Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program (Round 3)

Grant Opportunity Guidelines

Opening date:	Wednesday 3 March 2021
Closing date and time:	9:00 PM AEST Monday 12 April 2021
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Administering entity	Community Grants Hub
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, contact Community Grants Hub Phone: 1800 020 283 (option1) Email: support@communitygrants.gov.au Questions should be sent no later than 5:00 PM AEST on Monday 5 April 2021
Date guidelines released:	Wednesday 3 March 2021
Type of grant opportunity:	Open competitive

Contents

1 Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program (Round 3): grant processes

The Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives.

This grant opportunity is part of the above grant program, which contributes to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's (the department) Outcome 5.1 – Water Reform. The department works with stakeholders to plan and design the grant program according to the

Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017 (CGRGs).

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The grant opportunity opens

We publish the grant guidelines on GrantConnect and Community Grants Hub websites.

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You complete and submit a grant application

You complete the application form and address all of the eligibility and assessment criteria to be considered for a grant.

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We assess all grant applications

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

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We make grant recommendations

We provide advice, through the selection advisory panel, to the decision maker on the merits of each application.

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Grant decisions are made

The decision maker (Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia) decides which applications are successful.

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We notify you of the outcome

We advise you of the outcome of your application. We may not notify unsuccessful applicants until successful applicants are announced. Individual feedback will be available on request.

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We enter into a grant agreement

If you are successful, we enter into a Commonwealth Standard Grant Agreement with you.

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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.

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Evaluation of the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program

We evaluate your specific grant activity and the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program as a whole. We base this on information you provide us and that we collect from various sources.

1.1 Introduction

These guidelines contain information for Round 3 grants under the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program.

You must read and understand these guidelines before filling out an application.

This document sets out:

▪ the purpose of the grant program/grant opportunity

▪ the eligibility and assessment criteria

▪ how grant applications are considered and selected

▪ how grantees are notified and receive grant payments

▪ how grantees will be monitored and evaluated

▪ responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

This grant opportunity and process will be administered by the Community Grants Hub on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the department). The department is responsible for delivering water recovery programs and projects under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (the Basin Plan) and has policy and program responsibility for all rounds of this program.

2. About the grant program

The Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program (the program) will run over 5 years from 2018–19 to 2022–23.

The program was first announced by the then Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources on 7 May 2018, as part of the Basin Plan Commitments Package, to support those communities identified as most impacted by water recovery under the Basin Plan.

The Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia, the Hon. Keith Pitt MP announced Round 3 as part of the Murray-Darling Communities Investment Package on 4 September 2020. This package of initiatives was designed to put communities and jobs at the heart of the Basin Plan.

Round 3 will provide quick investment and associated jobs to those regional communities impacted by water recovery under the Basin Plan at a time when they are facing increasing challenges brought about by COVID-19. Rounds 3 and 4 have been combined into a single round (Round 3) to maximise the investment available to applicants and to do so as quickly as possible.

The department has considered a range of information, including the '*Independent assessment of social and economic conditions in the Murray-Darling Basin*' report (Sefton report) and research by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the MDBA), to understand the impacts of water recovery and to identify communities for inclusion in the program. The MDBA's research, the 2016 Northern Basin Review and 2017 Basin Plan Evaluation, identified varying degrees of social and economic impacts on Basin communities. The Sefton report is available here.

Communities included as eligible under Round 3 are those impacted to varying degrees by water recovery under the Basin Plan, with a focus on the recommendation of the Sefton report to prioritise more vulnerable and disadvantaged communities most negatively impacted by this water recovery. Consideration has been given to communities that have had water recovered through open tender buybacks and that have not received investment through other measures, such as on-farm irrigation upgrades. However, the inclusion of communities continues to take into account a wide range of research, including the above mentioned MDBA evaluations and newer research conducted around the Sefton report.

Among the areas of the Basin identified as disadvantaged and vulnerable to Basin Plan water recovery were some communities previously assessed as eligible under Rounds 1 and 2. These communities are again eligible under Round 3 and are listed at section 5.2.

The boundaries of the communities eligible under Round 3 are based on Local Government Areas (LGAs). This expansion of community size takes into consideration the expansion of impacts of Basin Plan water recovery since MDBA assessments in 2016 and 2017 and the social and economic linkages between populations within LGAs.

A map showing the boundaries of all communities eligible for funding under Round 3 of the program is at **Appendix A**.

The objective of the program is to assist eligible communities to undertake economic development projects to respond to the impact of water recovery activities under the Basin Plan.

The intended outcomes of the program are to:

- increase opportunities for employment within eligible communities
- increase capacity of eligible communities to diversify and strengthen local economies
- enhance resilience of eligible communities to manage current and future economic challenges and changes.

The benefits will be the number of jobs created as a result of the projects and the number of projects supporting economic development activities that continue after the end of the projects.

The department and the Community Grants Hub administer the program according to the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017* (CGRGs).

3. Grant amount and grant period

3.1 Grants available

The Australian Government has announced a total of $34 million (GST exclusive) for the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program Round 3 grant opportunity.

The grant opportunity will run from 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2022.

The minimum grant amount is $50,000 (GST exclusive). An application for grant funding below the set minimum amount will be deemed ineligible and the application will not be assessed.

The notional maximum grant amount is $1,000,000 (GST exclusive). The selection advisory panel may recommend grant applications seeking more than $1,000,000 (GST exclusive) for funding, but only if they represent value with relevant money for the economic benefits sought (Criterion 1) in the time available.

3.2 Grant period

The maximum grant period is 12 months. Grant activities should be completed by 31 May 2022. Following the grant period, a project evaluation period of 5 months will commence.

4. Eligibility criteria

The decision maker can choose to waive the eligibility criteria; however, they must be made aware of the risks.

Organisations must be eligible as per these guidelines at the time of submitting an application.

4.1 Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

To be eligible you must be one of the following entity types:

- Indigenous Corporation
- Local Government[1]
- Cooperative
- Incorporated Association
- Company.

Applications from consortia are acceptable, if you have a lead applicant who is solely accountable to the Commonwealth for the delivery of grant activities and is an eligible entity as per the lists at sections 4.1 and 4.2.[2] Eligible organisations can form consortia with ineligible organisations.

4.2 Additional eligibility requirements

We can only accept applications from organisations that:

- are a not-for-profit organisation
- have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or are willing to obtain one prior to the execution of the grant agreement
- have an account with an Australian financial institution.

During the eligibility assessment process you may be asked to provide proof of your status. Those organisations not able to do so will be deemed ineligible.

4.3 Who is not eligible to apply for a grant?

You are not eligible to apply if you are a:

- Corporate Commonwealth Entity
- Non-Corporate Commonwealth Entity
- Non-Corporate Commonwealth Statutory Authority
- Commonwealth Company
- Corporate State or Territory Entity
- Non-corporate State or Territory Entity
- Non-corporate State or Territory Statutory Authority
- International Entity
- Sole Trader
- Statutory Entity
- Partnership
- Person
- Trustee on behalf of a Trust

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[1] Includes New South Wales local governments created as Body Politics.

[2] The Australian Government recognises that some organisations may seek to form consortia in order to apply for a grant under the program. Consortia are eligible to apply and the relevant conditions applicable to consortia are at 7.2 'Joint (consortia) applications'

▪   Unincorporated Association.

You are not eligible to apply for this grant opportunity if your organisation is listed as one of the institutions on the National Redress Scheme website that have <u>not</u> joined the Scheme or signified their intent to join the Scheme.

If your entity details match any of those listed institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme, your application will be ineligible and will not progress to Assessment. The list of institutions that have joined the Scheme can be found here.

4.3.1   Unincorporated Associations

Non-legal entities such as an Unincorporated Association may be able to receive funding where a legal parent organisation, or a legal entity connected to the Unincorporated Association can enter into a legally binding agreement on its behalf and is an eligible entity as per sections 4.1 and 4.2.

5.   What the grant money can be used for

5.1   Eligible grant activities

To be eligible your grant activity must be in accordance with these guidelines and should meet the following requirements:

▪   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.

▪   Eligible projects should be in the communities identified in the list in section 5.2 and shown in the map at **Appendix A** and must conduct economic development activities that will mitigate the effects of the Basin Plan water recovery activities in those communities by seeking to achieve the outcomes of this program.

▪   Broadly, the program supports projects that create economic development and employment opportunities. This would include projects or proposals to build community capacity to make the most of the resources available. Innovative projects and those designed to make the most of the distinctive assets of eligible communities are encouraged.

▪   Projects do not have to relate to irrigation or agriculture. Ideally, project proposals should both provide jobs and economic stimulus through the project delivery stage and also, where possible, bring enduring benefits to the entire eligible community. Those doing so will be considered most favourably.

▪   Projects that undertake practical, on-ground works that address physical barriers to business development are particularly encouraged.

Projects should involve activities to support the specific situations faced by eligible communities and may:

- focus on future economic development needs through the development of non-technical skills such as business management, risk management, strategic planning and leadership in order to support resilience and adaptive management capability
- strengthen workforce capabilities through skills and capabilities development, entrepreneurialism, resilience and adaptive capacities in ways that are enduring
- deliver Indigenous-focussed outcomes
- develop industry clusters or networks that bring together representatives of regional businesses, research centres and other partners
- integrate new technology or processes for improved capability, productivity and competitiveness
- assist local businesses and industries (including tourism) to grow and/or diversify, attracting new investment and new job creation
- address barriers to commerce such as inadequate mobile or internet services, or local banking opportunities
- address environmental needs, including management, education and tourism
- address infrastructure challenges impacting on industry sustainability or expansion
- improve infrastructure, plant or equipment for enhanced efficiency and competitiveness of local industry
- strengthen supply chain efficiencies and linkages
- deliver strategic planning that addresses and responds to the economic challenges a community faces as a result of water recovery activities under the Basin Plan
- leverage other Commonwealth or state grant programs to increase the value of the grant.

The above list is not comprehensive and other project activities will be considered.

With the exception of the activities listed in section 5.4 that we will not fund, we will take a flexible approach to the type of project eligible for funding to enable local communities to identify the projects that best address their particular circumstances.

5.2   Eligible locations

Your grant activities should be delivered in, and must be delivered for, the benefit of the eligible communities listed below in Table 1. The boundaries of these communities are the same as the relevant Local Government Areas (LGAs) and are named as such. Eligible communities are clearly shown in the maps at **Appendix A**. You will not be eligible for funding if your project is not focused on one or more of these communities.

Table 1: Eligible communities – Local Government Areas

Alexandrina	Edward River	Moree Plains
Balonne	Federation	Murray Bridge
Balranald	Gannawarra	Murray River
Berri Barmera	Greater Shepparton	Murrumbidgee
Berrigan	Griffith	Narrabri
Bland	Gwydir	Narromine
Bourke	Hay	Paroo
Brewarrina	Leeton	Renmark Paringa
Campaspe	Loddon	Swan Hill
Carrathool	Loxton Waikerie	Walgett
Central Darling	Mid Murray	Warren
Coonamble	Mildura	Wentworth
Coorong	Moira	

5.3   Eligible expenditure

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure you have incurred on eligible grant activities. The program provides flexibility for eligible organisations to identify projects that best address an eligible community's particular circumstances. Therefore, these guidelines are not prescriptive about the type of project expenditure eligible for funding under the program.

Eligible expenditure items are:

▪ eligible costs you incur on agreed project activities specified in your grant agreement.

You must incur the eligible expenses on your project activities between the start date and completion date of your grant agreement for it to be eligible.

5.4   What the grant money cannot be used for

You cannot use the grant for:

▪ retrospective activities (project activities that have commenced before the start date of the grant agreement)

▪ costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation

▪ subsidy of general ongoing administration of an organisation such as electricity, phone and rent

▪ "business as usual" operation and administration costs of the local government authority or the organisation delivering the project, including maintenance, repairs, utilities and staffing (this does not extend to staff, consultants or contractors engaged specifically and solely for the purposes of the project)

▪ activities for which other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government bodies have primary responsibility

- activities funded through, or to be funded through, other Australian Government or state government investment

- labour, operational and maintenance costs associated with the project post completion

- projects requiring recurrent funding from a state government or the Australian Government once completed

- projects that only benefit private individuals or enterprises within the community (as opposed to projects that benefit the community)

- projects involving financial or debt restructuring

- projects strongly focussed on research and development that do not offer solid economic development benefits

- purchase of land, unless as an integral part of an eligible project

- purchase of water, water licenses and access to alternative water sources

- any activity which is contrary to the objectives and intent of the program.

We cannot provide a grant if you receive funding from another government source for the same purpose.

6.   The assessment criteria

You must address all of the following assessment criteria in the application. We will assess your application based on the weighting given to each criterion detailed below.

The application form includes character limits per criterion and will not accept characters beyond these limits. Please note spaces are included in the character limit.

You must address all of the assessment criteria in the application. Applications that score highly against all criteria are more likely to be recommended for funding.

All projects must deliver value with relevant money in the context of the criteria outlined below. We will assess each application on its merits and the weighting given to each criterion detailed below. We will recommend funding for projects based on a competitive evaluation against all assessment criteria.

Criterion 1: Economic benefits [weighting of 40%]

You must describe your project in detail. You must identify which community your project relates to, specify the location of the activities, and describe how it will deliver economic benefits that address the impacts of water recovery on the community. Do not provide a description of the impacts of water recovery on the community. When addressing the criterion, applications must discuss how the project will provide economic benefits, including how it will:

- increase opportunities within the community for employment

- diversify and strengthen an identified community's economy

- enhance resilience of the community to manage current and future economic challenges and changes.

Applications that outline measurable outputs of the proposed projects, such as the number of jobs created as a result of the project, will be highly regarded.

This criterion will be used to take into consideration previous program funding awarded against notional funding thresholds and the economic development benefits accruing from that investment. This will help to ensure a distribution of funding that addresses the impacts of water recovery on employment and economic development opportunities.

Criterion 2: Community support and benefit [weighting of 30%]

You must describe how your project will provide support for and benefit to the community, as opposed to only individuals or enterprises within the community. You must detail how your project is supported by the community. When addressing the criterion, applications must include:

▪ a description of the linkages to relevant local economic development strategies, including the plans, priorities or challenges outlined in any relevant local, state or Australian Government policies or other documentation that demonstrates the project is a strategic priority

▪ an analysis of the public benefit

▪ recent evidence from key stakeholders of support for this project. Key stakeholders may include, but are not limited to, relevant local governments, community stakeholders and Indigenous communities. You may include up to 5 written letters of support consolidated into a single attachment. You may also provide an additional attachment containing stakeholder engagement documentation that demonstrates your community consultation processes and the resulting community support for the project.

Criterion 3: Organisational capability [weighting of 30%]

You must describe how you will manage and deliver the project, including your financial control systems and project management arrangements. You should provide enough detail to demonstrate that your organisation has the capacity to manage grant funding and deliver the project. When addressing the criterion, applicants must include:

▪ a detailed itemised budget, including contingency allowances, in the project plan template provided

▪ details of your proposed governance arrangements and how you will manage the project

▪ a summary of your plan to deliver the project, in the form of a detailed project plan, including subcontracting arrangements (where relevant)

▪ a description of the experience of the personnel who will be delivering and managing the project/s.

7.　　How to apply

Before applying, you must read and understand these guidelines, the terms and conditions, sample grant agreement, and questions and answers.

These documents are found at [GrantConnect](#) and [Community Grants Hub](#) websites. Any changes to grant documentation are published on both sites and addenda[3] will be published on GrantConnect. By registering on this website, you will automatically be notified of any changes. GrantConnect is the authoritative source for grants information.

You can only submit one application form per project for this grant opportunity. If more than one application is submitted for a project, only the latest accepted application form will progress.

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[3] Alterations and addenda include but are not limited to: corrections to currently published documents, changes to close times for applications, questions and answers documents

To apply you must:

- complete the online application form on GrantConnect or Community Grants Hub
- provide all the information requested
- address all eligibility criteria and assessment criteria
- include all necessary attachments
- submit your application to the Community Grants Hub by 9:00 PM AEST Monday 12 April 2021.

We will not provide application forms or accept applications for this grant opportunity by fax or mail.

The application form includes help information. You are responsible for making sure your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* and we will investigate any false or misleading information and may exclude your application from further consideration.

If you need more help with the application process, submitting an application online, have any technical difficulties or find an error in your application after submission, but before the closing date and time, you should contact the Community Grants Hub immediately on 1800 020 283 (option1) or email support@communitygrants.gov.au. The Community Grants Hub does not have to accept any additional information, or requests from you to correct your application after the closing time.

You cannot change your application after the closing date and time.

If we find an error or note information is missing, we may ask you for clarification or additional information. This will not change the nature of your application. However, we can refuse to accept any additional information from you that would change your application after the closing time.

You should keep a copy of your application and any supporting documents.

You will receive an automated notification acknowledging the receipt of your application.

7.1 Attachments to the application

The following supporting documents must be attached to your application. Templates are provided for your use with the grant opportunity documents as specified below. Applications using the provided templates will be viewed more favourably.

- A project plan, including description of the proposed activity, resourcing, justification for grant amount, and outline of plan for project and risk management – template provided.
- A project budget – as part of the project plan template provided.
- Evidence of community support
  - You may attach copies of written support – consolidated into a single attachment, and/or an additional attachment with evidence of community consultations – as requested in Criterion 2.

You should attach supporting documentation according to the instructions provided within the application form. You should only attach requested documents. We will not consider information in attachments we have not asked for.

Please note: There is a maximum of 5 attachments and a 2 megabyte (MB) limit for each attachment.

7.2   Joint (consortia) applications

We recognise that some organisations may want to join together as a group to deliver a grant activity.

In these circumstances, you must appoint a 'lead organisation'. Only the lead organisation can submit the application form and enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The application must identify all other members of the proposed group. All members of the consortium must comply with the National Redress legislation.

You must have a formal arrangement in place with all parties, and supply evidence of this arrangement to the department, prior to execution of the grant agreement.

7.3   Timing of grant opportunity processes

You must apply between the published opening and closing dates.

Late applications

We 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 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 3 days after the grant opportunity has closed.

The delegate or their appointed representative[4] will determine whether a late application will be accepted. The decision of the delegate will be final and not 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.

Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Table 2: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Activity	Timeframe
Assessment of applications	5 weeks*

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[4] This may be the Community Grants Hub Delegate or nominated staff member of the client agency at the Director (Executive Level 2) level or above

Activity	Timeframe
Approval of outcomes of selection process	3 weeks following the assessment of applications*
Negotiations and award of grant agreements	From 1 – 12 weeks
Notification to unsuccessful applicants	Approximately 2 weeks following notification to successful applicants
Earliest start date of grant activity	1 June 2021
End date of grant activity	31 May 2022

* Please note that the number and type of applications received may impact assessment and approval times

7.4 Questions during the application process

If you have any questions during the application period, contact the Community Grants Hub on 1800 020 283 (option1) or email support@communitygrants.gov.au.

The Community Grants Hub will respond to emailed questions within 5 working days. Answers to questions are posted on the GrantConnect and Community Grants Hub websites.

The question period will close at 5:00 PM AEST Monday 5 April 2021. Following this time, only questions about using and/or submitting the application form will be answered.

8. The grant selection process

8.1 Assessment of grant applications

We will review your application against the eligibility criteria. Only eligible applications will move to the next stage. Eligible applications will be considered through an open competitive grant process.

If eligible, the selection advisory panel will then assess your application against the assessment criteria (see section 6) and against other applications. The selection advisory panel will consider your application on its merits based on:

▪ how well it meets the criteria

▪ how it compares to other applications.

A selection advisory panel will consider whether it provides value with relevant money.[5]

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[5] See glossary for an explanation of 'value with relevant money'.

When assessing the extent to which the application represents value with relevant money, the selection advisory panel will have regard to:

- the overall objective/s to be achieved in providing the grant
- the relative value of the grant sought
- the extent to which the geographic location of the application matches identified communities
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the program outcomes/objectives
- how the grant activities will target economic development in the identified communities.

The assessment plan for the round and the process of assessment will be reviewed by a probity advisor independent of the Australian Government and a report provided to the delegate prior to recommendations being made to the decision maker.

8.2 Financial viability

Applicants may be subject to a financial viability assessment. The financial viability assessment forms part of the risk mitigation strategy and can include:

- establishing whether relevant persons have any adverse business history (for example current or past bankruptcy)
- assessment of the financial health of an entity.

8.3 Who will assess and select applications?

The selection advisory panel will assess each eligible application on its merits and compare it to other eligible applications. The selection advisory panel will also make recommendations to the decision maker on allocating projects across all eligible communities and prioritising more disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

The assessment will have 4 phases:

- Phase 1: ranking of all eligible applications into an order of merit.
- Phase 2: eliminating projects that do not meet a minimum threshold of value with relevant money. This would constitute a ranking of 2 out of 5.
- Phase 3: adjusting the order of merit by applying a weighting to prioritise funding for the more disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, accounting for the impacts of water recovery. For those communities previously eligible under Rounds 1 and 2, consideration will be given to the amounts of program funding awarded against notional funding thresholds to ensure a distribution of funding that addresses the impacts of water recovery on employment and economic development opportunities and ensures a fair distribution of funds within the competitive process. Consideration will also be given to those communities previously ineligible and who have therefore received no program funding to date.
- Phase 4: assigning funding available to the highest ranked projects according to the order of merit, until available program funding has been exhausted.

Projects that exceed the notional funding amount of $1,000,000 (GST exclusive) will be considered in the context of the value for money they offer against all other projects during Phase 1. Consideration will be given to the time in which projects can be delivered and the number of communities provided benefit by the projects.

Applicants should note the selection advisory panel may recommend a lower amount of funding for projects to the decision maker to maximise the number of projects to be funded and maximise the number of communities with projects. The selection advisory panel may also recommend additional

value with relevant money projects from the order of merit to the decision maker for future funding if additional funding beyond the $34 million (GST exclusive) allocated to Round 3 of the program becomes available.

The selection advisory panel will comprise departmental officers, one (or more) economic development expert(s), and other members at the department's discretion. Panel members will undertake training to ensure consistent assessment of all applications and a thorough understanding of probity principles.

During consideration of proposals, the selection advisory panel may seek external advice on any aspect of a proposal to inform the assessment process, including from relevant local government agencies, state governments and/or the Australian Local Government Association.

Any expert/advisor, including Commonwealth Officials, will be required/expected to perform their duties in accordance with the CGRGs.

The selection advisory panel may seek additional information about you or your application and this may delay completion of the selection process. It may do this from within the Commonwealth, even if the sources are not nominated by you as referees. The selection advisory panel may also consider information about you or your application that is available through the normal course of business.

The selection advisory panel recommends grant applications to the decision maker for approval.

8.4   Who will approve grants?

The Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia (the decision maker) decides which grants to approve based on the recommendations of the selection advisory panel and the availability of grant funds for the purposes of the grant program.

The decision maker's decision is final in all matters, including the:

▪ approval of the grant

▪ grant funding amount to be awarded

▪ the terms and conditions of the grant.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

9.   Notification of application outcomes

We will write to you about the outcome of your application. If you are successful, you will be advised if any specific conditions are attached to the grant.

9.1   Feedback on your application

A feedback summary will be published on the Community Grants Hub website to provide all organisations with easy access to information about the grant selection process and the main strengths and areas for improving applications.

Individual feedback will be available. The process for requesting individual feedback will be included in the letter advising the outcome of your application.

10. Successful grant applications

10.1 The grant agreement

You must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth. We will offer successful applicants a Commonwealth Standard Grant Agreement for this grant opportunity.

Each grant agreement has general/standard grant conditions that cannot be changed. Sample grant agreements may be available on GrantConnect and Community Grants Hub websites as part of the grant documentation. We will use a schedule to outline the specific grant requirements.

We must execute a grant agreement with you before we can make any payments. We are not responsible for any of your expenditure until a grant agreement is executed.

Your grant agreement may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the decision maker. These will be identified in the grant agreement.

The Commonwealth may recover grant funds if there is a breach of the grant agreement.

Commonwealth Standard Grant Agreement

We will use a Commonwealth Standard Grant Agreement.

You will have up to twenty (20) business days from the date of a written offer to sign and return this grant agreement. The grant agreement is not considered to be executed until both you and the Commonwealth have signed the grant agreement. During this time, we will work with you to finalise details.

The offer may lapse if both parties do not sign the grant agreement within this time. Under certain circumstances, we may extend this period. We base the approval of your grant on the information you provide in your application.

10.2 Commonwealth Child Safe Framework

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse highlighted the need for organisations to adopt child safe practices including appropriate screening of staff, mandatory reporting and adoption of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. The Australian Government committed to a new Commonwealth-wide framework to protect children and young people it is responsible for – the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework (CCSF).

The Australian Government is considering appropriate ways to apply the requirements of the CCSF to grant recipients. A child safety clause is likely to be included in a grant agreement where the Commonwealth considers the grant is for:

- services directly to children
- activities that involve contact with children that is a usual part of, and more than incidental to, the grant activity.

A child safety clause may also be included in the grant agreement if the Commonwealth considers the grant activity involves children more broadly.

The successful applicant will be required to comply with all child safety obligations included in the grant agreement published with this grant opportunity or notified to the successful applicant prior to execution of the grant agreement. Irrespective of the child safety obligations in the grant agreement you must always comply with your state and territory legislative requirements for working with children and mandatory reporting.

10.3   Specific legislation, policies and industry standards

You are required to be compliant with all relevant laws and regulations; however, you may be requested to demonstrate compliance with the following legislation and/or their state and territory equivalents:

- *EPBC Act*
- *Fair Work Act 2009*
- *Water Act 2007*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

If your grant activities involve pest animals, you must adhere to relevant animal welfare legislation and requirements, and voluntary and/or mandatory Codes of Practice and Standard Operating Procedures for the management of relevant pest animals, as well as adhering to relevant federal and state/territory legislation and regulations.

If your grant activities involve pest plants, you must adhere to relevant federal and state/territory legislation and regulations.

10.4   Multicultural access and equity

The Australian Government's *Multicultural Access and Equity Policy* obliges Australian Government agencies to ensure their policies, programs and services – including those provided by contractors and service delivery partners – are accessible to, and deliver equitable outcomes for, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Grant applicants should consider how they will ensure their services will be accessible to people from CALD backgrounds. For example, service delivery partners may require cultural competency skills. In addition, services, projects, activities or events may require the use of professional translating or interpreting services in order to communicate with clients who have limited English proficiency. Based on an assessment of the client target group, costs for translating and interpreting services should be factored into grant applications.

10.5   How we pay the grant

The grant agreement will state:

- the maximum grant amount to be paid
- any financial contributions you will make, if any
- any financial contribution provided by a third party.

We will not exceed the maximum grant amount under any circumstances. If you incur extra costs, you must meet them yourself.

We will make payments according to an agreed schedule set out in the grant agreement. Payments are subject to satisfactory progress on the project.

If you are registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST), where applicable, we will add GST to your grant payment and issue you with a Recipient Created Tax Invoice.

If a Government Related Entity is deemed successful, GST will not apply.

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. We do not provide advice on your particular taxation circumstances.

11. Announcement of grants

If successful, your grant will be listed on the [GrantConnect](#) website 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by section 5.3 of the [CGRGs.](#)

12. How we monitor your grant activity

12.1 Keeping us informed

You should let us know if anything is likely to affect your grant activities or organisation.

We need to know of any changes to your organisation or its business activities, particularly if they affect your ability to complete your grant, carry on business and pay debts due because of these changes.

If you become aware of a breach of the terms and conditions under the grant agreement, you must contact us immediately.

You must notify us of events relating to your grant and provide an opportunity for the Minister or their representative to attend.

12.2 Reporting

You must submit reports in line with the grant agreement and the attached activity work plan. The activity work plan documents planned deliverables, milestones and outputs for the funded project. Successful applicants' progress and outcomes against the activity work plan will be monitored throughout the grant through regular reports.

We will provide sample templates for these reports. We will remind you of your reporting obligations before a report is due. We will expect you to report on:

- progress against agreed grant activity milestones and outcomes
- expenditure of the grant.

The amount of detail you provide in your reports should be relative to the size and complexity of the grant and the grant amount.

We will monitor progress by assessing reports you submit and may conduct site visits or request records to confirm details of your reports if necessary. Occasionally, we may need to re-examine claims, ask for more information or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

Activity Work Plan reports

Activity Work Plan reports must:

- include evidence of your progress toward completion of agreed activities and outcomes
- show the total eligible expenditure incurred to date
- be submitted by the report due date outlined in the grant agreement (you can submit reports ahead of time if you have completed relevant activities).

We will only make grant payments when we receive satisfactory progress reports.

You must tell us of any reporting delays as soon as you become aware of them.

Ad-hoc reports

We may ask you for ad-hoc reports on your grant. This may be to provide an update on progress, or any significant delays or difficulties in completing the grant activity.

Final report

When you complete the grant activity, you must submit a final report.

Final reports must:

- identify if and how outcomes have been achieved
- include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
- identify the total eligible expenditure incurred
- be submitted by the due date and in the format provided in the grant agreement
- include an independently audited financial acquittal report.

12.3   Audited financial acquittal report

We will ask you to provide an independently audited financial acquittal report. A financial acquittal report will verify that you spent the grant in accordance with the grant agreement.

12.4   Grant agreement variations

We recognise that unexpected events may affect your progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your grant agreement. You can request a variation by contacting the department in writing.

You should not assume that a variation request will be successful. We will consider your request based on provisions in the grant agreement and the likely impact on achieving outcomes.

12.5   Compliance visits

We may visit you during or at the completion of your grant activity to review your compliance with the grant agreement. We will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

12.6   Record keeping

We may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement.

12.7   Evaluation

We will evaluate the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Round 3 grant opportunity to see how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and reports for this purpose. We may also ask you for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the program was in achieving its outcomes.

We may contact you up to 2 years after you finish your grant for more information to assist with program evaluation.

12.8   Acknowledgement

If you make a public statement about a grant activity funded under the program, we require you to acknowledge the grant by using the following:

'This Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program project received grant funding from the Australian Government.'
or

'This project was funded by the Australian Government under the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program.'

13.   Probity

The Australian Government will make sure that the grant opportunity process is fair, according to the published guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct and is consistent with the CGRGs.

These guidelines may be changed by the department. When this happens, the revised guidelines will be published on GrantConnect and the Community Grants Hub websites.

13.1   Enquiries and feedback

Complaints about this grant opportunity

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's Client Service Charter applies to complaints about this grant opportunity. All complaints about this grant opportunity, including grant decisions, must be made in writing.

Any questions you have about grant decisions for this grant opportunity should be sent to MDBEDP@awe.gov.au.

Complaints about the selection process

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

Details of what makes an eligible complaint can be provided by asking the Community Grants Hub. Applicants can use the online complaints form on the Department of Social Services (DSS) website, or contact the DSS Complaints line.

Phone: 1800 634 035

Email: complaints@dss.gov.au

Mail: Complaints
          GPO Box 9820
          Canberra ACT 2601

Complaints to the Ombudsman

If you do not agree with the way the Community Grants Hub or the department has handled your complaint, you may complain to the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will not usually look into a complaint unless the matter has first been raised directly with the Community Grants Hub or the department.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can be contacted on:

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

13.2   Conflicts of interest

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

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 think there is an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and Community Grants Hub in writing immediately.

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*. Selection advisory panel members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

We publish our conflict of interest policy on the Community Grants Hub website.

13.3   Privacy

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

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

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone else for the primary purpose for which it was collected, unless an exemption applies.

The Australian Government may also use and give out information about grant applicants and grant recipients under this grant opportunity in any other Australian Government business or function. This includes disclosing grant information on GrantConnect as required for reporting purposes and giving information to the Australian Taxation Office for compliance purposes.

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

As part of your application, you declare your ability to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* (the Act) and the Australian Privacy Principles and impose the same privacy obligations on officers, employees, agents and subcontractors that you engage to assist with the activity, in respect of personal information you collect, use, store, or disclose in connection with the activity. Accordingly, you must not do anything, which if done by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment would breach an Australian Privacy Principle as defined in the Act.

13.4   Confidential information

Other than information available in the public domain, you agree not to give out to any person, other than us, any confidential information relating to the grant application and/or agreement, without our prior written approval. The obligation will not be breached where you are required by law, Parliament or a stock exchange to disclose the relevant information or where the relevant information is publicly available (other than through breach of a confidentiality or non-disclosure obligation).

We may at any time, require you to arrange for you; or your employees, agents or subcontractors to give a written undertaking relating to nondisclosure of our confidential information in a form we consider acceptable.

We will keep any information in connection with the grant agreement confidential to the extent that it meets all of the 3 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.

We will not be in breach of any confidentiality agreement if the information is disclosed to:

- 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.

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

13.5   Freedom of information

All documents that the Australian Government has, including those about this grant opportunity, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act).

The purpose of the FOI Act gives people the ability to get information held by the Australian Government and its organisations. Under the FOI Act, people can ask for documents the Australian Government has. People may not be able to get these documents if these documents need to protect essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons who the information relates to.

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

By mail: Freedom of Information Team
                Government and Executive Services Branch
                Department of Social Services (DSS)
                GPO Box 9820
                Canberra ACT 2601

By email: foi@dss.gov.au

14.   Consultation

Consultation on the program was undertaken prior to the release of the Round 1 guidelines and formed part of the community engagement process for the Sefton report. The result of the Sefton panel's discussions was the inclusion of 2 recommendations in its final report on the extension and expansion of the program.

The findings and the recommendations of the Sefton report have been taken into account in developing this grant opportunity, in particular in helping to identify communities targeted by the round.

Community views on the program have most recently been sought through a Have Your Say process conducted on the Round 3 guidelines by the department between 18 December 2020 and 22 January 2021.

Consultation with Basin communities continues to demonstrate the Australian Government's commitment to communities as highlighted in the Murray–Darling Communities Investment Package. Additionally, this consultation process assists in ensuring Round 3 grants will be delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible to achieve program objectives.

Feedback received is published on the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's website at https://haveyoursay.awe.gov.au/economic-development-program and via https://www.agriculture.gov.au/water/mdb/programs/basin-wide/edpgrants

In total, 13 responses (including 4 written submissions) were received. The responses were from all Basin states. From the responses we determined:

- 77.8% of respondents answering the question on the clarity of the draft guidelines agreed or strongly agreed that they were easy to read and understand, with only 11% disagreeing.
- Only 55.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the application process was straightforward, 33.3% were either neutral or did not respond and 11.1% disagreed.
- 100% of those answering the relevant question agreed that there was a clear linkage between the eligible activities and the development of their local economy.

15. Glossary

Term	Definition
accountable authority	see subsection 12(2) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.*
administering entity	when an entity that is not responsible for the policy, is responsible for the administration of part or all of the grant administration processes.
assessment criteria	are 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 grant opportunity, to determine application rankings.
commencement date	the expected start date for the grant activity.
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 PGPA Act.
Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines (CGRGs)	establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and articulate the expectations for all non-corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration. Under this overarching framework, non-corporate Commonwealth entities undertake grants administration based on the mandatory requirements and key principles of grants administration.
completion date	the expected date that the grant activity must be completed and the grant spent by.
co-sponsoring entity	when 2 or more entities are responsible for the policy and the appropriation for outcomes associated with it.
date of effect	can be the date on 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.
delegate	this may be the Community Grants Hub Delegate or nominated staff member of the client agency at the Director (Executive Level 2) level or above.
eligibility criteria	refer to the mandatory criteria which must be met to qualify for a grant. Assessment criteria may apply in addition to eligibility criteria.
funding arrangement manager	is the officer responsible for the ongoing management of the grantee and their compliance with the grant agreement.

Term	Definition
grant	for the purposes of the CGRGs, a 'grant' is an arrangement for the provision of financial assistance by the Commonwealth or on behalf of the Commonwealth: a. under which relevant money[6] or other Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) money[7] 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/activities	refers to the project/tasks/services that the grantee is required to undertake.
grant agreement	sets out the relationship between the parties to the agreement, and specifies the details of the grant.
GrantConnect	is the Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRGs.
grantee	the individual/organisation which has been selected to receive a grant.
grant opportunity	refers to the specific grant round or process where a Commonwealth grant is made available to potential grantees. Grant opportunities may be open or targeted, and will reflect the relevant grant selection process.
grant program	a 'program' carries its natural meaning and is intended to cover a potentially wide range of related activities aimed at achieving government policy outcomes. A grant program is a group of one or more grant opportunities under a single [entity] Portfolio Budget Statement Program.
Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Program	described within the entity's Portfolio Budget Statement, 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.

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[6] Relevant money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 8, Dictionary.

[7] Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 105, Rules in relation to other CRF money.

Term	Definition
selection advisory panel	provides strategic oversight, advice and recommendations to the decision maker on assessed applications from the program specific, service provider composition and service location perspectives.
selection criteria	comprise eligibility criteria and assessment criteria.
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.
value with relevant money	one of the key principles of the CGRGs, this is a judgement of the extent to which the grant proposal represents an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public resources and is determined from a variety of considerations. When administering a grant opportunity, an official should consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of each proposal including, but not limited to the: ▪ quality of the project proposal and activities ▪ extent to which the proposal is fit for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives ▪ extent to which the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the grantee and government's outcomes being achieved ▪ potential grantee's relevant experience and performance history.

Appendix A.

Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program
Round 3 Communities (Local Government Areas)

Legend

- MDB EDP R3 Communities - LGAs
- Local Government Areas
- Murray-Darling Basin

Paroo (S)

Balonne (S)

Brewarrina (SC)

Moree Plains (SC)

Gwydir (SC)

Bourke (SC)

Walgett (SC)

Narrabri (SC)

Coonamble (SC)

Warren (SC)

Central Darling (SC)

Narromine (SC)

Loxton Waikerie (DC)

Berri Barmera (C)

Renmark Paringa (C)

Wentworth (SC)

Carrathool (SC)

Bland (SC)

Mid Murray (C)

Balranald (SC)

Hay (SC)

Griffith (CC)

Mildura (RC)

Murray River (C)

Murrumbidgee (C)

Leeton (SC)

Edward River (C)

Murray Bridge (RC)

Swan Hill (RC)

Gannawarra (S)

Federation (C)

Coorong District (C)

Berrigan (SC)

Alexandrina (C)

Loddon (S)

Moira (S)

Greater Shepparton (C)

Campaspe (S)

Data sources
State local government areas: data.gov.au

Map produce by Water Division
Department of Agriuclture, Water and the Environment December 2020

0   125   250   500 km