

Questions and Answers

Smart Farms Small Grants – Round 2

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

The Application Form/s must be submitted by **11:30pm AEDT, 11 January 2019**. 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?

No, extensions will not be given. You must submit an application between the published opening and closing dates and times.

The Community Grants Hub will not accept late applications unless an applicant has experienced exceptional circumstances that prevent the submission of the application. Broadly, exceptional circumstances are events characterised by one or more of the following:

- reasonably unforeseeable,
- beyond the applicant's control,
- unable to be managed or resolved within the application period.

Exceptional circumstances will be considered on their merits and in accordance with probity principles.

How to lodge a late application

Applicants seeking to submit a late application will be required to submit a late application request to the Community Grants Hub Hotline via support@communitygrants.gov.au.

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

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

The Delegate or their appointed representative^[1] will determine whether a late application will be accepted. The decision of the delegate will be final and not be subject to a review or appeals process.

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

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 or by email at support@communitygrants.gov.au straight away. The Community Grants Hub may ask

^[1] This may be the Hub delegate or nominated staff member of the client agency at the EL2 level or above.

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 3.1 of the guidelines for further information about who is eligible to apply for a grant.

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 6.4, **must** be provided with your application (using the mandatory templates available as part of the grant opportunity documents available on GrantConnect and 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 \$55 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 Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources announced that he had approved 77 successful Round 1 applications in July 2018.

8. 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 research. Some demonstration and trial work would likely be eligible, and there are some examples under section 5 of the guidelines.

9. 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.

10. Would the Department prefer a consortium (joint) arrangement?

Individual and consortia/joint applications will be considered equally.

11. I have an idea for a project for the 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 grants objectives. This is to ensure that the process remains fair and impartial, not advantaging one applicant above another.

12. 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 GrantConnect and Community Grants Hub websites.

13. 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.

14. Where should I go for further information?

If you have any questions, 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.

15. 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.

16. What is a co-contribution?

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

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

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

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

18. 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.

19. When can I start my project?

A recipient must not commence work on the project activities before a funding 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 funding agreement, and no payments will be made unless a funding agreement has been executed. Please refer to section 9 of the guidelines: Successful grant applications.

20. How will Smart Farms Small Grants be administered?

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.

21. If Smart Farms Small Grants is to be managed by Department of Social Services will there be an assessment panel?

Details concerning the assessment of grant applications are detailed in Section 7 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

22. 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 6.4 of the Guidelines.

23. 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 5 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.

24. 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 guidelines. The government encourages all applicants to consider collaboration and partnerships between entities, including with individuals.

25. Do Smart Farm Small Grants project proposals have to identify 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.

26. 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 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.

27. 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 3 of the guidelines. This may change for future rounds, but the information will always be clear in the relevant guidelines.

28. 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 to help the Australian Government meet these obligations.

29. 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 projects. As the programs will be administered by the Department of Social Services they will use their outcome based reporting systems.

30. 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 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.

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

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

Question and answer added 6 December 2018

32. Will projects that focus on only outcome 1 be viewed less favourably than those that cover off on both outcomes 1 & 2?

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

We have given applicants the option of contributing to one outcome only in part to allow them to focus their project to address their specific need. We have not required applicants to focus on two outcomes, therefore, applicants will not be penalised for doing so. Applications in all tiers 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.

Questions and answers added 14 December 2018

33. 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 requiring an independent audit for the final financial report. The 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 Other 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 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).

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

Yes

Questions and answers added 20 December 2018

35. What was the policies/ policy behind Smart Farms Grants 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 1.2 and 3.2.2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines (Guidelines).

36. Was there a “white paper” regarding smart farms?

There was no “white paper” regarding Smart Farms.

37. What is the outcome that the Smart Farms Grant is 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 1.4 of the Guidelines (including section 1.4.1 for Outcome 1 and section 1.4.2 or Outcome 2). The eligible natural resources that Smart Farms Small Grants seeks to protect or improve are set out in section 3.2.2 of the Guidelines, including a statement of which on-farm and off-farm resources fall under this program.

38. Which International Obligations will these grants assist Australia to meet?

In the Guidelines, footnote 3 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.

39. What problems NRM/ and or the Department of Agriculture are 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 1.4 of the Guidelines for more information about the purpose of the Smart Farms Small Grants.

40. 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 1.4 of the Guidelines. Please refer to section 3.3.1 of the Guidelines for examples of suitable project activities for receiving the grants.

41. 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](#).

42. What is meant by “do better at managing our natural resources to the benefit of the landscape, community and economy”?

Australia’s soils, water, vegetation and biodiversity underpin the productivity and sustainability of agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries. But these natural resources are under threat. Pressures on Australia’s natural resources can limit the viability and productivity of food and fibre businesses.

As the managers of around 61 per cent of the Australian landmass, farmers have an essential role in protecting and rehabilitating natural resources. Natural resources management practices that improve and protect the condition of soil, water, vegetation and biodiversity also assist farming, forestry and fishing industries to adapt to significant changes in climate, weather and markets.

Smart Farms Small Grants provide organisations and individuals with the opportunity to apply for funding for projects that promote and deliver land manager adoption of best practice sustainable land management; that is management practices which provide for better long term outcomes for the landscape and the flora and fauna it supports. The grants will also improve the ability of Landcare groups and others to improve land manager adoption of best practice.

43. What is considered best practice by the Department? How do I demonstrate the method I will be doing/ using/ implemented is best practice for maintain/ 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 3.3.1 of the Guidelines, for applications for projects contributing to Outcome 1, 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. 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.

44. 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 1.4 of the Guidelines.

New questions and answers added 21 December

45. 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, 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% without justification.

46. I have a question around the eligibility of projects under this scheme. I have had two similar enquiries from farmers which both involve the upgrading of their watering systems to reduce water use and increase efficiency and yields of their farming enterprises. This will involve in both cases an external company coming in and installing the new irrigation system which I believe would fall under capital expenditure or construction works which under the guidelines cannot exceed 10% of the grant amount. Can I please get a clarification if irrigation infrastructure is considered capital expenditure ?

The cost of upgrading infrastructure on-farm, including an irrigation system, is a capital expense which cannot exceed 10% of the grant value. As well, all Smart Farming Small Grants projects must achieve a public benefit that would not occur without the grant and that is at-least proportional to the amount of the grant. All Small Grants projects must also not provide a private benefit that is disproportionately greater than the amount of any private contribution to the project. See item 3.2 of the guidelines.