



Australian Government

Community  
Grants Hub  
Improving your grant experience



---

# City-Country Partnerships

## General Feedback for applicants

---

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has provided the following General Feedback for applicants of the City-Country Partnerships grant opportunity.

### Overview

The City-Country Partnership program (the program) will run over 3 years from 2021–22 to 2023–24. The program was announced as part of the Australian Government's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, which seeks to improve school education for thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The grant contributes to the achievement of *Program 1.5 – Early Learning and Schools Support* of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment's Portfolio Budget Statement and the achievement of priority reform areas and socio-economic targets outlined in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The objective of the program is to support the establishment of formal partnerships between independent (non-government) schools and remote schools with a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to improve the quality of operational management, principal leadership and teacher practices.

The intended outcomes of the grant opportunity are to:


- improve student outcomes and attendance rates, which are key drivers that will accelerate progress toward the 2031 Closing the Gap Agreement
- accelerate progress toward meeting Target 5 of the Closing the Gap Agreement (the Agreement), 96% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 20–24 year olds attaining the qualification of Year 12 or equivalent by 2031
- improve the quality of operational management, principal leadership and increase the reach of effective teacher practices to lift the quality of pedagogy in remote schools.

The grant opportunity application period opened on 21 February 2022 and closed on 21 March 2022.

The grant opportunity received seven applications. Following the Decision Maker's decision, one application was selected for funding, to a value of \$24.604 million (GST excluded).

There was a strong interest in the grant opportunity and applications were of a very high standard. Applications were assessed according to the procedure detailed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines and outlined in the selection process below.

---



---

This feedback is provided to assist grant applicants to understand what generally comprised a strong application and the content of quality responses to the assessment criteria for this grant opportunity.

## Selection process

The applications were screened for eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for the City-Country Partnerships grant. If the Department of Education, Skills and Employment determined your application did not meet the eligibility and/or compliance criteria, you were notified of the outcome and your application did not progress to assessment.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment then considered all eligible and compliant applications through an open competitive grant process.

Each applicant was required to address the following selection criteria:

### **Criterion 1: Delivering outcomes**

Demonstrate your organisation's experience in achieving outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

### **Criterion 2: Organisational capability**

Demonstrate your organisation's capability and capacity to successfully administer the City-Country Partnerships program.

### **Criterion 3: Ability to work sensitively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**

Demonstrate your organisation's ability to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support improved educational outcomes.

The preferred applicant was identified based on the strength of their responses to the selection criterion and their demonstrated ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

## Selection results

One organisation was selected to deliver the City-Country Partnerships grant.

The selected organisation provided strong responses to the selection criteria and demonstrated their ability to meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. Further detail about what constituted a strong response to each criterion is provided below.

---

## **Criterion 1: Delivering outcomes**

Demonstrate your organisation's experience in achieving outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

When addressing your response you should consider:

- details of your organisation's experience in supporting improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education outcomes
- details of how your organisation will identify, assess and prepare advice on partnership proposals for the consideration of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment and decision by the Minister, including prior experience in dealing with the Australian Government
- a description of your organisation's demonstrated capacity to support school partnerships, capture and report on student outcomes, attendance, engagement, and Year 12 attainment rates
- a description of an effective risk management approach that will minimise risk and ensure that the funding can achieve the outcomes, objectives and performance indicators
- details of your organisation's ability to secure additional financial contributions (for example, experience in sourcing philanthropic and corporate contributions).



Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe experience in supporting improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education outcomes.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Strong involvement of staff with experience in achieving outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.</li><li>Key staff have worked on significant partnerships that have demonstrated success.</li><li>Significant Indigenous leadership on staff or board.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe how they would identify, assess, and prepare advice on partnership proposals, including prior experience with the Australian Government.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Prior experience in establishing partnerships between schools.</li><li>Experience in managing Australian Government funding to support existing partnerships.</li><li>Strong capacity to scale experience to a national footprint.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe the capacity to support school partnerships, capture and report on student outcomes, attendance, engagement, and Year 12 attainment rates.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Demonstrated prior experience of successfully implementing school partnerships and effectively capturing, measuring and reporting on outcomes.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe description of an effective risk management approach that will minimise risk and ensure that funding achieves outcomes and objectives and performance indicators.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Evidence of a solid risk management approach that supports success and captures data that provides evidence of improvement in outcomes.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Details of an ability to secure additional financial contributions.</li></ul>	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Prior experience in sourcing additional or philanthropic funds or the ability to do so.</li></ul>

---

## **Criterion 2: Organisational capability**

Demonstrate your organisation's capability and capacity to successfully administer the City-Country Partnerships program.

When addressing your response you should consider:

- details of your organisation's prior experience in delivering similar projects or programs, such as partnerships between schools, including key achievements of this work
- a description of related activities your organisation is currently engaged in and, if applicable, planned future business activities
- evidence of the qualifications and experience of your staff that will support delivery of the City-Country Partnerships program
- your organisation's demonstrated ability to engage and work with the non-government schooling sectors
- your organisation's capacity to communicate the grant opportunity to relevant schools, including developing culturally appropriate communication materials
- details your organisation's ability to provide secretariat support on establishment of an advisory board (if requested by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment)
- evidence of your organisation's capability to meet reporting and performance requirements.



Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe experience in delivering similar projects.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="813 495 1430 595">▪ Experience in supporting partnerships across a range of settings or the ability to adapt to varying settings.</li><li data-bbox="813 613 1436 714">▪ An organisational strategic priority focusing on the strong foundations to achieve improved educational outcomes and Year 12 attainment.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe related activities currently engaged in by the organisation.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="813 790 1430 891">▪ Had negotiated and implemented a significant school partnership that involved Indigenous communities.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe suitably experienced and qualified staff.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="813 969 1430 1137">▪ Strong Indigenous leadership across the organisation and demonstrated that their staff had achieved a range of outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe an ability to engage with non-government organisations.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="813 1211 1374 1312">▪ Experience working with a range of organisations to support projects and outcomes with schools and communities.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe capacity to communicate the grant opportunity to relevant schools, including developing culturally appropriate communication materials.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="813 1391 1417 1491">▪ A strong background in working with schools and especially in creating and managing partnerships.</li><li data-bbox="813 1509 1410 1610">▪ Strong Indigenous leadership and demonstrated an ability to communicate in a culturally sensitive manner.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe secretariat capacity.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="813 1686 1382 1756">▪ Relevant staff experience and structure to delivery secretariat support if required.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe evidence of reporting and performance requirements.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="813 1830 1430 1962">▪ A demonstrated understanding of the need for reporting and performance management to meet the Department of Education, Skills and Employment's requirements.</li></ul>

---

### **Criterion 3: Ability to work sensitively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**

Demonstrate your organisation's ability to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support improved educational outcomes.

When addressing your response you should consider:

- your experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (this could include your experience working in partnership with reference to [Priority Reform One of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#))
- how you will work with schools and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure partnerships are supported by community
- your understanding of the types of sensitivities that need to be managed in engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and your experience in managing these
- your understanding of these issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education outcomes and how partnerships through this program will support improvements.



Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe experience in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="810 504 1364 609">▪ Experience with existing initiatives and negotiating school partnerships from a community perspective.</li><li data-bbox="810 629 1417 734">▪ Experience with and understanding of how to work closely with community representative groups and organisations.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe how to ensure partnerships are supported by community.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="810 817 1380 922">▪ Existing initiatives that work closely with community representative groups and organisations.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe understanding of managing sensitivities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="810 1005 1372 1146">▪ Experience in working closely and successfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.</li></ul>
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe understanding of issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and how partnerships could support improvements.	Strong responses demonstrated/described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="810 1227 1441 1413">▪ A clear understanding of the issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as well as practical solutions for how the partnerships created by this program would support improvement.</li><li data-bbox="810 1433 1422 1538">▪ Evidence of improvement which had been achieved through previous or existing work with communities.</li></ul>