Terms of Reference (ToR) - Grant Panel

Community Housing Futures WA Program

Business Advisory (BA) Stream

Document Control

Version: V0.1

Effective date: 31/03/2026

Owner: Program Manager

Endorsed by: Steering Committee

Review cycle: Yearly, and after major rounds or evaluation milestones

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Purpose

The Grant Panel (the Panel) is established to assess applications for the Business Advisory (BA) Stream of the Community Housing Futures WA Program and provide independent funding recommendations.

The Panel is committed to a fair, consistent and transparent assessment process, underpinned by sound governance and probity. The Panel is advisory, it reviews applications and makes recommendations, but final funding decisions rest with the Steering Committee of the Community Housing Futures Program as the delegated approval authority.

Scope

The Panel will assess applications submitted to the BA Stream that seek funding for tailored advisory assistance in the *BA Capability Focus Areas* (Finance, Business Planning, Asset Management, Risk Management and Registration Support). Funding is intended to improve organisational capability and readiness to deliver growth in social and affordable housing. It is not intended to fund service delivery or capital works.

Key functions

The Panel will:

- Attend a pre-round briefing to review assessment criteria, ask questions about the scoring rubric, and declare any conflicts of interest before scoring begins. The assessment pack and scoring template will be shared at this meeting.
- Complete independent scoring between meetings by reviewing all eligible application packs and recording scores with written justification for each criterion by the set deadline.
- Attend a moderation meeting to discuss applications where scores vary significantly, confirm final scores, and agree on a ranked recommended list for Steering Committee endorsement.
- Attend a post-round debrief to capture lessons learned, reflect on the scoring process, and identify any improvements ahead of the next round.
- Apply criteria objectively, consistently and transparently, and document assessment reasoning throughout.
- Declare and manage conflicts of interest at every stage, including stepping aside where required.

Panel Composition and Term

The Panel will comprise five members, appointed by the Steering Committee for a 12-month term.

Panel membership will include:

- Two members with lived experience of housing need and/or community housing services
- Two community housing industry members: these positions will be filled by interstate community housing experts to ensure independence and minimise potential conflicts of interest with WA-based applicants
- One government representative

Panel members will be re-invited for the following year's grant round, subject to availability, performance, and the absence of conflicts of interest. Panel members may resign at any time by providing written notice to the Project Manager who will inform the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee may appoint a replacement member where required to maintain Panel capacity and skills mix for a given round.

Skills and capability requirements

Panel members should have skills and experience in one or more of the following areas:

- Community housing operations, governance, or regulation
- Financial management, modelling, or investment readiness
- Business advisory, strategic consulting, or organisational development
- Risk management or governance assurance
- Asset management or feasibility assessment
- Capability-building program design or delivery

Experience assessing grant applications, business cases, or funding proposals is highly desirable.

Panel members must be able to:

- Exercise independent professional judgement
- Interpret complex applications and funding proposals
- Clearly explain their assessment reasoning
- Work collaboratively within a panel environment

Roles and responsibilities

Panel members must:

- Review and assess applications independently and to the best of their ability
- Apply the BA Stream assessment criteria consistently and fairly
- Attend moderation meetings and contribute meaningfully to funding recommendations

As a panel member, they must not:

- Advocate for particular applicants
- Use information gained thro

Panel meeting administration

The Panel operates without a designated Chairperson. The Project Manager will facilitate meetings in a neutral, administrative capacity.

Before each meeting, the Project Team will circulate an agenda setting out the purpose, items to be discussed, and any decisions required.

The Project Team will manage all meeting administration, including preparing papers, recording attendance and conflicts of interest, capturing key discussion points, and documenting decisions and actions. Draft minutes will be circulated to panel members for review before being finalised.

Quorum

A quorum is required for any Panel meeting where moderation occurs and recommendations are confirmed.

Quorum is three members, provided that the meeting includes at least:

- One lived experience member, and
- One industry expert member.

Where the government representative is unable to attend, the meeting may proceed if quorum is met and any conflicts of interest have been managed (including recusals). If recusals reduce attendance below quorum for any application, that application will be held over for a separate meeting or assessed by an alternate panel member appointed for that purpose.

Assessment approach and moderation

Following completion of independent scoring, the Project Team will compile scores for moderation (including identifying score variances and preparing a moderation pack). Panel members will then attend a moderation meeting to discuss applications where there is a material difference in scoring, clarify assessment reasoning, and ensure the criteria have been applied consistently. The purpose of moderation is to confirm a fair, evidence-based recommended list and to document the rationale for recommendations.

All applications received will be reviewed by the Panel regardless of eligibility status or score outcome. A minimum score of 75% of the total weighted score across all criteria is required for an application to be recommended for funding — this benchmark ensures funding is directed to applications that demonstrate sufficient merit, regardless of available budget.

Where an application does not meet the eligibility requirements or falls below the 75% threshold, it will not ordinarily be recommended for funding. However, where the Panel determines there are sufficient grounds to engage with or consider such an application, the Panel must document its reasoning, including the basis for departing from the standard threshold or eligibility requirement. All decisions, including decisions not to recommend funding, will be recorded and included in the final recommendations to the Steering Committee.

During moderation, panel members will:

- Confirm any conflicts of interest and recusals before discussing applications.
- Review high-variance scores and discuss the evidence in the application against the assessment criteria.
- Confirm final scores (which may be adjusted following discussion) and agree a ranked order or recommended list, as required by the assessment process.
- Note any recommended conditions, clarifications, or follow-up actions for the Project Team to manage (where permitted in the process).

Where consensus cannot be reached, the Panel will record the differing views at a summary level and the final recommended position (including whether the recommendation reflects a majority view). The Project Team will document meeting outcomes in the minutes and prepare the final recommended list for Steering Committee endorsement in line with the program governance process.

Conflicts of interest and confidentiality

Panel members must declare all actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest prior to receiving application materials and again prior to any moderation meeting. Panel members must promptly update their declaration if circumstances change at any point during the assessment round.

Where a conflict exists (or is reasonably perceived to exist), panel members must comply with conflict management directions issued by the Project Team, which may include partial or full recusal. Recusal may require the panel member to not access relevant application materials, to leave the meeting (or stop participating) for the affected item, and to not influence discussion or recommendations relating to that item. The Project Team will record conflicts and recusals in the meeting record and ensure quorum requirements are maintained for decision-making.

Strict confidentiality applies to all information obtained through panel participation, including application content, assessment discussions, scoring, deliberations, and outcomes prior to public announcement. Panel members must not share information with applicants or any external party and must not use information gained through the role for personal, professional, or organisational advantage. Confidentiality obligations continue after the completion of panel duties.

Failure to comply with conflict of interest or confidentiality requirements may result in removal from the Panel and exclusion from future assessment rounds.

Time commitment

The time commitment will vary by round depending on the number and complexity of applications. Panel members should expect to attend three defined engagement points per round and complete independent work between meetings. Panel members may decline participation in a round due to availability or conflicts of interest.

The three engagement points per round are:

1. Pre-round briefing meeting
Participate in a pre-round briefing meeting to review assessment criteria, clarify any rubric questions, and confirm conflicts of interest before independent scoring commences. The assessment pack and scoring template will be distributed at this meeting.

2. Independent scoring (out of session)
Independently review all eligible application packs and complete scores with written rationale for each criterion by the specified deadline. This work is completed individually and confidentially, outside of Panel meetings.

3. Moderation meeting
Attend a moderation meeting to discuss applications with material score variances, confirm final scores, and agree the ranked recommended list for Steering Committee endorsement.

4. Post-round debrief meeting
Participate in a post-round briefing meeting to capture lessons learned, reflect on the scoring process, identify any rubric or criteria improvements, and confirm any process updates ahead of the next round.

Remuneration

Panel members will be paid an honorarium at a rate of **$110 per hour** for time spent undertaking grant assessment duties.

For each assessment round, the standard time allowance per Panel member is:

Engagement Point	Format	Time Allowance
Pre-round briefing meeting	Meeting (facilitated by Internal project team)	Up to 2 hours
Independent scoring and preparation	Out of session, individual	Up to 4 hours
Moderation meeting	Meeting (facilitated by Internal project team)	Up to 2 hours
Post-round debrief meeting	Meeting (facilitated by Internal project team)	Up to 2 hour

Payment will be made in accordance with the Program's approved payment and invoicing arrangements.

Records and information management

Panel assessment documentation will be retained by the CHFWA Program in accordance with its record-keeping requirements. Panel members must securely handle all materials and return or delete documents as directed at the end of the round.

Grant Panel records, including scoring sheets, moderation notes, COI declarations and meeting minutes, are retained by the program for a minimum of five (5) years after grant closure, in accordance with the program's records retention policy.

Term and review

These Terms of Reference apply to BA Stream assessment rounds and may be updated by the Project as required to reflect operational needs and probity requirements.
Any updates will be provided to panel members prior to the commencement of relevant assessment activities.

Appendix A - Workplan for 2026/2027

Date	Milestone / activity	Notes / outputs
May 2026	Grant Panel established and appointments are announced	Email sent to successful and unsuccessful applicants; all have been informed.
Early Jun 2026	Panel onboarding meeting and orientation	Assessment criteria pack; scoring template; conflict of interest declarations; confidentiality confirmation
1/06/2026	Advertise BA Stream – Round 1	Publish full guidelines and application extract; promote via channels; hold webinars
1/07/2026	BA Stream – Round 1 Commences/Opens	Open period live (as per portal); milestones setup
15/07/2026	BA Stream – Round 1 Applications Close	Close portal; verify completeness; prepare for assessment
July 2026	Team compiles applications and checks eligibility	Completeness check; eligibility verification; manage conflicts register; prepare “eligible/ineligible” list
Mid–Late Jul 2026	Eligible applications distributed to Panel for scoring (out of session)	All eligible applications sent to panel members for independent scoring outside meetings; COI checks confirmed
Early Aug 2026	Panel moderation meeting (Round 1)	Discuss individual scoring; agree final ranked list/recommendations; confirm probity; approve final list for endorsement
Mid Aug 2026	Final list sent to Steering Committee for endorsement	Panel recommendations submitted for Steering Committee endorsement

Date	Milestone / activity	Notes / outputs
15/08/2026	BA Stream – Round 1 Approvals & Announcements	Steering Committee endorsement; notify applicants; publish recipients
Late Aug 2026	Post-round panel debrief (after announcements)	Short meeting post-briefing: capture lessons; refine scoring guidance; confirm improvements for next round
Early year (e.g., Feb–Mar 2027)	Panel check-in ahead of next round	Confirm panel availability; refresh COI register; confirm any ToR/process updates; update workflow for 2027