



Australian Government

Community
Grants Hub
Improving your grant experience



Advancing Pest Animal and Weed Control Solutions Competitive Grant Round

General feedback for applicants

Overview

As part of our commitment to sharing information and to acknowledge the time and effort put into grant applications, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the department) is pleased to provide this general feedback to applicants for the Advancing Pest Animal and Weed Control Solutions Competitive Grant Round (grant round).

The grant round opened 4 August 2020 and closed on 25 September 2020.

197 eligible applications were received, with 19 applications worth \$13 million (GST excl.) funded following the Delegate's decision.

There was a strong interest by stakeholders in the grant round, and successful applications were of a very high standard. All eligible applications were assessed according to the Grant Opportunity Guidelines (Guidelines) and the process outlined below.

This feedback is provided to assist grant applicants understand what comprised a strong application, the content of quality responses to the assessment criteria and the key areas where some applications did not meet the Guidelines.

Grant round background

The purpose of the grant round was to fund projects to research and develop new practices, methods and tools (control tools), or adapt existing ones for use in a new or different way, for the control of established pest animals or weeds.

This was an open competitive grant opportunity offering up to \$13 million over 3 years, commencing in the 2020-21 financial year.

The grant round was administered by the Department of Social Services' Community Grants Hub (the Hub), on behalf of Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, under a Whole of Australian Government initiative to streamline grant processes across Australian government agencies.

Selection process

An open competitive selection process was undertaken.

All applications were screened for eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the Guidelines.

The Hub undertook preliminary assessment of all eligible and compliant applications, scoring each application in relation to the four equally weighted assessment criteria.

An Expert Assessment Panel (EAP) was convened to review and recommend applications for funding to be considered by the Delegate. The EAP comprised a chair and 2 members with expertise and industry knowledge relevant to the grant round.

The EAP considered:


- how well applications scored against the assessment criteria
- how well the project aligned with objectives and outcomes of the grant round
- the overall innovative nature of the project and potential future benefit to stakeholders
- the relative merit of an application compared to other applications with a focus on the objectives, outcome(s) and overall value for money
- whether the project targeted a nationally significant invasive established pest animal or weed that is not endemic to Australia or a particular part of Australia
- organisation/institution research and development capacity and capacity to deliver the project
- how the project will be delivered and aligned with the Guidelines
- possible duplication with other known Commonwealth/state/territory government programs.

The approval of funded applications was made by the Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management.

General feedback for applicants

Successful applicants all demonstrated projects that:

- were research and development focused
 - were innovative
 - addressed the grant program objectives, outcomes and selection criteria to a high degree
 - provided value for money
 - identified a strong research need
 - provided evidence the project outputs could lead to future adoption
 - presented outcomes would likely advance control tools for established pest animals and weeds.
-



Successful applicants also provided a detailed proposal, project plan, budget and risk assessment that delivered strong to good responses to all of the assessment criteria (refer to page 4 for criteria specific feedback).

Unfortunately for a variety of reasons, a number of applications were unsuccessful. As such, these applications were not recommended for funding to the Delegate. Unsuccessful applications were determined to have one or more of the following issues:

- focussed on training, extension-based, on-ground natural resource management or implementation, monitoring and/or validation rather than research
- targeted native or exotic species, or the proposed project outcomes had the potential to impact native Australian species
- a lack of clarity on methodology and project activities or the hypothesis lacked credibility and/or had a low prospect of success
- the project could raise social, ethical, or workplace/occupational related issues
- did not align, or did not sufficiently address, the selection criteria
- did not propose new or adapted control tool/technology that aligned with the Guidelines
- were localised or did not provide sufficient information on research outcomes that had a larger regional or national application
- outcomes would lead to higher private than public benefit
- intellectual property right concerns or issues
- applicants were not research organisations or could not provide supporting evidence that the organisation(s) had the capacity to undertake the proposed project
- may contravene regulation
- weren't considered value for money or innovative enough compared to other projects submitted under the grant round.

Note: A large number of applications did meet the program objectives; however, as this was a capped competitive grant round, other applications were considered to have stronger merit.

Careful editing should be undertaken for future applications to ensure readability and comprehension. A number of submitted applications did not comply with word limits, provided insufficient detail or too much background information across the 4 criteria.

Criteria specific feedback

Criterion 1 – Need for the project and its alignment to the grant program objectives and outcomes

Strong applications:	Example - Quality responses clearly provided:
<p>Clearly demonstrated the need and importance for the proposed grant activity.</p> <p>Clearly explained how the project would address the problem of the established pest animals or weeds.</p> <p>Clearly outlined how the proposed control solution would improve pest animal and/or weed management through future adoption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adequate information within the proposed location detail on the target established pest animal and/or weed and how the proposed activity could support a landscape-scale approach to their management detail on how the proposed control tool could be adopted by stakeholders.
<p>Clearly described the project's overall aims, purpose and the benefits of the activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> detailed information to clearly identify the aims and purposes of the project a clear description of the research question and the control tool to be investigated a clear description of benefits of the activity for pest animal or weed management.
<p>Clearly articulated the expected results and outputs of the project and outlined how it would achieve the grant round's objectives and outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a clear description of the results expected from the project detailed information to define how the proposed project outputs align with the grant round objectives and outcomes.
<p>Clearly described how the project would benefit Australia, farmers and land managers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a clear description on how the project will deliver benefits to Australian farmers and land managers or to increase agriculture productivity and farm gate profitability.



Criterion 2 – Suitability and effectiveness of the project activities to achieve project aims

Strong applications:	Example - Quality responses clearly described:
Clearly identified the project activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the proposed activities and the research questions that the proposed project would seek to address.
Clearly identified the proposed methodology(ies) or approach(es) to undertaking the project activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how the proposed activities will be conducted or how the research questions will be investigated the methodologies or approaches employed to achieve the results/activities.
Clearly identified where, when and how the project activities are to be undertaken.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all activities to be undertaken across the 3-year timeframe, how and where they will occur.
Clearly identified how the project activities will achieve its aim(s), including the technical feasibility of the methodology(ies).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how the proposed project activities will achieve the aims the feasibility of the methodology used for the activities.
Clearly identified how progress towards achieving the project's aim(s) will be measured.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> key milestones which are measurable and achievable a thorough understanding of how the applicant would measure their progress and success throughout the project.
Clearly identified potential risks to the success of the project and how these are to be managed or mitigated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> potential project risks and appropriate processes and strategies to manage and mitigate these risks.

Criterion 3 – Value for money and degree of innovation in the project

Strong applications:	Example - Quality responses clearly explained:
Clearly explained the innovation of the project and how it offers a breakthrough outcome and/or practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the innovativeness of the proposed control tool that will be trialled and developed how the control tool differs from usual practice scientific backing for the control tool, this could include references to similar or earlier research supportive of the proposed control tool.
Clearly described how the innovation will meet the identified need and lead to adoption by Australia's farmers and land managers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how the development of the innovative research meets the needs of Australia's farmers and land managers and will lead to adoption.
Detailed the budget for the project and identified activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how the proposed project budget will correspond to the project scope and activities how the project is value for money.
Explained how the funding requested is proportionate to the aim(s) of the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how the requested funding amount is appropriate in comparison to the scale of the activity and the project outcomes
Identified the value and composition of other cash and in-kind contributions towards delivery of the project and how they assist in achieving the project aim(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> who will contribute to the cost of the project and the extent of their contribution (cash and in-kind co-contributions) how the cash and/or in-kind contributions will add value to the delivery of the project.
Described any future financial or private benefit(s) (e.g. commercialisation of product or financial benefit from research) and how they may accrue from delivering on the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if there will be a private benefit resulting from the project what the private benefits are, how they have been valued and the beneficiaries.

Criterion 4 – Applicant and partnership consortium capability to deliver

Strong applications:	Example - Quality responses clearly explained:
Clearly demonstrated the organisation’s capability and experience in research and development together with its capacity to deliver outcomes and engage the expertise required to undertake the proposed project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the level of capability to implement and manage a government funded research project and outline appropriate governance structures in place experience through providing examples of previous projects of similar outcomes and budget.
Clearly demonstrated the organisation’s capability to implement, monitor and report on the proposed project and identify and manage risks to deliver on time and on budget.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the appropriate level of skills or access to relevant expertise to implement, monitor and report on the proposed project the ability to identify and manage risks to deliver the project on time and on budget how the applicant plans to manage any obstacles and risks which may arise.
Clearly demonstrated the organisation has or will engage with relevant stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a thorough understanding of the relevant stakeholders and how they will be involved to make the project successful the ability to engage with relevant stakeholders, experts and communities to deliver the proposed activity.
Clearly demonstrated the organisation has or will engage with end users to inform design and adoption.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the process for engagement with farmers and land managers to design the proposed control tool how the applicant will facilitate the adoption of the control tool.
Clearly demonstrated the organisation’s ability to manage Commonwealth and/or state government grant funding responsibly and effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> previous experience in responsible, successful and effective management of projects on behalf of the Commonwealth/state/territory/local government agency.