



National Environmental Science Program (NESP) 2 Grant Opportunity Guidelines

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Closing date and time:	11.00PM AEST on 30 June 2020
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Administering entity	Community Grants Hub
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, contact Community Grants Hub Phone: 1800 020 283 (option 1) Email: support@communitygrants.gov.au Questions should be sent no later than 5.00PM AEST on 23 June 2020
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Type of grant opportunity:	Targeted competitive

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1. National Environmental Science Program (NESP) 2 processes

The National Environmental Science Program 2 is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives.

This grant opportunity is part of the above grant program, which contributes to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment Outcome 1: Conserve, protect and sustainably manage Australia's biodiversity, ecosystems, environment and heritage through research, information management, supporting natural resource management, establishing and managing Commonwealth protected areas, and reducing and regulating the use of pollutants and hazardous substances.

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment worked with stakeholders to plan and design the grant program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017 \(CGRGs\)](#).



The grant opportunity opens

We publish the grant guidelines on the [GrantConnect](#) and [Community Grants Hub](#) websites.



You complete and submit a grant application

You complete the application form and address all of the eligibility and assessment criteria to be considered for a grant.



We assess all grant applications

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



We make grant recommendations

We provide advice, through Selection Advisory Panels to the Minister for the Environment on the merits of each application.



Grant decisions are made

The Minister for the Environment 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 enter into a grant agreement with you if successful. The type of grant agreement is based on the nature or complexity of the grant and is proportional to the risks involved.



Delivery of grant

You undertake the grant activity as set out in your grant agreement. We manage the grant by working with you, monitoring your progress and making payments.



Evaluation of the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) 2

We evaluate your specific grant activity and the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) 2 as a whole. We base this on information you provide us and that we collect from various sources.

1.1 Introduction

These guidelines contain information for the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) 2 grants.

You must read these guidelines before filling out an application.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant program/grant opportunity
- the eligibility and assessment criteria
- how grant applications are considered and selected
- how grantees are notified and receive grant payments
- how grantees will be monitored and evaluated
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

This grant opportunity and process will be administered by the Community Grants Hub on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the department).

2. About the grant program

The National Environmental Science Program (NESP 2) represents a \$149 million investment by the Australian Government in applied environmental science to support decision-makers from across the Australian community, including Indigenous communities, achieve positive environmental, social and economic outcomes. The program represents a critical cross-cutting enabler that provides the evidence base for the design, delivery and on-ground monitoring of core Government environmental commitments and the basis for long-term environmental programs.

The program will consist of multi-disciplinary research hubs or consortia hosted by Australian research institutions with national capability and be delivered where appropriate through regional nodes. Applications must be able to demonstrate capacity to harness multi-disciplinary expertise; excellence in the management and delivery of national scale applied environmental research programs; deep stakeholder networks with local communities, organisations, government and the private sector; and a proven ability to address complex multifaceted environmental challenges via the translation of world class science into practical advice and action on the ground for all Australians.

For each dollar granted by the Australian Government, applications are expected to generate a matching or greater co-investment (cash or in-kind).

Objectives and outcomes

NESP 2 will deliver applied scientific knowledge, decision tools and practical management options to support environmental commitments made by all levels of Government and other end-users.

The program will directly support:

- the delivery of practical science to support decision-makers to build resilience in our natural environment and communities
- development of collaborative partnerships between public and private sector stakeholders as well as Indigenous communities to maximise benefits for all Australians and their local environments
- management of Australia's unique environmental assets including our protected estate such as the Great Barrier Reef and Kakadu National Park as well as threatened and migratory species and ecological communities
- environmental assessment of development proposals under Commonwealth, state and territory regulations including by providing information on frequently triggered species and other matters
- our understanding of the impact of plastic and other waste material on our natural ecosystems to support action to improve environmental outcomes
- better understanding of our past, present and future climate to improve climate modelling and information delivery to inform adaptation planning for resilient regional and urban communities
- the transition of new collection, monitoring and modelling capabilities from research to practical management tools including via targeted investment into eDNA, biogenomics, predictive modelling systems, artificial intelligence and machine learning.

A key additional element of the program will be the capture of knowledge into national information repositories to ensure research outputs are easily accessible to all stakeholders and reusable to support multiple future end-user requirements.

The program will also support the development of critical human capital within the science community and related soft infrastructure through:

- a requirement to invest in Indigenous research capability including in remote communities as appropriate
- targeted investment in early to mid-career researchers to grow Australia's scientific capability including Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills
- actively fostering partnerships between researchers, end-users and local communities to establish trust and promote open engagement across different stakeholder groups.

The intended outcomes of NESP 2 are:

- Credible peer reviewed, timely research that is used by decision-makers to answer questions and develop solutions to problems.
- Research findings and practical guidance for decision-makers, stored in a manner that is discoverable and accessible, and where appropriate integrated into end-users' databases and decision support tools.
- Enhanced environmental science and research capability amongst researchers, end-users and Indigenous Australians.

The Community Grants Hub administers the program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017 \(CGRGs\)](#).

2.1 About the NESP 2 grant opportunity

The program will be delivered through four thematic research hubs with regional nodes to provide proximity both to systems of study and key research end users.

The four thematic research hubs will conduct applied research within their specific domains and support four cross-cutting missions delivering management options focused on a) Threatened and migratory species and ecological communities, b) Protected places, c) Waste and d) Climate adaptation.

The 'Resilient Landscapes' Hub will deliver:

- applied research to support management of Australia's terrestrial and freshwater habitats, including a focus on bushfire recovery, feral animals and invasive species impacts, and accessible science to assist land managers to create and maintain resilient, sustainable and productive landscapes
- targeted biodiversity and taxonomy products to support efficient system monitoring
- environmental monitoring systems and decision support tools
- cross-hub coordination for the 'threatened and migratory species and ecological communities' functional mission to support policy development, program management and regulatory processes to protect Australia's environmental assets in terrestrial, Ramsar and marine environments.

The 'Marine and Coastal' Hub will deliver:

- applied research to support management of Australia's marine and coastal environments including estuaries, coast, reefs, shelf and deep-water
- targeted biodiversity and taxonomy products to support efficient system monitoring
- environmental monitoring systems and decision support tools
- cross-hub coordination for the 'protected place management' functional mission to support the management of our protected places and heritage including the national park estate and Ramsar sites in both marine and terrestrial environments.

The 'Sustainable Communities and Waste' Hub will deliver research that supports:

- targeted information and management tools to reduce the impact of plastic and other material on the environment
- applied scenario modelling to support sustainable people-environment interactions in communities including urban heat island impacts and liveability analysis
- effective and efficient management options for hazardous waste, substances and pollutants throughout their lifecycle to minimise environmental and human health impacts
- maintained and improved air quality
- cross-hub coordination for the 'waste impact management' functional mission to support decision maker policy development, program management and regulatory processes in both marine and terrestrial environments.

The 'Climate Systems' Hub will:

- maintain our world-class capability in multidisciplinary Earth system science and modelling
- advance understanding of Australia's climate variability, extremes and associated drivers, including the fundamental drivers of bushfires, drought and rainfall in the Australian region
- develop applied decision-making tools and information to inform policy and programs to prepare Australia to manage emerging risks and opportunities

- cross-hub coordination for the 'climate adaptation' functional mission to support climate information to program hubs to drive integrated adaptation research across the program to support evidence-based decision-making and improve Australia's climate resilience.

Applicants must specify which research hub they are applying to deliver.

What is a hub?

A hub will be:

- a consortium of institutions/organisations
- administered by a host institution that is an Australian research institution
- led by a hub leader who is an outstanding researcher of international repute
- focused on research priorities that are informed by end-user requirements, co-designed with relevant stakeholders and set by the department
- multidisciplinary and span a range of specialisations including environmental scientists, data scientists and modellers, social scientists and economists.

Each hub will include:

- a senior Indigenous facilitator who will sit on all senior hub committees to ensure strong partnerships, collaboration and engagement with Indigenous Australians
- a cross-cutting mission leader who is an outstanding researcher of international repute to drive multidisciplinary outcomes, deliver outputs into national information repositories and guide relevant investment across the four research hubs
- individual specialists to support mission leaders deliver management options and research across the four cross-cutting missions
- a data wrangler to assist each mission leader capture and automate data flow to national information repositories
- knowledge broker and communications officer to facilitate both real-time and strategic engagement with end-users and maximise the impact of the program.

How will hubs operate?

The four research hub leaders and four cross-cutting functional mission leaders will work closely with the department and other end-users to develop annual research plans, and on an ongoing basis as required.

Hub leaders will retain financial accountability for all research activity, but operate peer to peer with the cross-cutting mission leaders.

Hubs will deliver scientific products and advice to meet end-user requirements as agreed by the department including:

- synthesis reports of current and emerging knowledge for senior decision makers
- applied science research, analysis, process studies and models to support policy makers, program managers and regulators
- integrated management decision tools inclusive of scalable state of the environment monitoring and evaluation systems
- long-term foundational science to support end-users understand and adapt to our climate.

Hubs will be flexible and adaptable to respond to emerging priorities, with the ability to rapidly scale output if additional resources are made available.

Hubs will have clear mechanisms to add additional partners with resources to support the delivery of research projects that involve external researchers that have been endorsed by the department.

All research publications will be planned and shared with the department at the design concept stage to ensure alignment with program research objectives.

All research products will be made publicly available unless specifically agreed at the start of a research project.

All hub and mission leaders will engage the department at the design concept stage of significant events or high-profile releases to support coordination with relevant stakeholders and consideration of program level promotion and impact messaging – including via coordinated media campaigns.

Roles, responsibilities and behaviours

The Minister for the Environment

The Minister has the sole discretion to approve funding under NESP 2.

The Department

The department will be responsible for assessing program applications to ensure they represent efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of Commonwealth resources, as required by Commonwealth legislation, and whether any specific requirements will need to be imposed as a condition of funding.

The department will also:

- report program progress to the Minister
- identify emerging priorities with the Minister
- approve all research activity
- participate in and facilitate where appropriate the Hub-led co-design of annual research plans with relevant stakeholders, including Commonwealth and State and Territory representatives and other end-users
- manage program level media engagement and management
- ensure senior departmental representation on all Hub Steering Groups
- provide secretariat support to a Cross-Hub Senior Governance Committee with the assistance of relevant administrative staff from the hub.

Indigenous Facilitation Network

The department values the experiences, perspectives and cultures of Indigenous Australians in protecting and enhancing Australia's environment, heritage and culture. A cross-hub Indigenous Facilitation Network comprised of hub 'Indigenous Facilitators' will be supported by the department to drive Indigenous inclusion at the program level.

The Indigenous Facilitation Network will be responsible for:

- ensuring Indigenous participation and related oversight of key performance indicators and targets
- assisting in the identification of Indigenous research needs within and across hubs
- connecting and supporting Indigenous researchers.

Program governance

The host institution and the hub leader will be responsible for the governance within their operational domains.

The host institution will enter into the grant agreement with the department and will be responsible for relevant administration, including the receipt and expenditure of funds, performance and financial reporting. The host institution will subcontract research partner institutions and organisations.

Hub leaders will develop and manage an agile governance structure that includes a good balance of skills, experience and independence to ensure ethical and responsible decision-making and accountability.

In developing their governance structure hubs should also consider how to best manage their research agenda and the geographic spread of potential end-users/stakeholders. The hub 'Indigenous Facilitator' must sit on all senior governance committees to ensure Indigenous views and research priorities are embedded within the research program.

Management costs should be kept to the minimum required to provide an effective and accountable governance model.

Hub Steering Committees

All hubs will have a Steering Committee run collaboratively with the department. Members will be jointly selected by the host institution and the department, with the department the final decision-maker.

Each Steering Committee will include an independent Chair, lead researchers, the hub's Indigenous Facilitator, departmental representatives and other key end-users.

The Steering Committee will be responsible for:

- providing strategic direction for the activities and research conducted by the hub
- reviewing and endorsing Research Plans, progress and financial reports, prior to approval by the department (the departmental representative won't endorse the financial statement)
- making recommendations for addressing project level issues, supported by user-satisfaction reporting and related key performance indicators.

Cross-Hub Senior Governance Committee

Hub leaders, mission leaders, a representative from the Indigenous Facilitation Network and senior departmental executives will come together bi-annually as a Cross-Hub Senior Governance Committee.

The Committee will provide oversight at the program level. The Committee will be responsible for:

- setting and monitoring the program's strategic direction, ensuring responsiveness to shifting priorities
- agreeing mission deliverables and identifying further opportunities for cross-hub collaboration
- addressing hub-specific issues unable to be resolved by individual hub Steering Committees.

Indigenous participation

The department supports Indigenous Australians in their aspirations to maintain, protect and manage their culture, language, land and sea country and heritage. Indigenous Australians play a key role in protecting and managing their heritage and in this regard are foundational partners in the program.

Successful hubs will be required to:

- incorporate Indigenous research needs into their research plans
- ensure indigenous consultation and appropriate participation in all research activities
- foster and develop Indigenous research capability, skills transfer, knowledge sharing and increased cultural awareness across all parties
- consult appropriately with Indigenous groups who have an active interest in the areas where research projects occur and obtain their consent.

Knowledge capture

Knowledge capture is essential to the success of the program. Knowledge capture officers or 'Data Wranglers' help integrate research outputs into national information repositories, digital systems and decision-support tools. Each hub will be required to appoint at least one Data Wrangler who will be responsible for working with the department and other user organisations to translate data and information into relevant databases and tools.

While each hub will be required to appoint at least one specialist Data Wrangler, hub researchers are also expected to play an active role in this regard.

The department expects that all research outputs from the program - except those specifically agreed during project design - will be made publicly and freely available:

- on the internet and that researchers deposit research outputs in an appropriate national repository
- under a creative commons licence - specifically the latest version of the Creative Commons Attribution licence.

A commitment to meet this expectation will be included in the grant agreement. Detailed guidance on the department's expectations about data accessibility will be provided to successful grant applicants as part of grant agreement negotiation.

Knowledge brokering

Knowledge brokering activities are essential to the success of the program. Knowledge brokers help decision-makers define the questions they need answered by science, then help to translate the science into practice.

While each hub will be required to appoint at least one specialist Knowledge Broker, hub researchers are also expected to play an active role in this regard.

Communications

Communication management is essential to the success of the program. Communication and media specialists help ensure information is targeted to the correct audience for maximum impact.

Each hub will have a communication strategy that details how the hub will communicate research outcomes to end-users across government, industry and communities. Hub communications

strategies will be brought together to form a program strategy that will operate under a community of practice that includes leaders, researchers, communicators and knowledge brokers.

Hub leaders and their communications specialist must ensure that there is regular coordinated engagement with departmental program managers and media areas – including any proposed campaigns, significant events or high-profile releases.

A commitment to meet this expectation will be included in the grant agreement. Detailed guidance on the department's expectations about communication management will be provided to successful grant applicants as part of grant agreement negotiation.

Ethics and research practices

All applications and program funded research should conform to the principles outlined in the following or their successor documents:

- NHMRC/ARC/UA *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (2018)
- as applicable, NHMRC/ARC/UA National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)
- as applicable, AIATSIS *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* (2012)
- as applicable, codes on animal research produced by the NHMRC.

If there is any conflict between a successor document and its predecessor, then the successor document prevails to the extent of any inconsistency.

3. Grant amount and grant period

3.1 Grants available

For this grant opportunity the program has funding of \$149 million (GST exclusive) available to support four research hubs through to June 2027. Funding will be available to hubs from the second half of 2020. The total value of grants awarded may exceed \$149 million if Government priorities and resources increase or new priorities are identified.

All hubs are expected to commit and deliver to the program a level of co-investment (cash and in-kind contributions) equivalent to or greater than the amount of program funding they receive. All partner organisations in a hub are expected to contribute resources to the hub.

Cash and in-kind resources from participants are treated equally for determining the 'matching' co-investment against the program grant.

All co-investments must be directly attributable to or relate directly to the activities of the hub. Access to large capital items provided as in-kind contributions must be valued proportionally to their use for program activities and based on the running costs and depreciation of the capital item.

Expenses for work applicants have already undertaken or plan to undertake after the timeframe of the grant agreement are not eligible to be counted as hub co-investment. Data is also ineligible as a co-investment.

The Minister may reduce or terminate program funding for a hub where the participants do not deliver or seek to reduce their contributions.

A decision on final funding amounts will be made following the applicant assessment process.

Hub	Indicative funds
Marine and Coastal	\$45-50 million over the life of the grant agreement
Resilient Landscapes	\$45-50 million over the life of the grant agreement
Climate Systems	\$35-40 million over the life of the grant agreement
Sustainable Communities and Waste	\$14-20 million over the life of the grant agreement

As a guide, we anticipate grant funding be apportioned within hubs as follows:

- Applied science, decision tools and practical management options (70 percent)
- Knowledge capture (10 to 20 percent)
- Communication (5 to 10 percent)
- Administration (5 to 10 percent).

The amount allocated to administration activities is expected to remain in-line with the current program hub average spend at around 6%.

Hubs will be required to set aside 10% of their annual funding to provide additional assurance they can respond to emerging ministerial priorities and bring on external expertise when required. Hubs will be expected to retain enough flexibility and financial provision for emerging priorities and external partners as part of their core business. Unused emerging priority funds in any given year will be rolled back into hub budgets for the next annual research planning process.

3.2 Grant period

The maximum grant period is seven years.

Funding will be available to hubs from the second half of 2020. Initial funding will be for a planning phase in the 2020-2021 financial year. Research activities are expected to commence from mid-2021 and must cease by 31 December 2026. The remaining six months of hub funding through to June 2027, will be devoted to final reporting and evaluation activities.

Hubs may be extended if the Government considers it to be in the program's interests at the time. Eligibility for, and approval of extension funding is at the Minister's discretion.

4. Eligibility criteria

4.1 Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

Applications are being sought from collaborative, multi-disciplinary and multi-institution/organisation consortia or groups. The consortium must nominate a lead applicant who is solely accountable to the Commonwealth for the delivery of grant activities. The lead applicant must be an Australian research institution (public or private) and an eligible entity as per the list below. Eligible organisations can form a consortium with ineligible organisations.

To be eligible as the lead applicant you must be one of the following entity types:

- Indigenous Corporation
- Company¹
- Corporate Commonwealth Entity
- Non-Corporate Commonwealth Entity
- Non-Corporate Commonwealth Statutory Authority
- Commonwealth Company
- Corporate State or Territory Entity
- Non-corporate State or Territory Entity
- Non-corporate State or Territory Statutory Authority
- Local Government²
- Cooperative
- Incorporated Association
- Statutory Entity
- Trustee on behalf of a Trust³.

4.2 Who is not eligible to apply for a grant?

You are not eligible to apply if you are a/an:

- Unincorporated Association
- International Entity
- Sole Trader
- Partnership
- Person⁴.

Funding will not be approved for individual researchers for small scale, individual projects.

5. What the grant money can be used for

5.1 Eligible expenditure

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure you have incurred on program activities.

Program funding is to be directed primarily to the conduct, collaboration and communication of research. Program funds are intended to be primarily spent in Australia, however international collaboration on projects will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

¹ Company is a company incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth).

² Includes New South Wales local governments created as Body Politics.

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.

⁴ A person is a natural person, an individual, a human being.

Funding may be used for:

- salaries for researchers and support staff, fellowships and student stipends, and direct salary on-costs
- direct support costs of research
- indirect support costs of research
- capital items, such as equipment necessary for conducting research.

Grant funds must only be spent for the purposes of undertaking the activities of the hub as specified in the grant agreement and Activity Work Plan.

You must incur the expenditure on your program activities between the start date and end or completion date for your grant agreement for it to be eligible.

5.2 What the grant money cannot be used for

You cannot use the grant for the following activities:

- the covering of retrospective costs
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation
- subsidy of general ongoing administration of an organisation such as electricity, phone and rent
- work that duplicates other research activities
- purchase of land
- purchasing, or paying for the construction or renovation of facilities such as buildings, laboratories etc.
- purchase of vehicles.

Grant funds must not be used to pay for staff or other resources committed as in-kind contributions under the grant agreement and Activity Work Plan.

The program funds are not intended to be used for international travel unless the purpose of the travel will deliver high levels of benefit for the program and the hub's research. The international travel must provide research outcomes that are of direct benefit to the research projects conducted by the hub.

6. The assessment criteria

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

The application form includes character limits – up to 2000 characters (approximately 300 words) per question related to criteria. The application form will not accept characters beyond this limit. Please note spaces are included in the character limit.

Criterion 1: Capacity to lead a collaborative research program that meets end user needs (45%)

Factors that will be considered include:

- A clear understanding of the principles of co-design and participatory research, involving end-users and other stakeholders throughout the research process. Examples of previous research delivered in this way and the outcomes achieved would be highly regarded.
- Demonstrated ability, or clear understanding of how to work with the department and a range of other stakeholder groups to plan a high impact and cohesive program of research.

- Demonstrated ability to collaborate with other researchers, across institutions and across disciplines, to achieve the highest possible research impact. This includes data science and the ability to incorporate behavioural insights and social and economic science where appropriate.
- Demonstrated flexibility in delivering a research program including responding to new priorities as they emerge and the ability to rapidly mobilise additional resources if needed.
- Demonstrated ability to provide timely scientific advice and knowledge to help answer questions and solve problems.
- Demonstrated ability to develop Indigenous stakeholder networks and facilitate Indigenous participation in relevant research activities. Examples of previous research partnerships with Indigenous Australians and the outcomes achieved would be highly regarded.
- Demonstrated ability to effectively communicate research findings to end-users, and build knowledge sharing networks.
- Demonstrated ability, or clear understanding of how to work with end-user organisations in the translation and integration of research outputs into their systems and decision support tools.
- Proposed hub governance structure that facilitates the above and provides clear mechanisms for ensuring:
 - national capability including via regional nodes where appropriate
 - new research partners can be brought into the hub where required
 - research quality, including peer review of research outputs
 - adherence to program data guidelines.

Criterion 2: Scientific expertise, networks and leadership capability in the hub scope (45%)

Factors that will be considered include:

- The consortium's capability as a whole to deliver research across the breadth of research required in the hub scope, including data science and modelling, and social, behavioural and economic research capability.
- The Hub Leader's scientific expertise and history of delivering high impact research, particularly applied science.
- The Mission Leader's expertise in the relevant mission and capability to lead mission research within and across the hubs.
- The ability of the Indigenous Facilitator/s to develop trusted relationships and contribute to the Indigenous Facilitation Network through activities such as identifying research needs and leveraging research capability.
- The leadership group's research and stakeholder networks of relevance to the hub scope, and ability to foster a culture that promotes co-design and ongoing partnerships with end-users.
- The leadership group's commitment to supporting early to mid-career researchers.

Criterion 3: Risk management, managerial and financial competency (10%)

Factors that will be considered include:

- Demonstrated capacity of the applicant to administer a large multi-institutional research program, including contract and project management. This includes defined processes for delivering quality outcomes on time and within budget.
- Details of the financial management systems and policies that are in place to financially acquit expenditure of grant monies and deliver required project reporting.

- Identification of key risks (i.e. what could delay or prevent the hub from delivering outcomes in the agreed timeframe) and adequacy of proposed treatments to minimise or manage key risks.

7. How to apply

Before applying, you must read and understand these guidelines, the terms and conditions, sample grant agreement, and questions and answers.

These documents are found on the [GrantConnect](#) and [Community Grants Hub](#) websites. Any changes to grant documentation are published on both sites and addenda⁵ will be published on GrantConnect. By registering on this website, you will be automatically notified of any changes. GrantConnect is the authoritative source for grants information.

Applicants must specify which of the four hubs they are applying to deliver.

Applicants may apply to deliver more than one hub. A separate application form must be submitted for each hub.

Applicants, institutions and organisations may also be consortium members on more than one application. The capacity of the applicant, institution or organisation to deliver or participate in each hub they have applied for will be taken into consideration during the assessment process.

If an applicant submits more than one application for the same hub, the latest accepted application form will progress.

To apply you must:

- complete the online application form on the [GrantConnect](#) or [Community Grants Hub](#) websites
- provide all the information requested
- address all eligibility criteria and assessment criteria
- include all necessary attachments
- submit your application/s to the Community Grants Hub by 11.00PM AEST on 30 June 2020.

We will not provide application forms or accept applications for this grant opportunity by fax or mail.

The application form includes help information. 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 1995](#) and we will investigate any false or misleading information and may exclude your application from further consideration.

If you need more help about the application process, submitting an application online, have any technical difficulties or find an error in your application after submission, but before the closing date and time, you should contact the Community Grants Hub immediately on 1800 020 283 (option 1) or email support@communitygrants.gov.au. The Community Grants Hub does not have to accept any additional information, or requests from you to correct your application after the closing time.

You cannot change your application after the closing date and time.

If we find an error or something missing, we may ask you for clarification or additional information. This will not change the nature of your application. However, we can refuse to accept any additional information from you that would change your application after the closing time.

You should keep a copy of your application and any supporting documents.

⁵ Alterations and addenda include but are not limited to: corrections to currently published documents, changes to close times for applications and questions and answers documents.

You will receive an automated notification acknowledging the receipt of your application.

7.1 Attachments to the application

All of the following supporting documents should be attached to your application. Templates are provided for your use with the grant opportunity documents as specified:

- High level research vision – template provided
- Diagram of proposed hub governance/organisational structure (optional)
- CV's for key personnel – template provided
- Hub level risk assessment and treatment plan – template provided.
- Letters of support from all the partner organisations named in the application (see section 7.2 below)
- trust deed and any subsequent variations, if applying as a Trustee on behalf of a Trust.

The templates have been designed to ensure we receive the information we need to be able to assess your application against the selection criteria. If a template is not used, we will be unable to assess that part of your application against the criterion to which that template relates. This will result in your application receiving a lower rating than it might have if the correct template had been used.

Information included in templates will also directly inform the development and execution of a grant agreement (including schedules) with successful applicants.

You must attach supporting documentation according to the instructions provided within the application form. You should only attach requested documents. We will not consider information in attachments we have not asked for.

Please note: There is a 2mb limit for each attachment.

7.2 Joint (consortia) applications

Applications are being sought from collaborative, multi-disciplinary and multi-institution/organisation consortia or groups.

The consortium must appoint a 'lead organisation'. Only the lead organisation can submit the application form and enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The application must identify all other members of the proposed group.

All partner organisations must have consent of an authorised officer or board.

Applicants must attach to their application form letters of support from all the partner organisations named in the application, including the lead organisation. The letters of support should outline the organisation's proposed input to the hub, and specify their intended cash and in-kind contribution. The letters must be signed by a person authorised to make such commitments on behalf of the organisation.

7.3 Timing of grant opportunity processes

You must submit an application between the published opening and closing dates.

Late applications

We will not accept late applications unless 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.

How to lodge a late application

Applicants seeking to submit a late application will be required to submit a late application request to the Community Grants Hub.

The request should include a detailed explanation of the circumstances that prevented the application being submitted prior to the closing time. Where appropriate, supporting evidence can be provided to verify the claim of exceptional circumstances.

The late application request form and instructions for how to submit it can be found on the [Community Grants Hub](#) website.

Written requests to lodge a late application will only be accepted within three days after the grant opportunity has closed.

The Delegate or their appointed representative⁶ will determine whether a late application will be accepted. The decision of the Delegate will be final and not be subject to a review or appeals process.

Once the outcome is determined, the Community Grants Hub will advise the applicant if their request is accepted or declined.

Expected timing for this grant opportunity

If you are successful, you will be expected to start your grant activity in the second half of 2020.

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Activity	Timeframe
Assessment of applications	4 weeks (weeks 1 to 4)
Approval of outcomes of selection process	4 weeks (weeks 5 to 8)
Negotiations and award of grant agreements	Up to 6 weeks (weeks 9 to 14)
Notification to unsuccessful applicants	2 weeks (weeks 15 to 16)
Earliest start date of grant activity	September 2020
End date of grant activity	30 June 2027

⁶ This may be the Community Hub Delegate or nominated staff member of Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment at the EL2 level or above.

7.4 Questions during the application process

If you have any questions during the application period, contact the Community Grants Hub on 1800 020 283 (option 1) or email support@communitygrants.gov.au.

The Community Grants Hub will respond to emailed questions within five working days. Answers to questions are posted on the [GrantConnect](#) and [Community Grants Hub](#) websites.

The question period will close at 5:00PM AEST on 23 June 2020. Following this time, only questions about using and/or submitting the application form will be answered.

8. The grant selection process

8.1 Assessment of grant applications

We will review your application against the eligibility criteria. Only eligible applications will move to the next stage. Eligible applications will be considered through a targeted competitive grant process.

If eligible, we will then assess your application against the assessment criteria (see section 6) and against other applications. We will consider your application on its merits, based on:

- how well it meets the criteria
- how it compares to other applications.

Selection Advisory Panels will consider whether it provides value with relevant money.⁷

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

- the overall objective/s to be achieved in providing the grant
- the relative value of the grant sought
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives.

Templates have been provided to ensure we receive the information we need to be able to assess your application against the selection criteria. If a provided template is not used, we will be unable to assess that part of your application against the criterion to which that template relates. This will result in your application receiving a lower rating than it might have if the correct template had been used.

8.2 Who will approve grants?

The Minister for the Environment decides which grants to approve based on the recommendations of Selection Advisory Panels and the availability of grant funds for the purposes of the grant program.

Applications may be approved either in full or in part, and approvals may include specific conditions.

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

- the approval of the grant, and
- the grant funding amount to be awarded.

⁷ See glossary for an explanation of 'value with money'.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

8.3 Who will assess and select applications?

Assessment panels from the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment will assess applications. Separate panels will be established to assess applications received for each hub.

Each panel will assess each eligible and compliant application on its merit and compare it to other eligible applications.

Assessors will undertake training to ensure consistent assessment of all applications.

The department may engage independent scientific experts to assist panels with the assessment of applications if required.

Any expert/advisor, who is not a Commonwealth Official, will be required/expected to perform their duties in accordance with the CGRGs.

Assessment panels may seek additional information about you or your application and this may delay completion of the selection process. They may do this from within the Commonwealth, even if the sources are not nominated by you as referees. Panels may also consider information about you or your application that is available through the normal course of business.

Each assessment panel recommends to the Minister for the Environment which application to approve for a grant.

9. Notification of application outcomes

We will write to you about the outcome of your application. If you are successful, you are advised of any specific conditions attached to the grant.

9.1 Feedback on your application

A Feedback Summary will be published on the Community Grants Hub website to provide all organisations with easy access to information about the grant selection process and the main strengths and areas for improving applications.

Individual feedback will be available. The process for requesting individual feedback will be included in the letter advising of the outcome of your application.

10. Successful grant applications

10.1 The grant agreement

You must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth. We will offer successful applicants a Commonwealth Standard Grant Agreement for this grant opportunity.

Each agreement has general/standard grant conditions that cannot be changed. Sample grant agreements are available on the [GrantConnect](#) and [Community Grants Hub](#) websites as part of the grant documentation. We will use a schedule to outline the specific grant requirements.

We must execute a grant agreement with you before we can make any payments. We are not responsible for any of your expenditure until a grant agreement is executed. You must not start any program activities until a grant agreement is executed.

Your grant agreement may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the Minister. These are identified in the agreement.

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

You will have twenty (20) business days from the date of a written offer to sign and return this grant agreement. The grant agreement is not considered to be executed until both you and the Commonwealth have signed the agreement. 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.

You may request changes to the grant agreement. However, we will review any changes to make sure they do not affect the grant as approved by the Minister.

10.2 How we pay the grant

The grant agreement will state the:

- maximum grant amount to be paid
- minimum co-investment (cash and in-kind) required of the hub.

We will make payments according to an agreed schedule set out in the grant agreement. Payments are subject to satisfactory progress on program activities.

10.3 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 issue you with a [Recipient Created Tax Invoice](#).

If a Government Related Entity is deemed successful, GST will not apply.

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 your particular taxation circumstances.

11. Announcement of grants

If successful, your grant will be listed on the GrantConnect website 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by section 5.3 of the [CGRGs](#).

12. How we monitor your grant activity

12.1 Keeping us informed

You should let us know if anything is likely to affect your program activities or organisation.

We need to know of any changes to your organisation or its business activities, particularly if they affect your ability to complete your grant, carry on business and pay debts due because of these changes.

If you become aware of a breach of the terms and conditions under the grant agreement, you must contact us immediately.

You must notify us of:

- events relating to your grant and provide an opportunity for the Minister or their representative to attend
- any approaches by the media for comment on program related topics/issues within one business day of the approach

- the publication of research findings at least 10 business days prior to their release
- any proposed political engagement within 15 business days of the proposed engagement.

12.2 Reporting

Grantees must have systems in place to meet their data collection and reporting obligations outlined in their grant agreement.

You must submit reports in line with the grant agreement. We will provide templates for these reports. We will expect you to report on:

- progress against agreed program activity milestones and outcomes, at a hub level and for each individual project
- performance against key indicators and targets
- your hub co-investments
- expenditure of the grant.

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

We will monitor progress by assessing reports you submit and will seek end-user confirmation of the satisfactory delivery of research activities and use of research outputs in decision-making.

Annual progress reports

Progress reports must:

- include evidence of your progress toward completion of agreed activities and outcomes
- provide an explanation for any delays that have occurred, the action/s you propose to take to address the delay and the expected effects (if any) the delay will have on the activity
- show the total eligible expenditure incurred and co-investments received to date
- be submitted by the report due date (you can submit reports ahead of time if you have completed relevant activities).

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

You must tell us of any reporting delays as soon as you become aware of them.

Final report

When you complete your program activities, you must submit a final report.

Final reports must:

- identify if and how outcomes have been achieved
- include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
- identify the total eligible expenditure incurred and co-investments received
- be submitted by the due date and in the format provided in the final grant agreement.

12.3 Audited financial acquittal report

We may ask you to provide an independently audited financial acquittal report. A financial acquittal report will verify that you spent the grant in accordance with the grant agreement.

12.4 Compliance visits

We may visit you during or at the completion of your grant activity to review your compliance with the grant agreement. We will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

12.5 Record keeping

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

12.6 Evaluation

A program evaluation at the end of NESP 2 will examine how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and reports for this purpose. We may also 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 one year after you finish your grant for more information to assist with the final evaluation.

12.7 Acknowledgement

Successful applicants must agree to acknowledge Government support. Any signage or publications related to the hub must carry an appropriate Australian Government logo. Logos and guidelines for their use will be supplied to successful hubs. The Government reserves the right to publicly disclose information about the hub in any promotional material in a manner agreed and specified in the grant agreement.

13. Probity

The Australian Government 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 by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. When this happens, the revised guidelines are published on the [GrantConnect](#) and [Community Grants Hub](#) websites.

13.1 Enquiries and feedback

Complaints about this grant opportunity

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment [Service Charter](#) applies to complaints about this grant opportunity. All complaints about this grant opportunity, including grant decisions, must be made in writing.

Any questions you have about grant decisions for this grant opportunity should be sent to researchconsultation@environment.gov.au.

Complaints about the selection process

Applicants can contact the complaints service with complaints about the Community Grants Hub's service(s) or the selection process.

Details of what makes an eligible complaint can be provided by asking the Community Grants Hub. Applicants can use the [online complaints form](#) on the [Department of Social Services](#) (DSS) website, or contact the DSS Complaints line.

Phone: 1800 634 035

Email: complaints@dss.gov.au

Mail: Complaints
GPO Box 9820
Canberra ACT 2601

Complaints to the Ombudsman

If you do not agree with the way the Community Grants Hub or the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment has handled your complaint, you may complain to the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#). The Ombudsman will not usually look into a complaint unless the matter has first been raised directly with the Community Grants Hub or the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can be contacted on:

Phone (Toll free): 1300 362 072
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au
Website: www.ombudsman.gov.au

13.2 Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the grant opportunity or program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and the Community Grants Hub staff, any member of a committee 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 expert advisor
- 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
- relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives a grant under the grant program/grant opportunity.

You will be asked to declare, as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If you later think there is an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and the Community Grants Hub in writing immediately.

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

We publish our conflict of interest policy on the [Community Grants Hub](#) website.

13.3 Privacy

We treat your personal information according to the [Privacy Act 1988](#) and the [Australian Privacy Principles](#). This includes letting you know:

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

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone else for the primary purpose for which it was collected, unless an exemption applies.

The Australian Government may also use and give out information about grant applicants and grant recipients under this grant opportunity in any other Australian Government business or function. This includes disclosing grant information on GrantConnect as required for reporting purposes and giving information to the Australian Taxation Office for compliance purposes.

We may share the information you give us with other Commonwealth entities for purposes including government administration, research or service delivery, according to Australian laws.

As part of your application, you declare your ability to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the Australian Privacy Principles and impose the same privacy obligations on officers, employees, agents and subcontractors that you engage to assist with the activity, in respect of personal information you collect, use, store, or disclose in connection with the activity. Accordingly, you must not do anything, which if done by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment would breach an Australian Privacy Principle as defined in the Act.

13.4 Confidential information

Other than information available in the public domain, you agree not to give out to any person, other than us, any confidential information relating to the grant application and/or agreement, without our prior written approval. The obligation will not be breached where you are required by law, Parliament or a stock exchange to disclose the relevant information or where the relevant information is publicly available (other than through breach of a confidentiality or non-disclosure obligation).

We may at any time, require you to arrange for you; or your employees, agents or subcontractors to give a written undertaking relating to nondisclosure of our confidential information in a form we consider acceptable.

We will keep any information in connection with the grant agreement confidential to the extent that it meets all of the three conditions below:

1. you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
2. the information is commercially sensitive
3. revealing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else.

We will not be in breach of any confidentiality agreement if the information is disclosed to:

- Commonwealth employees and contractors to help us manage the program effectively
- employees and contractors of our department so we can research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities
- employees and contractors of other Commonwealth agencies for any purposes, including government administration, research or service delivery
- other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government agencies in program reports and consultations
- the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- the responsible Minister or Parliamentary Secretary
- a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

The grant agreement may also include any specific requirements about special categories of information collected, created or held under the grant agreement.

13.5 Freedom of information

All documents that the Australian Government has, including those about this grant opportunity, are subject to the [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#) (FOI Act).

The purpose of the FOI Act gives people the ability to get information held by the Australian Government and its organisations.

Under the FOI Act, people can ask for documents the Australian Government has. People may not be able to get these documents if these documents need to protect essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons who the information relates to.

All Freedom of Information requests must be referred to the Freedom of Information Coordinator in writing.

By mail: Freedom of Information Team
 Government and Executive Services Branch
 Department of Social Services (DSS)
 GPO Box 9820
 Canberra ACT 2601

By email: foi@dss.gov.au

14. Glossary

Term	Definition
accountable authority	see subsection 12(2) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013
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
assessment criteria	are the specified principles or standards, against which applications will be judged. These criteria are also used to assess the merits of proposals and, in the case of a competitive grant opportunity, to determine application rankings.
commencement date	the expected start date for the grant activity
completion date	the expected date that the grant activity must be completed and the grant spent by
co-sponsoring entity	when two or more entities are responsible for the policy and the appropriation for outcomes associated with it
Commonwealth entity	a department of state, or a parliamentary department, or a listed entity or a body corporate established by a law of the Commonwealth. See subsections 10(1) and (2) of the PGPA Act
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.
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.
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.
Funding Arrangement Manager	is the officer responsible for the ongoing management of the grantee and their compliance with the grant agreement.

Term	Definition
grant	<p>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:</p> <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 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	sets out the relationship between the parties to the agreement, and specifies the details of the grant
GrantConnect	is the Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRGs
grant opportunity	refers to the specific grant round or process where a Commonwealth grant is made available to potential grantees. Grant opportunities may be open or targeted, and will reflect the relevant grant selection process.
grant program	a 'program' carries its natural meaning and is intended to cover a potentially wide range of related activities aimed at achieving government policy outcomes. A grant program is a group of one or more grant opportunities under a single [entity] Portfolio Budget Statement Program.
grantee	the individual/organisation which has been selected to receive a grant
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Program	described within the entity's Portfolio Budget Statement , PBS programs each link to a single outcome and provide transparency for funding decisions. These high-level PBS programs often comprise a number of lower level, more publicly recognised programs, some of which will be grant programs. A PBS program may have more than one grant program associated with it, and each of these may have one or more grant opportunities.

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
selection criteria	comprise eligibility criteria and assessment criteria.
selection process	the method used to select potential grantees. This process may involve comparative assessment of applications or the assessment of applications against the eligibility criteria and/or the assessment criteria.
Selection Advisory Panel	provides strategic oversight, advice and recommendations to the Minister for the Environment on assessed applications from the program specific, service provider composition and service location perspectives.
value with money	<p>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 the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ quality of the project proposal and activities ▪ fit for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives ▪ absence of a grant is likely to prevent the grantee and government's outcomes being achieved ▪ potential grantee's relevant experience and performance history.