



Australian Government

**Community
Grants Hub**
Improving your grant experience



Families and Communities Program Strong and Resilient Communities Activity – Inclusive Communities Grants

Feedback for applicants

The Department of Social Services (the department) has provided the following general feedback for applicants of the Families and Communities Program: Strong and Resilient Communities Activity – Inclusive Communities Grants (SARC – IC) grant opportunity.

Overview

The grant opportunity application period opened on 23 September 2022 and closed on 3 November 2022.

The objectives of the SARC – IC Activity are to support vulnerable and disadvantaged people on pathways to self-reliance and empowerment through local community-driven solutions that support them to participate socially and economically. SARC – IC focuses on supporting people in geographical areas of high socio-economic disadvantage across all states and territories.

Selection process

The Community Grants Hub undertook a screening for organisation eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines (the Guidelines). This information was provided to the department for the final decision on whether an application did not meet the eligibility and/or compliance criteria. Ineligible and non-compliant applications did not progress to assessment.

The Community Grants Hub then assessed and considered all eligible and compliant applications through an open competitive grant process. All assessed applications were provided to the department's Selection Advisory Panel (the Panel) for consideration. The Panel, established by the department, was comprised of subject matter experts from across the Australian Public Service. The Panel assessed applications and provided advice to inform the department's funding recommendations to the Delegate.

Applications were considered on merit, based on the following:

- represents value with money
 - the initial preliminary score against the assessment criteria by the Community Grants Hub
 - the overall objective/s to be achieved in providing the grant
 - whether the proposed project was in scope
 - the needs of this grant opportunity's priority cohorts
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- the relative value of the grant sought
 - how the grant activities would target groups or individuals, and how effectively
 - extent to which the geographic location of the application matches SARC – IC objectives
 - how well it compared to other applications
 - overlap with, or duplication of, other Australian Government grant programs, other Australian Government-funded projects or activities funded by state or territory governments
 - the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting measurable outcomes and the objectives of the SARC – IC
 - the extent to which the applicant demonstrates a commitment to the SARC – IC
 - the extent to which the application aligns with Australian Government policy, legislation or commitments (for example, the Closing the Gap Implementation Plan Priority Reform 2; increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations)
 - the risks (financial, fraud and other) that the applicant or project poses for the department
 - the risks that the applicant or project posed for the Commonwealth.

Each applicant was required to address the following selection criteria:

Criterion 1 – Demonstrate a strong need for the project within the target community (30%)

Criterion 2 – Describe the project in detail (30%)

Criterion 3 – Demonstrate your organisation’s capability to deliver the project in the identified community (20%)

Criterion 4 – Demonstrate your organisation’s governance arrangements to support the delivery of the project (20%)

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 Guidelines.

Selection results

The grant round was highly competitive with a strong interest in the program. Applications were assessed according to the procedure detailed in the Guidelines and outlined in the selection process above.

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.

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

Overarching feedback

Applications were reviewed based on merit relating to a range of topics. Strong applications clearly demonstrated how the project **did not cross over or duplicate** other services offered by other government programs such as HeadSpace, Workforce Australia, Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program, and Reconnect.

- Applicants should identify how their project is different from the example services above

Strong applications demonstrated how the project **was not the responsibility** of another service system such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and mainstream health/mental health and education.

Strong applications, that sought to move their existing project to a new location or support a new cohort, demonstrated how and why the project was successful.

Criterion 1: Demonstrate a strong need for the project within the target community (30%). In responding to this criterion, you should demonstrate:

- a) the problem or need your project will address and how it aligns with the objectives of the SARC – IC Activity (see section 2.1 of the Guidelines)
- b) the demographic of the community your project will target/benefit (see section 2.1 of the Guidelines for a description of the program objectives which also include the target cohorts for this grant)
- c) evidence of the need or demand for the project; including the extent to which the identified problem or need relates to the identified cohort and their community (for example, statistics, research, empirical evidence, evidence of unmet need or service gap, consultation with the target group).



Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to demonstrate the problem or need the project would address, and how it aligns with the objectives of the SARC – IC Grants (meets Criteria 1a and 1c).	Strong responses provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ statistics and data relevant to the service delivery area listed in the application, which highlighted the problems or issues the target cohorts were facing, such as ABS data or other Federal or state data▪ academic research or reports which discussed the issues or barriers experienced by the target cohorts▪ evidence of consultations with the target cohorts, subject matter experts or project stakeholders who discuss the identified problem or need related to the target cohorts and their community.
Strong applications were required to describe the demographic of the community the project will target/benefit (meets Criteria 1b and 1c).	Strong responses provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ a detailed description of one or more of the 4 target cohorts described in pages 5 and 6 of the Guidelines▪ data and other supporting information (such as the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 2016 score of the service delivery area)▪ a clear intention of achieving the outcomes for the target cohorts listed on page 6 of the Guidelines and within a 2 year period.

Criterion 2: Describe the project in detail (30%). In responding to this criterion, you should:

- a) provide a description of the project including details of how the project will be promoted (to recruit and engage your participants), delivered and implemented
- b) explain the intended short, medium and long term outcomes of the project, how the project will address the identified problem or need and how the outcomes of the project will result in or are linked to the intended outcomes listed in the SARC – IC Activity (see section 2.2 of the Guidelines)
- c) explain how you will measure the intended outcomes of the project, including any tools or strategies you intend to utilise and at what points in the project they will be used
- d) describe how you have consulted with and/or involved the target groups in the design of the project, including their role in this process, and support for the project.



Strength	Example
<p>Strong applications were required to describe the project, including how the project will be promoted, delivered and implemented (meets Criterion 2a).</p>	<p>Strong responses described:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ what and when the specific activities would be delivered (that is, key deliverables)▪ the anticipated number of participants in each activity or the total number of participants for the project▪ how the applicant intends to promote the project to the community (such as via online, social media and flyers)▪ methods to identify suitable participants (such as assessments, referrals or with the assistance of a project stakeholder).
<p>Strong applications were required to demonstrate how a participants' situation would improve over the short, medium and long term. Applicants also demonstrated a clear understanding of the intended outcomes of the SARC – IC Activity (meets Criterion 2b).</p>	<p>Strong responses described:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ how, as a result of the project, the intended outcomes will reduce the problems identified (theory of change)▪ clear links between the intended outcomes of the project and the outcomes of SARC – IC listed in page 6 of the Guidelines, rather than rephrasing the outcomes of the SARC – IC program. <p>For example: the short-term outcomes of a project whose activities are aimed towards helping vulnerable women include the participants feeling both empowered to pursue further training and more confident. The medium-term outcomes include developing social and community connections. The long-term outcomes are an improved sense of belonging and a willingness to support women in similar vulnerable situations.</p>



Strength	Example
<p>Strong applications were required to describe how, and through which means, the outcomes of the project would be measured, including any tools or strategies to be utilised and when during the project they will be used (meets Criterion 2c).</p>	<p>Strong responses included methods such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ surveys at the beginning, during and end of a participant's time in the project▪ rating scales, such as Likert rating scales, to measure change▪ an independent evaluator, either employed by or contracted to the organisation, who will be regularly monitoring the progress of the project▪ participant feedback collected at the end of every session▪ collection of other data specifically designed to help measure project outcomes.
<p>Strong applications were required to describe how applicants had consulted with and/or involved the target cohorts in the design of the project, including their role in the process, and support for the project (meets Criterion 2d).</p>	<p>Strong responses provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ evidence of the organisation's consultation with, and support for, the project amongst members of the target cohorts, such as feedback from participants▪ clear descriptions of the roles members of the target cohorts would have in co-designing the project activities with the organisation.

Criterion 3: Demonstrate your organisation's capability to deliver the project in the identified community (20%). In responding to this criterion, you should:

- a) demonstrate your organisation's knowledge of the local community your project is intended to target/benefit and why your organisation is well-placed to deliver this project to the target groups within the identified community
- b) describe the relevant experience, qualifications, and registration you intend to be required of staff who will deliver services. Describe how you will ensure they are appropriately skilled and supported, including staff from other organisations funded through any consortium or sub-contracting arrangements
- c) demonstrate how your organisation will leverage existing relationships and work with other services to deliver the project
- d) briefly outline how your organisation would continue to deliver the project in the event of coronavirus pandemic restrictions or other unanticipated major event.



Strength	Example
<p>Strong applications were required to demonstrate the organisation's knowledge of the local community the project intends to target/benefit and why the organisation is well placed to deliver the project to the target cohorts within the identified community (meets Criterion 3a).</p>	<p>Strong responses described:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ relevant previous experience the organisation has had with enacting or delivering services to the target cohorts or the community, including how successful the services had been, how many individuals were supported, and how long they have been delivering services▪ relevant previous experience key personnel have had in providing services to the target cohorts.
<p>Strong applications were required to describe the relevant experience, qualifications and registration project staff, including staff from other organisations funded through any consortium or sub-contracting arrangements, will have and how the organisation will ensure they are appropriately supported (meets Criterion 3b)</p>	<p>Strong responses described:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ roles and responsibilities of the staff who will deliver the project activities▪ staff's capability, relevant experience and qualifications▪ relevant registration the staff should have to deliver the project, such as a valid Working with Children Check▪ training or supports provided to staff to ensure they can be effective in their roles.
<p>Strong applications were required to demonstrate how the organisation would leverage existing relationships and work with other services to successfully deliver the project (meets Criterion 3c).</p>	<p>Strong responses described:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ existing or working relationships and partnerships the organisation has with other organisations or businesses in the community. Partners can include other community organisations and existing service providers funded by the government▪ the roles and services partners would offer to complement the project for the target cohorts, such as work placements to provide participants relevant work experience.



Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to describe any mitigation strategies the organisation would have in place to continue delivering the project in the event of coronavirus pandemic restrictions or other unanticipated major event (meets Criterion 3d).	<p>Strong responses outlined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ plans and equipment to manage COVID-19 risks to continue delivering services (such as up-to-date IT infrastructure capable of delivering services online) ▪ plans consistent with relevant state/territory health orders to safely deliver the services in-person ▪ how the project would continue and adapt around unexpected circumstances, such as natural disasters.

Criterion 4: Demonstrate your organisation’s governance arrangements to support the delivery of the project (20%). In responding to this criterion, you should:

- a) provide an overview of your organisation, including governance structures, geographical coverage, and dispute resolution policies
- b) describe your processes for ensuring that all reporting requirements in section 12.2 of the Guidelines for this grant opportunity will be met.

Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to comprehensively describe their organisation, including its governance structures, geographical coverage and dispute resolution policies (meets Criterion 4a).	<p>Strong responses outlined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ history and capacity of delivering services within the state/territory ▪ experiences, roles and responsibilities of members of the board of directors or committee ▪ hierarchical structure at the organisation ▪ relevant policies relating to dispute resolution and risk mitigation strategies.
Strong applications were required to demonstrate how the organisation has mechanisms in place to ensure all reporting requirements will be met to a high standard (meets Criterion 4b).	<p>Strong responses described:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the organisation’s previous experience or capability to use the department’s Data Exchange or other reporting mechanisms ▪ procedures of collecting the required information and developing an action work plan ▪ staff responsible for reporting.



Individual feedback

Individual feedback will not be provided for this grant opportunity.

