



# Growing Regions Program – Round 1 application and assessment process

Round 1 of the Growing Regions Program (the Program) has a two-stage application process:

- Stage one - which invites Expressions of Interest (EOIs), and
- Stage two - the full application.

*Stage one – the Expressions of Interest assessment process.*

The EOI assessment process has two-steps:

1. For step one - the Business Grants Hub (the Hub) assess all EOIs to determine if applicants and their projects are eligible according to the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. At the end of this process all ineligible applicants are notified of the outcome of their EOI.
2. For step two - all eligible projects are assessed by a multi-party Parliamentary panel (the panel). As outlined in the Round 1 guidelines, the panel is responsible for assessing the EOIs against criterion 2 - *how strongly projects are aligned to regional priorities.*

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the department) makes the final decision about which EOIs are successful and will be invited to the full application process. All applicants will be notified of their outcome prior to the opening of the Stage two - full application process.

*Stage two – Full application*

The full application process expands on the EOI process with a requirement for applicants to provide greater detail and documentation relating to the following criteria:

1. regional economic and social impact and community inclusion
2. alignment to broader government and regional strategic priorities, and
3. the applicant's capacity, capability and resources to deliver and sustain the project.

The Hub is responsible for merit assessing and ranking Stage two - full applications, with the department providing recommendations to the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional development and Local Government (the Minister) based on the Hub's criteria merit assessment, geographic spread, value with relevant money and available funding (\$300 million).

The Minister is the final decision maker on grant approvals, grant funding to be awarded and any conditions attached to the offer of grant funding.

**Multi-party Parliamentary panel**

The Australian Government is committed to greater accountability and transparency in the delivery of programs. This is being implemented through a number of mechanisms, one of which for the Growing Regions Program includes a multi-party Parliamentary panel (the panel).

The role of the panel is to:

- a) assess and score eligible EOIs received in Stage One of the Growing Regions application process for the assessment criterion 2 – *how does the project align with regional priorities for the area*, and
- b) make recommendations to the department on which applicants are successful and invited to apply for Stage two – the full application process.

The panel scored projects against EOI assessment criterion 2 according to the following scale:

Very strong alignment with regional priority	5
Strong alignment with regional priority	4
Marginal alignment with regional priority	3
Weak alignment with regional priority	2
Unable to determine alignment with regional priority	1

Further information on this scale is contained in Appendix C of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

An external probity advisor was appointed to support panel members and the panel secretariat was provided by the Hub.

*Panel membership.*

- 1. Ms Lisa Chesters MP, Member for Bendigo (Chair)
- 2. Senator Karen Grogan, Senator for South Australia
- 3. Senator Deborah O’Neill, Senator for New South Wales
- 4. Dr Helen Haines MP, Member for Indi
- 5. The Hon Mark Coulton MP, Member for Parkes
- 6. Mrs Bridget Archer MP, Member for Bass