



ANCD

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL ON DRUGS

SURVEY AT
A GLANCE

Survey on the Burden of Submission Writing and Reporting for Alcohol and Other Drug Non-Government Organisations

Extracted from the ANCD report 'Burden of Submission Writing and Reporting for Alcohol and Other Drug Non Government Organisations'

Background to the Survey

After consultation with the Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association (ATCA) and representations from many individual alcohol and other drug (AOD) non government organisations (NGOs) a survey was conducted by the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) on the extent and degree to which AOD NGOs in Australia have been impacted by submission and reporting requirements from funding bodies in the previous twelve months. It took place over a five-week period between December 2008 and January 2009.

- The survey was sent to the Chief Executive Officers of AOD NGOs in Australia.
- Information from 71 AOD NGOs in Australia was analysed.
- Responses were received from every state and territory.

Feedback from NGOs

- NGOs are struggling with the burden of submission and reporting requirements
- Many NGOs are sacrificing frontline staff in order to appoint administrative staff to meet compliance requirements
- As a result of funding constraints some NGOs are facing choices between the standards they set and whether they provide services at all
- Multiple funding bodies, all with different requirements are compounding the situation

Survey Findings

Funding Submissions

- An average of 11.4 submissions were completed for each organisation.
- Insufficient time was often provided to complete submissions.

Reporting

- An average of 11.3 funded programs/projects were reported on by each organisation.
- 50% of reports provided to the Australian Government departments were required six monthly, 26% were required three monthly and 24% were required every twelve months.
- 38% of reports prepared for state/territory governments were required six monthly; 37% were required twelve monthly and 25% were required three monthly.

Where does the funding come from?

Submissions

- 41% to various Australian Government Departments
- 29% to various State/Territory Government Departments
- 30% to other bodies e.g. philanthropic foundations, private corporations, international organisations

Reporting

- 38% to various Australian Government Departments
- 40% to various State/Territory Government Departments
- 22% other bodies e.g. philanthropic foundations, private corporations, international organisations

How long does it take?

Submissions (av.)

- 105 hours per submission
- 1,197 hours or 31.5 weeks/year on submissions (0.7 full-time equivalent)

Reports (av.)

- 42 hours per report
- 474 hours or 12.5 weeks/year on reports (0.3 full-time equivalent)

Impact of submission and reporting process

- Most NGOs reported that submission and reporting requirements had impacted on accounting practices, accessing additional expertise, data collection, changes to services provided and accreditation processes.
- 42.5% of organisations indicated that submission and reporting requirements had a negative impact on the employment of additional staff.
- 70% of organisations indicated that submission and reporting requirements had resulted in additional costs.
- 96% of organisations indicated that multiple funding bodies had created additional work.

Areas of Impact:

- Accounting practices
- Additional expertise
- Data collection
- Service provision
- Accreditation
- Employment
- Additional costs

What is required from here?

New thinking is required if these organisations are to continue to play an important role in providing services. Suggestions include:

- Development of a two stage submission process, e.g. an initial expression of interest followed by a formal submission process where there is intention to fund the program/project.
- Submission and reporting requirements to include funding and support for additional costs incurred, e.g. administration, evaluation and the development and maintenance of standardised databases required for reporting purposes.
- Funding needs to be approved at least three months prior to commencement dates of new or ongoing funding.
- Less frequent reporting times e.g. yearly reporting preferable.
- Streamlined standardised online reporting templates consistent across all government departments to be established and provided.
- A separate NGO liaison unit which manages all government submissions and reporting for all departments to be established.

New Thinking:

- Two-stage submission process
- Funding for additional costs
- Earlier approval of funding
- Annual reporting
- On-line reporting
- NGO liaison unit
- Simplified accounting requirements
- Organisational audits
- Streamlined KPIs
- New national standards

- Accounting requirements to be simplified in line with standard Australian accounting practices and in keeping with standard accounting packages used by NGOs.
- Organisational audits which include individual program/project details to be accepted in place of the detail currently required as part of administrative and accounting practices.
- Key performance indicators to be streamlined to be more meaningful and reportable and kept to a finite number of no more than six.
- Standardised nationally recognised registration/accreditation processes to be accepted and once completed recognised as covering issues such as governance and risk management thus excluding the need to report on these items separately.