

## Network of Digital Mentors Program

### Grant Opportunity Guidelines

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

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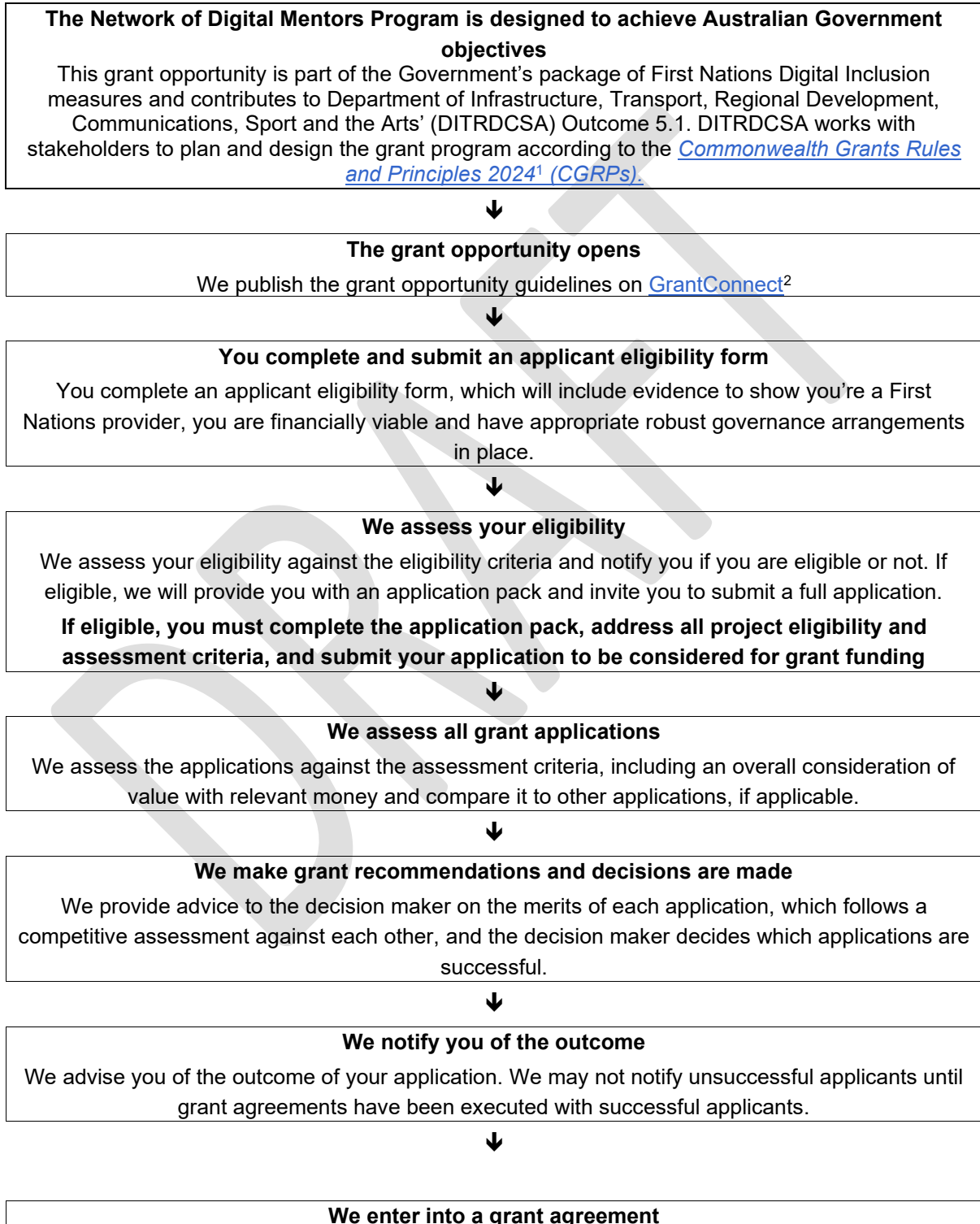
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# 1 The Network of Digital Mentors Program

## Process



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

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.grants.gov.au/>

We will enter into a grant agreement with you if you have been successful. The type of grant agreement is based on the nature of the grant and will be proportional to the risks involved.



#### 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 Network of Digital Mentors Program

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

## 1.1 Introduction

These grant opportunity guidelines (Guidelines) contain information relating to the Network of Digital Mentors (Digital Mentors) 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](#)<sup>3</sup> (CGRPs).

## 2 About the grant program

The Network of Digital Mentors Program 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 \$18 million (GST exclusive) over three years as part of the 2024-25 Budget. Funding is available up 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 has components that can be delivered flexibly so they best meet First Nations consumer expectations and community priorities. While Digital Mentors program and the First Nations Digital Support Hub Program (which is another grant opportunity under the 2024-25 Budget First Nations measures and running in parallel to the Digital Mentors program) will be delivered separately, it is

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

expected that the successful applicant/s will work together to ensure alignment in design and delivery, where possible.

Due to both programs scope and funding being available to deliver up until 30 June 2027, it is the Department's preference for applicants to apply for **only** one program, either the Network of Digital Mentors program or the Digital Support Hub 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 Mentors

The purpose of the Digital Mentors program is to establish a 'train the mentor' model which involves a central coordinator (the trainer) who will deliver training and upskilling to Digital Mentors in remote First Nations communities<sup>4</sup>. The Digital Mentors will help people living in those communities to develop digital skills, understand connectivity options, and be online safely.

In delivering grant activities for the Digital Mentors, the grantee will:

### **Stream 1 (Phase 1) – Train the Mentor (establish within 6 months of executed grant agreement)**

- develop training modules, which can be used to train Digital Mentors on key topics relating to digital inclusion, drawing on existing programs and materials as appropriate
  - these modules will cover issues such as troubleshooting problems with internet connection or devices, raising awareness of scams and how to avoid them, increasing confidence in the use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) and Digital ID.
- develop a national catalogue of digital literacy materials for use by the Digital Mentors in their engagement with communities, in conjunction with materials available from the Digital Support Hub
- identify and train up to two Digital Mentors (with a minimum of at least one) in the communities with community Wi-Fi services funded by the Australian Government (the full list will be provided to eligible applicants as part of the full application pack)
- as part of the process of engagement, Digital Mentors will need to have undergone a National Police Check and any other procedures to comply with relevant state and territory
- employ and support those Digital Mentors to deliver training and digital mentoring within their communities and/or surrounding communities.

### **Stream 1 (Phase 2) – Place-based approach (establish within 9 months of executed grant agreement)**

- The Train the Mentor will also identify communities (excluding the Community Wi-Fi sites that are part of Phase 1) suitable for Digital Mentors, taking into consideration access to connectivity and devices, community need, and population size
- support identified communities to identify a Digital Mentor, in collaboration with relevant community-controlled organisations
- employ and support those Digital Mentors to deliver training and digital mentoring within their communities and/or surrounding communities.
- identify and indicate any connections with National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) programs, including areas such as the Remote Australia Employment Service (RAES) and the Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program.

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<sup>4</sup> The location is classified by the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\)](#) as 'Remote Australia' or 'Very Remote Australia'

The Digital Mentors grant program will contribute to the DITRDCA'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 Grants Available

The Australian Government is providing up to \$18 million until 30 June 2027 for the Digital Mentors program. There is no minimum amount which you can apply for in your application.

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 \$18 million is made up of one stream and two phases:

- Stream 1 (Phase 1) (train the mentor): \$18 million for a central trainer / coordinator (the trainer) to identify and deliver training to Digital Mentors in communities with community Wi-Fi services funded by the Australian Government, as well as train the Digital Mentors approved through the place-based approach under Phase 2
- Stream 1 (Phase 2) (place-based approach): the train the mentor provider would support other communities, identified during delivery of Phase 1, to identify and train additional Digital Mentors.

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 phase of work under the Program.

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

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.

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 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 and part of the eligibility form you must be one of the following entity types and provide evidence that you are:

- 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
- 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.

## 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 website<sup>5</sup> on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme'
- an individual
- overseas resident/organisation

## 4.3 What qualifications, skills or checks are required?

Staff working with the trainer, as well as the Digital Mentors engaged to work within communities must maintain the following certification/registration as applicable in each relevant jurisdiction:

- National Police Certificate
- Working with Vulnerable People registration
- Working with Children check
- Current Australian driver's licence (if required).

# 5 What the grant money can be used for

## 5.1 Eligible grant activities

Under Stream 1 (Phase 1) of the program, eligible grants activities will relate to:

- development of training modules, which can be used to train Digital Mentors on key topics relating to digital inclusion, drawing on existing programs and materials as appropriate
  - these modules will cover issues such as troubleshooting problems with internet connection or devices, raising awareness of scams and how to avoid them,

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/>

increasing confidence in the use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) and Digital ID.

- development of digital literacy materials for use by the Digital Mentors in their engagement with communities
- identification and training of up to two Digital Mentors (with a minimum of at least one) in communities with community Wi-Fi services funded by the Australian Government (a full list will be provided to eligible applicants as part of the full application pack in Stage 2)
- as part of the process of engagement, Digital Mentors will need to have undergone a National Police Check and any other procedures to comply with relevant state and territory
- employment of those Digital Mentors to deliver training and digital mentoring within their communities and/or surrounding communities.

Under Phase 2 of the program, eligible grant activities will relate to:

- identification of communities (excluding the Community Wi-Fi sites that are part of Phase 1) suitable for Digital Mentors, taking into consideration access to connectivity and devices, community need, and population size
- support for identified communities to identify a Digital Mentor, in collaboration with relevant community-controlled organisations
- employment of Digital Mentors to deliver training and digital mentoring within their communities and/or surrounding communities.

## 5.2 Eligible locations

Under Phase 1, Digital Mentors will be identified and engaged in communities with community Wi-Fi services funded by the Australian Government.

A list of these selected Community Wi-Fi sites will be provided to the eligible applicants when they are provided with a full application pack.

As part of Phase 2, this will include activities at different locations (outside of the selected Community Wi-Fi sites under Phase 1), as long as they satisfy the following requirements:

- the location is classified by the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\)](#) as 'Remote Australia' or 'Very Remote Australia'
- the location has access to affordable connectivity
- the remote community has access to Devices by which to connect to the telecommunications infrastructure available within their community
- you are able to identify up to 2 individuals (of different genders preferred) within each remote community, who are willing and able to be trained by the 'train the mentor' project by the central coordinator as part of Phase 1, and who have undergone a National Police Check and any other procedures to comply with relevant state and territory legislation in relation to working with children and vulnerable people.

For Phase 2, the application should clearly outline if the delivery of Digital Mentors will be in a specific region, state or territory.

It is expected that the grantee will work collaboratively across Phases 1 and 2 to ensure a consistent and cohesive approach to digital mentoring.

## 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.

For Stream 1 (across Phases 1 and 2), eligible expenditure items are:

- administrative costs directly related to delivery such as legal advice, program management and coordination, human resourcing, work health and safety and procurement requirements
- training of Digital Mentors to support them in undertaking their role
- wages for Digital Mentors for hours worked
- a standard, single laptop and mobile phone for each Digital Mentor
- domestic travel costs (e.g. economy flights, taxi, hire car ground transfers and other occupational health and safety requirements) and accommodation expenses (up to 4 stars) for:
  - Digital Mentors to attend training, or to travel to nearby communities to perform a Digital Mentor role within those communities. There is no minimum or maximum length of each visit, so long as they are reasonable and necessary to achieving the objectives of the Program
  - travel for the purposes of delivering training to Digital Mentors in communities. There is no minimum or maximum length of each visit, so long as they are reasonable and necessary to achieving the objectives of the Program.

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 and in the eligibility form, you should provide 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.

We will assess your application with each criterion weighted equally. After a competitive assessment process, we will only award funding to the applicant/s that have satisfied all assessment criteria.

### Criterion 1 – Proven Ability to Deliver

You should demonstrate your track record of delivering training, or support programs to remote First Nations communities and your capacity to deliver the program within the specific cost and timeframe.

Under Phase1, you must identify:

- your specialist ability to deliver digital training and technical support to remote First Nations communities in a culturally appropriate manner

- your track record and capacity to deliver Phase 1 for the Digital Mentors, including example of delivering similar projects; this may include previous examples of delivering state and territory program
- your access to sufficient resourcing and expertise by which to deliver Phase 1
- evidence of contingency planning which mitigates risks of delays
- the maturity of your proposal including whether you have a project plan, risk management plan, or any other planning you have undertaken.

Under Phase 2, you must identify:

- your ability to support the delivery of digital training and technical support to Digital Mentors in identified communities in remote First Nations communities in a culturally appropriate manner
- your access to sufficient resourcing and expertise to support the Digital Mentors

### **Criterion 2 – Remote Community Identification and Prioritisation**

Under Phase 2, you should clearly indicate the mechanism by which you will:

- identify remote communities and assess their access to Connectivity, including assuring sufficient Devices by which to connect to telecommunications services are available within the remote community; and
- ensure remote communities are effectively prioritised for Digital Mentors and that Digital Mentors are not deployed in remote communities who are unable to connect, or have limited access to, the internet.

You must demonstrate this through identifying:

- how connectivity access in remote communities will be identified
- how the access of remote communities to devices will be identified
- any other indicators which will be used to identify, prioritise and assess the suitability of communities for Digital Mentors, including views of community-controlled organisations.

When submitting your full application, you must clearly outline if a national-reach will be used to support a network of Digital Mentors across Australia under part of Phase 2, or whether a regional or jurisdictional-reach will be deployed.

### **Criterion 3 – Identification and selection of digital mentors**

In addressing this criterion, you should identify the process around how Digital Mentors will be identified and selected – including selection criteria and skill requirements Digital Mentors will be asked to demonstrate.

You must demonstrate this through identifying:

- for Phases 1 and 2, how prospective Digital Mentors will be identified, what process will be undertaken to select them and how this process will be flexible to meet the needs of individual communities
- for Phases 1 and 2, how you will ensure Digital Mentors are able to support community members to use the information available on the First Nations Digital Support Hub website and other platforms such as MyGov, Digital ID and reporting options under the eSafety Commissioner
- for Phases 1 and 2, how you will ensure prospective Digital Mentors that come to you for training, either have, or are willing to undergo, a National Police Check and any other procedures to comply with relevant state and territory legislation in relation to working with children and vulnerable people.

### **Criterion 4 – Engaging and leveraging other stakeholders**

The grantee for the Digital Mentors must work in partnership with the grantee(s) of the First Nations Digital Support Hub (Digital Support Hub) and collaborate with other similar programs and networks (where applicable) being delivered by state and territory governments, industry and the private sector.

You should outline your approach to work alongside, collaborate with and support the Digital Support Hub and other like programs, to minimise duplication.

You must demonstrate this through identifying:

- how you will work with and support Digital Mentors in dispersed communities, while leveraging and complementing the Digital Support Hub (both using the resources and information on the website and the call centre) and other digital mentoring or digital literacy networks, 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 Mentors project that you are applying for
- whether you are able to source or leverage any connections with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) programs, including areas such as the Remote Australia Employment Service (RAES) and the Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program.

### **Criterion 5 – Training modules and delivery**

In addressing this criterion, you should identify the relevant process for each Phase of work under the Stream 1 of the Digital Mentors program.

Under Phase 1 your response should outline how you will:

- identify training modules currently available in the market relevant to Digital Mentors
- develop Digital Training Modules, which can be offered equally to all participating communities under Phase 2
- remain flexible enough to customise your outreach service to suit the needs of the communities and Digital Mentors. You would be expected to deliver training options which suit the individual needs of communities under Phase 2 (place-based approach)
- identify whether you are able to leverage any existing training offerings in the development of training modules
- maintain a record on which training modules are sought after most by Digital Mentors to inform future program consideration by the Department.

Under Phase 2 (place-based approach), your response should outline how you will:

- work to provide general support for the delivery of training to the Digital Mentors in your community and/or region
- demonstrate how you will engage with Digital Mentors in different communities and what you will do to facilitate this collaboration

### **Criterion 6 – Program costs**

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 Mentors, 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 with state and territory government, industry or other organisations.

If applicable, in your project budget you should indicate whether there are any administrative benefits, cost efficiencies, or savings, which could be realised if you were successful in being awarded funding 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 addenda<sup>6</sup> 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](mailto:FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au)
  - Full application by 5:00PM (AEST) on TBC for the Digital Mentors Program and Stream 1, which includes Phase 1 ('train the mentor') and Phase 2 (placed-based approach).

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](mailto: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.

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](mailto:FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au).

## 7.1 Attachments to the application

### Documentation for Stage 1 of Assessment

We require you to submit the following documents with your eligibility form:

- 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 your application. Also, you should identify any cost efficiencies which could be realised 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

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

(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 Mentors Program. We encourage organisations to consider this an option where appropriate.

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 Mentors Program

Digital Mentors Activity	Timeframe
Phase 1 ('train the mentor') and Phase 2 (placed-based approach)	
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

<b>Digital Mentors Activity</b> Phase 1 ('train the mentor') and Phase 2 (placed-based approach)	<b>Timeframe</b>
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](mailto: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 and make sure it 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
- extent to which the geographic location of the application matches identified priorities
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives
- how things like Connectivity, Affordability, access and digital ability of communities will be managed to ensure value with money is achieved.

In addition:

- when assessing applications for the Digital Mentors program, we will also have regard to how the grant activities proposed in your application will deliver services in a culturally safe way and be connected to the Digital Support Hub more broadly.
- when assessing applications for the Digital Mentors, we will also have regard to how the grant activities proposed in your application will target remote communities or individuals.

## 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](mailto: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 Mentors Program will use standard grant agreement.

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 that the staff employed by the Digital Mentors, 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 GST<sup>7</sup>, 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.<sup>8</sup> We do not provide advice on your particular taxation circumstances.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ato.gov.au/businesses-and-organisations/gst-excise-and-indirect-taxes/gst/registering-for-gst>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ato.gov.au/>

## 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](#)<sup>9</sup>.

## 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)
- provide information about the Digital Mentors and progress made to improve digital inclusion within communities.

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:

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2024L00854/latest/text>

- 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 Mentors and progress within communities that the digital mentors are active in
- 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](mailto: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 Mentors 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](#)<sup>10</sup>. By registering on this website, you will be automatically notified of any changes to these Guidelines.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.grants.gov.au/>

You should be aware of your obligations under the [National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022](#)<sup>11</sup>, noting that under the Act grantees will generally be considered 'contracted service providers' [see [NACC fact sheets](#)<sup>12</sup>].

### 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](mailto: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](#)<sup>13</sup>. 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](http://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.

Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff will be handled as set out in the [Australian Public Service Code of Conduct \(Section 13\(7\)\)](#)<sup>14</sup> of the [Public Service Act 1999](#)<sup>15</sup> 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.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2022A00088/latest/text>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nacc.gov.au/resource-centre/nacc-fact-sheets>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/integrity/integrity-resources/code-of-conduct>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A00538/latest/versions>

### 13.3 Privacy

We treat your personal information according to the [Privacy Act 1988](#)<sup>16</sup> and the [Australian Privacy Principles](#)<sup>17</sup>. 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
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

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A03712/latest/text>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/australian-privacy-principles>

- 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](#)<sup>18</sup> (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](mailto:FOI@infrastructure.gov.au)

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A02562/latest/versions>

## 14 Glossary

Term	Definition
accountable authority	see subsection 12(2) of the <a href="#">Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013</a> <sup>19</sup> (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.
affordable	this means a Connectivity or telecommunications service which the majority of people in the community can afford to access through either commercial means, or because the service is offered to the community for free (for example through community Wi-Fi).
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 PGPA Act
<a href="#">Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024 (CGRPs)</a> <sup>20</sup>	establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and articulate the expectations for all non-corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration. Under this overarching framework, non-corporate Commonwealth entities undertake grants administration based on the mandatory requirements and key principles of grants administration.
completion date	the expected date that the grant activity must be completed and the grant spent by.
connectivity	means any type of telecommunications service by which the internet can be accessed and may include but is not limited to the National Broadband Network, or telecommunications services such as 4G and 5G but could include emerging technologies such as Low Earth Orbit Satellites.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2013A00123/latest/text>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2024L00854/latest/text>

Term	Definition
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.
decision maker	the person 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.
Device	means any type of hardware device capable of sending, receiving or otherwise transmitting information. This may include but is not limited to a mobile handset, table, laptop, or computer.
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. under which relevant money<sup>21</sup> or other <a href="#">Consolidated Revenue Fund</a><sup>22</sup> (CRF) money<sup>23</sup> is to be paid to a grantee other than the Commonwealth and</li> <li>b. which is intended to help address one or more of the Australian Government's policy outcomes while assisting the grantee achieve its objectives.</li> </ul>
grant activity/activities	refers to the project/tasks/services that the grantee is required to undertake.

<sup>21</sup> Relevant money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 8, Dictionary.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.finance.gov.au/about-us/glossary/pgpa/term-consolidated-revenue-fund-crf>

<sup>23</sup> Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 105, Rules in relation to other CRF money.

Term	Definition
grant agreement	sets out the relationship between the parties to the agreement and specifies the details of the grant.
<a href="#">GrantConnect</a> <sup>24</sup>	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.
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 <a href="#">National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022</a> <sup>25</sup> .
Digital Mentors	Network of Digital Mentors Program
PBS Program	described within the entity's <a href="#">Portfolio Budget Statement</a> <sup>26</sup> , 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.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.grants.gov.au/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2022A00088/latest/text>

<sup>26</sup> <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"> <li>• the quality of the project proposal and activities</li> <li>• fitness for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives</li> <li>• that the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the grantee and government’s outcomes being achieved and</li> <li>• the potential grantee’s relevant experience and performance history.</li> </ul>

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