2 April 2024

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) met with Disability Representative and Carer Organisations (DRCOs) and Independent Advisory Council (IAC) members as part of the Reforms for Outcomes (RFO) co-design program.

The DRCOs represented at the 23 February RFO program quarterly meeting were: A4 Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia, Australian Autism Alliance, Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Blind Citizens Australia, Brain Injury Australia, Carers Australia, Children and Young People with Disability Australia, Community Mental Health Australia, Deaf Australia, Deafblind Australia, Deafness Forum Australia, Disability Advocacy Network Australia, Down Syndrome Australia, Every Australian Counts, First Peoples Disability Network, Inclusion Australia, JFA Purple Orange, Mental Health Australia, National Ethnic Disability Alliance, National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, People with Disability Australia, Physical Disability Australia, ReImagine Australia, Self Advocacy Resource Unit, Women with Disabilities Australia and Young People in Nursing Homes Alliance

Representatives from the IAC included: Leah van Poppel, Sharon Boyce, Gavin Burner, Leighton Jay, Samantha Jenkinson, Sylvana Mahmic, James Manders, Sam Paior, Dr George Taleporos, Mark Tonga

Apologies: Jennifer Cullen, Tricia Malowney (IAC members)

Representatives from the NDIA included: Rebecca Falkingham, Corri McKenzie, Aaron Verlin, Alex Rosenthal, Matt Wright, Kristy Cameron, Mitchell Clegg, Craig Hibbins, Kirsten Nield, Kitsa Papadopoulos, Anne Skordis.

This summary covers topics discussed on Friday 23 February 2024.

Summary key points

- RFO program members met as a group for the first time in 2024 to discuss the progress of RFO co-design reforms and the future of the co-design program.
- Members agreed to focus co-design efforts on shorter term initiatives, which the NDIA can deliver ahead of the Australian Government’s response to the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission. \
- Members provided valuable feedback on how to improve the co-design process and experience. The NDIA committed to operational improvements in line with this feedback.
- Members discussed likely themes of future co-design reform work, based on the recommendations of the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission. This included possible changes to existing working groups and the need to establish new working groups.

Summary

Aaron Verlin, NDIA General Manager Co-design and Engagement, opened the meeting.

Item 1. Update from RFO program Working Group

Mr Verlin introduced RFO Working Group Co-Chairs to provide an update on behalf of their Working group.

Better Planning Working Group update, provided by Co-Chair Nick Avery, Every Australian Counts

Ms Avery provided the following updates:

- The Working Group has developed the Better Planning work plan.
- The Group has identified the following priorities to progress and co-design while waiting for further direction on the Australian Government's response to the NDIS Review recommendations.
    - Improving check-ins to better support participants who are over or under spending their plans, including communication through the check-in process.
    - Plan implementation, including communication to participants, and better defining the role of support coordinators and plan managers.
    - Ensuring plan budgets are right first time at a participant’s planning meeting.
    - Testing strategies to help participants align their spending with their plans.
    - Improving the plan implementation directory.
    - Identifying and testing resources to increase participant independence in understanding and managing NDIS budgets and supports.
- Ms Avery highlighted the cross-over between the Better Planning Working Group and the Workforce Capability Working Group when looking at the check-in process. Ms Avery and Kristy Cameron, NDIA Service Delivery, Reform for Outcomes, and Workforce Capability Working Group member, agreed to work together to look at how our Agency staff are undertaking check-ins.

Fraud Working Group update, provided by Co-Chairs Jenny Karavolos, Australian Autism Alliance and James Manders, IAC member

Mr Manders and Ms Karavolos provided the following updates:

- The Fraud Working Group welcomed a new member, Mark Tonga, IAC member, to the Group.

- The Group has developed the following:
  - its 2023-24 work plan
  - a communications campaign to target providers and speak to participants about stopping or preventing fraud, which includes:
    - messaging about fraudulent activity
    - messaging about celebrating people who follow Scheme rules and processes
    - participant education about potential fraud
    - communication channels, and
    - a library of stories.
  - a map of fraud touch points for different NDIS audiences, to be shared with other program working groups
  - a Terms of Reference covering the Group's:
  - scope
    - rules of engagement
    - commitments
    - accessibility requirements, and
    - conduct.
- Group members have provided input into the Ethics and Human Oversight Framework principles and its tools, as part of information sharing between 16 government agencies, as part of the Fraud Fusion Taskforce.
- DRCO and IAC members are meeting regularly out of session to collaborate beyond Agency organised meetings to ensure Group momentum and support deeper collaboration in formal Group meetings.

Plan Flexibility Working Group update, provided by Co-Chair Yvonne Keane, CEO ReImagine Australia

Ms Keane provided the following updates:

- The Plan Flexibility Working Group is frustrated by the wait for the Government to provide its response to the NDIS Review.
- The Group is currently looking at the early intervention pathway, including:
  - the potential for more flexible options for participants whose needs change
  - developing early intervention principles for different age groups
  - additional supports for participants at life transition points.
- The Group has provided input and feedback into:
  - the tone and language used in Agency resources and communications about eligibility reassessments
  - resources to support families when choosing NDIS providers. The group has raised concern the resources were developed without appropriate input from the broader

    - disability community
    - improvements to the NDIS glossary.

Workforce Capability Working Group update, provided by Co-Chair Darryl Steff, Down Syndrome Australia

Mr Steff provided the following updates:

- The Workforce Capability Working Group has created a skills matrix for frontline staff, which includes the following prioritised skills:
    - contemporary attitude towards disability, which incorporates fundamentals of disability theory
    - critical thinking
    - cultural competence and awareness
    - understanding accessibility requirements
    - individual communication approaches
    - trauma informed approaches and practices, and
    - active listening and communication.
- The Group has:
    - identified practical changes required in the Agency, including providing advice on planner recruitment and position descriptions
    - expanded the scope of the Group to include ensuring all Agency staff working close to the front line, for example, managers of front line staff, are trained in the identified priority skills.
- The focus of the next Group meeting will be on reviewing the participant satisfaction survey and identifying areas where improvements can be made to participant experiences with planners.

Kirsten Nield, NDIA Co-Chair for the Plan Flexibility Working Group, reaffirmed the importance of all program members having visibility of other working groups priorities to identify areas of cross-over and where groups can work together on reforms.

Evidence Based Supports Working Group update, provided by Co-Chair Eileen McDonald, National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF)

Ms McDonald provided the following updates:

- The Evidence Based Supports Working Group welcomed its new NDIA Co-Chair, Anne Skordis, GM Providers and Market Coordination.

- The Group has been advised a significant amount of the work it completed in 2023 is to be incorporated into the scope of the recently established NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce to help improve NDIS registration.
- The Group has requested further information about how the advice it developed in 2023 is going to be provided to this taskforce.
- The Group has requested an opportunity to compare RFO program working group 'carparks' to better understand where there is overlap.

Independent Living Working Group update, provided by Co-Chair Dr George Taleporos, IAC member

Dr Taleporos provided the following updates:

- The Group has updated its name to be the Home & Living Working Group, in recognition of its focus on the Home & Living pathway.
- The Group has identified the following priority actions required to support improvements in the Home & Living pathway.
- Accessing better data about what supports are being delivered in the Home & Living space, and by which providers. For example, introducing a way to track unregistered Supported Independent Living providers to ensure they are being supported through the Home & Living process, and providing quality services to participants.
- Review and streamline the Home & Living process to ensure the information the Agency collects is necessary to make decisions about Home & Living but does not over burden people.
- Ensure the NDIS website has easily accessible information to support people to access Home & Living supports.

RFO program members contributed the following wider feedback throughout the session.

- NDIA representatives who attend working groups to provide expertise need to be senior Agency executives, able to speak to the Agency's vision in the area they oversee and make decisions alongside working groups.
- Working groups require a channel to communicate with senior Agency executives about the work the groups are doing related to their areas.
- The Agency needs to co-design a language framework that meets the needs of people with disabilities and participants.
- Working groups whose focus areas are greatly impacted by the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission recommendations and need to wait for further direction from government on its response to the recommendations, need to be supported to maintain momentum in their space.

Item 2. NDIS Review and plans for co-design/consultation in 2024, led by Corri McKenzie, Deputy CEO, Service Design & Improvement

Ms McKenzie spoke to administrative changes and clarifications to better support the RFO program.

- The Agency has provided DRCO and IAC program members access to the ICT system GovTEAMS . The system will allow working group members to collaborate on documents online and give program members visibility of all RFO program working group summaries, work plans and information.
- Program members are encouraged to discuss program work with their organisation members and networks. The Agency committed to improve the accessibility of RFO program communication so program members can easily share information with their members and networks.
- The Agency will ensure the right Agency staff attend RFO program meetings. This includes NDIA Co-Chairs and subject matter experts from appropriate Agency business areas.

RFO program members contributed the following feedback and suggestions are captured in actions below.

Ms McKenzie spoke to the RFO program focus for the next 3 months and stated the Agency's focus remains on ensuring the money invested in the NDIS delivers positive outcomes for people with disability.
Ms McKenzie reaffirmed the focus of the RFO program is on identifying Scheme improvements that can be made now, before the Australian Government releases its response to the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission recommendations.

Ms McKenzie confirmed each RFO Working Group will develop a work plan of priority, practical reform initiatives to be developed and implemented over the next 3 months. Alexandria Rosenthal, NDIA BM Co-design, responded the Agency will work with working groups to identify actions, processes or improvements that can be delivered in this period.

Ms McKenzie proposed program members identify how current RFO working group scope aligns to the themes of the NDIS Review and where additional working groups may need to be established to focus on specific areas of recommendations.

Ms McKenzie proposed the following next steps:

- The Agency is to support each working group to develop a work plan of practical reforms, which are to be delivered before the release of the response to the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission.

- Work plans are to be circulated to all RFO program members, prior to the May RFO Quarterly meeting.
- Working groups to identify which broader audiences need to be engaged by the group, to ensure appropriate representation of different disabilities in their proposed reforms.

The group also spoke about how they can better use the next quarterly meeting in May and agreed that co-chairs would provide written updates to all members ahead of the meetings so more time can be spent talking about opportunities for collaboration between groups.

Item 3. Closing from Aaron Verlin, NDIA GM, Co-design & Engagement

Mr Verlin thanked meeting attendees for their contributions and closed the meeting.

RFO program quarterly meeting actions

Action Item	Action Lead	Status
Ensure discussion of the Outcomes Framework is part of working group discussions	Co-design Branch	Ongoing
Investigate establishing cross-group meetings for groups working on similar initiatives, or where cross-over is identified between group initiatives.	Co-design Branch	Ongoing – the focus of the April Implementation Steering Committee meeting (via co-chair 'speed dating' session) RFO program Working Groups to develop work plans to include practical reform initiatives.
RFO program Working Groups to develop work plans to include practical reform initiatives Agency to share RFO working group work plans and progress reports before the May RFO Quarterly meeting.	Co-design Branch	Ongoing
Re-share past working group meeting summaries and RFO Quarterly Meeting summaries with RFO program members.	NDIA Secretariat / Co-design Branch	Ongoing

Action Item	Action Lead	Status
Future RFO working group meeting summaries to include executive summary of 3-4 key points.	Co-design Branch	Ongoing
Provide clearer guidance on confidentiality of documents – introduce colour coding for sharable documents.	NDIA Secretariat / Co-design Branch	Ongoing
Agency to have the right people in the room in all RFO program meetings. Agency Co-Chairs to be in the room for the entire meeting. Agency subject matter experts to continue to attend meetings to provide expert input.	Corri McKenzie	Ongoing
Future Agency-led meetings to include a roll call of people attending the meeting, including stating online or in person, as part of the meeting introduction. Include instruction as part of meeting housekeeping for people to announce if they are leaving the meeting and not returning.	NDIA Secretariat	Ongoing
All future co-design working group and RFO quarterly meeting pre-materials to include a list of attendees.	Co-design Branch / NDIA Secretariat	Ongoing
Corri McKenzie to meet with Sylvana Mahmic to discuss Agency communication.	Corri McKenzie	Ongoing

Action Item	Action Lead	Status
Develop proposal for future co-design program, including potential additional working groups, their scope and membership for feedback. Proposal to be shared before May RFO Quarterly meeting.	Co-design Branch	Ongoing
RFO program working groups to consider which different disability cohorts, people with lived experience and subject matter experts need to engage as part of their work program.	Co-design Branch / RFO working groups	Ongoing
Re-share NDIA meeting calendar with RFO program members. Request input into additional events and meetings that may clash with DRCO and RFO program meetings.	NDIA Secretariat	Ongoing

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