Australian Government

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Australian Biological Resources Study: National Taxonomy Research Grant Program (Round 3)

Feedback for applicants

Overview

The National Taxonomy Research Grant Program (NTRGP) provides grants for research into taxonomy and systematics research and to support the training and/or recruitment of taxonomists.

Grants are awarded for projects with the primary aim of undertaking research into the taxonomy of the Australian biota. The Australian Biological Resources Study (ABRS) has 3 *Priority Areas for Research Grants*:

1. Biodiversity, Conservation and Vulnerable and Endangered Species
2. Public, Plant, Animal and Environmental Health
3. Building Taxonomic Capacity.

ABRS aim to support the highest quality research in the field of taxonomy and systematics which also align strongly with the *ABRS Priority Areas for Research Grants*.

The grant opportunity application period opened on 1 November 2021 and closed on 10 December 2021.

The grant opportunity received 46 applications, including one withdrawn and 3 deemed ineligible. Following the Minister for the Environment's decision, 10 applications were selected for funding, to a value of $1,661,539 (GST exclusive) for up to 3 years.

There was a strong interest in the program and successful applications were of a very high standard. Applications were assessed according to the procedure detailed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines and outlined in the selection process below.

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

Selection process

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment used a targeted competitive selection process to select 10 projects to deliver the NTRGP grant.

Applications were screened for eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

All eligible and compliant applications were then assessed based on the weighting given to each criterion. Information on what made a strong response to each criterion is provided below.

Following assessment, a Selection Advisory Panel (the panel) comprised of 7 experts in the field of taxonomy and systematics made final funding recommendations via ABRS to the Minister for the Environment (the delegate).

Forty six applications were received, making the selection of successful grant recipients competitive.

The panel recommended applicants based on the strength of their responses to the selection criteria and their ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. Specifically, the panel recommended applicants who:

- clearly articulated a set of organised and realistic project activities which align with the ABRS Research Priorities
- demonstrated the relevant experience and expertise of the principal and joint researchers to undertake the proposed activities
- identified how the proposed activities would contribute to taxonomy and/or systematics research, and directly benefit an ABRS resource or product
- provided a detailed and well-justified budget which represented good value for money.

The panel recommended 10 projects to the delegate for funding. The delegate made the final decision to approve the grant, including the grant funding amount to be awarded.

Preferred applicants were identified based on the strength of their responses to the selection criterion and their demonstrated ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

Selection results

Ten projects from 9 organisations were selected to deliver the National Taxonomy Research Grant Program (Round 3).

The selected project applications provided strong responses to the selection criteria and demonstrated their ability to meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. Further detail about what constituted a strong response to each criterion is provided below.

Criterion 1

Relevance of the project to ABRS and taxonomic science (40%).

Strength	Example
Strong applications clearly demonstrated how the project adequately addresses the ABRS Research Priorities.	▪ direct links to more than one of the ABRS Research Priorities ▪ provided strong, feasible justification for the link/s to Priorities ▪ tenuous or weak links to the Priorities were ranked lower.
Strong applications clearly demonstrated how the project benefits an ABRS resource or product.	▪ direct benefits to ABRS publications or products/databases ▪ feasible research to produce the outcome which would benefit ABRS products ▪ naming specific ABRS products as benefiting from the proposed research scored higher than less specific or vague links.
Strong applications clearly demonstrated how the project adequately contributes to taxonomy and/or systematics research.	▪ clear outcomes which were realistic in scope ▪ outcomes which would have benefit to the field (such as publications or production of keys and so on) ▪ vague outcomes or outcomes which were not commensurate with the size of grant requested were ranked lower.
Strong applications clearly demonstrated the science is of a good quality.	▪ up to date and sound methodology ▪ excellent range of expertise in investigators, clear evidence of capability for completing the research ▪ demonstrably rigorous and defensible methods.

Criterion 2

Feasibility of proposed research project (40%).

Strength	Example
Strong applications clearly demonstrated the budget is appropriate and represents good value with money.	▪ requested funds are reasonable for the work proposed ▪ no padding of budgets or requests for unnecessary items/activities ▪ clear justification for each budget item in relation to achieving the outcomes of the project.
Strong applications clearly demonstrated the project outcomes were adequately addressed.	▪ well thought out set of outcomes ▪ outcomes which were targeted and realistic in scope, and the time needed to complete the work to achieve each outcome ▪ outcomes linked back to aims and ABRS Research Priorities.
Strong applications clearly demonstrated the methods and project activity were appropriate for success.	▪ methods and techniques proposed had sufficient expertise and support from the investigators ▪ timeframes are realistic to achieve outcomes.
Strong applications clearly demonstrated the timeframe of the project is realistic.	▪ proposals did not over-promise; work was appropriate in scope for the available timeline ▪ time commitments of investigators were reasonable for their contribution to the work.

Criterion 3

Capacity of researchers and/or institutions to deliver (20%).

Strength	Example
Strong applications clearly demonstrated the researchers and host institution were appropriately experienced in delivering taxonomic projects (Research Grants, Early Career Research Grants and Postdoctoral Fellowships only).	▪ CV and previous publications of investigators were strong and provided evidence of (or potential for) providing high-quality research outputs ▪ host institutions had evidence of supporting taxonomic research.
Strong applications clearly demonstrated the grantee's track record in the activity (Research Grants, Early Career Research Grants and Postdoctoral Fellowships only).	▪ track record of investigators was excellent relative to opportunity and demonstrated evidence or potential to deliver on the outcomes listed ▪ selection of joint investigators or collaborators was appropriate for the scope of the project.
Strong applications clearly demonstrated the student/researcher is of sufficient experience/expertise (Honours Scholarships, Masters Scholarships, PhD Scholarship Support Grants and Non-salaried Researcher Grants only).	▪ CV and previous publications of investigators were strong and provided evidence of (or potential for) providing high-quality research outputs ▪ students were assessed relative to opportunity and of their potential for excellence ▪ supervisors of students were appropriately experienced to provide the necessary guidance for the project.
Strong applications clearly demonstrated the student/researcher will have access to appropriate institutional resources to complete the project (Honours Scholarships, Masters Scholarships, PhD Scholarship Support Grants and Non-salaried Researcher Grants only).	▪ track record of investigators was excellent relative to opportunity and demonstrated evidence or potential to deliver on the outcomes listed ▪ selection of joint investigators or collaborators was appropriate for the scope of the project.