

Community Information sessions FAQs

Smart Farms

This is a summary of the questions asked at the Community Information Sessions 6 October to 16 October 2017.

General

Q: How will Smart Farms be administered?

A: Consistent with the Whole-of-Government change to centralised grants administration, the Department of Social Services will administer the Smart Farms program. This includes managing the receipt of applications, conducting the assessment process, advising successful grantees, making all payments, undertaking milestone assessments, and completing project and program acquittal. The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources will be involved in the assessment of project proposals and will maintain policy responsibility throughout the program.

Q: If Smart Farms is to be managed by Department of Social Services will there be an assessment panel?

A: Yes. Details concerning the assessment process are still being finalised.

Q: Will it be possible to submit a YouTube video or similar as part of a Smart farms application?

A: No. Applicants can only attach the documents that they have been asked to attach, which are detailed in Section 7.4 of the program guidelines.

Q: What is the timing for Smart Farms grant rounds over the coming years?

A: The department anticipates that for the \$50 million Smart Farms Small Grants there will be a funding round each year for six years, with approximately \$5 million available 2017-18. For the \$60 million Smart Farming Partnerships, which funds larger projects, it is anticipated that there will be two grant rounds, with \$30 million available this year 2017-18. More information will be posted on the Grants Connect website as it becomes available.

Q: Will the call for tender for Regional Land Partnerships and application period for Smart Farms overlap?

A: We expect that the Regional Land Partnership tender will be open either early December 2017 or mid-January 2018. Smart Farms Small Grants and Smart Farming Partnerships are currently open, with applications closing on 7 December 2017 and 21 December 2017 respectively.

Q: Can individual farmers apply for both Smart Farm Small Grants and Smart Farming Partnerships?

A: 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 in the 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, including with individual farm businesses.

Q: With respect to fisheries, are Smart Farms projects limited to commercial fisheries?

A: 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 guidelines which includes the quality of the proposal and the capacity of the applicant to deliver it. The government encourages all applicants to consider collaboration and partnerships between entities, including with individuals.

Q: Are all three components of Smart Farms open to regional Natural Resource Management organisations?

A: No. Smart Farming Partnerships and tier 2 of Smart Farms Small Grants are open to regional Natural Resource Management organisations; they are not eligible for Tier 1 Smart Farms Small Grants. See also Section 4.2 of the guidelines.

Q: Do Smart Farms project proposals have to identify within a particular region or Management Unit?

A: 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.

Q: How important is the integration of environmental and agricultural outcomes?

A: 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 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 insure that the dual outcomes are delivered.

Q: Where do urban and peri-urban environments fit under Smart Farms? Will all projects have to be on-farm?

A: Projects do not have to be on-farm. For examples of eligible activities and a list of ineligible activities for the currently open grants round please see Section 4.1 of the guidelines. This may change for future rounds, but the information will always be clear in the relevant guidelines.

Q: Is there scope for novel approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation?

A: 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 to help the Australian Government meet these obligations.

Q: Will reporting on Smart Farms projects be done through existing Monitoring Evaluation, Reporting, and Improvement Tool (MERIT) system?

A: No. MERIT will not be used for Smart Farms projects. As the programs will be administered by the Department of Social Services they will use their outcome based reporting systems.

Q: Under Smart Farms, is it better to submit a consortium bid?

A: Applicants will need to submit the best proposal that they can in order to meet the requirements of the program 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.

Smart Farming Partnerships

Q: What is the working definition of partnerships under Smart Farming Partnerships?

A: In this context a partnership means more than one organisation or individual working together under a mutually agreed arrangement. This generally involves pooling complementary skills and could involve co-investment or other forms of commitment.

We are encouraging organisations and individuals to come together in this manner, including those who have not been previously involved in the National Landcare Program.

Encouraging partnerships between complementary organisations and individuals is an approach that has been successful in the recent Innovation Grants and Carbon Farming Futures programs.

Details about partnerships are outlined in the program guidelines, including the need for a lead organisation in any proposed partnership.

Q: Will cross-state industry-driven projects be eligible under Smart Farms Partnerships?

A: There are no restrictions on location or range of projects under Smart Farming Partnerships (other than all on-ground activities being in Australia). The Australian

Government is encouraging a wide range of organisations to propose projects under Smart Farm Partnerships and are keen to see industry engagement.

Smart Farms Small Grants

Q: Will education activities be considered under Smart Farm Small Grants?

A: Yes, provided these activities contribute to the program aims detailed in the guidelines.

Q: How will small groups, such as Landcare groups, fit into the two tiers under Smart Farms Small Grants?

A: Landcare groups are eligible and encouraged to be the lead applicant or partner for both Tier 1 and 2 projects. Partnerships are not necessarily required. The capacity of the group to deliver the project will determine whether applying for Tier 1 or 2 is more appropriate. Tier 1 projects, are smaller (from \$5000 - \$50,000), and are targeted at smaller organisations with the capacity to deliver projects of this size, including smaller Landcare groups. Tier 2 are larger projects (from \$50,001 - \$100,000); that are suitable for larger organisations and partnerships with the capacity to deliver them.

Building Landcare Community and Capacity

Q: What is the application process under the Building Landcare Community and Capacity component of Smart Farms?

A: Building Landcare Community and Capacity is not a competitive grants program. The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources will work directly with the Landcare community and farmer organisations to identify suitable activities. Activities are likely to include, but are not limited to:

- awards and recognition for excellence among the Landcare community
- leadership development opportunities
- conferences and networking events
- communication and community engagement activities and other projects that strengthen the social and technical capacity that underpins the delivery of Landcare
- efforts by Landcare and farming groups to deliver on-the-ground improvements in land management.

Commitments have already been made by the government to support Landcare Australia and National Landcare Network. Further program information is available at www.agriculture.gov.au

Q: Landcare Australia Limited and National Landcare Network are reportedly merging, is there anything you can say about this?

A: This is a matter for Landcare Australia Limited and National Landcare Network. The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has provided expert assistance to facilitate their considerations of a merger.

Q: What is the definition of “leadership” and does this include supporting capacity of landcare?

A: Leadership is a broad term, and may include championing new methods and processes, guiding industry and taking new approaches.