



Australian Government

**Community
Grants Hub**
Improving your grant experience



Smart Farms Small Grants – Round 4

Questions and Answers

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

The application form/s must be submitted by **11:00pm AEDT, 9 October 2020**. It is recommended that you submit your application/s **well before the closing time and date**.

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

Late applications will only be considered where an applicant has experienced exceptional circumstances that are reasonably unforeseeable, beyond the applicant's control and unable to be managed or resolved within the application period.

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.

3. Can an applicant make changes to the application after it has been submitted?

If you find a mistake in your application after it has been submitted, you should contact the Community Grants Hub by phone on 1800 020 283 (option 1) or by email at support@communitygrants.gov.au straight away. The Community Grants Hub may ask you for more information, as long as it does not change the substance of your application. The Community Grants Hub does not have to accept any additional information, nor requests from applicants to correct applications after the closing time.

4. How do I know that my application has been received?

When you submit your application you should receive an acknowledgement email, so that you know that your submission has been received. This may take a few moments, depending on your internet connection. Please wait for the acknowledgement email before closing the application form.

5. Are not for profit organisations eligible to apply?

Yes, not for profit organisations are eligible to apply. Please refer to section 4.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for further information about who is eligible to apply for a grant and to section 4.2 regarding additional eligibility requirements.

6. What attachments do I need to include in my application?

A requirement for the funding round is that a budget attachment, as specified in the guidelines section 7.1, **must** be provided with your application (using the mandatory templates available as part of the grant opportunity documents available on the GrantConnect and the Community Grants Hub websites).

There are instructions in the application form to help you. Only attach the documents you have been asked to include.

7. How much funding is available for this program?

A total of \$43.5 million is available for Smart Farms Small Grants in six rounds over six years (2017–18 to 2022–23). The first round opened for applications in October 2017. The then Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources approved 77 Round 1 applications in July 2018. The second round opened 13 November 2018 and the then Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources approved 110 projects totalling \$9.246 million in March 2019. The third round opened for applications in October 2019 from which the Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management approved 113 projects totalling \$5.03 million (GST exclusive).

8. What is the purpose of Smart Farms Small Grants?

Smart Farms Small Grants support sustainable production, productivity and best practice natural resource management to protect and improve soil, biodiversity and vegetation. Smart Farms Small Grants supports adoption of best practice methods that have been tried and tested.

9. What can Smart Farms Small Grants be used for?

For projects contributing to Outcome 1 or both Outcomes 1 and 2, eligible project activities will undertake, demonstrate or extend sustainable agriculture practices that are already, or are emerging as, best practice for industries or regions relevant to the project but that may not yet be widely adopted. For more information on eligible and ineligible project activities please refer to section 5 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

10. How do the Future Drought Fund - Drought Resilience Grants differ from Smart Farms Small Grants?

- The Future Drought Fund is focussed specifically on building economic, social and environmental resilience to future drought.
- Future Drought Fund Natural Resource Management Grants goes beyond current best practice and encourages innovation, transformation, experimentation and safe fail (not business as usual). The Future Drought Fund supports experimentation which may be placed earlier along the innovation curve than those which are prioritised by Smart Farms Small Grants round 4.

11. Can I apply for funding for the same project from both the Future Drought Fund and from Smart Farms Small Grants?

No. However you may apply for funding from either the Future Drought Fund or the Smart Farms Small Grants round 4 for different projects.

12. Is the funding available to replicate work that has occurred in the area where my farm is located?

The section 5.1 Eligible grant activities of the Smart Farms Small Grants round 4 Guidelines state that projects cannot be duplicative of previous work, nor can they be activities that have already commenced. However, projects of a similar nature may be undertaken if they occur in a different area/region or industry and add value.

13. Are research projects eligible for funding?

No. Smart Farms Small Grants is focused on on-ground delivering of tools and practices to improve the sustainable management of natural resources, not to fund basic or stand alone research. Some demonstration and trial work would likely be eligible, and there are some examples under section 5 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

14. What is a consortium?

A consortium is two or more organisations who are working together to combine their capabilities when developing and delivering a grant activity.

A lead organisation must be an incorporated body which is able to enter into the Grant Agreement. If you submit a joint application, you must nominate a lead organisation for the application. The lead organisation for the project will, if your application is successful, sign the Grant Agreement, receive the funding and take legal responsibility for performing the activities and meeting the outcomes of the Grant Agreement.

15. Would the department prefer a consortium (joint) arrangement?

Individual and consortia/joint applications will be considered equally.

16. I have an idea for a project for the Smart Farms Small Grants Round. Can the department provide me with advice about my planned activities whether they meet the grants objectives?

During the application process, the department cannot provide advice to potential applicants about specific project ideas. This includes making any comments about the merit of a project or any of the planned activities and whether they meet the program objectives. This is to ensure that the process remains fair and impartial, not advantaging one applicant above another.

17. What are the contract conditions for this grant?

A copy of the Terms and Conditions for the Grant Agreement is included as part of the grant opportunity documents available on the GrantConnect and the Community Grants Hub websites.

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

You will be notified of the outcome of your application in writing, 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.

19. Where should I go for further information?

If you have any questions, please call 1800 020 283 (option 1) or Text Telephone / Teletype Terminal / TeleTyperwriter (TTY) 1800 555 677 or email support@communitygrants.gov.au. The Community Grants Hub will respond to emailed questions within five working days.

20. What feedback will be available for this funding round?

A feedback summary will be published on the Community Grants Hub website to provide all applicants with easy to access information about the assessment process and the main strengths and areas for improving their applications.

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

21. What is a project sponsor?

A project sponsor is a legal entity who chooses to apply on behalf of an individual or an organisation that cannot do so themselves because they are not an eligible legal entity. Please check the Grant Opportunity Guidelines section 4.4 for sponsor eligibility. If the application is successful, the sponsor is responsible for the project meeting the Grant Agreement obligations but is not directly involved in the on-ground delivery of the project.

22. What is a project contribution?

A project contribution is the provision of cash or in-kind resources to the project by an applicant or other entities. All contributions are in addition to grant funding.

Cash and/or in-kind contributions must be included in the project budget.

23. What is the difference between a 'cash contribution' and an 'in-kind contribution'?

Collectively, cash and in-kind contributions are known as contributions.

Cash contributions: A cash contribution is the actual money that an individual, group or organisation provides to the project. Cash contributions should be able to be seen as entries into a bank account. This needs to be included as part of the project budget.

In-kind contributions: In-kind contributions are goods, services, equipment loans or labour that others provide to the project. An in-kind contribution may include, for example, contributed 'time' for a project manager, availability of office space, trial land, equipment that would otherwise need to be hired. Applicants should substantiate the value of the in-kind contributions based on reasonable market value of the resources brought to the project. This will need to be included as part of the project budget.

24. What are the tax implications of receiving a grant?

If you receive a grant, you should consider speaking to a tax advisor about the effect of receiving a grant before you enter into a Grant Agreement. You can also visit the [Australian Taxation Office website](#) for more information.

25. When can I start my project?

A grantee must not commence work on the project activities before a Grant Agreement is executed with the department as grant money cannot be used for activities that are considered to be the same as ones already underway and/or activities commenced prior to the execution of the Grant Agreement. Payment will not be backdated for activities that commenced before the execution of the Grant Agreement, and no payments will be made unless a Grant Agreement has been executed. Please refer to section 10 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines: Successful grant applications.

26. How will Smart Farms Small Grants be administered?

Consistent with the whole-of-government change to centralised grants administration, the Community Grants Hub will administer Smart Farms Small Grants Round 3. This includes managing the receipt of applications, advising successful grantees, making all payments, undertaking milestone assessments, and completing project and program acquittal. The Department of Agriculture will conduct the assessment of project proposals – including a Selection Advisory Panel - and will maintain policy responsibility throughout the program.

Details concerning the grant selection process are detailed in section 8 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

27. Will it be possible to submit a YouTube video or similar as part of a Smart Farm Small Grants application?

No. Applicants can only attach the documents that they have been asked to attach, which are detailed in section 7.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

28. Can individual farmers apply for both Smart Farm Small Grants and Smart Farming Partnerships?

Yes. Both grant programs are designed to be open to a wide range of applicants.

Successful projects will be selected according to the selection criteria at section 6 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. Consideration will be given to the quality of the proposal and the capacity of the applicant to deliver it. The government encourages all applicants, for both Smart Farms grant programs, to consider collaboration and partnerships where appropriate, including with individual farm businesses.

29. With respect to fisheries, are Smart Farm Small Grants projects limited to commercial fisheries?

No, project proposals can be submitted by any type of fishers.

Like all projects, successful fisheries projects will be selected according to the selection criteria at section 6 in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. The government encourages all applicants to consider collaboration and partnerships between entities, where appropriate, including with individuals.

30. Do Smart Farm Small Grants project proposals have to identify their location within a particular region or management unit?

No. However, project proposal may identify as occurring within a particular region or management unit if the applicants considers the information relevant to the assessment of the proposal.

31. How important is the integration of environmental and agricultural outcomes?

The National Landcare Program will seek environmental and agricultural outcomes that collectively aim to redress the current decline in the quality of Australia's natural resources and environment. This aligns with the purpose of the Natural Heritage Trust. This is why the National Landcare Program phase two is administered by the environment and agriculture departments who are working closely to ensure that the dual outcomes are delivered.

32. Where do urban and peri-urban environments fit under Smart Farm Small Grants? Will all projects have to be on-farm?

Projects do not have to be on-farm. For full details of eligible entities, projects and natural resources please see section 4 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. This may change for future rounds, but the information will always be clear in the relevant guidelines.

33. Is there scope for novel approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation?

Yes. Innovative approaches that develop and implement new methods are encouraged. These new methods must be supported by robust science and clear evidence. The Australian Government has obligations under international treaties to address climate change. There is scope for activities under Smart Farms Small Grants to help the Australian Government meet these obligations.

34. Will reporting on Smart Farm Small Grants projects be done through existing Monitoring Evaluation, Reporting, and Improvement Tool (MERIT) system?

No. MERIT will not be used for Smart Farms Small Grants projects. The program is administered by the Community Grants Hub who will use their outcome based reporting systems.

35. Under Smart Farm Small Grants, is it better to submit a consortium bid?

Applicants will need to submit the best proposal that they can in order to meet the requirements of the program Grant Opportunity Guidelines and be competitive. It is up to the applicant to determine the best approach to deliver their project. However, forming partnerships with relevant organisations and individuals is encouraged where appropriate.

36. Will education activities be considered under Smart Farm Small Grants?

Yes, provided these activities contribute to the program aims detailed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

37. Will projects that focus only on Outcome 1 be viewed less favourably than those that address both Outcomes 1 & 2?

Applications will be considered by the Selection Advisory Panel in relation to all other applications.

We have given applicants the option of contributing to only one outcome to allow them to focus their project to address their specific need(s). We have not required applicants to

focus on two outcomes, therefore, applicants will not be penalised for doing so. All applications will be assessed and scored against the assessment criteria.

In addressing Criterion 2, applicants should note the assessment process will view more favourably those applications which can clearly demonstrate how much and when project activities will contribute to one or both outcomes, and not just demonstrate that it will contribute to a greater number of outcomes. In addressing Criterion 3, applicants should also note that a project which delivers against two outcomes may provide better value for money than a project that does not, but this is not necessarily the case. A tightly targeted project focussing on one outcome may be more suitable for public funding than another more expensive project focussing on two outcomes.

38. What are the acquittal requirements? Specifically is an independent audit required?

The Grant Agreement requires grantees to maintain records of expenditure of the grant and submit a financial report on completion of the project. We don't anticipate that there will be a requirement for an independent audit for the final financial report. The project final report is to include:

- A financial statement covering receipt, holding, expenditure and commitment of the grant over the term of the project, including a reconciliation against the project budget.
- A report of the receipt of any cash or in-kind contributions (including the grantees own contributions) over the term of the project, or, if other contributions were not received as budgeted, an explanation of actions taken by the grantee in response to this shortfall.
- A financial declaration that includes a certification from the grantee stating that the entirety of the funds (including any interest earned) were spent for the project and in which the grantee is required to declare unspent funds. The declaration must be signed and certified by either the Board, the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Financial Officer or an authorised officer with authority to do so verifying that the funding was spent on the project in accordance with the Grant Agreement. Giving false or misleading information in such a declaration is a serious offence under section 137.1 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth).

39. Does the set-up and implementation of several best practice farming demonstrations meet the criteria for Outcome 1 as being “on farm”?

Yes

40. What were the policy/ policies behind the Smart Farms program being established?

Smart Farms is the principal agricultural component of the National Landcare Program which aims to protect, conserve and provide for the productive use of Australia's water, soil, plants and animals and the ecosystems in which they live and interact, in partnership with industry, communities and other governments. Industry implementation of best practice sustainable agriculture also assists Australia to meet its obligations under international treaties including those about climate change, desertification, biological diversity and fish stocks.

For further information about the National Landcare Program, please refer to section 2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

41. Was there a “white paper” regarding the Smart Farms program?

There was no “white paper” regarding Smart Farms.

42. What are the outcomes that the Smart Farms Small Grants are wanting to achieve? Are they specific of soil, water, vegetation objectives that the department is wanting to achieve through this grant? Both on farm and off farm?

The purpose and outcomes of Smart Farms Small Grants are described at section 2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

43. Which international obligations will these grants assist Australia to meet?

In the Grant Opportunity Guidelines, footnote 7 explains which international obligations the Smart Farms Small Grants will assist Australia to meet. These include under (but not limited to) the: *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)* and *Australia’s Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010-2030*, *Convention on Biological Diversity*, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (including the Paris Agreement)*, *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*; *Ramsar Convention on Wetlands*, *the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, *the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* and *the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement*.

44. What problems are the Department of Agriculture wanting to solve through the successful completion of the grants?

The Australian Government’s policy purpose for Smart Farms Small Grants is to support land manager practice change to deliver more productive and profitable agriculture, fishing, aquaculture and forestry industries; protect Australia’s biodiversity; protect and improve the condition of natural resources (in particular on-farm soils, water and vegetation); and assist Australia meet its international obligations.

Please refer to section 2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for more information about the purpose of the Smart Farms Small Grants.

45. The Department of Agriculture mentions improving the condition of soils, water, vegetation and biodiversity - are their specifics or methods that the department deems best to do this?

The grant money must be used for project activities that mainly contribute to achieving at least one of the outcomes described at section 2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. Please refer to section 5.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for examples of eligible project activities for Smart Farms Small Grants funding.

46. Is there copy of the Smart Farming Inquiry into Agricultural Innovation House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry?

A copy of Smart Farming Inquiry into Agricultural Innovation - House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry can be found on the [Parliament of Australia website](#).

47. What is considered best practice by the department? How do I demonstrate the method I will be doing/ using/ implementing is best practice for maintaining/ improving Australia’s soil, water and vegetation resources and sustainable use of biodiversity?

Best practice is situational, it is up to the applicant to demonstrate that what they propose is best practice through the use of robust scientific evidence.

As set out in section 2.3.1 of the Guidelines, for applications for projects contributing to Outcome 1, eligible project activities will lead to increased adoption of best practice sustainable agriculture. Undertaking activities that directly improve eligible natural resources and improve on-farm adoption of best practice sustainable agriculture. These could be practices that:

- have been recently developed through research
- have become viable through changing conditions
- have been successful in other regions or under different conditions
- will assist with managing changing conditions
- embrace emerging technologies.

48. How is the department expecting a farmer to increase the knowledge, awareness and skills to sustainably manage our soil, water and vegetation of others?

It is up to the applicant to demonstrate how their proposed project will increase farming, forestry and fishing communities’ knowledge, awareness and skills to adopt sustainable natural resource management best practice. In so doing the project will contribute to the program purpose and outcomes set out in section 2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

49. Which general administration costs are able to be funded under the grant?

General administration of the grant can include project management costs, accounting and auditing fees, report drafting and consumables related to the project (e.g. printer toner).

General administration of the grant cannot be used to subsidise the general ongoing administration costs of your organisation and excludes expenses not directly related to delivering the project, such as office rent, phone, receptionist, utilities, insurance and the costs of developing this application.

NOTE: that the last column of the budget table gives a percentage of the total project funding that you are allocating to the project activity, this includes cash and in kind co-contributions. General administration of the project should not exceed 10 per cent without justification.

50. Can funding be used to engage a contractor (labour and equipment) to perform a particular activity that a farmer group is unable to do because they don't own the required equipment, e.g. sowing of a species that requires a particular piece of machinery and expertise to use to establish a trial for increasing productivity and profitability leading to an increase in soil organic carbon and ground cover.

Yes, contractor(s) can be engaged to deliver project activities where the project applicant(s) do not have the technical capability or the capacity to deliver those activities themselves, and where those activities are integral to successful achievement of project outcomes.

51. Section 5.3 'What the Grant Money cannot be used for' indicates that you cannot use the grant for the following: *capital expenditure or construction works valued at more than 10% of the grant money sought. Could it be confirmed if an application proposal which involved primarily river bank remediation, stabilization and restoration works to repair river bank erosion which would involve reconstruction of the original river bank back to its pre-existing condition using earthworks and rock revetment would be considered as 'construction works' and hence render the application ineligible?

The wording used in this question to describe the activities to be carried out as part of the riverbank restoration would seem to clearly refer to construction works type activities, and if the budget for these works exceeds 10% of the grant money sought then the application would be ineligible as outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines in section 5.3.

This clause of no more than 10% of the grant money sought to be spent on construction works is to ensure that projects have a focus on farmer/community capacity building and practice change to achieve the objectives of the Smart Farms Small Grants. The Smart Farms program is not intended to fund projects which have a greater focus on capital expenditure and construction activities.