

# National Community Housing Accreditation Council

## Glossary

<b><i>Accountability</i></b>	
Definition:	Being required to accept responsibility for the effectiveness of practices and policies.
Community housing context:	<p>Accountability involves ensuring transparency in all practices. Although accountability is frequently narrowly defined as financial accountability or accountability to funding authorities, within the community sector the scope of accountability is characterised more broadly.</p> <p>Community housing organisations are accountable to stakeholders - tenants, applicants, workers, management committees, the local community - as well as funding and/or regulatory authorities. Organisations are required to be accountable for the work of the organisation in terms of financial, asset and tenancy management.</p>
<b><i>Accreditation</i></b>	
Definition:	An external process for recognising or verifying that an organisation has met a set of Standards.
Community housing context:	<p>In the community housing sector, accreditation is the formal process by which an organisation is furnished with a credential by an external body which testifies that the service achieves a required level of performance against predetermined standards, including but not limited to the National Community Housing Standards.</p> <p>An accreditation system will ensure that housing providers can establish standards of performance that meet the needs of service providers and government, and provide assurance to consumers. In this sense it will improve accountability to tenants, financiers and administrators. Based on standards of good practice, the community housing accreditation framework is linked to the process of quality improvement.</p>
<b><i>Audit</i></b>	
Definition:	An external and independent examination of the activities and functions of an organisation over a period of time.
Community housing context:	Management audits involve the evaluation of an organisation's different managerial functions including planning, financial, reporting, directing, staffing and organising. They can serve as performance measures and are mechanisms that contribute to accountability.

National Community Housing Accreditation Council  
Glossary

<b><i>Benchmark</i></b>	
Definition:	A point of reference or a set standard against which performance can be measured. It can be of a quantitative or qualitative nature. Benchmarks provide a basis for comparison across an industry.
Community housing context:	<p>Benchmarking can either form a reference point to measure current performance or it could form a target for future performance. Benchmarks are linked to steps undertaken to achieve or improve service delivery and are therefore concerned with process rather than outcome.</p> <p>Where Standards have been developed to reflect good practice, they often provide benchmarks for quality in a service sector or industry. Developed in this way, benchmarks are linked to the goal of quality improvement.</p>
<b><i>Code of practice</i></b>	
Definition:	A system of standards, principles or regulations relating to the procedures and practices followed by a particular industry or profession.
Community housing context:	<p>A code of practice provides a public statement of the service standards it seeks to guarantee. The adoption of a code of practice by an organisation shows it intends its service and management to comply with the principles outlined in the code.</p> <p>Codes of Practice have been developed in some States, including SA and WA. NSW has a Code of Conduct.</p>
<b><i>Compliance</i></b>	
Definition:	Adhering to a defined requirement or set standard.
Community housing context:	<p>Compliance is another way of saying that an organisation meets certain minimum program or contractual requirements.</p> <p>Within the community housing sector, organisations are required to comply with the principles outlined in a code of practice, the terms of a contract, a funding agreement or regulation/legislation.</p>

National Community Housing Accreditation Council  
Glossary

<b><i>Effectiveness</i></b>	
Definition:	A measure of how well the outputs of a service achieve the stated objectives of that service.  (Report on Government services 2005)
Community housing context:	Improved effectiveness is one of the goals of quality improvement generally. In the National Community Housing Standards, effectiveness is extensively cited as an aspect of accountability, human resource management, governance and organisational viability.
<b><i>Efficiency</i></b>	
Definition:	A measure of how well an organisation uses its resources to produce services.  (Report on Government services 2005)
Community housing context:	Efficiency has traditionally been used to measure financial costs, as reflected in the definition above. As community housing providers' role in developing and acquiring assets increases, building and energy efficiencies also need to be considered.  In the National Community Housing Standards, efficiency is an element of good practice in human resource management, asset management, acquisition and development.
<b><i>Evaluation</i></b>	
Definition:	A systematic process of measuring and assessing practices and outcomes.
Community housing context:	Evaluation is a process of establishing organisational practices and making an assessment of outcomes. Evaluation involves recognition of a set of standards, the identification and analysis of shortfalls and provides guidance in remedying these shortfalls.  When linked to the goal of quality improvement, evaluation plays an important role in identifying areas for development and making recommendations for change. Importantly, evaluation can be an internal or external process. For internal evaluations, organisations examine their own practices and outcomes and set goals for improvement. An external process is more often associated with an assessment for a qualification.

National Community Housing Accreditation Council  
Glossary

<b><i>Good Practice</i></b>	
Definition:	A recognised set of sound procedures and practices within an industry. As a strategy, good practice is linked to the successful achievement of outcomes.
Community housing context:	<p>Good practice may be in a promotional or instructional form - for example, good practice guides and annual awards - which provide tools for meeting service standard requirements. The development of service standards that reflect good practice is an active step towards quality enhancement.</p> <p>While the expression 'best practice' is sometimes employed, 'good practice' is the commonly preferred term. The term good practice permits a diversity of practices that are seen to considerably benefit the sector.</p>
<b><i>Minimum Requirement</i></b>	
Definition:	The base level at which performance will be recognised as meeting its obligation.
Community housing context:	Minimum requirements are often spoken of in the context of registration and regulation. They represent the basic or lowest possible performance for registration.
<b><i>Outcome</i></b>	
Definition:	The organisation's impact on the status of individuals, a group, an issue or a community.
Community housing context:	<p>Delivering high quality outcomes for tenants, applicants and communities is one of the key aims of community housing.</p> <p>One of the goals of quality improvement is to generate greater outcomes through enhanced service delivery. In the National Community Housing Standards, outcomes are recognised as a crucial element of good practice. Quality improvement is not about lengthy written policies, but requires action and results.</p>
<b><i>Output</i></b>	
Definition:	The service provided by an organisation.
Community housing context:	<p>Outputs are often important elements of reporting on regulatory requirements.</p> <p>In quality improvement, outcomes are generally more valued than outputs, because outcomes are often qualitative and outputs are quantitative.</p>

National Community Housing Accreditation Council  
Glossary

<b><i>Performance Indicator</i></b>	
Definition:	Measurable target.
Community housing context:	Within the community housing sector, performance indicators tend to be linked to broad goals and desired outputs.
<b><i>Performance Measurement</i></b>	
Definition:	The method of quantifying how a Performance Indicator is met.
Community housing context:	Performance measures include data, evaluations, surveys, audits, reports and ratings.
<b><i>Process</i></b>	
Definition:	The way a service is produced or delivered. (Report on Government services 2005)
Community housing context:	Organisational processes that are effective and efficient are an important element of good practice. The National Community Housing Standards include a section on “Processes that can support good practice” for every Standard.
<b><i>Quality</i></b>	
Definition:	A degree or grade of excellence.
Community housing context:	Quality is one of the key aims of community housing. The National Community Housing Standards identifies quality as:  <i>To provide the best possible accommodation and housing services to tenants.</i>
<b><i>Registration</i></b>	
Definition:	The formal act of entering an established register
Community housing context:	Registration eligibility requirements may vary considerably across industries. They are often related to areas in which governments require specific outputs or have little or no tolerance of risk.  Registration may be a requirement for some government funding in some jurisdictions.

National Community Housing Accreditation Council  
Glossary

<b><i>Regulation</i></b>	
Definition:	A set of administrative and/or legal processes for the delivery of community housing.
Community housing context:	Regulation is distinct from accreditation, which is linked to the dynamic process of quality improvement. Regulation is sometimes reduced to a compliance system linked to contractual requirements and funding agreements.
<b><i>Risk Management</i></b>	
Definition:	A process of identifying factors that may prevent an organisation or industry from achieving its desired outcomes and developing the strategies to guard against these risks.
Community housing context:	In a quality improvement context, accreditation may be part of a risk management strategy. Continual and periodic review organisational practices may contribute to risk minimisation.  Conversely, risk management is a key element of good practice and sound risk management strategies are a requirement for accreditation.
<b><i>Standards</i></b>	
Definition:	A statement of what is expected of an organisation in a particular area.
Community housing context:	Standards establish what is expected of service providers in relation to the quality and effectiveness of services. They are most effective when they are accompanied by performance measures.  Standards may be minimal or optimal. Standards that reflect good practice and are linked to the process of quality improvement are optimum standards. Optimum standards form the basis of the community housing accreditation system.

*Endorsed: 30 August 2005*

*To be reviewed: February 2006*