Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) National Information Program Grant Round 2019-2022

General Feedback for applicants

Overview

As part of our commitment to sharing information with the sector to help inform future applications, and as an acknowledgement of the time and effort that applicants have put into developing applications, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is pleased to share this feedback.

The vision of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is to empower people with disability to choose and achieve their goals within an inclusive community, leading to their increased independence and social and economic participation. The NDIS achieves this through two components:

- Individual Funding Packages (or NDIS participant plans)
- Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC).

The ILC National Information Program Grant Round 2019-2022 will contribute to increasing the accessibility, quality and consistency of information available to people with disability, families, carers and relevant supports and services.

This grant opportunity contributes to the NDIA's ILC program, which funds innovative ways to increase the independence, social and community participation of people with disability.

The application period opened on 5 April 2019 and closed on 10 May 2019. A total of $51 million (GST exclusive) was available to applicants over the funding period. A total of 324 applications

were received, of which 314 were eligible, making the selection of successful grant recipients highly competitive. In making their recommendations, the Selection Advisory Panel considered whether the application provided value with *relevant money*[1]. After assessment, 37 applications were selected for funding, totalling just over $59 million (GST exclusive). Successful applicants may have received less funding than requested.

This feedback is provided to assist grant applicants to understand what generally comprised stronger and weaker responses to the assessment criteria for this grant round, and how to strengthen future applications.

Future grant opportunities may be available for this program. You can find out about new grant opportunities on Grant Connect or the Community Grants Hub websites.

Selection process

An open competitive selection process was undertaken, allowing a range of organisations that met the eligibility criteria to apply.

Applications were screened for eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines, including the provision of all the required attachments. The following attachments were requested:

- a project indicative budget
- the two most recent sets of year-end, and preferably audited financial statements inclusive of Profit and Loss Statements and Balance Sheets
- a completed auspice declaration (only applicable to organisations using an auspicing arrangement to authorise another organisation to apply on their behalf)
- the signed trust deed and any subsequent variations, if applying as a Trustee on behalf of a Trust.

All eligible and compliant applications were assessed against the five equally weighted assessment criteria outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

A Selection Advisory Panel consisting of a majority of people with disability with a mix of relevant policy, program and delivery expertise then made funding recommendations to the NDIA decision maker. The panel considered:

- the strength of alignment the project, or any of its elements, had with the program objectives
- if the project provided value with *relevant money*
- conformance with eligibility criteria
- distribution of projects across all disability types and priority cohorts

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[1] Relevant money is defined in Section 8 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth).

- how the project will be delivered

- how well the level of project resourcing matched the intended scale of program delivery relative to the particular population/s

- existing and/or potential market failure (if known)

- avoiding and/or minimising duplication with other federal, state or territory government programs and/or service delivery.

The NDIA decision maker approved the funding to the successful grant recipients.

General feedback

The successful applicants proposed activities that were eligible, appropriately scaled and proposed effective delivery methodologies for achieving the program objectives. They demonstrated their suitability for public funding, value with *relevant money,* met the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines and included strong responses to the selection criteria.

Further detail about what constituted a strong response to each criterion is discussed below, as well as feedback on how future applicants can strengthen their applications. Key themes in the feedback include:

- Demonstrating the need – strong applications provided specific details of the need the project would address, including evidence that the need exists within the community, rather than a recitation of previously published census or scientific data.

- Demonstrating that the proposed approach would be effective and would contribute to the ILC outcomes - strong applications explained in detail how specific activities would address the identified need and connected how the approach would contribute to the achievement of ILC policy outcomes.

- Clearly established that ILC is the most appropriate source and responsible for funding the proposed project – a number of applications could not be funded because the proposed activity was the responsibility of other federal, state, territory or local government bodies.

- Ensuring the proposed activity did not overlap with other areas of the NDIS, seek to provide information about the NDIS in existing formats or provide guidance on accessing information about the NDIS.

- Clearly outlining proposed stakeholder engagement – strong applications clearly articulated:

  - The centrality of people with disability in the design phase and implementation of an activity.

  - Partnerships and how the involvement of other organisations would contribute to the delivery of the proposed activity.

Applicants could have also generally strengthened their application by:

- Ensuring all aspects of the assessment criteria were addressed, including using the character count available to provide sufficient detail when responding.

- Supporting claims with relevant, reliable and current evidence.

- Linking claims between the project description/services to be delivered and the policy objectives.

- Not proposing services that duplicated services already offered through federal, state, territory or local government programs.

- Not proposing an activity that they are currently funded for through another source.

- For applications that proposed an activity which did not have national coverage, ensuring that the response clearly articulated how the project could be scaled or replicated to ensure a national reach.

- Ensuring that the project budget reflected an appreciation of the total program budget with respect to the size of the population that the project sought to engage.

- Ensuring a strong focus on measurement of outcomes.

- Articulating a program design that gave consideration to a theory of change.

- Clearly identifying project delivery partners, particularly when seeking to work with priority cohorts.

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

- Providing evidence that the relevant skills and expertise would be available to ensure successful project delivery.

Policy objectives

A number of applications were not aligned with the policy objectives of the ILC National Information Program Grant Round 2019-2022. Some applications may have been more suitable for the following grant rounds:

- Individual Capacity Building Program – enabling systematic, nationwide access to peer support, mentoring and other skills building for people with disability, carers and families, delivered through a national network of Disabled Peoples Organisations and Families Organisations (DPO/FOs).

- Mainstream Capacity Building Program – ensuring equity of access to and increase inclusion of people with disability in mainstream services.

- Economic and Community Participation Program – increasing the social and economic participation, including employment outcomes, of people with disability.

We encourage unsuccessful applicants to consider if their applications may be more suited to the policy objectives of the aforementioned grant rounds.

Criterion specific feedback

Criterion 1: Need and suitability

Demonstrate the need and the suitability of the proposed grant activity for the selected target group. (If your proposal is specifically targeted at any of the cohort groups then you should also provide evidence of need for those cohort groups).

When addressing the criterion strong applicants will:

- Describe the need or issue that the proposed project will address and why the information resource proposed is important and necessary.

- Explain how the proposed information resource will effectively address the information need amongst the selected target group/s.

- Describe how the project design and delivery will provide an innovative information solution within the three-year grant timeframe and beyond.

We encourage reference to relevant data or research to support your explanation. Your answer could include:

- Specific evidence of need (e.g. research, reports, studies) and how that evidence has been tested in the local situation, particularly for cohort groups.

- A clear description of the link between how the proposed grant project will create a change in the need/issue.

- A clear description of your method to implement the project.

- Evidence from previous projects you have delivered and any evaluation or assessment, which supports the need for the project.

Areas for improvement

Generally, applicants may have strengthened their responses to Criterion 1 by:

- Ensuring that the response effectively addressed the information need for the relevant target group(s).

- Connecting strong, publically recognised evidence with regional / cohort justification of the need(s) for the proposed project, its relevance to ILC and why the proposed project is important and necessary.

- Providing clear detail on exactly how the proposed project would effectively address the information need amongst the selected target group(s).

- Where available, providing evidence to support any claims made about the effectiveness of the proposed project in addressing the information need amongst the target group(s).

- Providing a thorough explanation of exactly how the proposed information resource's design and delivery provides an innovative solution within the three-year grant timeframe and beyond. This may have involved illustrating how the proposed information resources differs from current or standard practice.

- Ensuring that the proposed activity did not duplicate or overlap a function or program currently being delivered or funded by the federal, state, territory or local governments, such as by Disability Employment Service providers.

Criterion 2: Outcomes focused

How will the information product or activity assist or improve the way that information is accessed and/or received by people with disability and/or mainstream services and organisations? What are the expected results in developing and disseminating the information resource, which will be developed?

When addressing the criterion strong applicants will:

- Demonstrate the benefit for the selected target group in using the information resource or activity.

- Describe how the information resources proposed will increase knowledge and lead to increased social and community participation for the selected target group (people with disability or cohort groups), and for mainstream organisations and service systems - how it leads to increased understanding of disability and ability to deliver services and supports for people with disability.

- Describe how your communications planning will engage and undertake outreach to the target group/s and community to increase awareness, access to and use of your information resources.

In your response, we are looking for evidence of well thought out projects, project planning and how your organisation understands development of appropriately designed information resources for the target group/s, maintaining currency of information resources, engagement and communications planning to increase awareness of the information resources.

Generally, applicants may have strengthened their responses to Criterion 2 by:

- Incorporating strong evidence with regard to the claimed benefit(s) of using the information resource for the selected target group(s).

- Ensuring the approach and benefit(s) listed were reasonable, and relevant to the selected target group(s).

- Providing supporting information and evidence to describe how the resource would increase knowledge and lead to increased social and community participation for the selected target group (people with a disability).

- Providing supporting information and evidence to demonstrate how the resource would lead to an increased understanding of disability and ability to deliver services and supports for mainstream services and organisations.

- Describing an approach to measure and capture data to verify the efficacy of the project.

- Ensuring that if both 'People with disability' and 'Mainstream services and support' were selected as benefiting from the proposed project, the response clearly described how the information resource would benefit each of these groups.

- Providing an outline of the communications plan, and explained how the communications plan, would assist in engaging, and undertaking outreach, to the target group(s).

- Clearly explaining how the engagement and outreach would raise awareness of, access to and use of the information resource (using examples where practical).

Criterion 3: Sustainability

Demonstrate how the proposed project will ensure the information resources will be embedded in the organisation, shared or knowledge transferred and how you will ensure information resources retain currency and relevance for the target group/s throughout the life of the grant and beyond.

When addressing the criterion strong applicants will:

- Describe how information resources developed will be maintained and kept updated during the life of and beyond the project. How the information resources will be retained for utilisation over time.

- Describe how you will continue to share the learning and resources developed beyond the life of the grant. How might the resources developed be shared beyond your organisation or with the sector more broadly.

- Describe what opportunities there are for scalability and replication of your project.

In your response, we are looking for evidence that you will ensure your information resources developed through your project have longevity, are maintained; what your organisation will do to embed the ongoing management and update of the information resources to ensure currency and accuracy throughout and beyond the life of the grant.

Generally, applicants may have strengthened their responses to Criterion 3 by:

- Providing a clear and comprehensive description of how the information resource would be maintained and kept up-to-date throughout the life of the grant and beyond. As discussed above, strong responses including supporting information and/or a plan, which detailed exactly

how the information resource would be regularly reviewed to ensure currency and accuracy of the information resource.

- Ensuring that a clear explanation of how the information resource would be retained for utilisation over time was provided. This may have involved using examples or other information to support the claims made.

- Providing more detail to demonstrate how the learning and resources developed would be shared during and beyond the life of the grant. This may have been achieved by using examples to demonstrate how previous similar learning and resources had been shared, or referencing any organisational policies for the dissemination of information.

- Detailing plans the organisation had for sharing the information resource amongst the organisation as well as within the sector more broadly. Strong responses clearly detailed organisational plans for sharing the learning at conferences, information days, social media and other similar methods.

- Including examples or other supporting information, which clearly shows the opportunities for scalability and replication of the project. If examples or supporting information were not available, responses could have been improved by clearly explaining, with reasonable claims of the potential opportunities for scalability and replication.

Criterion 4: Organisational Capacity

Organisational capability and capacity: Describe your organisation's capability and expertise and/or experience to deliver the proposed project. What evidence is there that your organisation is best placed to deliver the project and what prior experience supports your claim?

Project Management: Describe how your organisation will project manage the proposed project and undertake the following in delivering your proposal:

- *Involving people with disability in co-design processes and including roles at a governance, staff or volunteer level.*

- *Project management including how any risks for the project will be identified and managed.*

- *Explain the relevant experience and qualifications held by key personnel and their role in managing the proposed project.*

When addressing the criterion strong applicants will:

- Demonstrate appropriate project management approach including an outline of how your organisation will manage resources, governance, finances, risk, monitoring and evaluation.

- Explain the relevant experience and qualifications held by key personnel and their role in managing the proposed project, as well as how people with disability will be involved in the project design and delivery.

- Outline what experience your organisation has in developing information resources for the target groups.

An applicant's response could:

- Use examples to describe your organisation's experience with developing and implementing similar projects.
- Explain the relevant experience and qualifications held by key personnel and their role in managing the proposed activity.
- Outline what experience your organisation has in developing information products or activities for people with disability.

In your answer we are looking for evidence that you are taking a planned approach to the project and have the organisational skills, capability and capacity to manage the project. Your answer could describe:

- Examples of implementing projects of similar scale and a similar type of project.
- Your experience in working with the target audience or community.
- The project planning you have done so far and other kinds of planning, like risk management, communications/engagement planning.

Areas for improvement

Generally, applicants may have strengthened their responses to Criterion 4 by:

- Providing a more focused and detailed description of the organisation's project management approach, including how it would be used to manage the proposed project.
- Providing detailed explanations of how the organisation would manage the key areas listed in the criterion, referencing existing organisational policies or procedures (where relevant) and examples of how these areas had been managed in previous projects.
- Including information about the key personnel in the project, detailing their role, experience and any relevant experience. This may have included citing examples of previous projects worked on by the key personnel and explaining their relevance to the proposed project.
- Providing a clear and comprehensive explanation of how people with a disability (and priority cohorts if applicable) would be involved in the project design and delivery, using examples (where possible) and explaining how their input would benefit the project.
- Using examples of previous information resources developed by the organisation for the target group(s), or using examples of previous projects and explaining how the skills and expertise were transferrable and easily applied to the proposed project.

Criterion 5: Reach

How will the proposal ensure a national approach to delivery and accessibility for people across Australia?

When addressing the criterion strong applicants will:

- Demonstrate the ability to deliver and operate the project within a nationally consistent approach, or demonstrate the potential for scalability to other locations.

- Demonstrate the ability to partner with other organisations and cohorts in order to deliver a nationally consistent approach.

- Describe proposed delivery channels so that the diverse information needs of people with a disability are met.

- Describe how the project will reduce duplication and enhance quality and ease of access to information nationally.

In your response, we are looking for evidence of ability to deliver to national audiences through existing or proposed networks and/or delivery channels.

Areas for improvement
Generally, applicants may have strengthened their responses to Criterion 5 by: • Ensuring that the links between the proposed delivery channels and how these would ensure a nationally consistent approach were clearly explained, using supporting examples of previous projects or publically available information (where possible). • Providing examples of partnerships with other organisations and/or cohort(s) and clearly explaining how these partnerships contributed to a nationally consistent approach. Where examples were not available, ensuring that any claims made were reasonable, and clearly explained. • Clearly explaining the proposed delivery channels and linking these with how the diverse information needs of people with a disability would be met. It was particularly important that the explanation of how these needs would be met was clear and well-reasoned. Using examples and/or publically available information was beneficial, particularly where this evidenced the information needs being met. • Using examples or other publically available information to evidence how the proposed project would reduce duplication and enhance quality and ease of access to information nationally. It was important the claims made addressed exactly how the proposed project would achieve these goals, and that the claims were reasonable.