



# Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program – Round 2

**Please note: This grant opportunity will now close at 11.00pm AEDT on Thursday, 20 February 2020. See Question 36 for more details.**

## Questions and Answers

These Questions and Answers should be read in conjunction with the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program Round 2 Grant Opportunity Guidelines (the guidelines) and all other relevant grant opportunity documents available on the Community Grants Hub website.

### Who can apply?

#### 1. Which communities are eligible for funding?

Round 2 of the program is limited to the 31 communities in the table below. Maps of these 31 communities can be found at **Appendix A** to the guidelines.

Communities Proposed for Inclusion in Round 2 (Reason for Inclusion, State)	
<b>Berrigan-Finley</b> (Election commitment, NSW)	<b>Blanchetown</b> (Election commitment, South Australia)
<b>Bourke</b> (Moderate Impact, NSW)	<b>Brewarrina</b> (Lower Darling/Barwon-Darling water recovery, NSW)
<b>Cobram</b> (Moderate Impact, Victoria)	<b>Coomealla</b> (Moderate Impact, NSW)
<b>Cullulleraine</b> (Moderate Impact, Victoria and NSW)	<b>Deniboota</b> (Moderate Impact, NSW)
<b>Denimein</b> (Moderate Impact, NSW)	<b>Hay</b> (Moderate Impact, NSW)
<b>Kerang-Cohuna</b> (Moderate Impact, Victoria and NSW)	<b>Kyabram-Tatura</b> (Moderate Impact, Victoria)



<b>Communities Proposed for Inclusion in Round 2 (Reason for Inclusion, State)</b>	
<b>Mannum</b> (Moderate Impact, South Australia)	<b>Menindee</b> (Lower Darling/Barwon-Darling water recovery, NSW)
<b>Mildura</b> (Moderate Impact, Victoria)	<b>Moree</b> (Moderate Impact, NSW)
<b>Morgan</b> (Election commitment, South Australia)	<b>Mungindi</b> (Lower Darling/Barwon-Darling water recovery, Queensland and NSW)
<b>Murray Bridge</b> (Moderate Impact, South Australia)	<b>Narromine</b> (Moderate Impact, NSW)
<b>Pyramid Hill-Boort</b> (Moderate Impact, Victoria)	<b>Shepparton Irrigation Area</b> (Moderate Impact, Victoria)
<b>Swan Hill</b> (Moderate Impact, Victoria and NSW)	<b>Tailem Bend</b> (Moderate Impact, South Australia)
<b>Trangie</b> (Moderate Impact, NSW)	<b>Waikerie</b> (Moderate Impact, South Australia)
<b>Walgett</b> (Lower Darling/Barwon-Darling water recovery, NSW)	<b>Wee Waa</b> (Moderate Impact, NSW)
<b>Wentworth</b> (inc. Pooncarie) (Moderate Impact, NSW)	<b>West Berriquin</b> (Moderate Impact, NSW)
<b>Wilcannia</b> (Lower Darling/Barwon-Darling water recovery, NSW)	

## 2. How were the eligible communities for the program chosen?

Communities were identified by the Department of Agriculture 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 Round 1 of the program were assessed as most impacted by water recovery under the Basin Plan. Many of the communities selected for Round 2 of the program are experiencing moderate impacts from water recovery under the Basin Plan.



Other communities eligible in Round 2 have been included due to the proposed acquisition of water entitlements in the Lower Darling and Barwon-Darling, including A Class licences. This measure is part of the Australian Government's response to the *Independent assessment of the 2018-19 fish deaths in the lower Darling Final Report*, an independent review led by Professor Robert Vertessey of the causes of the fish deaths that occurred in the lower Darling in December 2018 and January 2019.

In addition, three communities, with small impacts from water recovery under the Basin Plan, have been included due to election commitments made in the 2019 federal election.

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

This program is not intended to address all of 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.

### **4. 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](#)

### **5. How exactly did the MDBA look at impacts?**

The Northern and Southern Basin Review used changes in employment as a key indicator of community impact. This approach acknowledges that changes to employment levels are also influenced by a range of drivers of change, so it separates the effect of Basin Plan water recovery from the other drivers of change affecting Basin communities.

The research also considers the change to employment within the context of a number of other factors. These include:

- the scale, pace and method of water recovery



- the influences of temporary and permanent water trade
- the change in employment as a consequence of factors outside the Basin Plan
- the size and economic and demographic diversity of each community, and
- whether employment is increasing or decreasing over the time period examined.

The Southern Review deems a community to be:

- 'Most impacted' when water recovery has led to effects on employment greater than 6%. Communities considered 'most impacted' were eligible for funding in Round 1 of the program.
- 'Moderately' impacted where modest changes have generally resulted in changes to total employment arising from Basin Plan water recovery, of around 3% to 5%. There were 18 communities in this category and all of these were included in Round 2 of the program.
- Experiencing 'small' impacts where water recovery was estimated to have an effect of less than 2.7% on total employment. There were 12 communities in this category, with three included in Round 2 due to 2019 federal election commitments.

The Northern Review deems a community to be:

- 'Most impacted' when water recovery has led to effects on employment greater than 8% when combined with reduced in irrigated hectares by 15%. Communities considered 'most impacted' were eligible for funding in Round 1 of the program.
- 'Moderately' (or 'modest') impacted where there was less than a 4.2% reduction on total employment. There were five communities in this category and all of these were included in Round 2 of the program.
- Experiencing a 'small' impact where communities had little irrigation and no expected water recovery. There were six of these communities.

## 6. Why was my area not part of one of the communities looked at by the MDBA?

The geographical boundaries were identified by the MDBA in its 2016 and 2017 evaluations of Basin communities. The MDBA conducted research on areas across the Murray-Darling Basin but did not publish community profiles on all areas. The communities are not the same as Local Government Areas.

- Northern Basin: There are 21 community profile reports for northern Basin communities published in the Northern Basin Review. Areas were examined based on the main town, its surrounding agricultural area and the location of the irrigation enterprises relative to the towns.



- Southern Basin: There are 45 community profile reports for southern Basin communities published in the Basin Plan Evaluation. The community areas are based on irrigation areas where possible and/or distinctive reaches of the rivers based on particular types of irrigated production. In most communities there are one or two urban centres included.

## **7. Why are the eligibility boundaries set where they are?**

The boundaries of 29 of the communities 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 of Agriculture has to date on defined areas of 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 guidelines. As Wilcannia and Menindee were not communities analysed in the MDBA research, community boundaries have been set according to the expected impacts of water recovery.

## **8. Why are there some communities with very irregular and unusual shapes? If I am in one of the cut-out areas, including within an eligible community, am I eligible?**

The boundary lines have been set based on the research conducted by the MDBA and, in some instances, they are irregular. The cut-out areas are usually included in different communities, some of which have experienced different levels of impact from water recovery. Please note some cut-out areas on the edge of communities may belong to other communities in this round of the program. Check other maps to see if you may be eligible in another community.

## **9. Is it okay if my proposed project also benefits regions outside of the eligible community?**

It is a condition of the program that the benefit of a project occurs 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 primarily benefit areas outside an eligible community would not be acceptable.

## **10. Some communities exclude the nearest major town – why are these excluded?**

Some eligible communities include major towns and others do not. It depends on the boundaries determined by the MDBA in their research, as previously mentioned.



We recognise the inter-relationships between many large towns that may be outside the eligible communities and those within these communities. This is why there is no barrier to any eligible organisation located outside of the community applying for funding for a project that benefits the eligible community or communities.

For those applications that are successful and where the applicant is located outside of the eligible community, we may make it a condition of funding that you demonstrate to what extent the project is benefiting that community. For example, you may be asked to supply specific stakeholder engagement or communication plans to demonstrate how you intend to make the project available to the community.

#### **11. Some communities stretch across state and local government area (LGA) boundaries – who should apply for funding?**

Any eligible organisation can apply for funding within the eligible communities. Joint and/or consortia applications are welcome but there must be a lead organisation with whom the Australian Government can execute an agreement. We would encourage consortia applications for the benefit of the entire identified community rather than competing applications that do not address the needs of sectors of the community.

For those projects crossing LGA boundaries, applicants should be clear in their applications how the proposed project will benefit the whole eligible community and not exclude those in other LGAs. Any successful applications that do not make this clear may have a condition attached to their funding approval to demonstrate that all members of the community will have equitable access to the project/grant funding. For example, you may be asked to supply specific stakeholder engagement or communication plans to outline your approach.

Applications that seek to exclude sections of the eligible communities will not be well regarded.

#### **12. Is this program aimed at providing funding for Indigenous communities?**

The program supports Indigenous communities as part of broader communities. The program was originally listed as part of the May 2018 Basin Plan Commitments package, which had a strong focus on assisting Basin Indigenous communities. The program was announced as being for 'Indigenous, remote, rural and regional communities most impacted by water recovery under the Basin Plan'.

Although the program now also funds a wider range of communities than the 'most impacted' it still intends to assist communities with the characteristics of being Indigenous, remote, rural and regional.

Indigenous organisations are specifically identified as organisations eligible for funding. The Department of Agriculture welcomes projects from Indigenous organisations including projects with an Indigenous focus within one or more eligible communities.





**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 that are also local governments, Indigenous corporations, cooperatives, incorporated associations and companies. All entities within eligible communities are encouraged to work together to put forward projects. The guidelines allow non-eligible entities to partner with eligible entities to propose a project.

**14. So, I can 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.

**15. Are there other options for getting support for my community?**

There are a varying number of state and Commonwealth programs that can provide a variety of types of support to rural communities. Commonwealth grant opportunities can be found at [www.grants.gov.au](http://www.grants.gov.au).

**What can I apply for?**

**16. How much funding is available for Round 2 of the program?**

Up to \$15 million (GST exclusive) is available under this round of the program. Thirty one communities have been identified as eligible and a notional allocation of around \$450,000 (GST exclusive) is available in each eligible community for grants that deliver economic development projects.

A minimum amount has been set for each eligible project. The set minimum amount is \$10,000 (GST exclusive). An application for grant funding below the set minimum amount will be deemed ineligible and the application will not be assessed.

No maximum amount has been set for each eligible project. However, the assessment process (Section 8.3) strongly advantages grant applications at or under the notional allocation of \$450,000 (GST exclusive) for each community. Applications seeking more than \$450,000 (GST exclusive) for funding may be considered but only if there is sufficient unallocated funding after projects equal to or less than \$450,000 (GST exclusive) are recommended for funding.



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**17. Is the funding on-going?**

No, funding is not ongoing and will conclude at the end of financial year 2022-23.

**18. Is the program over three or four financial years?**

Funding is available for projects over four financial years from 2019-20 to 2022-23.

**19. Can I apply for both drought funding and this program?**

The guidelines for Round 2 of this program do not exclude you from applying for funding from other sources to contribute to your proposed activity. In fact, the guidelines allow for funds from this program to be used to leverage funding from other sources.

However, grant funds cannot be provided for the same project expenditure. For example, if you propose building a childcare centre with an outdoor landscaped play area, you cannot use multiple grants to construct this play area. You could, however, use this program's grant to construct the play area and another source of funding to construct the building itself.

Please check the requirements for other sources of funding – they may not allow you to combine those funds with funds from this program. If you propose a project dependent on other funding sources we may make it a condition of approval of funding that these funds are confirmed prior to signing an agreement with you.

**20. 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 in 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 as it is intended the program provide flexibility for eligible organisations to identify projects that best address an eligible community's particular circumstances.

**21. What kind of projects were funded under Round 1 of the program?**

The guidelines for both rounds of the program have not been prescriptive regarding the types of projects that can be funded. The freedom available to communities to propose projects that will stimulate economic activity and growth specific to the unique circumstances of their own communities has resulted in a wide variety of projects being approved.





Forty two projects were approved by the Minister and included projects such as: ecotourism trails, leadership development programs, wild dog exclusion fencing, showground renovations, an early learning centre, a holiday park re-invigoration, a chronic disease and wellbeing centre, digital literacy and business marketing workshops and many more. A full list of projects can be found here: [Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program](#).

## 22. 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.

## 23. Will the decision maker approve a different grant amount to the amount I requested?

It is possible that the grant amount offered to successful applicants is less than the funding requested. The selection advisory panel may recommend a lower amount of funding for projects to the decision maker, in order to maximise the number of projects to be funded, and maximise the number of communities with projects. There is no obligation to accept an offer of grant funding. The amount of grant funding is a decision for the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management (the decision maker) and the decision of the Minister is final.

In addition, the Department of Agriculture reserves the right to:

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

## How do I apply?

## 24. What is the closing time and date for applications?

The program is now open and the closing date for applications has been extended to 11 pm AEDT on Thursday 20 February 2020. It is recommended that you submit your application **well before the closing time and date**.

## 25. 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.

## **26. How can I submit the application form?**

The form is an online application form that you must submit electronically via the Community Grants Hub website. 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.

## **27. Do word limits apply to selection criteria?**

Yes, there is a limit of 6,000 characters (approximately 900 words) for the selection criteria. Attachments may be used as detailed in the guidelines and supported in the application form, noting that there is a maximum of five attachments per application. You should only attach requested documents as information we have not asked for will not be considered. The five attachments include the two templates – a project plan and project budget – and applications using the provided templates will be viewed more favourably.

## **What happens next?**

## **28. 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.

## **29. How will you ensure that projects are in the best interests of a community?**

The Department of Agriculture 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 descriptions would reference 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. You are not required to provide these documents at the time of application but you may be asked for them at a later date. Once the project is underway, the department will then monitor its progress by asking you for reports. We may also conduct site visits and meet with relevant



stakeholders to ensure projects are meeting the economic development needs of identified communities.

**30. Will there be future funding rounds?**

The decision to undertake another round of funding is at the discretion of the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management (the decision maker). A future funding round might occur if there was sufficient available funding after the second round is concluded or if further funding were to become available. Eligible applicants for this round should apply in this round and not rely on a possible future funding round.

**31. I understand that during the opening period of the funding round a machinery of government (MoG) process will be undertaken. How will that affect my application?**

Applications will not be affected by the MoG. On 1 February 2020, the Department of Agriculture will merge with the Department of the Environment and Energy.

This change will not affect your application or the assessment process and will have little consequence for the implementation or the management of the grant round. The Community Grants Hub will continue to manage the application round and will be the first port of call for all of your grant round queries.

**32. Where should I go for further information?**

Please email your enquiries to [support@communitygrants.gov.au](mailto:support@communitygrants.gov.au).

**Updated Questions and Answers 33-37 on 16 January 2020**

**33. The maps are not very clear, how do people very close to, or under, the boundary lines for communities know if they are eligible? Is the Shepparton CBD an eligible area under the program? Is it part of the Shepparton Irrigation Area (SIA)?**

The boundary lines indicate the general limits of the impacts of water recovery, they are not physical barriers. The lines indicate the areas that must obtain a majority of benefit from proposed projects rather than the eligibility of the organisations that can apply. For example, it doesn't matter if an organisation wishing to apply is in the Shepparton CBD or 50kms out of town – if a majority of the benefit is experienced in the SIA then the application would be eligible.

The Shepparton CBD is **not** part of the SIA identified community. The SIA was identified as moderately impacted by water recovery in the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's 2017 Basin Plan Evaluation and is therefore included in this round of the



program. The Basin Plan Evaluation reported no irrigated production or water recovery from Shepparton-Mooroopna itself, but noted this area had experienced the effect of Basin Plan water recovery from surrounding areas. It is these surrounding areas that are the target of the round.

What this means when applied to Shepparton is that a majority of the benefit should be experienced within the SIA community but we accept that some, incidental benefit may be felt in the town. We accept that organisations delivering benefit to surrounding eligible communities are likely to be located in the town and that by being located in the town, some incidental benefit may be felt there. This would not make an application ineligible. Eligibility would only be affected if a majority of the benefit of the project is to be felt outside the identified eligible community.

Please also note that an application such as that described above, which is eligible but does not demonstrate the benefits of the project proposal to the identified community/ies, would not be competitive in this round.

#### **34. Are those in Leeton Shire eligible to apply for the community of Hay under Round 2?**

**\* Please note this question is also relevant for other shires where only a small amount of the community is present within local government areas (LGAs).**

As the community of Hay, as defined under the program, reaches into the local government area of Leeton Shire Council, eligible organisations in this shire, including the Council, are eligible to apply.

The eligible community of Hay crosses a number of local government areas with the area that crosses into Leeton Shire representing a small percentage of the total area of this community. Organisations in this shire are eligible to apply and put forward project proposals that benefit all or part of this community. However, please note:

- Eligible projects should be in the eligible communities identified and must conduct economic development activities that would mitigate the effects of the Basin Plan water recovery activities in those communities. Applications for funding projects that deliver a majority of benefits outside of the eligible communities will be deemed ineligible, as explained in FAQ 9. Although there can be some incidental benefit achieved by the proposed project outside of the eligible communities, the greater this 'incidental benefit' the less competitive a proposal will become. When assessing the extent to which the application represents value with relevant money, the selection advisory panel will have regard to the extent to which the geographic location of the application matches identified communities.
- Eligible organisations are encouraged to collaborate with the broader eligible community and, as appropriate, act in partnership with other organisations to propose projects that stimulate economic activity and growth.



**35. As the maps are not very clear, how do applicants know if a particular location is eligible under the program?**

We encourage applicants to seek clarification about the eligibility of potential project applications via the Community Grants Hub website **before** preparing their application.

As explained in FAQ 33, the boundary lines of identified communities indicate the general limits of the impacts of water recovery and are not physical barriers. Although projects may be found eligible due to their physical location being on the boundary lines of a community, applications for these projects would still need to clearly demonstrate the benefits of the project within the nominated eligible community. If this is not done the selection advisory panel may find the project ineligible. Furthermore, the selection advisory panel will assess and rank other eligible applications providing benefits to the same community/ies.

**36. Why has the application closing date been extended?**

Due to current conditions within the Murray-Darling Basin and neighbouring regions, and in recognition of stretched resources throughout Basin states, the Department of Agriculture is extending the closing date for applications to Round 2 of the program by one calendar month.

The department was approached by a number of organisations with requests for extensions and recognised that many communities would be unable to compile suitable applications by the original closing date. The extension should enable organisations to submit strong applications for good quality economic development projects to benefit eligible communities.

The grant opportunity will now **close at 11.00pm AEDT on Thursday, 20 February 2020.**

**37. I had started an application some time ago and the information has now been lost/altered/corrupted. What do I do?**

To allow the extension to the application closing date it was necessary to make some technical changes to the application form on the Community Grants Hub and GrantConnect websites. While it is unlikely, it is possible that data associated with applications that were open or incomplete at the time the change was made could have been affected.

If this has happened to you contact the Community Grants Hub on 1800 020 283 or email [support@communitygrants.gov.au](mailto:support@communitygrants.gov.au).