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:	5th July 2023 (Expression of interest)
	1st November 2023 (Full application)
Closing date and time:	05:00pm Australian Eastern Standard Time on 1st August 2023 (Expression of interest)
	05:00pm Australian Eastern Daylight Savings Time on 12th December 2023 (Full application)
	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:	6 May 2023
Type of grant opportunity:	Open competitive

Contents

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).*

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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.

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We make grant recommendations

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

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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.

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STAGE TWO: FULL APPLICATION

Stage two of the grant opportunity opens

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

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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.

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> **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.

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> **Grant decisions are made**
>
> The decision maker decides which applications are successful.

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> **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.

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> **We enter into a grant agreement**
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> 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.

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> **Delivery of grant**
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> 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.

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> **Evaluation of the Growing Regions Program**
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> 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
- is strategically aligned with regional priorities.

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	Projects run by First Nations Community Controlled Organisations.(as defined in Section 14) or Projects located in 'very remote' locations per the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Remoteness Structure as detailed in the mapping tool [insert hyperlink] or 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.	Up to 90 per cent of eligible project costs
Group 2	Projects located in 'remote' locations per the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Remoteness Structure as detailed in the mapping tool [insert hyperlink] or Projects run by the following 'low rate based' councils, determined using the ratio of Financial Assistance Grant to Net Rate Income: Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council Shire of Woodanilling District Council of Ororoo Carrieton	Up to 70 per cent of eligible project costs

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[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 Government[2] / 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

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[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.

Organisation legal name	ABN
Tibooburra Village Committee Incorporated	58 160 430 241

If you are applying as a Trustee on behalf of a Trust[3], 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)

▪ 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

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[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.

- 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.

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:

a. how advanced the project designs are

b. how far you have progressed the tender process

c. 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 applicable[4], 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

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[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
- 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	1 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]
- *Code for the Tendering and Performance of Building Work 2016*[7] ([Building Code 2016](#))

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

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[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] https://www.abcc.gov.au/building-code

10.2.2.1. WHS Scheme

The WHS Scheme is administered by the [Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner](#)[8].

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).

10.3. 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.

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[8] http://www.fsc.gov.au/sites/FSC

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 entities[9].

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.

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[9] See Australian Taxation Office ruling GSTR 2012/2 available at ato.gov.au

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

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[10] 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](#)[11] 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](#)[12] 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

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

[12] 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.
Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines (CGRGs)	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,Transport, 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: a. under which relevant money[13] or other Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) money[14] 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.

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[13] Relevant money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 8, Dictionary.

[14] 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,Transport, 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 *Privacy Act 1988* (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	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. 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: • 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.