REGIONAL FAMILY VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP

Consultation with Victim Survivor Advocates

Related Policies and Procedures: Embedding Victim Survivor Advocates on RFVP Governance Groups and Working Groups; Managing Disclosures
Related Guidelines: RFVP Terms of Reference
Related Forms: Remuneration Rates table; VSA Consultation EOI; My Engagement Needs and Expectations; Skills and Capability Self-Reflection Tool

Policy:

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the RFVP policy – 'Embedding Victim Survivor Advocates on RFVP Governance Groups and Working Groups' and has been created for the occasions when the RFVP seek to consult or co-design with a broader group of Victim Survivor Advocates (VSAs) on key projects or pieces of work that are being developed by RFVP working groups, or the RFVP team.

A minimum of 2 victim survivor advocates will be engaged for involvement in a consultation. This provides the victim survivor advocate with an important 'buddy system', allowing the advocates to support each other. The RFVP will operate with a trauma-informed approach to all consultations and ensure all VSAs are seen, heard and respected. As part of this:

- VSAs are not expected to retell their story.
- The RFVP will undertake thorough planning and ensure the consultation is conducted in a safe and supportive environment.
- The RFVP respects the confidentiality of personal information that VSAs share in the consultation and will explicitly outline how information will be collected, used and stored at the outset of each consultation. Specific details will not be repeated outside of the consultation and only high-level themes will be shared. Specific examples shared by VSAs will be de-identified and quotes will be used only with the permission of VSAs.
- The RFVP are expected to be sensitive to power imbalances and treat VSAs as equals, listening to their insights and respecting their expertise from lived experience.
- VSAs are respected and empowered to make the choice to participate in consultations, even when the topic relates to a traumatic experience.

All VSAs will be remunerated for their involvement in consultations as per the endorsed RFVP Remuneration Rates table that was developed and refined from the Experts by Experience Framework. This remuneration will be sourced from the RFVP Integration Funds and allocated in the RFVP budget to be endorsed by the SLG each financial year.

The RFVP Terms of Reference for Governance Groups and Working Groups will be updated to reflect involvement of VSAs in consultations. It will be encouraged that each Governance Group and Working Group member complete the 'Skills and Capability Self-Reflection Tool' prior to VSA involvement / consultation with that group.

These procedures have been developed in consultation with VSAs and with reference to the Safe & Equal 'Planning Best Practice Engagement with Survivor Advocates' document.

It is acknowledged that these procedures are a starting point and will be adapted as needed and as learnings are gained with involvement from the VSAs.

Procedure:

1. Identifying need for a VSA consultation

RFVP Working Groups or the RFVP team may identify the need to consult with VSAs on a specific piece of work. If it is identified that a consultation with VSAs is required, the Principal Strategic Advisor (PSA) will confirm availability of funds in the RFVP budget to facilitate this. Following confirmation of funds, the RFVP team and/or RFVP Working Group will create an Expression of Interest utilising the 'VSA Consultation EOI' document; outlining the parameters and purpose of the consultation.

2. Expression of Interest and application process

The RFVP will seek VSAs engagement for consultations via an Expression of Interest process. The 'VSA Consultation EOI' document will be advertised through the RFVP newsletter; Implementation Committee; with former 'Speaking Out' Advocates who have expressed interest in engagement with the RFVP; and with Women's Health East 'Margins to the Mainstream'.

The EOI will form the 'Background Paper' and include all of the relevant information about the consultation. All VSAs wanting to apply for involvement will be asked to contact the PSA, briefly outlining their background and any prior advocacy experience. To ensure the application process is equitable and accessible, VSAs are also able to engage in this process verbally, rather than via written communication. If possible, VSAs will be asked to complete the 'My Engagement Needs and Expectations' form. However, completion of this form can also be facilitated verbally with an RFVP team member as required. The EOI process will be open for 2 weeks from the date the position is first advertised in the RFVP newsletter. The EOI will outline that the successful VSAs will be engaged as an independent contractor and not as an employee of the RFVP. (See Appendix 1)

3. Selection process

The selection process will commence once the application period ends. The selection will be conducted by the PSA in conjunction with the RFVP Independent Chair or Chair of the applicable Working Group with which the consultation is to occur, and with the RFVP Project and Communications Coordinator.

In line with our commitment to the Experts by Experience principles for best practice (Inclusion) our selection process will be dedicated to including a diverse range of voices. When selecting VSAs to participate in consultations, consideration will be given to the breadth of family violence experiences and range of communities represented. While it is critical that RFVP consultations reflect a variety of perspectives and identities, the diversity of experience within community groups is acknowledged. Subsequently, VSAs are not expected to represent all experiences of the communities to which they belong and are representing their own lived knowledge. Police checks will not be completed as part of the selection process and VSAs with experience with the criminal legal system are encouraged to apply.

A minimum of two VSAs will be selected for the consultation. No maximum number is specified as this will be based on the needs and format of the consultation.

4. Facilitation

The RFVP will seek for the consultations to be facilitated by an experienced VSA where possible or an independently engaged facilitator. The appropriate facilitator will be identified and engaged by the PSA in consultation with the RFVP Independent Chair or Chair of the applicable Working Group. The facilitator will be engaged as an independent contractor and remunerated.

5. Pre-consultation support and preparation

All consultations will be planned and structured to maximise meaningful engagement and ensure that VSAs feel supported and able to contribute. Any related materials and required reading will be circulated to the VSAs at least 1 week prior to the consultation. These materials may also include a pre-consultation survey. The RFVP team will offer a pre-consultation briefing to all participating VSAs, allowing them to raise any questions relating to the consultation or related materials.

6. Consultation structure

- Consultations will commence with an acknowledgment that we are working with VSAs as colleagues, not clients.
- Pronouns – All participants will be asked to share their pronouns to create a safe space for the consultation to take place.
- Ways of working – Permission for a VSA to take a break or step out of the consultation if needed.
- Language – Where possible, minimise jargon, acronyms and overt displays of hierarchy.

7. Disclosures

There may be occasions when serious disclosures are made during consultations with the VSAs. The VSA will be supported by the Chair or PSA in line with the RFVP 'Managing Disclosures' Policy.

8. Remuneration

All VSAs will be remunerated for their time as informed by the RFVP Remuneration Rates table and will include the consultation time, preparation time, and pre and post-briefing time. If additional commitments are required, for example to review and comment on material produced as a result of the consultation, then this will be remunerated at the meeting rate.
The RFVP Remuneration Rates table can be found here - RFVP-Lived-Experience-Remuneration-Rates-November-2021.pdf

9. Invoicing

The VSAs will be engaged as independent contractors. The preferred method of payment to the VSAs is via invoice. The PSA will assist new VSAs to obtain an ABN, if required, to enable VSAs to invoice the RFVP. Obtaining an ABN is free. VSAs can request that payment is made in the form of a voucher (eg. Prezzee gift card) and this will be facilitated by the PSA and delivered electronically to the VSA and recorded.

10. De-briefing and post consultation support

A member of the RFVP team will make individual contact with each VSA either via phone or electronically within 1 business day of the consultation. The RFVP team member will check in with the VSA around how they felt in the consultation; what worked well; what challenges were had; what could be done differently in future consultations; and an assessment of the power dynamics. If a need for further support or counselling is identified after a consultation, this will be followed up.

11. Confidentiality and Privacy

The nature and extent of confidentiality during a consultation will be explained to all VSAs at the outset via the 'VSA Consultation EOI' document. It will be explicitly outlined how information will be collected, used and stored. Each VSA may have different needs and requests around confidentiality and privacy. VSAs are requested to communicate their individual needs when completing the 'My Engagement Needs and Expectations'.
Following the consultation, a member of the RFVP team will discuss with participating VSAs how they would like their personal contact information, including email address and phone number, to be handled. VSAs may elect for the RFVP to delete their personal information from RFVP databases immediately after the consultation. For those that give permission for the RFVP to retain their details, this information will be kept for 5 years before being destroyed. Only RFVP team members will have access to VSA personal information.

12. Providing feedback and follow up

To ensure that the consultation process is not tokenistic and provides an opportunity for meaningful engagement, it is important that VSAs are advised of the outcomes of the consultation. At the outset of the consultation process, VSAs will be informed how and when they will be notified of the results of the project. This will also be communicated in the 'VSA Consultation EOI' document.

Avenues to provide feedback regarding the consultation process will also be communicated in the 'VSA Consultation EOI' document, as will the complaints procedure. A post-consultation survey may be utilised to capture feedback from VSAs. Any feedback or complaints received will be reviewed by PSA and Independent Chair or Chair of the relevant Working Group, and an appropriate response will be actioned as a priority.

Appendix 1

Is our consumer representative an independent contractor?

The legal test to determine whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor requires consideration of a number of different elements of the working relationship. Unlike employees who are seen to be subject to the control and direction of their employer, independent contractors are often recognised as running their own business and provide services under commercial, rather than employment, contracts.

Generally, a worker will be found to be an independent contractor when the following below attributes exist (other factors may also be relevant in particular cases):

Independent contractor – type of work	Independent contractor – payments and benefits
• has control over how to carry out their work and has the expertise to do so	• is paid for results achieved (for example, submits an invoice for work completed or is paid at the end of a project)
• is free to provide services to the general public and other businesses	• pays their own GST, tax, superannuation and holds own insurance policies
• is contracted to work for a set period of time or do a set task and can decide what hours of work are required to complete that work	• may have their own registered business as a sole trader with an Australian Business Number (**ABN**) or a proprietary limited company with an Australian Company Number (**ACN**)
• is free to accept or refuse work beyond the requirements of any current contract with the organisation	• provides all or most of the necessary materials and equipment to complete the work (for example, uses their own tools)
• is usually free to delegate work to others	• is in a position to make a profit or loss from work
• does not hold themselves out as part of the organisation (ie. doesn't wear the organisation's uniform or use its business cards)	• is not entitled to accrue any annual leave, sick leave or long service leave