

Murray–Darling Basin Economic Development Program - Round 3

Questions and Answers

Version 2 – 23 March 2021

These Questions and Answers should be read in conjunction with the Murray–Darling Basin Economic Development Program - Round 3 Grant Opportunity Guidelines (the guidelines) and all other relevant grant opportunity documents available on the Community Grants Hub website.

This document will be updated as required and as new questions arise. If you do have other questions please contact the Community Grants Hub on 1800 020 283 or at support@communitygrants.gov.au.

Contents

Who can apply?	4
1. Which communities are eligible for funding?	4
2. How were the eligible LGAs for the program chosen?.....	4
3. Why were LGAs selected for this round rather than unique communities?.....	5
4. Why is my community / LGA not eligible to apply when we are doing it tough too?	5
5. Where can I find the research conducted on the socio-economic impacts of water recovery on Basin communities?	5
6. How did the MDBA look at impacts in its research?	6
7. How did the Sefton report influence the design of Round 3?.....	6
8. Is it okay if my proposed project also benefits regions outside of the eligible LGA?	7
9. Is this program aimed at providing funding for Indigenous communities?.....	7
10. I am in an eligible community but I am/my organisation is not eligible to apply. Why?...	7
11. Can apply with another organisation or as part of a group of organisations?	7
12. Are there other options for getting support for my community?	8
What can I apply for?.....	8



13. How much funding is available for Round 3 of the program?	8
14. It is generally acknowledged that Basin communities have been impacted to varying degrees by water recovery activities. Does this round recognise this?	8
15. Is the funding on-going?	9
16. How many financial years is funding available over?	9
17. The project I would like to propose would run beyond June 2022. Can the program timeframe be extended or can I apply for funding beyond this time?	9
18. Why the shorter timeframe?	9
19. Can I apply for other funding, including drought funding, and this program?	9
20. What can grant funding be used for?	10
21. Can grant funding be used for other activities such as long-term strategic planning or establishing networks?	10
22. What kind of projects were funded under Rounds 1 and 2 of the program?	10
23. Can I be funded to prepare my application?	11
24. As the map is not very detailed, how can I determine if a particular location is eligible under the program?	11
25. Are those projects where only a small amount of the project location is present within an eligible LGA, eligible to apply?	12
26. Will the decision maker approve a different grant amount to the amount I requested?	12
How do I apply?	12
27. What is the closing time and date for applications?	12
28. I cannot find my local government area in the drop-down list for the Service Areas section in the application form? Is my community not eligible?	13
29. Do word limits apply to selection criteria?	13
30. Do applicants need to explain how water recovery under the Basin Plan has impacted their community?	13
31. Where can I find assistance to describe the benefits of my organisation's proposed project to the community?	13
32. Should I use GST inclusive or GST exclusive values in my application?	14
33. When providing financial information for the project, do I include any contributions being provided by the applying organisation or other third parties?	14



34. Where can I find other general assistance with developing and lodging an application?	14
35. Where should I go for further information?	14
36. Is there a reference number for my application?	15
37. I had started an application some time ago and the information has now been lost/altered/corrupted. What do I do?	15
38. How can I submit the application form?.....	15
39. If I am not able to submit my application by the due time and date, can I be granted an extension?	15
What happens next?	16
40. How will you ensure that projects are in the best interests of a community?	16
41. When will I know the outcome of my application?	16
42. Will there be future funding rounds?	16
Updated Questions and Answers on 23 March 2021	17
43. Who can I contact to find out more information on State priorities for economic development?	17



Who can apply?

1. Which communities are eligible for funding?

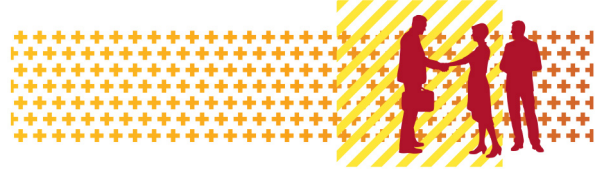
The boundaries of eligible communities in this round are the same as those of the relevant Local Government Areas (LGAs) and are named as such. Round 3 is limited to the 38 LGA communities in the table below. A map showing these communities can be found at **Appendix A** to the guidelines.

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	Moir	

2. How were the eligible LGAs for the program chosen?

LGAs included as eligible under Round 3 are all those that include communities identified as having measurable impacts from water recovery under the Basin Plan. Communities have been identified through a variety of sources including:

- the Murray–Darling Basin Authority’s (MDBA’s) 2016 Northern Basin Review and 2017 Basin Plan Evaluation
- Australian Government data on locations of water recovery and analysis of impact, including the MDBA’s 2020 Basin Plan Evaluation
- the recommendations and suggestions of the *‘Independent assessment of social and economic conditions in the Basin’* (Sefton report) have also been taken into account, including:



- to prioritise more vulnerable and disadvantaged communities most impacted by this water recovery, and
- to focus on 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.

3. Why were LGAs selected for this round rather than unique communities?

The boundaries of the communities eligible under Round 3 are based on LGAs. This expansion of eligible areas takes into consideration the development of impacts of Basin Plan water recovery since MDBA assessments in 2016 and 2017, including in secondary and tertiary industries and services. It is also mindful of the social and economic linkages between populations within LGAs and the administrative burdens on community organisations of limiting benefits to very contained areas within LGAs.

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

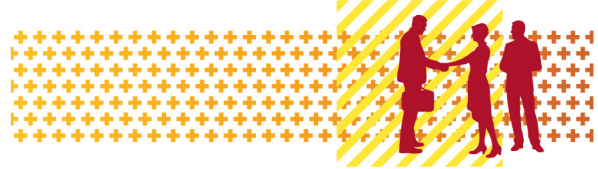
This program is not intended to address all the difficult economic conditions and circumstances that many Basin communities are facing due to other factors such as COVID-19, drought, job losses from mechanisation, or urban migration. There are other state and federal government programs designed to assist communities more broadly.

This program addresses the impacts of Basin Plan water recovery only.

5. Where can I find the research conducted on the socio-economic impacts of water recovery on Basin communities?

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority’s (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.

The Australian Government also commissioned an independent panel to consider social and economic conditions in the Murray-Darling Basin and help to further understand the impacts of water reform on Basin communities - the *‘Independent assessment of social and economic conditions in the Basin’* (the Sefton report).



More information on MDBA research, including the MDBA's 2020 Basin Plan Evaluation and the Sefton report on can be found at the following links:

- [Northern Basin Review](#)
- [Southern Basin Review](#)
- [Sefton Report](#)
- [2020 Basin Plan Evaluation](#)

6. How did the MDBA look at impacts in its research?

The Northern and Southern Basin Reviews 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.

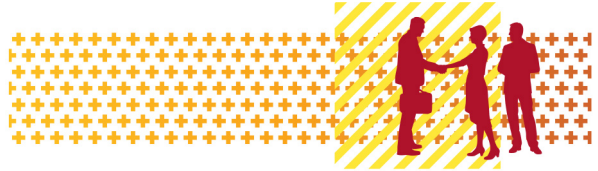
The research also considers the change to employment within the context of a number of other factors. These include:

- 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.

7. How did the Sefton report influence the design of Round 3?

A key focus of the report was conditions in communities identified by the panel's research as vulnerable to impacts from water recovery. Although the panel was unable to separate out the specific impacts of Basin Plan water reform from broader factors affecting regional communities, the Sefton report recommended that funding should be prioritised to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities that have been most impacted by water reform.

Additional consideration has been given to identifying communities that had water recovered through open tender buybacks and that have not received investment through other measures such as on-farm irrigation upgrades



8. Is it okay if my proposed project also benefits regions outside of the eligible LGA?

It is a condition of the program that the benefit of a project occurs within an eligible LGA. Incidental benefits for areas outside an eligible area arising from a project designed to benefit an eligible LGA would be acceptable. Projects intended to primarily benefit areas outside an eligible LGA would not be acceptable.

9. Is this program aimed at providing funding for Indigenous communities?

The program supports Indigenous communities as part of broader communities.

Indigenous organisations are specifically identified as organisations eligible for funding. The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment welcomes projects from Indigenous organisations, including projects with an Indigenous focus in one or more eligible communities.

10. I am in an eligible community but I am/my organisation is not eligible to apply. Why?

This program provides funding to not-for-profit community organisations, not individuals or private, or for-profit enterprises. The measures of impacts of water recovery are on a community level and so the remedy is also on a community level.

Although not directly eligible, no entity types are excluded from the program. 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, with the latter applying as the lead applicant - accountable for any successful grant.

The program intends for benefits to be experienced by as broad a cross-section of the community as possible..

11. 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 or partnership agreement) in place with all other members prior to execution of an agreement with the Australian Government.



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

There are a number of state and Commonwealth programs that can provide support to rural communities. Commonwealth grant opportunities can be found at www.grants.gov.au.

What can I apply for?

13. How much funding is available for Round 3 of the program?

Up to \$34 million (GST exclusive) is available under this round of the program.

A minimum amount of \$50,000 (GST exclusive) has been set for each eligible project. An application for grant funding below the set minimum amount will be deemed ineligible and the application will not be assessed.

The notional maximum amount of \$1,000,000 (GST exclusive) has been set for each project. Applications seeking more than \$1,000,000 (GST exclusive) per project may be considered but only if they represent value for money for economic benefits sought.

14. It is generally acknowledged that Basin communities have been impacted to varying degrees by water recovery activities. Does this round recognise this?

The program continues to be implemented to reflect that some communities have experienced greater impacts from water recovery than others.

Consideration has been given to the recommendations and findings of the '*Independent assessment of social and economic conditions in the Murray-Darling Basin*' (Sefton report) to prioritise more vulnerable and disadvantaged communities most negatively impacted by water reforms.

The program addresses the impacts of water recovery under the Basin Plan, looking at those communities considered most impacted, moderately impacted and those with small impacts. The 2016 and 2017 MDBA assessments are still invaluable in helping to identify those communities, including the more vulnerable and disadvantaged communities least able to adapt to water recovery.

The Sefton report and its referenced research provided some general guidance but also acknowledged the difficulties in identifying the impacts of water recovery as distinct from other drivers of change such as naturally declining populations, changing commodity prices and farm consolidations.



The Sefton report advice that consideration should be given to identifying communities that had water recovered through open tender buybacks and that have not received investment through other measures such as on-farm irrigation upgrades, was also taken into account.

15. Is the funding on-going?

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

16. How many financial years is funding available over?

Funding is available for projects over two financial years from 2020–21 to 2021–22.

17. The project I would like to propose would run beyond June 2022. Can the program timeframe be extended or can I apply for funding beyond this time?

No. Only projects that intend to complete by the end of the 2021–22 financial year should apply.

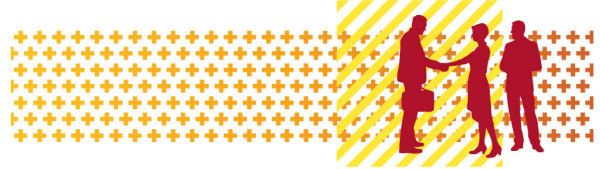
18. Why the shorter timeframe?

Rounds 1 and 2 of the program provided for projects of up to 3 years. This round of the program intends to provide rapid investment in Basin communities at a time when those communities are facing increasing challenges, including from COVID-19.

19. Can I apply for other funding, including drought funding, and this program?

The guidelines for Round 3 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. Can grant funding be used for other activities such as long-term strategic planning or establishing networks?

Section 5.1 of the guidelines states grant funding can be used to deliver strategic planning that addresses and responds to the economic challenges faced by a community as a result of water recovery activities under the Basin Plan.

Funding can also be used to establish a network to bring together key regional representatives for enhanced or leveraged benefits to the community.

The types of projects listed in Section 5.1 of the guidelines are illustrative only. It is for a community to identify and put forward a proposal for activities that would best address their circumstances and develop their local economy. Other project activities will be considered (noting ineligible funding activities listed in Section 5.4 of the guidelines).

As with all applications, such projects would need to address the assessment criteria (Section 6 of the guidelines) and will be evaluated on a competitive basis against all criteria.

22. What kind of projects were funded under Rounds 1 and 2 of the program?

The guidelines for previous 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.



The Minister approved 42 projects under Round 1 including: 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.

The Minister approved 32 projects for Round 2 funding including: riverfront revitalisations and riverfront developments, a youth centre construction, aged care facility enhancement and a library redevelopment fit out.

A full list of projects approved for Round 1 and Round 2 funding can be found on the [Murray–Darling Basin Economic Development Program webpage](#).

23. 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. Funding is only available for activities that commence after the signing of a grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

24. As the map is not very detailed, how can I determine if a particular location is eligible under the program?

The map shows the boundary lines of identified and eligible LGAs. In instances where it is unclear if the location for a proposed project is within an eligible LGA and **before** preparing an application, we encourage applicants to:

- first visit the [Australian Local Government Association's Council Maps and Boundaries web page](#), which links to a national map with the boundaries for all LGAs as well as state-specific links for additional details about council maps and boundaries, and
- then seek further clarification, as appropriate, about the eligibility of potential project applications via the Community Grants Hub website.

Although projects may be found eligible due to their physical location being on the boundary lines of an eligible LGA, applications for these projects would still need to clearly demonstrate the benefits of the project within the nominated eligible LGA or LGAs. If there are no benefits within an eligible LGA, the selection advisory panel may find the project ineligible.



25. Are those projects where only a small amount of the project location is present within an eligible LGA, eligible to apply?

Yes, providing they meet the conditions outlined in Section 5 of the Round 3 guidelines and the benefit of the project is for an eligible LGA/s.

The selection advisory panel will assess and rank other eligible applications providing benefits to the same community/ies. Projects on the edges of LGAs will have to compete with those focussed on providing benefit to the eligible LGA/s.

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. Applicants should consider these points carefully before committing to an application.

26. 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 will be 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 Resources, Water and Northern Australia (the decision maker) and the decision of the Minister is final.

In addition, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment 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?

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

The program is now open and the closing date for applications is 9 pm AEST on Monday, 12 April 2021. It is recommended that you submit your application **well before the closing time and date**.



28. I cannot find my local government area in the drop-down list for the Service Areas section in the application form? Is my community not eligible?

There is a slight difference in the titles of 2 South Australian LGAs between the guidelines and the application form. The guidelines list the LGAs consistent with the name used by the respective local government agency whereas the drop-down list in the application form is derived from 2020 [Australian Statistical Geography Standard](#), a framework of statistical areas used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

For the local government area of Berri Barmera, select Berri and Barmera (C) in the relevant section of the online application form. For the local government area of Coorong, select The Coorong (DC).

In other instances where you cannot find your local government area, please refer to [Question 24](#) in this document for further information or contact the Community Grants Hub at support@communitygrants.gov.au

29. Do word limits apply to selection criteria?

Yes, there is a limit of 3,500 – 6,000 characters (approximately 525 – 900 words) for each selection criteria. Attachments may be used as detailed in the guidelines and supported in the application form. You should only attach requested documents as the selection advisory panel is not obligated to consider any additional material and does not have to take it into account during evaluations. The attachments requested include the project plan (including milestone schedule and budget) template and applications using the provided templates will be viewed more favourably.

30. Do applicants need to explain how water recovery under the Basin Plan has impacted their community?

No, in being identified as an eligible community it is recognised that your community has experienced socio and economic impacts from water recovery.

31. Where can I find assistance to describe the benefits of my organisation's proposed project to the community.

It is important to sufficiently answer each of the assessment criteria (Section 6 of the guidelines) including the first criterion relating to the economic development benefits of the project to the community (weighted at 40% of the assessment)

The package of documentation found with this grant opportunity listing provides assistance and guidance to support applicants address each of the assessment criteria.



32. Should I use GST inclusive or GST exclusive values in my application?

All amounts in your application should be exclusive of GST. Should your application be successful, a number of factors will determine whether your grant payment will be subject to GST, such as your organisation's GST registration status and whether the funding is being provided to a government-related entity.

33. When providing financial information for the project, do I include any contributions being provided by the applying organisation or other third parties?

Yes, in the budget section of the project plan template. Please only note cash contributions – no in-kind.

All amounts in your main application form should relate to the Australian Government grant funding being applied for through the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program – Round 3. For example, in the Financials section of the application where you are asked to enter the amount of funding requested by financial year for each service area applicable to the application. This must break down the grant funding being applied for and not include any other contributions to the project.

34. Where can I find other general assistance with developing and lodging an application?

There are a number of reference materials to assist you with developing an application:

- The package of documentation found with this grant opportunity listing provides assistance and guidance to support applicants address each of the assessment criteria – Economic Benefits, Community Support and Benefits and Organisational Capability: [Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program \(Round 3\) | Community Grants Hub](#)
- General Feedback was published on the previous round which details where applications generally could have been strengthened and areas where claims and supporting materials were generally inadequate: [Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program \(Round 2\) | Community Grants Hub](#)
- There is general information and fact sheets for applicants on the Community Grants Hub website, including some focussed on areas of the application form, evidencing claims and the application processes: [Information for applicants | Community Grants Hub](#)

35. Where should I go for further information?

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



36. Is there a reference number for my application?

There are two reference numbers applicable to your application. The first is your application ID. This is generated upon starting an application. As you can save, exit and return to your application up until it is submitted, you should make a note of this reference for accessing a saved application at a later date.

The second reference is your submission ID. Upon successfully submitting an application, this reference will appear on the screen. In addition to keeping a copy of your application (refer to Question 38), you should make a note of this reference and quote it in any correspondence about the application.

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

If this has happened to you contact the Community Grants Hub on 1800 020 283 or email support@communitygrants.gov.au.

38. How can I submit the application form?

The application is an online 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.

At the time you submit your application form, you should download a copy and/or email a copy to an address you enter. Should the email not be received by you, contact the Community Grants Hub.

39. 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.



What happens next?

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

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment would like to see **broad** community support for each proposed project. Applicants must demonstrate how the project is supported by the community and describe 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.

41. 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.

42. Will there be future funding rounds?

The decision to undertake another round of funding is at the discretion of the Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia, (the decision maker). A future funding round is possible but eligible applicants for this round should apply in this round and not rely on a possible future funding round.



Updated Questions and Answers on 23 March 2021

43. Who can I contact to find out more information on State priorities for economic development?

State departments with responsibility for state or regional development can provide assistance to applicants on addressing the selection criteria, which ask applicants to describe the project's *'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'*.

State contacts:

State	Email or web address	Telephone
New South Wales	margaret.odwyer@regional.nsw.gov.au	02 9714 3884 0408 963 148
- Riverina		
- North West	melinda.atkin@regional.nsw.gov.au	0436 463 334
- Central and Far West	ben.morgan@regional.nsw.gov.au	0428 842 282
Queensland	jody.dare@dsdti@qld.gov.au	(07) 4624 1573
- Paroo		
- Balonne	sarah.holt@dsdti@qld.gov.au	(07) 4624 1543
South Australia	Barbara-ann.Cowey@sa.gov.au	08 8595 9153 0488 951 790
Victoria	https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/about-rdv/contacts-and-assistance	

Your state contact may also be able to assist applicants by providing information on other and complementary funding opportunities that applicants may be able to access.