On Farm Connectivity Program Round 3 – Public Consultation

Hi Team,

Overall I think the program is absolutely amazing and such a great initiative helping both farmers get tools they otherwise couldnt afford, and small businesses gain market access especially when they may be higher priced compared to massive corporate conglomerates

I'll keep it brief, I'll suggest things that were hard for us to deal with in round 2, with the hope that we represent many other small businesses where cashflow is so important

The hardest thing to deal with is the timing of payments:

when any grant/rebate is announced with uncertain backdating rules, and the grant/rebate applies to a businesses' core products, ALL sales of that product stop immediately whilst farmers wait to see what the details of the grant will be. This happened to us from late July/Early august 2024, we could not receive a single dollar of revenue which we simply weren't set up for.

The request here is to allow backdating of purchases to the time that the rebate/grant was announced. This at least lets us take payments, under the clear direction to the farmer that they may not be eligible but it is their risk if they want to buy it now anyway (in the case where they could afford it but would rather wait to see if they can get the rebate/grant). At a minimum it could be to allow deposits so we can get some money through the door

With regards to round 3, we are now in exactly the same situation where we cannot make any new sales until further details are known about the grant. I'm nervous we could be looking at no sales revenue until october-december 2025, a very scary prospect

The other thing that really hurt cashflow was the alteration of the wording around when deposits could be taken. Initially it was 'not able to take deposits until the round opens' and then as soon as the round opened an email came out saying 'not able to take deposits until the application is successful'. This again further delayed being able to accept any money for weeks.

The thing that did work well was the short timeframe at the start to approve applications so I thank you for this as we were nervous we weren't going to see any movement for 6 weeks

The next thing that hurt cashflow is the blowout of the 2-6 week window for application approvals

once again, I understand this is because of the massive influx I know you weren't planning for given how long the last grant took to be funded. But we also received communication stating that all of the applications will be vetted before the end of January which did not happen

I think the timeframe of 120 days is fine and generous

It would be fantastic if the supplier could enter the farmers details and they confirm them without having to go through the whole sign up process. It was quite cumbersome especially with some less tech-savvy farmers and given the rush of the funding nearly caused some farmers to miss out

We had some troubles with the caching of responses especially on the start of applications, where you have to put in the number and organisation details etc. That would be great if it could save all of those pieces of data to add efficiency when completing the applications

In the applications portal it would be amazing if the farmers last name could be one of the columns, it would make it extremely easy to find the applications instead of cross referencing with other documents to find the correct number