Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration Grants to Social Enterprises

Feedback for applicants

The Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) has provided the following General Feedback for applicants of the Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration Grants to Social Enterprises (the EPRI program) Grant Opportunity.

Overview

The EPRI program focuses on the provision of support to economic participation focused social enterprises who can demonstrate the ability to achieve economic participation outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants.

The opportunity seeks to increase the rate of employment for refugees and humanitarian entrants with lower skill levels and low English language proficiency.

The EPRI program focused on initiatives that were supported by evidence or demonstrated success in achieving outcomes for the target cohort and delivered in employment regions with a high proportion of refugees and humanitarian entrants.

The intended outcomes of the EPRI program are:

- higher rates of the refugee and humanitarian entrant employment and self-employment
- reduced refugee and humanitarian entrant welfare dependency and long-term unemployment.

The grant opportunity application period opened on 28 February 2022 and closed on 11 April 2022.

The grant opportunity received 111 applications. Following the Decision Maker's decision, 20 applications were selected for funding, to a value of $17.7 million (GST exclusive).

There was a strong interest in the program and successful 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 Community Grants Hub undertook the screening for organisation eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. This information was provided to Home Affairs, who were responsible for making the final decision on whether an application did not meet the eligibility and/or compliance criteria.

The Community Grants Hub undertook the preliminary assessment of all eligible and compliant applications using an open competitive selection process. Following preliminary assessment, all assessed applications were referred to the Home Affairs EPRI Policy Team for consideration by their Selection Advisory Panel.

For applications which did not meet the requirements within the Grant Opportunity Guidelines, the applicants were notified of this outcome in writing.

Each application was assessed by the Selection Advisory Panel on merit, based on:

- how well it met the criteria
- how it compared to other applications
- whether it provided value with relevant money.

Each applicant was required to address the following selection criteria:

Criterion 1: Demonstrate the need for your proposed intervention.

Criterion 2: Demonstrate how the proposal will contribute to the EPRI program objectives.

Criterion 3: Demonstrate your organisation's capacity to effectively deliver the project.

Preferred applicants were 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

Twenty organisations were selected to deliver the EPRI program grant.

The selected organisations 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

Demonstrate the need for your proposed intervention.
When addressing the criterion, strong applications included evidence which:

- outlined the proposal's target cohort, including the number of participants to be supported, their location, their characteristics and their economic participation support needs
- outlined how the target cohort aligned with the priorities of the EPRI program, including English language and skill levels
- outlined how the proposed intervention would address the economic participation support needs of your target cohort.

Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to outline the proposal's target cohort, including the number of participants who would be supported, their location, their characteristics and their economic participation support needs (meets Criterion 1a).	Strong responses clearly: • outlined who the target cohort were; including age range, nationalities, spoken language and their locations using specific evidence and statistics • demonstrated in-depth knowledge of the cohort's characteristics and economic support needs through demographic evidence and academic research.
Strong applications were required to outline how the target cohort would align with the priorities of the EPRI program, including English language and skill levels (meets Criterion 1b).	Strong responses clearly: • referred to socio-economic and demographic data (e.g. ABS, SEIFA) and other supporting information to demonstrate the target cohort's low English language and employment skill levels • provided a clear link between the priorities of the EPRI program and their provided evidence.
Strong applications were required to outline how the proposed intervention would address the economic participation support needs of their target cohort (meets Criterion 1c).	Strong responses: • provided a clear description of their project activities and clearly explained how they would address each of the addressed economic participation needs experienced by their target cohort.

Criterion 2

Demonstrate how the proposal will contribute to the EPRI program objectives.

When addressing the criterion, strong applications included evidence which:

- outlined the proposal and what outcomes it would achieve for the target cohort
- demonstrated how the proposed intervention would achieve its intended objectives. Evidence may have included a track-record of outcomes being achieved using the proposed intervention, an evaluation of a like program that showed effectiveness for the proposed cohort or a comprehensive theory of change outlining why the proposal would be effective in achieving the intended impact
- outlined how the proposal would deliver sustainable economic participation outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants. Evidence may have included data to support workforce shortages or projected growth in the industry of focus, or evidence of the medium or long-term economic participation outcomes of refugees who have received the treatment.

Strength	Example
Strong applications clearly outlined the proposal and what outcomes it will achieve for the target cohort (meets Criterion 2a).	Strong responses clearly: • described in detail what the activities would be and how they benefit the target cohort, often providing demographical data • provided an in depth explanation of each stage of the proposed project and its timeframes • demonstrated intended outcomes and how the organisation has the capacity and capability to achieve these outcomes.
Strong applications clearly demonstrated how the proposed intervention would achieve its intended objectives. Evidence included a track-record of outcomes being achieved using the proposed intervention, an evaluation of a like program showed effectiveness for the proposed cohort or a comprehensive theory of change outlining why the proposal will be effective in achieving the intended impact (meets Criterion 2b).	Strong responses clearly: • demonstrated the organisation has the capacity and capability to achieve their outcomes through evidence • linked their proposed project to deliverable outcomes based on prior research programs • described how they will achieve intended objectives in a clear and logical manner • provided relevant examples of successful previous projects directly related to the EPRI program objectives • demonstrated how their organisation intended to evaluate how the proposed intervention will achieve its intended objectives.

Strength	Example
Strong applications clearly demonstrated how the proposal will deliver sustainable economic participation outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants. Evidence may include data to support workforce shortages or projected growth in the industry of focus, or evidence of the medium or long-term economic participation outcomes of refugees who have received the treatment (meets Criterion 2c).	Strong responses clearly: • linked the intended methods to relevant data supporting the implementation of the project • indicated the project will provide the intended cohort with practical skillsets for work readiness, including knowledge on Australian workplace culture, connections to industry-related training and skills development, and job placements • demonstrated, through evidence and data, the project will give participants greater knowledge of English language skills.

Criterion 3

Demonstrated your organisation's capacity to effectively deliver the project.

When addressing the criterion, strong applications included evidence which demonstrated:

- the organisation's and/or key personnel's experience in delivering economic participation outcomes to disadvantaged groups
- experience in delivering services to refugees and humanitarian entrants and how the organisation would deliver culturally competent services
- capacity to evaluate the success of the proposed project
- a sound business model and evidence of financial viability
- sound governance, reporting and financial management capabilities.

Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to describe the organisations and/or key personnel's experience in delivering economic participation outcomes to disadvantaged groups (meets Criterion 3a).	Strong responses provided: • clear and detailed evidence on the organisation's and/or key personnel's experience in delivering economic outcomes to disadvantaged group, both describing the disadvantaged group and the nature of the service provided • quantitative data on the economic outcomes of the disadvantaged group caused by the project.
Strong applications were required to demonstrate their experience in delivering services to refugees and humanitarian entrants, and describe how the organisation will	Strong responses clearly: • indicated an extensive history of delivering service to refugees / humanitarian entrants,

Strength	Example
deliver culturally competent services (meets Criterion 3b).	indicating the timeframe and the nature of service provided • demonstrated knowledge of delivering culturally competent services to the target cohort through clear business policies and a flexibility • demonstrated ability for key personnel to delivery culturally competent services through use of training, education, and accreditation.
Strong applications were required to demonstrate their capacity to evaluate the success of the proposed project (meets Criterion 3c).	Strong responses clearly: • outlined the methodology of outcome measuring they would use including how they would gather relevant data • provided KPIs / milestones to indicate the project's success.
Strong applications were required to demonstrate a sound business model and evidence of financial viability (meets Criterion 3d).	Strong responses clearly: • demonstrated a logical business model and provided evidence of its effectiveness for the organisation • demonstrated financial stability and described the methodology in place to remain financially viable for the duration of the project.
Strong applications were required to describe sound governance, reporting and financial management capabilities (meets Criterion 3e).	Strong responses: • provided key detail on governance such as outlining senior staff roles and describing the smaller units which make up the organisation • provided evidence of experience with reporting procedures to similar grant opportunities; some applicants provided evidence of experience using DES • demonstrated a history of sound financial management and outlined the skills of staff to manage financials for the duration of the project.