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MS23-003398



Australian Government

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

To: Catherine King (for decision)

Subject: Growing Regions Program - Grant Opportunity Guidelines Approval for Public Release

Critical Date: Please action by 4 May 2023.

Reason: To enable soft launch of Growing Regions Program by 10 May 2023.

Recommendations:

1. That you agree and **sign** the letter to the Minister for Finance, Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, at **Attachment A** seeking her agreement to the public release of the Growing Regions Program guidelines in accordance with the Estimates Memorandum 2018/39.

Signed / Not Signed

2. That you **approve** the Growing Regions Program grant opportunity guidelines for Round One for a soft program launch at **Attachment B**.

Approved / Not Approved

The Hon Catherine King MP

Date: 2.5.23

Comments:**Key Points:**

1. The Growing Regions Program was allocated \$300 million to conduct the first round over three years from 2023-24 (refer MS22-002179). ✓
2. The Department of Industry, Science and Resources' Business Grants Hub will manage the open, competitive program on behalf of the department and has finalised the grant opportunity guidelines (the guidelines). ✓

s42

4. A letter to the Minister of Finance has been drafted for your signature seeking agreement for the public release of the guidelines (**Attachment A**). ✓

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5. Once approved the program can be launched and the guidelines will be published on GrantConnect, the Business Grants Hub page and the department's website in accordance with the Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines and the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act rules. ✓
6. The guidelines have been updated from the draft guidelines you previously approved. Changes were made to address the outstanding issue raised by you, namely the tiering of co-funding exemptions, as advised to your office by email on 17 April 2023. Additional changes address the feedback received from the Departments of Finance and Prime Minister and Cabinet. No significant policy changes were made. (Attachment B) ✓

Financial impacts:

7. s34(3)

s34(2)

s34(3)s34(2)

s34(3)

s34(2)

Legal/Legislative impacts:

8. Growing Regions Program expenditure was subsequently reprofiled and approved in an exchange of letters between you (refer MS22-002348) and the Prime Minister (refer MC23-002194).

s47C

s42

Stakeholder Implications:

13. The opening of this program is highly anticipated by stakeholders. The program is likely to be popular and oversubscribed. ✓

Consultation:

14. The department has consulted with Australian Government Solicitor, the departments of Finance and Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Business Grants Hub on the program guidelines.
15. The department also consulted the department's Urban Policy, Precincts and Partnerships Branch, Regional Development Australia committees, local government associations and identified peak bodies on the design principles of the program.

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Media Opportunities:

16. A proposed media package was provided to your office on 26 April 2023 for consideration.

Attachments:

Attachment A: Letter to the Minister for Finance, the Hon Katy Gallagher

Attachment B: Growing Regions Program Grant Opportunity Guidelines – Round One

Attachment C: Grant opportunity guidelines self-assessment risk analysis

Cleared By: s22(1)(a)(ii)

Position: A/g Assistant Secretary

Division: Regional Development and Local

Government/Regional Programs Branch

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Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)

Cleared Date: 02 May 2023

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The Hon Catherine King MP

**Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
Member for Ballarat**

Ref: MS23-003398

Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Finance
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Katy,

I am writing to seek your agreement to the release of the attached grant opportunity guidelines for Round One of the Growing Regions Program (the program) following the Australian Government's new regional program announcement as part of the 2022-23 October Budget ^{s34(2)} and ^{s34(2)}.

The aim of this program is to drive regional economic prosperity by providing access to funding for capital works for infrastructure across Australia's rural and regional areas. There is \$300 million available in Round One of the program, which will run over three years from 2023-24. I seek your approval to publish the grant opportunity guidelines for Round One in early May 2023, with the round expected to open to applications in early July 2023.

^{s34(3)}

^{s42}

^{s47C}

Thank you for your consideration of this request and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Catherine King MP

2 /05/2023

Enc: Grant opportunity guidelines for Round One of Growing Regions Program

Cc: Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP
The Treasurer, the Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP



Australian Government

Department of Industry, Science and Resources

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

Grant Opportunity Guidelines

Growing Regions Program – Round 1

Opening date:	[dd mmmm yyyy]
Closing date and time:	[00.00 Australian Eastern Daylight Time or Australian Eastern Standard Time] on [dd mmmm yyyy] Please take account of time zone differences when submitting your application.
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA)
Administering entity:	Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR)
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, contact us on 13 28 46.

Date guidelines released:	[dd mmmm yyyy]
Type of grant opportunity:	Open competitive

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1. Growing Regions Program processes

The Growing Regions Program is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

This grant opportunity is part of the above grant program which contributes to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts' (DITRDCA) Outcome 3: *Strengthening the sustainability, capacity and diversity of Australia's regions, including northern Australia, including through facilitating local partnerships between all levels of government and local communities; through investment in infrastructure and measures that stimulate economic growth; and providing grants and financial assistance.* DITRDCA works with stakeholders to plan and design the grant program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines \(CGRGs\)](#).



Stage one of the grant opportunity opens

We publish the grant guidelines on business.gov.au and [GrantConnect](#).



STAGE ONE: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

You complete and submit an Expression of Interest (EOI)

You complete the EOI application form, addressing all the eligibility and assessment criteria in order for your application to be considered.



We assess all grant applications

We assess the EOI against eligibility criteria and notify you if you are not eligible.
We analyse all eligible EOIs against assessment criterion 1 – EOI to understand how the project aligns with the program objectives and how ready it is to proceed, and we provide this information to the multi-party Parliamentary panel (the panel).
The panel assesses your application against assessment criterion 2 - EOI and compares it to other eligible applications.



We make grant recommendations

The panel recommends which projects will be invited to submit a full application (stage two), DITRDCA approves which applications proceed.



We notify you of the outcome

We advise you of the outcome of your EOI application.
We may not notify unsuccessful applicants until all successful applicants have been notified.



STAGE TWO: FULL APPLICATION

Stage two of the grant opportunity opens

Successful applicants from the EOI stage will be invited to apply.



You complete and submit a grant application

You complete the application form, addressing all the eligibility and assessment criteria in order for your application to be considered.



We assess all grant applications

We assess the full applications against eligibility criteria and notify you if you are not eligible. We assess eligible applications against the assessment criteria including an overall consideration of value with money and compare it to other eligible applications.

We make grant recommendations

DITRDCA provides advice to the decision maker on the merits of each application.



Grant decisions are made

The decision maker decides which applications are successful.



We notify you of the outcome

We advise you of the outcome of your application. We may not notify unsuccessful applicants until grant agreements have been executed with successful applicants.



We enter into a grant agreement

We will enter into a grant agreement with successful applicants. 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 complete the grant activity as set out in your grant agreement. We manage the grant by working with you, monitoring your progress and making payments. You will notify us early if there are risks to project activities and/or timeframes so we can work closely with you to ensure project success.



Evaluation of the Growing Regions Program

DITRDCA will evaluate the specific grant activity and Growing Regions Program as a whole. We base this on information you provide to us and that we collect from various sources.

1.1. Introduction

These guidelines contain information for the Growing Regions Program. The Australian Government has announced a total of \$600 million over 3 years from 2023-24 to drive regional economic prosperity by providing access to funding for capital works for infrastructure across Australia's rural and regional areas. Funding will be provided through 2 rounds.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant program/grant opportunity
- the eligibility and assessment criteria
- how we consider and assess grant applications
- how we notify applicants and enter into grant agreements with grantees
- how we monitor and evaluate grantees' performance
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

This grant opportunity and process will be administered by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (the department/DISR) on behalf of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA).

We have defined key terms used in these guidelines in the glossary at section 14.

You should read this document carefully before you fill out an application.

2. About the grant program

The Growing Regions Program – Round 1 (the program) will run over 3 years from 2023-24 to 2025-26. The program was announced as part of the October 2022 Budget.

The program will deliver community and economic benefits by investing in community-focused infrastructure which revitalises regions and enhances amenity and liveability throughout regional Australia.

The objectives of the program are:

- constructing or upgrading community infrastructure that fills an identified gap or need for community infrastructure
- contributing to achieving a wide range of community socio-economic outcomes.

The intended outcomes of the program are:

- delivery of community-focused infrastructure which contributes to local and regional priorities
- provision of infrastructure which benefits the community by improving equity and supports diverse social inclusion
- to contribute to the achievement of broader Government priorities such as net zero emissions, gender equity, and/or First Nations priorities
- growing local economies and enhancing amenity and liveability in the regions.

Growing Regions Program Round 1 will be delivered through a two-stage selection process.

Applicants must first submit an Expression of Interest at Stage 1 and if successful, applicants will be invited to submit a full application at Stage 2. For further details see section 6.

There will be other grant opportunities as part of this program and we will publish the opening and closing dates and any other relevant information on business.gov.au and [GrantConnect](#).

We administer the program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines \(CGRGs\)](#)¹.

3. Grant amount and grant period

3.1. Grants available

The Australian Government has announced a total of \$600 million over 3 years for the program. For Round 1, \$300 million is available over 3 years.

- The minimum grant amount is \$500,000.
- The maximum grant amount is \$15 million.

You are required to contribute towards the project. Co-funding requirements are:

Co-funding group	Project circumstance	Total Commonwealth Government funding towards eligible project costs
Group 1	<p>Projects run by First Nations Community Controlled Organisations.(as defined in Section 14)</p> <p>or</p> <p>Projects located in 'very remote' locations per the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Remoteness Structure as detailed in the mapping tool [insert hyperlink]</p> <p>or</p> <p>Projects located in areas impacted by natural disaster from 1 May 2022 onwards as defined in Australian disasters (disasterassist.gov.au) where the specific project site was directly impacted by the disaster.</p>	Up to 90 per cent of eligible project costs
Group 2	<p>Projects located in 'remote' locations per the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Remoteness Structure as detailed in the mapping tool [insert hyperlink]</p> <p>or</p> <p>Projects run by the following 'low rate based' councils, determined using the ratio of Financial Assistance Grant to Net Rate Income:</p> <p>Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council</p> <p>Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council</p> <p>Shire of Woodanilling</p> <p>District Council of Orroroo Carrieton</p>	Up to 70 per cent of eligible project costs

¹ <https://www.finance.gov.au/government/commonwealth-grants/commonwealth-grants-rules-guidelines>

	Shire of Tammin District Council of Peterborough Shire of Wyalkatchem Shire of Wickepin Shire of Dowerin District Council of Karoonda East Murray Shire of Kellerberrin Hay Shire Council Coolamon Shire Council Lockhart Shire Council Balranald Shire Council Weddin Shire Council Murrumbidgee Council Tenterfield Shire Council Narrandera Shire Council Wentworth Shire Council Bland Shire Council Lachlan Council.	
Group 3	All remaining projects.	Up to 50 per cent of eligible project costs

You are responsible for the remaining eligible and ineligible project costs.

Contributions to your project must be cash.

Other funding can come from any source including state, territory and local government grants.

You cannot use funding from other Commonwealth grants to fund the balance of project expenditure not covered by a grant under the Growing Regions Program.

3.2. Project period

You must complete your project by 31 December 2025. We may approve extensions provided you complete your project by the program end date.

4. Eligibility criteria

We cannot consider your application if you do not satisfy all eligibility criteria.

4.1. Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

To be eligible you must:

- be a not-for-profit organisation with a current Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission's (ACNC) registration or Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Organisations (ORIC) registration

or

- be a local government agency or body

and

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN), or ORIC registration
- deliver the project in an eligible location
- commence the project no later than 15 May 2024
- own the land/infrastructure being upgraded or built upon, or have the landowner's permission to use the land/infrastructure.

and be one of the following entities:

- an Australian company incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001
- a co-operative
- an incorporated association
- Indigenous Corporation / an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation registered under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (Cth)
- Local Government² / an Australian local government agency or body as defined in section 14

For the purposes of the program, we also consider the following organisations to be local government bodies:

Organisation legal name	ABN
Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara	77 261 612 162
Maralinga Tjarutja	90 178 229 972
Gerard Community Council Aboriginal Corporation	99 725 510 595
Nipapanha Community Aboriginal Corporation	97 841 764 643
Yalata Community Council Incorporated	93 356 134 967
Cocos (Keeling) Islands Shire Council	12 325 522 841
Lord Howe Island Board	33 280 968 043
Norfolk Island Regional Council	60 103 855 713
Outback Communities Authority	46 594 368 490
Shire of Christmas Island	94 494 925 146
Silverton Village Committee Incorporated	94 820 037 891
Tibooburra Village Committee Incorporated	58 160 430 241

² Local Government is an entity established under state or territory local government legislation, for the purposes of governing local areas within state or territory. In the states, they are generally referred to as local councils.

If you are applying as a Trustee on behalf of a Trust³, the Trustee must have an eligible entity type as listed above.

Joint applications are acceptable, provided you have a lead organisation who is the main driver of the project and is eligible to apply. For further information on joint applications, refer to section 7.4.

4.2. Additional eligibility requirements

We can only accept applications where you provide:

- evidence of a cash contribution from another source (for example state government), the source must provide you with formal documentation confirming the cash contribution so you can attach it to your application (see section 7.3)
- evidence to support the request for co-funding where the Commonwealth is funding 70 per cent to 90 per cent
- evidence to demonstrate eligibility of your entity type
- recent quotes for major costs as part of your EOI and your full application (if invited to apply)
- evidence that you either own the land/infrastructure being built/upgraded upon, or that you have the landowner's permission to use the land/infrastructure

We cannot waive the eligibility criteria under any circumstances.

4.3. Who is not eligible to apply for a grant?

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- an organisation, or your project partner is an organisation, included on the National Redress Scheme's website on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme'
- an employer of 100 or more employees that has not complied with the Workplace Gender Equality Act (2012)
- income tax exempt
- an individual
- a partnership
- a Regional Development Australia Committee
- an unincorporated association
- any organisation not included in section 4.1
- a trust (however, an incorporated trustee may apply on behalf of a trust)
- a Commonwealth, state or territory government body
- a non-corporate Commonwealth entity
- a non-corporate State or Territory Entity
- a non-corporate State or Territory Statutory Authority
- an international entity

³ Trusts are not legal entities in their own right – to be eligible, only the Trustee for the Trust can apply by providing the signed Trust Deed and any subsequent variations with the application form. Trustees must be an eligible entity type as stated in section 4.1. Both the Trust's and Trustee's details will be collected in the application form.

- sole trader
- a for-profit organisation
- university, technical college, school, hospital or aged care
- resort management board
- in an ineligible location as detailed in section 5.2.

5. What the grant money can be used for

5.1. Eligible grant activities

To be eligible your project must:

- be aimed at constructing new community infrastructure or expanding or upgrading existing infrastructure for wider community benefit
- not have commenced construction
- not have received Commonwealth funding to undertake the same grant activities
- have a minimum eligible expenditure of at least \$555,556 (group 1), \$714,286 (group 2) or \$1,000,000 (group 3) depending on co-funding requirements as outlined in section 3.1.

Eligible activities must directly relate to the project and must include at least one of the following:

- constructing new community infrastructure
- expanding or upgrading existing infrastructure for wider community benefit

Examples of these activities include but not limited to:

- community hubs and centres (youth centres, men's sheds)
- art galleries/libraries/museums/cultural facilities
- aquatic/sports centres
- social and community infrastructure which encourages economic and social liveability

All activities must be strategically aligned to regional priorities and benefit the wider community. This will need to be addressed through the assessment criteria.

We may also approve other activities.

5.2. Eligible locations

Your project must be delivered in an eligible location. All eligible locations must be outside of the Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSA) as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Use the [mapping tool](#) to determine eligibility of your project location.

5.2.1. Ineligible locations

The following are ineligible locations:

- Statistical Area Level 4 - Greater Sydney
- Statistical Area Level 4 - Greater Melbourne
- Statistical Area Level 4 - Greater Perth
- Statistical Area Level 4 - Greater Adelaide
- Statistical Area Level 4 - Greater Brisbane
- Statistical Area Level 4 - Greater Darwin

- Statistical Area Level 4 - Greater Hobart
- All of ACT.

5.3. Eligible expenditure

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure you have incurred on an agreed project as defined in your grant agreement.

- For guidance on eligible expenditure, refer to appendix A
- For guidance on ineligible expenditure, refer to appendix B.

We may update the guidance on eligible and ineligible expenditure from time to time. If your application is successful, the version in place when you submitted your application applies to your project.

Not all expenditure on your project may be eligible for grant funding. The program delegate (who is a manager within the department with responsibility for administering the program) makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be a direct cost of the project
- be incurred by you for required project audit activities.

You must incur the project expenditure between the project start and end date for it to be eligible unless stated otherwise. You must not commence your project until you execute a grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

6. The assessment criteria

6.1. Stage one - Expression of Interest

You must address all assessment criteria in your application.

The application form asks questions that relate to the assessment criterion below. The amount of detail and supporting evidence you provide in your application should be relative to the project size, complexity and grant amount requested. You should provide evidence to support your answers. The application form displays character limits for each response.

Projects which are assessed as meeting all eligibility requirements will be considered by the multi-party Parliamentary panel. The panel will consider and score your application against how strongly it aligns with the regional priorities of your area as per the matrix at Appendix C, using your response against criterion 2.

6.2. Assessment criterion 1 – EOI

To what extent is your project ready to proceed and how does it align to the program objectives (non-weighted)?

You should demonstrate this through identifying:

- how advanced the project designs are
- how far you have progressed the tender process
- the extent to which your project fills an identified gap or need for community infrastructure

- d. the extent to which your project will contribute to achieving a wide range of community socio-economic outcomes.

6.3. Assessment criterion 2 - EOI

How does your project align with regional priorities for the area (5 points)?

You should demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. which regional priorities are being addressed and how your project addresses these priorities.

Projects will be ranked and the panel will recommend applicants to be invited to submit a full application.

If invited to submit a full application, you will be asked to provide more detailed responses and evidence to support your answers as outlined in section 7.3.

6.4. Stage two – full application

You must address all assessment criteria in your application. We will assess your application based on the weighting given to each criterion.

The application form asks questions that relate to the assessment criteria below. The amount of detail and supporting evidence you provide in your application should be relative to the project size, complexity and grant amount requested. You should provide evidence to support your answers. The application form displays character limits for each response.

We will only award funding applications that score at least 60 per cent against each assessment criterion.

6.5. Assessment criterion 1 – full application

Contribution to economic opportunity and social and community inclusion (40 points)

Economic opportunities for a region may include increases in economic activity, improvements in productivity, wider access to markets or fairer and more equitable economic outcomes. Social and community inclusion may cover improving community connections and providing opportunities for learning and knowledge creation.

You should demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. the extent to which your project meets the needs of the community
- b. the economic benefits that your project will deliver for the community and/or region during and beyond the term of funding
- c. the social benefits that your project will deliver for the community and/or region during and beyond the term of funding.

Examples of how your project could deliver social and economic benefits may include but is not limited to:

- increasing Indigenous economic participation, including Indigenous employment and supplier-use outcomes.
- increasing access to community services and infrastructure
- supporting or protecting local heritage and culture
- increasing community volunteering

- the use of local suppliers and goods, especially those that employ the use of sustainable work practices/goods
- increasing the number or value of jobs, new businesses or the production of goods and services in the region (this includes direct and indirect opportunities created through the project)
- meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse socio-economic and cultural groups, such as First Nations people.

6.6. Assessment criterion 2 – full application

Alignment with broader Government and regional strategic priorities (20 points).

You should demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. the extent to which your proposal aligns with social, economic and environmental priorities in your region, including alignment with any local, regional, state or federal plans or policies
- b. the extent to which your proposal contributes to broader Government priorities such as net zero emissions, gender equity, and/or First Nations priorities
- c. how your proposal has considered environmental impacts and any potential role of environmentally sustainable design, including nature-based solutions and circular economy principles
- d. the extent of community support for the project, including outcomes from any consultation undertaken with the local community, such as First Nations groups and diverse socio-economic and cultural groups.

The evidence you provide to support this may include, but is not limited to:

- alignment with your Regional Development Australia (RDA) regional plan, if applicable⁴, your local government regional plan, or Regional Australia Institute research
- letters of support from your RDA committee, local government organisation and/or community groups for your project
- modelling of environmental impacts and/or mitigation.

6.7. Assessment criterion 3 – full application

Capacity, capability and resources to deliver and sustain the project (40 points).

You should demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. your track record managing similar projects and access to personnel and/or partners with the right skills and experience
- b. sound project planning to manage and monitor the project, which addresses scope, implementation methodology, timeframes, budget, community consultation, and risk management
- c. how you will operate and maintain the infrastructure and benefits of the project into the future
- d. your readiness to commence the project, including access. You should describe the steps you have taken to get your project investment ready including:
 - required regulatory and/or development approvals

⁴ Plans may be accessed by locating your local RDA through [My RDA | Regional Development Australia](#)

- project designs and costings
- authority from the land or infrastructure owner to undertake the project at the nominated site(s)
- funding contributions from all sources.

The evidence you provide to support this must include, but is not limited to:

- a clear business case for the proposal, including project plans, budget and relevant approvals, timelines and procurement processes
- a cost benefit analysis commensurate to size and scale of project
- a risk management plan, which identifies risks and mitigations.

7. How to apply

Before applying you should read and understand these guidelines, the sample [application forms](#) and the sample [grant agreement](#) published on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

Applicants should read all eligibility and assessment criteria closely and attach detailed evidence that supports the assessment criteria.

You will need to set up an account to access our online [portal](#). You can only submit an application during a funding round.

7.1. Stage one – Expression of Interest (EOI)

To apply, you must:

- complete and submit the Stage one - Expression of Interest (EOI) application through the online portal
- provide all the information requested
- address all eligibility and assessment criteria
- include all necessary attachments.

7.2. Stage two – full application

If you are invited to submit a full application you must:

- complete and submit the Stage two – full application through the online [portal](#)
- address all eligibility and assessment criteria
- include all necessary attachments and information requested.

You are responsible for making sure your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the [Criminal Code Act 1995](#). If we consider that you have provided false or misleading information we may not progress your application. If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should call us immediately on 13 28 46.

After submitting your application, we can contact you for clarification if we find an error or any missing information, including evidence that supports your eligibility/merit. The acceptance of any additional information provided after the submission of your application is at the discretion of the program delegate. Additional information should not materially change your application at the time it was submitted and therefore may be refused if deemed to be purely supplementary.

You can view and print a copy of your submitted application on the portal for your own records.

If you need further guidance around the application process, or if you have any issues with the portal, [contact us](#) at business.gov.au or by calling 13 28 46.

7.3. Attachments to the application

You must provide the following documents with your application:

7.3.1. Stage one – EOI

- evidence to support a request for co-funding group (including how your site was impacted by the disaster, if required) (if applicable)
- evidence that you either own the land/infrastructure being built/upgraded upon, or that you have the landowner's permission to use the land/infrastructure
- evidence of a cash contribution from any source (for example state government), the source must provide you with formal documentation confirming the cash contribution so you can attach it to your application
- project budget (template provided on [business.gov.au](#) and [GrantConnect](#))
- evidence of alignment to local and regional priorities
- evidence that the project is ready to commence including approved development applications, project designs and timelines
- trust deed (where applicable).

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with the instructions provided within the form. You should only attach requested documents. The total of all attachments cannot exceed 20MB. We will not consider information in attachments that we do not request.

7.3.2. Stage two – full application

- a business case which must include: the budget, the project risk management plans and cost benefit analysis
- attach detailed evidence that supports assessment criteria responses as detailed in section 6 (where applicable)
- recent quotes for major costs as part of your application
- accountant declaration
- evidence of funding strategy, e.g. financial statements, loan agreements, cash flow documents
- a letter of support from each project partner (see 7.4).

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with the instructions provided within the form. You should only attach requested documents. The total of all attachments cannot exceed 20MB. We will not consider information in attachments that we do not request.

7.4. Joint (consortia) applications

We recognise that some organisations may want to join together as a group to deliver a project. In these circumstances, you must appoint a lead organisation. Only the lead organisation can submit the application form and enter into the 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 project partners. Each letter of support should include:

- details of the project partner

- an overview of how the project partner will work with the lead organisation and any other project partners in the group to successfully complete the project
- an outline of the relevant experience and/or expertise the project partner will bring to the group
- the roles/responsibilities the project partner will undertake, and the resources it will contribute (if any)
- details of a nominated management level contact officer.

You must have a formal arrangement in place with all parties prior to execution of the grant agreement.

7.5. Timing of grant opportunity processes

You can only submit an application between the published opening and closing dates. We will only accept a late application where an applicant has experienced exceptional circumstances that prevent the submission of the application. Broadly, exceptional circumstances are events characterised by one or more of the following:

- reasonably unforeseeable
- beyond the applicant's control
- unable to be managed or resolved within the application period.

Exceptional circumstances will be considered on their merits and in accordance with probity principles.

For advice on how to submit late applications [contact us](#) at business.gov.au or by calling 13 28 46.

If you are successful, you must commence your project no later than 15 May 2024.

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Activity	Indicative timeframe
Assessment of EOI applications	6 weeks
Panel assessment of EOI applications	4 weeks
Approval of EOI applications	2 weeks
Open for full applications	October/November 2023
Assessment of stage two applications	6 weeks
Approval and announcement of successful applicants	2 weeks
Negotiations and award of grant agreements	5 weeks
Latest start date of project	15 May 2024
Project completion date	31 December 2025
End date of grant commitment	30 June 2026

7.6. Questions during the application process

If you have any questions during the application period, [contact us](#) at business.gov.au or by calling 13 28 46.

8. The grant selection process

8.1. Assessment of grant applications – Expression of Interest (stage one)

We first review your EOI against the eligibility criteria. Only eligible applications will proceed to the assessment stage.

If eligible, we will analyse your response to assessment criterion 1 – EOI to understand how your project aligns with the program objectives and how ready it is to proceed. We will provide our analysis of this information to the panel.

The panel will assess your EOI based on how strongly your project aligns with the regional priorities for the area (assessment criterion 2 – EOI). The panel will recommend projects to be invited to apply. DITRDCA approves which EOIs will proceed to a full application.

If your EOI is successful you will be invited to submit a full application.

8.2. Assessment of grant applications – Full application (stage two)

We consider your application on its merits, based on:

- how well it meets the criteria
- how it compares to other applications
- geographical spread
- 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 of the grant opportunity
- the evidence provided to demonstrate how your project contributes to meeting those objectives
- the relative value of the grant sought
- extent to which the geographic location of the application matches identified priorities
- extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives of the Growing Regions Program grant opportunity
- risks, financial, fraud and other, that the applicant or project poses for the department
- risks that the applicant or project poses for the Commonwealth

If applications are scored the same, DITRDCA will consider value for money, alignment to the program objectives and geographical spread to recommend applications for funding.

8.3. Who will assess applications?

We will assess all EOIs against the eligibility criteria. We then refer all eligible EOIs to the multi-party Parliamentary panel (the panel), together with our analysis of how your project aligns with the program objectives, and how ready it is to proceed using assessment criterion 1 – EOI.

The panel will assess your EOI application against assessment criterion 2 - EOI (in line with the assessment matrix at Appendix C) and compare it to other eligible applications before recommending which projects will be invited to submit a full application. The panel will be required to perform their duties in accordance with the CGRGs.

We will assess all full applications against the selection criteria. DITRDCA will then make recommendations to the decision maker.

8.4. Who will approve grants?

The DITRDCA approves which EOIs (stage one) will be invited to submit a full application (stage two) taking into account the recommendations of the panel.

The Minister for Infrastructure, Regional Development and Local Government (the decision maker) decides which grants to approve taking into account the results of DISRs merit assessment (stage two), DITRDCA's recommendations, and the availability of grant funds.

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

- the grant approval
- the grant funding to be awarded
- any conditions attached to the offer of grant funding.

We cannot review decisions about the merits of your application.

The Minister will not approve funding if there is insufficient program funds available across relevant financial years for the program.

9. Notification of application outcomes

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

9.1. Feedback on your application

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

10. Successful grant applications

10.1. The grant agreement

You must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The grant agreement has general terms and conditions that cannot be changed. A sample [grant agreement](#) is available on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

We will manage the grant agreement through the online portal. This includes issuing and executing the grant agreement. Execute means both you and the Commonwealth have accepted the agreement. You must not start any Growing Regions Program activities until a grant agreement is executed. We are not responsible for any expenditure you incur and cannot make any payments until a grant agreement is executed.

The approval of your grant may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the Minister. We will identify these in the offer of grant funding.

If you enter an agreement under the Growing Regions Program you cannot receive other grants for the same activities from other Commonwealth granting programs.

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

We will use a standard grant agreement.

You will have 60 days from the date of a written offer to execute this grant agreement with the Commonwealth. During this time, we will work with you to finalise details.

The offer may lapse if both parties do not sign the grant agreement within this time. Under certain circumstances, we may extend this period. We base the approval of your grant on the information

you provide in your application. We will review any required changes to these details to ensure they do not impact the project as approved by the Minister.

10.2. Specific legislation, policies and industry standards

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.

In particular, you will be required to comply with:

- State/territory legislation in relation to working with children
- Working with Vulnerable People registration
- building and construction requirements
- Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 reporting requirements

10.2.1. Child safety requirements

You must comply with all relevant legislation relating to the employment or engagement of anyone working on the project that may interact with children, including all necessary working with children checks.

You must implement the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)⁵ endorsed by the Commonwealth.

You will need to complete a risk assessment to identify the level of responsibility for children and the level of risk of harm or abuse, and put appropriate strategies in place to manage those risks. You must update this risk assessment at least annually.

You will also need to establish a training and compliance regime to ensure personnel are aware of, and comply with, the risk assessment requirements, relevant legislation including mandatory reporting requirements and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

You will be required to provide an annual statement of compliance with these requirements in relation to working with children.

10.2.2. Building and construction requirements

Wherever the government funds building and construction activities, the following special regulatory requirements apply.

- Australian Government Building and Construction WHS Accreditation Scheme ([WHS Scheme](#))⁶

These regulations are subject to the level of funding you receive as outlined below.

10.2.2.1. WHS Scheme

The WHS Scheme is administered by the [Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner](#)⁷.

The Scheme applies to projects that are directly or indirectly funded by the Australian Government where

⁵ <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/national-principles-child-safe-organisations>

⁶ <http://www.fsc.gov.au/sites/fsc/needaccredited/accreditationscheme/pages/theaccreditationscheme>

⁷ <http://www.fsc.gov.au/sites/FSC>

- the value of the Australian Government contribution to the project is at least \$6 million and represents at least 50 per cent of the total construction project value; or
- the Australian Government contribution to a project is \$10 million (GST inclusive) or more, irrespective of the proportion of Australian Government funding; and
- a head contract under the project includes building work of \$4 million or more (GST Inclusive).

10.3. Multicultural access and equity

The Australian Government's Multicultural Access and Equity Policy obliges Australian Government agencies to ensure their policies, programs and services - including those provided by contractors and service delivery partners – are accessible to, and deliver equitable outcomes for, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Grant applicants should consider how they will ensure their services will be accessible to people from CALD backgrounds. For example, service delivery partners may require cultural competency skills. In addition, services, projects, activities or events may require the use of professional translating or interpreting services in order to communicate with clients who have limited English proficiency. Based on an assessment of the client target group, costs for translating and interpreting services should be factored into grant applications (to assist with identifying these costs, see the Translating and Interpreting Services costing tool in the grant opportunity documents).

10.4. How we pay the grant

The grant agreement will state the:

- maximum grant amount we will pay
- proportion of eligible expenditure covered by the grant (grant percentage)
- any financial contribution provided by you and/or a third party.

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

We may make an initial payment on execution of the grant agreement. We will make subsequent payments as you achieve milestones in arrears, based on your actual eligible expenditure. Milestone payments are subject to satisfactory progress on the project.

Note that if you request an upfront initial payment, we will request additional financial information from you, to verify your organisation is unable to cover the costs associated with your project without that initial grant payment.

We set aside at least 10 per cent of the total grant funding for the final payment. We will pay this when you submit a satisfactory end of project report demonstrating you have completed outstanding obligations for the project. We may need to adjust your progress payments to align with available program funds across financial years and/or to ensure we retain a minimum 10 per cent of grant funding for the final payment.

The Program Delegate may approve alternative arrangements on a discretionary basis.

10.5. Grant Payments and GST

If you are registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST), where applicable we will add GST to your grant payment and provide you with a recipient created tax invoice. You are required to notify

us if your GST registration status changes during the project period. GST does not apply to grant payments to government related entities⁸.

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](#). We do not provide advice on tax.

11. Announcement of grants

If successful, your grant will be listed on the GrantConnect website 21 calendar days after the date of effect

We will publish non-sensitive details of successful projects on GrantConnect. We are required to do this by the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#), Section 5.3. We may also publish this information on business.gov.au. This information may include:

- name of your organisation
- title of the project
- description of the project and its aims
- amount of grant funding awarded
- Australian Business Number
- business location
- your organisation's industry sector.

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 project, carry on business and pay debts due.

You must also inform us of any changes to your:

- name
- addresses
- nominated contact details
- ABN
- bank account details.

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 project and provide an opportunity for the Minister or their representative to attend.

⁸ See Australian Taxation Office ruling GSTR 2012/2 available at ato.gov.au

12.2. Reporting

You must submit reports in line with the grant agreement. We will provide the requirements for these reports as appendices in the grant agreement. We will remind you of your reporting obligations before a report is due. We will expect you to report on:

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

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

We will monitor the progress of your project by assessing reports you submit and may conduct site visits to confirm details of your reports if necessary. Occasionally we may need to re-examine claims, seek further information or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

12.2.1. Progress reports

Progress reports must:

- include details of your progress towards completion of agreed project activities
- 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).

We will only make grant payments when we receive satisfactory progress reports.

You must discuss any project or milestone reporting delays with us as soon as you become aware of them.

12.2.2. Ad-hoc reports

We may ask you for ad-hoc reports on your project. This may be to provide an update on progress, or any significant delays or difficulties in completing the project.

12.2.3. End of project report

When you complete the project, you must submit an end of project report.

End of project reports must:

- include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
- identify the total eligible expenditure incurred for the project
- include a declaration that the grant money was spent in accordance with the grant agreement and to report on any underspends of the grant money
- be submitted by the report due date.

12.3. Audited financial acquittal report

We will ask you to provide an independent audit report. An audit report will verify that you spent the grant in accordance with the grant agreement. The audit report requires you to prepare a statement of grant income and expenditure. The report template is available on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

12.4. Grant agreement variations

We recognise that unexpected events may affect project progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your grant agreement, including:

- changing project milestones
- extending the timeframe for completing the project but within the maximum time period allowed in program guidelines
- changing project activities.

The program does not allow for an increase of grant funds.

If you want to propose changes to the grant agreement, you must put them in writing before the project end date. You can submit a variation request via our online portal.

If a delay in the project causes milestone achievement and payment dates to move to a different financial year, you will need a variation to the grant agreement. We can only move funds between financial years if there is enough program funding in the relevant year to allow for the revised payment schedule. If we cannot move the funds, you may lose some grant funding.

You should not assume that a variation request will be successful. We will consider your request based on factors such as:

- how it affects the project outcome
- consistency with the program policy objective, grant opportunity guidelines and any relevant policies of the department
- changes to the timing of grant payments
- availability of program funds.

12.5. 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 will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

12.6. Record keeping

We may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement.

12.7. Evaluation

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

We may contact you up to two years after you finish your project for more information to assist with this evaluation.

12.8. Acknowledgement

If you make a public statement about a project funded under the program, including 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 project, the signage must contain an acknowledgement of the grant.

13. Probity

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

These guidelines may be changed from time-to-time by DISR. When this happens, the revised guidelines will be published on GrantConnect.

13.1. Enquiries and feedback

For further information or clarification, you can contact us on 13 28 46 or by [web chat](#) or through our [online enquiry form](#) on business.gov.au.

We may publish answers to your questions on our website as Frequently Asked Questions.

Our [Customer Service Charter](#) is available at business.gov.au. We use customer satisfaction surveys to improve our business operations and service.

If you have a complaint, call us on 13 28 46. We will refer your complaint to the appropriate manager.

If you are not satisfied with the way we handle your complaint, you can contact:

General Manager
Business Grants Hub
Department of Industry, Science and Resources
GPO Box 2013
CANBERRA ACT 2601

You can also contact the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#)⁹ with your complaint (call 1300 362 072). There is no fee for making a complaint, and the Ombudsman may conduct an independent investigation.

13.2. Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the grant opportunity and/or program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if our staff, any member of a Panel or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel:

- has a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer or member of an external panel
- has a 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
- has a 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.

As part of your application, we will ask you to declare any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or confirm that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

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

Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff are handled as set out in the Australian [Public Service Code of Conduct \(Section 13\(7\)\)](#) of the [Public Service Act 1999](#). Panel members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

We publish our [conflict of interest policy](#)¹⁰ on the department's website. The Commonwealth policy entity also publishes a conflict of interest policy on its website.

13.3. Privacy

Unless the information you provide to us is:

- confidential information as per below, or
- personal information as per below.

we may share the information with other government agencies for a relevant Commonwealth purpose such as:

- to improve the effective administration, monitoring and evaluation of Australian Government programs
- for research
- to announce the awarding of grants.

We must treat your personal information according to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) and the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). This includes letting you know:

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

We may give the personal information we collect from you to our employees and contractors, the Panel, and other Commonwealth employees and contractors, so we can:

- manage the program
- research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities.

We, or the Minister, may:

- announce the names of successful applicants to the public
- publish personal information on the department's websites.

You may read our [Privacy Policy](#)¹¹ on the department's website for more information on:

- what is personal information
- how we collect, use, disclose and store your personal information
- how you can access and correct your personal information.

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

¹⁰ https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/July%202018/document/pdf/conflict-of-interest-and-insider-trading-policy.pdf?acsf_files_redirect

¹¹ <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/privacy-policy>

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 treat the information you give us as sensitive and therefore confidential if it meets all of the following conditions:

- you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
- the information is commercially sensitive
- disclosing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else
- you provide the information with an understanding that it will stay confidential.

We may disclose confidential information:

- to the Panel and our Commonwealth employees and contractors, to help us manage the program effectively
- to the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- to the responsible Minister or Assistant Minister
- to a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

We may also disclose confidential information if

- we are required or authorised by law to disclose it
- you agree to the information being disclosed, or
- someone other than us has made the confidential information public.

13.5. Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about the program, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (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.

If someone requests a document under the FOI Act, we will release it (though we may need to consult with you and/or other parties first) unless it meets one of the exemptions set out in the FOI Act.

14. Glossary

Term	Definition
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.
application form	The document issued by the program delegate that applicants use to apply for funding under the program.
assessment criteria	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 ranking.
<u>Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines (CGRGs)</u>	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
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.
Department	The Department of Industry, Science and Resources.
decision maker	Minister for Infrastructure, Regional Development and Local Government.
DITRDCA	The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, also known as the Commonwealth policy entity for this grant program.
eligible activities	The activities undertaken by a grantee in relation to a project that are eligible for funding support as set out in section 5.1.
eligible application	An application or proposal for grant funding under the program that the program delegate has determined is eligible for assessment in accordance with these guidelines.
eligibility criteria	Refers to the mandatory criteria which must be met to qualify for a grant. Assessment criteria may apply in addition to eligibility criteria.

Term	Definition
eligible expenditure	The expenditure incurred by a grantee on a project and which is eligible for funding support as set out in Appendix A.
First Nations community controlled organisations	These organisations are an Indigenous Organisation or enterprise and have an Indigenous Corporation Number (ICN) or can declare that they are a Traditional Owner or that their organisation is at least 51 per cent owned or controlled by Indigenous persons or the Indigenous Enterprise has 50 per cent Indigenous ownership.
General Manager	Position title for Senior Executive Service level staff within DISR.
grant	For the purposes of the CGRGs, 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"> a. under which relevant money¹² or other Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) money¹³ 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	A legally binding contract that sets out the relationship between the Commonwealth and a grantee for the grant funding, and specifies the details of the grant.
grant funding or grant funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth to grantees under the program.
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 DITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statement Program.

¹² Relevant money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 8, Dictionary.

¹³ Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 105, Rules in relation to other CRF money.

Term	Definition
GrantConnect	The Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRGs.
grantee	The individual/organisation which has been selected to receive a grant.
guidelines	Guidelines that the Minister gives to the department to provide the framework for the administration of the program, as in force from time to time.
Minister	Minister for Infrastructure, Regional Development and Local Government.
multi-party Parliamentary panel (the panel)	The multi-party Parliamentary panel established to assess and score eligible EOI's received in stage one of the application process against assessment criterion 2 – EOI. The panel will rank projects from top to bottom against the criterion, and make a recommendation to DITRDCA on who to invite to apply as part of stage 2 of the application process.
personal information	Has the same meaning as in the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i> (Cth) which is: 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.
program delegate	A manager within the department with responsibility for administering the program.
program funding or program funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth for the program.
project	A project described in an application for grant funding under the program.
regional priorities	These are priorities identified in local or regional plans such as RDA plans, council plans and state plans.
selection criteria	Comprises of eligibility criteria and assessment criteria.

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.

Appendix A. Eligible expenditure

This section provides guidance on the eligibility of expenditure. We may update this guidance from time to time; check you are referring to the most current version from the business.gov.au website before preparing your application.

The program delegate makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be incurred by you within the project period
- be a direct cost of the project
- be incurred by you to undertake required project audit activities (where applicable)
- meet the eligible expenditure guidelines.

A.1 How we verify eligible expenditure

If your application is successful, we may ask you to verify the project budget that you provided in your application when we negotiate your grant agreement. You may need to provide evidence such as quotes for major costs.

The grant agreement will include details of the evidence you may need to provide when you achieve certain milestones in your project. This may include evidence related to eligible expenditure.

If requested, you will need to provide the agreed evidence along with your progress reports.

You must keep payment records of all eligible expenditure, and be able to explain how the costs relate to the agreed project activities. At any time, we may ask you to provide records of the expenditure you have paid. If you do not provide these records when requested, the expense may not qualify as eligible expenditure.

At the end of the project, you will be required to provide an independent financial audit of all eligible expenditure from the project.

A.2 Materials for construction

We consider costs of acquiring materials for the construction of infrastructure as eligible expenditure. Where possible and suitable for your project, you should use locally procured and sustainable, recycled or repurposed building materials. For example applications of sustainable, recycled or repurposed building materials and to find potential suppliers see the [sustainable and recycled products](#) page on the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's website.

You must list material costs as a separate item within your project budget in the application form and in the expenditure table in your progress reports.

We will not make any payments to you for any expenditure you have incurred prior to the execution of your grant agreement.

Examples of eligible material costs can include:

- building materials
- ICT cabling
- fit out of the infrastructure, such as window dressings

- fixed furniture (e.g. kitchen fit outs as part of the construction of a building)
- landscaping.

You may show expenditure on materials by providing evidence of:

- purchase price
- payments (e.g. tax invoices and receipts from suppliers confirming payment)
- commitment to pay for the materials (e.g. supplier contract, purchase order or executed lease agreement)
- receipt of materials (e.g. supplier or freight documents)
- associated costs such as freight and installation (e.g. supplier documents)
- photographs of the infrastructure on your premises.

If you claim expenditure for materials, we limit this to:

- the costs of materials
- freight costs.

A.3 Hired/leased plant

You may lease plant and equipment to support your project, and where possible, you should use local suppliers.

You must calculate eligible expenditure for hired, rented, or leased plant by the number of payment periods where you use the plant for the project multiplied by the period hiring fee. If you purchase plant under a hire purchase agreement, or you use a lease to finance the purchase of the plant, the cost of the item of plant, excluding interest, is capitalised, and then depreciated.

Running costs for hired or leased plant are eligible expenditure but you must be able to verify them. They may include items such as rent, light and power, and repairs and maintenance.

A.4 Contract expenditure

Eligible contract expenditure is the cost of work undertaken on any agreed eligible project activities that you contract others to do. This can include contracting:

- another organisation
- an individual who is not an employee, but engaged under a separate contract.

This does not include existing employees that you pay a salary or a wage.

Where possible, you should engage local contractor/operators. All contractors must have a written contract prior to starting any project work—for example, a formal agreement, letter or purchase order which specifies:

- the nature of the work they perform
- the applicable fees, charges and other costs payable.

Invoices from contractors must contain:

- a detailed description of the nature of the work
- the hours and hourly rates involved
- any specific plant expenses paid.

Invoices must directly relate to the agreed project, and the work must qualify as an eligible expense. The costs must also be reasonable and appropriate for the activities performed.

We will require evidence of contractor expenditure that may include:

- an exchange of letters (including email) setting out the terms and conditions of the proposed contract work
- purchase orders
- supply agreements
- invoices and payment documents.

You must ensure all project contractors keep a record of the costs of their work on the project. We may require you to provide a contractor's records of their costs of doing project work. If you cannot provide these records, the relevant contract expense may not qualify as eligible expenditure.

A.5 External labour hire and external consulting expenditure

Eligible external labour and external consulting expenditure for the grant covers the cost of contracting others on the core elements of the project related to construction. Where possible, you should engage local labour and services.

Eligible external labour hire and external consulting expenditure may include:

- Architect services
- Design services
- Project management
- Quantity surveying
- Building services.

Costs for pre-construction activities including architect services, design, surveying, planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals (A.5 and A.6), are limited to 20 per cent of the total amount of eligible project expenditure claimed. These costs are only eligible if the activities occur during the project period as defined in your grant agreement.

A.6 Other eligible expenditure

Other eligible expenditure for the project may include:

- financial auditing of project expenditure
- costs you incur in order to obtain planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals during the project period. However, associated fees paid to the Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments are not eligible

Other specific expenditures may be eligible as determined by the Program Delegate in accordance with the CGRGs and Government practice.

Evidence you need to supply can include but is not limited to supplier contracts, purchase orders, invoices and supplier confirmation of payments.

Appendix B. Ineligible expenditure

This section provides guidance on what we consider ineligible expenditure. We may update this guidance from time to time; check you are referring to the most current version from the business.gov.au website before preparing your application.

The program delegate may impose limitations or exclude expenditure, or further include some ineligible expenditure listed in these guidelines in a grant agreement or otherwise by notice to you.

Examples of ineligible expenditure include:

- purchase of land or existing infrastructure, including the costs associated with sub-division of land
- repair or replacement of existing infrastructure where there is no demonstrated significant increase in benefit
- costs associated with existing staff of your organisation including wages or employee on-costs such as superannuation, holiday loading, overheads, and consumables such as paper, printer cartridges, office supplies, brochures and other marketing materials, kitchen supplies or food and beverages or catering, unless an exemption is sought and approved in the case of very remote locations
- retrospective costs
- temporary relocation costs
- ongoing upgrades, updates and maintenance of existing ICT systems, the cost of ongoing subscription-based software, and IT support memberships and warranties for purchases
- domestic or overseas travel
- funding to develop or deliver ongoing training or educational courses
- funding to undertake studies, including feasibility studies or investigations
- funding for the development of private or commercial ventures
- funding to purchase items that will not remain the property of the organisation including items to be given away
- activities for which other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government bodies have primary responsibility
- purchase and installation of manufacturing equipment
- subsidy of general ongoing administration of an organisation such as electricity, phone and rent
- payment of salaries for the applicant's employees
- project overhead items including office equipment, vehicles or mobile capital equipment. Examples include trucks and earthmoving equipment and the applicant's internal plant operating costs
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation for example business case development and feasibility studies
- costs related to registered training organisation training activities
- routine operational expenses, including communications, accommodation, printing and stationery, postage, legal and accounting fees and bank charges
- making donations, gifts and sponsorships

- pre-construction activities, including architect services, design, surveying, planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals (A.5 and A.6), that exceed 20 per cent of the total eligible project expenditure
- costs incurred prior to the execution of a grant agreement
- fees paid to the Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments to obtain planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals.

Additional examples of ineligible expenditure specific to investment ready projects include:

- purchase of unfixed furniture, such as desks and fridges
- ICT equipment, including software or hardware that is not an integral part of the funded infrastructure project
- office computing facilities.

This list is not exhaustive and applies only to the expenditure on the agreed project. Other costs may be ineligible where the Program Delegate determines they do not directly support the achievement of the planned outcomes for the project or, they are contrary to the objectives of the program.

You must ensure you have adequate funds to meet the costs of any ineligible expenditure associated with the project.

Appendix C. Panel scoring matrix

Score 1-5	1 Unable to determine alignment with regional priority	2 Weak alignment with regional priority	3 Marginal alignment with regional priority	4 Strong alignment with regional priority	5 Very strong alignment with regional priority
How strongly does the project align with the regional priorities?	No information on the project's alignment with regional priorities provided.	Regional priorities identified are vague and not well linked to the project.	The proposed project aligns with the identified regional priorities but only at a high level.	The proposed project specifically and reasonably aligns with regional priorities.	The proposed project specifically and clearly aligns with regional priorities, and priorities are clearly defined.

ATTACHMENT C

Grant Opportunity Guidelines Self-Assessment Risk Analysis

Risk assessment

Grant Opportunity Guidelines self- assessment risk analysis

1. Program details

Name of policy entity

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA)

Name of program

Growing Regions Program – Round 1

Summary of program

Include program objectives and the relevant entity outcome it contributes to.

The Growing Regions Program was announced as part of the October 2022 Budget to drive regional economic prosperity by providing access to funding for capital works for infrastructure across Australia's rural and regional areas. There is \$300 million available in Round 1 of the program, which will run over 3 years from 2023-24 to 2025-26.

The program will deliver community and economic benefits by investing in community-focused infrastructure which revitalises regions and enhances amenity and liveability throughout regional Australia. Projects must be delivered in locations outside of the Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSA) as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The objectives of the program are:

- constructing or upgrading community infrastructure that fills an identified gap or need for community infrastructure

- contributing to achieving a wide range of community socio-economic outcomes.

The intended outcomes of the program are:

- delivery of community-focused infrastructure which contributes to local and regional priorities
- provision of infrastructure which benefits the community by improving equity and supports diverse social inclusion
- to contribute to the achievement of broader Government priorities such as net zero emissions, gender equity, and/or First Nations priorities
- growing local economies and enhancing amenity and liveability in the regions.

The program contributes to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts' Outcome 3: *Strengthening the sustainability, capacity and diversity of Australia's regions, including northern Australia, including through facilitating local partnerships between all levels of government and local communities; through investment in infrastructure and measures that stimulate economic growth; and providing grants and financial assistance.*

This is a grant opportunity with a two-stage assessment process. Applicants will first submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) (stage 1) which will be assessed against eligibility and project readiness by the Business Grants Hub, within the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, and alignment with regional priorities by a multi-party Parliamentary panel. The panel will recommend which EOIs should proceed with DITRDCA to approve. Successful applicants will be invited to submit a full application (stage 2) which will be assessed by the Business Grants Hub and recommendations approved by the Minister for Infrastructure, Regional Development and Local Government as decision maker.

Total cost of program and cost over the Budget and forward estimates

The total cost of the Growing Regions Program is \$600 million over 3 years from 2023-24 to 2025-26. The program will be delivered in two rounds.

Year of program	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Financial year	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	
Funding per year	\$30m	\$210m	\$360m	\$600M

For Round 1 \$300 million is available over 3 years 2023-24 to 2025-26.

Policy authority for program

Include the legislative basis for the expenditure under the program. Include reference number/s of relevant approval minutes/briefs.

Policy authority

s34(3)

s34(2)

s34(3) s34(2)

s34
(3)

s34(2)

Growing Regions program expenditure was subsequently reprofiled and approved in an exchange of letters between Minister C King (Ref: MS22-002348 dated 12 January 2023) and the Prime Minister (MC23-002194 dated 7 February 2023).

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Legislative authority

Schedule 1AB to the Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Regulations 1997 (the FFSP Regulations).^{s42}

[REDACTED]

Other relevant information

[REDACTED]

2. Discussion of key issues and implementation risks

Provide details on the areas assessed for risk and on any identified risks or sensitivities arising from this assessment.

Use additional headings or supporting data, including attachments, as necessary.

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[REDACTED]

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This program is substantially similar to the Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF) which we have extensive experience in delivering. Previous BBRF rounds have

had long lead times, however the program guidelines require that projects can commence before 15 May 2024.

s47C

Implementation risks have been considered and mechanisms to effectively manage and mitigate risks are addressed in program design within the grant opportunity guidelines and grant administration approach (refer to section 4 below).

3. Risk assessment

On balance, do you assess the program as being of low, medium or high risk? Summarise the reasons for your assessment below.

s42

4. Risk management

Any mitigation strategies for addressing particular risks should be mentioned here.

RISK: There is a risk of potential criticism for a lack of transparency during the selection process which uses a multi-party Parliamentary panel to assess applications at the EOI stage.

MITIGATION:

- A multi-party Parliamentary panel has been selected as it is considered to be an open and transparent approach that will:
 - engage with a variety of parliamentarians with experience of regional Australia
 - ensure that priorities of government are reflected, including that projects represent a broad range of regional priorities and interests

- assess projects to ensure they are chosen based on eligibility and merit as outlined in the Guidelines
- The Business Grants Hub will attend meetings as Secretariat, and will record the decisions of the panel.

RISK: Grantees do not have the capacity or capability to deliver the approved project due to shortages of contractors and availability of materials.

MITIGATION:

- Applications will be assessed for project readiness and capacity, capability and resources to deliver the project. Applicants will need to demonstrate how projects are investment ready.
- Guidelines include provisions for monitoring grant activity, including progress and final reports to assess progress against agreed project milestones and project expenditure. There are also provisions to vary the grant agreement due to unexpected events impacting the project
- Grant agreements clearly articulate project objectives, project outcomes and milestones towards project completion, agreed to by the successful grant applicant upon execution of the grant agreement.
- Payments to be made in arrears unless there is substantial justification for alternative arrangements.

RISK: The grantee using grant funding for ineligible activities and expenditure.

MITIGATION:

- The guidelines include clear communication of eligible activities and expenditure.
- Applicants are required to provide a project budget allocated over each project activity.
- The grant agreement clearly articulates compliance requirements to the grantee, for example the provision to terminate the agreement and recover funds.
- Regular reporting including evidence of expenditure will enable the Business Grants Hub to detect any compliance issues.
- Funding is paid in arrears and dependent on sufficient progress against agreed milestones and evidence of expenditure.
- An independent financial audit is required at the end of the project and is specified in the grant agreement.

RISK: Program objectives and outcomes are not achieved.

MITIGATION:

- Only projects located in areas outside of GCCSAs are eligible.

- Co-funding arrangements have been designed to support applicants in those circumstances where community and economic benefits are most needed:
 - Co-funding is increased by up to 90 per cent of eligible costs where projects are run by First Nations Community Controlled organisations, or located in very remote locations as per the ABS Remoteness Structure, or located in areas impacted by natural disaster from 1 May 2022 onwards.
 - Co-funding is increased by up to 70 per cent of eligible costs where projects are located in remote locations as per the ABS Remoteness Structure, or run by 'low rate based' Councils determined using the ratio of Financial Assistance Grant to Net Rate Income.
 - Co-funding for all other projects is up to 50 per cent of eligible costs
- In the EOI stage, applications will be assessed for the extent to which they are strategically aligned to regional priorities and benefit the wider community.
- Full applications will be assessed against merit assessment criteria and only those that score at least 60 per cent against each assessment criterion will be recommended to the Minister for funding.

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MS23-003548



Australian Government

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

To: The Hon Catherine King MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (for decision)

Subject: Growing Regions Program Round 1

Critical Date: 1 June 2023 to allow system build for application form for amended guidelines to be ready prior to opening for the expressions of interest process on 5 July 2023.

Recommendations:

1. That you **agree** to the three amendments made to the Growing Regions Program Round 1 Grant Opportunities Guidelines (the guidelines) prior to their release on 6 May 2023.
Agreed/Not Agreed
2. That you **agree** to a new amendment to the guidelines allowing all incorporated not-for-profit organisations to be eligible for the Growing Regions Program (Attachment B).
Agreed/Not Agreed
3. That you **agree** to a new amendment to the guidelines to include Alpine Resorts Victoria as an eligible organisation for the purposes of the Growing Regions Program.
Agreed/Not Agreed
4. That you **note** the indicative timelines for Round 1 of the Growing Regions Program (Attachment B).
Noted/Please discuss
5. That you **note** the report summarising the findings from the Growing Regions Program roundtable consultations (Attachment C).
Noted/Please Discuss
6. That you **note** the probity briefing arrangements for the Growing Regions Program multi-party Parliamentary panel.
Noted/Please Discuss

The Hon Catherine King MP

Date: 1 June 23

Comments:

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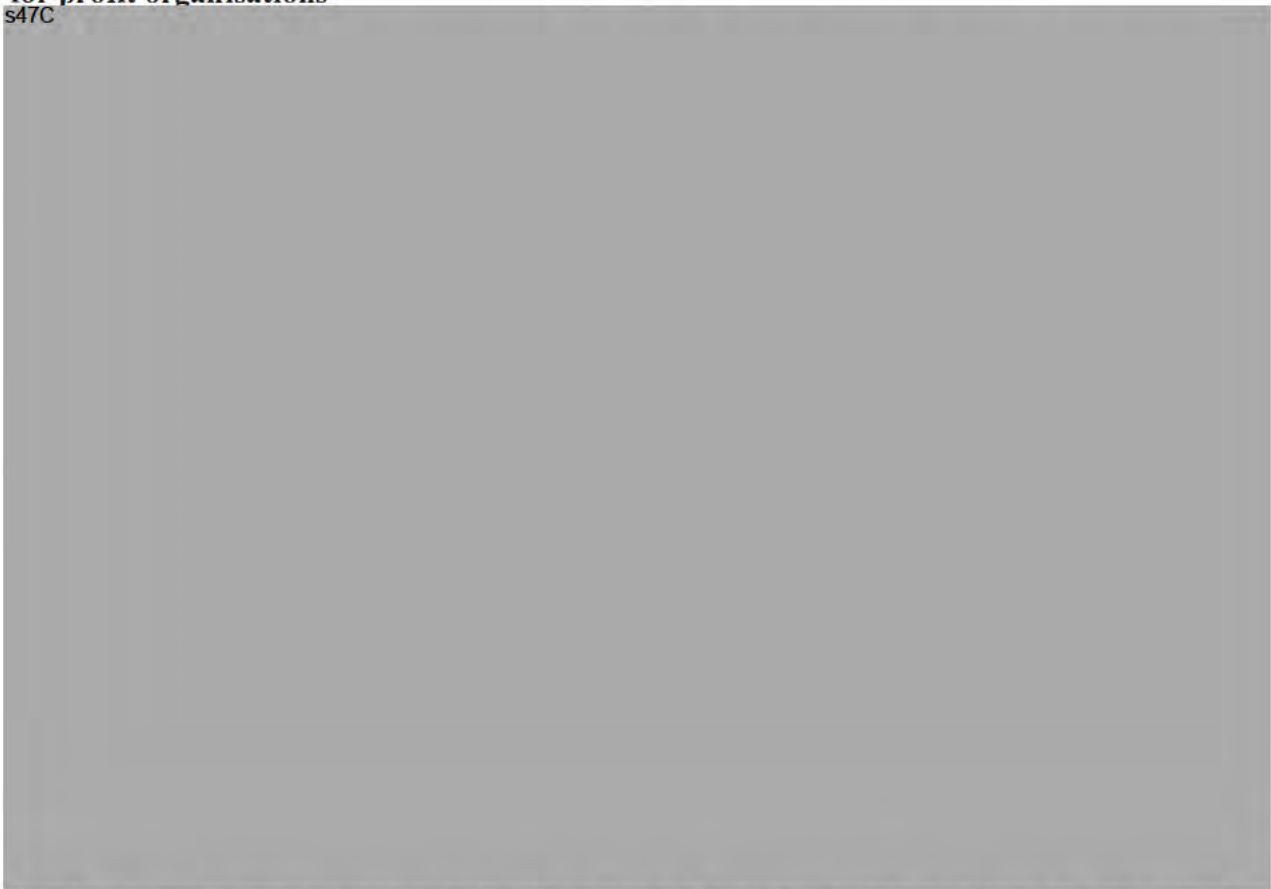
MS23-003548

Key Points:**Growing Regions Program guidelines – previously agreed amendments**

1. The Growing Regions Program (the program) Grant Opportunity Guidelines (the guidelines) were released on the department's website on 6 May 2023 to allow eligible applicants time to prepare for the Round 1 application process which begins with expressions of interests (EOI) opening on 5 July 2023. EOI ✓
2. As agreed with your office on 5 May 2023, three administrative changes were made to the approved guidelines prior to their release to ensure they reflected your agreed policy position. The department now seeks your formal approval of these changes:
 - Re-inserting 'is strategically aligned with regional priorities' under the objectives of the program (section 2).
 - Removal of the words 'income tax exempt' from the list of who is not eligible to apply for the grant. This would have prevented a significant number of not-for-profit organisations from applying (section 4.3).
 - Reinserting text setting out the requirement for grantees to comply with the *Code for Tendering and Performance of Building Work 2016* (section 10.2.2).
3. The need for these changes arose from an administrative error which was identified in final due diligence checks undertaken by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources' Business Grants Hub (the Hub) and the department. ✓

Proposed minor amendment to Growing Regions program guidelines – incorporated not-for profit organisations

s47C



9. If you agree to this recommendation, the amended guidelines will be uploaded on the website within 48 hours of the department being advised of your decision, to ensure applicants have access to the revised guidelines prior to opening the expressions of interest process on 5 July 2023.

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MS23-003548

Proposed minor amendment to the guidelines - Alpine Resorts Victoria eligibility

10. Questions have been raised with the department in writing and through the Budget estimates process about whether Alpine Resorts Victoria can be recognised as a local government agency or body, and therefore be eligible to apply for funding under the guidelines.
11. Section 4.3 of the guidelines lists Resort Management Boards (RMBs) as ineligible entities. This follows on from the Building Better Regions Fund where Resort Management Boards were determined to be ineligible for rounds 1-6.

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2022) including passing legislation which merged the four Resort Management Boards into a single entity called Alpine Resorts Victoria (ARV). ARV is a non-appropriated statutory authority, which operates independently from Government, although it is accountable to the Victorian Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

14. The effect of this change is such that ARV now functions in a similar way to the Lord Howe Island Board, which is specified in the guidelines as an eligible entity even though it is a statutory authority like ARV; that is, for the purposes of the Growing Regions program the department considers the Lord Howe Island Board to be a local government body.
15. Given the Lord Howe Island Board and ARV function similarly, in that they provide essential services and economic development activities like local government agencies, it is open to you to reconsider ARV's inclusion as an eligible entity for the purposes of the Growing Regions program, notwithstanding they are not specifically defined as a Local Government Body under the Australian Government's *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*.
16. The Regional Development Australia Committee for Hume have provided written support for ARV's inclusion as an eligible entity in the Growing Regions program, stating 'Access to Australian Government funding in the Alpine areas is critical given as the resorts have small rate payer bases that are inadequate to sustain investment in strategic infrastructure initiatives. The resorts have also been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, bushfires and other natural disasters (like the current landslide at Falls Creek) compared to other sectors.'

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possibility of making this proposed amendment to the current eligibility requirements in section 4.1 of the published guidelines. Finance has informed the department the guidelines can be amended to include ARV as an eligible entity without consulting the Minister for Finance, as the amendment is considered to be 'of minor administrative nature'.

19. The proposed amended wording for your agreement is also included in **Attachment B**.

Timeline

20. The department has prepared an indicative timeline for implementation of Round 1 of the Growing Regions program for noting at **Attachment C**.

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MS23-003548

Consultation report

21. The department held stakeholder consultations on 15-16 March 2023 on the Growing Regions program and regional Precincts and Partnerships Program design principles with representatives from Regional Development Australia committees, Local Government Associations and identified peak bodies.
22. Roundtable discussions provided stakeholders with an opportunity to provide feedback on the program design elements. Stakeholders indicated strong support for the program.
23. A summary report of the consultations is for your noting at **Attachment D**.

Multi-party Parliamentary Panel

24. Policy authority to establish a multi-party Parliamentary panel (the panel) to assess EOIs for the program was approved by the Prime Minister on 6 April 2023 (refer MC23- 020040).
25. You invited the following to participate on the panel (refer MS23-003509):
 - Chair: Ms Lisa Chesters MP, Member for Bendigo
 - Member: Senator Karen Grogan, Senator for South Australia
 - Member: Senator Deborah O'Neill, Senator for New South Wales
 - Member: Dr Helen Haines MP, Member for Indi
 - Member: The Hon Mark Coulton MP, Member for Parkes
 - Member: Mrs Bridget Archer MP, Member for Bass
26. To ensure high-level support and management of probity matters in the delivery of the panel arrangements and decision making, the department has approached the market to appoint an independent external probity advisor for the program.
27. The external probity advisor will conduct two probity briefings for the panel including an induction process in June 2023, and prior to the panel's assessment of eligible EOI applications in September 2023.
28. All invited panel members have accepted your invitation. Once the external probity advisor has been appointed the department will organise a virtual probity briefing for the panel.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Email from Department of Finance
 Attachment B: Drafted amendment to section 4.1
 Attachment C: Indicative timeline for Growing Regions Round 1
 Attachment D: Growing Regions Program roundtable report

Financial impacts: N/A**Legal/Legislative impacts:** N/A

Stakeholder Implications: The decision to include all incorporated not-for-profit organisations will be welcomed by program stakeholders.

Consultation: The department consulted with the Department of Finance and the Department of Industry, Science and Resources' Business Grants Hub regarding the proposed amendment.

Media Opportunities: N/A

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MS23-003548

Cleared by: s22(1)(a)(ii)
Position: Acting Assistant Secretary
Division: Regional Development and Local
Government
Ph: 02 6393 s22(1)
Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)
Cleared Date: 31 May 2023

Contact Officer: s22(1)(a)(ii)
Section: Regional Programs Branch
Ph: 02 6293 s22(1)
Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)

Instructions for MPS: Nil

Responsible Adviser: s22(1)(a)(ii) s22(1)(a)(ii)

PDMS Distribution List: Jim Betts, David Mackay, Clare Chapple, s22(1)(a)(ii) s22(1)(a)(ii) s22(1)(a)(ii)
s22(1)

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From: s22(1)(a)(ii) @finance.gov.au>
Sent: 1/06/2023 1:45:28 PM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>
Cc: s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>; "BFR - AAU - Communications and Regional Development" s22(1)(a)(ii) @finance.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>
Subject: RE: URGENT please: For consideration - a further Proposed edit for Growing Regions Program [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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Hi s22(1)(a)(ii)

Grant guidelines team have been able to review and respond:

As the Guidelines were only agreed by the Finance Minister on 6 May 2023 there is no requirement to go through the process again.

DITRDCA will have to publish an addenda to the guidelines on GrantConnect so potential applicants are aware of the changes (i.e. inclusion of an additional organisation) to the eligibility criteria.

Kind Regards,

s22(1)(a)(ii)

s22(1)(a)(ii) | Budget Officer

Communications and Regional Development Agency Advice Unit
 Budget Group

Department of Finance

T: 02 6215 s22(1)(a)(ii)

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A: One Canberra Avenue, Forrest, ACT 2603

Classification: OFFICIAL

Classified by: s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au **on:** 1/06/2023 1:44:20 PM

From: s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2023 5:43 PM

To: s22(1)(a)(ii) @finance.gov.au>

Cc: s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>; BFR - AAU - Communications and Regional Development s22(1)(a)(ii) @finance.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>

Subject: RE: URGENT please: For consideration - a further Proposed edit for Growing Regions Program [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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Hi s22(1)(a)(ii)

Thanks so much for phone call – attached are all the amendments we spoke about – they are on pages 8-11 and are sections 4.1 and 4.3.

As discussed we seek approval to treat this as minor changes so we can make them with Ministerial approval and upload the revised guidelines as soon as possible so potential eligible entities can start to prepare their EOI application forms.

If we are not able to treat the Alpine Resorts Victoria as a minor edit – the department will check with our Minister's Office to determine whether or not to go ahead with this particular amendment – but we would still intend to go ahead with the other amendment – namely, changing eligibility to all incorporated not-for-profits.

Thank you so much for your consideration of this and we look forward to your reply.

Cheers

s22(1)(a)

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From: s22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Wednesday, 31 May 2023 5:24 PM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) @finance.gov.au>
Cc: s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>; BFR - AAU - Communications and Regional Development s22(1)(a)(ii) @finance.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>
Subject: URGENT please: For consideration - a further Proposed edit for Growing Regions Program [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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Hi s22(1)(a)(ii) and team

We have one further question regarding a proposed change to be made to the Growing Regions Program guidelines.

We are seeking your views on whether this would be considered a minor change to the guidelines and thus would not need to go back to the Minister for Finance for approval.

The department is considering listing Alpine Resorts Victoria (ARV) as an eligible local government body for the purposes of the Growing Regions Program as identified in the guidelines in section 4.1.

Specifically it would be added to this table:

For the purposes of the program, we also consider the following organisations to be local government bodies:

<i>Organisation legal name</i>	<i>ABN</i>
<i>Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara</i>	<i>77 261 612 162</i>
<i>Maralinga Tjarutja</i>	<i>90 178 229 972</i>
<i>Gerard Community Council Aboriginal Corporation</i>	<i>99 725 510 595</i>
<i>Nipapanha Community Aboriginal Corporation</i>	<i>97 841 764 643</i>
<i>Yalata Community Council Incorporated</i>	<i>93 356 134 967</i>
<i>Cocos (Keeling) Islands Shire Council</i>	<i>12 325 522 841</i>
<i>Lord Howe Island Board</i>	<i>33 280 968 043</i>
<i>Norfolk Island Regional Council</i>	<i>60 103 855 713</i>
<i>Outback Communities Authority</i>	<i>46 594 368 490</i>
<i>Shire of Christmas Island</i>	<i>94 494 925 146</i>
<i>Silverton Village Committee Incorporated</i>	<i>94 820 037 891</i>
Alpine Resorts Victoria	

The Lord Howe Island Board is listed as an eligible entity under the guidelines as the department considers it to be a local government body. Both Lord Howe Island Board and ARV function similarly, providing essential services and economic development activities like government. However, both are not specifically defined as Local Government Bodies under the Australian Government's *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*.

In addition we would need to remove "resort management boards" from section 4.3 ineligible entities:

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- *an organisation, or your project partner is an organisation, included on the [National Redress Scheme's website](#) on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme'*
- *an employer of 100 or more employees that has [not complied](#) with the Workplace Gender Equality Act (2012)*
- *an individual*
- *a partnership*
- *a Regional Development Australia Committee*
- *an unincorporated association*
- *any organisation not included in section 4.1*
- *a trust (however, an incorporated trustee may apply on behalf of a trust)*
- *a Commonwealth, state or territory government body*
- *a non-corporate Commonwealth entity*
- *a non-corporate State or Territory Entity*
- *a non-corporate State or Territory Statutory Authority*
- *an international entity*
- *sole trader*
- *a for-profit organisation*
- *university, technical college, school, hospital or aged care*
- **resort management board**
- *in an ineligible location as detailed in section 5.2.*

Given we are about to change the guidelines for the incorporated not-for-profits as below – well in advance of the Expressions of Interest opening on 5 July 2023 – we are keen to hear your views on this so that if it is doable – we can do them at the same time after we have Ministerial approval. An addendum to the changes will go up with the revised guidelines and of course we will send you a copy.

Happy to discuss if you have any further questions on this matter.

Many many thanks in advance.

s22(1)
(a)(ii)

s22(1)(a)(ii)

Director • Engagement and Development • Regional Programs Branch • Regional Development and Local Government Division
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Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
CONNECTING AUSTRALIANS ■ ENRICHING COMMUNITIES ■ EMPOWERING REGIONS

infrastructure.gov.au



*I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live.
I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities.
I pay my respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.*

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From: s22(1)(a)(ii) <@finance.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 11 May 2023 2:47 PM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) <@infrastructure.gov.au>
Cc: s22(1)(a)(ii) <@infrastructure.gov.au>; BFR AAU Communications and Regional Development s22(1)(a)(ii) <@finance.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Proposed edit for Growing Regions Program [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s22(1)(a)(ii)

Thank you for providing these.

Feedback from the grants team is below:

As the Guidelines were only agreed by the Finance Minister on 6 May 2023 and there is no requirement to go through the process again.

DITRDCA will have to publish an addenda to the guidelines on GrantConnect so potential applicants are aware of the changes to the eligibility criteria.

It would also assist to provide additional information to stakeholders and potential applicants on the changes as the proposed amendments may impact on whether a potential applicant can now apply.

Appreciate if we could also have a final updated version to provide to our office to advise of the change.

Happy to discuss.

Kind Regards,

s22(1)(a)(ii)

s22(1)(a)(ii) | Budget Officer

Communications and Regional Development Agency Advice Unit

Budget & Financial Reporting

Department of Finance

T: 02 6215 s22(1)(a)(ii)

E: s22(1)(a)(ii)@finance.gov.au

A: One Canberra Avenue, Forrest, ACT 2603

Classification: OFFICIAL

Classified by: s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au **on:** 11/05/2023 2:45:02 PM

From: s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, 11 May 2023 2:33 PM

To: s22(1)(a)(ii) @finance.gov.au>

Cc: s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>

Subject: FW: Proposed edit for Growing Regions Program [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s22(1)(a)(ii)

Business Grants Hub have sent us a slight change to our edits – my apologies – I was hope to receive this prior to sending my last email.

Same sentiment.

Thanks

s22(1)(a)

OFFICIAL

From: s22(1)(a)(ii) @industry.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, 11 May 2023 2:29 PM

To: s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>

Cc: s22(1)(a)(ii) @industry.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii)

@industry.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) @infrastructure.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii)

@infrastructure.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii)

@industry.gov.au>; s22(1)(a)(ii) @industry.gov.au>

Subject: RE: Proposed edit for Growing Regions Program [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s22(1)(a)

Apologies for the delay, we are in training today.

As discussed, have made some further changes to the guidelines as we need a way to check an organisations not for profit status.

Kind regards

s22(1)(a)(ii)

Account Manager
Design and Liaison

Business Grants Hub | Corporate and Digital Network
Department of Industry, Science and Resources

Phone: +61 2 9397 s22(1)(a)(ii)
Internet: www.business.gov.au | [Subscribe to news updates](#)

Department of Industry, Science and Resources
Level 13, 100 Creek Street, Brisbane QLD 4000
GPO Box 2013, Canberra ACT 2601
ABN 74 599 608 295



Acknowledgement of Country

Our department recognises the First Peoples of this nation and their ongoing connection to culture and country. We acknowledge First Nations Peoples as the Traditional Owners, Custodians and Lore Keepers of the world's oldest living culture and pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.



OFFICIAL

From: s22(1)(a)(ii) [@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii)@infrastructure.gov.au)>
Sent: Wednesday, 10 May 2023 4:18 PM
To: s22(1)(a)(ii) [@industry.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii)@industry.gov.au)>
Cc: s22(1)(a)(ii) [@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii)@infrastructure.gov.au)>, s22(1)(a)(ii) [@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii)@infrastructure.gov.au)>
Subject: Proposed edit for Growing Regions Program [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

Hi s22(1)(a)

As discussed it came to our attention today that in the eligibility requirement accidentally excludes those not-for-profit organisation which are small like sports clubs, seniors groups, men's sheds, community and arts organisations who do not register for charity purposes. We have found out the only not-for-profit organisation which do get registered as a charity organisation are larger not-for-profit organisations like those providing disability care, large sporting organisations etc as once you are registered as a charity people can bequeath you funds in wills.

s34(3)

Can you please have a look at section four in attached guidelines and confirm the Hub is able to deliver on these words?

Many thanks in advance

s22(

s22(1)(a)(ii)

Director • Engagement and Development • Regional Programs Branch • Regional Development and Local Government Division

s22(1)(a)(ii) [@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii)@infrastructure.gov.au)

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GPO Box 594 Canberra, ACT 2601

s22(1)(a)(ii)

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
CONNECTING AUSTRALIANS • ENRICHING COMMUNITIES • EMPOWERING REGIONS

infrastructure.gov.au



*I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live.
 I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities.
 I pay my respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.*

OFFICIAL

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ATTACHMENT A

4.1 Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

To be eligible you must:

and

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN), or ORIC registration
- deliver the project in an eligible location
- commence the project no later than 15 May 2024
- own the land/infrastructure being upgraded or built upon, or have the landowner's permission to use the land/infrastructure.

For the purposes of the program, we also consider the following organisations to be local government bodies:

Organisation legal name	ABN
Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara	77 261 612 162
Maralinga Tjarutja	90 178 229 972
Gerard Community Council Aboriginal Corporation	99 725 510 595
Nipapanha Community Aboriginal Corporation	97 841 764 643
Yalata Community Council Incorporated	93 356 134 967
Cocos (Keeling) Islands Shire Council	12 325 522 841

Organisation legal name	ABN
Lord Howe Island Board	33 280 968 043
Norfolk Island Regional Council	60 103 855 713
Outback Communities Authority	46 594 368 490
Shire of Christmas Island	94 494 925 146
Silverton Village Committee Incorporated	94 820 037 891
Tibooburra Village Committee Incorporated	58 160 430 241

If you are applying as a Trustee on behalf of a Trust³, the Trustee must have an eligible entity type as listed above.

Joint applications are acceptable, provided you have a lead organisation who is the main driver of the project and is eligible to apply. For further information on joint applications, refer to section 7.4.

³ Trusts are not legal entities in their own right – to be eligible, only the Trustee for the Trust can apply by providing the signed Trust Deed and any subsequent variations with the application form. Trustees must be an eligible entity type as stated in section 4.1. Both the Trust's and Trustee's details will be collected in the application form.



Australian Government

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

REGIONAL PROGRAMS BRANCH

Roundtable report

Early Engagement on the Growing Regions Program

March 2023

Released under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 by the Department of
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

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Early engagement of stakeholders – roundtable discussions

Overview

The Regional Programs Branch, in collaboration with the Urban Policy, Precincts and Partnerships Branch, held stakeholder engagement roundtables on the Growing Regions and the regional Precincts and Partnerships programs on 15 and 16 March 2023.

Three separate roundtable discussions were held virtually with representatives from Regional Development Australia committees, Local Government Associations and identified peak bodies and First Nations organisations.

The objectives of the roundtables were to:

- Provide targeted stakeholders the opportunity to engage early and directly with the program design elements for both programs.
- Ensure the principles underpinning the proposed guidelines for the programs will achieve the program intent and outcomes.
- Seek feedback from stakeholders on the design principles for an effective, transparent and merit-based grants programs.
- Outline the similarities and differences between the two programs to illustrate the continuum of funding options available.

This report presents the feedback received from stakeholders on the Growing Regions Program.

The findings on the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program will be reported separately by the Urban Policy, Precincts and Partnerships Branch.

Early engagement

The roundtable discussions provided stakeholders with an overview of the design principles of the Growing Regions Program and an opportunity to provide feedback on a prepared set of questions.

Attendees at the virtual roundtables were as follows:

- 61 from the Regional Development Australia (RDA) committees
- 19 from Local Government Associations
- 4 from peak bodies

In addition, the power point presentation and Slido link was sent to all invited stakeholders.

Overall, participants were engaged and interested in the design of the programs, and expressed their appreciation for early engagement and consultation.

The following questions were provided to stakeholders prior to the roundtables via a Slido link included within the email invitations and/or in the follow-up emails which also included the presentations:

Growing Regions Program questions

1. What are the current priority needs of your communities?
 - a. How can we reflect those in our program design?

- b. What sort of evidence should we ask for?
2. Joint investment in projects ensures genuine collaboration and partnerships within the community.
 - a. What are your thoughts on co-funding requirements?
 - b. If there is a co-funding requirement, should there be exemptions?
 - c. If yes, for whom/what type of organisations?
3. How should we define a region in terms of determining locations for this program?
4. How can we make an application process less onerous while ensuring fairness and transparency?
5. Based on your knowledge or experience, how could application processes be improved?
6. What resources/services do applicants require to submit successful grant applications?
7. How can we support First Nations communities to bring forward proposals?
8. How can our requirement for evidence best align with the data or tools you already have?
9. What are the barriers to successful grant applications?
10. What are your views on an expression of interest process?
11. Do you think there should be a role for RDAs and what do you think it should look like?

Participants were provided with the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback through a Questions and Answers (Q&A) session at the end of each roundtable discussion.

Responses

Overall there was a good response rate.

Summary of responses:

- 320 responses through Slido (which was open from 14-17 March)
- 12 responses through email inbox
- 27 responses given through the Q&A session of the roundtable discussions

Findings and recommendations

Early engagement with stakeholders on the design principles for the Growing Regions Program indicates strong support for the program. Furthermore, participants were passionate about being involved in the development process of a grants program intended to meet identified community infrastructure needs and improve livability in their regions. Stakeholders value the opportunity to provide feedback into the design process and are keen to comment on the draft guidelines before they are finalised.

Definitions of regions are diverse

As expected, there was no singular agreement on how regions should be defined within the program.

The wide-ranging responses included defining regions based on various criteria such as: population numbers; accessibility and resources; RDA boundaries; Greater Capital City boundaries; non-metropolitan regions; the ABS Remoteness Structure; and both including or excluding peri-urban areas.

There were comments and discussions on the merits of differentiating larger regional cities from smaller rural townships as the need for funding varied significantly between these two types of areas.

Overall, there was agreement on the idea that regardless of which definition will be used – it needs to be clear and unambiguous.

Recommendation 1:

The department recommends retaining the definition of regional as outside Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSAs) for the purpose of the Growing Regions Program.

GCCSAs reflect labour markets and the areas and populations who regularly socialise, shop or work within Capital Cities, including small towns surrounding the city. We have defined regions for the Growing Regions Program as all areas outside of GCCSAs as it provides greater clarity to applicants, allows for better data collation, and provides a generally agreed sense of what is considered 'regional', particularly where peri-urban inclusion becomes contentious.

The only sensitivity in using this criterion for the Growing Regions Program is the difference from the Building Better Regions Fund which included cities such as Hobart and Darwin. This can be overcome through the announcement of a new program (Thriving Suburbs) which would cover all areas inside the GCCSAs.

Tiering of funding and/or co-funding exemptions could be used to support smaller and/or more disadvantaged communities.

Co-funding requirements are generally supported but should have flexibility and exemptions

Participants who commented on this requirement agreed with the principle of co-funding as it encourages joint investment and ownership within communities. Participants agreed co-funding requirements should generally apply to organisations in order to ensure partnership and shared risk.

However, it was noted smaller and/or more disadvantaged organisations should be able to access some type of co-funding exemption.

Flexibility and scales of co-funding were strongly supported, suggestions included:

- a sliding scale based on inner and outer regional, and remote and very remote
- economic position of the local government or local government area (LGA), including lower level of co-contribution for smaller, less-resourced LGAs
- reflective of financial capacity and rate base
- in-kind contributions to be considered as part of co-contributions
- applicants to demonstrate where they cannot provide co-funding to be considered for exemptions
- base level of co-contribution less than 50 per cent
- exemptions for First Nations communities and/or organisations
- exemptions for disaster impacted areas
- exemptions for small local governments, communities of high need and low economic participation

One respondent noted exemptions should be *"based on a fundamental understanding about the purpose of co-contributions – which to me is about local ownership and sustainability."*

Recommendation 2:

The department recommends the base level for co-funding remain at 50 per cent.

The department recommends co-funding exemptions for smaller, disadvantaged LGAs and organisations. We recommend the first option outlined below.

Option 1:

Co-funding requirements exemptions could be implemented on a tiered basis, where exemptions are made in two categories of up to 70 per cent and up to 90 per cent.

- Organisations and areas eligible for a co-funding exemption of up to 90 per cent could include:
 - o First Nations Community Controlled Organisations
 - o projects located in areas impacted by natural disaster in the past 12 months and
 - o projects located in very remote locations (according to the ABS remoteness structure).
- Organisations and areas eligible for a co-funding exemption of up to 70 per cent could include:
 - o small councils - based on a certain rate base and Financial Assistance Grants received and
 - o projects located in remote locations (according to the ABS remoteness structure).

Option 2:

Alternatively, funding allocations could be considered in two tiers based on the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). The Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) has five categories from most disadvantaged to most advantaged. The total funding allocation of \$300 million for the first round could be allocated where:

- \$200 million is allocated to the highest scoring applications, and
- \$100 million is allocated to Statistical Area Level 1s located in the lowest two quintiles, providing projects have been rated meritorious and achieve a minimum score of 60% per assessment criterion.

The application experience could be improved with an expressions of interest process, but the impact on timing is important to applicants

Stakeholders expressed support for the expressions of interest (EOIs) process with the main benefits identified as being:

- a better way to manage applicant expectations
- a simpler process which reduces the initial burden of applications (noting an early decision allows applicants to avoid expending resources and time when projects are unlikely to be successful)
- an easier confirmation of eligibility process
- useful in potentially providing early feedback on projects (especially in the case when applicants may want to re-apply when their projects are more developed).

Some participants expressed significant concerns about the EOI process and impact on the timing provided for application/assessment processes; primarily how the process would impact the overall time frame between program opening and the announcement of successful projects.

Other comments about timeframes included the following:

- ensuring application opening periods did not happen over the December/January holiday period
- the difficulty in obtaining/confirming co-funding across all levels of government due to lack of alignment with budget cycles of the different governments
- drawn out assessment periods and their potential impact on original quotes, resulting in increased major project costs

- any additional role for Regional Development Australia committees also included caveats that any changes to their role should not extend application time frames.

Recommendation 3:

The department recommends the EOI process for this program with adequate timeframes for applicants be set out in the guidelines.

An EOI process has benefits to an open and competitive grants program, particularly where applications are expected to significantly exceed the funding pool available. Timing is a key factor for the program EOI process to work effectively. We recommend that, should an EOI process be implemented, adequate time frames are provided to ensure applicants have the maximum opportunity for success.

We note that an EOI process will impact time frames by approximately 18 weeks, and an option may be considered to run the first round of the Growing Regions Program without an EOI process if timing to announcements is an issue.

In consultation with the Grants Hub, an EOI with full application process would require the following timing from program opening:

EOI open for applications	4 weeks
Assessment of EOI applications	6 weeks (note: time frame may be extended depending on the panel process)
Decision approval and announcement	4 weeks
Notification to applicants	4 weeks
Full applications open	6 weeks
Full application assessment	6 weeks
Decision approval and announcement	4 weeks
Total time to successful project announcements	34 weeks
Contract development and grant agreements finalised	6 weeks

With the right resourcing, Regional Development Australia committees could play a role in application processes

When participants were asked whether there should be a role for Regional Development Australia and what this should look like, responses differed amongst the participants.

Responses from the Regional Development Australia committees overwhelmingly indicated strong support for their involvement in the program, including potential roles such as:

- supporting the community consultation process
- supporting the writing of grant applications
- advocating for applicants and projects
- undertaking a part in the EOI process and/or
- undertaking a part in the assessment process.

All participant groups acknowledged capacity, resourcing and engagement may differ across RDA committees, noting committees were time-poor and would be best placed to support applicants if they had adequate resourcing.

Feedback from the Local Government Association and peak bodies advocated for maintaining the current role of RDA committees which is restricted to supporting applicants prior to the submission of applications. They did not support a role for Regional Development Australia in assessment or approval processes.

Recommendation 4:

The department recommends the role of RDA committees remains as a supportive and consultative one for the application process for the program.

The department recommends further roles for RDA committees to be considered should additional resourcing for the committees be provided in the future.

We recommend further engagement with RDA committees to seek feedback on draft guidelines.

We acknowledge RDA committees are well placed to support questions from potential applicants when the program is opened.

We will work with a Grants Hub to scope the possibility of including an opt-in or opt-out option for applicants to share their details with local RDA committees to assist in development of regional plans and promote active engagement locally.

Advocacy for processes which support First Nations organisations and communities, as well as small and less resourced organisations

Stakeholders recognised the difficulties faced by small organisations and First Nations communities in obtaining grant funding. They further noted the ability of larger, well-resourced organisations and local governments to engage grant writers to submit applications.

This can lead to unintended outcomes in competitive grants, where organisations who utilise grant writers can put forward stronger applications, leaving smaller and less well-resourced organisations at a competitive disadvantage.

Across all three groups, participants agreed more support in preparing applications would assist First Nations organisations and communities. Participants suggested clear communication of program opportunities and assistance through already established channels such as the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporations and networks like the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

Recommendation 5:

The department recommends the co-funding exemptions noted above as a way of assisting disadvantaged communities including First Nations organisations.

The Growing Regions Program's engagement and communications strategy with First Nations organisations will be strengthened to ensure targeted communication of the program opportunity is delivered through established First Nations channels.

While it may not be possible in the first round of the Growing Regions Program, further consideration could be made toward resourcing Regional Development Australia to assist organisations and small councils with their grant applications.

The EOI process should allow unsuccessful applicants to receive feedback and direct applicants to local resources to assist with development of future grant applications.

Support for applications to link proposals with regional and local plans

Stakeholders strongly supported linking proposed projects with existing regional and local plans.

Participant responses stated this type of linkage would ensure projects were assessed on their unique priorities and the value they would bring to their specific region and/or community.

When exploring barriers to successful grant applications, respondents noted small organisations were held back by the lack of funding for feasibility studies.

Recommendation 6

The department recommends that the EOI and full application assessment criteria in the guidelines remain as is – as it includes the requirement for applicants to outline how the proposed project aligns with a community and/or regional plan.

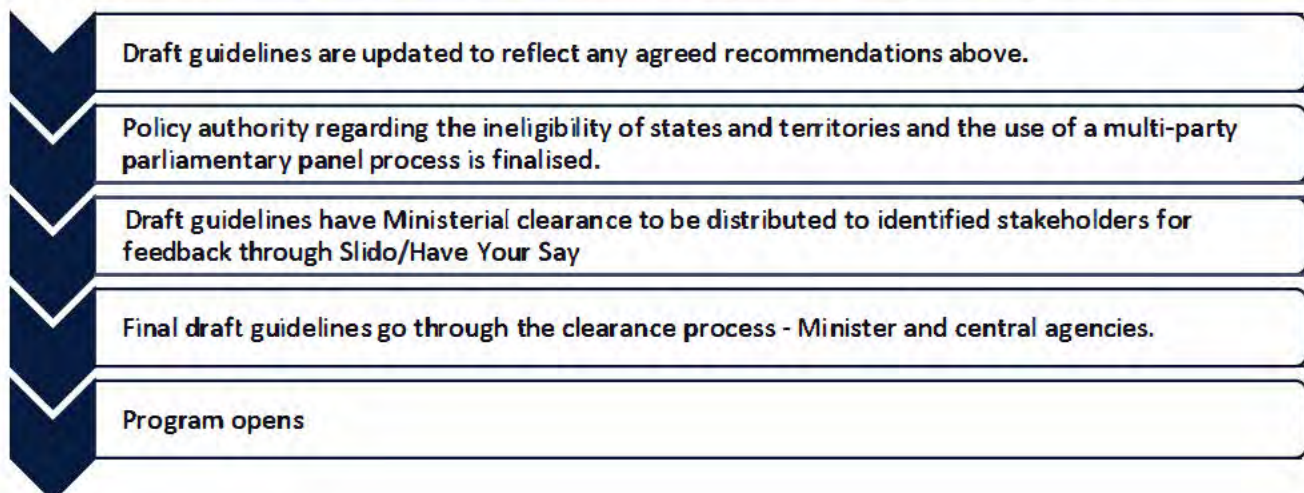
While we do not anticipate funding for feasibility studies will be made available through the Growing Regions Program, we note this is a consideration for the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program.

Implementation of feedback in the program and next steps

The early engagement of stakeholders via roundtable discussions has provided input into the high-level principles of the Growing Regions Program.

This has been a significant process and reflects the government's commitment to transparency, fairness and equity in grants. Ongoing engagement will ensure the program is successful in achieving these objectives.

We propose the following stages to finalise consultation and prepare for the program's opening:



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MS23-003750



Australian Government

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

Dispatched to MO

10 AUG 2023

To: Catherine King (for decision)

Subject: The regional Precincts and Partnerships Program - Grant Opportunity Guidelines
Approval for Public ReleaseCritical Date: Please action by **9 August 2023** to enable opening of the regional Precincts and
Partnerships Program to occur in late August 2023.**Recommendation/s:**

1. That you **approve** the final regional Precincts and Partnerships Program Grant Opportunity Guidelines at **Attachment A1 and A2**.

☒ Approved ☐ Not Approved

2. That you **sign** the letter to the Minister for Finance, Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher MP, at **Attachment B** seeking her agreement to publicly release the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

☒ Signed ☐ Not Signed

The Hon Catherine King MP

Date: 10.8.23

Comments:**Key Points:**

1. The Australian Government has committed \$400 million to the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (the program). The program will deliver transformative investment in regional, rural and remote Australia by providing grants for the development and delivery of precinct infrastructure. The program is expected to open for applications in late August 2023 and will be an open, non-competitive grants process.
2. The Department of Industry, Science and Resources' Business Grants Hub administers the program on behalf of the Department and is currently building the program's grants system, which is due for completion on 10 August 2023, which is the earliest this can be finalised.
3. The Business Grants Hub has finalised the program's two sets of Grant Opportunity Guidelines (the guidelines) at **Attachment A1 and A2**. The final guidelines incorporate feedback received as part central agencies' review, which took place in June and July 2023.

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MS23-003750

4. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet provided minimal and minor feedback on the guidelines. In mid-July 2023, the Department of Finance provided feedback which centred around increasing transparency and aligning with best-practice grants management, which has resulted in some material changes to the program's decision-making process.
5. Key amendments to the guidelines based on this feedback include:
 - a. Section 2: Adding in the rationale for selecting an open, non-competitive grants process.
 - b. Sections 6.1 and 8.2: Specifying which Australian Government policy priorities the Independent Expert Panel will consider in their merit assessment and the Department will consider in their recommendations, to increase transparency and guidance for applicants so they can better tailor their proposals.
 - i. Government priorities including Closing the Gap, transition to a net zero economy, Australia's emission reduction goals, delivery of housing (particularly social and affordable housing) and the National Cultural Policy have been added.
 - ii. We note we made your minor amendments as requested, MS23-003458 refers.
 - c. Section 8.2: Rather than providing all meritorious applications to you as the decision-maker, the Department of Finance strongly advised that the department should provide recommendations on which applications should be funded.
 - i. The department's recommendations will be based on alignment with Australian Government policy priorities, geographic distribution, precinct types and funding available.
 - d. Section 8.2: Adding clarification that any advice you may seek from other Minister/s as part of the decision-making process will only be in regard to specific policy responsibilities that are part of their portfolio.
6. Based on advice from the Business Grants Hub, changes have also been made to clarify the eligibility for not-for-profit entities, with eligibility requirements now aligning with the Growing Regions Program.
7. A letter to the Minister of Finance has been drafted for your signature seeking agreement for the public release of the guidelines (**Attachment B**). The standard timeframe for approval from the Minister for Finance is at least ten working days (Estimates Memorandum 2018/39). In order to allow for release of the guidelines in late August 2023, the Minister for Finance needs to provide approval by 23 August 2023 (this date assumes you sign the letter by 9 August).
8. Once approved, the program can open for applications and the guidelines will be published on GrantConnect, business.gov.au and the Department's website in accordance with the Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines and the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act rules.

Financial impacts:

9. \$400 million is allocated to the program across three years from 2023-24. \$100 million is available for 2023-24, and \$150 million is available for both 2024-25 and 2025-26.

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MS23-003750

s42
**Stakeholder Implications:**

11. The opening of this program is highly anticipated by stakeholders. Release of the guidelines as soon as possible will afford potential applicants more time to organise partnerships and develop strong proposals. I note that your office has proposed a mid-August announcement which will be possible if you are able to fast-track your approval and the approval of the Minister for Finance.

Consultation:

12. The department has consulted with the Department of Finance, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Business Grants Hub within the Department of Industry, Science and Resources on the program guidelines. The department has also consulted the Regional Programs Branch, Regional Development Australia committees, local government representatives, select peak bodies, and state and territory governments on the program design.
13. The Department of Finance confirmed on 3 August 2023 that both Departments of Finance and the Prime Minister and Cabinet have no further comments on the Guidelines and that there are no issues on the Funding Profile or Policy Authority.

Media Opportunities:

14. A proposed media package, including a media release and talking points, will be provided to your office prior to the launch of the program, for consideration.

Attachments:

Attachment A1: regional Precincts and Partnerships Program Grant Opportunity Guidelines Stream One: Precinct development and planning

Attachment A2: regional Precincts and Partnerships Program Grant Opportunity Guidelines Stream Two: Precinct delivery

Attachment B: Letter to the Minister for Finance

Cleared By: Tiffany Karlsson
 Position: Assistant Secretary
 Division: Partnerships and Projects Division
 Ph: 02 6274 s22(1)(a)(ii)
 Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)
 Cleared Date:

Contact Officer: s22(1)(a)(ii)
 Section: Precincts and Partnerships
 Ph: 02 6274 s22(1)(a)(ii)
 Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)

Instructions for MPS: Attachments A1 and A2 should be enclosed with the letter sent to the Finance Minister at Attachment B.

Responsible Adviser: s22(1)(a)(ii)

PDMS Distribution List: Jim Betts, David Mackay, Matthew Roper, Tiffany Karlsson

OFFICIAL

Regional Precincts and Partnerships – Stream One: Precinct development and planning

Opening date:	[dd mmmm yyyy]
Closing date and time:	[00.00 Australian Eastern Daylight Time or Australian Eastern Standard Time] on [dd mmmm yyyy] Please take account of time zone differences when submitting your application.
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA)
Administering entity:	Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR)
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, contact us on 13 28 46.
Date guidelines released:	[dd mmmm yyyy]
Type of grant opportunity:	Open non-competitive

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1. Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program – Precinct development and planning processes

The Regional Precincts and Partnerships program is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

This grant opportunity is part of the above grant program which contributes to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA)'s Outcome 3. The Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) works with stakeholders to plan and design the grant program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#).



The grant opportunity opens

DISR publish the grant guidelines on business.gov.au and [GrantConnect](#).



You complete and submit a grant application

You complete the application form and provide a proposal that addresses all the eligibility and assessment criteria in order for your application to be considered.



We assess all grant applications against eligibility

DISR assess the applications against eligibility criteria and notify you if you are not eligible.



The Panel assess eligible grant applications

Applications are batched twice a year and reviewed by an Independent Expert Panel (the Panel). The Panel assesses eligible applications against the assessment criteria including an overall consideration of value for money. The Panel provides a list of meritorious applications to DITRDCA.



DITRDCA provide policy advice on grant applications

DITRDCA provide advice to the decision maker on how the meritorious proposals meet policy and program objectives.



Grant decisions are made

The decision maker decides which applications are successful.



We notify you of the outcome

DISR advise you of the outcome of your application. We may not notify unsuccessful applicants until grant agreements have been executed with successful applicants.



We enter into a grant agreement

We will enter into a grant agreement with successful applicants. 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 complete 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 Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program

DITRDCA will evaluate the specific grant activity and regional Precincts and Partnerships Program as a whole. We base this on information you provide to us and that we collect from various sources.

1.1. Introduction

These guidelines contain information for the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (the program).

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant program/grant opportunity
- the eligibility and assessment criteria
- how we consider and assess grant applications
- how we notify applicants and enter into grant agreements with grantees
- how we monitor and evaluate grantees' performance
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

This grant opportunity and process will be administered by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (the department/DISR) on behalf of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA).

We have defined key terms used in these guidelines in the glossary at section 14.

You should read this document carefully before you fill out an application.

2. About the grant program

The program will run over 3 years from 2023-24 to 2025-26. The program was announced as part of the 2022-23 October Budget and reflects the Government's Regional Investment Framework, which:

- values local voices and priorities
- is informed by and builds on the evidence-base
- operates with flexibility and transparency and
- guides coordinated responses across government.

The program seeks to deliver transformative investment in regional, rural and remote Australia based on the principles of unifying regional places, growing their economies and serving their communities.

The program will focus on a **partnership approach**, bringing together governments and communities to deliver regional precincts that are tailored to local needs and have a shared vision in how that precinct connects to the region.

The program presents a new opportunity for regional investment through a unique grants process, which features a strong focus on collaboration and joint investment opportunities. The establishment of partnerships, that include local perspectives, will be critical to delivering place-based infrastructure supported by the community. The program allows governments and communities to establish long-term partnerships and jointly invest in genuine regional priorities. The Government is committed to regional development, renewal and supporting population growth by delivering the infrastructure and housing required to create strong and vibrant communities.

The program will support the planning and delivery of regional, rural and remote precincts. Regional precincts or 'places with a purpose' are user-defined geographic areas with a specific shared need or theme. Regional precincts may include business districts, neighbourhoods, activity centres, commercial hubs or community and recreational areas. They will be located in renewal areas and growth areas in regional centres, regional corridors, regional cities, as well as smaller

town centres that serve as service hubs in more remote communities. The scale of regional precinct projects will vary depending on their location and objectives.

Precincts support better integration of land use and ensure the infrastructure investment complements the broader region and its surrounding communities, spaces, transport and activities. The program's place-based, partnership approach will ensure that precinct proposals are suitably and strategically designed for their specific contexts and maximise outcomes for their communities.

The objectives of the Program are to:

- facilitate place-based approaches to planning, characterised by collaborative partnerships engaging in shared design, stewardship and accountability of planned outcomes
- provide targeted benefits related to productivity, equity and resilience for the people of regional, rural or remote Australia
- support community priorities for regional cities, rural or remote centres and areas
- reflect the Government's approach to regional investment as outlined under the Regional Investment Framework.

The intended outcomes of the Program are to:

- demonstrate the value of partnerships between governments, communities and businesses for effective planning, coordination and delivery of regional infrastructure
- develop and deliver regional precincts comprised of multiple infrastructure components, which provide benefits related to productivity, equity and resilience
- contribute to the Australian Government's current policy priorities, including but not limited to Closing the Gap, transition to a net zero economy, Australia's emission reduction goals, social and affordable housing, and National Cultural Policy.

It is the intent of the Program to:

- deliver grants across a broad geographic spread of regional Australia, including remote and very remote areas
- support precinct projects of differing scales and functionalities
- encourage projects from lesser-resourced applicants.

The regional Precincts and Partnerships Program will be an open grants process, meaning applications can be submitted at any time once the program opens. The program is a non-competitive program to avoid the direct, competitive comparison of applications from organisations of differing sizes and levels of resourcing. This approach provides the ability to ensure the equitable distribution of grants across the country based on the individual merits of a precinct proposal and its benefits to the local community. This allows the opportunity to balance small and large projects and different types of precincts within the funding profile.

There are two grant opportunities as part of this program:

- Stream One - Precinct development and planning: to activate partnerships and to deliver an investment- ready precinct plan
- Stream Two - Precinct delivery: to deliver a specified project or projects as part of a precinct.

We will publish the opening and closing dates and any other relevant information on business.gov.au and [GrantConnect](#).

We administer the program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines \(CGRGs\)](#)¹.

2.1. About the Stream One Precinct Development and Planning grant opportunity

This grant opportunity is part of the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program.

The Precinct Development and Planning grant opportunity provides opportunities to develop a precinct idea through to investment-ready stage. The rationale for Stream One is to recognise that financial constraints can inhibit great concepts being explored further and developed into realistic, well-designed and planned projects.

For Stream One, the **project** is considered to be a plan for the entire precinct, even if you are only considering future investment in one element of the precinct. This contrasts with Stream Two, where the project is one or more elements of a precinct.

The objective of the grant opportunity is to activate partnerships to jointly deliver precinct plans.

The intended outcomes of the grant opportunity are to:

- establish partnerships comprised of relevant government entities, community organisations and businesses that have a shared vision for a regional precinct
- deliver precinct plans that are tailored to their local contexts and based on community feedback and engagement
- support precinct plans to become investment ready.

2.2. Partnerships

The establishment of a partnership is essential to the program, which has a focus on bringing together all relevant interested parties to collaboratively plan or deliver precinct proposals. These partnerships are intended to be conglomerates of relevant entities as well as other local stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- State and Territory government
- Local government
- Regional universities
- Not-for-profit entities
- First Nations groups
- Regional Development Australia committees
- Community organisations
- Private enterprise
- Australian Government agencies that have policy/program interests or responsibilities.

Not all entity types listed above are eligible to apply for program funding (see section 4: Eligibility Criteria), however they can form part of the partnership.

The intention behind a partnership is to ensure the precinct is well-considered and allows an opportunity for relevant parties to work through issues, consult early and be investment ready.

¹ <https://www.finance.gov.au/government/commonwealth-grants/commonwealth-grants-rules-guidelines>

First Nations groups should be involved in the design phase to help shape projects and influence a stronger outcome that incorporates First Nations experiences, culture and design.

3. Grant amount and grant period

3.1. Grants available

The Australian Government has announced a total of \$400 million over 3 years for the program's two streams. For this grant opportunity we estimate a total of \$80 million is available over 3 years from 2023-24, noting this may be reviewed and balanced between streams to meet demand or until funding is exhausted.

- The minimum grant amount is \$500,000.
- The maximum grant amount is \$5 million.

The grant amount will be up to 100 per cent of the eligible expenditure for the project to a maximum amount of \$5 million.

Grants are intended to support a broader commitment to the precinct concept, therefore you are required to demonstrate your contribution and commitment to the proposed precinct in assessment criteria 4. Your contributions can be cash or in-kind (such as land or resources), or a combination of both. We are looking for applicants to show what they can do, monetarily or otherwise to ensure the success of the project.

Any partner contributions and other funding for your project can come from other sources including state, territory and local government grants. Other Commonwealth funding cannot be used for the project. You are responsible for the remaining eligible and ineligible costs.

3.2. Project period

You must complete your project by 31 March 2026.

4. Eligibility criteria

We cannot consider your application if you do not satisfy all eligibility criteria.

4.1. Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

To be eligible you must:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Organisations (ORIC) registration

and be one of the following entities:

- an Australian State/Territory Government agency or body
- an Australian local government agency or body as defined in section 14
- a Regional University which may be for-profit as defined in section 14
- an incorporated not-for-profit organisation. As a not-for-profit organisation you must demonstrate your not-for-profit status through one of the following:
 - current Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission's (ACNC) Registration
 - state or territory incorporated association status
 - constitutional documents and/or Articles of Association that demonstrate the not-for-profit character of the organisation.

4.2. Additional eligibility requirements

We can only accept proposals where you:

- have authority or are close to seeking authority for use of the land or infrastructure required to undertake the proposed project at a nominated site (if you have authority, you are required to provide a letter to confirm this authority from the land or infrastructure owner)
- can identify the intended project partner/s that form your partnership supported with a proposed governance structure for your precinct
- can provide evidence that the relevant State or Territory government have been invited to participate in the partnership
- can provide evidence that the relevant local government agency or body have been invited to participate in the partnership
- can provide evidence that the following organisations have been contacted to seek their support for the concept of the precinct:
 - the relevant Regional Development Australia (RDA) committee
 - the relevant Traditional Owner/First Nations groups for the area.

We cannot waive the eligibility criteria under any circumstances.

4.3. Who is not eligible to apply for a grant?

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- an organisation, or your project partner is an organisation, included on the [National Redress Scheme's website](#) on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme'
- an employer of 100 or more employees that has [not complied](#) with the *Workplace Gender Equality Act (2012)*
- for-profit organisations (with the exception of regional universities). However, they can form part of the partnership
- any organisation not included in section 4.1.

5. What the grant money can be used for

5.1. Eligible grant activities

To be eligible your project must:

- be aimed at meeting the objectives of the grant opportunity, as outlined in Section 2.1
- have at least \$500,000 in eligible expenditure.

Eligible activities must directly relate to the project and may include:

- scoping, planning, design and consultation activities for the proposed precinct
- development, formalisation and operation of partnership relationships and responsibilities
- business cases and feasibility studies.

We may also approve other activities and studies which are linked to the objectives and outcomes of the program, including but not limited to geotechnical, surveying, flora and fauna, and heritage assessments/investigations.

5.2. Eligible locations

The proposed project must be in a regional, rural or remote location, delineated as entirely outside the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSA).

Use the [mapping tool](#) to determine eligibility of your project location.

5.3. Ineligible locations

The following are ineligible locations:

- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Sydney
- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Melbourne
- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Perth
- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Adelaide
- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Brisbane
- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Darwin
- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Hobart
- All of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

5.4. Eligible expenditure

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure you have incurred on an agreed project as defined in your grant agreement.

- For guidance on eligible expenditure, refer to appendix A.
- For guidance on ineligible expenditure, refer to appendix B.

We may update the guidance on eligible and ineligible expenditure from time to time. If your application is successful, the version in place when you submitted your application applies to your project.

If your application is successful, we may ask you to verify project costs that you provided in your application. You may need to provide evidence such as quotes for major costs.

Not all expenditure on your project may be eligible for grant funding. The program delegate (who is a manager within the department with responsibility for administering the program) makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be a direct cost of the project
- be incurred by you for required project audit activities.

You must incur the project expenditure between the project start and end date for it to be eligible unless stated otherwise.

You may elect to commence your project from the date we notify you that your application is successful. We are not responsible for any expenditure you incur until a grant agreement is executed. The Commonwealth will not be liable, and should not be held out as being liable, for any activities undertaken before the grant agreement is executed.

6. The assessment criteria

You must address all assessment criteria in your application. The Independent Expert Panel (the Panel) will assess your application based on the weighting given to each criterion.

The application form asks questions that relate to the assessment criteria below. The amount of detail and supporting evidence you provide in your application should be relative to the project size, complexity and grant amount requested. You should provide evidence to support your answers. The application form displays character limits for each response.

Demonstrating value for money is a key requirement and will be assessed by comparing the projected benefits and opportunities created by the project against the estimated cost (refer to Section 8.1). Your response to the below assessment criteria should clearly articulate the expected benefits and opportunities that the project will create.

Only applications that score at least 50 per cent against each assessment criterion will be deemed as meritorious and considered for award of grant funding.

6.1. Assessment criterion 1

Project alignment with program objectives and Australian Government priorities (35 points).

You should demonstrate this through identifying how your proposal:

- a. aligns with regional plans, community priorities and other regional investment strategies and activities
- b. supports a place-based approach to planning, including better integration of land use and regional development and/or renewal
- c. provides economic opportunities, and enhances productivity, equity and resilience
- d. considers and/or measures climate and energy impacts such as disaster risk, emissions reduction, biodiversity, decarbonisation, circular economies, and energy and water efficiency
- e. contributes to the achievement of Australian Government policy priorities and program objectives, including but not limited to Closing the Gap, transition to a net zero economy, Australia's emission reduction goals, social and affordable housing, and National Cultural Policy, relative to the type of project being considered.

6.2. Assessment criterion 2

Project Need (35 points).

You should demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. how your proposal will address an existing public infrastructure gap
- b. how the precinct will deliver improvements and public benefits and/or services in your region
- c. evidence as to why investment in the proposal is needed, including any barriers preventing investment to date
- d. rationale for the elements you are considering for inclusion in the precinct and how these link a place with a purpose.

6.3. Assessment criterion 3

Community engagement, collaboration, and partnership (20 points).

You should demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. how your precinct development and planning process intends to engage with the local community, draw upon local knowledge and information, and identify and leverage opportunities and address challenges within your region
- b. how you and your partnership will work together to achieve the project based on the values of shared design, stewardship and accountability of planned outcomes
- c. the proposed governance arrangements of the partnership and how they will support, enhance or achieve community engagement, and collaboration for the project
- d. how First Nations groups could be involved in the design and planning phase to help shape the proposal and influence a stronger outcome that incorporates First Nations experiences, culture and design.

6.4. Assessment criterion 4

Capacity, capability and resources to deliver a sound precinct proposal (10 points).

You should demonstrate this by providing evidence of:

- a. your ability to undertake or manage the development of project proposals, including your track record of managing similar projects and your access to personnel with the right skills and experience
- b. your proven ability to manage and monitor timeframes, consultation processes, budget and risk management
- c. a resource plan that includes how the project will be supported and the cost of that resourcing
- d. any contributions you or your partners will be providing that would help to strengthen the delivery of the project. Contributions can be non-monetary.

7. How to apply

Before applying you should read and understand these guidelines, the sample [application form](#) and the sample [grant agreement](#) published on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

Applicants should read all eligibility and assessment criteria closely and attach detailed evidence that supports the assessment criteria.

You will need to set up an account to access our online [portal](#).

To apply, you must:

- complete and submit the application through the online [portal](#)
- provide all the information requested
- address all eligibility and assessment criteria
- include all necessary attachments.

You are responsible for making sure your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the [Criminal Code Act 1995](#). If we consider that you have provided false or misleading information we may not progress your application. If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should call us immediately on 13 28 46.

After submitting your application, we can contact you for clarification if we find an error or any missing information, including evidence that supports your eligibility/merit. The acceptance of any additional information provided after the submission of your application is at the discretion of the program delegate. Additional information should not materially change your application at the time it was submitted and therefore may be refused if deemed to be purely supplementary.

You can view and print a copy of your submitted application on the portal for your own records.

If you need further guidance around the application process, or if you have any issues with the portal, [contact us](#) at business.gov.au or by calling 13 28 46.

7.1. Attachments to the application

You must provide the following documents with your application:

- a project plan or preliminary project outline
- a project budget
- confirmation that you have authority for use of the land or infrastructure at the proposed site, if one has been selected. If the proposed site is not confirmed, you should clearly outline this in your application
- evidence to support your intended partnership (e.g. a letter from project partner/s or other type of agreement), including details of all project partners
- a proposed governance structure for your precinct outlining the roles and responsibilities of each project partner
- evidence of support from local community and business as relevant
- evidence that the relevant State or Territory government and local government agency or body has been invited to participate (e.g. an email or letter)
- evidence that the relevant RDA committee and Traditional Owner/First Nations groups for the area have been contacted to seek their support (e.g. an email, or letter)
- evidence of not-for-profit status (where applicable)
- detailed evidence that supports assessment criteria responses (where applicable)
- trust deed (where applicable).

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with the instructions provided within the form. You should only attach requested documents. The total of all attachments cannot exceed 20MB. We will not consider information in attachments that we do not request.

7.2. Timing of grant opportunity processes

You can submit an application at any time while the grant opportunity remains open. Proposals will be batched and announcements made twice per financial year, at a minimum until funding is exhausted.

If you are successful we expect you will be able to commence your project within 3 months of receiving the offer of grant funding.

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Activity	Timeframe
Assessment of applications	September/October and March/April
Approval and announcement of successful applicants	November/December and May/June
Negotiations and award of grant agreements	1-3 weeks
Notification to unsuccessful applicants	2 weeks
Earliest start date of project	The date you are notified that your proposal has been successful
Project completion date	31 March 2026
End date of grant commitment	30 June 2026

7.3. Questions during the application process

If you have any questions during the application period, [contact us](#) at business.gov.au or by calling 13 28 46.

8. The grant selection process

8.1. Assessment of grant applications

The program's non-competitive process means applicants will be assessed on their individual merit against the assessment criteria, and will not be compared to other applications.

It is intended that applications will be batched a minimum of twice a year, however the number of batches and the timing of each batch may vary depending on the volume and quality of applications received.

We first review your application against the eligibility criteria.

If eligible, your application will be assessed against the assessment criteria by the Independent Expert Panel.

Only eligible applications will proceed to the assessment stage. Any ineligible proposals will not proceed and are excluded from funding consideration.

We consider your application on its merits, based on:

- how well it meets the criteria
- whether it provides value with relevant money and represents an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public resources.²

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

- the overall objective/s of the grant opportunity
- the evidence provided to demonstrate how your project contributes to meeting those objectives
- the spread of projects across geographic areas, precinct types and government objectives

² See glossary for an explanation of 'value with money'.

- the relative resources of the applicant and need for the project
- the relative value of the grant sought.

8.2. Who will assess applications?

An Independent Expert Panel will assess all eligible proposals and make determinations regarding which proposals are meritorious. The Panel will comprise three members from the Urban Policy Forum, who were selected for their expertise in regional development and urban design and renewal. This will enable them to make assessments based on a thorough understanding of regional needs, best practice planning and sustainable development. The Panel will assess proposals against the assessment criteria, applying their expertise, before determining which are meritorious. Only proposals that have been deemed as meritorious in the assessment process will be provided to the Minister for final decision making.

The Panel will have robust governance arrangements and will meet twice per year to assess the proposals across the two grant funding streams.

The Panel members will be required to perform their duties in accordance with the CGRGs and will be subject to probity requirements as outlined in section 13.

DITRDCA will provide policy advice on meritorious proposals based on policy considerations and the funding envelope available.

DITRDCA's recommendations on meritorious proposals will be based on:

- the Independent Expert Panel's assessment
- alignment with the Government's approach to regional investment as outlined in the Regional Investment Framework
- alignment with current Australian Government policy priorities, and program objectives including but not limited to:
 - [Closing the Gap](#)
 - transition to a net zero economy
 - [Australia's emission reduction goals](#)
 - delivery of housing, particularly social and affordable housing
 - [National Cultural Policy](#)
- budget allocation available to fund projects
- balance of projects between each Stream across budget allocation
- geographic area, Government's policy priorities and types of precincts.

DITRDCA will also identify meritorious applications which propose projects that are:

- located in 'remote and very remote locations'
- submitted by First Nations Community Controlled Organisations
- submitted by 'low rate based' councils.

This information will allow DITRDCA to provide the decision maker with information regarding the diverse range of applicants, particularly lesser-resourced applicants that have submitted proposals assessed as meritorious by the Independent Expert Panel.

8.3. Who will approve grants?

DITRDCA will recommend which meritorious proposals should be considered for funding. The Minister decides which grants to approve taking into account the recommendations of DITRDCA,

the availability of grant funds, and, where necessary, advice from relevant Minister/s for meritorious proposals relevant to their specific portfolio responsibilities.

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

- the grant approval
- the grant funding to be awarded
- any conditions attached to the offer of grant funding.

We cannot review decisions about the merits of your application.

The Minister will not approve funding if there is insufficient program funding available across relevant financial years for the program.

9. Notification of application outcomes

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

Due to the nature of the application process, if you are not found meritorious, you will be notified and can submit a new application for the same project while the grant opportunity remains open. You should include new or additional information to improve upon your previous application.

If you were found meritorious but unsuccessful, you will be notified and you can choose to withdraw your application from future panel consideration or submit a variation to your previous application. This variation should include any new or additional information which may enhance your previous application. If a new application is substantially the same as a previous ineligible or unsuccessful application, we may refuse to consider it for assessment.

The previous online proposal can be accessed in portal.business.gov.au after logging in if you wish to build on the information previously provided. You should select 'My applications', click on the Application Summary and select 'view submitted application'. Alternatively, you can request a pdf of your unsuccessful proposal by contacting regional.precincts@industry.gov.au.

9.1. Feedback on your application

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

10. Successful grant applications

10.1. The grant agreement

You must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The grant agreement has general terms and conditions that cannot be changed. A sample [grant agreement](#) is available on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

We will manage the grant agreement through the online portal. This includes issuing and executing the grant agreement. Execute means both you and the Commonwealth have accepted the agreement. We are not responsible for any expenditure you incur and cannot make any payments until a grant agreement is executed.

The approval of your grant may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the program delegate or Minister. We will identify these in the offer of grant funding.

If you enter an agreement under this grant opportunity, you cannot receive other grants for the same activities from other Commonwealth granting programs.

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

We will use a standard grant agreement.

You will have 30 days from the date of a written offer to execute this grant agreement with the Commonwealth. During this time, we will work with you to finalise details.

The offer may lapse if both parties do not sign the grant agreement within this time. Under certain circumstances, we may extend this period. We base the approval of your grant on the information you provide in your application. We will review any required changes to these details to ensure they do not impact the project as approved by the Minister.

10.2. Specific legislation, policies and industry standards

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.

In particular, you will be required to comply with:

- State/territory legislation in relation to working with children

10.3. How we pay the grant

The grant agreement will state the:

- maximum grant amount we will pay
- proportion of eligible expenditure covered by the grant (grant percentage)
- any financial contribution provided by you or a third party.

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 six monthly in arrears, based on your actual eligible expenditure. Payments are subject to satisfactory progress on the project.

We set aside 10 per cent of the total grant funding for the final payment. We will pay this when you submit a satisfactory end of project report demonstrating you have completed outstanding obligations for the project. We may need to adjust your progress payments to align with available program funds across financial years and/or to ensure we retain a minimum 10 per cent of grant funding for the final payment.

10.4. Grant Payments and GST

If you are registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST), where applicable we will add GST to your grant payment and provide you with a recipient created tax invoice. You are required to notify us if your GST registration status changes during the project period. GST does not apply to grant payments to government related entities³.

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](#). We do not provide advice on tax.

³ See Australian Taxation Office ruling GSTR 2012/2 available at 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.

We will publish non-sensitive details of successful projects on GrantConnect. We are required to do this by the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#), Section 5.3,. We may also publish this information on business.gov.au. This information may include:

- name of your organisation
- title of the project
- description of the project and its aims
- amount of grant funding awarded
- Australian Business Number
- business location
- your organisation's industry sector.

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 project, 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.

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 project and provide an opportunity for the Minister or their representative to attend.

12.2. Reporting

You must submit reports in line with the grant agreement. We will provide the requirements for these reports as appendices in the grant agreement. We will remind you of your reporting obligations before a report is due. We will expect you to report on:

- progress against agreed project milestones and outcomes
- project expenditure, including expenditure of grant funds
- contributions of participants directly related to the project

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

We will monitor the progress of your project by assessing reports you submit and may conduct site visits to confirm details of your reports if necessary. Occasionally we may need to re-examine claims, seek further information or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

12.2.1. Progress reports

Progress reports must:

- include details of your progress towards completion of agreed project activities
- 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).

We will only make grant payments when we receive satisfactory progress reports.

You must discuss any project or milestone reporting delays with us as soon as you become aware of them.

12.2.2. Ad-hoc reports

We may ask you for ad-hoc reports on your project. This may be to provide an update on progress, or any significant delays or difficulties in completing the project.

12.2.3. End of project report

When you complete the project, you must submit an end of project report.

End of project reports must:

- include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
- identify the total eligible expenditure incurred for the project
- include a declaration that the grant money was spent in accordance with the grant agreement and to report on any underspends of the grant money
- identify the objectives and outcomes the project has achieved
- be submitted by the report due date.

12.3. Audited financial acquittal report

We will ask you to provide an independent audit report. An audit report will verify that you spent the grant in accordance with the grant agreement. The audit report requires you to prepare a statement of grant income and expenditure. The report template is available on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

12.4. Grant agreement variations

We recognise that unexpected events may affect project progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your grant agreement, including:

- changing project milestones
- extending the timeframe for completing the project but within the maximum time period allowed in program guidelines
- changing project activities that do not change the outcome of the project.

The program does not allow for:

- an increase of grant funds.

If you want to propose changes to the grant agreement, you must put them in writing before the grant agreement end date. You can submit a variation request via our online portal.

If a delay in the project causes milestone achievement and payment dates to move to a different financial year, you will need a variation to the grant agreement. We can only move funds between financial years if there is enough program funding in the relevant year to allow for the revised payment schedule. If we cannot move the funds, you may lose some grant funding.

You should not assume that a variation request will be successful. We will consider your request based on factors such as:

- how it affects the project outcome
- consistency with the program policy objective, grant opportunity guidelines and any relevant policies of the department
- changes to the timing of grant payments
- availability of program funds.

12.5. Compliance visits

We may visit you during the project period to review your compliance with the grant agreement. For large or complex projects, we may visit you after you finish your project. We will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

12.6. Record keeping

We may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement.

12.7. Evaluation

DITRDCA will evaluate your project and the grant program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. To support the evaluation of your project, you will be required to collect baseline and routine data as part of your progress reporting, and complete evaluation activities as part of the end of project report.

To support the broader program evaluation, we may use information from your application and project reports for this purpose. We may also interview you, or ask you for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the program was in achieving its outcomes.

We may contact you up to two years after you finish your project for more information to assist with this evaluation.

12.8. Acknowledgement

Signage and communications requirements will be stipulated in your grant agreement.

13. Probity

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

These guidelines may be changed from time-to-time by DISR. When this happens, the revised guidelines will be published on GrantConnect.

13.1. Enquiries and feedback

For further information or clarification, you can contact us on 13 28 46 or by [web chat](#) or through our [online enquiry form](#) on business.gov.au.

We may publish answers to your questions on our website as Frequently Asked Questions.

Our [Customer Service Charter](#) is available at business.gov.au. We use customer satisfaction surveys to improve our business operations and service.

If you have a complaint, call us on 13 28 46. We will refer your complaint to the appropriate manager.

If you are not satisfied with the way we handle your complaint, you can contact:

General Manager
Business Grants Hub
Department of Industry, Science and Resources
GPO Box 2013
CANBERRA ACT 2601

You can also contact the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#) with your complaint (call 1300 362 072). There is no fee for making a complaint, and the Ombudsman may conduct an independent investigation.

13.2. Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the grant opportunity and/or program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if our staff, any member of a panel or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel:

- has a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer or member of an external panel
- has a 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
- has a 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.

As part of your application, we will ask you to declare any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or confirm that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

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

Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff are handled as set out in the Australian [Public Service Code of Conduct \(Section 13\(7\)\)](#) of the [Public Service Act 1999](#). Panel members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

We publish our [conflict of interest policy](#)⁴ on the department's website. The Commonwealth policy entity also publishes a conflict of interest policy on its website.

⁴ https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/July%202018/document/pdf/conflict-of-interest-and-insider-trading-policy.pdf?acsf_files_redirect

13.3. Privacy

Unless the information you provide to us is:

- confidential information as per below, or
- personal information as per below.

we may share the information with other government agencies for a relevant Commonwealth purpose such as:

- to improve the effective administration, monitoring and evaluation of Australian Government programs
- for research
- to announce the awarding of grants.

We must treat your personal information according to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) and the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). This includes letting you know:

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

We may give the personal information we collect from you to our employees and contractors, the Panel, and other Commonwealth employees and contractors, so we can:

- manage the program
- research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities.

We, or the Minister, may:

- announce the names of successful applicants to the public
- publish personal information on the department's websites.

You may read our [Privacy Policy](#)⁵ on the department's website for more information on:

- what is personal information
- how we collect, use, disclose and store your personal information
- how you can access and correct your personal information.

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.

⁵ <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/privacy-policy>

We will treat the information you give us as sensitive and therefore confidential if it meets all of the following conditions:

- you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
- the information is commercially sensitive
- disclosing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else
- you provide the information with an understanding that it will stay confidential.

We may disclose confidential information:

- to the Panel and our Commonwealth employees and contractors, to help us manage the program effectively
- to the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- to the responsible Minister or Assistant Minister
- to a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

We may also disclose confidential information if

- we are required or authorised by law to disclose it
- you agree to the information being disclosed, or
- someone other than us has made the confidential information public.

13.5. Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about the program, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (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.

If someone requests a document under the FOI Act, we will release it (though we may need to consult with you and/or other parties first) unless it meets one of the exemptions set out in the FOI Act.

14. Glossary

Term	Definition
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.
application form	The document issued by the program delegate that applicants use to apply for funding under the program.
assessment criteria	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 ranking.
Australian local government body or agency	A local governing body as defined under the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995 (Cth) as a local governing body established by or under a law of a State.
<u>Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines (CGRGs)</u>	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
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.
Department	The Department of Industry, Science and Resources.
decision maker	The person who makes a decision to award a grant. For this program this is the Commonwealth Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.
eligible activities	The activities undertaken by a grantee in relation to a project that are eligible for funding support as set out in 5.1.
eligible application	An application or proposal for grant funding under the program that the program delegate has determined is eligible for assessment in accordance with these guidelines.

Term	Definition
eligibility criteria	Refer to the mandatory criteria which must be met to qualify for a grant. Assessment criteria may apply in addition to eligibility criteria.
eligible expenditure	The expenditure incurred by a grantee on a project and which is eligible for funding support as set out in 5.4.
eligible expenditure guidance	The guidance that is provided at Appendix A.
First Nations community-controlled organisations	These organisations are an Indigenous Organisation or enterprise and have an Indigenous Corporation Number (ICN) or can declare that they are a Traditional Owner or that their organisation is at least 51 per cent owned or controlled by Indigenous persons or the Indigenous Enterprise has 50 per cent Indigenous ownership.
grant	For the purposes of the CGRGs, 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"> a. under which relevant money⁶ or other Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) money⁷ 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	A legally binding contract that sets out the relationship between the Commonwealth and a grantee for the grant funding and specifies the details of the grant.
grant funding or grant funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth to grantees under the program.
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.

⁶ Relevant money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 8, Dictionary.

⁷ Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 105, Rules in relation to other CRF money.

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 DITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statement Program.
GrantConnect	The Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRGs.
grantee	The organisation which has been selected to receive a grant
guidelines	Guidelines that the Minister gives to the department to provide the framework for the administration of the program, as in force from time to time.
Independent Expert Panel (the Panel)	The body established to assess eligible applications and determine which are meritorious. Panellists comprise a subset of the Urban Policy Forum.
Low rate-based councils	Low rate based councils are determined using the ratio of Financial Assistance Grant to Net Rate Income and are as follows: Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council; Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council; Shire of Woodanilling; District Council of Orroroo Carrieton; Shire of Tammin; District Council of Peterborough; Shire of Wyalkatchem; Shire of Wickepin; Shire of Dowerin; District Council of Karoonda East Murray; Shire of Kellerberrin; Hay Shire Council; Coolamon Shire Council; Lockhart Shire Council; Balranald Shire Council; Weddin Shire Council; Murrumbidgee Council; Tenterfield Shire Council; Narrandera Shire Council; Wentworth Shire Council; Bland Shire Council; Lachlan Council.
Minister	The Commonwealth Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
partnership	For the purposes of the grant opportunity – partnership refers to collaboration between organisations/entities towards a shared goal. Applicants are not required to set up formal business partnership structures for the program, however, as noted in the assessment criteria you must demonstrate evidence that partners are committed to the goals of the project.

Term	Definition
personal information	<p>Has the same meaning as in the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i> (Cth) which is:</p> <p>Information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> whether the information or opinion is true or not; and whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.
Precinct	Place of purpose as outlined in this document
program delegate	A manager within the department with responsibility for administering the program.
program funding or program funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth for the program.
project	A project described in an application for grant funding under the program.
proposal	A detailed outline of project/s described in your application
Regional University	For the purposes of the grant opportunity – regional university refers to universities with a main campus or presence or universities that wish to establish a campus or presence within a regional area as stipulated by the Greater Capital City Statistical Area.
remote or very remote location	Refers to projects located in 'remote' or 'very remote' locations per the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Remoteness Structure
selection criteria	Comprises of eligibility criteria and assessment criteria.
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.

Appendix A. Eligible expenditure

This section provides guidance on the eligibility of expenditure. We may update this guidance from time to time; check you are referring to the most current version from the business.gov.au website before preparing your application.

The program delegate makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be incurred by you within the project period
- be a direct cost of the project
- be incurred by you to undertake required project audit activities (where applicable)
- meet the eligible expenditure guidelines.

A.1 How we verify eligible expenditure

If your application is successful, we may ask you to verify the project budget that you provided in your application when we negotiate your grant agreement. You may need to provide evidence such as quotes for major costs.

The grant agreement will include details of the evidence you may need to provide when you achieve certain milestones in your project. This may include evidence related to eligible expenditure.

If requested, you will need to provide the agreed evidence along with your progress reports.

You must keep payment records of all eligible expenditure and be able to explain how the costs relate to the agreed project activities. At any time, we may ask you to provide records of the expenditure you have paid. If you do not provide these records when requested, the expense may not qualify as eligible expenditure.

At the end of the project, you will be required to provide an independent financial audit of all eligible expenditure from the project.

A.2 Partnership Establishment and operation costs

We consider the costs associated with the establishment of a Partnership as eligible expenditure.

We will not make any payments to you for any expenditure you have incurred prior to the execution of your grant agreement. Examples of eligible Partnership establishment costs can include:

- meeting costs e.g. hiring meeting spaces, hospitality costs, facilitators to bring all parties together in the establishment phase, and for consultation sessions and meeting of partners during the project.
- advertising, social media, publicity associated with consultation activities
- establishing governance arrangements including professional and legal advice

You may show expenditure on the establishment of a Partnership by providing evidence of:

- purchase price
- payments (e.g. tax invoices and receipts from suppliers confirming payment)
- commitment to pay for the services

If you claim expenditure for the establishment of a partnership, we limit this to 10 per cent of the total grant funding amount.

A.3 Labour expenditure

We consider the costs associated with the establishment and management of a partnership as eligible expenditure. This includes labour costs. We will not make any payments to you for any expenditure you have incurred prior to the execution of your grant agreement.

Eligible labour expenditure for the grant covers the direct labour costs of employees you directly employ on the core elements of the project. We consider a person an employee when you pay them a regular salary or wage, out of which you make regular tax instalment deductions.

We consider direct costs for technical, administrative and management related to the partnership establishment and its ongoing management through the life of the project. However, we limit these costs to 20 per cent of the total amount of eligible labour expenditure claimed.

Eligible salary expenditure includes an employee's total remuneration package as stated on their Pay As You Go (PAYG) Annual Payment Summary submitted to the ATO. We consider salary-sacrificed superannuation contributions as part of an employee's salary package if the amount is more than what the Superannuation Guarantee requires.

The maximum salary for an employee, director or shareholder, including packaged components that you can claim through the grant is \$200,000 per financial year.

For periods of the project that do not make a full financial year, you must reduce the maximum salary amount you claim proportionally.

You can only claim eligible salary costs when an employee is working directly on agreed project activities during the agreed project period.

A.4 Labour on-costs and administrative overhead

You may increase eligible salary costs by an additional 30 per cent allowance to cover on-costs such as employer paid superannuation, payroll tax, workers compensation insurance, and overheads such as office rent and the purchase or provision of computing equipment directly required or related to the delivery of the project

You should calculate eligible salary costs using the formula below:

$$\text{Eligible salary costs} = \text{Annual salary package} \times \frac{\text{Weeks spent on project}}{52 \text{ weeks}} \times \text{percentage of time spent on project}$$

You cannot calculate labour costs by estimating the employee's worth. If you have not exchanged money (either by cash or bank transactions) we will not consider the cost eligible.

Evidence you will need to provide can include:

- details of all personnel working on the project, including name, title, function, time spent on the project and salary
- ATO payment summaries, pay slips and employment contracts.

A.5 Contract expenditure

Eligible contract expenditure is the cost of any agreed project activities that you contract others to do. These can include contracting:

- another organisation
- an individual who is not an employee, but engaged under a separate contract.

All contractors must have a written contract prior to starting any project work—for example, a formal agreement, letter or purchase order which specifies:

- the nature of the work they perform
- the applicable fees, charges and other costs payable.

Invoices from contractors must contain:

- a detailed description of the nature of the work
- the hours and hourly rates involved
- any specific plant expenses paid.

Invoices must directly relate to the agreed project, and the work must qualify as an eligible expense. The costs must also be reasonable and appropriate for the activities performed.

We will require evidence of contractor expenditure that may include:

- an exchange of letters (including email) setting out the terms and conditions of the proposed contract work
- purchase orders
- supply agreements
- invoices and payment documents.

You must ensure all project contractors keep a record of the costs of their work on the project. We may require you to provide a contractor's records of their costs of doing project work. If you cannot provide these records, the relevant contract expense may not qualify as eligible expenditure.

Where possible, you should engage local labour and services. Eligible contract expenditure may include:

- Legal services
- Architect services
- Design services
- Project management
- Quantity surveying
- Building services.
- Expertise relating to the development of business cases
- Data or research commissioned for the purpose of the project

A.6 Travel expenditure

Eligible travel expenditure may include:

- domestic travel limited to the reasonable cost of accommodation and transportation required to conduct agreed project and collaboration activities in Australia.

Eligible air transportation is limited to the economy class fare for each sector travelled; where non-economy class air transport is used only the equivalent of an economy fare for that sector is eligible expenditure. Where non-economy class air transport is used, the grantee will require evidence showing what an economy airfare costs at the time of travel.

A.7 Other eligible expenditure

Other eligible expenditures for the project may include:

- costs associated with consultation sessions including venue hire and light refreshments (excluding alcohol)
- marketing and branding costs
- administration costs directly related to the project and partnership establishment and management including communications and consultation materials
- staff training that directly supports the achievement of project outcomes
- financial auditing of project expenditure, the cost of an independent audit of project expenditure (where we request one) up to a maximum of 1 per cent of total eligible project expenditure
- costs you incur in order to obtain planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals during the project period, However, associated fees paid to the Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments are not eligible
- contingency costs up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the eligible project costs. Note that we make payments based on actual costs incurred.

Other specific expenditures may be eligible as determined by the program delegate.

Evidence you need to supply can include supplier contracts, purchase orders, invoices and supplier confirmation of payments.

Appendix B. Ineligible expenditure

This section provides guidance on what we consider ineligible expenditure. We may update this guidance from time to time; check you are referring to the most current version from the business.gov.au website before preparing your application.

The program delegate may impose limitations or exclude expenditure, or further include some ineligible expenditure listed in these guidelines in a grant agreement or otherwise by notice to you.

Examples of ineligible expenditure include:

- research not directly supporting eligible activities
- activities, equipment or supplies that are already being supported through other sources
- costs incurred prior to us notifying you that the application is eligible and complete
- financing costs, including interest
- capital expenditure for the purchase of assets such as office furniture and equipment, motor vehicles, computers, printers or photocopiers and the construction, renovation or extension of facilities such as buildings and laboratories
- costs involved in the purchase or upgrade/hire of software (including user licences) and ICT hardware (unless it directly relates to the project)
- costs such as renovations and utilities
- non-project-related staff training and development costs
- insurance costs (the participants must affect and maintain adequate insurance or similar coverage for any liability arising as a result of its participation in funded activities)
- debt financing
- costs related to obtaining resources used on the project, including interest on loans, job advertising and recruiting, and contract negotiations
- ongoing maintenance costs
- ongoing upgrades, updates and maintenance of existing ICT systems and computing facilities
- routine operating expenses not accounted for as labour on-costs – including accommodation, overheads and consumables, e.g. paper, printer cartridges, office supplies
- recurring or ongoing operational expenditure (including annual maintenance, rent, water and rates, postage, legal and accounting fees and bank charges)
- costs related to preparing the grant application
- overseas travel costs.

This list is not exhaustive and applies only to the expenditure of the grant funds. Other costs may be ineligible where we decide that they do not directly support the achievement of the planned outcomes for the project or that they are contrary to the objective of the program.

You must ensure you have adequate funds to meet the costs of any ineligible expenditure associated with the project.



Australian Government

Department of Industry, Science and Resources

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

Grant Opportunity Guidelines

Regional Precincts and Partnerships – Stream Two: Precinct delivery

Opening date:	[dd mmmm yyyy]
Closing date and time:	[00.00 Australian Eastern Daylight Time or Australian Eastern Standard Time] on [dd mmmm yyyy] Please take account of time zone differences when submitting your application.
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA)
Administering entity:	Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR)
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, contact us on 13 28 46.
Date guidelines released:	[dd mmmm yyyy]
Type of grant opportunity:	Open non-competitive

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1. Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program – Precinct delivery processes

The Regional Precincts and Partnerships program is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

This grant opportunity is part of the above grant program which contributes to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA)'s Outcome 3. The Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) works with stakeholders to plan and design the grant program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#).



The grant opportunity opens

DISR publish the grant guidelines on business.gov.au and [GrantConnect](#).



You complete and submit a grant application

You complete the application form and provide a proposal that addresses all the eligibility and assessment criteria in order for your application to be considered.



We assess all grant applications against eligibility

DISR assess the applications against eligibility criteria and notify you if you are not eligible.



The Panel assess eligible grant applications

Applications are batched twice a year and reviewed by an Independent Expert Panel (the Panel). The Panel assesses eligible applications against the assessment criteria including an overall consideration of value for money. The Panel provides a list of meritorious applications to DITRDCA.



DITRDCA provide policy advice on grant applications

DITRDCA provide advice to the decision maker on how the meritorious proposals meet policy and program objectives.



Grant decisions are made

The decision maker decides which applications are successful.



We notify you of the outcome

DISR advise you of the outcome of your application. We may not notify unsuccessful applicants until grant agreements have been executed with successful applicants.



We enter into a grant agreement

We will enter into a grant agreement with successful applicants. 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 complete 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 Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program

DITRDCA will evaluate the specific grant activity and Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program as a whole. We base this on information you provide to us and that we collect from various sources.

1.1. Introduction

These guidelines contain information for the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (the program).

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant program/grant opportunity
- the eligibility and assessment criteria
- how we consider and assess grant applications
- how we notify applicants and enter into grant agreements with grantees
- how we monitor and evaluate grantees' performance
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

This grant opportunity and process will be administered by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (the department/DISR) on behalf of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA).

We have defined key terms used in these guidelines in the glossary at section 0.

You should read this document carefully before you fill out an application.

2. About the grant program

The program will run over 3 years from 2023-24 to 2025-26. The program was announced as part of the 2022-23 October Budget and reflects the Government's Regional Investment Framework which:

- values local voices and priorities
- is informed by and builds on the evidence-base
- operates with flexibility and transparency and
- guides coordinated responses across government.

The program seeks to deliver transformative investment in regional, rural and remote Australia based on the principles of unifying regional places, growing their economies and serving their communities.

The program will focus on a **partnership approach**, bringing together governments and communities to deliver regional precincts that are tailored to local needs and have a shared vision in how that precinct connects to the region.

The program presents a new opportunity for regional investment through a unique grants process, which features a strong focus on collaboration and joint investment opportunities. The establishment of partnerships, that include local perspectives, will be critical to delivering place-based infrastructure supported by the community. The program allows governments and communities to establish long-term partnerships and jointly invest in genuine regional priorities. The Government is committed to regional development, renewal and supporting population growth by delivering the infrastructure and housing required to create strong and vibrant communities.

The program will support the planning and delivery of regional, rural and remote precincts. Regional precincts or 'places with a purpose' are user defined geographic areas with a specific shared need or theme. Regional precincts may include: business districts, neighbourhoods, activity centres, commercial hubs or community and recreational areas. They will be located in renewal areas and growth areas in regional centres, regional corridors and regional cities, as well as

smaller town centres that serve as service hubs in more remote communities. The scale of regional precinct projects will vary depending on their location and objectives.

Precincts support better integration of land use and ensure the infrastructure investment complements the broader region and its surrounding communities, spaces, transport and activities. The program's place-based, partnership approach will ensure precinct proposals are suitably and strategically designed for their specific contexts and maximise outcomes for their communities.

The objectives of the Program are to:

- facilitate place-based approaches to planning, characterised by collaborative partnerships engaging in shared design, stewardship and accountability of planned outcomes
- provide targeted benefits related to productivity, equity, and resilience for the people of regional, rural or remote Australia
- support community priorities for regional cities, rural or remote centres and areas
- reflect the Government's approach to regional investment as outlined in the Regional Investment Framework.

The intended outcomes of the Program are to:

- demonstrate the value of partnerships between governments, communities and businesses for effective planning, coordination and delivery of regional infrastructure
- develop and deliver regional precincts comprised of multiple infrastructure components, which provide benefits related to productivity, equity and resilience
- contribute to the Australian Government's current policy priorities, including but not limited to Closing the Gap, transition to a net zero economy, Australia's emission reduction goals, social and affordable housing, and National Cultural Policy.

It is the intent of the Program to:

- deliver grants across a broad geographic spread of regional Australia, including remote and very remote areas
- support precinct projects of differing scales and functionalities
- encourage projects from lesser-resourced applicants.

The regional Precincts and Partnerships Program will be an always open grants process, meaning applications can be submitted at any time once the program opens. The program is a non-competitive program to avoid the direct, competitive comparison of applications from organisations of differing sizes and levels of resourcing. This approach provides the ability to ensure the equitable distribution of grants across the country based on the individual merits of a precinct proposal and its benefits to the local community. This allows the opportunity to balance small and large precincts and different types of precincts within the funding profile.

There are two grant opportunities as part of this program:

- Stream One - Precinct development and planning - to activate partnerships and deliver an investment-ready precinct plan
- Stream Two - Precinct delivery - to deliver a specified project or projects as part of a precinct.

We will publish the opening and closing dates and any other relevant information on business.gov.au and [GrantConnect](https://grantconnect.gov.au).

We administer the program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#) (CGRGs)¹.

2.1. About the Stream Two Precinct Delivery grant opportunity

This grant opportunity is part of the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program.

The Precinct Delivery grant opportunity provides funding to deliver one or more elements of a precinct. This could include enabling public infrastructure (roads, pathways, underground infrastructure), open spaces between elements, or a particular building/s that is the catalyst for, or complements, other investment within a precinct.

For Stream Two, the **project** is considered to be one or more elements of a precinct. This grant opportunity will provide funding for the delivery of projects, rather than entire precincts. This contrasts with Stream One, where the project is considered to be the planning and development of the whole precinct.

The objective of the grant opportunity is to work with partners to support the delivery of precinct projects that will provide targeted benefits related to productivity, equity, and resilience for regional, rural and remote areas across Australia.

The intended outcomes of the grant opportunity are to:

- deliver project/s that form part of a precinct or foundational infrastructure that activates a precinct
- support the delivery of regional precincts that are tailored to their local contexts and based on a shared vision.

2.2. Partnerships

Partnerships are essential to the program, which has a focus on bringing together all interested parties to collaboratively plan or deliver precinct proposals. These partnerships are intended to be conglomerates of relevant entities as well as other local stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- State and Territory government
- Local government
- Regional universities
- Not-for-profit entities
- First Nations groups
- Regional Development Australia committees
- Community organisations
- Private enterprise
- Australian government agencies that have policy/program interests or responsibilities.

Not all entity types listed above are eligible to apply for program funding (see section 4: Eligibility Criteria), however they can form part of the partnership.

The intention behind a partnership is to ensure the precinct is well-considered and allows an opportunity for relevant parties to work through issues, consult early and be investment ready.

¹ <https://www.finance.gov.au/government/commonwealth-grants/commonwealth-grants-rules-guidelines>

First Nations groups should be provided an opportunity to shape projects and influence a stronger outcome that incorporates First Nations experiences, culture and design.

3. Grant amount and grant period

3.1. Grants available

The Australian Government has announced a total of \$400 million over 3 years for the program's two streams. For this grant opportunity we estimate a total of \$320 million is available over 3 years from 2023-24, noting this may be reviewed and balanced between streams to meet demand or until funding is exhausted.

- The minimum grant amount is \$5 million.
- The maximum grant amount is \$50 million.

The grant amount will be up to 100 per cent of the eligible expenditure for the project to a maximum amount of \$50 million. While grants up to 100 per cent of the eligible expenditure can be considered, you are required to demonstrate how you will contribute to the successful delivery of your project. Your contributions can be cash or in-kind (such as land or resources), or a combination of both.

Grants are intended to support broader investment in a precinct. You are required to demonstrate your contribution and commitment to the precinct in assessment criteria 4. You will need to provide a precinct funding strategy (see section 7.1) outlining funding contributions for the precinct. This will allow your project and co-contributions to be considered in the context of other investments committed to the precinct.

Any partner contributions and other funding for your project can come from other sources including state, territory and local government grants. Other Commonwealth funding cannot be used for the project, however other parts of the broader precinct can be Commonwealth funded.

You are responsible for the remaining eligible and ineligible project costs.

3.2. Project period

You must complete your project by 31 March 2026.

4. Eligibility criteria

We cannot consider your application if you do not satisfy all eligibility criteria.

4.1. Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

To be eligible you must:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Organisations (ORIC) registration

and be one of the following entities:

- an Australian State/Territory Government agency or body
- an Australian local government agency or body as defined in section 14
- a Regional University which may be for-profit as defined in section 14
- an incorporated not-for-profit organisation. As a not-for-profit organisation you must demonstrate your not-for-profit status through one of the following:
 - current Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission's (ACNC) Registration

- state or territory incorporated association status
- constitutional documents and/or Articles of Association that demonstrate the not-for-profit character of the organisation.

4.2. Additional eligibility requirements

We can only accept proposals where you:

- have a completed business case, a precinct master plan or equivalent and a project design which is part of the master plan or related to an existing precinct development plan, and is ready for delivery
- have authority for use of the land or infrastructure required to undertake the project at the nominated site (you are required to provide a letter to confirm this authority from the land or infrastructure owner)
- can identify the project partner/s that form your partnership supported with a governance structure outlining the anticipated engagement to carry out a precinct in collaboration
- can provide evidence that the relevant State or Territory government have been invited to participate in the partnership. If the relevant State or Territory government is not part of the partnership, reasoning should be provided in your application
- can provide evidence that the relevant local government agency or body have been invited to participate in the partnership. If the relevant local government agency or body is not part of the partnership, reasoning should be provided in your application
- can provide evidence that the relevant Regional Development Australia (RDA) committee has been contacted to seek their support
- can provide evidence that the relevant Traditional Owner/First Nations groups form part of the partnership or will be consulted on a regular basis throughout the implementation of the precinct in order to ensure their views are considered.

We cannot waive the eligibility criteria under any circumstances.

4.3. Who is not eligible to apply for a grant?

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- an organisation, or your project partner is an organisation, included on the [National Redress Scheme's website](#) on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme'
- an employer of 100 or more employees that has [not complied](#) with the *Workplace Gender Equality Act (2012)*
- for-profit organisations (with the exception of regional universities). However, they can form part of the partnership
- any organisation not included in section 4.1.

5. What the grant money can be used for

5.1. Eligible grant activities

To be eligible your project must:

- be ready to commence construction with a business case, design and consultation already completed
- be aimed at meeting the objectives of the grant opportunity, as outlined in Section 2.1

- have at least \$5 million in eligible expenditure.

Eligible activities must directly relate to the project and may include:

- projects that will develop or improve a regional precinct including:
 - upgrade or extension of existing infrastructure to enhance a precinct
 - construction of new infrastructure
- procurement of suitable equipment and infrastructure.

We may also approve other activities which are linked to the objectives and outcomes of the program.

5.2. Eligible locations

The proposed project must be in a regional, rural or remote location, delineated as entirely outside the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSA).

Use the [mapping tool](#) to determine eligibility of your project location.

5.3. Ineligible locations

The following are ineligible locations:

- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Sydney
- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Melbourne
- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Perth
- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Adelaide
- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Brisbane
- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Darwin
- Greater Capital City Statistical Areas - Greater Hobart
- All of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

5.4. Eligible expenditure

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure you have incurred on an agreed project as defined in your grant agreement.

- For guidance on eligible expenditure, refer to appendix A
- For guidance on ineligible expenditure, refer to appendix B.

We may update the guidance on eligible and ineligible expenditure from time to time. If your application is successful, the version in place when you submitted your application applies to your project.

If your application is successful, we will ask you to verify project costs that you provided in your application. You may need to provide evidence such as quotes for major costs.

Not all expenditure on your project may be eligible for grant funding. The program delegate (who is a manager within the department with responsibility for administering the program) makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be a direct cost of the project
- be incurred by you for required project audit activities.

You must incur the project expenditure between the project start and end date for it to be eligible unless stated otherwise.

You may elect to commence your project from the date we notify you that your application is successful. We are not responsible for any expenditure you incur until a grant agreement is executed. The Commonwealth will not be liable, and should not be held out as being liable, for any activities undertaken before the grant agreement is executed.

6. The assessment criteria

You must address all assessment criteria in your application. The Independent Expert Panel (the Panel) will assess your application based on the weighting given to each criterion.

The application form asks questions that relate to the assessment criteria below. The amount of detail and supporting evidence you provide in your application should be relative to the project size, complexity and grant amount requested. You should provide evidence to support your answers. The application form displays character limits for each response.

Demonstrating value for money is a key requirement and will be assessed by comparing the projected benefits and opportunities created by the project against the estimated cost (refer to Section 8.1). Your response to the below assessment criteria should clearly articulate the expected benefits and opportunities that the project will create.

Only applications which score at least 50 per cent against each assessment criterion will be deemed as meritorious and considered for award of grant funding.

6.1. Assessment criterion 1

Project alignment with program objectives and Australian Government priorities (25 points).

You should demonstrate this through identifying how your proposal:

- a. aims to align with regional plans, community priorities and other regional investment strategies and activities
- b. supports a place-based approach to planning, including better integration of land use and regional development and/or renewal
- c. provides economic opportunities, and enhances productivity, equity and resilience
- d. considers and/or or measures climate and energy impacts such as disaster risk, emissions reduction, biodiversity, decarbonisation, circular economies, and energy and water efficiency
- e. contributes to the achievement of Australian Government policy priorities and program objectives, including but not limited to Closing the Gap, transition to a net zero economy, Australia's emission reduction goals, social and affordable housing, and National Cultural Policy, relative to the type of project being considered.

6.2. Assessment criterion 2

Project Need (20 points).

You should demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. how your proposal will address an existing public infrastructure gap and how the precinct, or expansion upon an existing precinct is likely to result in improvements and public benefits in your region
- b. evidence as to why investment in the proposal is needed, including any barriers preventing investment to date

- c. rationale for the elements of the precinct and how these would link a place with a purpose
- d. identification of potential future opportunities for additional private investment in the precinct and/or surrounding region that can build upon the project and help stimulate further expansion, in order to ensure the longevity of the precinct.

6.3. Assessment criterion 3

Community engagement, collaboration and partnership (20 points).

You should demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. how your precinct was supported by local knowledge, evidence and information and how it has identified and leveraged opportunities to address challenges within the region
- b. how your partnership members and links with relevant stakeholders will work together to achieve the project based on the values of shared design, stewardship and accountability of planned outcomes
- c. the governance arrangements of the partnership and how they will support, enhance or achieve community engagement and collaboration for the project
- d. how First Nations groups will be involved to help shape the project and influence a stronger outcome that incorporates First Nations experiences, culture and design.

6.4. Assessment criterion 4

Capacity, capability and resources to deliver the project (35 points).

You should demonstrate this by:

- a. your proven track record of success in delivering similar initiatives or other public infrastructure projects and your sound project planning experience to manage and monitor the project. This should address scope, implementation methodology, timeframes, consultation, budget and risk management
- b. the business or governance structure and how you will adhere to Commonwealth procurement requirements including the use of First Nations employment and suppliers where possible
- c. the total contributions the grant will leverage from all partners by providing the precinct funding strategy
- d. the level of continued support and capacity to extend the project outcomes beyond the term of funding
- e. your readiness to commence the project with appropriate business case, approvals, land use rights, community support and completed engagement/consultation and all relevant legislative requirements in place.

7. How to apply

Before applying you should read and understand these guidelines, the sample [application form](#) and the sample [grant agreement](#) published on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

Applicants should read all eligibility and assessment criteria closely and attach detailed evidence that supports the assessment criteria.

You will need to set up an account to access our online [portal](#).

To apply, you must:

- complete and submit the application through the online [portal](#)

- provide all the information requested
- address all eligibility and assessment criteria
- include all necessary attachments.

You are responsible for making sure your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the [Criminal Code Act 1995](#). If we consider that you have provided false or misleading information we may not progress your application. If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should call us immediately on 13 28 46.

After submitting your application, we can contact you for clarification if we find an error or any missing information, including evidence that supports your eligibility/merit. The acceptance of any additional information provided after the submission of your application is at the discretion of the program delegate. Additional information should not materially change your application at the time it was submitted and therefore may be refused if deemed to be purely supplementary.

You can view and print a copy of your submitted application on the portal for your own records.

If you need further guidance around the application process, or if you have any issues with the portal, [contact us](#) at business.gov.au or by calling 13 28 46.

7.1. Attachments to the application

You must provide the following documents with your application:

- a feasible business case, precinct design or existing precinct development plan or master plan that demonstrates your proposal is ready for delivery
- a project budget and precinct funding strategy
- confirmation that you have authority for use of the land or infrastructure to undertake the project at the nominated site
- evidence to support your intended partnership, (e.g. a letter from project partner/s or other type of agreement), including details of all project partners
- a proposed governance structure for your precinct outlining the roles and responsibilities of each project partner
- evidence of support from local community and business as relevant
- evidence that the relevant State or Territory government and local government agency or body has been invited (e.g. an email or letter). If the relevant State or Territory government or local government agency or body is not part of the partnership, reasoning should be provided in your application
- evidence that the relevant RDA committee for the area has been contacted to seek their support (e.g. an email or letter)
- evidence that the relevant Traditional Owner/First Nations groups form part of the partnership or are consulted on a regular basis (e.g. an email, letter or minutes)
- evidence of not-for-profit status (where applicable)
- detailed evidence that supports assessment criteria responses (where applicable)
- trust deed (where applicable).

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with the instructions provided within the form. You should only attach requested documents. The total of all attachments cannot exceed 20MB. We will not consider information in attachments that we do not request.

7.2. Timing of grant opportunity processes

You can submit an application at any time while the grant opportunity remains open. Proposals will be batched and announcements made twice per financial year at a minimum until funding is exhausted.

If you are successful we expect you will be able to commence your project within 3 months of receiving the offer of grant funding.

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Activity	Timeframe
Assessment of applications	September/October and March/April
Approval and announcement of successful applicants	November/December and May/June
Negotiations and award of grant agreements	1-3 weeks
Notification to unsuccessful applicants	2 weeks
Earliest start date of project	The date you are notified that your proposal has been successful
Project completion date	31 March 2026
End date of grant commitment	30 June 2026

7.3. Questions during the application process

If you have any questions during the application period, [contact us](#) at business.gov.au or by calling 13 28 46.

8. The grant selection process

8.1. Assessment of grant applications

The program's non-competitive process means applicants will be assessed on their individual merit against the assessment criteria, and will not be compared to other applications.

It is intended that applications will be batched a minimum of twice a year, however the number of batches and the timing of each batch may vary depending on the volume and quality of applications received.

We first review your application against the eligibility criteria.

If eligible, your application will be assessed against the assessment criteria by the Independent Expert Panel.

Only eligible applications will proceed to the assessment stage. Any ineligible proposals will not proceed and are excluded from funding consideration.

We consider your application on its merits, based on:

- how well it meets the criteria

- whether it provides value with relevant money² and represents an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public resources.

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

- the overall objective/s of the grant opportunity
- the evidence provided to demonstrate how your project contributes to meeting those objectives
- the spread of projects across geographic areas, precinct types and government objectives
- the relative resources of the applicant and need for the project
- the relative value of the grant sought.

8.2. Who will assess applications?

An Independent Expert Panel will assess all eligible proposals and make determinations regarding which proposals are meritorious. The Panel will comprise three members from the Urban Policy Forum, who were selected for their expertise in regional development and urban design and renewal. This will enable them to make assessments based on a thorough understanding of regional needs, best practice planning and sustainable development. The Panel will assess proposals against the assessment criteria, applying their expertise before determining which are considered meritorious. Only proposals that have been deemed as meritorious in the assessment process will be provided to the Minister for final decision making.

The Panel will have robust governance arrangements and will meet twice per year to assess the proposals across the two grant funding streams.

The Panel members will be required to perform their duties in accordance with the CGRGs and will be subject to probity requirements as outlined in section 13.

DITRDCA will provide policy advice on meritorious proposals based on policy considerations and the funding envelope available.

DITRDCA's recommendations on meritorious proposals will be based on:

- the Independent Panel's assessment
- alignment with the Government's approach to regional investment as outlined in the Regional Investment Framework
- alignment with current Australian Government policy priorities, and program objectives including but not limited to:
 - [Closing the Gap](#)
 - transition to a net zero economy
 - [Australia's emission reduction goals](#)
 - delivery of housing, particularly social and affordable housing
 - [National Cultural Policy](#)
- budget allocation available to fund projects
- balance of projects between each Stream across budget allocation.
- geographic area, Government's policy priorities and types of precincts.

² See glossary for an explanation of 'value with money'.

DITRDCA will also identify meritorious applications which propose projects that are:

- located in 'remote and very remote locations'
- submitted by First Nations Community Controlled Organisations
- submitted by 'low rate based' councils.

This information will allow DITRDCA to provide the decision maker with information regarding the diverse range of applicants, particularly lesser-resourced applicants that have submitted proposals assessed as meritorious by the Independent Expert Panel.

8.3. Who will approve grants?

DITRDCA will recommend which meritorious proposals should be considered for funding. The Minister decides which grants to approve taking into account the recommendations of DITRDCA, the availability of grant funds, and where necessary, advice from relevant Minister/s for meritorious proposals relevant to their specific portfolio responsibilities.

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

- the grant approval
- the grant funding to be awarded
- any conditions attached to the offer of grant funding.

We cannot review decisions about the merits of your application.

The Minister will not approve funding if there is insufficient funding available across relevant financial years for the program.

9. Notification of application outcomes

Due to the nature of the application process, if you are not found meritorious, you will be notified and can submit a new application for the same project while the grant opportunity remains open. You should include new or additional information to improve upon your previous application.

If you were found meritorious but unsuccessful, you will be notified and you can choose to withdraw your application from future panel consideration or submit a variation to your previous application. This variation should include any new or additional information which may enhance your previous application. If a new application is substantially the same as a previous ineligible or unsuccessful application, we may refuse to consider it for assessment.

The previous online proposal can be accessed in portal.business.gov.au after logging in if you wish to build on the information previously provided. You should select 'My applications', click on the Application Summary and select 'view submitted application'. Alternatively, you can request a pdf of your unsuccessful proposal by contacting RegionalPrecincts@industry.gov.au.

9.1. Feedback on your application

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

10. Successful grant applications

10.1. The grant agreement

You must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The grant agreement has general terms and conditions that cannot be changed. A sample [grant agreement](#) is available on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

We will manage the grant agreement through the online portal. This includes issuing and executing the grant agreement. Execute means both you and the Commonwealth have accepted the agreement. We are not responsible for any expenditure you incur and cannot make any payments until a grant agreement is executed.

The approval of your grant may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the Minister. We will identify these in the offer of grant funding.

If you enter an agreement under this grant opportunity, you cannot receive other grants for the same activities from other Commonwealth granting programs, noting funding could be for another element of the precinct.

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

10.2. Standard grant agreement

We will use a standard grant agreement.

You will have 30 days from the date of a written offer to execute this grant agreement with the Commonwealth. During this time, we will work with you to finalise details.

The offer may lapse if both parties do not sign the grant agreement within this time. Under certain circumstances, we may extend this period. We base the approval of your grant on the information you provide in your application. We will review any required changes to these details to ensure they do not impact the project as approved by the Minister.

10.3. Specific legislation, policies and industry standards

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.

In particular, you will be required to comply with:

- State/territory legislation in relation to working with children
- Australian Industry Participation policy
- Building and construction requirements.

10.3.1. Australian Industry Participation (AIP)

If your approved grant is equal to or over \$20 million, you may need to develop an Australian Industry Participation plan (AIP plan) in accordance with the AIP policy. The AIP policy area will consider whether you need to complete an AIP plan based on the nature of your project and opportunities for Australian suppliers to provide goods and services.

If it is determined that you require an AIP plan:

- The department must approve your AIP plan prior to entering into a grant agreement
- We will publish an executive summary of your approved AIP plan at www.industry.gov.au/aip once we execute the grant agreement
- You must submit Implementation Reports showing how you are implementing the AIP plan.

More information on AIP plan requirements can be found at www.industry.gov.au/aip

10.3.2. Building and construction requirements

Wherever the government funds building and construction activities, the following special regulatory requirements apply:

- Australian Government Building and Construction WHS Accreditation Scheme (WHS Scheme)³.

These regulations are subject to the level of funding you receive as outlined below.

10.3.2.1. WHS Scheme

The WHS Scheme is administered by the [Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner](http://www.fsc.gov.au)⁴.

The Scheme applies to projects that are directly or indirectly funded by the Australian Government where

- the value of the Australian Government contribution to the project is at least \$6 million and represents at least 50 per cent of the total construction project value; or
- the Australian Government contribution to a project is \$10 million (GST inclusive) or more, irrespective of the proportion of Australian Government funding; and
- a head contract under the project includes building work of \$4 million or more (GST Inclusive).

10.4. How we pay the grant

The grant agreement will state the:

- maximum grant amount we will pay
- proportion of eligible expenditure covered by the grant (grant percentage)
- any financial contribution provided by you or a third party.

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 six monthly in arrears, based on your actual eligible expenditure. Payments are subject to satisfactory progress on the project.

We set aside 10 per cent of the total grant funding for the final payment. We will pay this when you submit a satisfactory end of project report demonstrating you have completed outstanding obligations for the project. We may need to adjust your progress payments to align with available program funds across financial years and/or to ensure we retain a minimum 10 per cent of grant funding for the final payment.

10.5. Grant Payments and GST

If you are registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST), where applicable we will add GST to your grant payment and provide you with a recipient created tax invoice. You are required to notify

³ <http://www.fsc.gov.au/sites/fsc/needaccredited/accreditationscheme/pages/theaccreditationscheme>

⁴ <http://www.fsc.gov.au/sites/FSC>

us if your GST registration status changes during the project period. GST does not apply to grant payments to government related entities⁵.

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](#). We do not provide advice on tax.

11. Announcement of grants

If successful, your grant will be listed on the GrantConnect website 21 calendar days after the date of effect

We will publish non-sensitive details of successful projects on GrantConnect. We are required to do this by the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#), Section 5.3,. We may also publish this information on business.gov.au. This information may include:

- name of your organisation
- title of the project
- description of the project and its aims
- amount of grant funding awarded
- Australian Business Number
- business location
- your organisation's industry sector.

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 project, 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.

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 project and provide an opportunity for the Minister or their representative to attend.

12.2. Reporting

You must submit reports in line with the grant agreement. We will provide the requirements for these reports as appendices in the grant agreement. We will remind you of your reporting obligations before a report is due. We will expect you to report on:

⁵ See Australian Taxation Office ruling GSTR 2012/2 available at ato.gov.au

- progress against agreed project milestones and outcomes
- project expenditure, including expenditure of grant funds
- contributions of participants directly related to the project.

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

We will monitor the progress of your project by assessing reports you submit and may conduct site visits to confirm details of your reports if necessary. Occasionally we may need to re-examine claims, seek further information or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

12.2.1. Progress reports

Progress reports must:

- include details of your progress towards completion of agreed project activities
- 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).

We will only make grant payments when we receive satisfactory progress reports.

You must discuss any project or milestone reporting delays with us as soon as you become aware of them.

12.2.2. Ad-hoc reports

We may ask you for ad-hoc reports on your project. This may be to provide an update on progress, or any significant delays or difficulties in completing the project.

12.2.3. End of project report

When you complete the project, you must submit an end of project report.

End of project reports must:

- include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
- identify the total eligible expenditure incurred for the project
- include a declaration that the grant money was spent in accordance with the grant agreement and to report on any underspends of the grant money
- identify the objectives and outcomes the project has achieved
- be submitted by the report due date.

12.3. Audited financial acquittal report

We will ask you to provide an independent audit report. An audit report will verify that you spent the grant in accordance with the grant agreement. The audit report requires you to prepare a statement of grant income and expenditure. The report template is available on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

12.4. Grant agreement variations

We recognise that unexpected events may affect project progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your grant agreement, including:

- changing project milestones

- extending the timeframe for completing the project but within the maximum time period allowed in program guidelines
- changing project activities that do not change the outcome of the project.

The program does not allow for:

- an increase of grant funds.

If you want to propose changes to the grant agreement, you must put them in writing before the grant agreement end date. You can submit a variation request via our online portal.

If a delay in the project causes milestone achievement and payment dates to move to a different financial year, you will need a variation to the grant agreement. We can only move funds between financial years if there is enough program funding in the relevant year to allow for the revised payment schedule. If we cannot move the funds, you may lose some grant funding.

You should not assume that a variation request will be successful. We will consider your request based on factors such as:

- how it affects the project outcome
- consistency with the program policy objective, grant opportunity guidelines and any relevant policies of the department
- changes to the timing of grant payments
- availability of program funds.

12.5. 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. For large or complex projects, we may visit you after you finish your project. We will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

12.6. Record keeping

We may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement.

12.7. Evaluation

DITRDCA will evaluate your project and the grant program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. To support the evaluation of your project, you will be required to collect baseline and routine data as part of your progress reporting, and complete evaluation activities as part of the end of project report.

To support the broader program evaluation, we may use information from your application and project reports for this purpose. We may also interview you, or ask you for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the program was in achieving its outcomes.

We may contact you up to two years after you finish your project for more information to assist with this evaluation.

12.8. Acknowledgement

Signage and communications requirements will be stipulated in your grant agreement.

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

13. Probity

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

These guidelines may be changed from time-to-time by DISR. When this happens, the revised guidelines will be published on GrantConnect.

13.1. Enquiries and feedback

For further information or clarification, you can contact us on 13 28 46 or by [web chat](#) or through our [online enquiry form](#) on business.gov.au.

We may publish answers to your questions on our website as Frequently Asked Questions.

Our [Customer Service Charter](#) is available at business.gov.au. We use customer satisfaction surveys to improve our business operations and service.

If you have a complaint, call us on 13 28 46. We will refer your complaint to the appropriate manager.

If you are not satisfied with the way we handle your complaint, you can contact:

General Manager
Business Grants Hub
Department of Industry, Science and Resources
GPO Box 2013
CANBERRA ACT 2601

You can also contact the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#) with your complaint (call 1300 362 072). There is no fee for making a complaint, and the Ombudsman may conduct an independent investigation.

13.2. Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the grant opportunity and/or program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if our staff, any member of a panel or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel:

- has a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer or member of an external panel
- has a 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
- has a 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.

As part of your application, we will ask you to declare any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or confirm that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

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

Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff are handled as set out in the Australian [Public Service Code of Conduct \(Section 13\(7\)\)](#) of the [Public Service Act 1999](#). Panel members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

We publish our [conflict of interest policy](#)⁶ on the department's website. The Commonwealth policy entity also publishes a conflict of interest policy on its website.

13.3. Privacy

Unless the information you provide to us is:

- confidential information as per below, or
- personal information as per below.

we may share the information with other government agencies for a relevant Commonwealth purpose such as:

- to improve the effective administration, monitoring and evaluation of Australian Government programs
- for research
- to announce the awarding of grants.

We must treat your personal information according to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) and the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). This includes letting you know:

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

We may give the personal information we collect from you to our employees and contractors, the Panel, and other Commonwealth employees and contractors, so we can:

- manage the program
- research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities.

We, or the Minister, may:

- announce the names of successful applicants to the public
- publish personal information on the department's websites.

You may read our [Privacy Policy](#)⁷ on the department's website for more information on:

- what is personal information
- how we collect, use, disclose and store your personal information
- how you can access and correct your personal information.

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).

⁶ https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/July%202018/document/pdf/conflict-of-interest-and-insider-trading-policy.pdf?acsf_files_redirect

⁷ <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/privacy-policy>

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 treat the information you give us as sensitive and therefore confidential if it meets all of the following conditions:

- you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
- the information is commercially sensitive
- disclosing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else
- you provide the information with an understanding that it will stay confidential.

We may disclose confidential information:

- to the Panel and our Commonwealth employees and contractors, to help us manage the program effectively
- to the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- to the responsible Minister or Assistant Minister
- to a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

We may also disclose confidential information if

- we are required or authorised by law to disclose it
- you agree to the information being disclosed, or
- someone other than us has made the confidential information public.

13.5. Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about the program, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (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.

If someone requests a document under the FOI Act, we will release it (though we may need to consult with you and/or other parties first) unless it meets one of the exemptions set out in the FOI Act.

14. Glossary

Term	Definition
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.
application form	The document issued by the program delegate that applicants use to apply for funding under the program.
assessment criteria	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 ranking.
Australian local government body or agency	A local governing body as defined under the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995 (Cth) as a local governing body established by or under a law of a State.
<u>Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines (CGRGs)</u>	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
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.
Department	The Department of Industry, Science and Resources.
decision maker	The person who makes a decision to award a grant. For this program this is the Commonwealth Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.
eligible activities	The activities undertaken by a grantee in relation to a project that are eligible for funding support as set out in 5.1.
eligible application	An application or proposal for grant funding under the program that the program delegate has determined is eligible for assessment in accordance with these guidelines.

Term	Definition
eligibility criteria	Refer to the mandatory criteria which must be met to qualify for a grant. Assessment criteria may apply in addition to eligibility criteria.
eligible expenditure	The expenditure incurred by a grantee on a project and which is eligible for funding support as set out in 0.
eligible expenditure guidance	The guidance that is provided at Appendix A.
First Nations community-controlled organisations	These organisations are an Indigenous Organisation or enterprise and have an Indigenous Corporation Number (ICN) or can declare that they are a Traditional Owner or that their organisation is at least 51 per cent owned or controlled by Indigenous persons or the Indigenous Enterprise has 50 per cent Indigenous ownership.
grant	For the purposes of the CGRGs, 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"> a. under which relevant money⁸ or other Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) money⁹ 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	A legally binding contract that sets out the relationship between the Commonwealth and a grantee for the grant funding, and specifies the details of the grant.
grant funding or grant funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth to grantees under the program.
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.

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

⁹ Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 105, Rules in relation to other CRF money.

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 DITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statement Program.
GrantConnect	The Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRGs.
grantee	The organisation which has been selected to receive a grant
guidelines	Guidelines that the Minister gives to the department to provide the framework for the administration of the program, as in force from time to time.
Independent Expert Panel	The body established to assess eligible applications and determine which are meritorious. Panellists comprise a subset of the Urban Policy Forum.
Low rate-based councils	Low rate based councils are determined using the ratio of Financial Assistance Grant to Net Rate Income and are as follows: Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council; Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council; Shire of Woodanilling; District Council of Orroroo Carrieton; Shire of Tammin; District Council of Peterborough; Shire of Wyalkatchem; Shire of Wickepin; Shire of Dowerin; District Council of Karoonda East Murray; Shire of Kellerberrin; Hay Shire Council; Coolamon Shire Council; Lockhart Shire Council; Balranald Shire Council; Weddin Shire Council; Murrumbidgee Council; Tenterfield Shire Council; Narrandera Shire Council; Wentworth Shire Council; Bland Shire Council; Lachlan Council.
Minister	The Commonwealth Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
partnership	For the purposes of the grant opportunity – partnership refers to collaboration between organisations/entities towards a shared goal. Applicants are not required to set up formal business partnership structures for the program, however, as noted in the assessment criteria you must demonstrate evidence, including the provision of an established governance structure, that partners are committed to the goals of the project,

Term	Definition
personal information	<p>Has the same meaning as in the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i> (Cth) which is:</p> <p>Information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> whether the information or opinion is true or not; and whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.
Precinct	Place of purpose as outlined in this document
program delegate	A manager within the department with responsibility for administering the program.
program funding or program funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth for the program.
project	A project described in an application for grant funding under the program.
proposal	A detailed outline of project/s described in your application
Regional University	For the purposes of the grant opportunity – regional university refers to universities with a main campus or presence or universities that wish to establish a main campus or presence within a regional area as stipulated by the Greater Capital City Statistical Area.
remote or very remote location	Refers to projects located in 'remote' or 'very remote' locations per the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Remoteness Structure
selection criteria	Comprises of eligibility criteria and assessment criteria.
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.

Appendix A. Eligible expenditure

This section provides guidance on the eligibility of expenditure. We may update this guidance from time to time; check you are referring to the most current version from the business.gov.au website before preparing your application.

The program delegate makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be incurred by you within the project period
- be a direct cost of the project
- be incurred by you to undertake required project audit activities (where applicable)
- meet the eligible expenditure guidelines.

A.1 How we verify eligible expenditure

If your application is successful, we may ask you to verify the project budget that you provided in your application when we negotiate your grant agreement. You may need to provide evidence such as quotes for major costs.

The grant agreement will include details of the evidence you may need to provide when you achieve certain milestones in your project. This may include evidence related to eligible expenditure.

If requested, you will need to provide the agreed evidence along with your progress reports.

You must keep payment records of all eligible expenditure, and be able to explain how the costs relate to the agreed project activities. At any time, we may ask you to provide records of the expenditure you have paid. If you do not provide these records when requested, the expense may not qualify as eligible expenditure.

At the end of the project, you will be required to provide an independent financial audit of all eligible expenditure from the project.

A.2 Materials for construction

We consider costs of acquiring materials for the construction of infrastructure as eligible expenditure.

You must list material costs as a separate item within your project budget in the proposal form and in the expenditure table in your progress reports.

We will not make any payments to you for any expenditure you have incurred prior to the execution of your grant agreement. Examples of eligible material costs can include:

- building materials
- ICT cabling
- fit out of the infrastructure, such as window dressings
- fixed furniture (e.g. kitchen fit outs as part of the construction of a building)
- landscaping.

You may show expenditure on materials by providing evidence of:

- purchase price

- payments (e.g. tax invoices and receipts from suppliers confirming payment)
- commitment to pay for the materials (e.g. supplier contract, purchase order or executed lease agreement)
- receipt of materials (e.g. supplier or freight documents)
- associated costs such as freight and installation (e.g. supplier documents)
- photographs of the infrastructure on your premises.

If you claim expenditure for materials, we limit this to:

- the costs of materials
- freight costs.
- plant under a hire purchase agreement, or you use a lease to finance the purchase of the plant, the cost of the item of plant, excluding interest, is capitalised, and then depreciated.

A.3 Hired/leased plant

You may lease plant and equipment to support your project, and where possible, you should use local suppliers. Examples of eligible hired/leased plants costs can include:

- lease of office spaces
- lease of space for the purpose of construction/site offices
- hire of IT equipment.

You must calculate eligible expenditure for hired, rented, or leased plant by the number of payment periods where you use the plant for the project multiplied by the period hiring fee. If you purchase plant under a hire purchase agreement, or you use a lease to finance the purchase of the plant, the cost of the item of plant, excluding interest, is capitalised, and then depreciated.

Running costs for hired or leased plant are eligible expenditure but you must be able to verify them. They may include items such as rent, light and power, and repairs and maintenance for the duration of the project only.

A.4 Labour expenditure

Eligible labour expenditure for the grant covers the direct labour costs of employees you directly employ on the core elements of the project. We consider a person an employee when you pay them a regular salary or wage, out of which you make regular tax instalment deductions.

We consider costs for technical, but not administrative, project management activities eligible labour expenditure. However, we limit these costs to 10 per cent of the total amount of eligible labour expenditure claimed.

We do not consider labour expenditure for leadership or administrative staff (such as CEOs, CFOs, accountants and lawyers) as eligible expenditure, even if they are doing project management tasks.

Eligible salary expenditure includes an employee's total remuneration package as stated on their Pay As You Go (PAYG) Annual Payment Summary submitted to the ATO. We consider salary-sacrificed superannuation contributions as part of an employee's salary package if the amount is more than what the Superannuation Guarantee requires.

The maximum salary for an employee, director or shareholder, including packaged components that you can claim through the grant is \$200,000 per financial year.

For periods of the project that do not make a full financial year, you must reduce the maximum salary amount you claim proportionally.

You can only claim eligible salary costs when an employee is working directly on agreed project activities during the agreed project period.

A.5 Labour on-costs and administrative overhead

You may increase eligible salary costs by an additional 30 per cent allowance to cover on-costs such as employer paid superannuation, payroll tax, workers compensation insurance, and overheads such as office rent and the purchase or provision of computing equipment directly required or related to the delivery of the project

You should calculate eligible salary costs using the formula below:

$$\text{Eligible salary costs} = \text{Annual salary package} \times \frac{\text{Weeks spent on project}}{52 \text{ weeks}} \times \text{percentage of time spent on project}$$

You cannot calculate labour costs by estimating the employee's worth. If you have not exchanged money (either by cash or bank transactions) we will not consider the cost eligible.

Evidence you will need to provide can include:

- details of all personnel working on the project, including name, title, function, time spent on the project and salary
- ATO payment summaries, pay slips and employment contracts.

A.6 Contract expenditure

Eligible contract expenditure is the cost of any agreed project activities that you contract others to do. These can include contracting:

- another organisation
- an individual who is not an employee, but engaged under a separate contract.

All contractors must have a written contract prior to starting any project work—for example, a formal agreement, letter or purchase order which specifies:

- the nature of the work they perform
- the applicable fees, charges and other costs payable.

Invoices from contractors must contain:

- a detailed description of the nature of the work
- the hours and hourly rates involved
- any specific plant expenses paid.

Invoices must directly relate to the agreed project, and the work must qualify as an eligible expense. The costs must also be reasonable and appropriate for the activities performed.

We will require evidence of contractor expenditure that may include:

- an exchange of letters (including email) setting out the terms and conditions of the proposed contract work
- purchase orders
- supply agreements

- invoices and payment documents.

You must ensure all project contractors keep a record of the costs of their work on the project. We may require you to provide a contractor's records of their costs of doing project work. If you cannot provide these records, the relevant contract expense may not qualify as eligible expenditure.

Where possible, you should engage local labour and services. Eligible contract expenditure may include:

- Project management
- Quantity surveying
- Building services.

Costs for pre-construction activities including surveying, planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals are limited to 10 per cent of the total amount of eligible project expenditure claimed.

A.7 Travel expenditure

Eligible travel expenditure may include

- domestic travel limited to the reasonable cost of accommodation and transportation required to conduct agreed project and collaboration activities in Australia.

Eligible air transportation is limited to the economy class fare for each sector travelled; where non-economy class air transport is used only the equivalent of an economy fare for that sector is eligible expenditure. Where non-economy class air transport is used, the grantee will require evidence showing what an economy airfare costs at the time of travel.

A.8 Other eligible expenditure

Other eligible expenditures for the project may include:

- costs associated with consultation sessions including venue hire and light refreshments (excluding alcohol)
- marketing and branding costs
- administration and operational costs directly related to the project including communications and consultation materials
- staff training that directly supports the achievement of project outcomes
- building modifications where you own the modified asset and the modification is required to undertake the project. Modifications to leased buildings may be eligible.
- financial auditing of project expenditure, the cost of an independent audit of project expenditure (where we request one) up to a maximum of 1 per cent of total eligible project expenditure
- costs you incur in order to obtain planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals during the project period. However, associated fees paid to the Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments are not eligible
- contingency costs up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the eligible project costs. Note that we make payments based on actual costs incurred.

Other specific expenditures may be eligible as determined by the program delegate.

Evidence you need to supply can include supplier contracts, purchase orders, invoices and supplier confirmation of payments.

Appendix B. Ineligible expenditure

This section provides guidance on what we consider ineligible expenditure. We may update this guidance from time to time; check you are referring to the most current version from the business.gov.au website before preparing your application.

The program delegate may impose limitations or exclude expenditure, or further include some ineligible expenditure listed in these guidelines in a grant agreement or otherwise by notice to you.

Examples of ineligible expenditure include:

- research not directly supporting eligible activities
- activities, equipment or supplies that are already being supported through other sources
- costs incurred prior to us notifying you that the application is successful
- financing costs, including interest
- capital expenditure for the purchase of assets such as office furniture and equipment, motor vehicles, computers, printers or photocopiers and the construction, renovation or extension of facilities such as buildings and laboratories
- costs involved in the purchase or upgrade/hire of software (including user licences) and ICT hardware (unless it directly relates to the project)
- costs such as rental and utilities
- non-project-related staff training and development costs
- insurance costs (the participants must affect and maintain adequate insurance or similar coverage for any liability arising as a result of its participation in funded activities)
- debt financing
- costs related to obtaining resources used on the project, including interest on loans, job advertising and recruiting, and contract negotiations
- depreciation of plant and equipment beyond the life of the project
- ongoing maintenance costs
- costs of purchasing, leasing, depreciation of, or development of land
- infrastructure development costs, including development of road, rail, port or fuel delivery networks beyond the manufacturing site
- site preparation activities
- ongoing upgrades, updates and maintenance of existing ICT systems and computing facilities
- recurring or ongoing operational expenditure (including annual maintenance, rent, water and rates, postage, legal and accounting fees and bank charges)
- costs related to preparing the grant application
- overseas costs.

This list is not exhaustive and applies only to the expenditure of the grant funds. Other costs may be ineligible where we decide that they do not directly support the achievement of the planned outcomes for the project or that they are contrary to the objective of the program.

You must ensure you have adequate funds to meet the costs of any ineligible expenditure associated with the project.



The Hon Catherine King MP

Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
Member for Ballarat

Ref: MS23-003750

Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher MP
Minister for Finance
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Katy

I am writing to seek your agreement to the release of the attached Grant Opportunity Guidelines for the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program following the Australian Government's new regional program announcement as part of the 2022-23 October Budget s34(2)

The aim of this program is to deliver transformative investment in regional, rural and remote Australia based on the principles of unifying regional places, growing their economies and serving their communities. The program presents a new opportunity for regional investment through a unique grants process, which features a strong focus on collaboration and joint investment opportunities.

In the October 2022-23 Budget, the Australian Government announced \$1 billion over three years from 2023-24 for the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program and the Growing Regions Program.

On 7 February 2023, the Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, approved a funding allocation of \$600 million for the Growing Regions Program and \$400 million for the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (program) (MS22-002348 and MC23-002194 refers). The Prime Minister also approved changes to the design elements I requested to the program, including:

- Grant process where applications can be submitted at any time during the year, so that applicants can spend the time they need to develop strong applications
- Establishment of an expert panel to be involved in the assessment process
- Extending eligibility to regional universities that may be for-profit entities, to specifically allow them to participate in the program
- Two funding streams – development and planning (master planning, design, consultation, business cases) with grants from \$500,000 to \$5 million, and then construction/delivery projects with grants from \$5 million to \$50 million per project, thereby allowing a diverse range of projects to be activated within the funding allocation.

Under the \$400 million allocated to this program, \$100 million is available in 2023-24, and \$150 million in both 2024-25 and 2025-26. I seek your approval to publish the Grant Opportunity Guidelines in August 2023, with the program expected to open for applications in late August 2023.

s47C

s42

In November 2022, you provided your agreement to amend the Schedule for the program at an Executive Council meeting in 2023 (MS22-001202 refers). Following consultation activities and further engagement with the Business Grants Hub, the program design is now finalised and the amendment is planned to be considered at the 17 August 2023 Federal Executive Council meeting.

Given the program's policy parameters have evolved since seeking your agreement in November 2022, I wrote to you on 14 July 2023 requesting the program's amendment ahead of the planned meeting on 17 August 2023 (MS23-003656 refers). There will be no expenditure on this program until early 2024.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



Catherine King MP

 /8/2023

Enc: Grant Opportunity Guidelines for the regional Precincts and Partnership Program

cc: Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP
The Treasurer, the Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP

Grant Opportunity Guidelines Self-Assessment Risk Analysis

Risk assessment

Grant Opportunity Guidelines self-assessment risk analysis

1. Program details

Name of policy entity

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA)

Name of program

Regional Precincts and Partnerships program (Stream one – Precinct Development and Planning and Stream two – Precinct Delivery)

Summary of program

Include program objectives and the relevant entity outcome it contributes to.

The program will run over 3 years from 2023-24 to 2025-26. The program was announced as part of the 2022-23 October Budget and reflects the Government's Regional Investment Framework. It aligns to Outcome No 3.1 – Regional Development.

The program will focus on a **partnership approach**, bringing together governments and communities to deliver regional precincts that are tailored to local needs and have a shared vision in how that precinct connects to the region. The establishment of partnerships that include local perspectives will be critical to delivering place-based infrastructure supported by the community. The program allows governments and communities to establish long-term partnerships and jointly invest in genuine regional priorities.

The program will support the planning and delivery of regional, rural and remote precincts. Regional precincts or 'places with a purpose' are user defined geographic areas with a

specific shared need or theme. Regional precincts may include: business districts, neighbourhoods, activity centres, commercial hubs or community and recreational areas. They will be located in renewal areas and growth areas in regional centres, regional corridors, regional cities, as well as smaller town centres that serve as service hubs in more remote communities. The scale of regional precinct projects will vary depending on their location and objectives.

Precincts support better integration of land use and ensure the infrastructure investment complements the broader region and its surrounding communities, spaces, transport and activities. The program's place-based, partnership approach will ensure precinct proposals are suitably and strategically designed for their specific contexts and maximise outcomes for their communities.

The objectives of the Program are to:

- facilitate place-based approaches to planning, characterised by collaborative partnerships engaging in shared design, stewardship and accountability of planned outcomes
- provide targeted benefits related to productivity, equity, and resilience for the people of regional, rural or remote Australia
- support community priorities for regional cities, rural or remote centres and areas
- reflect the Government's approach to regional investment as outlined under the Regional Investment Framework.

The intended outcomes of the Program are to:

- demonstrate the value of partnerships between governments, communities and businesses for effective planning, coordination and delivery of regional infrastructure
- develop and deliver regional precincts comprised of multiple infrastructure components, which provide benefits related to productivity, equity and resilience.
- contribute to the Australian Government's current policy priorities; including but not limited to Closing the Gap, Net Zero, social and affordable housing.

It is the intent of the Program to:

- deliver grants across a broad geographic spread of regional Australia, including remote and very remote areas
- support precinct projects of differing scales and functionalities
- encourage projects from lesser-resourced applicants.

The regional Precincts and Partnerships Program is an 'always open' grants process, meaning applications can be submitted at any time once the program opens. Applications will be batched and assessed by an Independent Expert Panel at a minimum of twice a year.

The program's non-competitive process means applicants will be assessed on their individual merit against the assessment criteria, and will not be compared to other applications. This is to avoid the direct, competitive comparison of applications from organisations of differing sizes and levels of resourcing.

This approach provides the ability to ensure the equitable distribution of grants across the country based on the individual merits of a precinct proposal and its benefits to the local community, and the opportunity to balance small and large precincts and different types of precincts within the funding profile.

There are two grant opportunities as part of this program:

- Stream One - Precinct development and planning - to activate partnerships and deliver an investment-ready precinct plan
- Stream Two - Precinct delivery - to deliver a specified project or projects as part of a precinct.

The objective of Stream One – Precinct development and planning grant opportunity is to activate partnerships to jointly deliver precinct plans.

Stream One intended outcomes are to:

- establish partnerships comprised of relevant government entities, community organisations and businesses that have a shared vision for a regional precinct
- deliver precinct plans that are tailored to their local contexts and based on community feedback and engagement
- support precinct plans to become investment ready.

The objective of Stream Two is to work with partners to support the delivery of precincts that will provide targeted benefits related to productivity, equity, and resilience for regional, rural and remote areas across Australia.

The intended outcomes of Stream Two grant opportunity are to:

- deliver project/s that form part of a precinct or foundational infrastructure that activates a precinct
- support the delivery of regional precincts that are tailored to their local contexts and based on a shared vision.

Total cost of program and cost over the Budget and forward estimates

The total cost of the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program is \$400 million over 3 years from 2023-24 to 2025-26.

Year of program	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Financial year	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	
Funding per year	\$100 million	\$150 million	\$150 million	\$400million

Policy authority for program

Policy authority

s34(3)

s34(2)

s34(3) s34(2)

s34
(3)

s34(2)

Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program expenditure was subsequently reprofiled and approved in an exchange of letters between Minister C King (Ref: MS22-002348 dated 12 January 2023) and the Prime Minister (MC23-002194 dated 7 February 2023). This also confirmed the inclusion of regional Universities as eligible applicants.

Constitutional authority

s42

s42

Other relevant information

s42

A new legislative instrument has been drafted and is expected to be approved in August 2023.

The self-assessment risk analysis was updated on 1 August 2023 to incorporate changes to the Guidelines that address feedback by the Department of Finance Grants Policy team regarding the grant assessment and recommendation process.

2. Discussion of key issues and implementation risks

Provide details on the areas assessed for risk and on any identified risks or sensitivities arising from this assessment.

Use additional headings or supporting data, including attachments, as necessary.

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The BGH has experience in delivering similar programs.

Key implementation risks considered during the design process include:

- Potential difficulty for applicants finding suitable partners to participate in the development of the precinct.
- Potential criticism for a lack of transparency during the selection process.
- The 'always open' grants process does not provide transparency to grant applicants about when applications will be assessed and how much funding will be available in each batch of assessments.
- Grantees do not have the capacity or capability to deliver the approved project because of shortage of suitably skilled project management staff.
- Project timeframes exceed grant funding period.
- Grantees use grant funding for ineligible activities and expenditure.

- Grantee unable to secure required planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals to complete their project.
- Program objectives and outcomes are not achieved.

Implementation risks have been considered and mechanisms to effectively manage and mitigate risks are addressed in program design within the grant opportunity guidelines and grant administration approach (refer to section 4 below).

3. Risk assessment

On balance, do you assess the program as being of low, medium or high risk? Summarise the reasons for your assessment below.

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4. Risk management

Any mitigation strategies for addressing particular risks should be mentioned here.

RISK:

Potential difficulty for applicants finding suitable partners to participate in the development of the precinct

MITIGATION:

- Guidelines do not specify the number of partners required. They do require applicants to provide evidence that they attempted to source appropriate partners and that some have been consulted and provide support for the concept.
- Applicants may select from a wide range of potential local partners including corporate for-profit entities and other levels of government.
- Applicants must approach state government, local government, Regional Development Australia (RDA) and First Nations groups to ensure visibility of their partnership.

RISK:

Potential criticism for a lack of transparency during the selection process

MITIGATION:

- Guidelines and web content clearly outline the assessment and grant selection process. Applications will be assessed by an Independent Expert Panel comprised of members of the Urban Policy Forum selected for their expertise
- The Business Grants Hub will attend meetings as Secretariat and will record the decisions of the panel.
- The Guidelines detail the process, policies and considerations by which DITRDCA will provide policy advice on meritorious applications, and recommend meritorious proposals within the funding envelope to the Minister
- Policy considerations provided to the Minister with the applications recommended for decision making are clearly outlined in the Guidelines and form part of the assessment criteria.
- The Guidelines outline the process by which the decision maker may seek advice from relevant Minister/s for meritorious proposals relating to their specific portfolio responsibilities.

RISK:

- The 'always open' grants process does not provide transparency to grant applicants about when applications will be assessed and how much funding will be available in each batch of assessments. The subsequent risk that it is not clear if funding will be available to applicants who submit applications later in the open period, and if reduced funding is available, that later applicants will be assessed under more competitive conditions

MITIGATION:

- The Guidelines include information that applications will be batched and assessed at least twice a year.
- DITRDCA advise that as this is a new program, they cannot determine how many applications will be received or the funding amount that will be requested throughout the year. They do not wish to set expectations without this knowledge or restrict the timing or funding amount of batches in order to be able to respond effectively to the applications that do come in, and in the instance of not awarding funding up to the amount allocated to a batch, to avoid attracting criticism.
- DITRDCA and BGH will use other mechanisms to provide updates to potential applicants about batches and funding available and update business.gov.au and the Guidelines if required, including if funding is exhausted and the program will stop receiving applications, or if additional funding is made available to the program.

RISK:

- Grantee unable to secure required planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals to complete their project.

MITIGATION:

- Applicants must have the relevant authority for the land and/or infrastructure to be eligible for the grant.
- Applicants will be assessed on their readiness to commence the project, including relevant approvals and legislative requirements.
- The grant agreement requires regular reporting against project progress, which enables the Business Grants Hub to detect any delays in obtaining approvals.

RISK:

- Grantees do not have the capacity or capability to deliver the approved project due to shortages of contractors and availability of materials.

MITIGATION:

- Applications will be assessed for project readiness and capacity, capability and resources to deliver the project. Applicants will need to demonstrate how projects are investment ready.
- Guidelines include provisions for monitoring grant activity, including progress and final reports to assess progress against agreed project milestones and project expenditure. There are also provisions to vary the grant agreement due to unexpected events impacting the project.
- Payments to be made in arrears unless there is substantial justification for alternative arrangements.

RISK: Project timeframes exceed grant funding period.

MITIGATION:

- Grantees must submit reports in-line with their grant agreement, including reporting on progress against project milestones and expenditure of grant funds.
- Grant payments will only be made when satisfactory progress reports have been provided by the applicant and reviewed. This will ensure visibility of project progress.

RISK: Grantees use grant funding for ineligible activities and expenditure.

MITIGATION:

- The guidelines include clear communication of eligible activities and expenditure.
- Applicants are required to provide a project budget allocated over each project activity.

- The grant agreement clearly articulates compliance requirements to the grantee, for example the provision to terminate the agreement and recover funds.
- Regular reporting including evidence of expenditure will enable the Business Grants Hub to detect any compliance issues.
- Funding is paid in arrears and dependent on sufficient progress against agreed milestones and evidence of expenditure.
- An independent financial audit is required at the end of the project and is specified in the grant agreement.

RISK: Program objectives and outcomes are not achieved.

MITIGATION:

- Only projects located in areas outside of GCCSAs are eligible.
- Partnership agreements will encourage multiple stakeholders to agree on objectives and outcomes.
- Applications will be assessed against merit assessment criteria and only those that score at least 50 per cent against each assessment criterion will be forwarded to the Minister for decision.