Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**

Department of Communities Agency Commissioning Plan for Community Services

2026







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Acknowledgement of Country and People

The Department of Communities (Communities) proudly acknowledges Traditional Custodians throughout Western Australia and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waters, families and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders past and present.

Communities' Agency Commissioning Plan (ACP) was developed through the Department's Operating Model. The Commissioning Operating Model involves a three-tier governance structure for decision making and authority for commissioning at portfolio, intra-agency and strategic levels of the Department. The strategic tier of the Commissioning Operating Model is comprised of representatives from Communities; Treasury and Finance; and Premier and Cabinet.

The information contained in the ACP should not be viewed as a definitive list of activities that will be undertaken by the agency. The plan outlines the proposed commissioning activities at the time of publication and may be subject to change based on new and emerging Western Australian Government or Communities agency priorities.

Executive summary



The purpose of the ACP is to provide an overview of Communities approach to commissioning community services over the next five years (2026–2030), with a focus on the priorities within the first two years (2026 and 2027).

The ACP is developed under the Government of Western Australia's State Commissioning Strategy for Community Services 2022 (the State Commissioning Strategy) and is aligned to the principles of the Financial Guidelines for Government Agencies – Commissioning Community Services 2024 and the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy.

Communities continues to support some of the most vulnerable members of our community, including children in care, people with a disability, people experiencing homelessness, and women experiencing domestic violence across metropolitan, regional and remote locations in WA.

Introduction

Communities is a multi-function human services agency. The essence of why Communities exists is to provide services to a diverse range of people to improve social outcomes for Western Australians.

Communities collaborates across government and the human services sector to create pathways that enable individual, family and community wellbeing, with a focus on five interconnected outcome areas: strong families and kin; safe children; empowered people; a place to call home; and inclusive and accessible communities.

Collaboration enables Communities to combine its efforts and capabilities with those of its partners to guide a system-wide approach to achieving collective impact.

There are multiple government and non-government organisations that contribute directly and indirectly to the provision of community and human services, impacting the lives of Western Australians. Communities acknowledges that effective, genuine and purposeful engagement with stakeholders is fundamental to building and maintaining trusted partnerships to collaborate purposefully and maximise opportunities.

The State Commissioning Strategy sets out the strategic role of commissioning in driving a fundamental shift in how community services are delivered in WA with the goal of delivering better outcomes for services users and community.

ACP purpose

The purpose of the ACP is to provide an overview of Communities' strategic approach to commissioning community services over the next five years (2026–2030), with a focus on the first two years (2026 and 2027).

This ACP is developed under the State Commissioning Strategy. It outlines how Communities intends to progressively implement a strategic commissioning approach for community services, that supports strategic priorities of the State Government and reflects valuable insights from the community services sector, service users, Aboriginal people and people with lived experience.

ACP objectives

The ACP will:

- Demonstrate that Communities is progressing a commissioning approach under the State Commissioning Strategy.
- Demonstrate how Communities is driving positive improvements through commissioning, to support outcomes for vulnerable Western Australian people and achievement of Closing the Gap.

ACP scope

Community services which are commissioned under the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy 2023 (the DCSP Policy) are within the scope of this ACP.

The DCSP Policy aligns with the State Commissioning Strategy and promotes productive relationships between government agencies, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and the community services sector. The DCSP Policy provides direction in the approach to the procurement of community services, clarifies when a targeted approach to procuring community services is appropriate and when an open tender is more appropriate, and enables direct negotiation with an ACCO for services supporting Aboriginal people.

Communities has in place approximately 780 community services contracts with 450 distinct external service provider organisations, of which 70 are ACCOs[1] registered with the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations. These contracts have an estimated total contract value of $4 billion over their entire contract period. These contracts deliver a broad range of programs across WA focussing on meeting the diverse needs of our community.

Note, the following activities are outside the scope of this ACP:

- services which are directly delivered by Communities
- goods and services contracts
- annual grant processes.

The context for commissioning at Communities

Communities continues to support some of the most vulnerable members of our community, including children in care, people with a disability, people experiencing homelessness, and women experiencing domestic violence across metropolitan, regional and remote locations in WA.

A significant proportion of current service agreements and grants have been in place for over 10 years, and stakeholder engagement to inform service re-design is needed. Communities recognises the importance of engaging with service users, and opportunities for engaging with people who have lived experience are central to commissioning.

Departmental overview[2]

During 2024–25, Communities provided services and partnered with others to keep children safe; deliver social and public housing; deliver vital community services, including in emergencies; address homelessness and ensure appropriate, affordable housing; prevent family and domestic violence; provide stewardship for the disability sector; and drive the agenda for women's interests, youth, seniors and ageing, carers, and volunteering.

Vision

Ngulluk Kart | All minds

The long-term change we are working towards for the community.

Safe, inclusive and empowered communities.

Purpose

Ngulluk Koort | All hearts

What we are here to do.

We work together to improve the lives of people, children, families and communities across Western Australia.

Values

Guide our behaviour.

- Integrity
- Courage
- Respect
- Empathy
- Accountability
- Trust
- Empowerment

Strategic alignment for commissioning

Commissioning with Communities is informed by and aligned with the following:

State Government legislation, strategies and polices

- Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy – Western Australia 2021–2029
- Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy
- Financial Guidelines for Government Agencies – Commissioning Community Services
- *Financial Management Act 2006 WA*
- Our Priorities for Government 2025–2029
- *Procurement Act 2020*
- State Commissioning Strategy Community Services Implementation Plan 2024–26
- Strengthening Responses to Family and Domestic Violence – System Reform Plan 2024 to 2029
- Western Australian Grants Administration Guidelines 2022
- Whole of Government ACCO Strategy
- Western Australian Procurement Rules

Commonwealth Government

- National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- Various Funding Agreements with the Commonwealth

Communities strategic directions and frameworks

- Communities' ACCO Strategy 2022–2032
- Department of Communities Strategic Plan 2026-30
- Grants Framework
- Grants Guidelines
- Procurement and Contract Management Framework

Ministerial portfolios

Communities supports five Ministers with responsibilities across 10 portfolios:

- Child Protection
- Community Services
- Disability Services
- Early Childhood Education
- Homelessness
- Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence
- Seniors and Ageing
- Volunteering
- Women's Interests
- Youth.

Communities strategic alignment

Outcomes

The Department's purpose is delivered under six outcomes, as set out in its Strategic Plan 2026 to 2030.

Ngulluk Koorliny | All moving forward

The meaningful results and impact we deliver through our work.

Children and young people are safe and supported.

Children and young people are safe from abuse and harm, and are thriving, supported by strong families and early intervention services.

People with disability live empowered lives within inclusive communities.

People with disability, their families and those who share their lives, experience enhanced wellbeing through choice and control, accessibility and inclusion.

Working to end family, domestic and sexual violence.

Violence is reduced and prevented through strong, connected systems that prioritise victim-survivor safety and recovery, and hold people who use violence to account.

Communities are resilient.

People and communities are safe, resilient and able to respond to emergencies, with a focus on those experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, and young people at risk.

People experience self-determination and inclusion.

People, including carers, can access quality services that enable active participation in the community and support choice, wellbeing, cultural connection and inclusion.

Our organisation is a great and safe place to work.

Communities has a skilled and productive workforce, enabled by efficient and effective systems, capable leadership, a strong focus on safety and a positive workplace culture, delivering high-quality services.

Communities is the line agency responsible for leading the following Western Australian Government Strategies:

- All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030
- Path to Safety: Western Australia's Strategy to Reduce Family and Domestic Violence 2020–2030
- At Risk Youth Strategy 2022–2027
- State Disability Strategy 2020–2030
- WA Youth Action Plan 2024–2027
- WA Carers Strategy
- An Age Friendly WA: State Seniors Strategy
- Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality
- WA Volunteering Strategy
- Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy
- Building Safe and Strong Families: Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy
- LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Strategy (2025–2035)
- Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy: Addressing Sexual Violence Together 2025–2035
- WA Strategy to Respond to the Abuse of Older People (Elder Abuse) 2019-2029

Communities was established on 1 July 2017 under the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, bringing together the former Department for Child Protection and Family Support; Housing Authority; Disability Services Commission (the Commission), and various functions from the Department of Local Government and Communities. On 31 March 2025, the Premier announced reform of some public sector agencies to align with his vision for the future of Western Australia. Implementation of the Public Sector Reforms occurring during 2025–26 has resulted in the establishment of the Department of Housing and Works which has taken over responsibility for all of Communities' housing functions including the Housing Authority legal entity. Notably, the public and community housing activities have now transitioned to the Department of Housing and Works.

The revised Communities operational structure continues to provide supports and services administered under the *Disability Services Act 1993* and the *Children and Community Services Act (2004)*.

Strategic commissioning current state at Communities

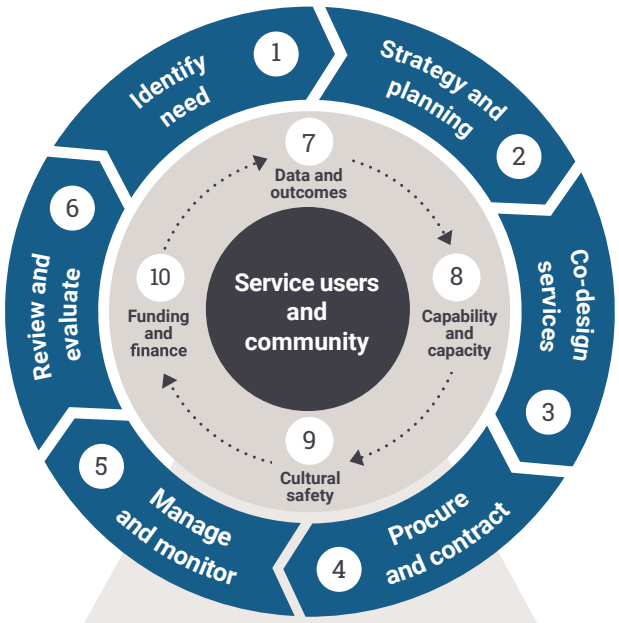
As part of the State Commissioning Strategy to support the implementation of commissioning, a number of Commissioning Agencies have completed a Commissioning Maturity Assessment against the Rebbeck Consulting Maturity Assessment Framework. The Maturity Assessment utilises the State Commissioning Strategy and key enabling factors to assess Commissioning Agencies against 10 key commissioning domains.

Communities finalised its Maturity Assessment during 2025 and was rated as having a Commissioning Maturity of "Developing" (level 3 of 6) which is described as: "Commissioning is guided by a clear framework and consistency is emerging across teams. Standardising approaches with processes, tools and frameworks is a key focus."

The Developing level reflects commissioning where:

- staff are applying established rules and processes
- early signs of consistency are beginning to emerge
- foundational tools are in place
- initial efforts are underway to align commissioning with population needs.

Commissioning cycle



Commissioning enablers

7 Data and outcomes	8 Capability and capacity
9 Cultural safety	10 Funding and finance

Strategic Plan for Commissioning Community Services

Achievements

The Communities ACP published in 2021 identified the commissioning priorities of the following service areas:

- Out of Home Care
- Homelessness
- Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence
- Child Sexual Abuse Therapeutic Services.

Key achievements for the Department since 2021 include:

- The Out of Home Care (OOHC) Program within the Child Protection Portfolio has reformed the model of care and awarded block funded contracts across multiple evidence based and trauma informed service models, including Community Foster Care, Complex Care, Group, Temporary and Emergency Care. Through the reform process a growing number of children with complex needs, including disabilities, were identified whose needs could not be met through traditional and existing care models. To provide appropriate and tailored support for these children an intensive, therapeutic 24-hour care model is now included within the complex care service model. The OOHC recommissioning activity included investment in a statewide asset portfolio. Review and analysis of the cost savings realised, demand for services and the application of a new funding model will continue throughout the life of contracts and inform evidence-based commissioning decisions into the future.
- The Homelessness portfolio has achieved the contract award for new services including Djinda Merriwa to assist young people moving towards independent living; Geraldton Short Stay Accommodation; Common Ground – East Perth; and the Supportive Landlord Model trial delivering Djuripiny Mia. In addition, commissioning activities are continuing for the establishment of the Mandurah Common Ground and the Albany Housing First Support Service and the re-commissioning of the Coordinated Outreach Services in the metropolitan area and Accommodation Support Services across the State.
- The Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence Portfolio has been significantly expanded and enhanced since 2021. New investment from the State Government has enabled commissioning of additional services across Metropolitan and Regional locations, including the redesign and expansion of Safe at Home services, expansion of Men's Behaviour Change programs in regional areas, three new One Stop Hubs delivered across the State, increased services in community-based primary prevention and Aboriginal-led responses, and increased beds in crisis accommodation services. Communities is progressing implementation of the Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) System Reform Plan 2024–2029, involving systemic and structural efforts which underpin the effectiveness of commissioned services and outcomes for victim-survivors. This work includes the expansion of FDV Response Teams, establishment of a Lived Experience Advisory Group, and increased collaboration and coordination across State Government Agencies. Ongoing commissioning linked to the FDV System Reform Plan is detailed later in this ACP.

- During 2024–25, Communities implemented a commissioning governance framework and operating model across the Department to respond to lines of inquiry identified in the 2023 Agency Capability Review. Communities is continuing to build and iterate improved governance through the Commissioning Operating Model. This Operating Model provides an opportunity for Communities to focus on integrated services across agency Portfolios which aligns with the intentions of the State Commissioning Strategy.
- Communities is developing an ACCO Commissioning Framework, in collaboration with the ACCO sector and community-controlled peak organisations, which will guide the way Communities seeks to maximise ACCO involvement in developing and delivering services for Aboriginal children, families and communities which value culture at the heart.

Commissioning schedule

Communities is in the early stages of building the capacity and capability necessary to implement a system-wide strategic commissioning approach for community services. As such, the key areas of commissioning focus over 2026 and 2027 will take into consideration programs that align with government priorities, and those programs where current contracts need significant redevelopment to better align with contemporary practice and changing demand and need.

As Communities grows its commissioning capability and implementation progresses, the schedule of commissioning will evolve.

Table 1: Commissioning priority programs for 2026 and 2027

Child Protection	Community Services	Disability Services	Homelessness	Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence	Youth, Aged Care and Seniors, Volunteering
• Adoption Services • Homestretch • Family Counselling • Support for Family and Foster Carers • Specialist and Community Support Services Responding to Sexual Abuse	• Aboriginal Community Connectors • Financial Counselling Services • Sector Support, Development and Advocacy Services • Youth At Risk	• Advocacy (Independent; Systemic) • Commissioning to deliver against commitments under the WA Thriving Kids Agreement with the Commonwealth.	• Accommodation Support (24/7; In-reach; Night Respite) • Coordinated Outreach Services • Engagement Hubs • Common Ground – Mandurah • Specialist Support Services • Albany Housing First Support Services	• FDV Supported Accommodation • Workforce Entity • Therapeutic Counselling and Indigenous Healing Services • Safe at Home (new services)	• Cadets and Rangers

Child Protection

Within the Child Protection Portfolio, a priority focus area will be on commissioning activities for Adoption Services. This will include consideration of the findings of the Broken Bonds, Fractured Lives: Report on the Inquiry into Past Forced Adoption in Western Australia (Broken Bonds, Fractured Lives) and consultation with people with lived experience including those impacted by forced adoption in WA.

Other priority focus areas will include Support for Family and Foster Carers, including Family Care Support Services; Carer and Family Counselling, Support and Information Services; and Child and Family Advocacy services. The commissioning activities across these programs will consider contemporary design of services, defining key outcomes and developing a program logic to support improved and continued delivery of the services support by evidence-based decisions.

Support for young people leaving care will also be a key focus with commissioning of Homestretch services.

Recommissioning of Specialist and Community Support Services Responding to Sexual Abuse, including the Indigenous Healing Services will continue as a priority. A 15% funding uplift to all services was provided in December 2023 until contracts expire on 30 September 2026, as an interim measure to address cost pressures, while options for the future are developed and considered by Government. Additional investment has enabled the continuation of the Kimberley Sexual Abuse Prevention and Support Service to victim-survivors of child sexual abuse and sexual assault in the East and West Kimberley. Investment has been provided for a two-year Client Advocacy Trial to explore and evaluate models of support for victims of child sexual abuse, which will also inform the recommissioning process.

Community Services

Within the Community Services portfolio, Communities has identified a priority focus on the Aboriginal Community Connectors Program, which assists Aboriginal people in public places who are affected by alcohol or other drugs or generally at risk of harm to improve their personal safety and well-being. Commissioning has been informed by a program evaluation and proposes to engage ACCOs as service providers in each region.

Financial Counselling Services have been identified as another priority focus during 2026 and 2027. The Financial Counselling Services Sub-Program provides services that support individuals to improve financial stability and resilience by offering free specialist support and assistance to individuals and families who may be experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, financial difficulties, financial instability, or hardship. The commissioning of these services will consider the design of services and a program logic to support the achievement of service outcomes across the State.

A commissioning priority focus has been determined for the re-commissioning of the Sector Support Development and Advocacy Services. This Sub-Program is delivered through 11 sector peaks, representing various community services sectors. The Sub-Program strengthens the community services sector by enhancing capability, fostering networks and collaboration, conducting research and consultation, and providing advocacy and representation. The Sub-Program supports community service organisations through the development of specialised knowledge and expertise on sector related issues, ensuring that diverse groups and service providers are represented, supported, and informed. The commissioning approach is based on a commitment to work in partnership with the sector peaks to refine the service specifications and program logic to better align with the intended outcomes of the Sub-Program.

The recommissioning of At Risk Youth Services also remains a key priority, with the aim to strengthen responses for young people aged 10 to 24 years with multiple and complex challenges who are at risk of harm and have increased vulnerability of experiencing poor life outcomes. Community consultation will continue to inform the design and development of contemporary statewide culturally safe and responsive services.

Disability Services

Within the Disability portfolio, Communities has undertaken a review of its disability programs and services to determine if the WA Government's current investment in Disability community services programs and services are fit for purpose, reflect contemporary needs and State Government commitments. This review is an outcome and Expenditure Review Committee decision from the 2025–26 Budget process.

The scope of the review includes current Programs of ACROD Parking, Advocacy (Independent and Systemic), Core Services and Companion Card, Disability Services Provider Panel, Disability Professional Services and Family Support Services.

Stakeholder consultations conducted as part of the review process are intended to provide the Western Australian Government with an initial understanding of the disability services landscape (including strategic and individual advocacy) and how we can sustainably and safely meet the needs of people with disability.

Subject to government direction, recommissioning activities will be anchored in a collaborative, fit for purpose engagement process, delivered progressively across the next two financial years.

Homelessness

A priority focus for commissioning in the homelessness portfolio over 2026 and 2027 will be the following:

- Accommodation Support Services – 24/7 Sub-Program
- Accommodation Support Services – In-reach Sub-Program
- Accommodation Support Services – Night Respite Sub-Program
- Albany Housing First Support Service new initiative
- Coordinated Outreach Services Sub-Program
- Common Ground – Mandurah Sub-Program
- Engagement Hubs Program
- Specialist Support Services Sub-Program.

Homelessness accommodation support services deliver accommodation and support services for young people, adults and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Commissioning of these services is focusing on contemporising the service design and alignment with the All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030.

The commissioning of the Albany Housing First Support Service is a new initiative, currently in the procurement phase. Commissioning is focussing on the delivery of the Housing First Support Service model within Albany, building on services already established in Bunbury, Geraldton and Perth.

Coordinated Outreach Services and Common Ground – Mandurah are commissioning priorities, and activities are currently at the Procure and Contract phase of the commissioning cycle. Procurement activities to establish new service agreements for each of these Sub-Programs is underway.

A further commissioning priority focus is Engagement Hubs (also commonly referred to as 'drop-in centres', 'day centres', and 'access centres'), which provide frontline homelessness services that have been designed to provide safe, welcoming, and non-judgemental environments for people to access a variety of essential services and supports. Commissioning of Perth metropolitan services will be informed by a market sounding exercise.

The Specialist Support Services Sub-Program provides support to adults, young people and families who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, to secure and maintain stable accommodation. Services provide vital advocacy, intervention, case management, counselling, outreach, group, and capacity building activities. Commissioning of these services is focussing on reviewing the achievement of service level outcomes to inform the development of the future service design of this Sub-Program.

Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence

The Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence continues to be a priority for the State Government, and commissioning over the term of this ACP will focus on progressing the delivery of the State Government's family and domestic violence system reform plan. This will include:

- Supported Accommodation Refuges and Safe Houses
- Establishing a workforce entity to support the FDV sector agencies, organisations and workers
- Exploring options for additional Safe at Home services in regions
- Delivering enhanced support for children and young people impacted by family and domestic violence, including new therapeutic and indigenous healing services.

Commissioning capability and maturity

What we are doing – priority actions for Communities over the next two years

Communities is looking to build its commissioning capability and progress to achieving the next maturity level of the Commissioning Maturity Assessment of "Managing" (4 of 6 stages):

> "Commissioning practices are consistent and aligned with strategic goals. A defined commissioning process is in place, supported by policies, tools, and frameworks to enable effective commissioning cycles."

Drawing on insights from the Commissioning Maturity Assessment and aligned with the State Commissioning Strategy, Communities will be focusing on the following areas to support this progression of commissioning maturity:

- Refining strategic planning and commissioning governance
- Building capability and capacity across commissioning phases
- Prioritising Aboriginal people and ACCOs
- Improving data and outcomes to support commissioning decision making
- Supporting government investment to achieve outcomes.

Priority Action 1

Refining strategic planning and commissioning governance

Strategic commissioning reflects a different way of thinking and is about State agencies working together to create services that support better outcomes for Western Australians.

Communities oversees a wide range of portfolios and programs, which have often been procured in isolation in the past with limited opportunity for inter-agency and intra-agency coordinated planning. This fragmented approach potentially impacts internal commissioning processes and limits the opportunity for the community services sector to prepare for and respond to commissioning activities.

When planning a commissioning activity, consideration is given to how the proposed service can be designed to better reflect the needs of place-based service delivery and how it can be integrated with other services delivered by Communities and by other State agencies. This strategic planning will be enhanced by the continuing implementation and growing maturity of the Commissioning Operating Model within Communities. An initial indicator of successful strategic planning for Communities, will be the increased oversight and integration of services across the 10 portfolios managed by the agency.

How will we move towards improved strategic planning and commissioning governance:

- Continue to develop the Commissioning Operating Model to embed a strategic governance framework for commissioning across the agency. Governance will consolidate cross-portfolio leadership forums to align priorities across portfolios, clarify roles and processes, and enable collaborative decision making which drives increased impact and value through commissioning.
- Continue to develop an agency-wide prioritisation framework that guides commissioning and investment decisions and supports Communities to operationalise and communicate commissioning priorities with interested stakeholders. Prioritisation will be responsive to the dynamic environment for commissioning.
- Translate Communities commissioning priorities and strategic objectives into commissioning plans and actions, through establishing collaborative working groups which reflect a range of expertise, and working systematically through system design, program design and service design, to develop culturally appropriate and purposeful service agreements which deliver strong outcomes and indicators.
- Collaborate with other State agencies, across portfolios within Communities, and with the community services sector to explore opportunities to provide services to service users in a coordinated, efficient, and accessible manner to achieve better outcomes. The implementation of integrated and place-based services is supported by the increased sharing of information as Communities continues to embed the Commissioning Operating Model.

Priority Action 2

Building the Department's maturity in the phases of commissioning community services

To strengthen commissioning across the agency, a continuing effort is needed to leverage areas of good commissioning practice and build capability and capacity across key commissioning phases.

How we will build commissioning capability and capacity across the Department:

- Build evidence of community need that informs commissioning decision making by ensuring:
  - Community strengths and needs are systematically and consistently identified through engagement with community, community providers, ACCOs and Communities regional offices.
  - Insights from needs assessments inform the commissioning prioritisation and commissioning plans, to improve outcomes for the community.
- Strengthen lived experience engagement that informs needs assessment and guides co-design, development of outcomes, and supports continuous improvement and service evaluation.
- Build understanding of the market profile, its capacity, and the maturity of potential service providers within the market – and collaborate with other State agencies to identify opportunities to integrate services where appropriate.
- Continue to build proactive and structured service performance management by:
  - Working in partnership with community service providers to foster a culture of shared learning and continuous improvement.
  - Ensuring Key Performance Indicators, as they are updated, align with the Outcomes Measurement Framework and Outcomes Based Management reporting frameworks.
  - Strengthen review and evaluation of programs by developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks early when commissioning services, to improve data collection from commencement of the service agreements.

Priority Action 3

Prioritising Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)

Communities is committed to driving implementation of whole-of-government policy initiatives such as the Western Australian Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021–2029 and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement). In response, Communities is reforming the way that it commissions and delivers services to Aboriginal children, families, communities, and their organisations.

Communities recognises the importance and value of ACCOs in delivering culturally secure services for Aboriginal people. Partnering with and procuring from ACCOs empowers Aboriginal people and strengthens Aboriginal culture. Given the high proportion of Aboriginal people that access the Department's services, ACCOs are best placed to engage with members of the community, assess needs and design programs that incorporate Aboriginal ways of working including the nuance of kinship structures and family dynamics.

Communities' ACCO Strategy 2022–2032 (ACCO Strategy) reforms and directs how Communities partners with Aboriginal people, and their community-controlled organisations.

Communities' ACCO Commissioning Framework (currently in development) will be an important operational approach for Communities' ongoing transformation, in response to the National Agreement Priority Reform 3. The ACCO Commissioning Framework aims to:

- Provide guidance for all Communities staff to undertake commissioning in ways that are culturally appropriate
- Provide transparency to Aboriginal organisations and businesses around the commissioning process Communities will undertake
- Provide guidance for the non-ACCO community services sector to work in genuine partnership with the ACCO sector
- Identify opportunities for collaboration across State Government to support ACCO commissioning.

Commissioning requires a growth mindset, recognising that there are opportunities to learn in every commissioning initiative and through all phases of commissioning, and to implement changes to Communities' contracts and processes. Communities will learn through its own experiences and the experiences of other Western Australian government agencies and other jurisdictions within Australia.

Communities has identified priority Programs where commissioning over 2026 and 2027 will focus on ACCO involvement, including:

- Specialist and Community Support Services Responding to Sexual Abuse
- Homestretch
- Support for Family and Foster Carers
- Youth At Risk
- Aboriginal Community Connectors;
- Homelessness Low Barrier 24/7 Accommodation – Boorloo Bidee Mia
- Homelessness Coordinated Outreach
- Short Stay Accommodation.

Further efforts will focus on supporting ACCOs recently engaged in the delivery of services, in programs including:

- Out of Home Care
- Earlier Intervention and Family Support Services
- Aboriginal Family Safety Grants
- Broome Family and Domestic Violence One Stop Hub
- Geraldton Short Stay Accommodation.

How will we prioritise Aboriginal people and ACCOs:

- Continue to progress the strategic vision of our ACCO Strategy through the development of a second Implementation Plan (2026–2029).
- Implement the ACCO Commissioning Framework (once finalised) and use this to guide approaches to commissioning services of significance to Aboriginal children, families and communities.
- Continue to develop our knowledge of the ACCO sector through a detailed exploration of strengths, opportunities, aspirations and system constraints, as a baseline to inform commissioning within the remit of Communities. Extensive ACCO market research, and genuine engagements that prioritise self-determination, will inform Communities where direct procurement approaches may be made.
- The ACCO Strategy and Commissioning Framework are aligned with Communities' Aboriginal Cultural Framework 2024–2034, which aims to strengthen the cultural competency and capability of our staff, systems and policies across the agency. This includes ensuring all services commissioned through Communities are culturally informed and responsive.

Priority Action 4

Improving data and outcomes to support commissioning decision making

Communities collects data through service and grant agreement progress reporting and service reviews; however, manual systems and siloed platforms hinder integration and impact data quality which creates barriers to supporting commissioning decisions that are based on evidence and data.

How will we improve data and outcomes to support commissioning decision making:

- Continue to deliver and achieve the priorities of Government through continuing to embed the whole-of-agency Commissioning Operating Model. This Commissioning Operating Model commenced implementation during 2025 and involves a three-tier governance structure for decision making and authority for commissioning at Portfolio, intra-agency and strategic levels of the Department. The strategic tier of the Commissioning Operating Model is comprised of representatives from the Departments of Communities; Treasury and Finance; and Premier and Cabinet and this membership supports the alignment with priorities of Government.
- Modernise and integrate legacy data systems:
  - The current legacy data systems are being reviewed. Consideration of future systems will aim to align data collection and systems development with the information requirements to support commissioning activities. A key systems development activity for an agency-wide procurement and contract management system is a priority.
  - Communities has implemented an Information Management Structure to support commissioning. This categorises each community services contract into a meaningful Program and Sub-Program structure for the purpose of improving consistency and accurate reporting on commissioning processes across the Department.
- Apply the Western Australian Outcomes Measurement Framework across all current service agreements:
  - Mapping outcomes from the Outcomes Measurement Framework to Communities' Outcomes, Communities' Strategic Directions, Outcomes Based Measurement Framework and government strategies and then applying these consistently across the Information Management Structure of each Program and Sub-Program.
  - Collaborating with service providers to identify data collection methods which measure the achievement of outcomes which matter most to service users and the community, reduce administrative burden, and are supported by a clear evaluation framework and methodology.

Priority Action 5

Supporting government investment to achieve outcomes

On behalf of the Government, Communities oversees a significant budget for the achievement of community outcomes through the delivery of community services by external service partners. Communities' will continue to use investment data to inform future plans and to support the ongoing sustainability of community service providers.

How will we support government investment to achieve outcomes:

- Continue to engage with Government at key touch points during commissioning in order to support long term strategic planning and investment in community services commissioning. This includes early planning and scoping with the Department of Treasury and Finance on future budget proposals, engaging with the Central Agencies Financial Assurance Committee in relation to the high value high risk commissioning activities, and submitting Procurement Plans and Evaluation Reports to the Community Services Procurement Review Committee for procurement activities valued over $5 million.
  - Apply the Financial Guidelines for Government Agencies Commissioning Community Services 2024 and undertake cost modelling and benchmarking in the preparation of budget submissions for consideration by Government.
- Develop more detailed pricing schedules in procurement processes that align with the template produced by WACOSS on pricing community services; and
- Build processes that support Communities to work together with Community Service Organisations to ensure that service agreements are sufficient for sustainable delivery of community services. This includes continuing to build on sector engagement such as the Communities Partnership Roundtable, Commissioning, Data Sharing and Outcomes Working Group and participating in and leading Communities of Practice with providers, lived experience groups and other statewide forums.

Endnotes

1 As at 1 September 2025

2 As the Public Sector Reform has now completed, Communities is no longer responsible for the Housing Authority functions.

Department of Communities

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