

# Summary of Changes to the Homelands Program Guidelines

The Homelands Program Guidelines have been updated for 2026–27 to make the program clearer, easier to administer and more effective in supporting safe, functional homelands. These changes reflect feedback from service providers. The guidelines will continue to be refined over time.

## Clearer guidance on funding use

The guidelines now provide more explicit direction on what funding can be used for and helping service providers plan and deliver services with greater certainty.

## Improved planning and reporting requirements

Service providers now have more flexibility in planning and budgeting, supported by clearer expectations.

In 2026–27, providers must:

- submit an Operational Work Plan and Budget within 10 business days of signing the grant agreement, unless another timeframe is agreed with the Department
- show how they will meet minimum service requirements
- request variation to Attachment A - Budget for HMES activities of their grant agreement (justification to be provided, subject to approval)
- submit a Service Delivery Plan (SDP) or resident engagement plan, using either the Department's template or their own template.

Providers must describe their engagement and delivery approach within the Operational Work Plan. This supports forward planning and helps the Department understand each organisation's service delivery approach. The document can be updated at any point during the year and resubmitted if priorities change.

### Financial reporting template:

Providers may use:

- the Department's Service Delivery Log (SDL), or
- their own internal system(s) to record service delivery – capturing all relevant information requested.

Financial reporting and infrastructure equipment/asset register (IER) reporting templates remain unchanged and must be used. Administrative support is available to assist providers with transferring asset data into new templates.

## Defined minimum service standards

New minimum service standards help ensure services are consistent, safe and reliable across funded homelands. Providers must plan and deliver services in line with these standards, which include:

- providing basic municipal and essential services
- maintaining water, power and sewerage systems to ensure homeland eligibility

- protecting essential infrastructure from contamination, damage or fire
- undertaking essential grounds maintenance, including firebreaks
- managing waste safely to prevent disease, environmental harm or injury
- identifying and addressing emergency housing safety issues as a priority.

### More consistent funding model

Funding continues to be based on the number of occupied houses at eligible homelands. Updates include:

- more consistent application of base rates and weightings
- consideration of remoteness and distance from service hubs (major towns)
- removal of the 40% wages cap
- internal process improvements to support prompt initial payments once agreements are executed.

### Capital purchase approval threshold increased

The approval threshold for Municipal and Essential Services (MES) and Housing Maintenance Services (HMS) capital purchases has increased from \$10,000 in the 2025–26 guidelines to \$15,000 in the 2026–27 guidelines.

This gives service providers more flexibility to manage essential capital works without needing Departmental approval for lower-value items. In addition, where capital purchases are urgent, retrospective approval may be provided where the expenditure is justified and documented.

### Clearer guidance on unspent funds and carry-forward

The 2026–27 guidelines introduce more detailed instructions on how unspent funds must be managed. This includes clearer requirements for acquittals, approvals for carry-forward requests and the treatment of overexpenditure to ensure transparency and consistent financial management across homelands.

### Elements that remain unchanged

Key components of the program remain the same, including:

- eligibility criteria
- the scope of services delivered
- shared responsibility with residents
- resident engagement
- compliance, acquittals, the IER and financial reporting obligations.

### No changes to GrantsNT

There are no changes to GrantsNT processes.

### Commencement date

All changes take effect on 1 July 2026.

# Homelands Program

## Summary of key changes

The below table summarises the differences between the [2025-26 Homelands Program Guidelines](#) and the [2026-27 Homelands Program Guidelines](#).

|                                     | 2025-26                                                                      | 2026-27                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Overall approach                    | General guidance                                                             | More detailed with clearer expectations and requirements                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Program focus                       | Focus on delivering services                                                 | Stronger focus on service delivery outputs (safety, water, power and sanitation)                                                                                                                                               |
| Eligibility                         | Clear minimum criteria                                                       | Same criteria with clearer explanation and monitoring processes                                                                                                                                                                |
| Funding model                       | Per dwelling (house) basis                                                   | Per house, with clearer and more consistent application of base rates and weightings. Removal of 40% wages cap                                                                                                                 |
| Service delivery standards          | General expectations                                                         | Defined minimum service standards                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Planning approach                   | Separate SDPs for each homeland, no consolidated budget or planning          | Single combined Operational Work Plan for each provider, including a budget and SDP/engagement plan for each funded homeland. Flexibility to request variation to Attachment A – Budget for HMES activities of grant agreement |
| Reporting                           | Standard reports using NT Government templates (half-year, full-year, audit) | Clearer, practical guidance; flexibility with SDLs; improved internal NT Government processes for consistent reporting assessments                                                                                             |
| Unspent funds                       | Must be reported and managed                                                 | More detailed guidance on carry-over, approvals and use                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Capital purchase approval threshold | Approval required for MES/HMS capital purchases over \$10,000                | Approval threshold increased to \$15,000; greater flexibility for urgent purchases, including retrospective approval where justified and documented                                                                            |

*Feedback provided by service providers throughout the year will inform the development and refinement of future program guidelines.*