

First Nations Digital Support Hub Program

Grant Opportunity Guidelines

Opening date:	TBC
Closing date and time:	TBC
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts
[Co-sponsoring entity:]	N/A
[Administering entity:]	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, contact us at FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au Questions should be sent no later than XYZ
Date grant opportunity guidelines released:	TBC
Type of grant opportunity:	Open competitive

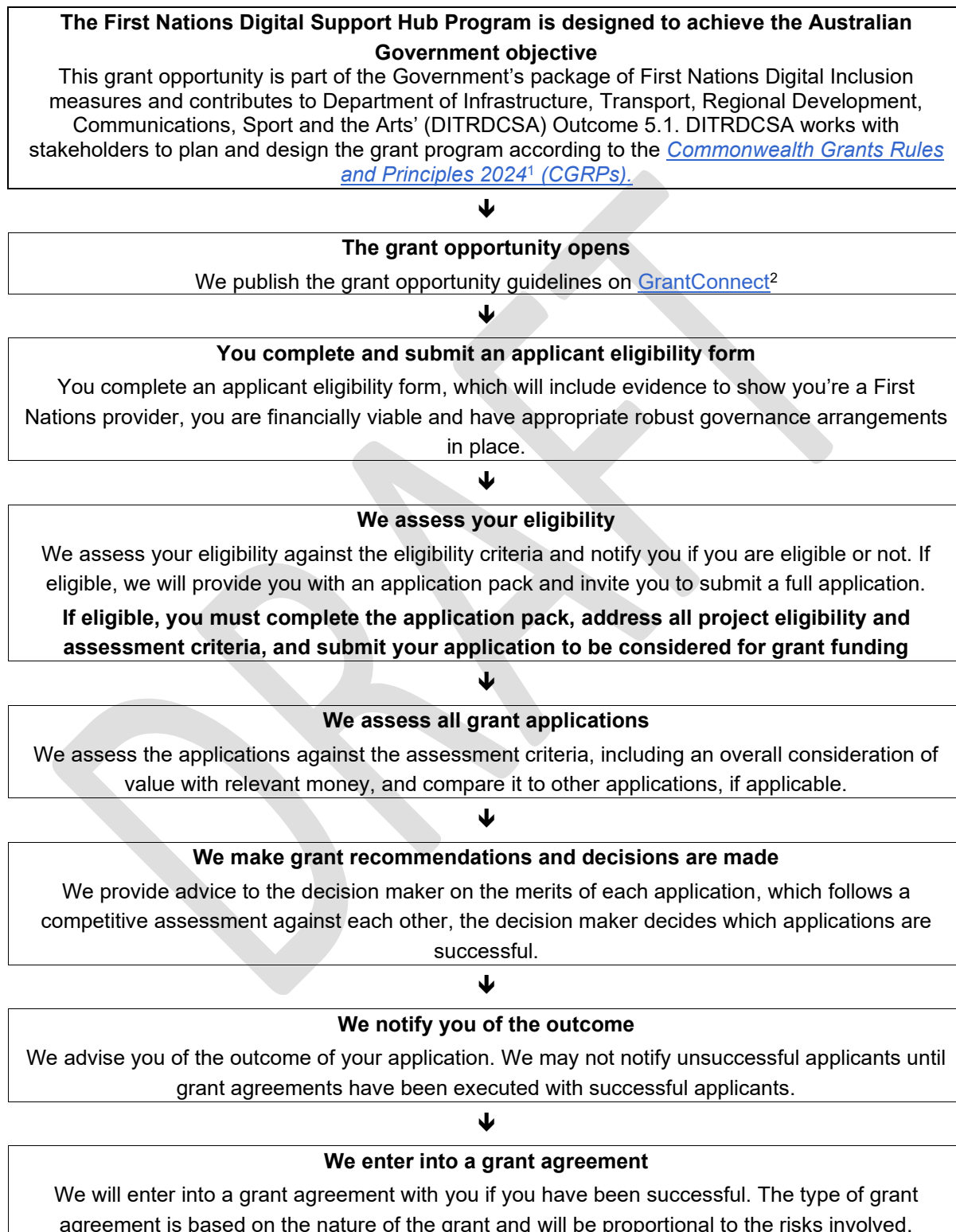
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1 First Nations Digital Support Hub Program Process



¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2024L00854/latest/versions>

² <https://www.grants.gov.au/>



Delivery of grant

You undertake the grant activity as set out in your grant agreement. We manage the grant by working with you, monitoring your progress and making payments.



Evaluation of the First Nations Digital Support Hub Program

We evaluate your specific grant activity and the First Nations Digital Support Hub Program as a whole. We base this on information you provide to us and that we collect from various sources.

1.1 Introduction

The grant opportunity guidelines (Guidelines) relate to the First Nations Digital Support Hub (Digital Support Hub) Program.

You must read these Guidelines to determine your eligibility before filling out an Applicant Eligibility form (**Attachment A**). Only applicants deemed eligible will be provided with the opportunity to apply.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant program/grant opportunity
- the eligibility and assessment criteria and how to apply
- how eligibility and grant applications are considered and assessed
- who decides which project will receive funding and how applicants are notified
- how grantees receive grant payments
- how grantees will be monitored and evaluated
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the grant opportunity.

We administer the grant opportunity and program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024](#)³ (CGRPs).

2 About the grant program

The First Nations Digital Support Hub Program (Digital Support Hub) was funded as part of a broader package of measures to support First Nations digital inclusion, which were announced in the 2024-25 Budget. It provided \$4 million (GST exclusive) over two years as part of the 2024-25 Budget – with the existing funding now extended until 30 June 2027. The program supports Target 17 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which seeks to ensure First Nations Australians have equal levels of digital inclusion by 2026. Further information on Target 17 can be found here: [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#).

The program is informed by recommendations made by the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group (Advisory Group) in its [initial report released in October 2023](#). The program also aligns to the [First Nations Digital Inclusion Roadmap](#) which was released in late 2024.

The program aims to support First Nations digital inclusion by providing culturally safe advice and support to First Nations Australians regarding the use of telecommunications services, online safety, accessing essential services and troubleshooting connectivity issues.

The program can be delivered flexibly so that it best meets First Nations consumer expectations and community priorities. It is expected the provider will collaborate with the provider of the Network of Digital Mentors program (which is another grant opportunity under the 2024-25 Budget First Nations measures and running in parallel to the Digital Support Hub program) to support alignment across the two programs.

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2024L00854/latest/text>

Due to both programs scope and funding available to deliver up until 30 June 2027, it is the Department's preference for applicants to apply for **only** one program, either the Digital Support Hub program or the Network of Digital Mentors program; however, if the applicant wishes to apply for both programs, a consortium could be considered as per the option in section 7.2 of these Guidelines.

In the case that an applicant applies for only one program, we still encourage applicants to consider partnering with other organisations to help ensure expertise across the different elements of the program. Please see section 7.2 of these Guidelines for further information on potential partnerships with other organisations, including with non-First Nations entities.

2.1 About the Digital Support Hub

The purpose of the Digital Support Hub is to support digital ability and connectivity literacy for First Nations Australians be online safely and effectively, and to understand the connectivity option that is best for them and their community. The Digital Support Hub will not be a walk-in centre that services customers in-person.

Eligible Applicants can apply for either one or both streams of work under the Digital Support Hub.

Stream 1 – Website (establish within 3 months of executed grant agreement)

- Using materials from the Regional Tech Hub and other online sources, develop a website which provides culturally appropriate information for First Nations people and communities, including in Plain English and First Nations languages.
- The website will include information relating to how to access online services, how to recognise and reduce the risk of scams and other online harms, and how to understand the relative benefits of different connectivity options.
- Regularly assess the information provided on the website for its ongoing relevance and accuracy, with materials updated as required.
- Collaborate with similar hubs/online services, including those provided by industry, to share learnings and avoid duplication of effort.

Stream 2 – Call centre (establish within 6 months of executed grant agreement)

- Establish a call centre, staffed by First Nations Australians across standard business hours, to respond to inbound calls and emails from First Nations consumers on such things as tech support and troubleshooting and identifying and reporting scams.
- Develop training modules and materials for use by call centre staff, ensuring advice is accurate and consistent, and can complement the resources used by the Network of Digital Mentors Program in the future.

The Digital Support Hub will contribute to the Department's achievement of Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS): Outcome 5: Promote an innovative and competitive communications sector, through policy development, advice and program delivery, so all Australians can realise the full potential of digital technologies and communications service.

3 Grant amount and grant period

3.1 Grant Available

The Australian Government is providing up to \$4 million until 30 June 2027 for the Digital Support Hub. Indexation is not applied to this program. Unless otherwise agreed by the decision maker, the grantee will be responsible for remaining eligible and ineligible program costs (refer to section 5.3 and 5.4).

The program's total funding of up to \$4 million is made up of two funding projects:

- Stream 1 (website): \$0.5 million to establish and maintain a website, which delivers digital literacy and connectivity in plain English and in First Nations languages
- Stream 2 (call centre): \$3.5 million to establish a call centre to provide advice on the digital options and connectivity challenges that communities may face.

There is no minimum amount per grant application, and the total amount of the grant approved cannot exceed the amount of available funds assigned to each stream of work under the Digital Support Hub.

Eligible Applicants are recommended to apply for **only** the Digital Support Hub or the Network of Digital Mentors program, as outlined in section 2 of these Guidelines. The Network of Digital Mentors is a separate grant opportunity under the Government's 2024-25 Budget First Nations measures and is being run in parallel to the Digital Support Hub program.

Also, where an applicant applies for the Digital Support Hub grant opportunity, it should be made clear in the full application form if there are any administrative benefits and cost savings which can be achieved by a single Applicant if they aim to deliver both streams of work under the program.

3.2 Grant period

You must complete your grant activities by 30 June 2027. An evaluation of the program will be undertaken by the Department.

4 Eligibility criteria

Only applicants deemed eligible through the first stage process will be eligible to submit a full application.

4.1 Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

The Department is deploying a two-stage process as part of this grant opportunity.

Stage 1 – Open to all noting the eligibility criteria outlined below. An applicant eligibility form will be available on [GrantConnect](#), along with these Guidelines.

As part of this stage, the applicant can put forward an eligibility form for initial assessment by the Department.

In this stage, applicants must outline which streams of work under the Digital Support Hub that they are interested in applying for and include evidence to address the eligibility criteria outlined below.

Stage 2 – After an initial assessment of the eligibility form, and the required documentation and evidence is satisfactorily provided, the applicant will be provided with a full application form to complete and provide to the Department for assessment against section 6 of these guidelines.

Stream 1 – Website

As part of Stage 1 you must provide the following evidence

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- evidence of financial viability, e.g. financial statements, loan agreements, cash flow documents, or a copy of latest audited financial statement
- evidence of appropriate governance arrangements, e.g. constitution, outline of board or committee arrangements
- be a permanent resident of Australia

As part of Stage 1 you must be one of the following entity types and provide evidence that you are:

- be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO), or
- be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business that has at least 51% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ownership and/or directorship and/or management, or
- be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Corporation registered under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander) Act* or,
- other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisations, for example, an organisation that has at least 51% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ownership and/or directorship and/or management

In addition, you must:

- be registered for the purposes of GST
- have an account with an Australian financial institution.
- be a legal entity with the capacity to enter into a legally binding agreement or contract
- have no overdue acquittal or serious breaches relating to Australia Government funding. A serious breach is one that has resulted in, or warrants, the termination of a grant agreement.

Stream 2 – Call centre

As part of Stage 1 and part of the eligibility form you must provide the following evidence:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- evidence of a funding strategy, e.g. financial statements, loan agreements, cash flow documents, or a copy of latest audited financial statement
- evidence of appropriate governance arrangements, e.g. constitution, outline of board or committee arrangements
- be a permanent resident of Australia

As part of Stage 1 and part of the eligibility form you must be one of the following entity types and provide evidence:

- be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO), or
- be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business that has at least 51% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ownership and/or directorship and/or management, or
- be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Corporation registered under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander) Act* or,
- other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisations, for example, an organisation that has at least 51% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ownership and/or directorship and/or management

In addition, you must:

- be registered for the purposes of GST
- have an account with an Australian financial institution.
- be a legal entity with the capacity to enter into a legally binding agreement or contract
- have no overdue acquittal or serious breaches relating to Australia Government funding. A serious breach is one that has resulted in, or warrants, the termination of a grant agreement.
- have adequate governance arrangements in place and not be an organisation that is at risk of insolvency.

4.2 Who is not eligible to apply for a grant?

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- an organisation not included in section 4.1
- an organisation, or your project partner is an organisation, included on the National Redress Scheme's website⁴ on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme'
- an individual
- overseas resident/organisation

⁴ <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/>

4.3 What qualifications, skills or checks are required?

First Nations Australians employed to provide support to First Nations people who contact the call centre under Stream 2 of the Digital Support Hub must maintain the following certification/registration as applicable in each relevant jurisdiction:

- National Police Certificate
- Working with Vulnerable People registration
- Working with Children check

5 What the grant money can be used for

5.1 Eligible grant activities

Eligible Applicants can apply for either one stream of work, or both, under for the Digital Support Hub.

Applicants should also indicate in their Application which stream of work they intend to apply for as well as if there are partnerships (refer to section 7.2 of these Guidelines) that they may have in place to support their work.

If you are applying to establish the website under Stream 1 of the Digital Support Hub, eligible grant activities include:

- development of a website to provide culturally safe information for First Nations people and communities, including in Plain English and First Nations languages
- identification, development and management of materials for the website, including liaising with relevant agencies and organisations to ensure resources are accurate and relevant.

If you are applying to establish the call centre under Stream 2 of the Digital Support Hub, eligible grant activities must relate to:

- establishment of a call centre, staffed by First Nations Australians, to respond to inbound calls and emails from First Nations consumers
- development of training modules and materials for use by call centre staff, ensuring advice is accurate and consistent, and complements the resources used by the Digital Mentors.

For Streams 1 and 2 you must provide regular updates on key performance indicators to enable the Department to evaluate outcomes and inform future policy.

5.2 Eligible locations

The Digital Support Hub can be operated at any location across Australia. The Digital Support Hub, via both projects of the website and the call centre, is a national service which is delivered online and by telephone.

5.3 Eligible expenditure

Not all expenditure on your project may be eligible for grant funding. The decision maker makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure for eligible grant activities.

Eligible expenditure items are:

- for both Stream 1 (website) and Stream 2 (call centre) costs directly related to administration (including wages for staff directly involved in the stages of work), IT equipment and support, as well as legal advice, program management and coordination, human resourcing, work health and safety and procurement requirements
- for only Stream 1 (website), First Nations language translation services (visual, audio and written) to ensure materials are culturally accessible

- for only Stream (call centre) of the Digital Support Hub costs directly related to building and operations including delivery of training for staff, software, replacement and warranty costs and equipment rental costs (if required)

You must incur the expenditure on your project between the start date and end or completion date for your grant agreement for it to be eligible.

5.4 What the grant money cannot be used for

You cannot use the grant for the following activities:

- activities not specified in your grant agreement, but which are inside the project's scope and aligned to the purpose of the grant
- staffing expenditure associated with delivering the grant, unless otherwise listed in Section 5.3 of these Guidelines, and approved by the Department
- purchase of land
- major capital expenditure
- the covering of retrospective costs
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation
- subsidy of general ongoing administration of an organisation such as electricity, phone and rent
- major construction/capital works
- overseas travel
- activities for which other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government bodies have primary responsibility.

6 The assessment criteria

As part of Stage 1 you should take note of which stream of work you are applying for, either/or Stream 1 (website) or Stream 2 (call centre), as well as providing the evidence required to address the eligibility criteria sought for under section 4.1.

As part of Stage 2 and in your full application form you must address all the following assessment criteria noted in section 4.1 of these Guidelines.

After a competitive assessment process, we will only award funding to the applicant/s that demonstrate the ability to satisfy all assessment criteria.

Stage 1

Criterion – Eligibility assessed against eligibility criteria

An initial determination of applicant's eligibility based on evidence provided to address the eligibility criteria sought for under section 4.1.

Stage 2

After an eligibility check eligible applicants will be provided with a full application form to complete and provide to the Department for assessment against the criterion below.

Criterion 1 – Proven Ability to Deliver

In the applications for both Stream 1 (website) or Stream 2 (call centre), you must demonstrate this through identifying:

- your specialist ability to deliver digital training and technical support to First Nations Australians in a culturally appropriate manner
- your track record and capacity to deliver the Digital Support Hub, including examples of delivering similar projects and online/helpdesk services; this may include previous examples of delivering programs or services at community/local, state or territory levels

- your access to the technical expertise required to deliver the program
- evidence of contingency planning which mitigates risks of delays
- your track record in engaging with First Nations people and communities in a culturally appropriate way
- the detail of your proposal including whether you have a project plan, risk management plan, or any other planning you have undertaken.

Criterion 2 – Identification, prioritisation and development of information and training materials

If you are applying for either Stream 1 or Stream 2 (or for both Streams), in your full application form you should provide an outline against the relevant section of this criterion:

- Stream 1 (website) – how you will identify, develop and curate materials for the website to ensure resources are accurate and relevant
- for both Stream 1 (website) and Stream 2 (call centre) – how you will engage with First Nations people and communities to ensure the information and services available through the Digital Support Hub are culturally safe and responsive
- for both Stream 1 (website) and Stream 2 (call centre) – how you will collaborate with similar hubs, online services or call centres, including those provided by industry, to avoid duplication of effort and support alignment.

Criterion 3 – Collaboration with the grantee(s) of the Network of Digital Mentors Program

If you are applying for Stream 1 (website) or Stream 2 (call centre) (or for both Streams),

In your application you should provide an outline against the marked relevant section of this criterion:

- Stream 1 (website) – how you will provide material and features on the website that could be used for the future digital mentors under the Network of Digital Mentors Program, and which allows them to refer First Nations people to the website
- Stream 2 (call centre) – how you will engage with the grantee(s) of the Network of Digital Mentors to ensure effective and culturally appropriate support is consistently provided and how you will raise awareness of the Digital Mentors via the call centres and refer callers to local digital mentors once these are established.

Criterion 4 – Identification and Selection of call centre staff

This criterion **only** applies for Stream 2 (call centre), and you should identify the process in which First Nations call centre staff will be identified and selected, including selection criteria and skill requirements call centre staff will be asked to demonstrate.

You must demonstrate this through identifying:

- how prospective First Nations call centre staff will be recruited, what process will be undertaken to select them and how this process will support engagement of First Nations people
- how you will ensure call centre staff are effectively trained to ensure the advice they provide is accurate, culturally safe and consistent
- how you will ensure prospective call centre staff either have, or are willing to hold, a Working with Children check, or similar, to comply with state and territory legislation.

Criterion 5 – Engaging and leveraging other stakeholders

In your application for either Stream 1 (website) or Stream 2 (call centre), you should outline how you will work alongside, collaborate with and support other like programs, to minimise duplication.

You must demonstrate this through identifying:

- how you will work with, leverage and complement other online information resource hubs, including those led by state and territory governments, industry or the private sector

- whether you are able to source, or leverage any co-funding from state and territory governments, local councils, industry, or the private sector to support the Digital Support Hub.

Criterion 6 – Program costs

For applications for both Stream 1 (website) or Stream 2 (call centre), and when addressing this criterion, you should demonstrate how you will be using the available grant funding, and on what.

You should take into consideration all program costs to deliver the Digital Support Hub relevant to your project, including:

- a project budget showing how costs will be utilised over the grant period, demonstrating value with money, in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024 (CGRPs) - see link provided in 1.1 of these Guidelines.
- your current ability to leverage existing programs you are a part of and/or potential co-funding or partnerships (refer to section 7.2 of these Guidelines) with state and territory government, industry or other organisations

If applicable, it should be made clear if there are any administrative benefits and cost savings which can be achieved by a single Applicant if they aim to deliver both streams (website and call centre) of work under the program.

7 How to apply

You must read and understand these Guidelines before putting forward an eligibility form. You must provide the evidence to support your eligibility form as outlined in 4.1 of these Guidelines.

A full Application Pack will be provided to eligible applicants following the applicant eligibility check process.

These Guidelines, including the applicant eligibility form, will be made available on [GrantConnect](#).

GrantConnect is the authoritative source for grants information. Any alterations and addenda⁵ will be published on GrantConnect and by registering on this website, you will be automatically notified of any changes to these Guidelines.

Following the Department confirming your eligibility against the eligibility criteria, you will be invited to submit a full application, where you must:

- complete the Grant Opportunity full application form provided to you
- provide all the information requested in the Application Pack
- address all the Assessment Criteria
- include all necessary attachments
- submit your application/s to FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au
 - Full application due by 5:00PM (AEST) on TBC for the Digital Support Hub for both Stream 1 (website) and Stream 2 (call centre)

You are responsible for ensuring that your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the [Criminal Code 1995](#) and we will investigate any false or misleading information and may exclude your application from further consideration.

If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should contact us immediately at FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au. We do not have to accept any additional information, nor requests from you to correct your application after the closing time.

You cannot change your application after the closing date and time for the program you are applying for.

⁵ Alterations and addenda include but are not limited to: corrections to currently published documents, changes to close times for applications, Questions and Answers (Q&A) documents and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents.

If we find an error or information that is missing, we may ask for clarification or additional information from you that will not change the nature of your application. However, we can refuse to accept any additional information from you that would change your submission after the application closing time.

You should keep a copy of your application and any supporting documents. We will acknowledge that we have received your full application within three working days. If you need further guidance around the application process, contact us at FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au.

7.1 Attachments to the application

Documentation for Stage 1 of Assessment

We require you to submit the following with your eligibility form regardless of which stream of work you are applying for (noting you can apply for one stream or both):

- evidence and documentation to support your eligibility, as well as the financial and governance documentation as outlined in section 4.1 of these Guidelines,

Documentation for Stage 2 of Assessment

We require you to submit the following documents with your full application:

- an indicative budget for each application. If you apply for both streams of work under the Digital Support Hub you should identify any cost efficiencies which could be realised, should you be selected to deliver both streams of work under the program (please provide this material in a format of your choosing)
- a project management plan and risk management plan
- evidence of a funding strategy, including financial statements for the last 3 financial years signed by a Certified Accountant, and evidence of how you will provide your share of grant activity costs (such as the existing resourcing and administrative costs to deliver the program). Also, loan agreements cash flow documents (if applicable).
- evidence of support from your organisation's board, CEO or equivalent that the grant activity is supported, and that you can complete the grant activity and meet any costs of the grant activity not covered by the grant
- letters of support or endorsement from First Nations organisations or communities.

You must attach supporting documentation to the application and should only attach requested documents.

7.2 Joint (consortia) applications

We recognise that some organisations may want to join as a group to deliver the Digital Support Hub Program. We encourage organisations to consider this an option where appropriate. For example, a website operator could partner with a call centre provider to make a joint application for the Digital Support Hub.

In these circumstances, you must appoint a First Nations 'lead organisation', which must be an organisation eligible to apply as specified in Section 4.1 of these Guidelines. Only the lead organisation can submit the application form and enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The application must identify all other members of the proposed group and include a letter of support from each of the partners.

Each letter of support should include:

- details of the partner organisation(s)
- an overview of how each of the partner organisations will work with the lead organisation and any other partner organisations in the group to successfully complete the program
- an outline of the relevant experience and/or expertise the partner organisation will bring to the group
- the roles/responsibilities of the partner organisation and the resources they will contribute (if any)

- details of a nominated management level contact officer.

If the application is successful, you must have a formal arrangement in place with all parties prior to execution of the grant agreement.

7.3 Timing of grant opportunity processes

You must apply between the published opening and closing dates. We cannot accept late applications.

If you are successful, we expect you will be able to commence your project on the execution of a Grant Agreement.

Table 1: The expected timing for Digital Support Hub Program

Digital Support Hub Activity	Timeframe
Stream 1 (website) and Stream 2 (call centre)	
Guidelines open released, eligibility and registration open	Documentation for applicant eligibility due by no later than TBC Month 2026 (TBC weeks after opening)
Applicant eligibility checks	TBC
Applicants complete full application and lodge with Department	5:00pm AEST, TBC
Applications close	5:00pm AEST, TBC
Assessment of applications	TBC weeks
Announcement on Successful Applicants	TBC
Negotiations and award of Grant Agreements	Up to TBC weeks following announcement of Successful Applicants
Commencement Date of Grant Activity or project/services	Date that the Grant Agreement is executed.
End date of Grant Activity	30 June 2027

7.4 Questions during the application process (Stage 1 and Stage 2)

If you have any questions during the eligibility check stage, as well as during the application period, contact: FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au. The Department will respond to emailed questions within three working days.

8 The grant selection process

8.1 Assessment of grant applications

As part of Stage 1, we review your eligibility form make sure if addresses the Eligibility Criteria, as only eligible applicants will move to the next stage of assessment.

As part of Stage 2, we will then assess your full application against the Assessment Criteria (see section 6 of these Guidelines) and against other applications as it is a competitive process. We consider your application on its merits, based on:

- how well it meets the assessment criteria
- how it compares to other applications

- whether it provides value with relevant money.

When assessing the extent to which the application represents value with relevant money, we will have regard to:

- the overall objectives to be achieved in providing the grant
- the relative value of the grant sought
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives

In addition:

- when assessing applications for the Digital Support Hub, we will also have regard to how the grant activities proposed in your application will deliver services in a culturally safe way

8.2 Who will assess applications?

In relation to the program, an assessment committee will review each application on its merit and compare it to other eligible applications before recommending to the decision maker which grant applications should be awarded a grant.

The assessment committee will be made up of employees of the Department. The one committee will assess applications under both the Digital Support Hub and the Network of Digital Mentors Programs, including undertaking a value with relevant money assessment on each application.

We may ask external experts (i.e. drawn from Supply Nation) to inform the assessment process, including a financial advisor to assess financial viability. In instances where an expert is not a Commonwealth Official, they will be required to perform their duties in accordance with the CGRPs in the same way every other person involved in the grant process will be.

The assessment committee may seek additional information about you, your application, project partners, related bodies corporate, related entities and associated entities (as defined in the Corporations Act) and related personnel from third party sources, including from other Commonwealth entities. They may do this from within the Commonwealth, even if the sources are not nominated by you as referees. The assessment committees may also consider information about you or your application that is available through the normal course of business.

The assessment committee will recommend to the decision maker which application, or applications, to approve.

8.3 Who will approve grants?

The decision maker decides which applications to approve taking into account the recommendations of the assessment committee and the availability of grant funds for the purposes of both grant programs.

The decision maker's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of each grant
- the funding amount to be awarded under both grants.

9 Notification of application outcomes

We will advise you of the outcome of your application in writing. If you are successful, we will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant.

If you are unsuccessful, we will give you an opportunity to discuss the outcome.

9.1 Feedback on your application

If you are unsuccessful, you may ask for feedback, by contacting us at FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au or in writing at GPO Box 594, Canberra ACT 2601 within one month of being advised of the outcome.

We will give written feedback within one month of your request. You may also request a meeting to receive feedback on your application.

10 Successful grant applications

10.1 The grant agreement

You must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The Digital Support Hub Program will use a standard grant agreement/s.

Each agreement has general terms and conditions that cannot be changed. A sample grant agreement is available on GrantConnect.

We must execute a grant agreement with you before we can make any payments. We are not responsible for any of your expenditure until a grant agreement is executed. If you choose to start your project before you have an executed grant agreement, you do so at your own risk.

Your grant agreement may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the decision maker. We will identify these in the agreement.

After you receive a written offer from us, you will need to execute this grant agreement with the Commonwealth ('execute' means both you and the Commonwealth have signed the agreement). During this time, we will work with you to finalise details.

We base the approval of your grant on the information you provide in your application. You may request changes to the grant agreement. However, we will review any required changes to these details to ensure they do not impact the grant as approved by the decision maker.

The Commonwealth may recover grant funds if there is a breach of the grant agreement.

In addition:

- You must comply with all relevant laws, regulations and Australian Government sanctions in undertaking your project.
- You must also comply with the specific legislation/policies/industry standards that follow. It is a condition of the grant funding that you meet these requirements. We will include these requirements in your grant agreement.
- You will be required to ensure (where it is relevant for your application) that the staff employed by the Digital Support Hub for Stream 2, comply with relevant state or territory legislation including in relation to working with children or other vulnerable cohorts.

10.2 How we pay the grant

The grant agreement/s will state the:

- maximum grant amount to be paid
- eligible expenditure covered by the grant.

We will not exceed the maximum grant amount under any circumstances. If you incur extra costs, you must meet them yourself.

We will make an initial payment on execution of the grant agreement. We will make subsequent payments in arrears, based on your progress against milestones and based on your actual eligible expenditure. Payments are subject to satisfactory progress as outlined in section 12.2 of these Guidelines.

We set aside a percentage of the total grant funding for the final payment. We will pay this when you submit a satisfactory final report demonstrating you have completed outstanding obligations. We may need to adjust your progress payments to align with available grant program funds across financial years and/or to ensure we retain a minimum percentage of grant funding for the final payment.

These features will be clearly outlined in the grant agreement developed with you, if you are selected as the successful provider.

10.3 Grants payments and GST

This grant is Goods and Services Tax (GST) inclusive. If you are registered for GST⁶, where applicable, we will add GST to your grant payment and issue you with a Recipient Created Tax Invoice.

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office.⁷ We do not provide advice on your particular taxation circumstances.

11 Announcement of grants

If successful, your grant will be listed on the GrantConnect website 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by Section 5.4 of the [CGRPs](#)⁸.

12 How we monitor your grant activity

12.1 Keeping us informed

You should let us know if anything is likely to affect your project or organisation. We need to know of any key changes to your organisation or its business activities, particularly if they affect your ability to complete your grant, carry on business and pay debts due.

You must also inform us of any changes to your:

- name
- addresses
- nominated contact details
- bank account details
- business structure. If you become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the grant agreement, you must contact us immediately.

You must notify us of events relating to your grant and provide an opportunity for the Minister for Communications, or their representative, to attend.

12.2 Reporting

You must submit reports in line with the grant agreement. We will expect you to report on:

- progress against agreed project milestones
- project expenditure, including expenditure of grant funds.

The amount of detail you provide in your reports will be relative to the size, complexity and grant amount.

Progress reports typically include:

- details of your progress towards completion of agreed project milestones
- show the total eligible expenditure incurred to date
- include evidence of expenditure
- be submitted by the report due date (you can submit reports ahead of time if you have completed relevant project activities)

⁶ <https://www.ato.gov.au/businesses-and-organisations/gst-excise-and-indirect-taxes/gst/registering-for-gst>

⁷ <https://www.ato.gov.au/>

⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2024L00854/latest/text>

- provide information about the Digital Support Hub

We will only make grant payments when we receive satisfactory progress reports. You must discuss any reporting delays with us as soon as you become aware of them.

Ad hoc reports:

As part of your grant, we may ask you for ad-hoc reports on your grant. This may be to provide an update on progress, or any significant delays or difficulties in completing the project or a milestone.

Final report:

When you complete the project, you must submit a program completion report.

The program completion report typically requires the grantee/s to:

- identify if and how outcomes have been achieved
- include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
- identify the total eligible expenditure incurred for the project
- provide information on the Digital Support Hub
- include a declaration that the grant money was spent in accordance with the grant agreement and a report on any underspends of the grant money
- be submitted by the report due date.

12.3 Grant agreement variations

We recognise that unexpected events may affect your progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your grant agreement. You can request a variation by contacting the Department (FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au).

You should not assume that a variation request will be successful. We will consider your request based on provisions in the grant agreement and the likely impact on achieving outcomes.

Compliance visits

We may visit you during the project period, or at the completion of your project to review your compliance with the grant agreement. We may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement. We will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

12.4 Evaluation

We will evaluate grant programs to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and reports for this purpose. We may also interview you or ask you for more information to help us understand how the applicable grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the program was in achieving its outcomes.

We may contact you up to one year after you finish your grant for more information to assist with this evaluation.

12.5 Acknowledgement

If you make a public statement about an activity funded under the Digital Support Hub program, including in media releases, on social media and in a brochure or publication, you must acknowledge the grant by using the following:

‘This project received grant funding from the Australian Government.’

If you erect signage in relation to the funded project, the signage must contain an acknowledgement of the grant to a similar effect.

If you are successful in receiving a grant, you must seek written permission from the Department prior to any public statements being made, including on social media.

13 Probity

We will make sure that the grant opportunity process is fair, is conducted according to the published Guidelines, is consistent with the CGRPs and incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud and corruption, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct.

These Guidelines may be changed from time-to-time by the Department. When this happens, we will publish the addendum on [GrantConnect](#)⁹. By registering on this website, you will be automatically notified of any changes to these Guidelines.

You should be aware of your obligations under the [National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022](#)¹⁰, noting that under the Act grantees will generally be considered 'contracted service providers' [see [NACC fact sheets](#)¹¹].

13.1 Enquiries and feedback

We welcome your feedback about the policy, programs or service provided by the Department which can be submitted by writing to us via:

[Online Enquiry Form](#) or Mail:

Director, Digital Inclusion Section Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

GPO Box 594 CANBERRA ACT 2601

Any questions you have about grant decisions for this grant opportunity should be sent to FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au

If you do not agree with the way the Department has handled your complaint, you may complain to the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#)¹². The Ombudsman will not usually consider a complaint unless the matter has first been raised directly with the Department.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can be contacted on:

Phone (Toll free): 1300 362 072

Website: www.ombudsman.gov.au

13.2 Conflict of interest

Any conflicts of interest, or perceived conflicts of interest can affect the performance of the grant opportunity or program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if the Department's staff, any member of a committee or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel, including sub-contractors have a:

- professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who can influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer [or member of an external panel]
- relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently or
- relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives a grant under the grant program/ grant opportunity.

You will be asked to declare, as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interest or that, to the best of your knowledge, there are no conflicts of interest.

If you later identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform the Department in writing immediately.

⁹ <https://www.grants.gov.au/>

¹⁰ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2022A00088/latest/text>

¹¹ <https://www.nacc.gov.au/resource-centre/nacc-fact-sheets>

¹² <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>

Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff will be handled as set out in the [Australian Public Service Code of Conduct \(Section 13\(7\)\)](#)¹³ of the [Public Service Act 1999](#)¹⁴ and section 29 (duty to disclose interests) of the [Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013](#). Committee members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

13.3 Privacy

We treat your personal information according to the [Privacy Act 1988](#)¹⁵ and the [Australian Privacy Principles](#)¹⁶. This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- who we give your personal information to.

'Personal information' means information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable:

- (a) whether the information or opinion is true or not and
- (b) whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone else for the primary purpose for which it was collected, unless an exemption under the Australian Privacy Principles applies.

The Australian Government may also use and disclose information about grant applicants and grant recipients under this grant opportunity in any other Australian Government business or function. This includes disclosing grant information on GrantConnect as required for reporting purposes and giving information to the Australian Taxation Office for compliance purposes.

We may share the information you give us with other Commonwealth entities for purposes including government administration, research or service delivery, according to Australian laws.

As part of your application, you declare that you will comply with the Privacy Act and the Australian Privacy Principles and that you will impose the same privacy obligations on officers, employees, agents and subcontractors that you engage to assist with the activity, in respect of personal information you collect, use, store, or disclose in connection with the activity. Accordingly, you must not do anything, which if done by the Department, would breach an Australian Privacy Principle as defined in the Privacy Act.

13.4 Confidential information

Other than information available in the public domain, you agree not to disclose to any person, other than us, any confidential information relating to the grant application and/or agreement, without our prior written approval. The obligation will not be breached where you are required by law, Parliament or a stock exchange to disclose the relevant information or where the relevant information is publicly available (other than through breach of a confidentiality or non-disclosure obligation).

We may at any time, require you to arrange for you; or your employees, agents or subcontractors to give a written undertaking relating to nondisclosure of our confidential information in a form we consider acceptable.

We will keep any information in connection with the grant agreement confidential to the extent that it meets all of the three conditions below:

1. you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
2. the information is commercially sensitive

¹³ <https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/integrity/integrity-resources/code-of-conduct>

¹⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A00538/latest/versions>

¹⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A03712/latest/text>

¹⁶ <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/australian-privacy-principles>

3. revealing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else.

We will not be in breach of any confidentiality agreement if the information is disclosed to:

- the [assessment committee] and other Commonwealth employees and contractors to help us manage the program effectively, including for an integrity purpose
- employees and contractors of our department so we can research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities
- employees and contractors of other Commonwealth agencies for any purposes, including government administration, research or service delivery
- other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government agencies in program reports and consultations
- the Auditor-General, Ombudsman, Privacy Commissioner or National Anti-Corruption Commissioner, or staff of their agencies
- the responsible Minister or Parliamentary Secretary, or
- a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

The grant agreement may also include any specific requirements about special categories of information collected, created or held under the grant agreement.

13.5 Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about this grant opportunity, are subject to the [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#)¹⁷ (FOI Act).

The purpose of the FOI Act is to give members of the public rights of access to information held by the Australian Government and its entities. Under the FOI Act, members of the public can seek access to documents held by the Australian Government. This right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary to protect essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

All Freedom of Information requests must be referred to the Freedom of Information Coordinator in writing.

By mail: Freedom of Information Coordinator

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development Communications, Sport and the Arts

GPO Box 594 CANBERRA ACT 2601

By email: FOI@infrastructure.gov.au

¹⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A02562/latest/versions>

14 Glossary

Term	Definition
accountable authority	see subsection 12(2) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 ¹⁸ (PGPA Act).
administering entity	when an entity that is not responsible for the policy, is responsible for the administration of part or all of the grant administration processes.
assessment criteria	are the specified principles or standards, against which applications will be judged. These criteria are also used to assess the merits of proposals and, in the case of a competitive grant opportunity, to determine application rankings.
commencement date	the expected start date for the grant activity.
Commonwealth entity	a Department of State, or a Parliamentary Department, or a listed entity or a body corporate established by a law of the Commonwealth. See subsections 10(1) and (2) of the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024 (CGRPs) ¹⁹
completion date	the expected date that the grant activity must be completed and the grant spent by.
contracted service provider	a person who is a party to a Commonwealth contract or is a party to a subcontract with a contracted service provider and is responsible for the provision of goods or services under contract, either directly or indirectly.
co-sponsoring entity	when two or more entities are responsible for the policy and the appropriation for outcomes associated with it.
date of effect	can be the date on which a grant agreement is signed or a specified starting date. Where there is no grant agreement, entities must publish information on individual grants as soon as practicable.

¹⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2013A00123/latest/text>

¹⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2024L00854/latest/text>

Term	Definition
decision maker	the person (department's Senior Executive Service, Band 2 member) who makes a decision to award a grant.
Department	the administering entity, being the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts.
Digital Support Hub	the First Nations Digital Support Hub Program
eligibility criteria	refer to the mandatory criteria which must be met to qualify for a grant. Eligibility criteria should be developed to enable objective validation and are either 'met' or 'not met'. Assessment criteria may apply in addition to eligibility criteria.
grant	for the purposes of the CGRPs, a 'grant' is an arrangement for the provision of financial assistance by the Commonwealth or on behalf of the Commonwealth: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. under which relevant money²⁰ or other Consolidated Revenue Fund²¹ (CRF) money²² is to be paid to a grantee other than the Commonwealth and b. which is intended to help address one or more of the Australian Government's policy outcomes while assisting the grantee achieve its objectives.
grant activity/activities	refers to the project/tasks/services that the grantee is required to undertake.
grant agreement	sets out the relationship between the parties to the agreement and specifies the details of the grant.
GrantConnect ²³	is the Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRPs.
grant opportunity	refers to the specific grant round or process where a Commonwealth grant is made available to potential grantees. Grant opportunities may be open or targeted and will reflect the relevant grant selection process.

²⁰ Relevant money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 8, Dictionary.

²¹ <https://www.finance.gov.au/about-us/glossary/pgpa/term-consolidated-revenue-fund-crf>

²² Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 105, Rules in relation to other CRF money.

²³ <https://www.grants.gov.au/>

Term	Definition
grant program	a 'program' carries its natural meaning and is intended to cover a potentially wide range of related activities aimed at achieving government policy outcomes. A grant program is a group of one or more grant opportunities under a single [entity] Portfolio Budget Statement program.
grantee	the individual/organisation which has been selected to receive a grant.
National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC)	the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) is an independent Commonwealth agency. It detects, investigates and reports on serious or systemic corruption in the Commonwealth public sector. The Commission operates under the National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022 ²⁴ .
Digital Mentors	Network of Digital Mentors Program, which will be delivered via a separate Grant and where applicable will have a complementary connection with the Digital Support Hub
PBS Program	described within the entity's Portfolio Budget Statement ²⁵ , PBS programs each link to a single outcome and provide transparency for funding decisions. These high-level PBS programs often comprise a number of lower level, more publicly recognised programs, some of which will be grant programs. A PBS program may have more than one grant program associated with it, and each of these may have one or more grant opportunities.
selection criteria	comprise eligibility criteria and assessment criteria.
selection process	the method used to select potential grantees. This process may involve comparative assessment of applications or the assessment of applications against the eligibility criteria and/or the assessment criteria.

²⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2022A00088/latest/text>

²⁵ <https://budget.gov.au/content/pbs/index.htm>

Term	Definition
value with money	<p>value with money in this document refers to 'value with relevant money' which is a judgement based on the grant proposal representing an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public resources and determined from a variety of considerations.</p> <p>When administering a grant opportunity, an official should consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of each proposal including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of the project proposal and activities • fitness for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives • that the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the grantee and government's outcomes being achieved and • the potential grantee's relevant experience and performance history.

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