



**ASIC**  
Australian Securities &  
Investments Commission

## REGULATORY GUIDE 262

# Crowd-sourced funding: Guide for intermediaries

October 2018

### **About this guide**

This guide is for entities providing, or looking to provide, a crowd-funding service as a crowd-sourced funding (CSF) intermediary by operating a platform for CSF offers and investments.

This guide explains the general ongoing obligations that apply to CSF intermediaries as Australian financial services (AFS) licensees and the specific obligations that apply under the CSF regime in the Corporations Act.

Note: From 27 July 2020, applications for relief should be submitted through the [ASIC Regulatory Portal](#). For more information, see [how you apply for relief](#).

### About ASIC regulatory documents

In administering legislation ASIC issues the following types of regulatory documents.

**Consultation papers:** seek feedback from stakeholders on matters ASIC is considering, such as proposed relief or proposed regulatory guidance.

**Regulatory guides:** give guidance to regulated entities by:

- explaining when and how ASIC will exercise specific powers under legislation (primarily the Corporations Act)
- explaining how ASIC interprets the law
- describing the principles underlying ASIC's approach
- giving practical guidance (e.g. describing the steps of a process such as applying for a licence or giving practical examples of how regulated entities may decide to meet their obligations).

**Information sheets:** provide concise guidance on a specific process or compliance issue or an overview of detailed guidance.

**Reports:** describe ASIC compliance or relief activity or the results of a research project.

### Document history

This guide was issued in October 2018 and is based on legislation and regulations as at the date of issue. The note on the front page was inserted on 27 July 2020. In March 2022 we updated the note at RG 262.13, RG 262.73 (and its note) and RG 262.193 to reflect the breach reporting reforms that commenced on 1 October 2021.

Previous versions:

- Superseded Regulatory Guide 262 *Crowd-sourced funding: Guide for intermediaries*, issued September 2017

### Disclaimer

This guide does not constitute legal advice. We encourage you to seek your own professional advice to find out how the Corporations Act and other applicable laws apply to you, as it is your responsibility to determine your obligations.

Examples in this guide are purely for illustration; they are not exhaustive and are not intended to impose or imply particular rules or requirements.

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## A Overview

### Key points

Crowd-sourced funding is a form of fundraising that allows a company to access capital from a large number of investors.

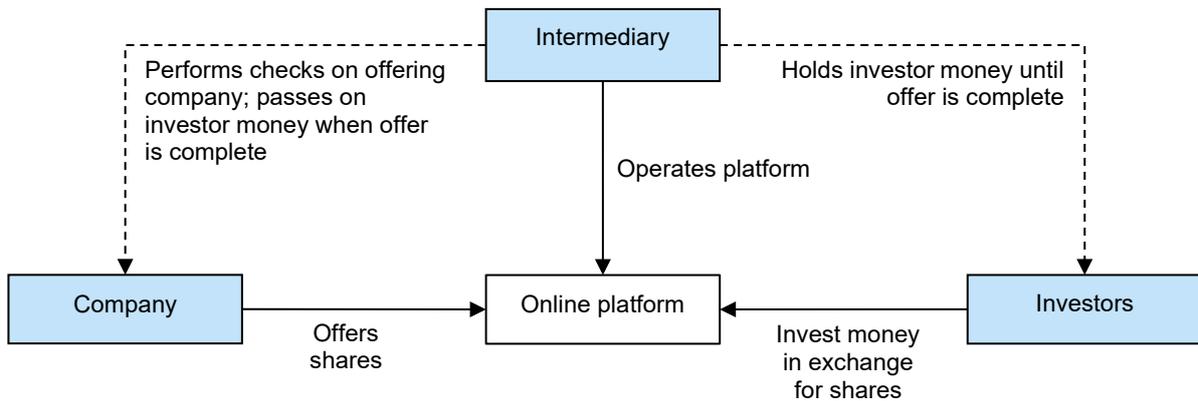
The crowd-sourced funding (CSF) regime in Pt 6D.3A of the *Corporations Act 2001* (Corporations Act) provides a regulatory framework for equity-based crowd-sourced funding by small unlisted public companies and proprietary companies, enabling them to make offers of ordinary shares to retail clients, through a licensed intermediary's platform, using a CSF offer document.

This guide will assist you, as a CSF intermediary, to:

- understand how to apply for authorisation to provide a crowd-funding service;
- meet your obligations and responsibilities as an Australian financial services (AFS) licensee under the law; and
- meet specific requirements under the CSF regime.

## Crowd-sourced funding in Australia

- RG 262.1 Crowd-sourced funding involves raising funds—usually through an online intermediary—from a large number of people who make relatively small financial contributions to the company.
- RG 262.2 Crowd-sourced funding generally falls into two categories: non-investment and investment-based. Non-investment crowd-sourced funding allows participants to make a donation to support a cause or pre-purchase a good or a service that will be made using the funds raised. Investment-based crowd-sourced funding involves participants investing money for a financial reward or gain.
- RG 262.3 The CSF regime in Pt 6D.3A of the Corporations Act provides a regulatory framework for equity-based crowd-sourced funding, which is a type of investment-based crowd-sourced funding that involves a company offering its ordinary shares to investors in return for a relatively small cash investment. This guide focuses specifically on the equity-based crowd-sourced funding that is covered by the CSF regime.
- RG 262.4 Figure 1 illustrates how equity-based crowd-sourced funding works, with an intermediary performing checks on the issuing company, operating an online platform (through which the company offers shares and investors invest money in exchange for shares), holding investor money and passing investor money to the company when the offer is complete.

**Figure 1: A basic illustration of how equity-based crowd-sourced funding works**

Note: The process shown in Figure 1 is described in RG 262.4 (accessible version).

RG 262.5 Under the CSF regime, unlisted public companies and proprietary companies with less than \$25 million in assets and annual revenue can make offers of ordinary shares to retail clients, through an AFS licensed CSF intermediary's platform, using a CSF offer document. Eligible companies can raise up to \$5 million in any 12-month period under the CSF regime.

RG 262.6 Crowd-sourced funding provides an additional funding option for entrepreneurs and small companies to grow their businesses, and provides an additional investment option for people wishing to invest in start-ups and small businesses.

RG 262.7 However, crowd-sourced funding is recognised internationally as a risky form of investment.

Note: See the [Crowdfunding: 2015 survey responses report](#) (PDF 0.5 MB), released December 2015, by the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO).

RG 262.8 The development of Australia's CSF regime has followed a global trend towards law reform facilitating investment-based crowd-sourced funding, including in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

RG 262.9 In its *Crowdfunding: 2015 survey responses report*, IOSCO observed that the regulatory approaches of each jurisdiction it surveyed aim to balance the need for appropriate investor protection with facilitating a new form of fundraising by companies. Common key elements include:

- (a) appropriate regulation of intermediaries (i.e. licensing or registration);
- (b) investor protections proportionate to the high risk and low liquidity of the investments; and
- (c) some disclosure and other requirements for companies raising funds.

## The role of a CSF intermediary

- RG 262.10 A CSF intermediary plays a significant role under the CSF regime, operating the platform through which investors invest and companies offer their shares. This role includes managing some of the risks identified by IOSCO in relation to crowd-sourced funding, to help ensure that investors and offering companies can be confident in using the CSF regime.

## ASIC's role in regulating crowd-sourced funding

- RG 262.11 ASIC is Australia's corporate, markets and financial services regulator. We administer the Corporations Act and the *Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001* (ASIC Act). Our role includes the regulation of fundraising and licensing of financial service providers.
- RG 262.12 Crowd-sourced funding under the CSF regime involves offering shares in the company that is raising funds. Providing a crowd-funding service to offering companies and investors is a financial service. A CSF intermediary must hold an AFS licence authorising it to provide this service. A CSF intermediary might require an Australian market licence if the operation of a platform involves operating a financial market; however, this guide does not address this requirement.

Note: For information on market licences, see [Regulatory Guide 172](#) *Financial markets: Domestic and overseas operators* (RG 172).

- RG 262.13 As well as issuing your AFS licence, we also oversee your compliance with the Corporations Act and the ASIC Act. To do this, we may conduct surveillance to check your compliance with the law, including in response to reports of misconduct from investors or companies using your services. ASIC has a range of powers to check compliance and investigate suspected breaches.

Note: As a CSF intermediary, you have an obligation to notify ASIC of reportable situations—see [Regulatory Guide 78](#) *Breach reporting by AFS licensees and credit licensees* (RG 78).

## Purpose and scope of this guide

- RG 262.14 This guide aims to assist you, as a CSF intermediary, to understand and comply with your obligations when providing a crowd-funding service to offering companies and investors. In particular, it will help you:
- (a) understand how to apply for an AFS licence authorisation to provide a crowd-funding service;
  - (b) meet your obligations and responsibilities as an AFS licensee; and
  - (c) meet specific requirements under the CSF regime.

RG 262.15 This guide covers the key features of the CSF regime in the Corporations Act for CSF intermediaries, as set out in Table 1.

**Table 1: Key features of the CSF regime for CSF intermediaries**

Key feature	Summary	Guidance
AFS licence obligations	<p>You need to hold an AFS licence with an authorisation to provide a crowd-funding service.</p> <p>As an AFS licensee, you must comply with the general obligations in s912A and other obligations in the Corporations Act. For example, you must have adequate resources and, in particular, you must meet requirements to demonstrate you will maintain an adequate cash buffer through preparing projections and arranging a report by an auditor on the projections annually.</p>	Section B of this guide
Specific obligations under the CSF regime	<p>You must meet gatekeeper obligations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>performing checks on a prospective offering company, CSF offer and CSF offer document; and</li> <li>not publishing, or not continuing to publish, a CSF offer document on your platform in certain circumstances.</li> </ul> <p>Under the CSF regime, you must also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>display certain information prominently on your platform;</li> <li>provide a facility on your platform to enable people to apply under a CSF offer (application facility) for all offers on your platform;</li> <li>provide a communication facility for investors to ask questions about a CSF offer, and monitor posts on this facility;</li> <li>deal with application money compliantly;</li> <li>comply with timing rules for CSF offers;</li> <li>appropriately deal with defective CSF offer documents; and</li> <li>ensure advertising is not misleading or deceptive, and advertising of CSF offers directs investors to the general risk warning and CSF offer document.</li> </ul>	<p>Section C of this guide</p> <p>See also <a href="#">Regulatory Guide 261</a> <i>Crowd-sourced funding: Guide for companies</i> (RG 261)</p>
Additional obligations for retail clients	<p>You have additional obligations to retail clients, to help ensure that they can be confident to invest. You must ensure that, for all CSF offers made on your platform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>retail clients complete a risk acknowledgement before applying for shares under a CSF offer;</li> <li>retail clients do not invest more than the investor cap (\$10,000) per company in any 12-month period; and</li> <li>retail clients are informed of and able to exercise their cooling-off rights to withdraw from a CSF offer within five days of applying.</li> </ul>	Section C of this guide
Data reporting	You have obligations to provide information to ASIC about your activities on an annual basis.	Section D of this guide

## What is not covered by this guide?

### Companies seeking to make CSF offers

- RG 262.16 To raise funds under the CSF regime, a company must meet certain requirements, including being eligible to make a CSF offer and providing the prescribed disclosure to investors. We provide guidance for companies seeking to raise funds under the CSF regime in [Regulatory Guide 261](#) *Crowd-sourced funding: Guide for companies* (RG 261).

### Secondary trading of shares by CSF companies

- RG 262.17 CSF intermediaries and other entities seeking to operate a secondary market in shares of eligible CSF companies must hold an Australian market licence or be exempt from the requirement to hold an Australian market licence. We provide guidance for market operators in [RG 172](#).

### Other forms of crowd-sourced funding

- RG 262.18 This guide does not provide guidance about non-investment crowd-sourced funding, including donation-based crowd-sourced funding and funding based on the pre-purchase of goods and services other than financial products and services. This type of crowd-sourced funding is not regulated by ASIC.
- RG 262.19 ASIC is the regulator responsible for investment-based crowd-sourced funding, including the equity-based crowd-sourced funding covered by the CSF regime. Other forms of investment-based funding include offers under prospectuses and Product Disclosure Statements, through business introduction services, by personal offers under s708 of the Corporations Act, involving the use of nominee services and fundraising activities arranged as managed investment schemes—these types of fundraising are not covered by this guide.
- RG 262.20 Where a CSF intermediary intends to facilitate other forms of investment-based funding (as well as equity-based crowd-sourced funding) on the same website, it is important that these are clearly segregated to ensure that consumers do not confuse the funding options. In particular, the website should make clear the differences between the funding options, the risks, and any other information a consumer may need to make an informed decision about where to invest their money. It is also important to make clear if each funding option is provided by the entity in its capacity as an AFS licensee.

### Business introduction services

- RG 262.21 Some entities provide a service of introducing potential investors to companies looking to raise funds, to enable the companies to make personal offers to those investors. The investors introduced to the companies can be retail and wholesale investors who have registered their interest in investing

and receiving personal offers from the type of companies that they are introduced to. This is generally known as a business introduction service, and might be promoted as a form of crowd-sourced funding. The business introduction service may be provided in reliance on Class Order [CO 02/273] *Business introduction or matching services* and the personal offers made under s708.

Note: [ASIC Corporations \(Repeal and Transitional\) Instrument 2017/186](#) extends the relief in [CO 02/273] in the same form for two years so that ASIC can review and consult on the policy settings of the relief by 1 April 2019.

- RG 262.22 This guide does not apply to entities operating a business introduction service. In light of the CSF regime, these entities must take care in referring to their services as a form of crowd-funding, and make clear to investors that they do not hold an AFS licence to provide a crowd-funding service under the CSF regime and are not subject to the gatekeeping obligations that apply to CSF intermediaries. Retail clients in particular may be misled, or confuse business introduction services with a crowd-funding service provided by a CSF intermediary holding an AFS licence.

### **Fundraising involving managed investment schemes**

- RG 262.23 Fundraising involving managed investment schemes is another type of investment-based funding, which typically involves the operator of the scheme raising funds for investments that it makes on behalf of investors in the scheme. The fundraising activity may be promoted through a website. In return for making an investment in the scheme, the investors acquire an interest in the scheme that gives them a return based on the performance of the investments chosen and made by the operator of the scheme. The investors may not acquire any specific interest in the investments made by the operator on their behalf.
- RG 262.24 Operating a registered managed investment scheme is a financial service that requires the operator to hold an AFS licence issued by ASIC. Where the scheme is offered to retail clients, it will generally need to be a registered managed investment scheme unless certain exclusions apply. This guide for CSF intermediaries is not directed at operators of managed investment schemes. Operators of managed investment schemes should see our dedicated regulatory guides for managed investments schemes.
- RG 262.25 Operators of such managed investment schemes will also need to take care in promoting their products as a form of crowd-sourced funding, to ensure that investors do not confuse their product with CSF offers under the CSF regime. It is important to ensure that investors understand the nature of the investment that is being offered to them and, where applicable, that by investing in the scheme they are not acquiring a specific interest in the investments made on their behalf.

### **Custodial arrangements**

- RG 262.26 The CSF regime does not apply to offers of interests in shares that are held through a nominee as a result of a CSF offer, whether the nominee is the CSF intermediary or another person. A nominee may apply for shares under a CSF offer but will need to comply with applicable laws, including:
- (a) when carrying on a business of providing a custodial or depository service—holding an AFS licence authorising that service, and meeting the relevant requirements under [Regulatory Guide 133](#) *Funds management and custodial services: Holding assets* (RG 133) and [Regulatory Guide 148](#) *Platforms that are managed investment schemes and nominee and custody services* (RG 148) and associated legislative instruments. This includes ensuring that, if the client would be acquiring as a retail client if they had acquired directly, the client has access to the CSF offer document, cooling-off rights and the communication facility; and
  - (b) when carrying on a business of acquiring shares on behalf of the clients of the nominee—holding an AFS licence authorising those dealings.

### **Marketplace lending**

- RG 262.27 Marketplace lending can involve fundraising by small and medium sized businesses through an online platform in the form of a loan (or another credit facility) from the marketplace lending provider or, in some cases, by issuing debentures. The funding may be provided by wholesale and retail clients through a managed investment scheme structure. This guide does not apply to marketplace lending.

Note: [Information Sheet 213](#) *Marketplace lending (peer-to-peer lending) products* (INFO 213) provides guidance for marketplace lending providers.

## B AFS licensee obligations

### Key points

A CSF intermediary must hold an AFS licence authorising the licensee to provide a crowd-funding service: see RG 262.28–RG 262.32.

As a CSF intermediary, you must meet the general obligations that apply to AFS licensees for:

- conflicts of interest (see RG 262.33–RG 262.38);
- adequacy of financial resources (see RG 262.39–RG 262.47);
- adequacy of other resources, such as human and technological resources (see RG 262.48–RG 262.57);
- outsourcing functions that relate to your licence (see RG 262.58–RG 262.59);
- organisational competence (see RG 262.60–RG 262.77);
- dispute resolution (see RG 262.78–RG 262.85);
- risk management (see RG 262.86–RG 262.99);
- compensation arrangements (see RG 262.100–RG 262.103);
- client money handling (see RG 262.104–RG 262.106); and
- providing clients with a Financial Services Guide (FSG) (see RG 262.107–RG 262.111).

You must also comply with advertising restrictions and be authorised to provide financial product advice, if necessary: see RG 262.112–RG 262.126.

### AFS licence and authorisation to provide a crowd-funding service

RG 262.28 To be a CSF intermediary, you must have an AFS licence that expressly authorises you to provide a crowd-funding service.

RG 262.29 You do not need an authorisation to deal in the securities offered on your CSF platform: see s766C(2A). However, if you provide financial product advice you will need to have an AFS licence authorisation to do so. For guidance on financial product advice provided by CSF intermediaries, see RG 262.123–RG 262.126.

Note: Providing the CSF offer document, or a statement contained in or drawn from the document which is attributed to the document, is not financial product advice—see reg 7.1.08 of the Corporations Regulations 2001 (Corporations Regulations).

RG 262.30 When deciding whether to grant an AFS licence authorisation to provide a crowd-funding service, we will assess your capacity and expertise to act as a CSF intermediary in accordance with your obligations as an AFS licensee.

For example, we will consider whether you are likely to do all things necessary to carry on the business efficiently, honestly and fairly. Relevant guidance can be found in:

- (a) [Regulatory Guide 1](#) *AFS Licensing Kit: Part 1—Applying for and varying an AFS licence* (RG 1);
- (b) [Regulatory Guide 2](#) *AFS Licensing Kit: Part 2—Preparing your AFS licence application* (RG 2);
- (c) [Regulatory Guide 3](#) *AFS Licensing Kit: Part 3—Preparing your additional proofs* (RG 3);
- (d) [Regulatory Guide 104](#) *Licensing: Meeting the general obligations* (RG 104);
- (e) [Regulatory Guide 105](#) *Licensing: Organisational competence* (RG 105);
- (f) [Regulatory Guide 126](#) *Compensation and insurance arrangements for AFS licensees* (RG 126);
- (g) [Regulatory Guide 165](#) *Licensing: Internal and external dispute resolution* (RG 165);
- (h) [Regulatory Guide 166](#) *Licensing: Financial requirements* (RG 166);
- (i) [Regulatory Guide 167](#) *Licensing: Discretionary powers* (RG 167); and
- (j) [Regulatory Guide 181](#) *Licensing: Managing conflicts of interest* (RG 181).

### Single CSF platform

RG 262.31 Generally, we expect that your application for authorisation to provide a crowd-funding service will be for a single platform, on a particular website. If granted, the authorisation will be tailored to specify the platform that we have assessed.

RG 262.32 It must be your platform and should not be, or appear to be, made available by anyone else. You cannot appoint an authorised representative to operate your platform for dealing with applications under your authorisation to provide a crowd-funding service, including to hold the trust account into which application money is paid. However, you may have an authorised representative to provide other aspects of the crowd-funding service, such as operating the communication facility on your platform, transacting in relation to the trust account or performing certain checks for your gatekeeper functions: see RG 262.58–RG 262.59. You may also contract for the provision of information technology (IT) or other services for your platform that are not financial services.

## Conflicts of interest

- RG 262.33 An AFS licensee must have adequate arrangements for managing conflicts of interest that may arise wholly or partially from the provision of financial services by the licensee, or a representative of the licensee, as part of the financial services business of the licensee or the representative: see s912A(1)(aa).
- RG 262.34 This obligation will apply to the crowd-funding service provided by you as a CSF intermediary. You should consider our general guidance for AFS licensees in [RG 181](#) on conflicts of interest, including our expectations for controlling, avoiding and disclosing conflicts of interest.
- RG 262.35 You should have a written conflicts of interest policy with appropriate measures to identify, document and manage conflicts, and follow that policy when running your business as a CSF intermediary. Disclosure can be a way of managing conflicts, but on its own is not adequate unless it gives sufficient assurance that you are not at risk of not meeting your obligations. The measures need to be adequate to provide confidence that, despite any conflicting interest or duty you may have, you will comply with your obligations as an AFS licensee.
- RG 262.36 A key conflict of interest that you are likely to face, and which is specific to CSF intermediaries, is the conflict between your various obligations under the CSF regime and the financial benefits you derive from publishing CSF offers and ensuring the success of those offers. This conflict is heightened by measures that increase the extent to which your remuneration depends on the success of an offer.
- RG 262.37 Examples of this potential conflict of interest include, but are not limited to:
- (a) ensuring that investors can exercise their cooling-off rights and receive a refund of their money, even though this may lead to the CSF offer being unsuccessful (as it reduces the amounts raised), which can in turn have a negative impact on your income (where this is linked to the offer being successful);
  - (b) managing the communication facility knowing that negative factual information or opinions may detract from the success of the offer and consequently harm your revenue;
  - (c) performing checks to the required standard, which may result in you declining to publish certain offers and in turn negatively impact your ability to generate revenue; and
  - (d) reviewing the CSF offer document, which may result in you declining to publish certain offers and in turn negatively impact your revenue.
- RG 262.38 There are no restrictions under the CSF regime on the fee arrangements that may be agreed between a CSF intermediary and a company making a

CSF offer, including fees based on the amount of funds raised or on providing an interest in the offering company. You may enter an underwriting arrangement (provided you are separately authorised to do so) or expect to derive benefits from facilitating secondary trading of shares offered in a CSF offer. However, with such arrangements, conflicts may arise between your interest in earning fees, including by acquiring an interest in the offering company, and your responsibilities as a CSF intermediary—for example, your responsibility in certain circumstances to:

- (a) not publish, or not continue to publish, a CSF offer document;
- (b) suspend or close a CSF offer;
- (c) where relevant, provide compliant financial product advice to investors about products offered through your crowd-funding service or to a prospective offering company about the prospects of raising funds; and
- (d) deal with (e.g. remove) comments on the communication facility.

## Financial resource requirements

RG 262.39 As an AFS licensee, generally you must have adequate resources, including financial resources (except for certain bodies regulated by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA)): see s912A(1)(d). We also consider that your risk management arrangements must be adequate for the risks relating to maintaining any required financial resources.

RG 262.40 ASIC applies some particular measures for licensees to demonstrate adequate financial resources and risk management related to the financial resources. Some of the financial resource requirements apply to AFS licensees generally, while others apply to particular classes of AFS licensee (such as CSF intermediaries), as set out in [RG 166](#).

RG 262.41 The specific minimum requirements for CSF intermediaries are provided under modified provisions of Pt 7.6 in [ASIC Corporations \(Financial Requirements for CSF Intermediaries\) Instrument 2017/339](#).

### Surplus liquid funds

RG 262.42 One of the general financial resource requirements is for an AFS licensee to maintain surplus liquid funds (SLF) of \$50,000 if it holds client assets of at least \$100,000. As a CSF intermediary, you may hold at least \$100,000 of client assets (such as application money) from time to time, and you will need to meet the SLF requirement at those times. This test can be met with the same assets that are used for the cash needs requirement below.

Note: See Section C of [RG 166](#).

## Cash needs requirement

- RG 262.43 As an AFS licensee, you need to demonstrate that you expect to have sufficient cash to meet your expenses, including the costs involved in ensuring compliance with your AFS licensee obligations.
- RG 262.44 This is done through having cash flow projections that cover at least 12 months ahead at all times, based on reasonable assumptions about what is most likely, and approved by your directors or governing body (or you, if the CSF intermediary is a natural person) at least every three months. This is consistent with requirements applying to other AFS licensees that typically hold substantial client funds over a period of time, such as operators of investment platforms. However, until 1 July 2020, we will accept cash flow projections that cover at least three months ahead. This recognises that there may be challenges in projecting cash flows for a CSF intermediary business during the early years in which this type of business is able to be operated in Australia.

Note: For further information see Appendix 9 to [RG 166](#). We will review these transitional arrangements in July 2020.

- RG 262.45 The cash flow projections need to indicate that you will hold, at all times covered by the projection, a cash buffer of at least 5% of projected 12-month cash outflows or, if higher, the cash outflows in a previous year. Until 1 July 2020, the cash flow projections only need to show that you will hold, at all times covered by the projection, a cash buffer of at least 20% of projected three-month cash outflows or, if higher, 5% of the cash outflows in a previous full financial year.

Note: Cash and cash flow are explained in RG 166.137–RG 166.39.

- RG 262.46 This way of demonstrating adequacy of cash financial resources and related risk management arrangements through projections of likely cash flows reflects Option 1 in [RG 166](#). Generally, we do not consider that CSF intermediaries will be able to show adequate cash financial resources and related risk management arrangements using Options 2 to 5 in [RG 166](#). This is because CSF intermediaries are not likely to be in a position to confidently estimate and document a plan for all reasonably foreseeable circumstances, and are also not likely to be able to rely on undertakings of financial support from banks or substantial parent entities. We are willing to consider applications to modify the requirements if an alternative approach can provide the same level of confidence about the adequacy of your cash resources over the term of the projections.

## Audit

- RG 262.47 As an AFS licensee, you must lodge annual financial statements with ASIC under s989A, and an audit report on those statements. The auditor is also

required to audit compliance with any SLF and other financial requirements, and express certain opinions on compliance with the requirements about trust accounts. An audit is not required for your cash flow projections—but, similar to other AFS licensees, a specific opinion from an auditor (on a positive or negative assurance basis, as appropriate) is required about particular aspects of the process that you used to develop the projections.

Note: For further information see Appendix 9 to [RG 166](#).

## Adequacy of other resources

RG 262.48 Demonstrating adequate human and technological resources is crucial to show that you have the capacity to carry on your financial services business in full compliance with the Corporations Act, including the requirement to comply with the financial services laws and to supervise your representatives.

Note: See the [AFS Licensing Kit](#) (RG 1, RG 2 and RG 3), [RG 104](#) (particularly Section E) and [RG 105](#).

### Human resources

RG 262.49 Whether your human resources are adequate will depend on the nature, scale and complexity of your business. You need to have enough people to:

- (a) comply with all of your obligations under the law;
- (b) carry out monitoring and supervision; and
- (c) meet your current and anticipated future operational needs.

RG 262.50 You need to regularly review the adequacy of your human resources. We expect that you will identify key indicators of inadequate human resources.

RG 262.51 As a CSF intermediary, you should have people within your business who:

- (a) sufficiently understand the platform and underlying technology to ensure it operates as expected and, to the extent possible, without system issues (we expect you to have at least one person in your business with this understanding);
- (b) provide the financial services or monitor any authorised representatives that do so;
- (c) provide and maintain the application and communication facilities; and
- (d) meet all of the CSF intermediary gatekeeper obligations, including:
  - (i) performing the required checks (see RG 262.128–RG 262.144);
  - (ii) complying with restrictions on publication of CSF offer documents (see RG 262.145); and

- (iii) meeting the requirements for dealing with application money (see RG 262.165–RG 262.166).

RG 262.52 As the CSF intermediary, you must provide an application facility for CSF offers made through your platform, although you may use technology provided by others in doing so. If you choose to outsource other functions relating to your crowd-funding services, we expect you to have people within the business who understand these functions to appropriately monitor and assess the outsourced service provider’s performance, to help ensure that you meet your general obligations: see RG 262.59.

### Technological resources

- RG 262.53 As an AFS licensee authorised to provide a crowd-funding service, you should have sufficient technological resources, including resources to:
- (a) provide and maintain the platform technology, and ensure an appropriate level of system availability to comply with your day-to-day gatekeeper obligations and rules—for example:
    - (i) for the application facility—caps on investment rules (see RG 262.189–RG 262.190) and timing rules related to a CSF offer (see RG 262.167–RG 262.171); and
    - (ii) for the communication facility—ensuring appropriate oversight of posts to identify and promptly remove any information that is misleading or not in good faith (see RG 262.159–RG 262.162);
  - (b) maintain client records and data integrity, and meet annual reporting requirements, for ASIC to monitor your ongoing capability to effectively perform the crowd-funding service and ensure confidence in the market for shares offered under the CSF regime (see RG 262.194–RG 262.198);
  - (c) protect confidential and other information, taking into account cyber risks and events that may occur;
  - (d) meet current and anticipated future operational needs, including in relation to system capacity; and
  - (e) comply with all your other obligations as an AFS licensee.

RG 262.54 You should also have adequate business continuity, backup and disaster recovery plans for any systems that support the platform.

### Reviewing your IT systems

RG 262.55 You need to regularly review the adequacy of your technological resources to manage your risk of non-compliance.

- RG 262.56 When reviewing your IT systems, you need to consider:
- (a) your IT system security;
  - (b) the currency of your hardware and software;
  - (c) the quality and relevance of the applications you use, including as demonstrated by user testing;
  - (d) your disaster recovery systems and business resumption capacity;
  - (e) the number of users;
  - (f) the ongoing viability of software and other service providers;
  - (g) the response times of your IT systems;
  - (h) the down times of your IT systems;
  - (i) your use of legacy IT systems; and
  - (j) complaints (e.g. from staff, clients or service providers) about your IT systems.
- RG 262.57 We may ask you to provide evidence of your process for overseeing and monitoring the relevant systems—including the platform, application facility and communication facility—regardless of whether aspects of these functions are performed in-house or outsourced: see also RG 262.32.

## Outsourcing functions that relate to your licence

- RG 262.58 If an outsourced function is required to be provided by a CSF intermediary, including all aspects of the role of a CSF intermediary under Pt 6D.3A, the person to whom it is outsourced must be an officer or employee of the CSF intermediary or its related body corporate, or an authorised representative. This would apply, for example, to conducting checks required of the CSF intermediary as a gatekeeper and provision of the communication facility.
- RG 262.59 If you outsource functions that relate to your AFS licence, you remain responsible for complying with your obligations as a licensee: see s769B. If the outsourced service provider is providing a crowd-funding service by performing any of your obligations on your behalf, or providing other financial services on your behalf, then they are your representative. You are required to take reasonable steps to ensure that your representatives comply with the financial services laws (see s912A(1)(ca)) and are adequately trained and competent to provide those financial services (see s912A(1)(e)). For any outsourced service, we expect that you will:
- (a) have measures in place to ensure that due skill and care is taken in choosing suitable service providers;
  - (b) monitor the ongoing performance of service providers; and

- (c) appropriately deal with any actions by service providers that breach service level agreements or your obligations as a licensee.

## Organisational competence

RG 262.60 You need to be able to show that you can comply with the organisational competence obligation from the time you are granted an AFS licence, and on an ongoing basis. We cannot grant you a licence if we have reason to believe you will be likely to contravene this obligation: see s913B(1)(b).

Note: You should read the [AFS Licensing Kit](#) (RG 1, RG 2 and RG 3), which explains the licence application process and the ‘proof’ documents you may need to provide to support your application. You will need to submit a C11 CSF intermediary non-core proof, in addition to other proofs.

RG 262.61 You must have and maintain the competence to provide the financial services covered by your AFS licence: see s912A(1)(e). We refer to this obligation as the ‘organisational competence obligation’, because it requires you to be competent at the organisational level.

Note: There is a separate obligation under s912A(1)(f) to ensure the representatives who provide financial services on your behalf are trained and competent to do so: see RG 105.20.

## Responsible managers

RG 262.62 We assess your compliance with the organisational competence obligation by looking at the knowledge and skills of the people who manage your financial services business (referred to as your ‘responsible managers’).

RG 262.63 In assessing the competence of your nominated responsible managers, we will look at a combination of their relevant experience, training and qualifications. The different options for demonstrating the competence of your responsible managers are set out in Section C of [RG 105](#). These options provide flexibility for responsible managers with a range of different educational and occupational backgrounds.

RG 262.64 Who you nominate as your responsible managers will depend on the nature, scale and complexity of your business: see RG 105.42. Usually, people with direct responsibility for significant day-to-day decisions about your financial services will be people who decide how your financial services are provided and supervise the provision of those services. They do not need to actually provide financial services on your behalf, although they might do so.

- RG 262.65 At a minimum, you need to nominate one or more responsible managers who:
- (a) are directly responsible for significant day-to-day decisions about the ongoing provision of your financial services (see RG 105.21–RG 105.25);
  - (b) together, have appropriate knowledge and skills for all of your financial services—this includes providing the platform and performing all other aspects of the role of a CSF intermediary under the CSF regime; and
  - (c) individually, meet one of the five options for demonstrating appropriate knowledge and skills relevant to their role, taking into account the functions required to provide your financial services compliantly.

- RG 262.66 When nominating your responsible managers, you also need to ensure they are of ‘good fame and character’, as we consider this when we assess an application for an AFS licence.

Note: For more information on the good fame and character requirement, see the [AFS Licensing Kit](#) (RG 1, RG 2 and RG 3).

- RG 262.67 Our general policy for AFS licensees on competence assessment will apply to CSF intermediaries. As a crowd-funding service is a new financial service, you may look to rely on Option 5 in [RG 105](#) to demonstrate the competence requirements. Experience that may be relevant to demonstrating your responsible managers’ competence might include a combination of some of the following:
- (a) experience as an investor directed portfolio service (IDPS) platform operator, managed discretionary accounts (MDA) operator or conducting due diligence on investments to be offered to retail clients as part of admission to an approved product list for advisers;
  - (b) experience dealing in securities—for example, as a stockbroker;
  - (c) experience as a corporate adviser in mergers and acquisitions, listing, takeovers and rights offers, initial public offers, corporate actions, underwriting, and placements of securities;
  - (d) fund management experience (including registered and unregistered managed investment schemes);
  - (e) experience operating a crowd-sourced funding platform, including non-investment or investment-based, using a wholesale or registered scheme arrangement or small-offers exemption under s708;
  - (f) experience as an operator of an investment-based crowd-sourced funding platform, including overseas (such as in New Zealand);
  - (g) experience as a financial market operator in Australia or overseas;
  - (h) experience operating a platform-based financial services business, such as marketplace lending; and

- (i) experience acting as a legal adviser to AFS licensees and providing compliance services to AFS licensees.

Note: We will not regard legal and compliance experience of itself as sufficient to demonstrate organisational competence to operate as a CSF intermediary, but may demonstrate some aspects of the required competence.

## Key persons

- RG 262.68 If we are satisfied with your organisational competence, but we consider you are heavily dependent on the knowledge and skills of one or two responsible managers, we will generally include a ‘key person condition’ in your AFS licence. The key person condition will name those responsible managers whose competence we consider you heavily depend on, and you will need to inform ASIC if that person leaves the business: see RG 105.83.

## Measures for maintaining organisational competence

- RG 262.69 Once you have an AFS licence, you must maintain your organisational competence at all times. We expect a licensee to stop providing financial services for which a key person was appointed, where that person leaves and has not been replaced with someone else who meets the competence standards required under [RG 105](#): see RG 262.67. This does not affect the obligations of a CSF intermediary under the Corporations Act in relation to money already held under a CSF offer.

- RG 262.70 If we have reason to believe you are not complying with the organisational competence obligation, we may take administrative action. This could include suspending or cancelling your licence, or imposing additional licence conditions: see s915C(1)(a) and 914A(1).

Note: For guidance on our administrative powers, see [Regulatory Guide 98 ASIC’s powers to suspend, cancel and vary AFS licences and make banning orders](#) (RG 98).

- RG 262.71 We expect your measures for complying with the organisational competence obligation will ensure that you:
- (a) review your organisational competence on a regular basis and whenever your responsible managers or business activities change;
  - (b) maintain and update the knowledge and skills of your responsible managers; and
  - (c) keep records showing that you have reviewed your organisational competence and the steps you have taken to maintain your organisational competence.

Note: For more information on compliance measures, see Sections B and C of [RG 104](#).

- RG 262.72 We expect you to document your measures to help demonstrate your compliance with the organisational competence obligation.

RG 262.73 If you breach, or are likely to breach, the organisational competence obligation, you may need to notify ASIC: see s912DAA.

Note: For guidance on notifying ASIC of reportable situations, see [RG 78](#).

### Changes to the business

RG 262.74 If you are applying for a new AFS licence, or adding new responsible managers for a variation to your existing licence, you will need to provide us with information about your nominated responsible managers: see RG 2.261–RG 2.293. You should ensure that this information explains as precisely as possible how the knowledge and skills of each nominated responsible manager will support the particular financial services for which you wish to be authorised.

Note 1: If you are varying your AFS licence and intend to nominate additional responsible managers to meet the competencies of the new authorisation, you will first need to complete [Form FS20 Change of details for an Australian financial services licence](#).

Note 2: If you appoint an authorised representative, you must generally lodge with ASIC a notice of the appointment—see s916F.

RG 262.75 We expect you to review your organisational competence and ensure you will continue to be competent in the changed circumstances before you make any changes to your business, such as expanding your range of financial services or products or replacing a responsible manager.

### Training and competence

RG 262.76 You have an obligation to ensure your representatives are trained and competent to provide financial services on your behalf.

RG 262.77 We expect you to:

- (a) identify the knowledge and skills your representatives need to competently provide your financial services;
- (b) ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills;
- (c) ensure that they undertake continuing training programs to maintain and update their knowledge and skills; and
- (d) maintain a record of their training as required under reg 7.6.04(1)(d).

## Dispute resolution

RG 262.78 A CSF intermediary that provides a crowd-funding service to retail clients must have a dispute resolution system that meets certain requirements, available for those retail clients: see [RG 165](#).

- RG 262.79 The dispute resolution system must consist of:
- (a) internal dispute resolution (IDR) procedures; and
  - (b) membership of an ASIC-approved external dispute resolution scheme (EDR) such as the Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA).

RG 262.80 We consider it good practice to make details of your IDR procedures and EDR scheme available on your website where they can be easily located, whether in the FSG or otherwise.

### **Internal dispute resolution procedures**

- RG 262.81 Your IDR procedures must:
- (a) comply with the standards and requirements made or approved by ASIC; and
  - (b) cover complaints made by retail clients in relation to the crowd-funding service.
- RG 262.82 We explain what an AFS licensee must do to have a dispute resolution system that meets our requirements in Section B of [RG 165](#).
- RG 262.83 You will have two types of clients in relation to a CSF offer:
- (a) the investor making an application for the CSF offer; and
  - (b) the company making the CSF offer.
- RG 262.84 Your IDR procedures will therefore need to cover complaints made by either type of client, where they are a retail client.

Note: For guidance on when a client is a retail client for the purposes of the CSF regime, see RG 262.183.

### **Membership of an external dispute resolution scheme**

- RG 262.85 As a CSF intermediary, you must be a member of an EDR scheme that covers complaints made by retail clients about the crowd-funding service: see s912A. We have set out guidance on membership of ASIC-approved EDR schemes in Section C of [RG 165](#) and on membership of AFCA specifically in Section B of [Regulatory Guide 267 Oversight of the Australian Financial Complaints Authority](#) (RG 267).

Note: Under transitional arrangements, AFS licensees that are members of an EDR scheme that is approved by ASIC have until 21 September 2018 to become members of AFCA and must retain their existing membership until further notice. For more information, see [ASIC Media Release \(18-123MR\) ASIC welcomes AFCA authorisation](#) (2 May 2018).

## Risk management

RG 262.86 As an AFS licensee, you must have adequate risk management systems (except for certain bodies regulated by APRA): see s912A(1)(h). You must also have measures in place to ensure that you comply with this obligation on an ongoing basis: see RG 104.35.

Note: Section D of [RG 104](#) provides general guidance on the obligation to have adequate risk management systems.

RG 262.87 This means that you need to explicitly identify the risks you face and their likelihood and potential impact, and have measures in place to keep the risks to an acceptable minimum. We expect your risk management systems will:

- (a) be based on a structured and systematic process that takes into account your obligations under the Corporations Act;
- (b) identify and evaluate risks faced by your business, focusing on risks of non-compliance with the financial services laws that adversely affect clients;
- (c) establish and maintain controls designed to manage or mitigate those risks; and
- (d) fully implement and monitor those controls to ensure they are effective.

RG 262.88 Your risk management systems will depend on the nature, scale and complexity of your business and your risk profile. They will be different for each AFS licensee. Your risk management systems will also need to adapt as your business develops and your business risk profile changes over time, so they will need to include arrangements for review of the risks and controls.

RG 262.89 If you use external providers to provide functions that relate to your AFS licence, your risk management measures will be different than if you performed those functions in-house.

### Specific risks for CSF intermediaries

RG 262.90 In developing your risk management systems, it is important to consider your specific obligations under the CSF regime, including gatekeeping obligations, which are intended to manage some of the key risks that may arise in the context of crowd-sourced funding.

Note: For more information, see Australian/New Zealand Standard [AS/NZS 31000:2009](#) *Risk management—Principles and guidelines*.

### Gatekeeping obligations

RG 262.91 There is a higher risk of default or failure associated with start-up businesses, which highlights the risk to investors if you fail to perform your gatekeeping obligations. Fundraising through crowd-sourced funding also

involves costs for companies making CSF offers, meaning that unsuccessful fundraising or successful fundraising for unviable businesses if you fail to perform your gatekeeping obligations may cause substantial loss to these clients.

- RG 262.92 You should consider the types of risks particular to your gatekeeper role and your platform. For example, this will include the risk of publishing a CSF offer document for a company that is not eligible to make offers under the CSF regime. As part of carrying out your gatekeeping obligations as a CSF intermediary, you may wish to ask a prospective offering company about any prior refusal by other CSF intermediaries due to non-eligibility. You should also consider the risk of market manipulation through the abuse of cooling-off rights to create a false impression of significant demand for a CSF offer.

Note: Part 7.10 of the Corporations Act, relating to market misconduct and manipulation, applies to crowd-sourced funding.

### **Technological risks**

- RG 262.93 A CSF intermediary business will generally have a focus on technology, so you will need to carefully consider specific technological risks—for example:
- (a) compliance risks associated with technological failure (such as maintenance of a communication facility and discharging obligations in relation to cooling-off rights); and
  - (b) business continuity and disaster recovery planning.

### **Malicious cyber activity and ensuring cyber resilience**

- RG 262.94 You can manage the risk of malicious cyber activity, and ensure cyber resilience, by:
- (a) conducting regular cyber resilience health checks (for additional guidance, see [Report 429](#) *Cyber resilience: Health check* (REP 429));
  - (b) updating policies and procedures to reflect current industry and international guidance;
  - (c) regularly testing IT systems;
  - (d) developing, testing and implementing disaster recovery and business continuity plans; and
  - (e) regularly reviewing the material risks from and to other entities, as a result of technology interdependencies.

**Employee misconduct**

- RG 262.95 Another relevant risk is the conduct of employees (deliberately or inadvertently) not aligning with your interests or obligations as a CSF intermediary.
- RG 262.96 Some ways you might seek to manage this risk include:
- (a) carrying out comprehensive employment screening;
  - (b) having specific provisions in your conflicts of interest policy that you implement where appropriate;
  - (c) adequately training employees about your conflicts of interest policy;
  - (d) having appropriate remuneration systems that support risk management and do not create incentives for employee misconduct;
  - (e) monitoring employee conduct—for example, through exceptional reporting of unusual events and random review or audit of transaction records;
  - (f) maintaining an internal audit function;
  - (g) conducting peer reviews;
  - (h) having whistleblower policies and procedures;
  - (i) electronically monitoring high-risk functions; and
  - (j) implementing other controls to prevent misappropriation of client funds, such as co-signing policies.

**Fraud**

- RG 262.97 You can manage the risk of fraud, and the risk of other illegal activities being undertaken through your platform, by:
- (a) segregating duties, particularly for staff involved in high-risk functions;
  - (b) maintaining an internal audit function;
  - (c) conducting peer reviews;
  - (d) reporting unusual events;
  - (e) implementing whistleblower policies, including externally managed confidential hotlines;
  - (f) rotating staff involved in high-risk functions;
  - (g) requiring dual approvals for significant transactions;
  - (h) ensuring regular reporting from external service providers;
  - (i) conducting inquiries about the offering company and associated persons; and
  - (j) implementing effective and comprehensive checking processes.

### Compliance measures

- RG 262.98 An AFS licensee is required by its AFS licence conditions to establish and maintain compliance measures that ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that it complies with the provisions of the financial services laws: see condition 4 in [Pro Forma 209 Australian financial services licence conditions](#) (PF 209).
- RG 262.99 To meet this requirement and manage your risk of non-compliance, you will generally need a number of processes and systems that operate robustly to manage the relevant risks—for example:
- (a) disclosure and reporting;
  - (b) having adequate arrangements to manage conflict of interests;
  - (c) ensuring fees are calculated and deducted correctly;
  - (d) meeting client money handling requirements;
  - (e) compliant complaints handling;
  - (f) ensuring staff competence; and
  - (g) meeting financial requirements.

## Compensation arrangements

- RG 262.100 If you provide a crowd-funding service to a person as a retail client, you must have adequate arrangements for compensating them for loss or damage suffered because of breaches of its obligations under Ch 7 of the Corporations Act.

Note: You will need to consider both retail clients that are investors and those that are companies making CSF offers.

- RG 262.101 The objective of the compensation requirements is to reduce the risk that a licensee will be unable to meet compensation claims by retail clients due to a lack of available financial resources. They are not a mechanism for providing compensation directly to consumers.
- RG 262.102 Your compensation arrangements must:
- (a) satisfy the requirements in the Corporations Regulations to obtain adequate professional indemnity (PI) insurance cover, considering the nature of your business and your potential liability for compensation claims (reg 7.6.02AAA); or
  - (b) be approved by ASIC as alternative arrangements.
- RG 262.103 We have provided guidance on what we regard as the minimum requirements for adequate PI insurance in Section C of [RG 126](#).

## Client money handling

- RG 262.104 Money you receive from investor clients must be held in an account of the licensee that is kept in accordance with s981B and operated as a trust account in accordance with regs 7.8.01–7.8.03. There are also particular requirements for receipt and payment of the money under the CSF regime, as discussed at RG 262.165–RG 262.166. We expect you to have appropriate systems and controls to ensure that you meet these requirements.
- RG 262.105 You may outsource client money handling functions to a third-party representative. However, the client money must be held in a bank or other authorised deposit-taking institution account in the name of the licensee. If you outsource functions that relate to your AFS licence, the acts and omissions of the person acting on your behalf are treated as your acts or omissions: see s769B. You should take this into account when determining if you are complying with your obligations as an AFS licensee.
- RG 262.106 An AFS licensee has obligations to keep records of financial transactions: see s988A. The annual lodgement of your financial statements must be accompanied by an audit report (by the auditor of your financial statements) on compliance with the requirements for keeping the s981B account.

## Providing an FSG

- RG 262.107 An AFS licensee providing financial services to a retail client must give them an FSG under Div 2 of Pt 7.7. Generally, this must be given as soon as practicable after it becomes apparent that a financial service will or is likely to be provided to the client.
- RG 262.108 For retail clients that are investors in a CSF offer, you could provide the FSG electronically through your platform to persons accessing the application facility, as that is the time when you begin providing the financial service to investors.
- RG 262.109 For retail clients that are companies making CSF offers, you could email the FSG when it appears likely that they will enter a hosting agreement—as it is the entry into the hosting agreement that commences your provision of the financial services to companies making CSF offers through your platform.
- RG 262.110 The FSG provides important information. It needs to include clear disclosure, including an explanation of how you are remunerated.

Note: For guidance on preparing an FSG, see [Regulatory Guide 168](#) *Disclosure: Product Disclosure Statements (and other disclosure obligations)* (RG 168).

- RG 262.111 An authorised representative of an AFS licensee who provides financial services to a retail client must also give an FSG. This will apply if an

authorised representative provides the communication facility or undertakes gatekeeper checks on your behalf.

## Advertising by CSF intermediaries

RG 262.112 Advertising by a CSF intermediary may take many forms, including by posting content on the platform (including the webpages with the application facility and the communication facility), internet, social media, television, radio or print advertising, conducting webinars or seminars, and inclusion of information in social media. All advertising that you cause or authorise to be communicated must comply with certain requirements, whether or not it is attributed to you.

RG 262.113 You need to ensure that your advertising:

- (a) is not misleading or deceptive, including that it is balanced and that there are reasonable grounds for any statements about the future;
- (b) complies with s738ZG, if it relates to a CSF offer or proposed offer; and
- (c) if it contains financial product advice, is provided when you have an authorisation in your AFS licence to provide the financial product advice (if required).

### Advertising of CSF offers

RG 262.114 Generally, under s738ZG, you must not:

- (a) advertise a CSF offer or intended offer; or
- (b) publish a statement that:
  - (i) directly or indirectly refers to a CSF offer or intended offer; or
  - (ii) is reasonably likely to induce people to apply for securities under a CSF offer or intended offer.

RG 262.115 This restriction does not apply where the advertisement or publication states that a person should, in deciding whether to make an application under the CSF offer, consider the CSF offer document and the general risk warning (whether or not the advertisement or publication also contains other material).

RG 262.116 This requirement applies to CSF intermediaries as well as companies making CSF offers and other persons. A number of exceptions apply.

Note: For further information see [RG 261](#).

## Not misleading or deceptive

RG 262.117 Advertising, whether of a CSF offer or of your platform, must not be misleading or deceptive. ‘Advertising’ includes material that you publish on your platform (e.g. through the communication facility) and other forms of advertising, including on the internet and social media. It also includes information published in text, video or audio form. For guidance to help you ensure that your advertising is not misleading, see [Regulatory Guide 234 Advertising financial products and services \(including credit\): Good practice guidance](#) (RG 234).

Note: For further guidance on advertising in the context of crowd-sourced funding, see [RG 261](#).

RG 262.118 The CSF regime requires advertisements that refer to a CSF offer, including posts on social media that directly or indirectly refer to an offer, to include a statement that investors should consider the offer document and the general risk warning when deciding whether to apply under the offer.

RG 262.119 When preparing advertising materials, you should ensure that:

- (a) the advertising material includes balanced messages about the potential returns, benefits and risks of the offer. An advertisement that tends to emphasise the benefits and potential returns and rewards of an offer, but understate the risks, can create unrealistic expectations about the investment in the company making the CSF offer; and
- (b) the general CSF risk warning, discussion of the risks facing the business, and other disclaimers or qualifications are sufficiently prominent to convey this information to readers.

RG 262.120 It may be misleading to:

- (a) state success stories of companies raising funds without acknowledging that some or all of the companies have not yet provided any returns to investors under the CSF offers, if that is the case, or that other companies have not succeeded in raising funds, if that is the case;
- (b) present views about a CSF offer as those of investors or others, if that is not the case; or
- (c) quote levels of investment that include investments by you (as the CSF intermediary) or your associates, or associates of the company making the CSF offer, or amounts that are subject to cooling-off withdrawal rights if the reader may be given the impression that the level of investment shows the confirmed level of interest of unassociated public investors.

RG 262.121 When considering the placement, presentation and content of advertising or other communications to clients, it is necessary to consider the context. Information provided by electronic media may not be read as thoroughly in

some cases, so it is particularly important for readers' understanding that the information is layered appropriately. For example, key information that is necessary for readers' understanding or necessary to balance information that is more prominent should not be placed at the bottom of a webpage where it can only be accessed by scrolling, or through links.

- RG 262.122 Following good practices that are informed by an understanding of how those exposed to advertising are likely to be affected by it, especially with robust consumer testing, will help you ensure advertising is not misleading.

## Financial product advice

- RG 262.123 Generally, a person who carries on a business of providing financial services must have an AFS licence authorising the provision of those services. Provision of financial product advice is a separate financial service to being a CSF intermediary. Generally, if you include in advertising or other communications (on the communication facility or otherwise) matters of opinion or a recommendation that is intended to, or may be reasonably regarded as intended to, influence a decision about financial products (such as shares offered or to be offered through your platform), that will be financial product advice: see s766B.

Note: See [Regulatory Guide 36](#) *Licensing: Financial product advice and dealing* (RG 36), [Regulatory Guide 175](#) *Licensing: Financial product advisors—Conduct and disclosure* (RG 175) and [Regulatory Guide 244](#) *Giving information, general advice and scaled advice* (RG 244).

- RG 262.124 It is not financial product advice to provide opinions or recommendations that only influence a decision about a financial *service* (such as the decision to use your platform) and that are not intended to, and cannot be reasonably regarded as intended to, influence a decision about any financial *product* (such as shares offered through your platform).
- RG 262.125 It is not financial product advice to provide a CSF offer document or to communicate a statement that is attributed to, and is contained in or drawn from, the document: see reg 7.1.08(3A).
- RG 262.126 It is not financial product advice to filter or screen CSF offers when deciding whether to publish the offers on your platform. Disclosing that you filter or screen offers may not be financial product advice where the disclosed criteria are based on factual matters, and you do not imply that those are the only or important criteria. However, disclosing that you filter or screen offers based on matters of opinion about things that could affect a decision whether to offer or apply for shares, or where you indicate that the criteria you use are important for investor decision making, could be financial product advice. In particular, such disclosures are likely to be financial product advice if the context implies that they are promoting a particular offer.

## C Specific obligations under the CSF regime

### Key points

CSF intermediaries have specific obligations under the CSF regime in the Corporations Act, including in relation to:

- gatekeeper obligations (see RG 262.128–RG 262.146);
- providing certain information (see RG 262.147–RG 262.150);
- providing an application facility (see RG 262.152–RG 262.153);
- providing a communication facility (see RG 262.154–RG 262.164);
- dealing with application money (see RG 262.165–RG 262.166);
- timing rules for CSF offers (see RG 262.167–RG 262.171); and
- defective CSF offer documents (see RG 262.172–RG 262.179).

Additional requirements apply for retail clients: see RG 262.181–RG 262.191.

RG 262.127 In addition to complying with your general obligations as an AFS licensee under Ch 7, you must also comply with the specific obligations for CSF intermediaries set out in Pt 6D.3A.

### Gatekeeper obligations

RG 262.128 As a CSF intermediary, you have certain specific obligations that apply in recognition of your important role as a ‘gatekeeper’ for your platform, which include:

- (a) performing certain checks before publishing a CSF offer document on your platform; and
- (b) not publishing, or not continuing to publish, a CSF offer document on your platform in certain circumstances.

### Completing the required checks

RG 262.129 Before publishing a CSF offer document (or a supplementary or replacement document) on your platform, you have to perform certain checks to a reasonable standard. The intention of this requirement is not for you to conduct comprehensive checks on the company making a CSF offer (as directors of a public company making an initial public offering may do to rely on statutory defences of having met duties of due diligence), but rather to ensure you do not publish, or continue to publish, the CSF offer document in specific circumstances.

Note: See [Report 484](#) *Due diligence practices in initial public offerings* (REP 484).

RG 262.130 The checks that you must complete are specified in the Corporations Regulations, and summarised below in Table 2. It is important that you are familiar with the detail of the checks set out in the Corporations Regulations.

**Table 2: Checks required by the Corporations Regulations to be completed by a CSF intermediary about a company seeking to make a CSF offer**

Check	Summary	Corporations Regulations reference
Identity of the company	You must check the following details of the company: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>name, Australian Company Number (ACN) and type (e.g. public company);</li> <li>address of its registered office; and</li> <li>address of its principal place of business.</li> </ul>	reg 6D.3A.08(2)
Eligibility to make a CSF offer and the CSF offer document	You must check whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the company is an 'eligible CSF company' under s738H(1); and</li> </ul> <p>Note: For further information see RG 261.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the CSF offer document contains the information required by regs 6D.3A.02–6D.3A.06, and is worded and presented in a 'clear, concise and effective' manner.</li> </ul> <p>Note 1: The required topics must not merely be mentioned and addressed—you need to check if all of the required information is provided about each of the required elements. RG 261 provides guidance on the information required to be in the CSF offer document.</p> <p>Note 2: A CSF offer document may also contain additional information.</p>	reg 6D.3A.08(3)
Information about key personnel	You must check the names and addresses of each current and proposed director and other officer or senior manager of the company, and whether the CSF offer document contains required information about those persons and the company.	reg 6D.3A.08(4)
	Note: For further information, see RG 261.	

RG 262.131 The prescribed checks under the CSF regime are a minimum requirement and are not intended to limit the checks conducted, or information that you may wish to seek from an offering company or its officers. If you lead potential clients to believe that you will undertake certain checks or achieve a certain level of quality in CSF offers, it is important that you take the necessary reasonable steps to ensure these expectations are met.

RG 262.132 You must check that the company has its principal place of business in Australia and most of its directors ordinarily resident in Australia. Depending on the circumstances, you should make reasonable further inquiries if the offering company requests the funds raised to be paid directly to an offshore bank account, and only transfer the money to this account if you do not find evidence that the company is not eligible or that the fundraising is associated with illegal activities.

**What is a 'reasonable standard'?**

RG 262.133 The Corporations Regulations require that these checks be done to a 'reasonable standard', which is explained in reg 6D.3A.09. The law does not prescribe how long a check will remain valid for. However, if the check was done several weeks before publishing the offer document, you need to be aware that new information or a change in circumstances may arise. Therefore, we suggest that you repeat the check immediately before the offer document is issued. This will ensure that your checks remain up to date.

*Checking information on ASIC's registers or website*

RG 262.134 If the information to be checked is included in a register kept by ASIC under the Corporations Act or on ASIC's website, reg 6D.3A.09(2) prescribes that a reasonable standard is to check:

- (a) whether the information is included in that register or on that website; and
- (b) if it is included—whether the information is contrary to any other information that you have.

RG 262.135 Some of the checks outlined in Table 2 can be undertaken using the [ASIC registers](#), or by purchasing a current extract of company.

RG 262.136 The [ASIC registers](#) also contain:

- (a) information about a company's financial position and any accompanying financial reports lodged using Form 388 *Copy of financial statements and reports* or Form 405 *Statement to verify financial statements of a foreign company*; and
- (b) information about certain disqualifications and bannings.

RG 262.137 The above information has been provided to assist you perform the required checks; however, it should not be taken to be an exhaustive list of available or relevant registers.

*Requiring information from the offering company*

RG 262.138 If the information to be checked is not included in a register kept by ASIC under the Corporations Act or on ASIC's website, reg 6D.3A.09(3) requires that to check the information to reasonable standard you must:

- (a) explain in writing to the offering company what information or matters are required, including the level of detail required for each; and

Note: For guidance on the information to be included in a CSF offer document, which may assist in relation to this requirement, see [RG 261](#).

- (b) require the offering company to provide the information and matters to you in accordance with a reasonable process that you have developed, documented and implemented for this purpose.

- RG 262.139 We expect that a reasonable process for requiring an offering company to provide information will generally include:
- (a) contractual promises by the offering company to provide the information compliantly and in accordance with the requirements that have been explained;
  - (b) checking that the offering company's relevant officers understand the requirements as explained;
  - (c) asking the offering company to provide support for the matters it represents from independent and reliable sources of information (where reasonably available), to enable you to check that the information is accurate and complete;
  - (d) checking that the offering company's relevant officers understand the potential practical, reputational and civil and criminal consequences that may flow from failure to provide the required information in relevant circumstances;
  - (e) having, and informing the offering company that you have, an active process for monitoring communications on the communication facility and complaints received, to identify possible failures of disclosure and take action where appropriate; and
  - (f) requiring personal confirmations by relevant directors that the information is accurate and complete based on their knowledge.

RG 262.140 What a reasonable process will depend on the nature, scale and complexity of your business and the companies seeking to use your platform. Fewer steps may be needed if you apply filtering criteria to reduce the likelihood of your platform being used by offering companies that would not meet the eligibility and disclosure requirements.

RG 262.141 In relation to the checks to be conducted and the support companies are asked to provide, as envisaged by RG 262.139(c), we do not expect you to conduct a comprehensive or detailed review of all relevant available information. Unless you have a basis to suspect that any information is not accurate and complete, your inquiries do not need to involve substantial expense or time—they should be proportionate to the materiality of the matter and the extent of the risk that is apparent from the information provided.

*Checking the CSF offer document is 'clear, concise and effective'*

RG 262.142 For checking whether the CSF offer document is worded or presented in a 'clear, concise and effective' manner, you must check the document in accordance with a reasonable process that you have developed, documented and implemented for this purpose: see reg 6D.3A.09(4).

Note: For guidance on wording and presenting a CSF offer document in a 'clear, concise and effective' manner, see [RG 261](#).

### Failure to complete the prescribed checks

RG 262.143 The consequences of failing to conduct one of the gatekeeper checks, or failing to conduct a check to a reasonable standard, are serious. It is a strict liability offence to not comply with this requirement and if you do not comply you are taken to have knowledge of anything you would have had knowledge of had you conducted the check to a reasonable standard. This is relevant to determining whether you meet the other gatekeeper obligation to not publish, or stop publishing, a CSF offer document in certain circumstances: see RG 262.145.

RG 262.144 For example, you commit an offence if you continue to publish a CSF offer document where the offering company is not eligible to make a CSF offer, and you would have had reason to believe the company was not eligible had you carried out the relevant gatekeeper check, or carried the check out to a reasonable standard.

Note: You have an obligation to report significant breaches of the law to ASIC as soon as practicable, and in any case within 10 days of becoming aware of the breach—see [RG 78](#).

### Publishing of CSF offer documents

RG 262.145 You must not publish or continue to publish a CSF offer document in four specific circumstances, which are summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3: When a CSF intermediary must not publish or continue to publish a CSF offer document**

Circumstance	Details
You are not satisfied about the identity of the offering company or of its directors or other officers	You must satisfy yourself about the identity of the company making the CSF offer and its directors, officers and senior managers.  Note: 'Officer' is defined in s9, and includes persons who exert significant influence over a company or its directors.
You have reason to believe that any of the directors or other officers are not of good fame or character	The law does not define 'good fame or character' for this purpose, but factors that may give you reason to believe that a person is not of good fame or character include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• criminal or civil penalty proceedings or disciplinary action where they were found to have engaged in dishonest or fraudulent activity;</li> <li>• insolvency history, depending on the circumstances;</li> <li>• bans from managing corporations;</li> <li>• bans from providing financial services; and</li> <li>• failure to be frank and honest in dealing with and providing information to the intermediary.</li> </ul>

Circumstance	Details
You have reason to believe the offering company or its directors or other officers have, in relation to the CSF offer, knowingly engaged in conduct that is misleading or deceptive or likely to mislead or deceive	<p>Conduct that is misleading or deceptive, or likely to mislead or deceive, may occur at various stages of the CSF offer—for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pre-offer—where you have reason to believe that the directors' representations about an offer are dishonest; and</li> <li>• during an offer—where you have reason to believe that the directors have knowingly provided misleading information in response to a post on the communication facility.</li> </ul> <p>Note: Where the relevant conduct is in relation to a defective CSF offer document, the specific rules covering defective offer documents will apply—see RG 262.172–RG 262.179.</p>
You have reason to believe the offer is not an eligible CSF offer	<p>This rule intends to ensure that offering companies that purport to be eligible to raise funds under the CSF regime, but are not in fact eligible, are excluded from making a CSF offer. For example, you would have reason to believe an offer is not an eligible CSF offer if it has reason to believe that it does not comply with the issuer cap: see <a href="#">RG 261</a>.</p>

Source: Section 738Q(5) of the Corporations Act.

### Arrangements to ensure compliance with gatekeeper obligations

RG 262.146 To ensure its effectiveness as a gatekeeper, the Corporations Regulations require a CSF intermediary to have in place 'adequate arrangements', recorded in writing, to ensure it complies with the gatekeeper obligations. This means you must have in place sufficient policies, systems and procedures that ensure you are aware of, and comply on an ongoing basis with, your gatekeeper obligations—and ensure these are followed in practice.

### Prominent display of certain information on platform

RG 262.147 You must prominently display on your platform, at all times while a CSF offer is open or suspended:

- a prescribed general risk warning;
- the platform fees paid to you by the company making the CSF offer, and any interests that you have or intend to take in the company; and
- information relating to retail clients' cooling-off rights (see RG 262.184–RG 262.186).

RG 262.148 Whether information is displayed prominently will depend on the particular facts and circumstances, including the overall design and presentation of your CSF platform and the information on the webpage. For example, information presented at the top of a webpage with sufficient space or

bordering to separate it from other information is more likely to be prominent, while information contained in a lengthy disclaimer or otherwise not likely to come to the attention of a potential investor is unlikely to be sufficiently prominent. Similarly, a general risk warning placed at the bottom of a webpage, where it can only be accessed by scrolling, or on a separate webpage the consumer has to click through to, is unlikely to be sufficiently prominent.

- RG 262.149 We consider that, in order to be prominently displayed, the general risk warning needs to be on a page that an investor must access before applying for shares under the CSF offer.
- RG 262.150 The CSF offer document must be published on the platform containing the application facility. To ensure this, it would be appropriate for the CSF offer document to be displayed to, or downloaded by, the investor before they apply for shares. This will ensure that the investor is able to correctly acknowledge that they have read the CSF offer document, and can form part of your arrangements to manage the risk of investor misunderstanding and complaints. It would also form part of your arrangements to manage the risk of you not meeting your gatekeeper obligations, by increasing the chances of investors identifying problems in the CSF offer document that you should have identified.
- RG 262.151 CSF intermediaries should consider continuing to make the CSF offer document accessible on their platform for a reasonable period after the offer has closed, or emailing a copy of the offer document to investors after they have submitted their application.

## Providing an application facility

- RG 262.152 As a CSF intermediary, you must provide an application facility on your platform to enable people to make applications in response to CSF offers. All applications must be made through this facility and you must as soon as practicable reject, and refund any money paid for, any applications made other than through the application facility. Restricting the making of applications to the application facility ensures that applicants are made aware of, and receive, the investor protections under the CSF regime.

Note: You must ensure that retail clients complete a risk acknowledgment prior to making an application—see RG 262.188.

- RG 262.153 The application facility must only be available while the relevant CSF offer is open—applicants must not be able to make applications while an offer is closed or suspended.

## Providing a communication facility

- RG 262.154 As a CSF intermediary, you must provide a communication facility for each CSF offer while the offer is open or suspended.
- RG 262.155 The purpose of the communication facility is to allow potential investors, the company making the CSF offer and you to communicate with each other about the offer. The facility must enable a person who accesses the CSF offer document to:
- (a) make posts about the offer;
  - (b) see posts about the offer; and
  - (c) ask the company making the offer, or the CSF intermediary, questions about the offer.
- RG 262.156 The communication facility must also enable the company making the offer and you to respond to questions and posts.
- RG 262.157 The communication facility does not need to be open to the general public, but must be accessible to persons that are able to access the CSF offer document. If a person is able to access a CSF offer document once they have registered on your platform, they must be able to make and see posts on the communication facility for the offer on registration.

### Communications from the company making a CSF offer

- RG 262.158 Persons who are officers, employees or agents of the company making a CSF offer (or a related party or associate) or of the CSF intermediary (or an associate), must clearly disclose that fact when posting on the communication facility.

### Monitoring and quality control of communication facility

- RG 262.159 You may decide your approach to monitoring posts on your communication facility. This may be a pre-vetting arrangement where you review posts before they appear, or a review of posts as they are posted and in response to complaints.
- RG 262.160 You may, and may be required to, refuse to post communications on the facility or remove them from the facility if they are misleading or otherwise unlawful or clearly irrelevant. You may not refuse to post or remove communications from the facility because they are negative or critical towards the offer, you, or an offering company.
- RG 262.161 You should consider what approach is appropriate in light of the particular risks in the circumstances—for example, the nature of the CSF offer, the level of investor interest, and how the communication facility is being used.

You should therefore have sufficient resources and procedures to allow you to adapt your monitoring of the communication facility as appropriate for each CSF offer, and keep in mind the purpose of the communication facility to inform investment decisions through frank discussion in good faith.

### Misleading information

- RG 262.162 You must take action—by removing a CSF offer document from your platform and closing a CSF offer—if you have reason to believe that the company making the offer, or its director or officer, has knowingly engaged in conduct that was misleading or deceptive or that was likely to mislead or deceive: see s738Q(5)(c). This could include, for example, providing misleading information in response to a post on the communication facility.
- RG 262.163 This obligation only arises where you have reason to believe the offering company or relevant person *knowingly* engaged in misleading or deceptive conduct. It applies when you have reason to believe, even if you do not in fact believe, and does not require proof beyond reasonable doubt.
- RG 262.164 There may be cases where an offering company unintentionally provides information that is misleading, which in itself does not require you to take action. However, if the company subsequently fails to provide further disclosure to ensure readers are not misled, this may separately be misleading conduct that is knowingly engaged in, which would require you to remove the CSF offer document and close the CSF offer.

## Dealing with application money

- RG 262.165 The client money provisions in Div 2 of Pt 7.8 apply to money that you receive for a CSF offer. Generally, money paid to an AFS licensee to be used to pay an issuer of shares or other financial products to acquire the financial products must be held in a trust account for the paying client. Regulations 7.8.01–7.8.03 set out requirements for operating the account.
- RG 262.166 In addition, you must deal with application money for a CSF offer in certain ways in different circumstances, as summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4: Dealing with application money for a CSF offer**

Circumstance	A CSF intermediary must
<p>A CSF offer is complete and the company has issued shares to applicants.</p> <p>Note: An offer is complete in the circumstances set out in s738N(7).</p>	<p>Pay the application money to the company, less fees payable to you under the hosting agreement, as soon as practicable.</p>

Circumstance	A CSF intermediary must
<p>A CSF offer is closed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for a reason other than because the you were required to do so under s738N(4)(a)–(c); or</li> <li>• because you were required to do so under s738N(4)(a)–(c), all withdrawal periods under the offer have ended, and the applications not withdrawn at that time do not meet the minimum subscription amount for the offer.</li> </ul>	<p>Refund the application money to applicants who have not withdrawn their applications or had their applications rejected.</p>
<p>A person withdraws an application as permitted under s738T, or the person’s application is rejected or unsuccessful for any other reason.</p>	<p>Refund the application money to the applicant as soon as practicable.</p>

Source: Section 738ZB of the Corporations Act.

## Timing rules for CSF offers

### General timing rules

- RG 262.167 A CSF offer is open from the time when it is first published on a CSF intermediary’s platform, and can only be closed by the intermediary giving written notice on its platform that the CSF offer is closed.
- RG 262.168 You have the power to close a CSF offer at any time, subject to limits imposed by the hosting arrangement with the company making the offer (other than limits that would prevent you from closing an offer where you are required to do so under the CSF regime).
- RG 262.169 Closing an offer early may mean that the offer will not be regarded as ‘complete’ under the CSF regime. You must refund all application money to investors for any offer that is closed but not completed.

Note: See s738N and RG 261.71–261.78.

### When a CSF offer must be closed

- RG 262.170 You must close a CSF offer at the earliest of the following times:
- (a) three months after the offer is made;
  - (b) any date specified in the CSF offer document that the offer will close;
  - (c) when you consider the offer to be fully subscribed;
  - (d) when the company making the offer withdraws the offer;
  - (e) when the gatekeeper obligations require you to remove the CSF offer document from your platform (see RG 262.128–RG 262.146).

## When a CSF offer must be suspended

RG 262.171 You must suspend a CSF offer (if you do not close it) if you become aware that the CSF offer document is defective: see RG 262.172–RG 262.174.

## Defective CSF offer documents

RG 262.172 A CSF offer document will be defective where:

- (a) it contains a misleading or deceptive statement; or
- (b) there is an omission of information required to be included; or
- (c) a new circumstance arises that would have been required to have been included, had it arisen before the document was published.

RG 262.173 If you become aware that a CSF offer document is defective, you must:

- (a) notify the company making the CSF offer as soon as possible; and
- (b) remove the CSF offer document from your platform and either close or suspend the offer by giving notice on your platform.

Note: You are taken to have knowledge of any matter that you would have known had you conducted the relevant prescribed checks to a reasonable standard—see RG 262.143.

RG 262.174 If you suspend a CSF offer, a notice of suspension must continue to appear on the platform for the entire time the offer is suspended, and no applications may be received while the offer is suspended.

## Supplementary or replacement CSF offer documents

RG 262.175 An offering company may decide to prepare a supplementary or replacement CSF offer document to correct a defect in a CSF offer document.

RG 262.176 Where new and material information comes to light during the course of a CSF offer and that information would otherwise have been required to be included in the original CSF offer document (i.e. if it had arisen before the offer document was published), then you must decide whether the offer document is defective. If you consider the offer document defective, you must ask whether the offering company will prepare a supplementary or replacement offer document to correct the defect. If the offering company will not, you must decide whether to close or suspend the offer as soon as practicable. This applies regardless of whether the information is positive or materially adverse from the point of view of an investor.

RG 262.177 If the offering company decides to prepare a supplementary or replacement offer document to correct the defect, then you can decide whether to publish the supplementary or replacement offer document and re-open the offer.

- RG 262.178 If you publish a supplementary or replacement CSF offer document on your platform for a CSF offer document that had a materially adverse defect (from the point of view of an investor), you must send the supplementary or replacement document to each person who has already applied to the CSF offer. That document must be sent as soon as practicable and be accompanied by a written notice advising that the investor may, within 14 days after the date of the notice, withdraw their application and have their application money refunded.
- RG 262.179 If a CSF offer has been suspended, the suspension ends when you first publish the supplementary or replacement CSF offer document on your platform.
- RG 262.180 You must check each supplementary or replacement offer document, as it is a new and separate document. The checks must be performed to a reasonable standard. However, generally the original parts of the offer document will not require a re-check unless something has come to your attention that causes you to believe it contains something that is misleading or deceptive.

## **Additional obligations when dealing with retail clients**

- RG 262.181 When providing a crowd-funding service to a retail client seeking to apply for shares under a CSF offer, you must comply with additional obligations under the CSF regime that involve:
- (a) unconditional cooling-off rights;
  - (b) risk acknowledgements;
  - (c) a cap on investment; and
  - (d) restrictions on financial assistance.
- RG 262.182 These additional obligations aim to ensure that retail clients can make informed decisions, and are not exposed to excessive levels of risk.
- RG 262.183 If you are not going to treat a potential investor as a retail client, you must determine that the person is not a retail client when they first use the application facility to apply for a CSF offer. If you treat a potential investor as a retail client, but determine later that they are not a retail client, then you may stop treating them as such. It would be appropriate to warn clients that you take this approach if you wish to reserve the right to stop treating them as a retail client.

Note: The person will be a retail client where they are a retail client for the purposes of Ch 7—see s738D.

## Unconditional cooling-off rights

- RG 262.184 All retail clients who make an application in response to a CSF offer have an unconditional right to withdraw their application within five business days of making the application. The applicant must exercise this right in accordance with the method specified by the CSF intermediary on its platform.
- RG 262.185 You must ensure that the following statements appear prominently on your platform at all times while a CSF offer is open or suspended:
- (a) a statement about the right of retail clients to withdraw applications; and
  - (b) a statement specifying a method for a person to exercise this right.
- RG 262.186 As an AFS licensee, you must do all things necessary to ensure that you provide the cooling-off method, as part of your financial service, in a manner that is honest, efficient and fair. You should ensure the method is simple to use—this will generally include using an online facility, since the application will have been made online.
- RG 262.187 Under the CSF regime, the cooling-off period commences when the application is made. While you may determine when the application is considered to be ‘made’—for example, when the application form is submitted or the application money is received—we expect that you will make it clear to investors when the cooling-off period starts and ends.

## Risk acknowledgements

- RG 262.188 As a CSF intermediary, you must ensure that a retail client is not able to make an application under a CSF offer unless they complete an applicant risk acknowledgement containing the exact wording in the Corporations Regulations. You may choose to have an investor digitally sign the acknowledgement, although this is not required for it to be ‘completed’.

Note: See reg 6D.3A.07 for the prescribed wording of the risk acknowledgement.

## Investor cap

- RG 262.189 You must reject an application from a retail client where it would breach the \$10,000 cap in respect of applications for CSF offers made by a particular company via the same intermediary over a 12-month period.
- RG 262.190 We expect you to have the necessary systems and procedures in place to ensure compliance with this obligation. For instance, you should have systems and procedures to ensure that a retail client cannot make one or more applications in response to an offer from a company for more than \$10,000 in total in any 12-month period. This would generally involve reasonable identification processes for each retail client.

## Restrictions on financial assistance

RG 262.191 As a CSF intermediary, you must not financially assist a retail client in relation to a CSF offer, or arrange financial assistance for a retail client to acquire shares under a CSF offer, that you are hosting or intending to host.

## Consequences if there is a breach

RG 262.192 As a CSF intermediary, you will commit an offence if you:

- (a) fail to comply with your gatekeeper obligations;
- (b) do not have in place ‘adequate arrangements’ to ensure you comply with the gatekeeper obligations;

Note: This means that you must have in place policies, systems and procedures to ensure that you comply with the gatekeeper obligations, and ensure that those policies, systems and procedures are adhered to. This must be documented in writing.

- (c) publish a CSF offer document or information about a CSF offer that includes a statement or information that is materially misleading and is likely to induce an investor to apply under the offer and you know, or ought reasonably to have known, that the statement or information is materially misleading (see s1041E).

RG 262.193 A breach of any of these obligations is also a breach of your obligation to comply with financial services laws: see s912A. The requirement to notify ASIC of reportable situations (see s912DAA) will therefore apply. We may consider action to include additional conditions on an AFS licensee, or suspend or revoke their licence if appropriate, if a breach occurs—and we may take into account whether there has been any failure to report significant breaches to ASIC.

## D Data reporting requirements

- RG 262.194 You will be asked to provide certain information to us about your CSF intermediary business after the end of each financial year. We may ask for this information by way of a notice that we will give you under s912C.
- RG 262.195 Where practicable, we may specify in advance the form and timing for providing the information and other requirements to enable you to put in place measures to collect the information. We expect most of the required information will be readily available in your records from managing your business. When determining what information we will require, we will take into account what information we already have and any costs that may arise from being required to collate the information to provide to ASIC.
- RG 262.196 The required information may include information about:
- (a) the total amount raised by all eligible CSF companies through your platform;
  - (b) successful CSF offers made through your platform, including the:
    - (i) date of the CSF offer;
    - (ii) name of the company making the CSF offer and the relevant industry (such as mining, technology, financial services, or manufacturing);
    - (iii) minimum and maximum subscription amount sought by the company making the CSF offer;
    - (iv) amount raised by the successful CSF offer;
    - (v) number of days taken to raise the funds; and
    - (vi) details of any extensions of time taken to raise the funds;
  - (c) unsuccessful offers, including:
    - (i) details of each CSF offer that you ‘closed’ or ‘suspended’ during the reporting period, due to your gatekeeper obligations or because the CSF offer document was defective, including:
      - (A) the data items in RG 262.196(b); and
      - (B) a brief description of how your gatekeeper obligations brought about that result and/or how the CSF offer document was defective;
    - (ii) amounts refunded to investors and when these amounts were refunded;
    - (iii) amounts not refunded to investors where this was required and a brief description of why the amounts have not been refunded; and

- (iv) details of each CSF offer not published on your platform because the company seeking to make the offer did not meet the eligibility criteria or pass the gatekeeper checks, including:
  - (A) the data items in RG 262.196(b)(ii)–(iii); and
  - (B) a brief description of why the offering company did not meet the eligibility requirements;
- (d) companies that you considered ineligible to make CSF offers as a result of carrying out the required checks;
- (e) investors in CSF offers, including the number of:
  - (i) investors per type (i.e. wholesale and retail clients) investing in each successful CSF offer and the average amount invested by each type of investor;
  - (ii) clients that exercised their cooling-off period rights during the reporting period;
  - (iii) retail clients that made complaints to you, and which CSF offers the complaints related to, during the period; and
  - (iv) complaints by retail clients that have been referred to an EDR scheme;
- (f) operation of your platform, including:
  - (i) platform outages, including how many times and for how long:
    - (A) the platform was down; and
    - (B) the communication facility was down;
  - (ii) outsourcing arrangements that are material to the operation of your CSF intermediary business;
  - (iii) remuneration or other benefits received by you for each CSF offer, including details of each offer and the amount and form of remuneration (e.g. cash or equity); and
  - (iv) when you had to remove material from the communication facility, for each CSF offer, including:
    - (A) details of the offer;
    - (B) the number of times material was removed; and
    - (C) a general description of the reasons why the material was removed; and
- (g) companies making CSF offers relying on the temporary corporate governance concessions, including name and ACN of each company relying on:
  - (i) the annual general meeting (AGM) concession;
  - (ii) the reporting concession; and

(iii) the audit concession.

- RG 262.197 This information will help ASIC better understand your business and how it compares to other CSF intermediary businesses. We may publish a report based on the aggregated information collected. Disclosure from the data will not be made available to the public generally in a way that identifies individual AFS licensees or offering companies, unless we are compelled to do so by law.
- RG 262.198 We may adjust the data reporting requirements as necessary based on our experience in previous collection cycles.

## Key terms

Term	Meaning in this document
AFCA	Australian Financial Complaints Authority—The EDR scheme for which an authorisation under Pt 7.10A of the Corporations Act is in force
AFS licence	An Australian financial services licence under s913B of the Corporations Act that authorises a person who carries on a financial services business to provide financial services Note: This is a definition contained in s761A.
AFS licensee	A person who holds an AFS licence under s913B of the Corporations Act Note: This is a definition contained in s761A.
APRA	Australian Prudential Regulation Authority
ASIC Act	<i>Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001</i>
Ch 7 (for example)	A chapter of the Corporations Act (in this example numbered 7), unless otherwise specified
communication facility	A facility provided by a CSF intermediary in relation to a CSF offer that can be used by investors, the company making the offer and the CSF intermediary to communicate about the CSF offer
Corporations Act	<i>Corporations Act 2001</i> , including any regulations made for the purposes of that Act
Corporations Regulations	Corporations Regulations 2001
crowd-funding service	Has the meaning given in s766F of the Corporations Act
CSF	Crowd-sourced funding
CSF intermediary	An AFS licensee whose licence expressly authorises the licensee to provide a crowd-funding service Note: See s738C of the Corporations Act.
CSF offer	An offer of ordinary shares that is made under the CSF regime in Pt 6D.3A of the Corporations Act Note: See s738B of the Corporations Act.
CSF offer document	A document setting out the terms of a CSF offer that complies with s738J of the Corporations Act
CSF regime	The statutory regime for crowd-sourced funding in Pt 6D.3A of the Corporations Act regulating CSF offers

Term	Meaning in this document
defective	In relation to a CSF offer document, has the meaning given in s738U(1) of the Corporations Act
EDR	External dispute resolution
eligible CSF company	A company that meets the requirements in s738H of the Corporations Act to be eligible to make a CSF offer
general risk warning	<p data-bbox="767 539 1353 600">A prescribed statement about the risks associated with investing in CSF offers</p> <p data-bbox="791 616 1401 719">Note 1: See s738ZA(2) of the Corporations Act and reg 6D.3A.10 of the Corporations Regulations for the wording of the general risk warning that must appear prominently on a CSF intermediary's platform.</p> <p data-bbox="791 730 1401 801">Note 2: See reg 6D.3A.03 of the Corporations Regulations for the wording of the general risk warning that must be included in a CSF offer document.</p>
platform	A website or other electronic facility provided by the CSF intermediary to host a CSF offer
Pt 6D.3A (for example)	A part of the Corporations Act (in this example numbered 6D.3A), unless otherwise specified
reg 7.1.08 (for example)	A regulation of the Corporations Regulations (in this example numbered 7.1.08), unless otherwise specified
related party	Has the meaning given by s738G(3) of the Corporations Act
retail client	A client as defined in s761G of the Corporations Act and Div 2 of Pt 7.1 of the Corporations Regulations
RG 261 (for example)	An ASIC regulatory guide (in this example numbered 261)
s708 (for example)	A section of the Corporations Act (in this example numbered 708), unless otherwise specified

## Related information

### Headnotes

AFS licensee, application facility, authorisation, checks, communication facility, cooling-off rights, crowd-funding service, crowd-sourced funding, CSF, document, eligible company, gatekeeper, general risk warning, intermediary, obligations, offer, platform, regime, risk acknowledgement

### Legislative instruments and pro formas

[ASIC Corporations \(Repeal and Transitional\) Instrument 2017/186](#)

[ASIC Corporations \(Financial Requirements for CSF Intermediaries\) Instrument 2017/339](#)

[PF 209 Australian financial services licence conditions](#)

### Regulatory guides

[RG 1 AFS Licensing Kit: Part 1—Applying for and varying an AFS licence](#)

[RG 2 AFS Licensing Kit: Part 2—Preparing your AFS licence application](#)

[RG 3 AFS Licensing Kit: Part 3—Preparing your additional proofs](#)

[RG 36 Licensing: Financial product advice and dealing](#)

[RG 78 Breach reporting by AFS licensees and credit licensees](#)

[RG 98 ASIC's powers to suspend, cancel and vary AFS licences and make banning orders](#)

[RG 104 Licensing: Meeting the general obligations](#)

[RG 105 Licensing: Organisational competence](#)

[RG 126 Compensation and insurance arrangements for AFS licensees](#)

[RG 133 Funds management and custodial services: Holding assets](#)

[RG 148 Platforms that are managed investment schemes and nominee and custody services](#)

[RG 165 Licensing: Internal and external dispute resolution](#)

[RG 166 Licensing: Financial requirements](#)

[RG 167 Licensing: Discretionary powers](#)

[RG 168](#) *Disclosure: Product Disclosure Statements (and other disclosure obligations)*

[RG 172](#) *Financial markets: Domestic and overseas operators*

[RG 175](#) *Licensing: Financial product advisors—Conduct and disclosure*

[RG 181](#) *Licensing: Managing conflicts of interest*

[RG 234](#) *Advertising financial products and services (including credit): Good practice guidance*

[RG 244](#) *Giving information, general advice and scaled advice*

[RG 261](#) *Crowd-sourced funding: Guide for companies*

[RG 267](#) *Oversight of the Australian Financial Complaints Authority*

## **Legislation**

ASIC Act

Corporations Act, Ch 7, Pts 6D.3A, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8, s9, 708, 738D, 738H, 738N, 738Q, 738T, 738ZB, 738ZG, 766B, 766C, 766F, 769B, 912A, 912C, 912DAA, 913B, 914A, 915C, 916F, 981B, 988A, 989A, 1041E

*Corporations Amendment (Crowd-sourced Funding) Act 2017*

Corporations Amendment (Crowd-sourced Funding) Regulations 2017

*Corporations Amendment (Crowd-sourced Funding for Proprietary Companies) Act 2018*

Corporations Amendment (Crowd-sourced Funding) Regulations 2018

Corporations Regulations, regs, 7.1.08, 7.6.02AAA, 7.6.04, 7.8.01–7.8.03

## **Consultation papers and reports**

[CP 288](#) *Crowd-sourced funding: Guide for public companies*

[CP 289](#) *Crowd-sourced funding: Guide for intermediaries*

[CP 293](#) *Revising the market licence regime for domestic and overseas operators*

[REP 429](#) *Cyber resilience: Health check*

[REP 484](#) *Due diligence practices in initial public offerings*

[REP 544](#) *Response to submissions on CP 288 and CP 289 on crowd-sourced funding*

[REP 572](#) *Response to submissions on CP 293 Revising the market licence regime: Domestic and overseas operators*

### **Information sheets**

[INFO 213](#) *Marketplace lending (peer-to-peer lending) products*

### **ASIC forms**

[Form FS20](#) *Change of details for an Australian financial services licence*

### **Standards**

[AS/NZS 31000:2009](#) *Risk management—Principles and guidelines*