



Australian Government

Community
Grants Hub
Improving your grant experience



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

Final feedback for Ideas, 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.

Innovation and Proof-of-Concept grant applications which did not progress to the Targeted Competitive Rounds were considered through an assessment process for potential funding as an Ideas grant. Interim feedback on Innovation and Proof-of-Concept grants was published for these applications.

Following assessment of the Targeted Competitive Round and the Ideas grants process, 15 Innovation Grants, 8 Proof-of-Concept and 23 Ideas grants have been successful in receiving an offer of a grant opportunity.

Feedback

This feedback will assist applicants to understand what generally comprised a strong application and what lead to an offer of a 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 Ideas grant applicants clearly identified how they proposed to undertake further testing, co-design and development of their idea.

For this grant opportunity, the department was looking for the following points to be addressed:

- 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 and 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 and therefore could not be supported for funding.
 - 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 provide clear and comprehensive evidence of the issue being addressed. The statements made needed to be convincing and clearly articulate how the project would address the identified issue and deliver public good.
 - Applicants needed to clearly describe impact pathways and how the proposed project would deliver solutions and practice change. Where relevant applicants needed to explain how the project could be scaled up, and provide evidence supporting key stakeholders and end-users engagement in the development and implementation of the project.
 - Applicants sometimes needed to explain why the project was not duplicative of, or better 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). In some cases, 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 needed to explain how their project or findings would be shared, distributed or published more broadly. Where relevant applicants needed a plan for engagement with industry, end users and/or identifying future pathways.
 - Applicants needed to provide a clear demonstration of how collaboration between the applicant and others would occur (such as private enterprise, industry, and universities), showing how they have or will approach overall co-design.
 - Applicants needed to clearly demonstrate the critical gap which exists and how their project would address those gaps while also demonstrating it was innovative. While a project may fill a gap it does not automatically make it novel.

In addition to the above, for Ideas grants, applicants needed to demonstrate how they would develop their idea. There needed to be a focus on idea development over demonstration or execution of the idea. Applicants needed to demonstrate how they would explore an issue and identify future pathways.