

Family **R**elationships **S**ervices **P**rogram:

Developing and Implementing a Performance Framework

**Performance Framework
2005-2008**

Note: This framework is currently under review. A revised framework will be released in 2007-08 for Early Intervention Services, Post Separation Cooperative Parenting, and Children's Contact Services. Should the review be completed during the 2007-08 Selection Process, all Applicants will be provided with an update.

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Glossary of terms

Accountability—Reporting to explain expenditure (at a national program and individual service delivery level) consistent with the purpose for which funding was intended.

Accreditation—A process to externally assess individual service performance against a common set of standards.

Action Research—A process by which a group of people critically reflect on practice as it is occurring and continuously implement new action as a result.

Adversarial litigation—Contested legal process that may involve antagonistic approaches.

Community—A group of people bonded together by a common interest such as a school, suburb, ethnicity, or culture.

Continuous quality improvement—A process that links community need, planning, implementation of resources and client activities (or outputs), improvements for clients (or outcomes) and research; in order to continually improve service delivery.

Devolution—Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) has devolved or transferred the day-to-day administration of the Family Relationship Services Program to its State and Territory Office network.

Evidence based—Program planning, development and implementation is based on sound information collection and research that uses proven methodology.

External assessment—Independent review of organisational performance carried out by an external agency.

Family— For the purpose of the Family Relationship Services Program a family relates to any group of two or more people who perceive themselves as a family.

Input— The key resources used to deliver outputs or client activities.

Minimum standard—A set of standards (often legislatively based) that are designed to ensure a minimum standard of service delivery.

Needs Based Planning—A process whereby future action is mapped out based on critical analysis of available data that identifies a priority ranking of demand for services or products.

Outcome— The impact or effect on families and children of client activities delivered (is anyone better off—what changed for clients as a result of what [outputs] we provided?)

Outcome based—Program planning, development, implementation, information collection and research is centred on outcomes or improvements for clients.

Output— The goods or services provided to clients, or Client Service Activities (What did we provide to clients?)

Quantitative information—Data collection and reporting pertaining to the numerical measures, for example the number of clients accessing the program.

Program—All of the services nationally that make up the Family Relationship Services Program.

Qualitative information— Data collection, reporting, and monitoring, pertaining to the quality of service delivery to clients.

Stakeholders—All of the relevant participants involved such as clients, service providers, the legal profession, funding bodies, research organisations, peak bodies etc.

Target group—The population group (this may include cultural groups, geographically defined communities, or any group with a defined set of characteristics) for whom services provide interventions.

Transparency—Data collection, performance reporting, program development and planning that is open and accessible or publicly available.

1. Introduction

In October 2003 a Review of the Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP) was undertaken. The Review recommended a comprehensive and outcome focused performance framework should be developed for the FRSP. Subsequent Regional Workshops and a National Forum held in June 2004 recommended that the development of an outcome focused performance framework for the FRSP is a top priority.

A Performance Framework Discussion Paper was circulated to FRSP service providers in February 2005 and responses closed on 7 March 2005. This Paper represents a revised version of the Discussion Paper incorporating consideration of feedback received.

This paper represents the new FRSP Performance Framework developed by Family and Community Services (now the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) in partnership with the Attorney-General's Department. The Performance Framework has been developed in consultation with FRSP service providers and the three Industry Representative Bodies that existed at that time namely Relationships Australia, Family Services Australia and Catholic Welfare Australia.

This paper outlines the purpose of a performance framework, the key elements of a performance framework, and these elements in relation to the FRSP.

The following key elements of the Performance Framework have now been finalised and are outlined in this paper:

- Research questions
- Target group including secondary target groups
- Principles
- Outcomes
- Outputs
- Processes
- Inputs

Other elements will be further developed over the next year:

- Performance measures
- Review of administrative Approval Requirements process
- Modifications to FaCSLink (now FRSP Online)
- Modifications to Status Reports
- Modification of National Program report

This paper outlines progress made in relation to these elements and the next steps that will be undertaken to fully implement the Performance Framework.

2. Background

The Review of the Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP) found that current performance information is not sufficiently serving the information needs of service providers or the Australian Government the then Department of Family and Community Services, now the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), and the Attorney-General's Department (AGD).

The Review of the Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP) and the subsequent Regional Workshops and National Forum identified the need to develop a comprehensive performance framework that:

- positions the FRSP to provide sound evidence for future growth and development of the program;
- provides information on outcomes for clients;
- informs continuous quality improvement; and
- focuses on both prevention and early intervention, and tertiary interventions.

Feedback suggests that monitoring and reporting on performance should be as efficient and streamlined as possible. Where possible fit with other performance requirements (other State and Commonwealth funded programs), and meet the reporting requirements of government.

Industry representative bodies and their members have considerable expertise in service planning and evaluation, and collecting performance information. As such they have participated in the development of the FRSP performance framework outlined below.

FaCSIA has recently devolved the day-to-day management of the FRSP to its State and Territory Office (STO) Network. The STO network have considerable expertise in performance monitoring and reporting across a range of FaCSIA programs and has also participated in the development of the FRSP performance framework.

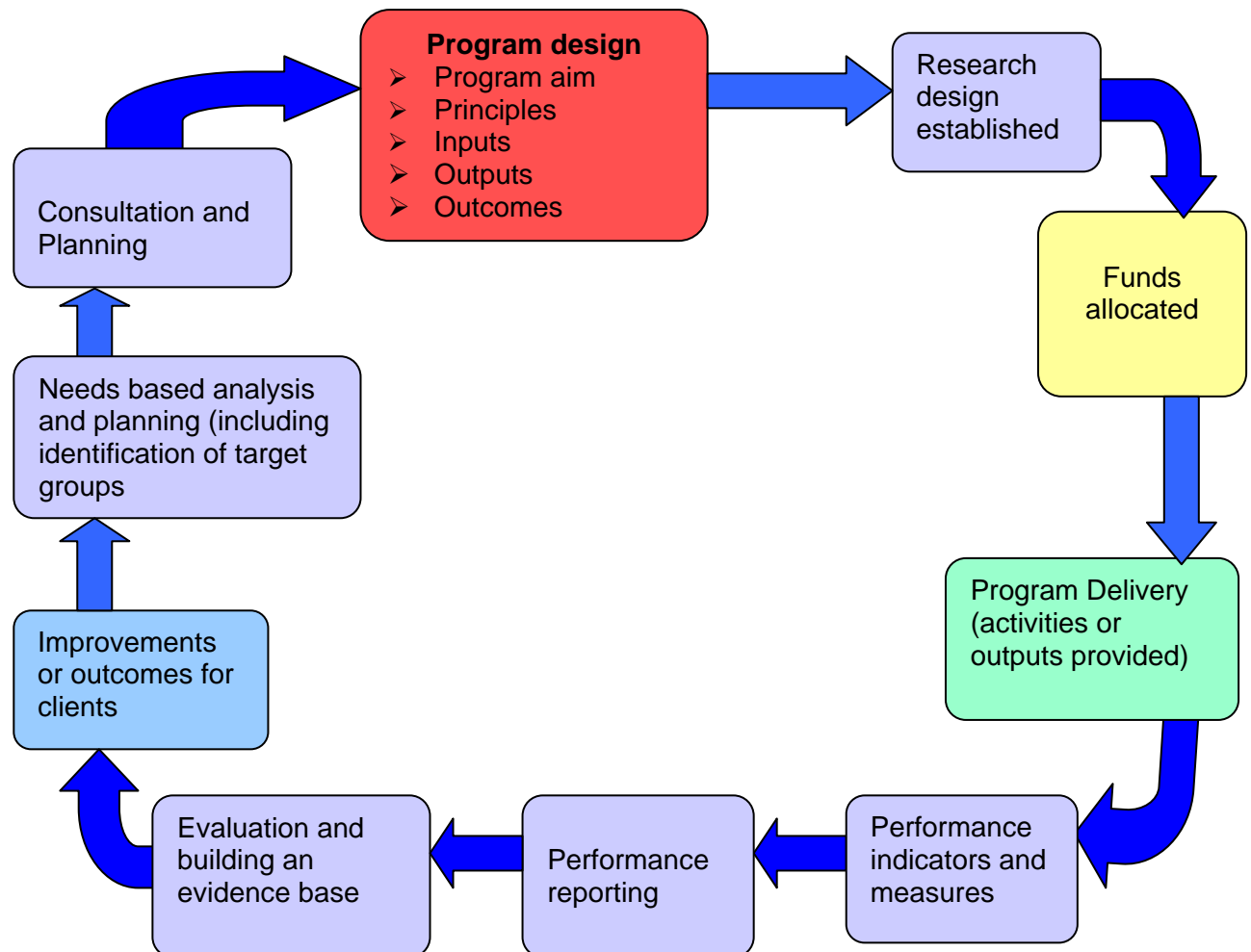
The aim of changes in performance reporting will be to, ensure that only information required for accountability and reporting purposes is collected, that data integrity is improved, and that the key questions regarding the impact and effectiveness of services and ultimately the program can be answered.

A shift in information collection and performance reporting further towards an outcome-based focus (or a focus that emphasises what changes for clients) will provide better evidence to inform government policy and program development. The implementation of changes outlined will be staged to reduce the administrative impact and cost on services and ensure that sufficient time is allowed for management.

3. Purpose of a Performance Framework

The FRSP Performance Framework will provide all of the information needed to manage and report on the program. Information collected through different methods will be used for different purposes. For example information collected through the current administrative Approval Requirements process is used to ensure a minimum standard in relation to the quality of service delivery, FaCSLink (now FRSP Online) data is used mainly to collect quantitative information on the number and demographics of clients using the FRSP and the issues for which they present, and Status Reports provide a greater level of detail on qualitative information.

This performance framework aims to build on existing information collection and provide a more coherent link between client needs, research, program design and delivery, program monitoring and evaluation, outcomes for clients and consultation and planning.



A comprehensive and logical performance framework will provide information to ensure:

- accountable and evidence based service delivery—both the community sector and government are accountable for public funds. Good information collection and reporting will promote and demonstrate what the program does, inform research, and ultimately improve responsiveness to client need.
- Strategic Planning and Development—will ensure all stakeholders are working towards a common goal and help inform future directions for the program. Good information will help identify gaps and focus on what changes for families as a result of the program (outcome or activities). It will inform decision making at all levels of planning and development.
- a case for current and future growth of the FRSP—information that supports arguments to justify current or additional resources and distribution of resources.
- quality assurance and improvement—a feedback mechanism that provides greater quality of services for clients and supports continuous improvement of service delivery.
- recognition—affirmation and acknowledgement that the program is achieving what it has set out to do.

4. What is a Performance Framework

A performance framework gives a clear line of sight between FaCSIA and AGD outcomes and service delivery to the client. It clearly defines and documents the process intended to measure program and provider performance and makes it clear who is responsible at each level of measurement. It is a documented strategy that contains how all performance that contributes to program outcomes will be measured and reported. It is acknowledged and understood that service providers do reflect on service delivery and undertake extensive planning, reporting, evaluation and research activities. This framework is designed to coordinate these efforts at a national level and meet government accountability requirements.

A performance framework includes:

- what the program is trying to achieve (planned outcomes—impact or effect on clients);
- how you will know that planned outcomes have been achieved;
- the program logic—how the inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes fit together into a hierarchy with broad outcomes (FaCSIA and AGD) at the top;
- what performance information is required by when and how that information will be measured and used to demonstrate results;
- who is responsible at each level of measurement and reporting.

5. Aim of the program

The way the aim of the program and its target group are stated will impact on all other aspects of accountability and the performance framework. Clients, providers and funding bodies alike need to be clear about what is being provided and what is the intended benefit for clients. What is the program trying to do or what is its vision?

FRSP — improving the well being of families and children by supporting positive family relationships through:

- a) **prevention and early intervention services, and**
- b) **post separation services.**

This program aim does not change the intent of the program but does more clearly align with FaCSIA's departmental outcome, Families and children have choices and opportunities, to promote healthy family relationships. It also more clearly aligns with AGDs' outcome to provide an equitable and accessible system of federal civil justice and also the Family Law Act focus on the best interests of children.

6. Target Group

All families and family members at various stages of the relationship cycle . prior to and during relationship formation, during relationships, through separation and divorce, during parenting and grand-parenting and through retirement.

In order to ensure greater universal access to the FRSP, services also target specific population groups or geographic areas with significant barriers to access. Specific target groups in the FRSP include children (children are defined as 0-18), families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and Indigenous families. The FRSP also has specific service types for families experiencing family violence, young people and men.

7. Principles

The following principles are intended to clarify the broad visionary parameters and culture within which the program aspires to operate. The FRSP aspires to:

- ***Provide interventions that focus on whole of family approaches and are responsive to the needs of all family types***— Recognising that family relationship issues affect every member of a family the program will aim to provide interventions that are meaningful for all family members and where possible take account of the goals and aspirations of each member. The program and individual services will deliver interventions for all families regardless of their configuration.
- ***Focus on family and community strengths, build skills and be child focused***—The program will aim to provide flexible service delivery that adapts to the needs of each individual or family and community identifying and utilising the strengths of that individual or family and community. Interventions will build on the strengths of individuals, families and communities and assist them to develop skills to support the achievement of their goals and the best interests of their children.

- **Work with family law professionals, Australian and State and Territory programs, and communities to contribute to an integrated family support system**—The Departments will work in partnership with service providers to ensure collaboration is achieved with other key agencies in the human service and legal industries to develop effective ways of providing coordinated prevention and early intervention and tertiary services.
- **Ensure universal and equitable access to the program**—Individuals and families may experience significant barriers to access due to: culture or language background, disability, mental health and health issues, age, gender, poverty, homelessness, geographic location or other factors. The program will develop strategies at a national, state and organisation level to assist individuals and families with significant barriers to access to engage with service providers who can meet their family relationship needs.
- **Develop and maintain a skilled workforce**—In order to provide quality services effort must be made to support a skilled and diverse workforce through for example training and development, supervision and provision of resources.
- **Support a culture of continuous quality improvement**—The program will link research, planning, implementation, feedback, data collection, evaluation, and program development to facilitate continuous quality improvement. Program support will be provided to assist organisations operate within this framework.
- **Use a partnership approach to program development**—The departments will work in partnership with service providers to ensure the program is responsive to community needs. Research and evaluation will be used to inform program development so that children and families benefit from effective practice. Data collection and reporting will focus on providing evidence to inform future directions for the FRSP and ensure the sustainability of the FRSP.
- **Provide transparency and accountability**—National program performance and financial reporting and service level reporting requirements will ensure program and service level transparency and accountability.
- **Implement an outcomes based approach**—Program and service planning and reporting will focus on what changes for clients as a result of what is provided. Data collection and research will focus on providing evidence to inform future directions for the FRSP.
- **Provide flexibility in terms of service delivery**—Program design, service delivery and program reporting requirements will maximise flexibility by providing for a range of service delivery models relevant to individual, family and community needs.
- **Help build family friendly communities**—Recognising that children and families live within broader community environments that influence family relationships, the program will promote the importance of strong family relationships to help build supportive and family friendly communities. Family transitions are easier when there are social networks, institutions and communities available to provide support.

8. FRSP Research questions

In order for relevant research to be undertaken and for the program to be evaluated effectively, research questions have been posed to determine what it is we want to know or what information we need from the performance framework. Research coordinated at a national level will provide evidence to ensure the FRSP continues to be responsive to the needs of children, individuals, families, and communities into the future.

Broad research questions that will be the focus of longer term cost benefit research:

- What contribution do family relationship interventions make to enhancing relationships and preventing separation and divorce?
- What contribution do family relationship interventions make to reducing the costs of family separation [including social, financial and emotional costs to individuals and their family and the community]?

Research questions that will be the focus of national program outcome research:

- What impact does the FRSP have on individual, family and child well-being (including health, mental health, and workforce participation)?
- What contribution do family relationship interventions make to reducing conflict experienced by families and children?

Research questions that will be the focus of both national outcome research, service level reporting and program evaluation:

- What contribution do family relationship interventions make to improving communication skills within families?
- What contribution do family relationship interventions make to increasing parenting skills and providing for safe contact with both parents?
- What contribution do family relationship interventions make to social and community participation?
- What contribution do family relationship interventions make to improving family dispute resolution or assisting families to reach and maintain parenting agreements?

Data collection and reporting will focus on collecting information to inform program evaluation and research consistent with questions 3-6 of this framework. In addition to these research questions program evaluation will explore other issues for example: how well the program is reaching its intended target group and specific population groups, levels of unmet need, or what improvements should be made to the program at service delivery, program development and policy levels?

Possible future research questions:

- Do family relationship interventions assist families to redefine their relationships after separation to facilitate ongoing healthy relationships between both parents and their children?
- What contribution do family relationship interventions make to arrangements promoting shared parental responsibility?

9. Outcomes (is anyone better off—what changed for clients as a result of the outputs or activities we provided?)

The impact or effect on families and children of client activities delivered.
Outcomes should show a clear line of sight between FaCSIA and AGD outcomes through to program outcomes and service provider level outcomes

FaCSIA Outcome Strong and supportive families with choices and opportunities, and able to give children the best start.	AGD outcome An equitable and accessible system of federal civil justice		
Suggested Family Relationship Services Program Outcomes Improved well being of families and children by supporting positive family relationships through: <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">a) Prevention and early intervention services</td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">b) Post separation services</td> </tr> </table>		a) Prevention and early intervention services	b) Post separation services
a) Prevention and early intervention services	b) Post separation services		
Suggested Service Provider Level Outcomes			
Outcomes with a focus on the family:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased communication skills (in the context of family relationships) • Increased parenting skills (both parents have parenting skills and are involved in their children’s upbringing) • Increased family and social connections (improved help-seeking behaviour/able to identify support people and services) • Improved conflict resolution skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased communication skills (particularly in relation to children after separation) • Increased parenting skills (both parents maintain a relationship with their children) • Increased [client] knowledge and awareness of professional support • Improved conflict resolution skills • Families learn to resolve their own disputes • Agreements reached are fair, sustainable and durable. 		
Outcomes with a focus on children			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved developmental skills (eg language, social, relationship, physical) • Improved relationships with parents, carers and other family members • Increased participation or enjoyment of school or other social activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children maintain a relationship with both parents post-separation (where this is in the children’s best interests) • Children experience safe contact post-separation • Agreements reflect best interest of children 		
Outcomes with a focus on community			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community development-increased community participation, links and collaboration, within the community of interest to best support and address the needs of families and their relationships • Community Capacity Building-increased skills in the community of interest to respond to the needs of families in maintaining strong and resilient relationships • Community Education-increased knowledge in the community of interest to respond to the needs of families in maintaining strong and resilient relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced litigation in the family law court system • Reduced negative impact of separation or divorce on the community 		

The next challenge for the FRSP is to develop a set of outcome measures that are meaningful in terms of demonstrating what changed for clients as a result of the program. Given the importance and challenge of this work it is anticipated that developing the right set of outcomes and performance measures will be an evolving process. Performance measures linked to the outcomes and outputs in this framework will be implemented over time throughout the three year funding agreement cycle. Outcomes may be modified in response to work undertaken to develop outcome measures.

10. Outputs (What did we provide to clients?)

Outputs are the goods or services provided to clients, or Client Service Activities

FRSP client activities or outputs

- Information and referral – A service that provides knowledge and awareness of services and resources that respond to clients' needs, and helps to match and link people with appropriate services. (This includes follow up to ensure referrals were successful and in some cases may involve escorting clients to another service and supporting them by sitting in on a first appointment).
- Education and skills training – Theoretical instruction (based on professional educational frameworks) or practical training on family relationships and related topics to inform, maintain or develop family relationship skills (including for example parenting and behaviour management skills, conflict resolution skills, communication and negotiation skills, and life skills). Development and publication of relevant resources.
- Counselling (includes family therapy) – Professional therapeutic services from a qualified counsellor to assist people to identify and analyse family relationship and related problems, adjust to changed circumstances, and reach solutions that overcome their problems.
- Dispute resolution (includes mediation, conciliation and making post-separation agreements) – A service that assists families with the help of a neutral third party to identify and explore issues in dispute, develop options, consider alternatives, reconcile conflict, and reach agreements (in the case of parenting disputes reach agreements that are in the best interests of their child/ren without the need for litigation).
- Change-over and supervised contact - A service that provides supervision and a safe environment for the change over of children between carers and/or supervised visitation, to implement children's contact arrangements.
- Support – Activity responding to client needs such as support groups or informal client help.
- Community development – Working with communities to identify their own needs and find solutions that respond by utilising and building community skills and resources (includes any activities designed to identify need, build knowledge and skills in the community or generate interest and participation).

11. Processes

(The method used—what was important about the way we did it?)

The following processes are suggested as requirements of FRSP funding and should be counted as legitimate and important areas of activity through both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Processes are not less important than outputs as they help to ensure the quality of what is delivered.

- Client intake, assessment and case management – A process used to determine eligibility and assess needs of clients being considered for ongoing service (the intake and assessment process needs to be able to identify critical factors such as family violence, child abuse, drug and alcohol misuse or suicide risk)—and an approach to service delivery that is based on assessment, planning, support, and review for clients with high and complex needs, that coordinates access to and delivery of services.
- Evaluation (includes client feedback) – Assessment of the quality of services delivered and outcomes achieved based on client and stakeholder feedback and other data collection.
- Quality assurance – Includes activities undertaken in relation to all aspects of monitoring and managing the program at a national and individual service level (eg Approval Requirements [staff training and development], self assessment—ongoing compliance, financial accountability—auditing, and reporting).
- Collaboration –joint projects undertaken to improve access to and integration of the service delivery system.
- Stakeholder relationships – activities undertaken to develop and maintain relationships with key internal and external stakeholders.
- Networking– activities undertaken to maintain and develop an awareness of other services and service delivery practice relevant to client need.
- Research – both at a program and service level.

12. Inputs (what resources were used to provide [the outputs] what we provided?)

The key resources used to deliver the Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP)

Suggested inputs

- Policy
- Legislation, family law system
- Government funding both AGD and FaCSIA
- Program support eg-industry support
- Program management (including research and program development)
- Community support (for example community infrastructure, volunteers, NGO resources [including fund raising], advocacy etc
- Client fees collected.

13. Program Logic Diagram

The program logic diagram below provides a summary of the key elements of the Performance Framework and how the elements link to each other.

