

2023-25 Homelands Program Guidelines

Homelands Services Group



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Acronyms	Full form
NT	Northern Territory
NTG	The Northern Territory Government
TFHC	The Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities
MES	Municipal and Essential Services
HMS	Housing Maintenance Services
HCG	Homelands Capital Grants
GST	Goods and Services Tax
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
SPFR	Specific Purpose Financial Report
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
SDP	Service Delivery Plan
IER	Infrastructure and Equipment Register

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1. Overview

The Homelands Program supports the delivery of housing, municipal and essential services to eligible homelands, town camps and selected communities.

Homelands and outstations are interchangeable terms used to describe small, often remote, Aboriginal communities where people have traditional ownership or historical association. They play a critical role in the social, cultural and economic life of Aboriginal people and the Territory as a whole. The NT Government recognises and supports Aboriginal Territorians' fundamental right of to live on, develop and maintain their homelands.

The majority of homelands are located on Aboriginal land, held by Aboriginal Land Trusts established under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976. However, there are a small number of homelands on other statutory tenures, such as community living areas (land excised from a pastoral lease), or parcels of land within national parks. Generally, homelands are not part of the NT's remote housing system.

Town camps are Aboriginal urban living areas usually located on Crown land, which has been leased or granted to an Aboriginal community organisation for communal living purposes. The Homelands Program provides funding to support housing, municipal and essential services in town camps, which are not subject to Northern Territory Government leasing or part of the NT's remote public housing system.

The Homelands Program also provides funding to support municipal services for a small number of the 73 remote communities across the NT.

Guidelines are to be read in conjunction with terms and conditions of the relevant funding agreement.

2. Eligibility

To be eligible for funding a homeland must:

- have a sustainable, potable water supply;
- have a water supply in operating condition;
- have its own operating power supply;
- have safe and secure housing;
- be accessible;
- be the principal place of residence (for at least six months of the year); and
- have a service provider, recognised under the Homelands Program, willing to undertake the responsibility for servicing the homeland and be able to deliver services in a safe environment.

2.1. Occupancy survey

TFHC will work with the service providers to undertake an occupancy and population survey to inform the allocation of municipal, essential and housing maintenance funding allocations. Funding is allocated on a 'per dwelling' formula.

Funding may be weighted to consider other factors, such as remoteness, and access/supply of water and power.

Funding is reviewed each year and may change according to the number of homelands and dwellings included in the program.

2.2. Establishing a new homeland

The Homelands Program does not provide funding to support the establishment of new homelands.

Generally, the process to establish a new homeland requires engagement with the relevant land council.

2.3. Adding a homeland to the Homelands Program

If a homeland is established but is not currently funded, residents can approach their local service provider to find out if it is eligible for funding.

The service provider will contact TFHC to consider the homeland for funding.

TFHC will undertake a technical assessment of the homeland to ensure that it meets the eligibility requirements.

The service provider is responsible for notifying the residents once TFHC has approved the homeland to be funded, or advise if the location does not meet the required criteria.

If the service provider does not wish to take part in servicing an eligible homeland, another provider can be engaged. Where an alternative service provider is engaged, TFHC will make the final decision on the suitability of the provider.

2.4. Removal of a homeland from the Homelands Program

TFHC officers will visit homelands to ensure that the homelands funded by the program continue to meet the eligibility requirements.

It is the responsibility of the service provider to notify TFHC immediately when a homeland stops meeting the eligibility requirements.

3. Grant funding arrangements

Grant funding is provided for the provision of housing, municipal and essential services at eligible locations.

Generally, a single grant will be provided per location for the delivery of housing, municipal and essential services.

Service providers must allocate funding for the delivery of services in line with the following prescribed grant arrangements:

- Administration – up to 20 per cent of total funding, including, but not limited to:
 - Salaries of admin staff
 - Audit and accounting fees
 - Travel allowance, training, education, seminars for staff funded to deliver services
 - Stationery
 - Consumables
- Wages – up to 40 per cent of total funding, including, but not limited to:

- Wages to employ trades and other staff directly related to the delivery of services
- Wages to employ Aboriginal people living in homelands to assist in the delivery of local services
- Services – including, but not limited to:
 - Payment to specialist contractors and subcontractors involved in delivery of services
 - Direct purchase of materials for delivery of housing, municipal and essential services

Additional information regarding prescribed grant arrangements will be set out in relevant reporting templates provided by TFHC.

4. Service delivery

The delivery of housing, municipal and essential services at eligible locations should be based on:

- outcomes and requirements set out in these guidelines;
- local factors, including environment, age and condition of housing and infrastructure;
- consultation with residents, which is to be documented via the Service Delivery Plan for each funded location; and
- compliance with relevant professional Australian Standards, where applicable, such as electrical and plumbing services.

4.1. Municipal and Essential Services

Municipal and Essential Services (MES) includes repairs and maintenance, minor works and general operational costs for the delivery of municipal and essential services.

Essential service activities are primarily concerned with the operation and maintenance of electricity supplies, water supplies and sanitation systems.

Municipal service activities are primarily concerned with road and aerodrome maintenance, waste disposal, landscaping and dust control in common areas, firebreaks, animal control, environmental health activities and other municipal services.

Service providers must seek approval from TFHC regarding MES related capital purchases over \$10,000.

Scope of MES services and key outcomes are set out below:

Category	Outcome	Scope
Water system	Provide a safe and reliable water supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inspect, repair and maintain water supply infrastructure to ensure system is operational and working as intended to achieve the specified outcomes. ● Ensure all compounds and areas around

		<p>infrastructure are clean and clear of vegetation to reduce risk of fire and structural damage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure fences and gates around water infrastructure are secure. • Inspect for and repair any water leaks in infrastructure and at houses. • Ensure water reticulation where possible is buried to a safe depth to reduce risk of damage. • Ensure active and unused bores are correctly sealed to prevent contamination. <p><u>Callout/emergency</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service providers are required to attend and restore services to water systems within two weeks of being informed of disruption of services. If this cannot be achieved, TFHC must be informed.
Power systems	Provide a safe and reliable power supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect, repair and maintain power supply infrastructure to ensure system is operational and working as intended to achieve the specified outcomes. • Ensure all compounds and areas around infrastructure are clean and clear of vegetation to reduce risk of fire and structural damage. • Inspect and repair all wiring and connections to ensure a safe condition and ensure there is no potential hazard to residents. <p><u>Power stations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure generators and controls are maintained and serviced in accordance with the manufacturers' guidelines. • Ensure compounds, gates and fencing are secure and locks are operational. • Ensure bulk fuel storage is securely contained, being only accessible by authorised personnel. <p><u>Callout/emergency</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service providers are required to attend and restore services to the power system within two weeks of being informed of disruption of services. If this cannot be achieved, TFHC must be informed.
Sewerage and septic systems	Sewerage disposal systems are to be constructed, located, maintained and operated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect, repair and maintain sewerage and septic infrastructure to ensure system is operational and working as intended. • Ensure all compounds and areas around

	<p>so as to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent direct and indirect contact between people and infectious organisms. • Minimise the risk of contamination of drinking water supplies, food crops or other supplies. • Prevent the breeding of mosquitoes. 	<p>infrastructure are clean and clear of vegetation to reduce risk of fire and structural damage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure septic tanks are secure and there is no risk of accidental access. • Identify any maintenance or repairs required at the next maintenance visit. <p><u>Callout/emergency</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service providers are required to attend and restore services to the sewerage or septic system within two weeks of being informed of disruption of services. If this cannot be achieved TFHC must be informed.
Grounds maintenance	<p>Communal areas should be maintained to a standard that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces the risk of fire. • Minimises the risk of disease. • Provides a level of safety to residents. • Reduces the opportunity for snakes and other animals to shelter in and around the location. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear vegetation to a level that achieves the stated outcomes but does not add to the generation of dust or erosion. • Where appropriate, install and maintain fire breaks. • Identify any maintenance required at the next maintenance visit.
Waste disposal	<p>Waste management practices applied to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent the transmission of infectious disease. • Reduce risk of injury and trauma. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area around tips must be clear of waste and all rubbish must be placed in tips. • Old tip sites must be filled in. • If the level of rubbish around the location is deemed a health hazard, the service provider must ensure rubbish is removed and disposed of correctly. • Identify any maintenance required at the following maintenance visit.
Internal roads	<p>Allow the use of roads and minimise erosion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure roads are clear of fallen vegetation. • Identify any maintenance or repairs required.

Airstrips	Maintained on a regular basis to allow the safe operation of light aircraft.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational airstrips only – does not include abandoned or out of service airstrips. Inspect airstrip and ensure surface is clear of roots, undulations, large rocks, ant and termite mounds, saplings and erosion. Drag airstrip as required. The immediate 15 metres either side of the strip surface should be cleared of any obstacles including ant hills, tree stumps, large rocks or stones and fencing wire. Identify any maintenance or repairs required at the next maintenance visit.
Environmental	Reduce the risk of disease, poor health, water contamination and damage to infrastructure due to environmental influences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the need for animal control around homelands where necessary, and carry out identified works. Ensure minimal disturbance to soil on homelands by works or animals to prevent erosion and dust. Identify any maintenance or repairs required at the next maintenance visit.

4.2. Housing Maintenance Services

The purpose of HMS is to contribute to repairs and maintenance to eligible houses, including:

- responding to life threatening electrical, gas, fire and structural safety issues; and
- general or routine repairs and maintenance to extend the life of houses and minimise deterioration.

Service providers must seek approval from TFHC regarding HMS related capital purchases over \$10,000.

4.2.1. Electrical, gas, fire and structural safety issues

Electrical, gas, fire and structural safety issues must be treated as the highest priority. Life threatening issues must be responded to within 48 hours:

Category	Scope
Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check for, and repair rust, corrosion, rot, termite damage and other signs of structural deterioration. Check for, and fix water leaks. Check for damage and correct operation of doors/windows in accordance with maintenance plan.

Plumbing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect for, and repair any water leaks. • Check operation of hot water systems and repair where necessary. • Check for, and fix any damage to waste water systems and ensure correct operation. • Check for, and fix sewerage or septic leaks, blockages or backup from septic systems.
Electrical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check operation of residual-current device (RCD) switch. • Check connection of wires to earth stake. • Check power points/fittings are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ in working condition; ○ not damaged; ○ secured to walls/ceilings; and ○ have no exposed wires. • Check there are no exposed cables. • Check that low voltage connection to the house is not damaged or with any exposed wires, and ensuring there is no risk of electrical hazard.
Gas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that gas fittings are secured and working correctly. • Check for, and repair any leaks.

4.2.2. Preventive repairs and maintenance

The delivery and planning for general housing repairs and maintenance should be based on:

- 9 Healthy Living Practices set out below – noting order of priority; and
- implementation of a preventive maintenance schedule, which includes regular and routine maintenance of housing fixtures and hardware. Works should be batched to reduce mobilisation costs and achieve greater efficiencies.

Category		Outcome
1	Washing people	Ensuring there is adequate hot and cold water, taps and drainage.
2	Washing clothes and bedding	Ensuring the laundry is functional with provision for a washing machine.
3	Removing wastewater safely	Ensuring toilets and all drains are working.
4	Improving nutrition through the ability to store, prepare and cook food	Ensuring the sink, taps and stove work.
5	Reducing the negative impacts of overcrowding	Ensuring health hardware (e.g. hot water and septic systems) can cope with the number of people living in the house.

6	Reducing the negative effects of animals, vermin or insects	Ensuring adequate insect screening and other measures that protect people from exposure.
7	Reducing the health impacts of dust	Introducing ways to limit the movement of dust to reduce the risk of respiratory illness.
8	Controlling the temperature of the living environment	Looking at the use of insulation and passive design to reduce health risks, particularly to small children, the sick and elderly.
9	Reducing hazards that cause trauma	Considering aspects of housing that can cause non-life-threatening injury.

For more information on the 9 Healthy Living Practices, please visit: <https://www.healthabitat.com/what-we-do/safety-and-the-9-healthy-living-practices/>

4.3. Program exclusions

Funding allocated under the Homelands Program can only be used for the delivery of services to eligible dwellings and communal infrastructure, such as power and water supply.

Funding cannot be used for:

- Private or commercial enterprises
- Schools
- Clinics
- Ranger stations
- Insurance for assets not owned/leased by the service provider
- Tourism ventures
- Council rates for land not owned/leased by the service provider

Please contact TFHC regarding any issues which are not captured by these guidelines.

4.4. Diesel for power generation

Power generation in homelands can include connection to grid, solar, solar and generator, or generator only.

The amount of diesel required to operate the above systems is highly dependent on location, technology, age of power system and community demand for power.

As such, it is incumbent on service providers to determine which of the following approaches will be used to allocate program funding for diesel:

- Supply of diesel is a resident responsibility.
- Service provider supplies a set amount of diesel per week/month.
- Service provider supplies diesel as required to ensure power generation.
- Service provider supplies diesel under a fee for service cost recovery arrangement.

Arrangements for individual homelands regarding which approach has been agreed to must be set out in the service delivery plan.

4.5. Homelands Capital Program

The Homelands Capital Program provides funding (\$10,000 - \$300,000) for the purchase and construction of capital infrastructure and equipment that supports the delivery of housing, municipal and essential services.

Funding is generally allocated via an annual application based process.

For more details, please see the Homelands Capital Funding Guidelines 2023-25.

5. Operational requirements

Service providers are required to develop and maintain the following documents and processes to facilitate the delivery of housing, municipal and essential services.

TFHC has the right to request documentation in relation to items set out throughout the year.

5.1. Service Delivery Plans

All service providers are required to develop a service delivery plan (SDP) in collaboration with residents for each funded location and agreed to by TFHC.

SDPs ensure that services are delivered in line with community preferences, program outcomes and the available budget.

Service providers must re-confirm SDPs with residents every 12 months and submit them to TFHC.

Service providers must utilise the prescribed templates provided by TFHC.

5.2. Maintenance Logs

The purpose of the Maintenance Logs is to record all works delivered in funded locations.

Maintenance Logs are to be updated as works are completed.

Service provider must utilise the prescribed templates provided by TFHC, unless a provider is using a system that already captures the information required within the Maintenance Log. Ensuring that the location, house number, date, description of the work and estimated cost is captured. All reporting must be submitted in Excel or CSV format to allow TFHC to analyse the information effectively.

The Maintenance Log is to be submitted to TFHC on the scheduled reporting dates.

5.3. Infrastructure and Equipment Register

Service providers are required to maintain an Infrastructure and Equipment Register (IER) of infrastructure on funded locations, including but not limited to generators, bore pumps, solar hybrid systems as well as equipment, which is used in the delivery of services, such as tractors. The IER is to be updated to record all infrastructure and equipment changes on funded locations. This must include any warranty documents and operational manuals.

All new items funded through Homelands Capital Grants Program must be included in the IER upon completion.

Service providers must maintain the IER utilising the prescribed templates provided by TFHC biannually. The IER is to be submitted to TFHC at the scheduled reporting dates and as part of the service provider's performance reporting.

5.4. Emergency plans

All homeland service providers are required to have an up to date Emergency Plan, which sets out how organisations will:

- Communicate with residents during an emergency
- Participate in local emergency management plans operated by NT Police
- Key contacts and personnel
- Processes for how the organisation will restore housing, municipal and essential services once access becomes available.

5.4.1. Wet Season - no declared emergency

Residents are expected to prepare for regular regional weather events, such as flooding in the Wet Season, including planning for additional food and supplies appropriate for local factors, such as number of residents and known access issues.

In the event that a homeland is cut off and supplies become low, residents should enact their wet season plans, including the arrangement of food drops from local airlines and other relevant organisations.

Homeland service providers can assist residents with this process, however the expectation is that residents are required to fund these activities.

If a homeland service provider is aware of welfare issues in a homeland, such as lack of critical medication, this should be immediately reported to local police.

5.4.2. Wet Season - declared emergency

In the event of a declared emergency, NT Police will enact local emergency management plans.

Homeland service providers are expected to monitor homelands in their region, including population levels, welfare issues and impact of weather on housing and infrastructure.

TFHC will work with homeland service providers to feed information into relevant emergency management committees, which will consider responses, such as evacuations and food drops.

As emergency works turn to the recovery stage, TFHC will work with homeland service providers to assess damage and restore essential services.

Service Delivery Contributions

5.4.3. Residents

Homelands are a shared responsibility. Residents are expected to contribute to service delivery by paying a service delivery contribution to their service provider.

If residents contribute to service delivery, the service provider must work with the residents to identify how the fees will contribute to improved service delivery. This should be documented as part of the SDP process.

Where residents do not contribute to service delivery, service providers are only required to provide basic services in line with available funding allocated under the Homelands Program.

5.4.4. Other organisations operating on homelands

Where a community, government or commercial organisation or agency is operating in homelands, such as a clinic or ranger station, it is a requirement that the relevant entity contribute to the cost of operating and maintaining communal assets. This includes, but is not limited to community power systems, bores, roads and airstrip.

Service providers should seek a contribution based on the true cost of delivering services. This may be negotiated based on a breakdown of known costs or the use of individual meters for relevant dwellings/buildings.

6. Reporting

Service providers must complete and submit prescribed reporting requirements as specified in these guidelines and in the funding agreement, through GrantsNT.

If TFHC considers the form or content of a report to be inadequate, it may request the service provider to submit a revised report. Where necessary, TFHC reserves the right to request any reports to be submitted at shorter intervals than stated.

Service providers must, at all reasonable times, allow access to records, accounts, documents and papers relating to all Homelands Program agreements. This will include all documentation related to how service providers are carrying out the activity and receiving or spending the funding.

Service providers must allow copies of these materials to be viewed by the following parties:

- TFHC and/or persons authorised by TFHC;
- the Commonwealth Auditor-General;
- the Commonwealth Director of Evaluation and Audit or person(s) authorised by them; and
- residents of the respective homelands.

Reporting process and timelines

Report	Submission due date
Half year financial report including Maintenance Log and IER	28 February
Full year financial report including Maintenance Log and IER	28 August
Audited Special Purpose Financial Report	15 November

Reports are based on self-certification as to the accuracy and reliability of the information supplied. TFHC has the right to request a copy of the Reports at any other time that is deemed necessary.

Reports will be assessed and the service provider will be formally notified, if the Report is accepted as satisfactory or otherwise.

The Full Year statement of financial position and service statement report will identify the unspent amount remaining for the grant.

6.1.1. Audited Special Purpose Financial Reports

Service providers are required to submit annual Audited Special Purpose Financial Reports (SPFRs) for received grant funding.

Acquittal of funding is under a prescribed arrangement that requires SPFRs to be prepared and independently audited by a registered company auditor for the period ending 30 June each year. The audited financial report must be submitted on the registered company auditor's business letterhead.

Independently audited SPFRs are to be provided to TFHC by 15 November each year via the GrantsNT system. Audited SPFRs will be assessed by TFHC and the service provider will be formally notified accordingly, via the Accepted Audit Letter.

Service providers are required to present a copy of their previous year's Accepted Audit Letter to the auditor. The Accepted Audit Letter identifies the accepted grant surplus for the funded grant.

6.1.2. Unexpended Funds

Service providers are to report all unexpended funds as part of half year and full year reporting processes.

Service providers are required to continue service delivery until such time as receiving written advice from TFHC regarding either retention or return of the funding in question. This ensures that works from previous financial years are not disrupted and that delivery of these works is able to be continued.

Unexpended funding which is approved to be carried forward, as per the Accepted Audit Letter, must be spent by 30 June the following year.

All grant funding balances accepted via the Accepted Audit Letter must be specifically itemised in:

- the service provider's half year financial position and service statement report; and
- the service provider's annual audited SPFR.

No deficit amount is to be brought forward from the previous year, for any grant funded through the Homelands Program. Any over expenditure of the program must be absorbed by the service provider unless agreed with TFHC in writing.

6.1.3. Goods and Services Tax ruling

TFHC has determined that the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) private tax ruling no. [1051410180505](#) in relation to the treatment of Goods and Services Tax (GST), is applicable to grants issues under the Homelands Program.

The ATO ruling provides that no taxable supply is made in the provision of some grant funding arrangements, and consequently there is no creditable acquisition from the recipient to the NTG. Consequently, all payments will be made without allowance for GST.

7. Performance

In order to manage and assess service delivery and service provider performance under a prescribed grant arrangement, performance reporting templates have been developed by TFHC which identify the allowed actual expenditure against specified eligible categories. These templates must be completed in full and submitted to TFHC by the due date. The reporting templates provide information that contributes to TFHC's assessment of performance and identifies each eligible category item under the respective programs. Where performance is assessed as requiring further review, the following areas may be examined:

- creation and implementation of Service Delivery Plans;
- complaints and complaints procedure;
- local employment numbers;
- communication procedure;
- service delivery contributions;
- the level of commitment of expenditure against prescribed grants; and
- quality of services in line with relevant professional standards.

7.1. Performance Review

TFHC reserves the right to conduct a Performance Review to ascertain the quality of services and other requirements relevant to the service agreement.

This may require full access to employees, records, documents and papers that relate directly or indirectly to the delivery of the service.

Instances in which TFHC may require a Performance Review include, but not limited to:

- Where TFHC and other parties receive ongoing complaints from residents and other stakeholders
- Where the Maintenance Log indicates no, or limited, service delivery
- Major delays to capital upgrades
- Late submission of required reporting and documentation
- Failure to respond to life threatening or urgent repairs and maintenance
- Failure to maintain operational requirements

TFHC will advise the service provider when a Performance Review is being undertaken, including advice regarding issues being raised and actions required to be undertaken by the service provider.

TFHC will advise the service provider whether actions taken have appropriately responded to issues raised.

In events where the service provider is unable to undertake required actions, TFHC will consider further steps, including ceasing the service agreement.

8. Contact

Enquiries regarding the performance against these programs should be directed to the Homelands Services Group on 1800 031 648 or Homelands.Program@nt.gov.au

Enquiries regarding the funding agreement or payment of grant funds against these programs should be directed to the Investment Management team on (08) 8999 8456 or tfhc.InvestmentManagement@nt.gov.au