Tenant Participation and Community Engagement Program Guidelines

25 June 2018

1. Introduction

The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) Tenant Participation and Community Engagement (TPCE) program is a key part of helping FACS meet its obligations under the objects of NSW Housing Act 2001 to "maximise the opportunities for tenants to participate in the management of their housing and in the development of housing policies" and "to encourage social mix and the integration of different housing forms in existing and new communities".

The concepts of tenant participation and community engagement are widely recognised in the literature as key pillar of effective social housing—contributing to a wide range of positive individual tenant and community outcomes.

Under the *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW*—the Government's vision for social housing over the next 10 years—tenant participation and community engagement are central to the delivery of improved services and outcomes in social housing.

The TPCE Program grew out of a long history of partnerships with non-government organisations to deliver tenant participation and community engagement services to social housing tenants—most recently under the FACS funded Tenant Participation Resource Services (TPRS) program and the Housing Communities Program (HCP).

These programs have now been consolidated into the TPCE program.

2. Program framework

2.1 Program aim and outcomes

The Tenant Participation & Community Engagement (TPCE) program aims to provide FACS Housing tenants with enhanced access to information, advice and opportunities to be more actively involved in processes and decisions related to improving social housing tenancies and communities.

For the purpose of the program, tenant participation and community engagement refers to the active involvement of tenants in processes and decisions that relate to their tenancy and engaging in their local and broader community.

Specifically, the expected outcomes for the TPCE program are to:

- **Improve the experiences** of people living in social housing through the creation of additional opportunities and more appropriate mechanisms for tenants to be actively involved in processes related to their tenancy and local community.

- **Improve tenant outcomes** by facilitating access to the information needed to more independently manage their tenancy and to build tenant capacity to take advantage of opportunities for social and economic participation.

- **Improve community outcomes** by facilitating community-driven projects and initiatives that build social cohesion and community wellbeing in locations with high concentrations of social housing or in locations affected by significant community issues or change.

- **Leverage additional resources** for tenant participation and community engagement by creating opportunities for tenant volunteering and partnerships with local services and community organisations.

In line with the new FACS Strategic Directions 2017-2021 and the Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy, the TPCE program has an additional cross-cutting focus on

- Inclusion of the **client voice** in service design and delivery
- Improved long-term **outcomes for Aboriginal people and families** living in social housing.

Both of these cross-cutting priorities will be incorporated into the District TPCE priorities statement—which outline specific district priorities for tenant participation and community engagement (see Section 2.5).

2.2 Scope

The TPCE program seeks to deliver services to support tenant participation and community engagement for tenants living in FACS Housing managed properties.

Within each FACS district, the scope of the program is defined by the catchments of FACS Housing Tenancy Teams nominated by the district and identified priority estates or precincts/ neighbourhoods affected by significant community issues or change.

The specific scope and priorities for the TPCE program within each FACS district will be defined through a TPCE priorities statement, updated annually, that outlines which FACS Housing Tenancy Teams and estates/precincts/ neighbourhoods will be the focus of program effort—reflecting local priorities and opportunities to align TPCE with the full suite of other tenant and community initiatives (including CHP, AHO and LAHC initiatives).

Whole-of-location CHPs will be responsible for funding their own tenant participation and community engagement services. During the Social Housing Management Transfer transition to whole-of-location CHPs, districts may specify priorities for targeting some aspects of TPCE

services to social housing tenants impacted by the transfer program (e.g. tenant consultation activities).

2.3 Principles

The aims and outcomes of the TPCE program are underpinned by operating principles that should inform all tenant participation and community engagement activities—as well as engagement between program providers and FACS.

- Ensuring a shared commitment between FACS and TPCE providers to work together.

- Recognising that the achievement of the *Future Directions* policy objectives of improved tenant and community outcomes requires both high quality TPCE services and strong engagement by FACS in the work of TPCE providers.

- Leveraging the independence of TPCE providers who operate outside of the formal tenancy/ landlord relationships under the tenant's residential tenancy agreement.

- Leveraging and building networks across the local service system, rather than trying to replicate or simply fill service gaps.

- Recognising the role of tenant volunteers as a key resource for TPCE activities.

- Recognising the importance of building trusted relationships with tenants and communities as a critical success factor in delivering effective TPCE activities

- Recognising the vulnerability of FACS Housing tenants—including the significant barriers to participation and engagement for Aboriginal tenants, tenants with low literacy, CALD tenants, younger tenants, tenants with disability and carers.

- Ensuring tenant and community feedback on issues and priorities reflects the diverse range of views and experiences of tenants—rather than simply the loudest or most articulate voices.

2.4 Service requirements

The TCPE service requirements are defined in terms of a core set of deliverables that will be used as the starting point for all TPCE contracts—with flexibility for FACS districts and contracted providers to negotiate specific performance thresholds for each deliverable to reflect the local delivery context and priorities.

These deliverables do not cover all TPCE activities—as providers will also need to spend time building and maintaining relationships with tenants and communities so the TPCE activities are valued and effective. Rather, the core deliverables are intended to represent the most important public value contributions of TPCE providers to the program outcomes within the

available funding—recognising that the full achievement of program outcomes is dependent on a range of factors outside of the control of TPCE providers.

The core deliverables cover four areas.

1. Consultation and community liaison

- Tenant groups: coordination and support for structures or arrangements identified in conjunction with FACS that facilitate groups of tenants/ community members to regularly come together to provide input into social housing matters (tenant consultative groups) or to plan actions to improve social housing and local communities (tenant action groups).

- Open tenant consultative forums: open forums requested by FACS to formally consult and engage with the full range of tenants/ community members on specific issues or changes that impact on their housing and local community.

- Tenant volunteering: opportunities for tenants to volunteer their time and skills to work within their communities as part of supporting tenant participation and community engagement activities.

2. Information and education

- Access to information and advice: establishing mechanisms and arrangements identified in conjunction with FACS that support tenants to access the information and advice needed to independently manage their tenancy (e.g. drop-in centre, helpline; support in using My Housing online).

- Tenant information sessions: hosting open information sessions for tenants on 'hot topics' and practical 'how to' areas that are identified in conjunction with FACS.

- Tenant training sessions: facilitating tenant training / capacity building sessions on topics and skill areas identified in conjunction with FACS (e.g. tenant volunteer training, Rent it Keep It workshops).

3. Access to services

- Partnerships and service networks: establishing and sustaining a formal network of community and services partners to maximise opportunities for tenants to participate and engage with activities, services and support in their local community.

- Tenant outreach: one-on-one and group assistance to facilitate the participation of tenants who are isolated or difficult to engage and linking them to local community activities and services—including accepting referrals from FACS Housing to work with individual tenants and groups of tenants to overcome barriers to participation and community engagement.

- Linking tenants to existing support and community services: warm referrals of tenants to the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Program (TAAP); legal, advocacy or advisory services (e.g. Community Justice Centres); and the full range of community services to sustain tenancies and take advantage of opportunities for social and economic participation.

4. Community wellbeing initiatives

- Tenancy improvement initiatives: initiatives or events identified in conjunction with FACS that involve a diverse range of tenants attending and participating in a project or event to improve social housing tenancies and local communities (e.g. maintenance pop-ups, clean-up days; recycling project; community pantry).

- Neighbourhood/ community improvement initiatives: initiatives or events identified in conjunction with FACS that address identified community needs and support greater engagement by tenants in the local and broader community (e.g. whole-of-precinct community development projects; community centre management).

A summary of the service requirements and core deliverables is presented in Table 1.

2.5 Service plans

As part of the funding cycle, each FACS district will prepare a TPCE priorities statement, updated annually, outlining their requirements for tenant participation and community engagement activities—reflecting local priorities and opportunities to align TPCE with the full suite of other tenant and community initiatives. Each TPCE priorities statement will outline:

- The focus of required TPCE services in the district—including Housing Tenancy Teams and estates/precincts/ neighbourhoods that will be the focus of program effort
- Specific expectations for each of the TPCE deliverables
- Specific expectations for how TPCE services with work with other tenant and place-based district initiatives.

Contracted service providers are expected to negotiate annual service plans with FACS districts—outlining the specific TPCE activities and deliverables to best meet the district priorities. To ensure program integrity, annual service plans will be presented in a consistent format aligned to the core deliverables.

Table 1: TPCE service requirements and core deliverables

TPCE requirements	Deliverables	Baseline performance threshold	Attributes of success
Increasing opportunities for tenants to have constructive input and actively participate in activities to improve social housing services and local communities	1.1 Ongoing tenant groups / working parties	▪ Agreed number of ongoing tenant groups across district (e.g. Tenant groups for each FACS Housing Team / priority location)	▪ Regular attendance by diverse range of tenants ▪ Each group has clear action plan for tenant participation & community engagement activities
	1.2 Open tenant / community consultative forums	▪ Agreed number of forums	▪ Attendance per forum ▪ Discussion presents a diverse range of tenant views
	1.3 Tenant volunteering	▪ Agreed number of tenants who volunteer their time to support TPCE activities – by type	▪ Total number of tenant volunteers pa-by type ▪ Total number of hours of tenant volunteering pa – by type
Increasing access to information and skills needed to actively participate in housing and engaging in the community	2.1 Tenant access to information and advice	▪ Agreed mechanism / arrangements for tenants to access information and advice	▪ Information and advise mechanisms leverage existing information resources and tools e.g. My Housing Online
	2.1 Tenant information sessions	▪ Agreed number of tenant information sessions per annum (e.g. managing neighbourhood disputes; e-Repairs)	▪ Total participation in information session ▪ Summary of information event disseminated by social media, web, other existing communication channels
	2.2 Tenant training workshops	▪ Agreed number of training workshops per annum (e.g. 'Rent it Keep It' style education sessions; skills development workshops)	▪ Number of tenants pa attending training workshops ▪ % of participants completing training/receiving a certificate
Increasing opportunities for tenants to access support and services needed for sustainable tenancies and social & economic participation	3.1 Partnerships and service network	▪ MoU with support providers and community organisations to facilitate tenant access to support and services in the community	▪ Number of providers as signatory to MoU ▪ Support partner satisfaction with TPCE assistance in facilitating contact and engagement with social housing tenants
	3.2 Tenant outreach services	▪ Outreach to agreed number of tenants to overcome barriers to participation and community engagement —including accepting referrals from FACS housing tenancy team to engage with isolated/disconnected tenants	▪ Total number of contact hours with outreach tenants ▪ % of tenants linked to social and community participation opportunities
	3.3 Linking tenants to existing services	▪ Agreed number of tenants assisted to de-escalate/ resolve individual tenancy matters; engage in local community; participate in education & employment — including referrals to TAAP; FACS opportunity pathways	▪ % of tenants followed up after initial request for assistance to determine whether referral accepted/ issue resolved
Facilitating local initiates that build successful tenancies and community wellbeing	4.1 Tenancy improvement initiatives / events	▪ Agreed number of TPCE supported initiatives/ events per annum (e.g. maintenance pop-up; clean-up days; community wellbeing projects)	▪ Participation per initiative/ event ▪ Level of involvement of service/ support partners in initiatives/ events
	4.2 Community improvement initiatives / events		

3. Commissioning

3.1 Commissioning strategy

FACS has of budget of $2.355m per annum to purchases services that maximise the achievements of the program outcomes. FACS is seeking to contract with one or more non-government organisations to deliver TPCE services as an integrated part of the full suite of initiatives that aim to improve the experiences of people living in FACS Housing and to improve tenancy and community outcomes.

FACS is interested in innovative service models that leverage the available program funding to supply the core set of deliverables and offer additional benefits that support tenant participation and community engagement. This could include:

- partnerships, consortia or lead contractor models that deliver services in more than one district or across the state
- single district providers that target opportunities to align TPCE with the full suite of other tenant and community initiatives within a particular district.

Under the TPCE resource allocation model, a proportion of program funding is nominally allocated to each of the seven FACS districts—aligned to the number of ongoing FACS Housing tenancy teams operating in the district (Table 2). Proponents that seek to deliver services across more than one district will operate under a single contract and budget—but will need to ensure that resources are applied in line with the TPCE resource allocation model. Where a FACS district has a small allocation of TPCE resources (linked to a small number of FACS Housing Tenancy Teams), FACS understands that service provision may only be viable if delivered as part of a multi-district service model.

Table 2: TPCE Resource Allocation Model

FACS Districts	Number of FACS Housing tenancy teams	TPCE resource allocation
Hunter New England and Central Coast	3	$185,921
Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW	4	$247,895
Mid North Coast & Northern NSW	1	$61,974
Western NSW, Murrumbidgee & Far West	5	$309,868
South Western Sydney	8	$495,789
Sydney, South Eastern Sydney & Northern Sydney	9	$557,763
Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains	8	$495,789
TPCE program	38	$2,355,000

3.2 Roles and responsibilities

3.2.1 Role of the TPCE Provider

The TPCE provider will be responsible for:

- Maintaining a commitment and focus on the aims, outcomes, and core deliverables of the TPCE Program and the delivery of an agreed Service Plan;

- Employing, supervising and supporting TPCE staff consistent with their legal responsibilities as an employer, including adherence to industrial awards, entitlements and procedures, occupational health and safety provisions, equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination policies;

- Establishing a clear policy on the use of volunteers within the TPCE. The TPCE volunteer policy should include a statement of rights and responsibilities and procedures as to how volunteers will be supported in the course of this work;

- Working strategically and collaboratively with FACS and other partner organisations that support tenant participation and community engagement;

- Establishing clear guidelines in regard to using program funds and managing program expenses. The guidelines will clarify how resources will be used and the documentation required to acquit TPCE funds;

- Administering TPCE initiatives and events using effective management practices, performance monitoring and accounting procedures;

- Establishing a policy and procedure for dealing with internal complaints or disputes regarding TPCE management, staff and volunteers;

- Implementing principles of stakeholder inclusiveness, equal opportunity, access and equity;

- Complying with other management and governance provisions documented in Section 4 of these Guidelines;

- Having up-to-date workers compensation, public liability and other insurances as required by law.

The TPCE provider is also accountable for the core deliverables. To this end it will prepare the following documents and reports and submit to the relevant FACS District Coordinator:

- Draft and Final Service Plans (see Section 4.3.1)

- Annual Outcomes Report (see Section 4.3.2)

- Annual Income and Expenditure Statement (see Section 4.3.3)

- Audited Financial Statement of TPCE expenditure at the conclusion of the contract (see Section 4.3.4).

3.2.2   Role of FACS

FACS Commissioning and Planning is responsible for managing the contracts and relationship with TPCE providers to maximise the program outcomes. FACS Commissioning and Planning will work closely with FACS Housing Operations in developing and approving TPCE Service Plans and assessing performance against these plans.

Specifically, FACS Commissioning and Planning, in consultation with FACS Housing Operations, will be responsible for:

- Promoting a partnership approach to achieving the outcomes of the Program

- Working in collaboration with the TPCE provider to develop an appropriate service plan with agreed performance thresholds and attributes of success;

- Meeting regularly with the TPCE provider to monitor progress on the service plan;

- Conducting six monthly and annual TPCE service plan reviews based on submitted reports to monitor and evaluation deliverables and outcomes at the district level;

- Facilitating networking opportunities for the TPCE provider staff and FACS District staff;

- Providing information and/or facilitate the involvement of the TPCE project with FACS Housing teams, LAHC staff and other relevant FACS staff;

- Providing agreed support and assistance to the TPCE provider, as requested and appropriate; and

- In the first instance, receiving and endeavouring to manage any complaints or disputes regarding the TPCE provider.

4.   Management

4.1   Program management

Housing Statewide Services (HSS) within FACS will be responsible for program management of the TPCE program. HSS will be responsible for:

- Management of the TCPE budget

- Working in collaboration with the FACS District TPCE Coordinators / FACS District Commission and Planning to coordinate statewide implementation of the program

- Program monitoring and evaluation—including preparing an annual statewide summary of TPCE program (based on TPCE Service Plans and performance reports for each FACS district)

4.2 Human Services Agreement

All NSW government agencies are now required to use the Human Services Agreement (HSA) when procuring human services from non government organisations.

The HSA is a standard contract that will make it easier for NGOs to do business with government by streamlining contracting arrangements and promoting consistency across the NSW government.

Consistent with the HSA, FACS acknowledges and respects that TPCE providers are independent agencies that are responsible and accountable for their own performance and management. However, TPCE providers, as beneficiaries of government funding, are accountable to the Government for their performance in relations to the service funded.

The HCA includes specific requirements covering:

- Your conduct
- Compliance with laws, standards and policies
- Complaints
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service provision
- Personnel and subcontractors
- Conflicts of Interest
- Payment, use and management of funds
- Confidential, sensitive and cultural information
- Documents, Records and reports
- Insurance and indemnity
- Acknowledgement and publicity
- Dispute resolution

4.3 Reporting and performance monitoring

4.3.1 Service Planning and Reporting Cycle

Each TPCE provider will be required to prepare a Draft Service Plan, using the template included at Attachment 1.

During the funding cycle, one Service Plan will be developed and agreed to between the TPCE provider and the relevant FACS District.

The TPCE provider will prepare and submit to FACS a draft Service Plan (using the template provided) for the nominated period. The draft will reflect the FACS Priorities Statement prepared for the district.

Representatives of the TPCE provider and FACS will meet to discuss the Draft Plan and negotiate any changes or amendments as appropriate.

Based on agreements reached, a final Service Plan will be prepared and submitted by the TPCE provider to FACS. It will be included as a formal attachment to the funding agreement. This document will form the basis of all work conducted for the specified period.

Should any significant changes need to be made in the Plan, these will be agreed to in writing between the TPCE provider and FACS. Where necessary a revised Service Plan will be signed, submitted and appended to the contract by mutual agreement.

A 12 month report on Performance Measures will be expected by 30 June of each year (using the reporting templates included at Attachment 2). This report will again form the basis of a formal review and monitoring meeting between representatives of the TPCE provider and FACS.

Periodical review meetings will also be used to discuss input and priorities for the next period.

Leading into the next period's planning process, FACS Coordinators and the TPCE providers may agree to implement a number of consultation or input activities. This may include:

- FACS Coordinators preparing and providing to the TPCE provider an update of the District TPCE Priorities Statement;
- Hosting an Achievements and Planning Workshop
- Conducting a stakeholder questionnaire or feedback loop.

This cycle will be replicated for each planning cycle of the TPCE funding period.

Attachment 1: TPCE service plan (template)

TPCE requirements	Deliverables	Agreed performance threshold (target; baseline) for assessing whether deliverable has been fully met	Agreed attributes of success for the deliverable to be reported in the annual performance report
Increasing opportunities for tenants to have constructive input and actively participate in activities to improve social housing services and local communities	1.1 Ongoing tenant groups / working parties	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	1.2 Open tenant / community consultative forums	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	1.3 Tenant volunteering	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
Increasing access to information and skills needed to actively participate in housing and engaging in the community	2.1 Tenant access to information and advice	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	2.1 Tenant information sessions	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	2.2 Tenant training workshops	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
Increasing opportunities for tenants to access support and services needed for sustainable tenancies and social & economic participation	3.1 Partnerships and service network	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	3.2 Tenant outreach services	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	3.3 Linking tenants to existing services	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
Facilitating local initiates that build successful tenancies and community wellbeing	4.1 Tenancy improvement initiatives / events	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	4.2 Community improvement initiatives / events	▪ ▪	▪ ▪

Attachment 2: TPCE annual performance report (template)

TPCE requirements	Deliverables	Quantitative data for each deliverables against the agreed performance threshold	Qualitative data for each deliverables against the agreed attributes of success
Increasing opportunities for tenants to have constructive input and actively participate in activities to improve social housing services and local communities	1.1 Ongoing tenant groups / working parties	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	1.2 Open tenant / community consultative forums	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	1.3 Tenant volunteering	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
Increasing access to information and skills needed to actively participate in housing and engaging in the community	2.1 Tenant access to information and advice	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	2.1 Tenant information sessions	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	2.2 Tenant training workshops	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
Increasing opportunities for tenants to access support and services needed for sustainable tenancies and social & economic participation	3.1 Partnerships and service network	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	3.2 Tenant outreach services	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	3.3 Linking tenants to existing services	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
Facilitating local initiates that build successful tenancies and community wellbeing	4.1 Tenancy improvement initiatives / events	▪ ▪	▪ ▪
	4.2 Community improvement initiatives / events	▪ ▪	▪ ▪