



Solution Brokerage – Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Why was the solution brokerage role developed?

Many programs, initiatives and policies are currently being implemented by multiple organisations in Aboriginal communities. This complex landscape of service provision and policy can be confusing, and is viewed as wasteful and failing to enhance capacity in the local community.

Solution Brokerage requires agencies to work together and collaborate with Aboriginal communities, NGOs and other tiers of government to find practical solutions to multifaceted issues.

2. What is the purpose of solution brokerage?

Solution brokerage is the coordinated management of critical issues and opportunities to bring about improved outcomes in Aboriginal communities. It includes service and policy integration and coordination to ensure policy reforms deliver their full potential and do not have unintentional consequences for, or at odds with, other reforms.

It requires agencies to work together and collaborate with Aboriginal communities, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and other tiers of government to find practical solutions.

3. How and when can solution brokerage be invoked?

The authority to invoke the solution broker functions is vested in the Head of Aboriginal Affairs.

Criteria must be met before a solution broker issue can be declared.

4. Who can request solution brokerage?

Aboriginal Affairs can receive requests for solution brokerage from any third party (Aboriginal communities, government agency, NGO, or community organisation) or identify potential issues for solution brokerage in the course of its business. However criteria must be met before a solution broker issue can be declared.

Aboriginal Affairs will also identify potential issues for solution brokerage in the course of its business.

5. What is the criterion for declaring a solution brokerage issue?

For an issue to be declared a solution brokerage issue, it must:

- require multiple agency engagement to resolve the issue or maximise the opportunity;
- be 'significant' (defined as the potential to bring about significant benefit or significant harm);
- be able to be managed to a point where a sustainable solution can be put in place and maintained in the short to medium term (within 6 months);
- be able to be managed within existing workload and resource levels; and
- be a current issue (it is not the role of solution brokerage to investigate past action or review past performance as these review functions sit within the role of the NSW Ombudsman and NSW Auditor General).

6. How will solution brokerage issues be managed?

Solution brokerage will operate in a clear project management framework, delegating authority to the officer in charge, assigning cross-agency project teams with clearly defined roles, establishing Solution Brokerage Response Plans with resources, milestones, accountabilities and start and end dates.

Solution Brokerage Response Plans will be approved by an appropriate approving body and will clearly articulate agreed lines of authority and responsibilities for cross-agency project teams formed to address the solution broker issues. Through solution brokerage Aboriginal Affairs will be able to direct cross-agency resources in accordance with approved Solution Brokerage Response Plans.

7. Will solution brokerage issues receive additional resources?

Where an outcome cannot be achieved within, or by the redirection of, existing resources, it may be necessary for Solution Brokerage Response Plan resourcing to be considered by the Expenditure Review Committee or through normal budget process.

8. What functions does the solution brokerage role cover?

The solution broker role has three broad functions, including:

- Coordination; this includes both service and policy integration to drive improvement. For service coordination, a number of existing agency and Non-Government Organisation (NGO) resources may be coordinated to provide a community outcome. At the policy

integration level it can involve the coordination of a number of separate but interconnected policy reform processes for which there is a want of integration.

- Emergency response; in these instances, government needs to identify priority responses, work with community leaders, coordinate delivery of outcomes and monitor and direct resources. In general, this requires an agency to lead with authority.
- Problem solving and advocacy; often Aboriginal community leaders are volunteers and many find the nest of government agencies, corporations and NGOs, impenetrable and unresponsive. This leads to unresolved problems and significant frustration. In these instances, the solution broker role could focus on coordination and problem solving.

9. Can local issues be declared for solution brokerage?

Yes, a three tiered approach to solution brokerage has been adopted to enable tailored responses to range of issues at different scales and complexity.

The highest tier, Level Three, is for major policy reform integration, extraordinary or state-wide issues or issues that require directed agency response. Tier Two issues will be more complex local or regional issues and addressed through regional governance mechanisms, and Tier One will be local or place specific issues that will be addressed through engagement with Aboriginal communities and other local stakeholders.

10. Who will manage solution brokerage issues once they have been declared?

All declared solution brokerage issues will have an Officer in Charge assigned who will be responsible for managing and coordinating the response. They will oversee the development and implementation of a Solution Brokerage Response Plan, working with a project team of government and non-government stakeholders. The Officer in Charge through an approved Plan will be able to direct agency staff within the project team. The Solution Brokerage Response Plan will outline agreed lines of authority and responsibility.

For Tier One issues, in most instances, Aboriginal Affairs' Regional Coordinators will be the Officer in Charge and take a lead role in brokering cross-government solutions, oversee the project plan, and, where relevant, the project team.

Tier Two issues are those more complex matters or matters that cannot be resolved locally, and need to be escalated to a more senior level. The Officer in Charge will be an Aboriginal Affairs senior executive and will be responsible for the Solution Brokerage Response Plan and directing the project team if one is assigned.

Tier Three issues will require high level negotiation and coordination to bring about change, or have a state wide focus. They may also cover major policy reform and integration in an area of

importance in Aboriginal affairs. The Officer in Charge will likely be the Head of Aboriginal Affairs (or devolved to a senior executive if appropriate) and will manage the project team assigned to respond to the issue. Staff from other NSW Government agencies may also be nominated as an Officer in Charge.

11. What are Solution Brokerage Response Plans?

Solution Brokerage Response Plans will be approved by an appropriate body (see Qu.12) and will set out agreed lines of authority, the responsibilities of cross-agency teams and resources. Solution Brokerage Response Plans will assist the Officer in Charge to direct agency staff within the project team. Solution Brokerage Response Plans include:

- A summary of the issue, desired outcome, measure of success and a start and end date;
- The date declared and nominated tier;
- The approving body and assigned officer in charge;
- Actions, milestones, timeline, resources, responsibilities; and
- Assigned cross-agency project team, roles and responsibilities, project reporting lines of authority, other resources (including financial).

12. Who will oversee solution brokerage?

The Secretaries Board will oversee solution brokerage, which will be included as a regular item on the Secretaries Board agenda. The Cabinet Standing Committee on Social Policy will receive quarterly solution brokerage progress reports from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Authority to participate in declared solution brokerage issues is mandated by an appropriately senior approval body. Solution Brokerage Response Plans will clearly delegate authority from senior management levels to project teams, which may not necessarily align with the line management structure. This approval process enables resources to be assigned, clear roles and responsibilities to be agreed and establishment of monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

The approval body will vary depending on the tier, and may be the Secretaries Board, the Senior Executive Committee, relevant agency heads, or the Regional Leadership Group (RLG). The Head of Aboriginal Affairs will approve the declaration of solution brokerage issues.

13. When and how can solution brokerage issues be escalated?

Issues may require escalation due to lack of agency participation, slow progress, the need for additional resourcing or oversight or that the issues has not been able to be resolved.

- The Head of Aboriginal Affairs will take necessary action to resolve disputes locally to the greatest extent possible, with agencies having a positive obligation to comply with the reasonable requests of the Head of Aboriginal Affairs. The Head of Aboriginal Affairs will be an escalation point within government direct to the Secretaries Board.
- Where intractable disputes arise between agencies in relation to Tier Two and Tier One issues, they will be escalated by the Head of Aboriginal Affairs to the Secretaries Board for determination. Every attempt must be made to resolve disputes between Government and community locally prior to escalation. This may involve mediation between agencies and communities. Once an issue is escalated to Secretaries Board, a timeline and project plan for resolving the matter will be developed.
- The Ombudsman, and by delegation the Deputy Ombudsman for Aboriginal Programs, monitors and assesses the implementation of OCHRE, including the operation of the solution brokerage scheme. For intractable issues, where existing solution brokerage mechanisms have been exhausted, the Deputy Ombudsman for Aboriginal Programs may exercise their powers under the Ombudsman Act 1974, including their conciliation and reporting powers.