Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Grants Program

Questions and Answers

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

   The application form must be submitted by **11.00pm AEDT on 10 March 2019**. It is recommended that you submit your application **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?**

   We will not accept late applications unless an applicant has experienced exceptional circumstances that prevent the submission of the application. Exceptional circumstances will be considered on their merits and in accordance with probity principles.

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

3. **How much funding is available for this program?**

   Under the program, up to $20 million (GST exclusive) is available. Fifteen communities have been identified as eligible under the program and a notional allocation of around $1 million (GST exclusive) is available in each eligible community for grants that deliver economic development projects.

   A minimum and maximum amount has been set for each eligible project. The set minimum amount is $10,000 (GST exclusive) and the maximum amount is $500,000 (GST exclusive).

   An application for grant funding below the set minimum amount will be deemed ineligible and the application will not be assessed. Applications above the maximum amount may be considered if there are funds available for an eligible community.

   Financial co-contributions are encouraged and welcome but are not a requirement for being successful. Applicants can also utilise other government program funding. In the latter case, applicants should note that such investment must be for additional activities and for complementary purposes to the objectives of this program and we cannot provide a grant if you receive funding from another source for the same purpose.

4. Is the funding on-going?

No, funding is not ongoing and will conclude at the end of financial year 2021-22.

5. Is the program over three or four financial years?

Funding is available for projects over four financial years from 2018-19 to 2021-22. There may be limited funding expended in 2018-19 due to the timing of the assessment and contract negotiation processes.

6. How can I submit the Application Form?

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

7. Do word limits apply to selection criteria?

Yes, there is a limit of 6,000 characters (approximately 900 words) for most selection criteria with the exception of the limit for criterion 1(b) which is 2,000 characters (approximately 300 words).

8. How were the eligible communities chosen?

Communities were identified through a range of information, including research by the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) that evaluated the economic impacts of the Basin Plan on Basin communities. Based on this information, the communities selected for the program are experiencing greater impacts from water recovery under the Basin Plan than other communities. The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has identified five communities in the northern Basin and ten communities in the southern Basin as those most impacted by water recovery under the Murray–Darling Basin Plan (Basin Plan). The program is limited to these 15 communities.

9. Which communities are eligible for funding?

The community boundaries are in the maps at **Attachment A** to the program guidelines. Fifteen communities have been identified as eligible for funding under the program.

Northern Basin
- Dirranbandi, QLD
- St George, QLD
- Cunnamulla, QLD
- Collarenebri, NSW
- Warren, NSW

Southern Basin

- Wakool, NSW
- Colignan, NSW/VIC
- Red Cliffs, VIC
- Merbein, VIC
- Rochester, VIC
- Berri, SA
- Loxton, SA
- Cobdogla-Barmera, SA
- Swan Reach, SA
- Lower Lakes, SA

10. Why are the eligibility boundaries set where they are?

The boundaries are consistent with the boundaries for communities as defined by the MDBA in its evaluation of the Basin Plan because this is the best information the Department has on areas of greatest economic impact from water recovery under the Basin Plan. These community boundaries are not the same as local government boundaries. Applicants should carefully consider eligibility in conjunction with the detailed maps provided in the grant opportunity guidelines.

11. Why is my community not eligible to apply when we are doing it tough too?

This program is not intended to address all the difficult economic conditions and circumstances that many Basin communities are facing from other circumstances such as drought, job losses from mechanisation, or urban migration. Economic hardship is widespread in the Murray-Darling Basin, especially during this period of drought, and many areas would benefit from economic development assistance. There are other state and federal government programs designed to assist communities more broadly.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources identified which communities were most impacted based on a range of information, including research by the Murray–Darling Basin Authority. Only those communities most impacted by water recovery under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan are eligible for funding under this program.

12. Where can I find the research conducted by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA)?

The MDBA's research found water recovery under the Basin Plan has led to varying economic impacts in communities. The MDBA's 2016 Northern Basin Review and 2017 Basin Plan Evaluation identified varying degrees of social and economic impacts on Basin communities.
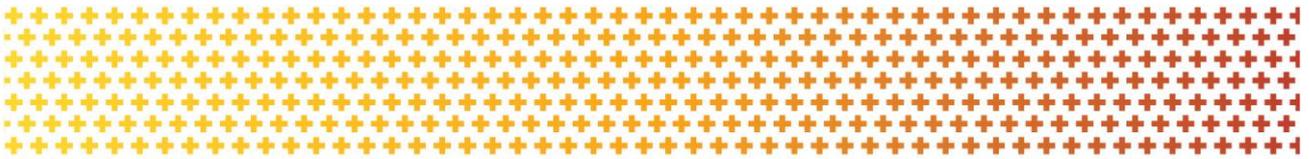
More information on MDBA research can be found at the following links, together with separate reports on each relevant community:

- Northern Basin Review

- Southern Basin Review

13. My organisation is in an eligible community. Why is my organisation not eligible to apply?

The program is intended to apply to not for profit organisations such as local governments, Indigenous corporations, cooperatives and incorporated associations. All entities within eligible communities are encouraged to work together to put forward projects. The guidelines allow non-eligible entities to partner with other entities to propose a project. The application would then be submitted by a lead applicant who would need to be an eligible organisation.

14. Are there other options for getting support for my community?

There are several state and Commonwealth programs that can provide support to rural communities, including the Building Better Regions Fund. Commonwealth grant opportunities can be found on GrantConnect.

15. What can grant funding be used for?

The grant funding can be used for a broad range of economic development projects. Eligible projects must deliver economic benefits that address the economic impacts of water recovery on one or more of the eligible communities.

The guidelines detail the types of activities (Section 5.1) and expenditure (Section 5.3) that are eligible through the program. These lists are not comprehensive, however, as it is intended that the program provide flexibility for eligible organisations to identify projects that best address an eligible community's particular circumstances.

16. Can I be funded to prepare my application?

No, funding is not available for costs incurred in the preparation of a project proposal or related documentation.

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

You will be notified of the outcome of your application at the end of the selection process after the closing date. 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.
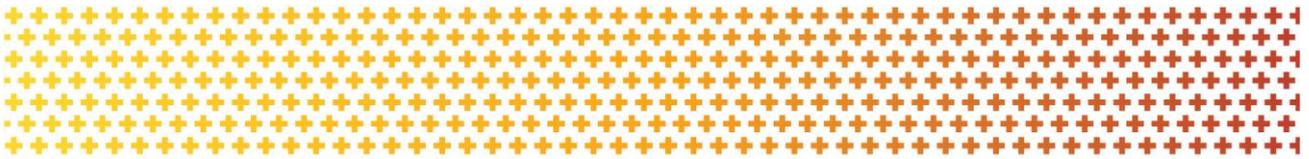
18. How will you ensure that projects are in the best interest for a community?

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources would like to see broad community support for each proposed project. Applicants must describe how the project is supported by the community and how it links to relevant local economic development strategies. These would include links to the plans, priorities or challenges outlined in any relevant local, State or Australian Government policies or other documentation that demonstrates that the project is a strategic priority.

19. Is it okay if my proposed project will also benefit regions outside of the eligible community?

It is a condition of the program that the benefit of a project occur within an eligible community or communities. Incidental benefits for areas outside an eligible community arising from a project designed to benefit an eligible community would be acceptable. Projects intended to benefit areas outside an eligible community would not be acceptable.

20. Can I apply with another organisation or as part of a group of organisations?

Yes, as long as the lead organisation is eligible for funding. The application should clearly identify the lead organisation and all other members of the group.

Should the application be successful, the grant agreement will be with the lead organisation and the lead organisation must have a formal arrangement (such as a memorandum of understanding) in place with all other members prior to execution of an agreement with the Australian Government.

21. Will the decision maker approve a different grant amount to what I requested?

It is possible that the grant amount offered to successful applicants is less than the funding requested. There is no obligation to accept an offer of grant funding. The amount of grant funding is a decision for the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources and the decision of the Minister is final.

In addition, the department reserves the right to:

- negotiate the scope of a project under the fund
- specify conditions attached to the grant, and
- impose conditions that must be met before funding is provided.

22. Will there be future funding rounds?

The decision to undertake another round of funding is at the discretion of the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources. A future funding round might occur if there was sufficient available funding after the first round is concluded. Applicants should apply in this funding round and should not rely on a possible future funding round.

23. Where should I go for further information?

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

New questions and answers added 11 February

24. Can I check if my project proposal is likely to be successful before I apply?

No, the Department is unable to provide advice about the suitability of your proposed project or the likelihood of its success for grant funding.

Grant funding can be used for a broad range of economic development projects and your description of the proposed project should clearly describe how the project meets the selection criteria outlined in the program guidelines.

The suitability, and therefore the success of any project in attracting funding, is directly linked to how well the project meets the selection criteria. Successful projects will be those that deliver economic benefits that address the economic impacts of water recovery on one or more of the eligible communities.

25. If I put in more than one application, is there a requirement to prioritise the applications?

You may submit more than one application but there is no need to provide your perspective on the relative priority of your applications. Each project will be assessed on its own merits against the assessment criteria and in competition with other projects.

26. Is it best to do a joint application with other organisations or submit separate applications for each organisation?

The decision to lodge one application for a project or multiple applications for separate components is one for the members of the group. However, joint applications would be sensible where one application is dependent on other applications to proceed or if economies of scale are required to make a project viable.