Australian Government

Community Grants Hub
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National Agriculture Traceability Grants Program – Sustainability Reporting Uplift Grant Round

Feedback for applicants

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has provided the following general feedback for applicants of the National Agriculture Traceability Grants Program – Sustainability Reporting Uplift grant round.

Overview

The grant opportunity application period opened on 19 January 2023 and closed on 23 February 2023. It was an open competitive grant opportunity offering up to $4 million over 2 years commencing in the 2022–23 financial year.

The grant round received 59 eligible applications with up to 11 applications selected for funding by the Grant Round Decision Maker, to a value of $3,839,647 (GST exclusive).

The grant round was administered by the Department of Social Services' Community Grants Hub, on behalf of DAFF, under a Whole of Australian Government initiative to streamline grant processes across Australian Government agencies.

This grant round provides the opportunity for successful applicants to make further improvements to agricultural traceability consistent with the objectives of the consultation National Agricultural Traceability Strategy 2023 to 2033. It also gives successful applicants the chance to uplift the agriculture sector's data capabilities to consistently report against sustainability frameworks and meet emerging international requirements and standards.

Projects developed under this grant program will address known data gaps for Australian agriculture in demonstrating credentials against standards, sustainability frameworks, international and other relevant requirements. Initiatives will support increased and increasingly consistent reporting across the sector to provide transparency and give assurance to sustainability credentials and support the case for data standardisation to build value-added economic benefits in Australia through enhanced traceability.

There was a strong interest by stakeholders in the grant round and successful applications were of a very high standard. All applications were assessed according to the procedure detailed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines and the process outlined 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 DAFF 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.

DAFF then assessed and considered all eligible and compliant applications through an Open Competitive grant process. All assessed applications were considered by the Selection Advisory Panel (the Panel). The Panel, established by DAFF was convened to review and recommend applications for funding to the Decision Maker. The Panel comprised of a chair and 2 members with expertise and knowledge relevant to the grant round.

The Panel assessed applications on merit, based on:

- a score against the assessment criteria
- the overall objective(s) to be achieved in providing the grant
- whether the project provided value with relevant money
- the relative value of the grant sought
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrated how it would contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives of the grant program as outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines
- the relevant merit of an application compared to other applications with a focus on the objective(s), outcome(s) and overall value for money
- the extent to which the applicant demonstrated a commitment to the program
- how the grant activities would be applied to other commodities or agricultural industries
- the risks, financial, fraud and other, which the applicant or project posed for the department
- the risks which the applicant or project posed for the Commonwealth.

Each applicant was required to address the following selection criteria:

Criterion 1: Project alignment to the grant program purpose, objectives and outcomes (25 points)

Criterion 2: Suitability and effectiveness of the project to achieve its aims (25 points)

Criterion 3: Capacity, capability and resources to deliver your project (25 points)

Criterion 4: Value with money and degree of innovation in the project (25 points)

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

Up to 11 organisations were selected to deliver the National Agriculture Traceability Grants Program - Sustainability Reporting Uplift grant round.

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 the general feedback.

General feedback for applicants

Successful applicants all demonstrated projects which were innovative, addressed the grant program objectives, outcomes and selection criteria to a high degree; provided value for money; and provided evidence that the project outputs could lead to future adoption across multiple agricultural sectors and commodities; and/or whose outcomes would likely advance the agriculture sector's data capabilities and meet emerging international requirements and standards for sustainability. Successful applicants also provided a detailed proposal, project plan, budget and risk assessment which delivered strong to good responses to all of the assessment criteria, plus provided letters of support from consortium partners and/or key stakeholders.

Criterion 1

Project alignment to the grant program purpose, objectives and outcomes (25 points).

Applicants had to demonstrate this through identifying:

- the project's overall aim(s) and why they were important, including how it would align to the draft National Agricultural Traceability Strategy, emerging international requirements or standards and sustainability frameworks (such as the Australian Agriculture Sustainability Framework (AASF) or sectoral frameworks)
- how the project was supported by evidence
- which grant program objectives and outcome(s) (see section 2.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines) the project would deliver against and how would it achieve them
- partnership(s) and collaboration in the project, for example across industry, scientific organisations; cooperative research centres; state, territory or local governments; corporate Commonwealth entities; universities; or public and private research organisations
- the long-term benefits the activity would deliver to industry and Australian agriculture and how it would strengthen enduring national and/or international collaboration and partnerships.

Strong applications	Example
Clearly described the project's overall aims, identified why they were important, and how the project would align to the draft National Agricultural Traceability Strategy.	Strong responses demonstrated how their project's overall aim(s) would enhance agricultural traceability by consistently reporting against sustainability frameworks and meeting emerging international requirements and standards. They clearly provided: ▪ a list of project aim(s) and identification of why they were important, including impacts on affected stakeholders, a particular commodity, or what the broader impact would be on the agricultural industry ▪ clear identification of how the project's aim(s) would align with the objectives of the consultation draft strategy.
Clearly described how their project was supported by evidence.	Strong responses demonstrated an evidence base for their project. They clearly provided: ▪ a well-designed and well-written proposal which was built on prior research or proofs of concept ▪ reasons for why their chosen method was preferred.

Strong applications	Example
Clearly identified which grant program objectives and outcomes(s) the project would deliver against and described how it would achieve them.	Strong responses outlined a clear methodology, required resources, and identified partnerships which would be used to achieve the relevant program objectives and outcomes. They clearly provided: ▪ a proposal which identified relevant grant program objectives and outcomes, with strong articulation of the different aspects of the project, and clear and achievable outcomes ▪ a proposal which clearly articulated activities, risks and methodology.
Clearly listed their identified partnerships and collaboration in their projects.	Strong responses demonstrated their proposal had support from related stakeholders, including identification of collaboration partners as well as consortium arrangements where applicable and attached letters of supports. They clearly provided: ▪ information on who has been consulted as part of the development of the project ▪ support from relevant stakeholders including technology partners, scientific organisations or research centres, government agencies and/or across industry ▪ a strong consortium arrangement and/or strong relationships with relevant stakeholders with sufficient letters of support from across industry and government.
Described their project's long-term benefits to Australian agriculture, and how it would strengthen national and international partnerships and collaboration.	Strong responses demonstrated how their project would contribute to the development of innovative and practicable proposals to address known data gaps for Australian agriculture. They clearly provided: ▪ a proposal which was an innovative yet appropriate use of technology in agricultural traceability ▪ a proposal which had a wide application across commodities other than its targeted commodity ▪ evidence which the public benefit outweighed the private benefit ▪ evidence which project would strengthen sector-wide interoperability.

Criterion 2

Suitability and effectiveness of the project to achieve its aims (25 points).

When addressing this criterion, applicants had to clearly identify:

- the activities they would undertake including where and when they would occur
- how the proposed methodology(ies) or approach(es) to undertaking the project activities would assist with achieving the project's aim(s)
- the specific partner(s) involved in the project to support achieving project outcome(s)
- how progress towards achieving the project's outcome(s) would be measured
- potential risks to the success of the project and how these would be managed or mitigated.

Strong applications	Example
Clearly described where and when project activities would be undertaken.	Strong responses clearly articulated project phases and activities. They provided: ▪ information on how all proposed activities would be undertaken across the project timeframe ▪ identification of risk points and allowance of slippage time.
Clearly described how their proposed methodology(ies) or approach(es) would assist with achieving the project's aim(s).	Strong responses clearly outlined the project's aim(s) and how they would achieve the desired program outcomes through the proposed methodology(ies). They provided: ▪ a suitable methodology and cross-disciplinary approach ▪ sufficient details in their methodology(ies) to assess the feasibility of the project and identification of how it would achieve the project's aim(s) ▪ a well-designed project proposal which appeared achievable based on the clear method.

Strong applications	Example
Demonstrated how their identified partnerships would support achieving project outcome(s).	Strong responses demonstrated appropriate industry engagement and partner support in their projects. They provided: ▪ a clear description of how stakeholders would support achieving the desired project outcome(s), including letters of support from consortium partners and other stakeholders ▪ identification of the right partners to be involved to ensure the project approach was feasible ▪ an outline of how relationships would be built beyond their direct network to ensure the project's success.
Demonstrated how they would measure progress towards the project's outcome(s).	Strong responses demonstrated a thorough understanding of how they would define and measure their progress throughout their project timeframe. They provided: ▪ a breakdown of the project's desired outcome(s) ▪ key milestones which were measurable and achievable and were clearly in support of the outcome(s).
Demonstrated how they would manage or mitigate potential risks toward project outcome(s).	Strong responses identified potential risks to the success of their projects and outlined how these would be managed or mitigated. They clearly provided: ▪ a well-articulated description of the project's potential risks ▪ appropriate processes and strategies to manage and mitigate the project's potential risks.

Criterion 3

Capacity, capability and resources to deliver your project (25 points).

In addressing this criterion, applicants had to clearly demonstrate:

- their organisation's ability to deliver the outcomes, track record in delivering similar projects, and access to personnel with the right skills and experience relevant to the project, including commercialisation where required
- how they would manage and monitor the project, including responsibility for oversight
- how their organisation would work with partners, and engage agricultural industry and other relevant stakeholders and end users to inform design and adoption
- how they would manage organisational risks
- how they would manage security (including national and cyber security risks), involvement of international partners and intellectual property protection where applicable.

Strong applications	Example
Described how the organisation would deliver the outcomes and demonstrate their track record in delivering similar projects, and their access to personnel with the right skills and experience.	Strong responses identified the organisation's capability and experience in research and development together with its capacity to deliver outcomes. They clearly demonstrated: ▪ which project could be taken from concept to implementation through their access to personnel with the right skills and experience ▪ experience through providing details of previous work or research of similar outcomes and budget ▪ identification of relevant stakeholders who could fill any organisational gaps in knowledge or experience.
Demonstrated how the organisation would manage and monitor the project effectively.	Strong responses demonstrated the organisation's capability to implement, manage and monitor a government funded project and outlined appropriate governance structures. They provided: ▪ evidence the proposal used an established platform for their project's administration and governance ▪ strong articulation of different aspects of the project ▪ information on how the governance structure would engage with risk ▪ information on how the project would be governed including relevant partners or consortium partners.

Strong applications	Example
Described how the organisation would work with partners to engage agricultural industry and other relevant stakeholders and end users throughout their project.	Strong responses demonstrated initial engagement and collaboration with identified partners and industry stakeholders. They clearly provided: ▪ a thorough understanding of the relevant stakeholders and how to engage to make the project successful ▪ information on how to facilitate the adoption of project outcomes would meet the needs of agricultural stakeholders.
Demonstrated how they would effectively manage organisational risks.	Strong responses clearly identified: ▪ organisational risks could affect the delivery of the project, and how future risks would be identified ▪ details of how the organisation would manage any obstacles and organisational risks, including linking this to the timeline of delivery.
Demonstrated how they would effectively manage security (including national and cyber security risks).	Strong responses demonstrated their capability to identify, manage and mitigate potential security risks including national and cyber security risks. Responses provided: ▪ a proposal which was well thought-out and addressed cyber security strongly ▪ a built-in ability to undertake risk assessments and strategies to mitigate and respond to incidents.

Criterion 4

Value with money and degree of innovation in the project (25 points).

Applicants had to demonstrate this through identifying:

- how the funding requested was proportionate to the aim(s) of their project
- any co-contributions by the organisation or participatory partner(s) in the project
- any future financial or private benefit(s) (for example, commercialisation of product or financial benefit from research) that may accrue from delivering on the project
- how the project would enhance/differ from current practice to address and deliver an innovative outcome and/or practice for an industry-identified problem
- how the innovation would lead to adoption and could be expanded across different commodities and products to enhance agricultural traceability systems and supply chains.

Strong applications	Example
Demonstrated how the funding requested was proportionate to the aim(s) of the project.	Strong responses demonstrated how the requested funding amount was appropriate for the project scope and activities. They provided: ▪ a well-articulated budget, clearly connected to project activities ▪ budget figures which were considered appropriate to the cost and implementation of the project activities.
Listed any co-contributions by their organisation or participatory partner(s) in the project.	Strong responses listed any co-contributions. They clearly provided details of: ▪ partner(s) who would contribute to the cost of their projects and the extent of their contribution ▪ project partners' additional support through cash and/or in-kind contributions which would add value to the delivery of the project.
Described future financial or private benefit(s) which would be realised from delivering the project.	Strong responses described gains which may accrue from the project. They clearly described: ▪ parts of the project would provide benefit beyond the participating organisations and how those benefits might be shared ▪ how their project outcomes might be implemented across the agricultural supply chain.

Strong applications	Example
Described how the project would deliver an innovative outcome and/or practice for addressing an industry-identified problem.	Strong responses described how the project's outcome(s) would address an industry-identified problem. They clearly identified: ▪ an industry-identified problem and existing solutions, and how the project would deliver an innovative outcome or practice ▪ how the project would be made user-friendly for the relevant audience(s).
Described how the project would be adopted for use and how it could be expanded across different agricultural commodities and products.	Strong responses demonstrated how their projects could be adopted and scaled. They clearly outlined: ▪ the regulatory technology solution underpinning their project would be interoperable with other systems ▪ an education component extending to other industries ▪ engagement with stakeholders from other agricultural sectors beyond the project's initial phases.