



Australian Government

**Community
Grants Hub**
Improving your grant experience



National Environmental Science Program

(NESP) 2

Questions and Answers

Who can apply?

1. Who is eligible to apply?

The hub's host institution must be an Australian research institution. This can be any existing public or private research institution, located anywhere in Australia.

Hubs are welcome to form partnerships with small, regional research organisations in developing proposals.

The hub's partner institutions will contribute to the research activity of the hub. Not all partners will necessarily have to be research institutions.

You can find more information about eligibility in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

2. Can I submit an application for a single research project?

No. NESP 2 funding is only for research hubs made up of multi-institutional consortia. Applications for individual projects will not be accepted.

There will be opportunities to submit individual project proposals for hubs to consider as part of their annual research planning process once they are established. Information on how to do this will be available on the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the department) website.

3. Can I get funding for my honours or PhD research?

No. Applications for individual projects or from individual researchers will not be accepted.

NESP 2 research hubs will have opportunities for early career researchers to be involved in projects. Interested students should contact the hubs directly when they are established.

4. Can regional organisations be part of this Program?

The ability to deliver applied environmental science with impact requires deep regional and local knowledge built on strong local networks and partnerships. The next phase of NESP will



draw on expertise from organisations, big and small, from all around Australia – from northern Australia to the south, from east coast to west.

The focus of the next program is on delivering world-class, practical, applied research that delivers for all levels of Government as well as community groups and the private sector. For this reason, the expertise of small and regional organisations, with local knowledge and networks, is important.

What can I apply for?

5. How much funding is available for this program?

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 and paid in accordance with an agreed schedule set out in the grant agreement over the life of the program.

Indicative funding amounts for each hub can be found in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. A decision on final funding amounts will be made following the applicant assessment process.

6. What is the duration of funding?

The maximum grant period for this funding round is seven years. 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.

All hub activity must cease by 30 June 2027. Hubs may be extended if the Government considers it to be in the program's interests at the time.

7. Can I ask for more funding than the indicative amount in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines?

You should base your application on the indicative funding amount in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. The amount you request should reflect appropriate resourcing required to deliver the capability and capacity described in your application. If the NESP 2 funding you request is higher than the indicative funding amount this may make your application less competitive.

8. The scope for each hub is quite broad. Will applications to deliver part of a hub's scope be considered?

A factor that will be considered in the assessment of applications is the consortia's capability to deliver research across the breadth of research required in the hub's scope. If your proposed consortium does not have the capability to deliver on the entire hub scope as outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines it is highly likely your application will be less competitive than others.



9. Can I propose an alternative scope for the hub I am applying for?

Hub themes and scope reflect Australian Government environmental information needs. Applications for an entirely new theme or scope will not be considered.

You have an opportunity to tell us where you would focus research efforts, within the given scope, in your Research Vision.

10. How is NESP 2 different to the current NESP?

Hub themes under NESP 2 are different to those under the current program to reflect contemporary Australian Government environmental information needs. An increased focus on data capture, monitoring and modelling capabilities reflects the information needed to support biodiversity recovery and resilience in a changing climate.

A key change from the current NESP is the introduction of four cross-cutting 'missions' that all hubs must deliver on. Mission deliverables will support a national and integrated approach to solving some of our biggest environmental challenges.

A new cross-hub Indigenous Facilitation Network, supported by the department, will build on the success of Indigenous research partnerships under the current program and support best practice Indigenous inclusion.

11. Why has the current NESP been consolidated to a four hub structure under NESP 2?

The consolidation of the former six hubs into four 'mega hubs' was designed to promote collaboration and build research depth to respond to complex environmental challenges.

The introduction of four cross-cutting 'missions' will see even stronger cross-hub collaborations bringing together social scientists, economists, climate experts, environmental scientists, and Indigenous Australians with natural resource managers, farmers and business to tackle our most complex challenges across the whole portfolio of research.

The new hub structure will continue to deliver the same priorities as before while also broadening the program's scope to provide greater flexibility to respond to changing needs. The revised structure does not reflect on the performance of previous hubs. It has been designed to maximise collaboration between multiple disciplines and research partners at local, regional and national scales.

How do I apply?

12. What is the closing time and date for applications?

The application form must be submitted by **11.00pm AEST on Friday, 30 June 2020**. It is recommended that you submit your application **well before the closing time and date**.



13. If I am not able to submit my application by the due time and date, can I be granted an extension?

No, extensions will not be given.

If an application is late or the Community Grants Hub is requested to approve a lodgement after the closing date the [late application policy](#) available on the Community Grants Hub website will apply.

14. How can I submit the application form?

The form is an online application form that you must submit electronically. The Community Grants Hub will not provide application forms or accept application forms for this grant opportunity by fax, email or through Australia Post unless otherwise stated in the grant opportunity documents.

15. Do character limits apply to my application?

Yes, the application form includes character limits – up to 2000 characters (approximately 300 words) for each question related to the selection criteria. Please note spaces are included in the character limit.

16. Is there a maximum file size for attachments to my application?

Yes, there is a 2mb limit per attachment. The application form will not accept individual attachments above this size. Please plan to modify your attachment files accordingly if necessary.

17. Who should I provide CVs for?

CVs for the Hub Leader, Mission Leader and Indigenous Facilitator/s are mandatory.

In selecting the key researchers that you provide CVs for, keep in mind CVs will be one method the assessment panel will use to assess your consortia's capability to deliver research across the breadth of research required in the hub's scope.

CVs for key hub management/administration personnel should reflect your proposed governance structure.

Ideally, you should include CVs for all key personnel including knowledge brokering personnel, and data wranglers. This allows the assessment panel to evaluate applicants' capability in each of these areas.

If you have not yet identified an individual for the knowledge brokering or data wrangler positions, an option is to attach the position descriptions or job advertisements for these roles in place of the CV so that the assessment panel can see what skills you are seeking in these roles.



18. What does it mean for my application if the Research Vision budget differs from the breakdown of proposed funding in the application form?

The Research Vision budget should align with the funding amount you request in your application form. The Research Vision will be used in the assessment process as evidence of applicants' ability to plan and deliver a program of research, as per the assessment criteria. Your indicative budget amount should be appropriate to the resourcing required to deliver the Research Vision you have described. We are not expecting a fully costed research proposal with the Vision.

Note that NESP Research Plans and budgets are updated on a calendar year basis to align with the academic year. The Research Vision budget table has been developed on this basis.

What happens next?

19. How will my application be assessed?

Eligible applications will be assessed against the assessment criteria and against other applications. Assessment panels will consider whether your application provides value for money.

In preparing your response you should have consideration for how your application reads as a cohesive whole, not just as individual parts.

While questions have been developed with a specific criterion in mind you should not assume your response will be used by assessors for that criterion only.

CVs and the Research Vision will be considered by assessors against all three criteria.

20. When will I know the outcome of my application?

You will be notified of the outcome of your application at the end of the selection process. For probity reasons, to treat all applicants fairly and equally, it is not possible to give you information about the status of individual applications during the assessment process.

21. How will Research Plans be developed?

During the first few months of their contracts, successful hubs will work closely with the department and other end-users to develop a Research Plan that describes the program of research the hub will deliver. The department will ensure research activities described in each hub's Research Plan meets the department's needs and represents good value for the Government's investment. Research Plans will be reviewed annually and updated with additional projects on an ongoing basis. If an urgent need arises, new projects can be initiated, developed and approved at any time.

Research activities are expected to commence from mid 2021. Details on how the department and hubs will work together in developing Research Plans will be discussed with successful hubs.



22. How responsive to change will hubs need to be?

Research needs and priorities change over time. Hubs must set aside 10% of their annual funding to respond to emerging ministerial priorities and bring on external expertise when required. Requests to use these funds may be at short notice. How well your application demonstrates your hub's ability to facilitate flexibility and responsiveness will be assessed as part of the application assessment process.

23. Where should I go for further information?

Please email your enquiries to support@communitygrants.gov.au

Question and Answers updated 03 April 2020

Question numbers 4 and 11 have been added.

Question number 1 has been updated/modified.

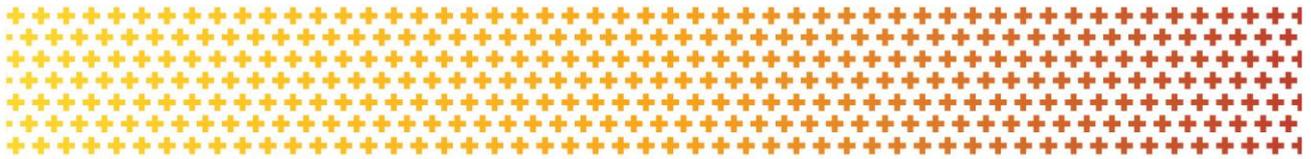
Question and Answers added 29 April 2020

24. The guidelines mention 'regional and urban communities'. Are these to be of equal focus in the SCAW Hub, or do you envisage that this hub's research will be mostly focused on urban communities? On a related point, how are regional communities defined for the purposes of this bid? Would these include communities in regional cities and towns, or just communities in rural/remote areas? Lastly, by sustainable communities, are you referring to human communities only, or does this definition encompass communities of other species (i.e., ecological communities)?

NESP 2 has been designed to ensure each hub has national capability, but will be delivered where appropriate through regional nodes. Applications should consider both regional and urban communities. Further details on the scope of each hub will be provided through additional 'Hub research scope overviews' available before the end of April 2020. You are encouraged to [subscribe to receive alerts](#) when new information is made available.

25. Can you provide more information about the boundaries of this hub's remit with respect to freshwater environments? For example, could research in this hub address questions relating to the impacts of waste and other pollutants, or urban development, on freshwater systems? Or would that type of research belong more within the Resilient Landscapes Hub?

Further details on the scope of each hub will be provided through additional 'Hub research scope overviews' available before the end of April 2020. You are encouraged to [subscribe to receive alerts](#) when new information is made available.



26. If a consortium of university partners that was bidding for a hub were to bring cash contributions from non-university/non-research partners (such as industry, local or state governments, NGOs), would this be viewed favourably or unfavourably?

For each dollar granted by the Australian Government, applications are expected to generate a matching or greater co-investment (cash or in-kind). Section 3.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines provides details regarding the co-investment requirements.

Section 6 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines outlines the criteria against which applications will be assessed. Risk management, managerial and financial competency factors will be considered. Applicants are required to submit letters of support from hub partners including intended cash and in-kind contributions, which will be assessed.

Section 8.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines outlines how applications will be assessed upon its merits, based on:

- How well it meets the assessment criteria;
- How it compares to other applications.

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

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

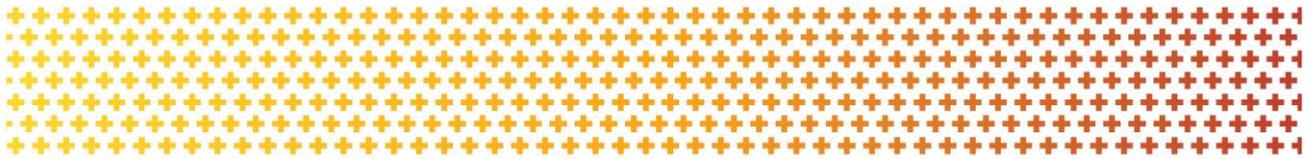
- the overall objective/s to be achieved in providing the grant
- the relative value of the grant sought
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives.

27. Would it be possible to appoint two Indigenous Co-facilitators rather than a single Indigenous Facilitator, to share the role?

Yes. Criterion 2 of Section 6 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines notes that an assessment of applications will include consideration of:

- 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.

Applicants are encouraged to provide a 'Diagram of proposed hub governance/organisational structure' (This is an optional attachment referred to under Section 7.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines) to assist with the assessment of proposed hub governance structure against the assessment criteria.



Questions and Answers added on 4 May 2020

28. How can traditional owners play a leadership role in the NESP?

Indigenous leadership is embedded throughout the program.

Bids that do not have Indigenous representation and true on ground partnerships with Indigenous people in both northern and southern Australia will not be competitive.

Each hub must have at least one senior Indigenous Facilitator who will sit on all senior hub leadership committees to build trusted relationships and ensure collaboration and engagement with Indigenous Australians.

A cross-hub Indigenous Facilitation Network will be established to share learnings and enable Indigenous-led consideration of Indigenous perspectives, cultural approach and research needs across the whole program. Indigenous Facilitators will be part of this Network. There will also be dedicated funding to nurture the next generation of Indigenous researchers to build capability including in remote regions. Indigenous Corporations are eligible to be lead applicants.

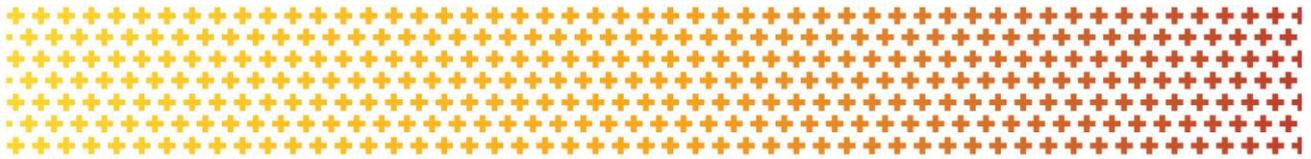
Hubs must seek appropriate advice and engagement from traditional owners and Indigenous communities when designing the hub governance structure. This will ensure the cultural safety of the Indigenous Facilitator and other advisors, and culturally appropriate governance processes that meet the research interests and needs of Indigenous people.

29. Why is there no Northern Australia hub?

Northern Australia remains a strong focus of NESP 2. Both the Resilient Landscapes and the Marine and Coastal Hubs must include locally delivered and led regional centres in both northern and southern Australia to facilitate place-based research and support local outcomes.

Funding within the Resilient Landscapes and the Marine and Coastal Hubs will be split across northern and southern regions of Australia on an equitable basis. The Minister for the Environment will decide on final funding amounts following the application assessment process.

Applied national research is built on strong collaboration across stakeholder groups and must be informed by local and traditional knowledge. Applications that do not include strong regional representation through northern and southern research centres, with significant enduring on ground presence will not be competitive.



30. How can a northern group with capabilities highly relevant to NESP contribute to a successful bid?

Collaboration is at the heart of NESP 2.

Regional groups are encouraged to lead national consortia. Groups with highly relevant regional capabilities are encouraged to build partnerships with other groups so that as a collective whole the consortia meets the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

Applicants are encouraged to partner with regional groups to form consortia that can address the required overarching national objectives via the inclusion of locally delivered and led regional centres in both northern and southern Australia.

Application for the Resilient Landscapes and the Marine and Coastal hubs that do not include both northern and southern regional centres with significant ongoing on ground presence will not be competitive.

31. How will environmental and cultural integration, such as the relationship between land and sea, be ensured in NESP?

NESP 2 is designed to facilitate cross-hub collaborations and consideration of the environment as an integrated whole with a multi-disciplinary approach to all research across hub.

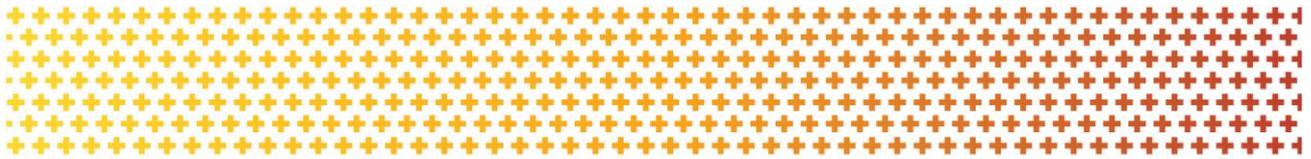
This is facilitated through the introduction of:

- Four cross-cutting ‘missions’ that all hubs must deliver on covering all aspects of the natural environment, with mission leaders driving cross-hub collaboration; and
- A Cross-Hub Senior Governance Committee, including Hub leaders, mission leaders, a representative from the Indigenous Facilitation Network and senior departmental executives to ensure close collaboration including across the land and sea interface.

Question and Answer added on 15 May 2020

32. The Grant Opportunity Guidelines note the requirement for applicants to provide a Hub level risk assessment and treatment plan (pg. 18). Is there a template for this?

The Hub level risk assessment and treatment plan is part of the web-based application form, including questions with click to select answers and boxes for short form responses. These can be viewed either in the application form, or in advance in the Application Preview, which is available on the Community Grants Hub NESP 2 web page. There is no separate template for the Hub level risk assessment and treatment plan.



Question and Answer added on 26 May 2020

33. I would appreciate if you could clarify for me the question on “Previous Funding: Details about Commonwealth Government grant funding within the last 5 years”. More specifically, to whom does this question apply?

This question refers to Commonwealth grant funding received by the Host institution over the last 5 years. If the Host institution is a large institution (e.g. a university), only the Commonwealth grant funding received by the area (e.g. school/faculty/research group) of the institution that is applying for NESP 2 needs to be listed.

Question and Answer added on 02 June 2020

34. Is it reasonable to assume that NESP 2 will cover data storage costs for data publication and delivery?

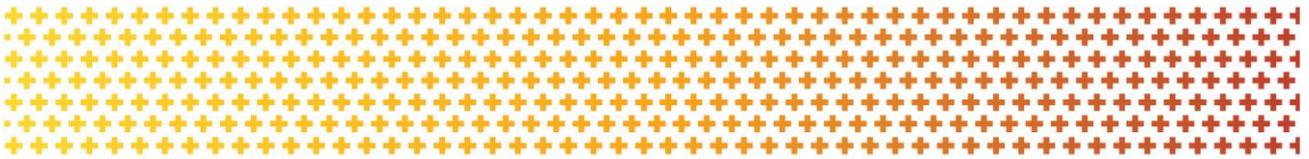
Knowledge capture is essential to the success of NESP 2. It is expected that pathways are established for data to flow into existing national repositories that are publicly accessible - thus ensuring accurate up-to-date knowledge is easily accessible to all stakeholders and reusable to support multiple future end-user requirements, and available for informing policy and decision making. This includes ensuring data collection and generation is designed for maximum usability and in such a way that it is compatible with these databases and repositories.

It is expected that NESP 2 Hubs identify existing national databases and repositories in which the data they collect/generate can be stored (for example, IMOS, TERN, ALA or DAWE databases). Where there is no identifiable national repository, it will be incumbent upon the hub or the host institution to fund the storage and accessibility of this data. In instances where Commonwealth or State Government run programs become engaged in hub research both as funders and users of the hub data, there may be funding within those programs allocated to data storage and maintenance.

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).

Data management activities (including infrastructure) fall under Knowledge capture, so are allocated a maximum portion of 20% of NESP funding. This portion also includes funding the Knowledge capture officers or ‘Data Wranglers’ to 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. NESP funding is not intended to be used for current data management activities already funded through existing national repositories.

Question and Answers added on 17 June 2020

35. High level research vision template - Please confirm whether the second page in the template titled 'Indicative budget information' is additional to, or included in the maximum 10 pages permitted for the High level research vision?

The indicative budget information table (page 2 of the High Level Research Vision template document) is additional to the maximum 10 pages permitted for the High Level Research Vision.

36. Details about Commonwealth Government grant funding within the last 5 years - Have you received Commonwealth Government grant funding within the last 5 years? Given the response is limited to only 10 rows of program grant funding within the last 5 years, could you please provide further clarification as to the rationale behind this question?

Is the selection provided intended to demonstrate that the Host Institution (in particular, the school/faculty/research group) has a track record in being awarded Commonwealth grant funding for large programs which demonstrates the ability to administer large funding grants?

Does it relate specifically to the investigators listed at the Host Institution?

Also, can you please confirm that the response is limited to grant funding and does not need to include contract research?

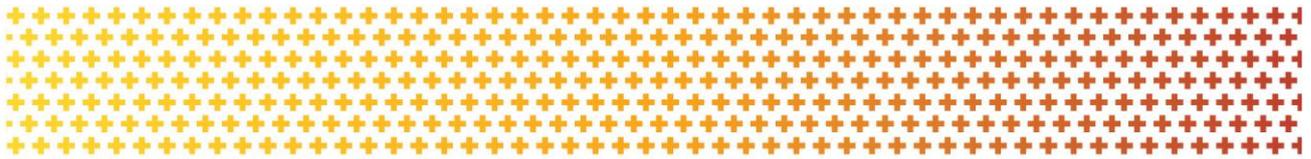
This question refers to Commonwealth grant funding received by the Host institution over the last 5 years. If the Host institution is a large institution (e.g. a university), only the Commonwealth grant funding received by the area (e.g. school/faculty/research group) of the institution that is applying for NESP 2 needs to be listed. This is limited to Commonwealth grant funding and does not need to include contract research.

37. Budget (Knowledge capture) The grant opportunity guidelines indicate that the grant funding is anticipated to 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).

In the High Level Research Vision, the categories differ to the above (Administration, Communication and Research Activity 1, 2 etc). Is there a definition of Research Activity?

In the Indicative budget information table, where does Knowledge Capture fit?



'Research Activity' refers to both the research projects as well as the knowledge brokering and communication projects associated with that research, that the grantee has been approved to undertake. In the Grant Opportunity Guidelines funding breakdown this fits under the category 'Applied science, decision tools and practical management options (70 percent)'. 'Knowledge Capture (10 to 20 percent)' is a separate section that must be included in the indicative budget information table (page 2 of the High Level Research Vision template document). This template has been updated to include the 'Knowledge Capture' category, as per the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

Question and Answer added on 18 June 2020

38. Am I expected to submit a fully-formed 'bid' including final partner allocations and a fully costed research proposal? How finalised should my High Level Research Vision be?

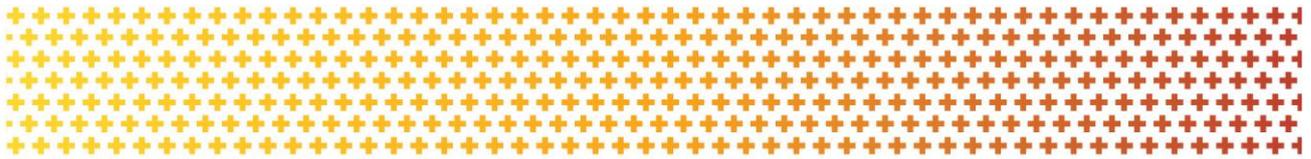
Applicants are advised that their response to the High Level Research Vision will be used in the grant assessment process as evidence of the consortium's ability to plan and deliver a strategic, high impact, collaborative and cohesive program of research. The information they provide in this template is not an indication of specific research they will be delivering should their submission be successful. Budget information is also indicative only; we are not expecting a fully costed research proposal with the Vision.

A decision on final funding amounts will be made following the applicant assessment process. During the first few months of their contracts, successful hubs will work closely with the Department and other end-users to develop a Research Plan that describes the program of research the hub will deliver.

Please do not reach out at this stage to end-users within the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment for further details regarding the Hub Research requirements listed in Research Scope Overview documents, as this would be considered a breach of probity guidelines. The Department will assist in connecting end-users to successful hubs once they have been determined, in order to commence the co-design of future research planning.

Question and Answer updated on 19 June 2020

Question 34 has been updated / modified.



Questions and Answers added on 26 June 2020

39. The High level research vision is to be a maximum of 10 pages. The template provided has a normal 2.54 cm (1 inch) margin and a font size of 10. Is there any flexibility in reducing the margins or the font size to fit more content or should we strictly adhere to the template provided? Of course the document will have some margins and the content has to be legible, but if we were allowed to reduce the margin to 1 cm or the font size to 9, it means we can fit in about additional 400-500 words of content within the same 10 pages. Is that permissible?

We ask that applicants adhere to the High Level Research Vision template, including normal 2.54 cm margins and font size 11.

40. The application form has limited the number of hub partners that can be entered to 20 – does that mean applications cannot include more than 20 hub partners?

There is no limit on the number of partners that can be included in applications for hub consortia. The application form has a technical limit where a maximum of 20 hub partners can be entered per application. For applications that wish to list more than 20 hub partners, the full list of hub partners should be emailed to support@communitygrants.gov.au. The email must include the application details and the application reference number.
