



**Australian Government**

Guideline:

# Managing the Employment Preparation Activity Trial (For EST Providers)

Under the New Employment Services Trial (NEST), Digital Participants may be required to undertake a compulsory activity on commencement of their fourth month in Digital Services. Digital Participants will have a choice of activities to select from, depending on eligibility and availability, with Employment Preparation Activities (EPA) being one of the activities available.

The EPA Trial will help to improve employment prospects of EPA Participants through core elements such as (but not limited to) supported job search skills; writing a resume; cold canvassing; interview and presentation skills; following up job leads; employability skills; registering for job search websites and learning from unsuccessful job applications.

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## Changes from the previous version 1.0

Policy Change:

Nil

Wording changes:

Updated Name and contact details for the Digital Services Contact Centre; updated dates for measuring performance. **Document Change History:**

A full document history is available at the [Provider Portal](#). Related documents and references

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## Related documents and references

- [Employability Skills Training Deed 2017-2022](#)
- [Employability Skills Training Guideline](#)
- [Insurance Readers Guide](#)
- [Additional Services- Employment Preparation Activity Trial](#)

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## 1. Background and Policy Intent

In early 2019, the Australian Government announced a significant reform of the current employment services model, and the commencement of NEST that will test key aspects of the new employment services model in the Trial Employment Regions.

NEST commenced on 1 July 2019 and will conclude on 30 June 2022.

The EPA Trial commenced on 9 March 2020 and will run for the duration of the NEST.

(Additional Services Document references: Clause 1)

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## 2. Interpretation

All capitalised terms used in this Guideline have the same meaning as in the Employability Skills Training Services Panel Deed 2017-2022 (the Deed) and the [Additional Services – Employment Preparation Activity Trial 2020-2022 document](#) (the Additional Services Document), unless stated otherwise.

(Deed references: Clause 29 and Additional Services Document references: Clause 3)

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## 3. Delivery of Employment Preparation Activities

The EPA Provider must deliver EPA Services in accordance with section 5 of the Additional Services Document.

For the avoidance of doubt, each EPA conducted by the EPA Provider must be delivered as a discrete activity and must not be delivered in combination with, or as part of, any other type of activity including any EST Course or Career Transition Assistance Course.

(Deed references: Clause 29 and Additional Services Document references: Clause 5)

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## 4. EPA Service Plan

The EPA Provider must have an approved EPA Service Plan in accordance with section 6 of the Additional Services Document.

(Deed references: Clause 29 and Additional Services Document references: Clause 6)

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## 5. Amendments to EPA Service Plan

Due to the nature of the EPA Trial, EPA Providers may wish to apply different, innovative approaches to support EPA Participants during the term of the EPA Trial.

If the EPA Provider wishes to make any changes to its EPA Service Plan for the purpose of introducing a new innovative method for the delivery of EPAs or for any other reason, it must first contact the Account Manager to discuss the proposed changes. If the Account Manager agrees with the EPA Provider doing so, the EPA Provider may submit a revised draft of the EPA Service Plan to the Account Manager for the Department's consideration.

The Department will notify the EPA Provider within ten (10) Business Days that the revised draft of the EPA Service Plan is:

- approved, in which case it will become the applicable EPA Service Plan from the date specified by the Department; or
- not approved, in which case the Department may request the EPA Provider to make changes to the draft and resubmit the draft to the Department for approval in accordance with the process in this section 6 of the Additional Services Document.

The EPA Provider must not implement any change to its EPA Service Plan unless and until the relevant change is approved in writing by the Department.

(Deed references: Clause 29 and Additional Services Document references: Clause 6)

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## 6. Employment Preparation Activity delivery requirements

### Activity content requirements

The EPA Provider must offer and provide EPAs that can be undertaken by EPA Participants with full-time and part-time participation requirements.

Each EPA must be delivered face-to-face or as directed by the Department, over a continuous two week period and in a group setting, and must operate for a total of:

- 25 hours per week for two weeks for EPA Participants with a full-time participation requirement
- 15 hours per week for two weeks for EPA Participants with a part-time participation requirement.

Each EPA must include, as a minimum, the following 10 topics:

- writing a résumé
- digital aptitude
- interview and presentation techniques
- job search skills
- registering for job search websites
- developing greater understanding of the local labour market
- cold canvassing
- learning from unsuccessful job applications
- following up job leads
- employability skills

Each EPA must also include any additional content as specified in the EPA Provider's EPA Service Plan.

(Additional Services Document references: Clauses 5 and 12)

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## 7. Scheduling the Employment Preparation Activity

The EPA Provider must conduct each EPA over a continuous two week period.

The EPA Provider must ensure that EPAs are not scheduled to occur on a public holiday, but still run for the required minimum number of hours per week.

For example, if there is a public holiday on the Friday and the activity is being delivered on a full-time basis, the EPA could run Monday to Thursday for 6.25 contact hours per day to meet the required 25 hours per week.

The EPA Provider must ensure each EPA scheduled in the Department's IT Systems complies with the requirements of this Guideline.

### Setting up an Employment Preparation Activity in the Department's IT Systems

The EPA Provider must record each EPA in the Department's IT Systems in order to facilitate Allocations of Digital Participants and EPA Payments.

For each EPA, the EPA Provider may create multiple schedules within the Department's IT Systems for the same period to cater for full-time and part-time EPA Participants, to optimise trainer and venue expenses.

The EPA Provider should enter the details of each EPA it will deliver into the Department's IT Systems no later than 10 business days before the EPA is scheduled to commence, to allow sufficient time to obtain Allocations.

### Information that must be entered

When recording an EPA in the Activity Management component of the Department's IT Systems, the EPA Provider must ensure that the activity details are accurate and correct and meet the requirements set out in the Deed and the Additional Services Document.

For each EPA, the EPA Provider must ensure that the details recorded on the Department's IT Systems confirm that:

- the scheduled start date of the EPA is the same as the first session date;
- held over a continuous two week period;
- the scheduled EPA hours are 25 hour per week for full time EPA Participants and 15 hours for part time EPA Participants;
- at least one Supervisor is assigned to Supervise the EPA, and any requirements regarding Supervision as specified in the Deed are met; and
- the location of the EPA is within the EPA Trial Region for which the EPA Provider has been approved by the Department as an EPA Provider.

The EPA Provider must also ensure that the details of any EPA recorded in the Department's IT Systems are consistent with the EPA Provider's EPA Service Plan.

### Marketing Employment Preparation Activities to Digital Participants

To support EPA Providers in marketing their EPAs to Digital Participants, the Department will display on the jobactive website information obtained from the Activity Details screen in the Department's IT Systems and the EPA Provider's EPA Service Plan.

The EPA Provider must ensure information entered on the Department's IT Systems is written so Digital Participants can easily understand the details of each EPA.

Information taken from the Department's IT Systems will include (but is not limited to) Activity Details, location, schedule and dates/times of EPAs.

### Changes to the details of scheduled Employment Preparation Activities

Once an EPA Participant has been Allocated an approved EPA, the EPA Provider must not make any changes to the scheduled dates, times and location of that EPA, as

recorded in the Department's IT Systems, without the written approval of the Department.

If the Department agrees to any changes to an EPA, the EPA Provider must then make those changes in the Activity Management component of the Department's IT Systems. The EPA Provider must also notify the Digital Services Contact Centre of the changes so that the Digital Services Contact Centre can contact the relevant Digital Participants and update their Activity Schedule.

### Withdrawing an Employment Preparation Activity

The EPA Provider may withdraw any EPA that has been created on the Department's IT Systems, if it has incorrectly created the EPA and there are no EPA Participants recorded in that EPA in the Department's IT Systems.

Unless agreed in writing by the Account Manager, the EPA Provider must not withdraw an EPA that has commenced, regardless of enrolment or attendance rates.

To request approval for an EPA be withdrawn, the EPA Provider must submit a written request to the Department. For the avoidance of doubt, the decision whether or not to approve the withdrawal of an EPA will be at the sole discretion of the Department. Without limiting any clause of the Deed, any decision of the Department with respect to withdrawal of EPAs will be final.

If the withdrawal of an EPA is approved by the Department in writing, the EPA Provider must work with the Digital Services Contact Centre to have the relevant Digital Participants removed from the EPA before withdrawing the EPA from the Department's IT Systems.

(Deed references: Clause 3, 21 and 22 and Additional Services Document references: Clause 5 and 12)

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## 8. Filling Employment Preparation Activities

### Working with the Digital Services Contact Centre

The EPA Provider must work with the Digital Services Contact Centre to support the delivery of EPAs to Digital Participants. The Digital Services Contact Centre can be emailed at [digitalservices@dese.gov.au](mailto:digitalservices@dese.gov.au) or contacted on 1800 314 677 and press 9.

The telephone numbers and email addresses for the Digital Participants Allocated to the EPA Provider is available on the Activity Placement List in the Department's IT Systems. This information is limited to mobile phone numbers and email addresses where available, to support engagement with Digital Participants before and during EPAs to improve attendance.

### Monitoring Allocations of Digital Participants

Once the EPA Provider has scheduled an EPA in the Department's IT Systems, Digital Services Contact Centre staff can search for and view that EPA and its Activity Schedules in the Department's IT Systems.

It is the EPA Provider's responsibility to regularly check and monitor the number of Allocations to their EPAs, noting the Department's IT Systems will not limit the

number of Allocations to EPAs. The EPA Provider must provide all reasonable assistance to the Digital Services Contact Centre to fill their EPAs.

The EPA Provider will also have access to a number of Departmental reports that help identify Digital Participants for potential participation in EPAs. The EPA Provider should use these reports to better target the Digital Services caseload to maximise EPA attendance numbers.

(Additional Services Document references: Clause 9)

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## 9. Managing the Employment Preparation Activity

### Commencing an Employment Preparation Activity

Noting any alternative servicing arrangements that the department may, from time to time, direct the EPA Provider to comply with, EPA Participants will be required to attend the location advised by the EPA Provider in the Department's IT Systems, at the specified date and start time.

EPA Participants must not be charged any fees or be required to pay any costs for their participation in any part of an EPA.

All Digital Participants who have been Allocated to the EPA Provider to undertake an EPA will be listed on the Department's Supervisor App. The EPA Provider must ensure that the relevant Supervisor(s) for that EPA have access to the Supervisor App including the names of the EPA Participants.

If a Digital Participant attends an EPA but is not listed in the Department's Supervisor App or the Activity Placement List in the Department's IT Systems as being Allocated to the EPA Provider to undertake that EPA, the EPA Provider must advise the Digital Participant to immediately contact the Digital Services Contact Centre. If the Digital Services Contact Centre is not able to Allocate that Digital Participant, the EPA Provider must not allow the Digital Participant to continue attending at that EPA.

The Department will not pay any EPA Payments to the EPA Provider in respect of a Digital Participant who has not been validly Allocated to the EPA Provider to undertake the EPA in accordance with the requirements in this Guideline.

### Recording and monitoring attendance

Participation in, and completion of, the EPA will be a compulsory component of each EPA Participant's Job Plan.

If an EPA Participant does not attend a session of an EPA as scheduled, their Income Support Payment will be placed on hold. If this occurs, the EPA Participant must contact the Digital Services Contact Centre, if they are a Digital Participant to discuss the reconnection requirement that the EPA Participant must meet.

Digital Participants are expected to record their own attendance. However, if a Digital Participant is unable to record their own attendance (e.g. the Digital Participant has no internet access or smart phone), the EPA Provider must use the Supervisor App to record the Digital Participant's attendance.

To ensure appropriate attendance results are recorded for each EPA Participant, the EPA Provider must:

- for each EPA session, provide a QR code or passcode to each EPA Participant in attendance so they can report their own attendance;
- if the number of hours scheduled for an EPA for a particular day exceeds 4 hours, provide two QR codes or passcodes to all attendees; and
- if an EPA Participant is not able to record their own attendance for any reason:
  - record the EPA Participant's attendance result for that day (by selecting 'Yes' or 'No') in the Department's Supervisor App on the same day as the scheduled attendance; or
  - if the Department's Supervisor App is unavailable, request attendance be recorded (Yes or No) by the Digital Services Contact Centre.

No back-dating of attendance is possible.

Failure to record attendance as requested by an EPA Participant may result in the EPA Participant's income support payment being placed on hold.

In order to avoid compliance action, Digital Participants need to contact the Digital Services Contact Centre for approval before any absence. The EPA Provider should remind Digital Participants of this at their first attendance at an EPA.

If a Digital Participant is incorrectly marked as absent from an EPA session by the EPA Provider, the EPA Provider must update the attendance record using the Supervisor App on the same day to ensure their Income Support Payment is restored.

In the event of a system outage that prevents the EPA Provider from recording attendance, the Department may accept an EPA Provider's manual attendance Records to support override or special claims in the Department's IT Systems on the relevant day of the EPA.

(Deed references: Clause 15 and Additional Services Document references: Clauses 5, 8 and 9)

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## 10. EPA Exits

As EPA Participants have until midnight in their local time zone to record their attendance at an EPA, the EPA Provider must not record the specific reason for the EPA Exit until the next Business Day. This will ensure that the EPA Participant has the opportunity to record their attendance at the final day of their participation in the EPA.

For the purposes of section 7.1(c) of the Additional Services Document, the circumstances in which an EPA Participant may withdraw, or be withdrawn, include:

- if the EPA Provider considers that the EPA Participant is facing Non-vocational Barriers that need to be addressed before the EPA Participant can benefit from participating in an EPA. For example, if the EPA Participant has language, numeracy or literacy issues that need to be addressed; and
- if the EPA Participant is displaying violent, threatening, aggressive or otherwise inappropriate behaviour. In these circumstances, the EPA Provider must comply with section 11 of this Guideline.

For the purposes of this Guideline, 'Non-vocational Barrier' means the range of barriers that can prevent a person from obtaining and sustaining Employment or



Education or from undertaking further skills development, including but not limited to homelessness, mental illness, drug or alcohol addiction, sexual abuse or violence and physical or mental abuse.

If the EPA Provider intends to record an EPA Exit for a Digital Participant due to reasons of misconduct by the Digital Participant or the Digital Participant not being suitable for the EPA, the EPA Provider must first discuss this with the Digital Services Contact Centre.

For Digital Participants, the recording of a valid EPA Exit reason will trigger the Department's IT Systems to calculate and make EPA Payments to the EPA Provider based on the Digital Participant's recorded attendance.

The Department will monitor the Allocation, EPA Commencement and EPA Exit data to ensure that each EPA is delivered in accordance with the Deed, the Additional Services Document and this Guideline. Engagement and retention of EPA Participants by the EPA Provider will be considered by the Department in assessing the performance of the EPA Provider in the EPA Trial.

(Deed references: Clause 14 and Additional Services Document references: Clauses 5 and 7)

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## 11. Managing EPA Participants with challenging behaviours

Challenging behaviour is any behaviour that a reasonable person would consider unacceptable or hostile and that creates an intimidating, frightening, threatening, offensive or physically dangerous situation in the workplace or other location.

Challenging behaviours may include but are not limited to:

- physical violence against any person—for example, hitting, kicking, punching, spitting on or throwing objects at a person
- acting in a way that would cause a person to have a reasonable belief that assault was intended
- adopting a physical position or state and/or producing an object that a reasonable person would consider constitutes a serious and imminent threat of physical violence
- oral or written (including email or communication through social media) threats, abuse or harassment, inappropriate touching and stalking of staff members
- damaging, defacing or destroying property intentionally or through inappropriate and aggressive behaviour such as throwing objects or punching and kicking property
- theft of property, illicit drug use on EPA Provider's premises, use of EPA Provider's equipment and/or property for illegal purposes
- swearing, making offensive noises or gestures, inappropriate or suggestive comments, vilification
- threatening self-harm; causing injury to oneself
- any other behaviour that is deemed inappropriate and warrants an incident being recorded.

If a Digital Participant is displaying challenging behaviours, the EPA Provider must immediately report this to the Digital Services Contact Centre.

An EPA Provider can choose to EPA Exit an EPA Participant from an EPA if the Participant displays any of the behaviour listed above. However, this must first be

discussed with the Digital Services Contact Centre to determine whether this is an appropriate course of action. The Digital Services Contact Centre can issue warnings to EPA Participants who display challenging behaviours, so that they are aware of the consequences of this behaviour. This may in some circumstances address the challenging behaviour and allow the EPA Participant to continue participating in the EPA.

(Deed references: Clause 14 and Additional Services Document references: Clauses 5, 7 and 12)

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## 12. Work, health and safety

### Industry Awareness Experiences

The EPA Provider may conduct Industry Awareness Experiences as part of delivering the EPA Services, in accordance with the requirements for Industry Awareness Experiences set out in the Deed and the Additional Services Document.

Industry Awareness Experiences can be delivered by the EPA Provider or in the case of a Hosted Industry Awareness Experiences, on the premises of a Host Organisation.

Without limiting any clause in the Deed and in accordance with any Guidelines, the EPA Provider must:

- ensure prior to the commencement of any Industry Awareness Experience:
  - that for any Industry Awareness Experience delivered by the EPA Provider, purchase or fund additional insurance for the Industry Awareness Experience if required to ensure adequate coverage for that activity;
  - that the Host Organisation is satisfied it has sufficient and up-to-date insurance if the Industry Awareness Experience is a Hosted Industry Awareness Experience. This insurance must cover any risks specifically associated with the Hosted Industry Awareness Experience including any risks specifically identified in the relevant risk assessment in relation to the Hosted Industry Awareness Experience; and
  - that the EPA Provider has insurance for any motor vehicle or other mode of transport used by their organisation to transport EPA Participants to and from the Industry Awareness Experience, as required by the Deed; and
- ensure that EPA Participants engaged in an EPA, including any Industry Awareness Experience, receive adequate and appropriate Supervision and otherwise ensure that the requirements for Supervision as set out in the Deed are met.

### Reporting and Managing Incidents

Without limiting any clause in the Deed, if an EPA Participant, Supervisor, Personnel or member of the public sustains an injury during an EPA, the EPA Provider must ensure that:

- its Personnel or the Supervisor encourages the injured person to seek appropriate medical attention or call emergency services depending on the nature of the incident;

- it notifies the Department or the Digital Services Contact Centre, as relevant, as soon as possible and on the same day the incident occurred, using the [WHS Employment Assistance Program Incident Report](#) available on the Provider Portal; and
- it fully cooperates with the Department and the Department's insurance broker in relation to any incident in accordance with the Deed and the Insurance Readers Guide.

For further information on the incident reporting process, see the [Insurance Readers Guide](#).

### Managing complaints and feedback

The EPA Provider must ensure that each EPA Participant is aware of the process for lodging a complaint or voice safety concerns about any part of the EPA Services.

(Deed references: Clauses 5, 6, 11, 44 and 82 and Additional Services Document references: Clauses 5 and 12)

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## 13. Claiming EPA Payments for Digital Participants

The EPA Provider must only claim EPA Payments in accordance with section 8 of the Additional Services Document.

The Department's IT Systems will calculate the EPA Payment once a successful EPA Exit is recorded in the system in accordance with Section 10 of this guideline.

### Found Employment

If a Digital Participant finds Employment during the course of an EPA (resulting in the Participant voluntarily withdrawing from the EPA), the EPA Provider can select an EPA Exit reason of 'Found Employment' to claim the applicable EPA Payment.

The EPA Provider must, at the time of claiming any EPA Payment, declare that they hold Documentary Evidence (e.g. a copy of the letter of offer or equivalent email from the relevant Employer) to demonstrate that the Participant has found Employment when entering the EPA Exit reason into the Department's IT Systems.

(Deed references: Clauses 3, 21 and 22 and Additional Services Document references: Clauses 5, 7, 8 and 12)

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## 14. Performance Management

The performance of EPA Providers will be assessed on a six monthly basis to support the evaluation of the EPA Trial. The first performance assessment period will be from 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2021.

From 1 January 2021, each EPA Participant for which an EPA Exit has been recorded in the Department's IT Systems will receive an EPA Participant survey to complete. The EPA surveys will assist the Department in measuring the effectiveness and service quality of each EPA Provider and the satisfaction of EPA Participants with EPA Services.

### Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

EPA Providers will be assessed against the following two KPIs:

- KPI 1—Effectiveness. This KPI measures EPA Participants' improvement in job search skills and employment prospects following their participation in EPA. Performance against this KPI will be measured primarily using information provided by EPA Participants in the EPA Participant surveys.
- KPI 2—Satisfaction and Service Quality. This KPI measures the EPA Provider's compliance with the Deed, this Guideline and assesses the EPA Provider's performance against its EPA Service Plan. In assessing performance against this KPI, the Department may take into account EPA survey responses and any other relevant source of information.

### Other factors in performance assessment

When assessing the EPA Provider's performance, the Department may also take into account other factors, including but not limited to:

- any assurance activities undertaken by the Department, including in relation to any breaches of the Deed by the EPA Provider or recoveries of Payments from the EPA Provider under the Deed;
- the EPA Provider's performance in assisting people from diverse backgrounds (such as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples);
- the EPA Provider's performance in working collaboratively with the Digital Services Contact Centre;
- the EPA Provider's performance in building linkages with industry and Employers and connection with the local labour market;
- the EPA Provider's compliance with the Deed and this Guideline and any representation made by the EPA Provider in its Expression of Interest;
- the EPA Provider's compliance with its EPA Service Plan; and
- any other information available to the Department, including feedback from Participants, Employers, feedback from the Department's Employment Services Tip-off Line and Department of Human Services (Services Australia).

This section 14 does not in any way limit the rights of the Department under the Deed or at law, including rights to take remedial action against the EPA Provider, arising out of the monitoring, measuring, evaluating or reviewing of the EPA Provider's performance under this section 14, or otherwise.

(Deed reference: clauses 4, 20 and 42 and Additional Services Document references: Clauses 11 and 12)

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## 15. Summary of required Documentary Evidence



**Documentary Evidence:** EPA Providers must retain Documentary Evidence in accordance with the Deed, including the following Documentary Evidence, and provide this to the Department if requested to do so:

- 'Found Employment' Records – each Digital Participant who is EPA Exited because they have found Employment during the EPA must provide Documentary Evidence to demonstrate found Employment. Documentary Evidence can include a copy of the letter of offer or equivalent email from the relevant Employer; and
- Manual attendance Records - In the event of system outages in the Department's IT Systems, any manual attendance Records which may be used to

support override or special claims in the event attendance is unable to be recorded on the Department's IT Systems on the day of an EPA.

(Deed reference: clauses 4, 14, 20 and 42 and Additional Services Document references: clause 11 and 12)

This is not a stand-alone document and does not contain the entirety of the EPA Provider's obligations in relation to the subject matter. It must be read in conjunction with the Employability Skills Training Services Panel Deed 2017-2022 (**Deed**), the Additional Services – Employment Preparation Activity Trial 2020-2022 (**Additional Services Document**) and any other relevant Guidelines or reference material issued by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment under or in connection with the Deed or Additional Services Document.