



Australian Government

**Community
Grants Hub**
Improving your grant experience



Future Drought Fund: Drought Resilience Innovation Expression of Interest and Grants Program

Interim EOI feedback for Innovation and Proof-of-Concept grant applications

Overview

The Expression of Interest (EOI) grant opportunity application period opened on 29 July 2021 and closed at 9:00 pm AEST on Wednesday 8 September 2021.

The grant opportunity received over 800 applications for the 3 grants. Following assessment, 22 Innovation grant applications and 15 Proof-of-Concept grant applications were selected to proceed to the Targeted Competitive Round. 180 Ideas grant applications were received.

Grant applications that did not progress to the Targeted Competitive Rounds are being considered through an assessment process for potential funding as an Ideas grant.

There was a strong interest in the program and applications progressing to the next stage were of a very high standard. Applications were assessed according to the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.


Interim feedback

This feedback will assist applicants to understand what generally comprised a strong EOI application and the content of quality responses to the assessment criteria for this grant opportunity.

Successful grant applications clearly identified how their project would deliver drought resilience outcomes, and public good benefits, would be innovative or novel, and would link directly to the investment objectives and priorities in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. Furthermore, the most competitive Proof-of-Concept grant applicants clearly identified how their projects would support feasibility and/or viability testing for innovative ideas and described the project costs, risks and how these would be managed.

For the Innovation and Proof-of-Concept Grants EOI grant applications, the department was looking for the following points to be addressed, or have the potential to be addressed through the targeted competitive grant application round.

- Applicants needed to explain how the focus of the project would increase drought resilience and what the anticipated impact on drought resilience would be, as opposed to other aims such as productivity improvements (that is drought resilience is the primary aim, rather than a secondary or ancillary outcome). For example, a number of EOI's were focused on water use efficiency, land management practices or production techniques, and it was inferred or stated



this would support drought resilience, without a convincing explanation of how, why, and the significance of the contribution.

- Applicants needed to demonstrate how their idea is innovative, whether it is new or novel. Where relevant, this should have included details on how it is different to, or goes beyond, common practices, and/or provided elaboration about how the project would create a step change in drought resilience practices.
- Applicants needed to clearly identify how the grant funds primary focus would be on development, extension, adoption and early commercialisation activities. Some applied research in the context of these areas of work was acceptable. Applications which had research as their primary focus (whether “pure” or applied), were not the objective of this program.
- Applicants needed to clearly explain how the project delivered public good benefits, and where relevant, acknowledge any private benefits and why public benefits outweighed the private benefits. Public good benefits are the benefits of the project which are not captured by a particular business, individual or other entity.
- Applicants needed to clearly describe impact pathways and how the proposed project would deliver solutions and practice change. Applicants needed to explain how the project could be scaled up, and to provide evidence supporting key stakeholders and end-users engagement in the development and implementation of the project.
- Applicants needed to explain why the project was not funded through other mechanisms, including how the project connected or aligned with trends, and other investments and work which is underway (for example, government funding or international innovation). It would have been useful for applicants to outline how Future Drought Fund investments described on the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment’s website were complementary or aligned with the grant proposal, and not duplicated.
- Applicants could have described how benefits and progress would continue after the grant is completed.

Proof-of-Concept grant applications:

- Needed to articulate the concept and/or hypothesis of the proposal – that is, what is the concept which is “being proven”? How the Proof-of-Concept grant will assist in reducing risks or uncertainty surrounding the idea before more investment is made? This could have been identified through the project resolving technical and other issues which are hampering the development of an innovative product, service or process that would deliver drought resilience. Proof-of-Concept proposals which were about delivering a concept (rather than proving a concept) were not within the scope of this program.
- Needed to state how the funding would be used to develop a prototype, test protocols, run a short demonstration to test feasibility or explore a market opportunity of a product, process or service. That is, what are you going to do with the funding?
- Needed to explain how the project could be scaled up to deliver impact.