Australian Government

Department of Social Services

Feedback for Applicants

Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC)

Individual Capacity Building Grant Opportunity 2020-2021

Overview

The Individual Capacity Building grant opportunity is delivered as part of the Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program which is administered by the Department of Social Services under Outcome 3.2 - Disability and Carers – National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The *Individual Capacity Building Grant Opportunity 2020-2021* seeks to enable systemic, nationwide access to peer support, mentoring and other skills building for people with disability, their carers and families, and is primarily delivered through a national network of Disabled Peoples Organisations and Families Organisations.

The objectives of the Individual Capacity Building grant opportunity are to ensure:

- People with disability have the skills and confidence to participate and contribute to the community and protect their rights through an increase in:
    - skills and capacity
    - motivation, confidence and empowerment to act
    - participation and contribution to community.

- Disabled Peoples Organisations and Families Organisations are strengthened in their capability to deliver services for people with a disability through:
    - improving the organisation's capacity and ability to deliver the organisation's mission and Information, Linkages and Capacity Building in the community.

The expected outcomes of Individual Capacity Building projects are to improve:

- knowledge and skills of people with disability
- motivation and confidence of people with disability
- participation and contribution to community by people with a disability.

The application period opened on 11 March 2020 and closed on 6 May 2020. A total of $85 million (GST exclusive) was available for two streams:

- Individual Capacity Building aimed at building the capacity of people with disability by ensuring that they have the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to participate and contribute to community, and speak up for themselves

- Organisational Capacity Building to improve the ability of Disabled Peoples Organisations and Families Organisations to achieve and strengthen their organisational mission and to deliver activities in the community.

Applicants could apply for funding of between $10,000 (GST exclusive) to $500,000 (GST exclusive) per year, for up to two financial years under the categories outlined below. Funding was prioritised to regions, cohorts and organisations that were not funded in the Individual Capacity Building Program 2019-2020. Funding was also prioritised to those organisations that were successful in the 12-month interim Disabled Peoples and Families Organisations funding round but unsuccessful in the Individual Capacity Building Program 2019-2020.

Category 1: Disabled Peoples Organisation
A Disabled Peoples Organisation was eligible to apply for either a large Individual Capacity Building grant or a small Individual Capacity Building grant. A Disabled Peoples Organisation was also able to apply for an Organisational Capacity Building grant.

Grant opportunity	Minimum and maximum funding request	Grant length
Small Individual Capacity Building	$10,000 to $25,000 (GST excl.) per year	Up to 2 years
Large Individual Capacity Building	$100,000 to $500,000 (GST excl.) per year	Up to 2 years
Organisational Capacity Building	$5,000 to $50,000 (GST excl.) per year	Up to 2 years

Category 2: Family Organisation
A Family Organisation was eligible to apply for either a large Individual Capacity Building grant or a small Individual Capacity Building grant. A Family Organisation was also able to apply for an Organisational Capacity Building grant.

Grant opportunity	Minimum and maximum funding request	Grant length
Small Individual Capacity Building	$10,000 to $25,000 (GST excl.) per year	Up to 2 years
Large Individual Capacity Building	$100,000 to $500,000 (GST excl.) per year	Up to 2 years
Organisational Capacity Building	$5,000 to $50,000 (GST excl.) per year	Up to 2 years

Category 3: Priority Cohort Led Organisations
A Priority Cohort Led Organisation was eligible to apply for either a large Individual Capacity Building grant or a small Individual Capacity Building grant.

Grant opportunity	Minimum and maximum funding request	Grant length
Small Individual Capacity Building	$10,000 to $25,000 (GST excl.) per year	Up to 2 years
Large Individual Capacity Building	$100,000 to $500,000 (GST excl.) per year	Up to 2 years

A total of 467 applications were received. After assessment, 138 applications were selected for funding, totalling $64.904 million (GST exclusive).

The feedback provided below on behalf of the Department of Social Services is to help grant applicants understand what generally comprised stronger and weaker responses to the assessment criteria for this grant opportunity, and how to strengthen future applications.

Future grant opportunities may be available for this program. You can find out about new grant opportunities on GrantConnect.

Selection Process

The open competitive selection process allowed a range of organisations that met the eligibility criteria to apply. Applications were assessed for eligibility against the *Individual Capacity Building Grant Round 2020-2021 Grant Opportunity Guidelines* (Grant Opportunity Guidelines).

All eligible applications were then independently assessed and ranked against the equally weighted assessment criteria in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. Small grant applications were assessed and ranked against Assessment Criterion 1 and 2; large grant applications against Assessment Criterion 1, 2 and 3.

A Selection Advisory Panel (the Panel), comprising of people with disability, National Disability Insurance Agency and Department of Social Services officials with a mix of relevant policy, program and delivery expertise; state and territory government officials; and sector representatives with relevant specialist expertise, then made funding recommendations to the Department of Social Services' decision maker. The recommendations were based on the strength of responses to the assessment criteria and the applicant's ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

The Panel considered all applications and their assessment results and made recommendations on applications having regard to:

- merit
- comparison to other eligible applications
- the ability of the applicant to successfully deliver activities
- the strength of the evidence base underpinning the proposed activity
- whether the application provides value with money.

When assessing the extent to which the application provided value for money, the Panel considered:

- whether the proposed project was in scope of ILC policy and would contribute to meeting the outcomes and objectives of the grant round

- the score achieved in the assessment process

- the extent to which there is a demonstrated commitment to the social model of disability

- the extent to alignment with the definition of Disabled Peoples Organisation, Families Organisation or Priority Cohort Led organisations

- the relative value of the grant sought

- other factors as set out in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

The Department of Social Services' decision maker approved funding to the successful grant recipients.

The successful applicants proposed activities that were eligible, appropriate and considered effective for achieving the program objectives. They demonstrated their suitability for public funding, value for money and met all of the eligibility requirements in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

General feedback

Applicants could have generally strengthened their application by:

- ensuring they thoroughly read the Grant Opportunity Guidelines
- ensuring all aspects of the criteria were addressed
- demonstrating their consideration of the grant program's objectives
- only including relevant information that is not ambiguous
- supporting claims with relevant, reliable and current evidence linking claims back to the policy objectives and the project description to be delivered.

Successful applicants demonstrated their suitability for public funding, value with relevant money, satisfied the Grant Opportunity Guidelines requirements and included strong responses to the assessment criteria.

In general, applications were strengthened by:

- providing evidence that the applicant was an eligible organisation type as either a Disabled Peoples Organisation, Families Organisation or Priority Cohort Led Organisation

- ensuring all aspects of the assessment criteria were addressed, including using the character count available to provide sufficient detail

- supporting claims with relevant, reliable and current evidence for each assessment criteria. This includes linking the applicant's anecdotal evidence with published census or scientific data to support these claims

- linking the project description and project activities to ILC policy objectives and outcomes

- ensuring the activity work plan provided sufficient detail for each project stage

- providing sufficient expenditure detail in the project budget

- ensuring the project budget reflected the scale of the project with respect to the number of people that the project aimed to engage

- ensuring the project budget reflected the ability, experience and capacity of the applicant organisation

- providing evidence that the applicant had relevant skills and expertise to successfully deliver the project

- ensuring a strong focus on measuring outcomes

- demonstrating a program that considered a theory of change

- ensuring that people with disability are employed in delivering all aspects of the project

- clarifying how a proposed activity sufficiently varied from an ongoing ILC project.

Key feedback themes from this grant round are:

Demonstrating the need for the project

Strong applications described the Individual Capacity Building activities to be delivered and the people the activities would assist. Evidence was provided of the need for these activities in that community/cohort and the proposed locations. These applications provided strong supporting evidence, including linking anecdotal evidence with previously published census or scientific data to support their claims.

Demonstrating that the project contributes to ILC outcomes

Strong applications detailed how specific activities would address the identified need and explained how the project approach contributes to ILC policy outcomes. Other strong applications provided a strong evidence base and justification for a pilot project in a new context or cohort.

Establishing ILC as the appropriate funding source

Strong applications detailed how the proposed activities are not able to be funded through other sources and drew distinctions between funding sources. Some applications could not be funded because the proposed activity was the responsibility of other federal, state, territory or local government bodies.

Delivering Individual Capacity Building Program outcomes

Strong applications described how the proposed Individual Capacity Building activities would improve the knowledge, skills, motivation and/or knowledge of people with disability to protect their rights and participate in, and contribute to, the community. Some applications could not be funded as they were better aligned to a different ILC program (e.g. National Information Program or Economic and Community Participation).

Explaining the organisation's connection to community

Strong applications clearly explained the organisation's connection to their community. For example: "Our organisation's mission is for the benefit of the XYZ community. Our organisation has been operating for five years and in that time we have delivered 15 projects with this community in the planned delivery area. The majority of our Board members and staff identify as part of this community."

Demonstrating a strong commitment to the social model of disability

Strong applications clearly described a strong alignment to the social model of disability in their written responses about their organisation. Some applications could not be funded as they did not demonstrate a strong commitment to the social model of disability.

Providing evidence of meeting the Disabled Peoples Organisation eligibility criteria

Strong applications provided evidence as to how their organisation met the Grant Opportunity Guidelines Disabled Peoples Organisation eligibility criteria. Applications for this organisation type described how their organisation was strongly aligned with the social model of disability and were run by and for people with disability. These applications provided consistent information across both text and numerical fields to demonstrate their eligibility.

Many Registered Providers of Support were unable to be funded as they failed to demonstrate that their role as a provider is a secondary activity to fund their organisation's mission as a Disabled Peoples Organisation.

Providing evidence of meeting the Families Organisation eligibility criteria

Strong applications provided evidence as to how their organisation met the Grant Opportunity Guidelines Families Organisation eligibility criteria. Applications for this organisation type described how their organisation was strongly aligned with the social model of disability and run by carers and families of people with disability for carers and families of people with disability. These applications provided consistent information across both text and numerical fields to demonstrate their eligibility.

Many Registered Providers of Support were unable to be funded as they failed to demonstrate that their role as a provider is a secondary activity to fund their organisation's mission as a Families Organisation.

Providing evidence of meeting the Priority Cohort Led Organisation eligibility criteria

Strong applications provided evidence as to how their organisation met the Grant Opportunity Guidelines Priority Cohort Led Organisation eligibility criteria. Applications for this organisation type demonstrated a clear connection to the priority cohort group, the community they represent and a commitment to the social model of disability.

Many organisations failed to demonstrate a clear connection to the cohort they claimed to represent. Stronger applications provided credible evidence of their connection to community through written responses about their mission, organisational structure and activities. These applications also provided consistent information across both text and numerical fields to demonstrate this community connection.

Demonstrating people with disability were central to activity design and implementation

Strong applications detailed how people with disability were central to the design and implementation of project activities. These applications described how the project activities were designed in collaboration with people with disability and connected this description to prior work, an evidence base or other relevant information to illustrate this co-design approach. These applications also outlined how people with disability would be included across all aspects of the project including delivery of activities and governance structures.

Strong applications also specified which group of people with disability would be engaged with the project and included commitments to employing people with disability.

Choosing an appropriate project model

Strong applications chose an appropriate model to deliver outcomes for the people the activities are expected to support. They provided credible evidence to support their claims that the chosen project model would build the knowledge, skills and/or confidence of people with disability. For example: "A recent survey of our members showed that 83% prefer the use of teleconferencing for peer-to-peer support. Further, they reported an increase in confidence in using this technology to communicate with their peers."

Forming relevant partnerships or consortiums with other organisations

Strong applications formed partnerships or consortiums with relevant organisations to deliver ILC outcomes. These applications detailed existing, and confirmed new, partnerships to be formed during the project. For example: "We will team with the XYZ Association and have an existing partnership agreement in place."

Stronger applications described the role of each partner/consortium organisation, rather than listing organisations without any detail as to their role in the project. Evidence of the partnerships was demonstrated in the activity work plan and budget.

Describing the difference between an organisation's daily activities and the project activities.

Strong applications clearly described how the grant would be used to deliver a project and not fund business as usual activities. These applications explained how the proposed activities were different to standard practices/responsibilities and/or activities the applicant is currently funded to deliver.

Describing the sustainability of the project

Stronger applications demonstrated how the organisation would continue to promote or use the resources/products beyond the project's timeframe. These applications clearly demonstrated the resources/products were being produced for general or public use, rather than being developed to generate revenue for an organisation.

Assessment criteria feedback

The Grant Opportunity Guidelines required small grant applicants to provide a written response to the equally weighted selection Assessment Criterion 1 and 2. Large grant applicants were required to provide a written response to Assessment Criterion 1, 2 and 3. The feedback below outlines how applicants provided stronger responses to the three assessment criteria.

Criterion 1: Need and suitability of the Individual Capacity Building activities

Describe the Individual Capacity Building activities to be delivered and why these are needed in the proposed location(s)

The response must cover:

- the activities to be delivered (what will be done?)

- the people that the activities are expected to support (who will it assist?)

- where the activities will be delivered and why these are needed in the proposed location(s) (where will it be delivered and why those areas?)

Strong responses to Criterion 1:

- Clearly described the individual capacity building activities to be delivered in the project.

- Described the people that the individual capacity building activities are expected to support.

- Described the geographical location or jurisdiction where activities would be delivered.

- Provided specific relevant, credible and current evidence to support the claims of the need for the project in the chosen area.

Criterion 2: Outcomes from the Individual Capacity Building activities

Describe how the Individual Capacity Building activities proposed will improve the:

- *knowledge and skills of people with disability*
- *motivation and confidence of people with disability*
- *participation and contribution to community by people with a disability.*

The response must describe:

- *how the activities will achieve outcomes and result in people with disability having the skills and confidence to participate and contribute to the community and protect their rights*
- *with supporting evidence, the current capacity (capability and opportunity) of the target individuals and the connection with the community or activity participants*
- *how the progress and success of the activity will be monitored and evaluated.*

Strong responses to Criterion 2

- Described the current capacity (capability and opportunity) of the target individuals and the connection with the community or activity participants, and provided evidence to support these claims.

- Directly involved people with disability (or, as appropriate, family or carers) in all aspects of the project including design, delivery of activities and governance structures.

- Provided credible evidence to support claims about how the individual capacity building activities will build the knowledge, skills and confidence of people with disability to set and achieve their goals, contribute to the community and protect their rights.

- Stated what would be achieved for people with disability (outcomes) rather than simply listing the number of activities to be undertaken (outputs).

- Explained how the organisation would monitor and evaluate the progress of the project and participants; not just listing the proposed evaluation activities.

Criterion 3: Capability of the organisation to deliver

Describe how the activities will be implemented and managed, specifically in relation to:

- *how people with disability will be engaged in the planning and delivery of the activity (including employment)*

- *the role of the board/committee in oversight of the activities, as well as the management/implementation of the activity*

- *any partnerships or collaborations that may be utilised*

- *how you will make the project outcomes sustainable beyond the life of the grant agreement.*

Strong responses to Criterion 3

- Described how the project activities would be planned and delivered in collaboration with people with disability using examples, an evidence base or other relevant information to illustrate this co-design approach. Applications also clearly described the processes or structures of how people with disability would be engaged in the delivery of activities.

- Demonstrated the project was of an appropriate scale and scope relative to the size of the organisation seeking to deliver the project.

- Requested funding that matched the proposed project's scale and scope, rather than requesting the maximum allowable funding and longest possible timeframe.

- Described a detailed activity work plan, including a short description of the key project stages and/or milestones.

- Listed the key personnel/roles in project governance and oversight processes, their relevant skills, qualifications and experience.

- Detailed the project management structure, specifying the role of the organisation's board/committee in managing the project outcomes.

- Described the role of partner/consortium organisations; rather than listing organisations without any detail as to their role in the project. Responses detailed existing and confirmed partnerships to be formed. For example: "We will team with the XYZ Association and have a partnership agreement in place."

- Described how the organisation would make the project outcomes sustainable beyond the life of the grant agreement.

For further information, please contact ilcgrants@dss.gov.au.