

100-01/04 Regional Advisory Forums Instruction

1. Scope

- 1.1. This instruction provides information regarding Regional Advisory Forums and how they operate in Open Arms.

2. Context

- 2.1. Open Arms consults with the veteran community and stakeholders through the National Advisory Committee (NAC) and Regional Advisory Forums (RAFs). These are opportunities to discuss issues and identify opportunities to better meet the needs of ex-serving, current and future-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families.
- 2.2. To facilitate national discussion of strategic issues, each RAF meeting has a theme determined by the NAC. A NAC member will be present at each RAF wherever possible.
- 2.3. The RAF also guides the establishment and development of strategic relationships and partnerships between Open Arms and key stakeholders in each region. RAF meetings also establish and strengthen positive and cooperative relationships with community service organisations and other key stakeholders, to benefit Open Arms clients and improve service delivery.
- 2.4. The outcomes of these forums are reported to the NAC and underpin Open Arms' national consultation process.

3. Forum establishment

- 3.1. The RAF meets the following Open Arms community linkage objectives:
 - establishing cooperative service delivery relationships to minimise unnecessary duplication of services, so that services are delivered more effectively to clients in the region
 - exchanging information about service provision and identifying opportunities to leverage regional activities, to ensure the needs of greater numbers of clients are met
 - obtaining feedback from stakeholders, providing opportunities to improve Open Arms services
 - reporting to the NAC and providing recommendations to help promote a shared strategic direction for Open Arms in the regions and nationally.
- 3.2. Each Open Arms region convenes at least two RAF meetings annually.

4. Forum membership

- 4.1. Membership of each RAF comprises government and non-government stakeholders. Membership is by invitation only and reflects the range of services available to the veteran community in the region. Specific membership requirements are determined by the Regional Director, depending on the needs of the service. Membership is reviewed annually.
- 4.2. Generally, membership includes regional representation from:
 - key ex-service organisations in the area
 - other non-government organisations with an ex-service focus
 - the ADF (ideally Garrison Health or key local ADF mental health services)
 - the Defence Community Organisation and any other major veterans' family associations in the region
 - primary health networks
 - state government agencies, including for mental health, hospitals and housing
 - relevant private mental health providers
 - the Department of Veterans' Affairs (Veterans' Access Network or On Base Advisory Service representative, or Deputy Commissioner).
- 4.3. NAC members residing in the region are invited to all RAFs as a matter of course.
- 4.4. The Community Engagement team supports Open Arms' strategic direction by developing partnerships in the region and may participate in RAFs as directed.

5. Operating framework

- 5.1. The Regional Director convenes the RAF, develops the agenda in consultation with members (using the Regional Advisory Forum Agenda Template (100-01/T7)) and chairs the meeting.
- 5.2. Administrative and secretariat support is provided by regional Open Arms staff.
- 5.3. The minutes from each RAF are provided to the NAC (via the NAC secretariat) within four weeks, for consideration and action as appropriate.

6. Operating principles

- 6.1. The following operating principles are in place to enhance group cooperation, communication, function and performance of each RAF:
 - 6.1.1. Open Arms services are delivered within Australian Government legislative frameworks.
 - 6.1.2. Each RAF has a clear agenda and participant objectives.

- 6.1.3. RAFs should, in general, be chaired by the Regional Director.
- 6.1.4. These operating principles and information about Open Arms services are provided to new RAF members.
- 6.1.5. Correspondence to RAF members will be sent via email, including draft minutes (see the Regional Advisory Forum Minutes Template) distributed no later than a fortnight following each meeting.
- 6.1.6. Correspondence and meeting discussions are in plain English. Acronyms are explained in the body of minutes.
- 6.1.7. A member who is unable to attend a meeting can arrange a suitable delegate to represent them or tender an apology before the meeting.
- 6.1.8. All members are encouraged to share information, issues and concerns; respect and value all opinions and ideas; and promote equal participation.
- 6.1.9. The chair will seek agreement from participants on the confidential nature of material or information before tabling or discussion.
- 6.1.10. It is expected that members will require time to consult with their organisations before agreeing to major recommendations.
- 6.1.11. RAF minutes are provided to the Assistant National Manager and the NAC secretariat. The National Manager provides a summary of any key actions and recommendations to the NAC for its consideration.

7. Review of Regional Advisory Forums

- 7.1. The Assistant National Manager reviews membership of the RAFs, provides input into the shared strategic direction for Open Arms and makes recommendations to the National Manager.

8. Parent procedure

- 100-01 Governance Procedure

9. Related instructions and templates

- 100-01/T7 Regional Advisory Forum Agenda Template
- 100-01/T8 Regional Advisory Forum Minutes Template
- 100-01/T9 Regional Advisory Forum Report to National Advisory Committee Template

Authorisation and signature

This instruction is the authorised version agreed by Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling and is to direct the decision-making of all staff.

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National Manager

Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling

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Instruction version history

Version	Date	Details of change	Author/responsible
1.0	1 July 2020	Initial – endorsed	National Manager
1.1	February 2022	governance update	Policy Team