

National Landcare Program: Smart Farming Partnerships Grant Opportunity Guidelines

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Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, please contact: Phone: 1800 020 283 Email: support@communitygrants.gov.au Questions should be sent no later than 5pm, 13 December 2017
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National Landcare Program: Smart Farming Partnerships Grant Process

The Program is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

This grant opportunity is part of the National Landcare Program announced through the 2017-18 budget. We plan and design the grant program according to the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines*.



The grant opportunity opens

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



You complete and submit a grant application



We assess all grant applications

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



We make grant recommendations

We provide advice to the decision maker on the merits of each application.



Grant decisions are made

The decision maker decides which grant 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 will enter into a grant agreement or letter of agreement with successful applicants. The type of grant agreement is based on the nature of the grant and 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 based on progress.



Evaluation of the grant

We evaluate the specific grant activity as a whole. We base this on information you provide to us and that we collect from various sources.

1.1 Role of the Community Grants Hub

The Smart Farming Partnerships grant opportunity will be administered by the Community Grants Hub on behalf of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources under a Whole-of-Australian Government initiative to streamline grant processes across agencies.

2. About the grant program

2.1 Why Smart Farming Partnerships?

There are pressures on Australia's natural resources (soil, vegetation and biodiversity) that can limit the viability and productivity of Australia's farming, fishery, aquaculture and forestry industries. Agricultural industries are looking to trial and implement new and innovative technologies and tools, which will reduce these pressures while increasing their productivity and profitability.

In response to these needs the Australian Government has established the Smart Farming Partnerships grant program under the Smart Farms initiative, a component of the sustainable agriculture element of the National Landcare Program (NLP).

Grants will be available for experienced and skilled organisations to undertake projects to develop, trial and implement new and innovative tools that support uptake of sustainable agriculture practices across our agricultural, fishing, aquaculture and farm forestry industries. These projects will allow new ideas and technologies to be shared and tested across industries and regions, which will subsequently benefit the nation.

Industry implementation of these practices will assist the Australian Government to meet its obligations under international treaties including conventions on climate change, biological diversity and desertification.

The Smart Farming Partnerships grant opportunity will be administered according to the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017* (CGRGs).

2.2 What is the National Landcare Program?

The National Landcare Program is the Australian Government's natural resources management (NRM) program, the next phase of which was announced in the 2017-18 budget (with \$1.08 billion of funding). The aim of the National Landcare Program is 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 governments, industry and communities. Our natural resources are in threat of, or are being degraded from, land use change. Farmers manage around 61 per cent of our land and so play an important role. Protecting and restoring our soils, water, vegetation and biodiversity underpins the productivity and profitability of agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries and will assist these industries to become more resilient and able to effectively respond to changing climate, weather and market conditions.

The National Landcare Program has five proposed program outcomes:

1. Increase the protection, rehabilitation and restoration of environmental assets

2. Increase in the NRM community delivering biodiversity and natural resources practices
3. Increased awareness and the adoption of land management practices that improve and protect the condition of soil, biodiversity and vegetation
4. Support for the eradication of Red Imported Fire Ants and the establishment of a Centre for Invasive Species Solutions research institute
5. Agricultural systems have a capacity to adapt to significant changes in climate, weather and markets.

These National Landcare Program outcomes will be delivered by a number of initiatives administered by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Department of Environment and Energy. The key initiative for the agriculture portfolio is Smart Farms.

Smart Farms—will run over six years from 2017-18 to 2022-23 and consists of three elements:

- Smart Farming Partnerships - will invest \$60 million into medium to large scale projects to encourage the development, trial and roll-out of new and innovative tools and farm practices
- Smart Farms Small Grants - is a \$50 million small grants program to support the adoption of best practices that improves the management and quality of our natural resources and increases on-farm productivity.
- The Building Landcare Community and Capacity - will invest \$24 million to support the sharing of knowledge and achievements, and promote community leadership.

There is also a joint Department of the Environment and Energy and Department of Agriculture and Water resources initiative called Regional Land Partnerships. This will focus on delivering environmental, economic and social benefits to Australian agriculture through protecting threatened plants and animals; eradication or better management of weeds and pests; improving agricultural land management practices and profitability; and building community resilience at the regional scale. This new regional delivery program will build on the strengths of the regional delivery stream of the previous National Landcare Program: including, retaining national coverage, engaging Indigenous people, delivering both environmental and sustainable agriculture outcomes and planning and strategic approaches.

2.3 About the Smart Farming Partnerships Grant Opportunity

Smart Farming Partnerships is an open competitive grant opportunity that supports four to five-year projects to develop, trial and implement new and innovative tools and farm practices. Two rounds of funding (\$30 million each) are expected: the initial round in 2017-18 followed by a second call for applications in late 2018-19.

Applications are invited for grants, the value of which range from a minimum of \$250 000 to a maximum of \$4 million (GST exclusive). Under this grant round the Australian Government is seeking applications for projects that will be completed by 30 April 2022.

Grants will be available for experienced and skilled organisations to undertake projects to develop, trial and implement new and innovative tools that support uptake of sustainable agriculture practices across our agricultural, fishing, aquaculture and farm forestry industries. These projects

will allow new ideas and technologies to be shared and tested across industries and regions, which will subsequently benefit the nation.

Smart Farming Partnerships is seeking to support projects capable of delivering all aspects needed to develop and maximise the appropriate uptake of these new tools and farm practices. Applicants must form partnerships, also known as consortia as defined in Part 7.5, as part of delivering project outcomes. Each partnership will have a nominated lead proponent. It is expected that organisations with relevant experience/expertise in developing/trialling such tools will partner with groups that possess the networks/resources to ensure appropriate delivery of large scale implementation and extension phases.

Applications can be related to all forms of production, including cropping, pasture grazing livestock, dairy, horticulture, mixed farming, agroforestry (or farm forestry), fishing and aquaculture. Applications can also be delivered at different scales including national, multi-regional and regional levels targeting uptake at the appropriate level.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant opportunity
- the eligibility and assessment criteria
- how grant applications are assessed and selected
- the responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

You must read this document before filling out an application.

2.4 Smart Farming Partnerships Grant purpose and outcomes

The purposes of the Smart Farming Partnerships are to develop, trial and implement new and innovative tools that support industry practice changes that will deliver more productive and profitable agriculture, fishing, aquaculture and farm forestry industries; protect Australia's biodiversity; protect and improve the condition of natural resources (in particular soils and vegetation); and assist Australia to meet its obligations under relevant international treaties (as discussed in Part 5).

The purposes will be achieved through grants that deliver against at least one of the two priority outcomes specified in Parts 2.4.1 and 2.4.2.

2.4.1 Outcome 1 – Protecting the natural resource base

By 2023 Smart Farming Partnerships will have increased the number and area of Australia's farming, fishery, aquaculture and farm forestry entities and land managers that have developed, trialled and/or implemented innovative practices for maintaining or improving the natural resource base and sustainable use of Australia's biodiversity.

Delivering this outcome will:

- assist entities improve their own productivity, profitability and ability to adapt to significant changes in climate, weather and markets, while improving the capacity of Australian farmers to demonstrate the sustainability of their operations and the traceability of their products
- deliver benefits to the broader community such as cleaner air and water, and better protected biodiversity.

2.4.2 Outcome 2 – Improving planning and capacity for natural resource management

By 2023 Smart Farming Partnerships will have increased the percentage of Australia’s farming, fishery, aquaculture and farm forestry entities and land managers with the awareness, knowledge and skills to manage our soil and vegetation resources and biodiversity.

Delivering this outcome will:

- increase the awareness and use of institutional, sectoral, market and supply chain-based initiatives to promote adoption of sustainable farm practices, such as product traceability
- increase the capacity and confidence of regional community leaders, including women, young people and Indigenous Australians involved in agriculture or fisheries production and the protection of natural resources to plan for and manage Australia’s natural resource base
- increase engagement and participation by regional communities and groups, including Landcare, professional farming system groups, industry, other community groups or individuals in natural resource management activities
- increase community awareness and understanding of the importance of managing Australia’s soil, water and vegetation, and the contribution that innovative practices on-farm can make to agricultural sustainability, adaptation to climate change and the quality of the environment enjoyed by the broader community.

2.5 Natural resource management requirements

The Smart Farming Partnerships outcomes relate primarily to protecting the condition of Australia’s natural resource base and biodiversity.

The natural resources being protected or improved through these grants are **on-farm soil**, **vegetation** (where it also contributes to sustainable use outcomes) and **biodiversity** (including both terrestrial and marine).

Healthy soil is a key natural resource used by agriculture and agroforestry. The focus is on reducing the amount of soil (and nutrients) lost through wind and water erosion, slowing rates of soil carbon loss, and better managing soil acidification and nutrient balances. Improving these soil condition factors will also better support soil biology and its biodiversity. Improving on-farm vegetation management will contribute to biodiversity protection, including soil biodiversity, and enhance opportunities for integrated pest management.

Applicants must address at least one of these natural resource conditions.

Projects should also consider how the adoption of technologies and improved management practices align with the government’s current national priorities identified at a regional level. The

government's priorities report and background reports on regional priorities are accessible at the Australian Government's [natural resource management website](#).

2.6 Scope of innovation

Innovation is change that unlocks new value. For the purposes of this grant opportunity, innovation can encompass completely new practices or technology, adapting existing practices or technology, or applying existing practices or technology in a novel way, or in a new region or production situation.

Details include:

Innovative practices and systems

- New on-ground practices or new combinations of practices, an improvement to existing practices, or the introduction of practices that are already being used successfully in other countries, regions or industries. This includes farming and fishing practices and systems, machinery, equipment and digital information systems.
 - Examples: pasture cropping, grazing practices, trialling new species/varieties that are expected to deliver soil improvements, smart technologies, remote stock monitoring and management, variable rate technologies for fertilisers and pesticides.

Innovation in capacity building

- New and existing information, communication systems and products that provide improved natural resources management knowledge, extension or services and/or build networks including community level innovation.
 - Examples: information systems and applications to deliver information to farmers to facilitate informed natural resource management decision making.

Institutional and market based approaches

- Institutional and market based approaches that involve supply chains, monitoring and evaluation and demonstration of progress to support branding and/or marketing to assist with the adoption of sustainable land management practices and/or technology.
 - Examples: on-farm best management practice systems that incorporate sustainable natural resource management practices that can be acknowledged by markets.

Eligible innovations must be underpinned by scientific research and evidence, and have demonstrated 'proof of concept'. The innovation should be considered suitable for adoption by farmers, fishers, land managers and/or groups involved in natural resource management. Applicants should also consider the likely level of adoption of the innovation past the life of the project (i.e. adoption levels in 5 and 10 years).

Applicants should consider the current level of adoption of the practice and/or technology and how the proposal would expand or advance this recognition or adoption. This may vary for different regions, industries and/or groups.

If despite widespread knowledge of an innovation, the innovation currently has a low farmer investment and adoption rate, the improvements expected to the quality of the environment enjoyed by the broader community must be demonstrated if government support is proposed. It

would be expected that proponents would contribute to project costs if there is a prospect for commercialisation of the innovation.

3. Grant amount

\$60 million over six years (2017-18 to 2022-23) is available for Smart Farming Partnerships. This grant opportunity is expected to contribute up to \$30 million to support projects. Funding between \$250 000 to \$4 million (GST exclusive) per grant is available.

4. Grant eligibility criteria

4.1 What is an eligible project?

To be eligible, a project must meet all of the following criteria:

- total funding sought must be between a minimum of \$250 000 and a maximum of \$4 million (GST exclusive) (at Part 3)
- applicants must form partnerships as part of delivering project outcomes (defined at Part 7.5)
- funded project activities must be planned to be completed on or before 30 April 2022 (at Part 2.3)
- project must contribute to delivering against at least one of the priority outcomes (at Part 2.4)
- project must address a natural resource requirement (at Part 2.5)
- project must contribute to innovation (at Part 2.6)
- project activities must be eligible (at Part 5)
- funding sought must not be for ineligible activities (at Part 5.4).

Your application will not be progressed if it does not satisfy all the eligibility criteria.

4.2 Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

The following can apply for funding:

- Individuals and organisations that are legal entities capable of entering into a legally binding and enforceable agreement with the Commonwealth. This includes:
 - Aboriginal Corporation
 - Australian Government
 - Private Company
 - Public Company
 - Incorporated Cooperative
 - Trustee on behalf of Trust
 - Incorporated Association

- Organisation established through a specific piece of Commonwealth or State/Territory legislation
- Individual/Sole Trader
- Local Government
- Partnership
- State/Territory Government

To be eligible for funding, applicants must also:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- be registered for the purposes of GST
- have an account with an Australian financial institution.

Each partnership will have a nominated lead proponent and supporting/additional partners (defined in Part 7.5). The Australian Government is keen to support projects that are delivered by parties working together in partnership as this adds value and will more effectively deliver the outcomes. Applicants are encouraged to consider a wide range of possible partners, such as:

- Industry associations and bodies
- Farming systems groups
- Landcare and community groups
- Aquaculture and commercial fisheries organisations
- Regional natural resource management organisations
- Research and development bodies including Rural Research and Development Corporations
- Universities
- Local, state and territory governments
- Farmers and fishers
- Groups whose membership is predominantly made up of Indigenous Australians or people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- Agribusinesses and other supply chain businesses
- Technology/ Emerging technology groups.

Depending on the type of innovation, applicants may need to consider whether it is appropriate to work with new partners and not just those currently involved in natural resource management delivery.

4.3 Who is not eligible to apply for a grant?

The following entities are ineligible to apply for funding (they can only participate as a collaborating partner):

- Overseas Entity
- Overseas Entity operating in Australia.

5. Eligible grant activities

To be eligible, activities will contribute to one or more of the following:

- soil health
- conserving or restoring Australia's native biodiversity
- climate change adaptation
- greenhouse gas emissions management
- sustainable agriculture and natural resource management that supports any of the above.

This ensures that the applicant will be contributing to Australia's national and international obligations. These include (but are not limited to): Australia's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and *Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010-2030*, the *Convention on Biological Diversity*, the Paris Agreement, the *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*; the *Ramsar Convention on Wetlands*; and the *UN Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*.

Ineligible activities are detailed in Part 5.4

5.1 Examples of eligible grant activities

The grant money can be used for a range of activities that contribute to the two outcomes of this program. Some examples of eligible activities, that may be able to demonstrate how they will deliver benefits to the broader community, are listed below:

Protecting the natural resource base: examples of Outcome 1 activities

- maintaining groundcover levels above regional groundcover targets to reduce soil and nutrient loss, through wind and water erosion and improve air and water quality
- managing soil acidification to improve productivity and avoid future loss of productive land through subsoil acidification
- improving nutrient use efficiency where this will reduce losses into waterways while improving productivity and slow rates of soil acidification or reduce nitrous oxide emissions
- improving soil health through better soil biology, better nutrient matching and management of soil structure where it can be demonstrated that this will lead to increased productivity and reduced nutrient loss
- adopting, extending and implementing industry guidelines and codes of practice for sustainable management practice activities in the fishing/aquaculture industry
- providing information on new technologies to help land and marine resource managers make better decisions about sustainable practices
- building partnerships that leverage public funding to improve on-farm soil and vegetation management while increasing productivity and profitability across a range of primary industries through the use of flexible, innovative and cost-effective approaches
- building systems to address bycatch reduction, water exchange, nutrient, chemical and sediment management in aquaculture farms (including minimising off-site impacts and risks), changing environmental conditions and emerging challenges

- new options for effective, economic and environmentally sound on-farm management of pest and weed populations that threaten native species, habitats or ecosystems.

Improving planning and capacity for natural resource management: examples of Outcome 2 activities

- encouraging effective partnerships between stakeholders, including industry, regional, community, Landcare and Indigenous groups, research and teaching organisations and governments to extend information and training to drive on-farm practice change that improves management of natural resources
- encouraging uptake of natural resources management practices through projects that foster supply chain linkages to ensure the clear flow of market signals and to improve the capacity of Australian farmers to demonstrate the sustainability of their operations and the traceability of their products, including through the use of industry and on-farm sustainability frameworks
- training fishers to improve their knowledge and skills in areas such as ecosystem management and sustainable fishing practices
- encouraging uptake of natural resources management practices through improved information sharing amongst commercial fishers, recreational fishers and the community.

5.2 Activities to include in project applications

All applicants are required to include (through attachments using the provided templates) in the project application details of how they plan to deliver the following activities during the course of the project (these activities are eligible for funding):

- **Preparation of a communications strategy** – Communicating the outcomes from the project can assist with the adoption of the innovation in the future, by applying the innovation in new regions or by different groups and fostering long- term benefits from the project.
- **Preparation of an implementation plan that extends beyond the life of the project** – For projects that will implement new practices or adapt existing farming practices and/or technology, the development of a plan can provide the opportunity to further develop knowledge about, and understanding of the practice(s), techniques and their application by practitioners, scientists and land managers. The level of detail in the implementation plan is expected to be more robust for projects with lower adoption rates.
- **Preparation of a strategy for community capacity building** – The application must consider and include detail on how a strategy will be developed on how capacity would be built in the community to support the adoption of practices and/or technology past the project life.

5.3 Budget

Applications must include a project budget, using the template provided.

Applicants should consider all aspects of their project and ensure their applications include all relevant costs, as items not budgeted for in the original application will not be funded. Total administrative costs should not be more than 10 per cent of the total grant funding.

Project budget items may include, but are not limited to:

- materials, equipment hire and labour
- advertising, website development, printing and publication costs
- training and extension activities
- expert advice
- essential and project specific administration support including phone and internet bills and costs associated with legally required documents
- minor capital or capital items essential to deliver the project. It is expected this would not be the majority of the project budget.

Applicants should also note that additional funds will not be available to meet costs that have increased after the application is submitted.

Successful applicants are required to have the necessary levels of insurance in place for their project.

The budget will also need to detail the value of any co-contributions (see Part 5.6). The budget template will also set out how to do this for in-kind contributions.

It is anticipated that the first payment will be made late in the 2017-18 financial year. Please note that project years are financial years. Applicants should consider this when preparing their project budgets.

5.4 What the grants money cannot be used for?

The following activities will not be funded under the Smart Farming Partnerships:

- activities that are reasonably considered to be the same as ones which have already started, or activities that are so closely related that they could not be reasonably considered to be additional to what has already been undertaken
- activities for which the applicant has already received funding from the Australian Government
- activities with the potential to adversely impact on any matter of national environmental significance as identified under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- purchase of equipment or materials that are reasonably considered to be normally part of a landholder's responsibility for the management of their property
- the introduction of plants, animals or other biological agents known to be, or that could become environmental or agricultural weeds and pests
- subsidies for commercial operations, business start-ups or where the primary activity is for commercial gain
- activities that are the core responsibility or business of applicant
- activities that are regarded as basic research
- activities that are the legislative and regulatory responsibility of the applicant or others, such as managing or controlling certain weeds and pests
- activities designed to raise revenue for the group or individuals

- on-ground activities outside of Australia
- retrospective activities that have been undertaken prior to the signing of a Smart Farming Partnerships grant agreement.

5.5 Co-contributions

Activities on private land must include contributions (cash and/or in-kind, noting that direct cash contributions will be given a higher consideration as part of the assessment considerations, see Part 6.1) to the cost of the activities that is proportionate to levels of private benefits to be obtained from the activities. For example, funding for on-ground works (such as fencing or the installation of watering points) on private land may only be provided if there is a substantial public and environment benefit, and a contribution from the landholder/s that will compensate for significant private benefit obtained.

The following activities, financial sources and/or costs **will not** be considered valid co-contributions for the purposes of a Project:

- funding from other projects under the National Landcare Program or any other previous or current Australian Government programs, such as funding obtained through NLP regional funding to regional natural resource management organisation
- funds from any other grant programs not secured at the time of applying.

5.6 Eligible expenditure for grantee contributions

This grant opportunity requires the applicant to contribute to the grant activity as stated in Part 5.5. The applicant can only spend agreed funds (either the applicant's contribution or the government portion) on eligible expenditure the applicant has incurred on an agreed project, as defined in the grant agreement. The applicant must incur the project expenditure between the project start and end-date for it to be eligible.

6. The assessment criteria

Subject to the assessment considerations in Part 6.1, applications will be evaluated against the following assessment criteria. All assessment criteria will be used to consider the overall value for money of the application. All criteria will be weighted equally. The assessment process reserves the right to seek external advice and use the information provided in applications for this purpose.

Applicants must address all the following criteria:

1. **Demonstrate how the development and implementation of your project will contribute to the Smart Farming Partnership outcomes.**

- Describe how the project will deliver clear and measurable achievements against the Smart Farming Partnerships outcomes (Part 2.4)
- Describe how the project will contribute to the natural resource management requirements (Part 2.5), specifically how this will deliver benefits to the broader community

- Describe the type of activities to be funded to deliver the outcomes (Part 2.4)
 - Where relevant and appropriate, explain:
 - i. The appropriateness of the scale and degree of intervention proposed
 - ii. How the project builds on the collective knowledge of what works best
 - iii. Any related National Landcare Program investments.
- 2. Demonstrate how your project contributes to innovation in delivering against the Smart Farming Partnership outcomes**
- Explain how the project will contribute to innovation (Part 2.6) including:
 - i. The underpinning scientific research and evidence and demonstrated ‘proof of concept’
 - ii. Suitability for adoption by farmers, fishers, land managers and/or groups involved in natural resource management
 - iii. The use of the most effective delivery mechanisms
 - iv. Technical feasibility.
- 3. Demonstrate your capability to successfully deliver the grant project in the chosen location(s), on time and within budget**
- Outline your history in administering grants funding or your collaboration with appropriate partners to deliver the project
 - Outline your expertise, or access to relevant expertise required to achieve the project outcomes
 - Outline the governance arrangements of the project, including your capacity for reporting and project management
 - Outline the way in which relevant partnerships will operate both administratively and practically and the benefit they will provide to the project
 - Outline any risks associated with the grant activities, and explain how they will be managed and mitigated.
- 4. Demonstrate how you will establish partnerships and engage with the community to achieve project outcomes**
- Describe how you will incorporate effective partnerships to achieve the full, end-to-end delivery of your project, noting that the mandatory partnerships must have a nominated lead proponent (defined in Part 7.5).
 - Describe your engagement with relevant stakeholders and partners including, where relevant, details of participation of:
 - i. Indigenous groups/communities in planning and implementation
 - ii. How the project supports and engages culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

6.1 Assessment considerations

The assessment panel will ensure that all proposed activities are eligible under Part 5. Proposed activities that are not eligible activities will not be funded under the program.

The Smart Farming Partnerships grants also aim to support industry and community groups across the country, and target different types of innovation. To achieve a reasonable distribution and balance of different types of projects, the assessment panel will consider the following:

- the range of primary industries including agriculture (such as broadacre cropping, horticulture and livestock production, fishing, aquaculture and agroforestry (or farm forestry)) relative to the size of the industries and the extent of natural resource use
- distribution across Australia and agro-ecological zones relative to the location of the industries
- the different types of innovation (practices and systems, innovation in capacity building and institutional and market based approaches)
- different stages of innovation (i.e. level of adoption range)
- fostering and building good partnerships and networks
- whether the applicant has considered the risk of activities not being able to proceed as planned and a risk mitigation strategy
- whether the applicant has considered the risk of failure of the innovation and when this would be reported to the government
- the public or broader community benefit derived from the application value for money for outcomes achieved, including:
 - that budget items are eligible, reasonable and relevant to the project activities, recognising the project and a sense of its scale
 - the total project budget is comparable with the outcomes of the overall project, taking into account the co-contributions (cash and/or in-kind, with direct cash contributions given a higher consideration) and expected public benefit to be derived from the project (see Part 6.1.1 for principles of public/private benefits and cost sharing).

6.1.1 Principles of public/private benefits and cost sharing

Government funding will be guided by a set of principles for public and private benefit. The interaction between the natural resource issue, the environmental and productive outcome(s), and the activities funded, the management practices and technologies being promoted, and the subsequent public and private benefits will vary between projects. Assessments will be made on a case-by-case basis taking into account:

- the public benefit, the current market reward and whether the outcomes would not occur without government intervention
- government funding being commensurate with the expected public or broader community benefit derived
- the level of private investment (cash and/or in kind) being appropriate for the level of private benefit received

- grant payments should only be considered where the public benefit is high
- extension activities including education, communication, demonstration should be used where there is a market failure and both public and private net benefits are expected
- alignment of information content, transfer and extension with similar activities by industry and other jurisdictions to make the most efficient use of resources.

7. The grant application process

7.1 Overview of application process

You must read the grant guidelines, the application form, and the terms and conditions before you submit an application.

You are responsible for ensuring that your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information will exclude your application from further consideration.

You must address all of the eligibility and assessment criteria to be considered for a grant. Please complete each section of the application form and make sure you provide the information we have requested.

Please keep a copy of your application and any supporting papers.

7.2 Application process timing

Submit your application by the closing time and date below. Late applications will not be accepted. If an application is late or the Community Grants Hub is requested to approve a lodgement after the closing date, the Community Grants Hub may determine that there were exceptional circumstances beyond the applicant's control that meant they could not meet the deadline.

Examples of exceptional circumstances could include, but may not be limited to:

- Community Grants Hub infrastructure failures,
- natural disasters,
- power outages affecting the ability of the applicant to submit their application by the deadline, and
- death or disability of key personnel.

Information on the Community Grants Hub [late application policy](#) is available on the [Community Grants Hub website](#).

The expected commencement date for the granting activities is June 2018 and the expected completion date is 30 April 2023.

The key dates for the program are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Activity	Timeframe
Application period	Open: 19 October 2017 Close: 2pm 21 December 2017
Assessment of applications	Mid-January 2018 – mid-February 2018
Approval of outcomes of selection process	March 2018
Negotiations and award of grant agreements	April – May 2018
Notification to unsuccessful applicants	May 2018
Activity commences	June 2018
End date	30 April 2023

7.3 Completing the grant application

You must submit your grant application using the application form, which is available on the [GrantConnect](#) and [Community Grants Hub](#) websites. The application form includes help information.

This is an online application form that you must submit electronically. If you have any technical difficulties, please contact 1800 020 283 or email support@communitygrants.gov.au.

The Community Grants Hub will not provide application forms or accept applications for this grant opportunity by fax or mail.

You must make sure that your application is complete and accurate and submitted in accordance with these Guidelines.

You cannot change your 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 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.

Applicants are encouraged to read the application carefully before submitting to ensure that all relevant sections have been completed and the information provided is true and correct. Projects will be selected through an open competitive grants process and assessors need all information in the application form to be completed to ensure applications can be compared equally.

7.4 Attachment for all applications

The following documents must be included with your application:

- A project budget (refer to part 5.3)

- A plan to deliver: (refer to part 5.2)
 - a communications strategy
 - an implementation plan that extends beyond the life of the project
 - a strategy for community capacity building.

Complete the provided templates and attach to the application form. There will be instructions in the application form to help you. Only attach the documents you have been asked to include.

7.5 Applications from consortia

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

All Smart Farming Partnerships grant must involve consortia (commonly referred to as partnerships). When you submit a grant application on behalf of a consortium, a member organisation or a newly created organisation must be appointed as the 'lead organisation'. Only the lead organisation will enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth and will be responsible for the grant. The lead organisation must complete the application form and identify all other members of the proposed consortium in the application.

7.6 Submitting multiple applications

Some organisations may apply for grants for more than one project. In this case, applicants must complete a new application form for each project. Applicants should keep a copy of each submitted application.

7.7 Questions during the application process

If you have any questions during the application period, please call 1800 020 283 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.

Answers to questions will be posted on the [GrantConnect](#) and [Community Grants Hub](#) websites.

The question period will close at 5:00pm AEDT on 13 December 2017. Following this time, only questions relating to using and/or submitting the application form will be answered.

8. Assessment of grant applications

8.1 Who will assess applications?

An assessment team comprised of Community Grants Hub staff will assess all eligible and compliant applications based on their merits and score them. The assessment team will undertake training to ensure consistent assessment of all applications.

If the selection process identifies unintentional errors in your application, you may be contacted to correct or explain the information.

An Expert Panel will provide strategic oversight, advice and recommendations on assessed applications to the grant decision maker. The Expert Panel will include a range of experts in agriculture and natural resource management.

The Expert Panel will make recommendations having regards to:

- overall objective for Smart Farming Partnerships
- conformance with eligibility criteria
- distribution of providers across all locations
- how the project will be delivered
- existing and/or potential market failure
- value for money; and
- (if known) minimise possible duplication with other Commonwealth/State/Territory government programs/service delivery.

The Expert Panel may seek information about you or your application. They may do this from within the Commonwealth, even if the sources are not nominated by you as referees. The Expert Panel may also consider information about you or your application that is available through the normal course of business.

8.2 Who will approve grants?

Projects recommended for funding by the Expert Panel will then be submitted to the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources for recommendation to the appropriate Minister in the agriculture and water resources portfolio. This Minister will consider applications and make the final decisions on which applications are successful to be offered funding.

While delivery of funding will be primarily on a competitive basis, if after running each application process, emerging issues have been identified and/or there are priorities that have not been met, the Minister may consider other projects to address these emerging issues or other forms of financial arrangements with partners and/or applicants, to otherwise further the objectives of the program. In these cases, the assessment criteria outlined in these guidelines will remain applicable.

All decisions made by the Minister about successful project applications are final. There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant. The Minister must not approve funding if they reasonably consider the program funding available across financial years will not accommodate the funding offer, and/or the application does not represent value for money.

9. Notification of application outcomes

You will be advised of the outcomes of your application in writing, following a decision by the Community Grants Hub. If you are successful, you will also be advised about any specific conditions attached to the grant.

9.1 Feedback on your application

Feedback summaries for open funding rounds will be published on the Community Grants Hub website to provide all organisations with easy to access information about the assessment process and the main strengths and areas for improving their 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

If you are successful, you must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth represented by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources will use the *Commonwealth Simple Grant Agreement*. Simple terms and conditions for the grant agreement will apply and cannot be changed. A schedule may be used to outline the specific grant requirements. Any additional conditions attached to the grant will be identified in the grant offer or during the grant agreement negotiations.

10.2 How the grant will be paid

The grant agreement will specify the total grant amount to be paid for each successful application. Any extra eligible expenditure will have to be borne by the project owner.

Initial payment will be made to grantees upon the execution of a grant agreement. Subsequent payments will be made upon the acceptance of each half-yearly progress report by the Commonwealth. Details of payment will be provided in a Schedule that forms part of the grant agreement.

11. Announcement of grants

If successful, your grant will be listed on the [GrantConnect](#) website 21 days after the date of effect¹ as required by Section 5.3 of the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines*.

Information to be published includes:

¹ See glossary

- name of the person or entity receiving the grant
- project title and purpose
- amount of funding received
- term of the grant
- funding location.

By submitting an application for grant funding, the applicant consents to the above information being published by the department if they are successful under the Smart Farming Partnerships.

12. Delivery of grant activities

12.1 Your responsibilities

The government places a high priority on monitoring and reporting for all Smart Farming Partnerships projects and as a recipient of public monies, one of the most important obligations of successful applicants is to report on the progress and completion of the project undertaken with the funds received. Reporting requirements for the innovation grants are:

- tracking of expenditure for acquittal
- recording of project achievements as outlined in the application
- provision of data collected during the project for incorporation into relevant national databases
- progress reports on the project at six monthly intervals that outline the activities that have been completed to date and financial management. A progress report template will be provided
- a final report suitable for publication on the project's outcomes and financial expenditure including case studies
- successful applicants will be required to produce a monitoring, evaluation, risk and reporting plan.

Payments will be made based on meeting milestones, key performance indicators and providing required reports that are accepted by the government. Where a successful applicant has identified that a level of private funding and/or contribution will be made, this will form part of the reporting requirements.

12.2 Community Grants Hub's responsibilities

The Community Grants Hub will:

- meet the terms and conditions set out in the grant agreement
- provide timely administration of the grant
- evaluate the grantee's performance.

The Community Grants Hub will monitor the progress of your project by assessing reports you submit and may conduct site visits to confirm details of your reports if necessary. Occasionally the

Hub may need to re-examine claims, seek further information or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

12.3 Grant payments and GST

Payments will be made as set out in the grant agreement. Payments will be GST inclusive. Before any payments are made, you must provide:

- a tax invoice for the amount of the payment (the Australian Government's default invoice process is Recipient Created Tax Invoices)
- evidence that you have achieved the associated milestone or contractual obligations
- any other conditions of payment (e.g. evidence of purchase of equipment, satisfactory progress report, approvals, and any other documentation).

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.

12.4 Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

All funded projects will be subject to financial and performance reporting requirements and meeting specified milestones. Grantees will need to keep records of project activities and monitor project progress, expenditure and the project's results. This information will help grantees to report on and evaluate the success of their project.

Specifically, successful applicants will be required to include a formal Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) plan and program logic, and submission of six-monthly reports demonstrating progress against the funding agreement and the project's commitment to monitoring and evaluation. The budget for these activities is generally no more than 10 per cent of the total annual budget cost. MERI activities will contribute to the program evaluation (Section 12.4) and determine the extent to which outcomes are achieved.

Some projects may require a higher level of monitoring and evaluation. Activities with currently very low levels of adoption are likely to require more robust monitoring and evaluation.

Adaptation processes should be included in the project design to mitigate risk, including considerations for when a project may need to be stopped.

Where existing monitoring approaches are available or have been developed, it is recommended that the project proponent use these methods. This could include engaging experts in the project to assist with monitoring and reporting. For example, when a farm practice aimed at improving ground cover levels is being trialled, the nationally agreed and adopted methods for monitoring ground cover should be used and data collected by regional or state agency staff trained in these techniques.

Officers from the Community Grants Hub may contact a grantee to check how the project is progressing, or to arrange a visit to the project site(s).

Grantees will be required to submit a final report suitable for publication and a financial statement for the project on project completion.

12.5 Evaluation

The Smart Farming Partnerships program will be evaluated to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. Your grant agreement requires you to provide information to help with this evaluation.

12.6 Acknowledgement

The National Landcare Program logo is designed to be used on all materials related to grants under the Program. Whenever the logo is used the publication must also acknowledge the Commonwealth as follows:

National Landcare Program, Smart Farming Partnerships – an Australian Government initiative’.

[OR]

All publications related to grants under the Program must acknowledge the Commonwealth as follows:

‘This activity received grant funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.’

13. Probity

The Australian Government will make sure that the program process is fair, according to the published guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct and is consistent with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines.

Note: These guidelines may be changed from time-to-time by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. When this happens the revised guidelines will be published on the [GrantConnect](#) website.

13.1 Complaints process

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

Details of what constitutes an eligible complaint can be provided upon request by the Community Grants Hub. Applicants can lodge complaints by using the [online complaints form](#) or by phone or mail:

Phone: 1800 634 035

Mail: Complaints

GPO Box 9
Canberra ACT 2601

Complaints to the Ombudsman

If an applicant is at any time dissatisfied with the Department of Social Services or the Community Grant Hub's handling of a complaint, they can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman on:

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

Mail: Commonwealth Ombudsman
GPO Box 442
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Further information can found on the Commonwealth Ombudsman's website.

13.2 Conflict of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the grant. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Community Grants Hub staff, any member of a committee or adviser 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
- has a relationship with an organisation, or in an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently or
- has a relationship with, or interest in an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives funding under the Program.

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 identify that there is an actual, apparent, or potential conflict of interest or that one might arise in relation to a grant application, you must inform the [Community Grants Hub](#) in writing immediately. Committee members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

The chair of the Assessment Committee will be made aware of any conflicts of interest and will handle them as set out in Australian Government policies and procedures. 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. We publish our conflict of interest policy available on the [Community Grants Hub](#) website.

13.3 Privacy: confidentiality and protection of personal information

We treat your personal information according to the 13 Australian Privacy Principles and the *Privacy Act 1988*. This includes letting you know:

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

You are required, as part of your application, to declare your ability to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988*, including the Australian Privacy Principles and impose the same privacy obligations on any subcontractors you engage to assist with the activity. You must ask for the Australian Government's consent in writing before disclosing confidential information.

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone else if you are given reasonable notice of the disclosure; where disclosure is authorised or required by law or is reasonably necessary for the enforcement of the criminal law; if it will prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to a person's life or health; or if you have consented to the disclosure.

The Australian Government may also use and disclose information about grant applicants and grant recipients under the Program in any other Australian Government business or function. This includes giving information to the Australian Taxation Office for compliance purposes.

We may reveal confidential information to:

- the committee and other 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.

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

- *Public Service Act 1999*
- *Public Service Regulations 1999*
- *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act*
- *Privacy Act 1988*
- *Crimes Act 1914*

- *Criminal Code Act 1995*

We'll treat the information you give us as sensitive and therefore confidential if it meets all of the four 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
4. you provide the information with an understanding that it will stay confidential.

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

13.4 Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about the Program, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act)*.

The purpose of the FOI Act is to give members of the public rights of access to information held by the Australian Government and its entities. Under the FOI Act, members of the public can seek access to documents held by the Australian Government. This right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary to protect essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

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

By mail:

Freedom of Information Coordinator
The Department of Social Services
Public Law Branch
GPO Box 9820
Canberra ACT 2601

By email: foi@DSS.gov.au

14. Glossary

Term	Definition
assessment criteria	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 granting activity, to determine applicant 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.
date of effect	This will depend on the particular grant. It can be the date in 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.
decision maker	The person who makes a decision to award a grant.
double dipping	Double dipping occurs where a grant recipient is able to obtain a grant for the same project or activity from more than one source.
eligibility criteria	The principles, standards or rules that a grant applicant must meet to qualify for consideration of a grant. Eligibility criteria may apply in addition to assessment criteria.
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 <i>Public Governance and Performance Act 2013</i> .
Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines (CGRGs)	The CGRGs establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and articulate the expectations for all non-corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration and are found at the Department of Finance website .
cost shifting	Involves 'substitution of effort' by the Commonwealth for activities of another organisation or level of government. For example, cost shifting occurs where the Commonwealth provides a grant for an activity that would usually be paid for by

Term	Definition
	a state, territory, or local government, such as municipal services.
grant	<p>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 money or other CRF money, is to be paid to a grantee other than the Commonwealth; and 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	Is the project /tasks /services that the Grantee is required to undertake with the grant money. It is described in the Grant Agreement.
grant agreement	Grant agreement means the contract template used by Australian Government entities to set out the mutual obligations relating to the provision of the grant. The Australian Government is standardising and streamlining grant agreements between the Commonwealth and grant recipients to allow grant recipients to engage more easily and efficiently with the Commonwealth.
grant opportunity	A notice published on GrantConnect advertising the availability of Commonwealth grants.
grant program	May be advertised within the 'Forecast Opportunity' (FO) section of GrantConnect to provide a consolidated view of associated grant opportunities and provide strategic context for specific grant opportunities
grantee	An individual/organisation that has been awarded a grant.
PBS Program	Described within the entity's Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS), 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

Term	Definition
publicly funded research organisation	All higher education providers of the <i>Higher Education Support Act 2003</i> as well as Federal, State and Territory Government departments or agencies which undertake publicly funded research. This includes, but is not limited to, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Defence Science and Technology Organisation, Australian Institute of Marine Science and Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation.
selection criteria	Comprise eligibility criteria and assessment criteria. (as defined in the CGRGs)
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.