

Remote Passenger Transport Program

Program Information

Introduction

The Northern Territory Government is committed to ensuring that Territorians have reasonable access to regular passenger transport services to and from key centres providing essential services.

The Remote Passenger Transport Program (the Program) was established in 2016/17 as the next stage of support for remote passenger transport. The Program followed the Remote Bus Trial Program that ran from 2011 to 2016.

Objective

The objective of the Program is to expand access to regular passenger transport services providing Territorians with access to key service centres. In practice, this means filling gaps in service provision that exist because a service may not be commercially viable and/or has not been provided for other reasons.

Operation

The Program provides funding support to remote and regional passenger transport operations that provide specified regular route services. Funding support is usually limited to terms of one to three years, on a trial basis, to assist a specified route service towards commercial viability.

A service can be classified as either inter-town or intra-town. An **inter-town** service is a service operating to/from communities and key centres and is typically long distance (e.g. Numbulwar to Katherine). An **intra-town** service is typically within a town or from nearby communities to/from a key centre (e.g. Yirrkala to Nhulunbuy on the Gove Peninsula).

The Program operates to a capped annual budget. The capacity to provide additional services or support is limited by the available budget in any year, taking into account all prior ongoing commitments.

What services are eligible

To be considered for funding assistance under the Program, a location must clearly demonstrate the **need** for a regular passenger transport service. The following factors are considered in determining if a location or service may qualify for funding assistance:

Inter-town services

- It does not currently receive a passenger transport service (e.g. flight, ferry or bus) to the nearest key centre providing essential services at least once per week; and
- It has a permanent population base of at least 100 persons (locations with less than 100 persons can be considered as part of a stop or extension of another passenger transport route); and
- It is more than two hours (one-way) surface travel to a key centre providing essential services and it is more than one hour (one-way) surface travel to a location receiving a regular passenger transport service.

Intra-town service

- It does not currently receive a passenger transport service at least two days per week (e.g. town bus, minibus or taxi); and
- It has a permanent population base of at least 1,000; and
- The permanent population does not currently have reasonable access to essential services.

Previously receiving funding for a particular service does not guarantee ongoing funding.

How to apply

An applicant can be any person – for example, a commercial bus operator or a representative of a community. Applications can be submitted at any time. The recommended process for an applicant is:

1. Consult the *Remote Community Transport - Guiding Principles and Tools* for assistance in developing a transport initiative. This document is particularly useful for potential community led intra-town services or smaller scale inter-town services.
2. If further funding assistance is required for your transport initiative, check that you may be eligible for this Program as an inter-town or intra-town service as described in this document.
3. Read and understand this document and fill out and submit an Application Form. See 'What to include in your application' to ensure you include all necessary information.
4. Your application will be reviewed. The Department aims to provide an application outcome within eight weeks but this may vary depending on the number of other applications and any complexities with your application.

What to include in your application

The information you provide will be used to assess your application. Applicants should include the following information to clearly show how your service may be eligible for funding.

1. ELIGIBILITY

- Demonstrating that the service is eligible under the Program (see 'What services are eligible').

2. SERVICE PROVIDER DETAILS

- General information about the service provider.
- Evidence of past successful delivery of similar services.
- Evidence of the organisation's financial sustainability (e.g. recent financial statements).
- Copy of the organisation's Business Plan.

3. COMMERCIAL VIABILITY POTENTIAL

- Proposal for the service, including an assessment of the potential commercial viability, estimated passenger numbers and ticket revenue, and plan to improve the service's commercial viability over time.
- Estimate of costs associated with the establishment and delivery of the service, including but not limited to: vehicle, operations (fuel, maintenance etc), staffing, overheads, margin, training and professional development and any other costs.
- Estimate of the funding required and schedule of proposed payments. This is typically split between an establishment (up front) payment and ongoing operational payments every six months. Alternate payment schedules can be proposed with justification.
- Demonstrated consideration of other potential funding sources. Provide details of any other funding sources that will be used in providing the service.

4. SERVICE PLAN

- Fare structure (based on typical commercial rates) and timetable including trip distance and time and any connections to other services.
- Fare payment options and systems.
- Internal policies (e.g. cancellation of fares policy, grievance procedure and fatigue management).
- Demonstrate how services will be suitable for disabled and mobility impaired persons. If not suitable, explain how this has been considered and why these services cannot be provided.

5. NOMINATED FLEET

- Details of the vehicle/s to be used to deliver the service.
- Demonstrate that vehicle/s are in a good working condition and appropriate to deliver the services in the relevant environment.
- Provide a contingency plan for incidents such as a vehicle breakdown.

6. COMMENCEMENT PLAN

- Provide a commencement plan, including lead time, required to commence the service.

7. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND MARKETING PLAN, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Plan for engagement, marketing and ridership growth.
- Evidence and plan for community development (i.e. Indigenous employment plan, local industry involvement, community involvement etc).

8. COMPLIANCE

- Evidence of required industry certifications, licenses, permits and insurances.

If you are successful

Successful applications are finalised via a funding agreement. Funding agreements are typically provided for one specified route service; not multiple route services. A standard funding agreement sets out the terms and conditions for the use of the funding provided by the Northern Territory Government. Funding recipients are required to report on and acquit all funding provided. Further details will be in the funding agreement you receive.

Review and Evaluation

The Program will be reviewed and evaluated annually. Feedback on the Program is welcome at any time using the contact details below.

Contact

For feedback, queries or assistance please contact the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics at passenger.transport@nt.gov.au or by calling (08) 8924 7577.