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# Future Drought Fund: Drought Resilience Research and Adoption Program – Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs

Feedback for applicants

## Overview

The Drought Resilience Research and Adoption Program (the program) is a national 4-year program. It is one of 8 programs currently underway under the Future Drought Fund.

The objective of the program is to invest into collaborative research, development, extension, adoption and commercialisation (RDEA&C) activities aimed at helping primary producers and rural and regional communities to become more prepared for, and resilient to, future droughts.

The program seeks to achieve this objective by:

- supporting cross-sectoral innovative and transformative RDEA&C
- focusing on the needs of end users, involving them in the co-design and adoption phases of research and development (R&D)
- delivering effective communication of new and existing knowledge and technologies
- facilitating co-investment in national drought resilience RDEA&C priorities with collaboration and co-design between governments, primary producers, community groups, research and training providers.

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The program elements are as follows.

- 8 regionally-focused Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs (Hubs). Hubs will be established in specified regions which take in major climatic and agricultural zones across Australia. The Hubs will facilitate transformational change through co-design of RDEA&C activities. This will be achieved by bringing together farmers, researchers, local entrepreneurs, Indigenous groups, Natural Resource Management (NRM) practitioners, and industry and community groups. Their different knowledge and expertise will enable user-centred innovation, research and adoption.
- Drought Resilience Innovation Grants (Innovation Grants) for research organisations, the private sector, industry, not-for-profit organisations and community groups will support R&D projects co-designed to deliver targeted solutions to identified drought resilience priorities.
- A Research Investment Plan will be developed through a participatory process to identify the highest national drought RDEA&C priorities.
- A Science to Practice Forum will be held to bring together program participants, synthesise RDEA&C outcomes and inform practice and policy, and to facilitate key stakeholders' discussion on RDEA&C gaps and priorities.

## Selection Process

An open selection process was used to select providers to deliver the Future Drought Fund: Drought Resilience Research and Adoption Program – Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs. The grant round opened on 30 October 2020 and closed at 11:00 PM AEDT on 23 December 2020. The Community Grants Hub received 17 applications for funding.

Preferred applicants were identified based on the strength of their responses to the selection criteria and their demonstrated ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the program guidelines.

## Selection Results

8 organisations were selected as the successful candidates to lead the Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs.

There was strong interest by stakeholders in the grant round, and successful applications were of a very high standard. The selected organisations provided strong responses to the assessment criteria and demonstrated their ability to meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the program guidelines.



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In general terms, unsuccessful applications contained one or more of the following issues.

- The application did not adequately specify which region the Hubs will support or provide details on the proposed geographical coverage and types of agricultural industries.
- The consortium membership did not have as a member at least one regional university or metropolitan university who could demonstrate regional connections.
- The application did not include the provision for a Hub Director.
- The application did not include provision for a Knowledge Broker.
- The application did not include CVs for key personnel.
- The application did not include the lead organisation's structure and the proposed structure to deliver the Hub.
- The application did not include a Business Plan.
- The application did not include a Risk Management Plan.
- The application did not address all aspects of the assessment criteria.
- The application lacked depth and detail in responses to the assessment criteria.
- The application did not demonstrate the capability, skills and experience of the team to deliver the project.

Further detail about what constituted a strong response to each criterion is provided below.



**Criterion 1 — Ability to effectively service the RDEA&C needs of the region you are applying for**

Strong applications	Example
Clearly demonstrated the proposed regional coverage of the Hub, as well as the agricultural sectors and farming practices the Hub will focus on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project plan scope included strong regional coverage of the Hub, as well as the inclusion of a range of agricultural industries (for example, both the livestock and horticulture sectors)</li> </ul>
Clearly demonstrated the inclusiveness of key organisations and stakeholders within the region as part of the membership of the Hub (or collaborators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive one state approach with key stakeholders and groups</li> <li>Applications with consortium partners included a good mix of consortium members across the proposed hub region</li> </ul>
Clearly demonstrated the physical presence Hub members have in the region in question, including the relevance to deliver the Hub services. This includes presence in different areas of the region in question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applications which included details of main Hub and node locations including what staff would be available at the location</li> <li>Applications who proposed a Hub and spoke model providing regional coverage</li> </ul>
Clearly demonstrated their history of RDEA&C and drought resilience leadership across your region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applications who demonstrated capability, skills and experience of team in RDEA&amp;C and drought resilience leadership</li> </ul>
Clearly demonstrated support from the key organisations and groups across your region, and state and/or territory and local governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 universities were involved, with strong connections within the consortium</li> <li>Applicants were able to provide evidence of state government support for the proposal</li> </ul>
Clearly demonstrated the leadership group’s stakeholder networks of relevance to the Hub scope, and ability to foster a culture which promotes co-design and ongoing partnerships with end-users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applications who demonstrated capability, skills and experience of proposed team, as well as strong stakeholder connections</li> <li>The inclusion of relevant qualified staff with strong experience</li> </ul>
Clearly demonstrated flexibility, capability and willingness to scale up to address other regional and national priorities as they arise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applications who outlined the consortium’s ability to scale up and address other priorities by seeking additional funding and involving more sectors</li> <li>Applications who demonstrated the ability to be flexible and the need to be responsive to emerging issues as needed</li> </ul>



## Criterion 2 — Alignment with the program objectives

Strong applications	Example
<p>Clearly outlined how their project aligns with the program objectives outlined in section 2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicants who provided a robust and thorough application against the grant guidelines with strong methodology and collaboration</li> </ul>
<p>Clearly demonstrated how the Hub will benefit agricultural businesses, supply chain small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and community groups across the region to improve their drought resilience capability through RDEA&amp;C activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applications who identified links to supply chain SMEs and inclusion in the co-design process</li> <li>Applications who included community groups and supply chain SMEs as part of the co-design process</li> <li>Applications who had excellent collaborations, including support of mental health and financial resilience</li> <li>Detailed inclusion of RDEA&amp;C activities and linkages to drought resilience capability</li> </ul>
<p>Clearly demonstrated how their project would have impact and influence and will generate economic, environmental and social drought resilience benefits for participating farmers, supply chain SMEs and community groups which would not have occurred otherwise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applications who demonstrated clear benefits being generated in economic, environmental, social and drought resilience</li> <li>Linkages with natural resource management groups will support delivery of environmental benefits, and the inclusion of agroforestry adds value</li> </ul>
<p>Clearly outlined their plan to engage with stakeholders across their region to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>leverage existing commercial and community strengths</li> <li>engage and provide services to targeted agricultural businesses, supply chain SMEs and community groups</li> <li>identify drought resilience RDEA&amp;C opportunities for participating agricultural businesses, supply chain SMEs and community groups</li> <li>build and maintain relationships with state and territory government agencies, research organisations (including Research and Development Corporations (RDCs), CSIRO and universities), education and training organisations, and advisors (both private and public)</li> <li>leverage and participate in industry and community networks (including those of the centre and the other FDF programs through sharing learnings and insights)</li> <li>seek alignment with other government initiatives including (but not limited to) the National Agricultural Innovation Agenda, RDCs, CSIRO, Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs), the Entrepreneurs' Programme, agribusiness focused SME Export Hubs, the National Landcare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submitted a detailed co-designed activity plan</li> <li>Good balance between top-down and bottom-up approach</li> <li>Reflected stakeholder engagement in governance structures submitted</li> <li>Clearly articulated linkages to other Future Drought Fund programs</li> <li>Leverage of existing regional strengths, between existing organisations and government departments</li> </ul>



Strong applications	Example
<p>Program, Regional Development Australia Committee Planning, Building Better Regions Fund initiatives, Regional Growth Fund and Regional Jobs and Investment Packages' initiatives, Austrade and/or TradeStart; and promote (and potentially facilitate) opportunities for participating farmers, supply chain SMEs and community groups to access these other initiatives and services to supplement their drought resilience capabilities.</p>	
<p>Clearly demonstrated how the proposed Hub would address the shared interests of the participant farmers, supply chain SMEs and community groups; and improve the interactions between farmers, supply chain SMEs and community groups, researchers, educators and state and territory government agencies to deliver drought resilience outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Successful applications could demonstrate strong engagement and co-design with different stakeholders including farmers, communities, researchers, local and state government.</li></ul>
<p>Clearly demonstrated how their proposal aligns with relevant regional economic development strategies, agricultural priorities and advances</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Successful applications clearly articulated linkages to other Future Drought Fund programs and other regional priorities.</li></ul>



### Criterion 3 — Capacity, capability and resources to deliver the Hub

Strong applications	Example
Clearly demonstrated their capacity and capability for managing the project including access to personnel with the right skills and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrated capability, skills and experience of team including the provision of the CVs of proposed appointments to Hub Director and Knowledge Broker positions</li> </ul>
Clearly demonstrated a clear understanding of the principles of co-design and participatory research, involving end users and other stakeholders. Examples of previous research, adoption, extension and commercialisation delivered in this way and the outcomes achieved would be highly regarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrated understanding and application of co-design and participatory innovation processes</li> <li>▪ Demonstrated a focus on end users</li> </ul>
Clearly outlined the demonstrated knowledge brokering ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This was demonstrated through the CVs of key personnel included and experience of the consortiums as a whole in knowledge brokering</li> </ul>
Clearly demonstrated ability to effectively communicate research findings to end-users, and support knowledge sharing networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This was demonstrated through past experience of the applicants in related projects</li> </ul>
Clearly outlined their consortium partner and the consortium’s capability as a whole to deliver the proposed Hub activities which support adaption, reorganisation and transformation of agricultural industries and communities for improved drought resilience which are the focus of the Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Applications assessed as having a good strategic method, co-investment and structure</li> <li>▪ Participation across the consortium with universities and other related groups</li> <li>▪ Inclusive consortium membership</li> </ul>
Clearly outlined their access to facilities, capital equipment, technology and other resources (including co-investments from third parties), intellectual property, administrative systems, including record keeping practices, reporting and required regulatory or other approvals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Detailed breakdowns of what facilities would be used and other resources to be contributed to the proposed Hub and how the resources would be used.</li> </ul>
Clearly outlined a sound project plan to manage and monitor the project and risks, including scope, implementation methodology, timeframes, cyber security, and budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Detailed project plans were submitted including project budgets showing funding sources, expected costs including administration costs of the Hub and the pay levels of key staff involved in the Hub</li> </ul>
Clearly outlined financial capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provided details of all the co-contributions which would be provided by consortium members</li> </ul>



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## Criterion 4— Impact of grant funding on the project

Strong applications	Example
Clearly demonstrated whether their project would go ahead without the grant. They explained how the grant would impact their project in terms of scale, timing and reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicants were able to demonstrate how the funding would be used to achieve the project goals and if the project would be taking place without the use of grant funding.</li></ul>
Clearly outlined their justification for the funding amount requested with respect to the scale of the project, grant period and intended outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicants were able to provide a detailed breakdown of costs against the project plan including outcomes sought.</li></ul>
Clearly demonstrated the total investment the grant will leverage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applications which provided specific details of the funding sources, timing and amounts of co-contributions.</li><li>• Universities included in consortium providing appropriate levels of funding.</li></ul>