minor changes to reflect digital identity through myGovID. The changes are:

- **Section 6.14** – addition of recording alternate service delivery
- **Section 10** – removal of AUSKey, addition of myGovID to the access and set-up steps, flexible ways to transmit data and advice for organisations no longer reporting via the Data Exchange.

Version 6, October 2019

The department released version 6 of the protocols following a review of readability and accessibility. All sections were changed to improve reading ease.

The section on client surveys was clarified to reflect that the department will no longer be implementing a generalised outcomes survey to all Data Exchange clients. Instead, program specific surveys will be implemented where required.

Version 5, November 2018

The department released version 5 of the protocols in October 2018 to reflect the August 2018 system enhancements. Details of the August 2018 enhancements are on the Data Exchange website. The changes are:

- **Various sections** - 'service provider' replaced with 'organisation'. This is a better reflection of who is reporting into the Data Exchange.
- **Section 5** - addition of program specific fields for Career Pathways Pilot for Humanitarian Entrants and the National Disability Advocacy Program
- **Section 6** - updated references to the partnership approach
- **Section 7** - updated naming, definition and scope of Circumstances outcome domains
- **Section 8** - updated client survey pilot references
- **Section 9** - information on the handshake agreement
- **Section 11** - updated data values made as part of the August 2018 enhancements

Version 4, March 2017

This review was conducted in the context of the Data Exchange expansion to other agencies and jurisdictions, and the creation of the Community Grants Hub. The changes are:

- **Section 6** - addition of the partnership approach as a requirement of some program funding agreements
- **Section 8** - updated with client survey and changed section name and numbering
- **Section 9** - updated with reports information and changed section name and numbering
- **Section 10** - updated program specific fields for Career Pathways Pilot for Humanitarian Entrants and the National Disability Advocacy Program. Changed section name and numbering
- **Section 11** - addition of new Data Values
- **Section 12** - addition of version history section (previously Attachments 1 & 2)

Version 3, October 2015

The department released version 3 of the protocols in October 2015 to include enhancements made to the system for the Commonwealth Homes Support Programme activity and clarify protocols relating to protecting the client's privacy and personal information.

- **Section 2** - Added an example for who is a client for the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP)
- **Section 3** - Included definition of outlet
- **Section 4** - Consolidated information about personal information; Limited the content to the department's privacy obligations; Updated the consent and notification protocols and arrangements for follow-up research.
- **Section 5** - Clarified how to report the client's residential address; introduced data items for CHSP.
- **Section 6** - Added homeless/no household value in the extended data items for household composition; introduced client exit reason for CHSP cases.
- **Section 7** - Added the Translation Matrix for SCORE; moved in-scope activities and service types into Appendix A—Service Type Matrix.
- **Section 8** - Expanded client management functions of the Data Exchange; Clarified the Statistical Linkage Key.

Version 2, March 2015

The department released version 2 of the protocols in March 2015 to align the Data Exchange technical specifications (December 2014) and the Data Exchange web-based portal (February 2015).

The original version of this document was published in August 2014.