

NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project

Tipsheet: Selecting and Engaging an Approved Quality Auditor (AQA)

Selecting an Approved Quality Auditor (AQA) that is a good fit for your organisation is important. This tipsheet provides ideas and helpful tips for getting the right match for your organisation.

This resource is aimed at providers who are new to the provision of NDIS supports and services. The information in this resource is general in nature and is a starting point. It should be used and adapted to meet the size and scope of your organisation and the supports you provide.

Selecting and Engaging an Approved Quality Auditor (AQA)

Selecting an Approved Quality Auditor (AQA) that is a good fit for your organisation is important. Getting the right match can have benefits such as:

- **Having an AQA that understands your organisation** – If your auditor understands your approaches to service delivery, your culture and your business, this will help you to be on the same page and can enhance your approach to continuous improvement.
- **Creating a long-term relationship** – This will make the audit process and outcomes, a more viable process for meeting the requirements for re-registration. Having a consistent approach can help your organisation effectively monitor your journey and achievements as a provider of quality services over a period of time.
- **Aligning audits** – You may be required to have audits for multiple areas of the business in addition to NDIS registration. For example, as part of your organisation's governance, you may also be seeking certification under ISO 9001 Quality Assurance.
- **Saving time and resources** - Understanding how the AQA operates can create effective processes to facilitate audits and align audits across various standards so they can be conducted concurrently.

Once a provider has received their Scope of Audit document, they can start to look for an AQA. Only NDIS Commission approved AQA's can be used. The list of AQA's can be found at [NDIS Commission - Find an auditor](#).

AQAs will not provide a quote without the Scope of Audit and will request confirmation of the information provided within the Scope of Audit prior to providing the quote.

Providers should consider contacting **multiple AQAs for quotes** to ensure the quote is competitive and that the AQA is the right fit for the size and scope of the organisation.

Things to consider in your initial research and discussions with AQAs could be:

- The supports and services the AQAs cover, are they what your organisation needs?
- The skills/experience of the AQAs.
- The availability of the AQA to meet your preferred and required dates/timeframes.
- The availability of locally based auditors.
- Any references.

Tips for selecting your Approved Quality Auditor (AQA)



Have selection criteria. This can help you to identify what is most important to you in your relationship with the AQA. Shortlist AQA's against your selection criteria. Consider:

- What is their governance framework - not for profit, commercial, small business?
- Are they aligned with your values and culture?
- Does their auditing expertise align with your service delivery (e.g., are they approved to audit schemes that apply to other areas of your business such as Mental Health, Aged Care, Early Childhood)?
- Do they have a local audit team? Are you going to incur additional costs for flights and accommodation?
- Does their service model appeal to your organisation? Is it responsive to your needs or more focused on the AQA processes and procedures?



Check with your networks.

- Have other providers in your local market had experience with any AQA's?
- Do you know any of the auditors from previous experiences (e.g. evaluations)? Which AQAs are they working for and why?



Monitor how they build a relationship with you and communicate during the quoting period.

- How does the AQA respond to any questions you have?
- What is the AQA's response time to queries?
- How many different people are responding to your queries?



Consider the quotes carefully.

- Compare quotes received for:
 - daily rates and fees,
 - variations of time allocated for tasks,
 - accuracy against audit scope and terms and conditions,
 - inclusions (e.g. Stage 1, Stage 2, mid-term costs).
- Ensure quotes include estimates for additional or hidden costs such as travel, action plans, interim reviews, scope creep.



Scope Creep is a term for when the scope of a project or job (in this case an audit) starts to increase from what was originally agreed. This could lead to an increase in cost.

- How easy was the quote and service model understood by you and your team?
- Will you have a key point of contact; is this the same person you have so far dealt with? If not, who or which role will it be?



Start looking for an auditor as soon as you have your Scope of Audit. This will help you to ensure you have enough time to meet all other timeline requirements.

AQA have to meet quality requirements too. The AQAs will have complaints and feedback mechanisms so let them know if you see areas for improvement. If you aren't satisfied you can change your AQA for the next audit.

Please note: This resource was reviewed in August 2023 by the NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project. The resource is general in nature and is provided as a guide only. NDS believes that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publishing, however, NDS reserves the right to vary any of this publication without further notice. The information provided in this publication should not be relied upon instead of other legal, medical, financial, or professional advice. Please always refer to online documents for the latest versions including the NDIS Practice Standards and advice to providers on the Code of Conduct.

