



Australian Government

Community  
Grants Hub  
Improving your grant experience



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## Future Drought Fund

## Extension and Adoption of Drought Resilience Farming Practices Grants Program

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### General Feedback

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has provided the following general feedback for applicants of the Future Drought Fund Extension and Adoption of Drought Resilience Farming Practices Grants Program (the program) grant opportunity.

### Overview


The purpose of the program is to support farmers through the delivery of grants for demonstrations of proven and existing research and development (R&D) practices and technologies which assist farmers with building drought resilience.

The objective of the program is to fund activities that support increased adoption, including through demonstration, of proven and existing (Australian and international) R&D drought resilience practices and technology that:

- reduce the impacts of drought on agricultural productivity and/or enable a quicker recovery for farmers and their lands from drought
- have potential to be adopted at a large scale (either across multiple farms, a farming system, landscapes, regions or industries)
- can demonstrate public benefits.

The grant opportunity application period opened on 11 November 2022 and closed on 9 January 2023. The grant opportunity received 164 applications. 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.

Following the assessment process, 18 applications were selected for funding, to a value of \$13,019,191.00 (GST exclusive). The selected applicants provided well-written responses to all the assessment criteria. The proposed activities met all the program's eligibility requirements and clearly demonstrated how they would contribute to its outcomes, as outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.



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The decision to award grant funding to projects was made by the Drought Minister based on the recommendations of the program's independent selection advisory panel (the panel). When assessing applications, the panel had regard to whether the proposed project is in scope, as well as aligned with and the extent to which the project met both the Future Drought Fund's (FDF) funding plan and the program's objectives and outcomes. The panel also considered the relative value of the grant sought.

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.

Some general feedback comments:

- Strong applicants comprehensively explained ways to improve drought resilience. Drought resilience was the primary focus in these applications, not one that is secondary or ancillary to other aims such as sustainability.

Applicants also outlined pathways to share outcomes of the project with other farmers, land managers, regions or areas. In addition, strong answers included clear monitoring and evaluation approaches and communication strategies.

Strong applicants clearly demonstrated their project had the ability to deliver and demonstrate adoption at scale. They provided details of how the project would reach broader audiences, cover larger geographic landscapes and lead to adoption beyond the life of the grant.

Strong applicants provided evidence of support from relevant stakeholders and community members, including from Indigenous communities. There was evidence applicants leveraged existing networks (producer, farming systems, NRM groups Drought Resilience and Innovation Hubs) and previous projects.

Strong applicants demonstrated value for money and public benefits from the project. Where relevant, they clearly acknowledged public benefits and succinctly outlined how these outweighed private benefits. Importantly, these applicants emphasised and showed evidence of interest from agricultural communities and their willingness to engage in the project.

Strong applicants clearly demonstrated their capability to deliver the project by articulating the roles, skills, expertise, qualifications, and credentials of participants and/or consortia members. Applicants explicitly demonstrated how all these attributes added value to the project.

Successful applicants also outlined their organisations' history in administering projects of the size and type proposed.

Strong answers listed potential/perceived risks that could occur during the course of the project, including the consequences of these risks and what measures they would put in place to mitigate those risks.

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## 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.

DAFF assessed and considered eligible and compliant applications through an open competitive grant process. All assessed applications were considered by the panel. The panel, established by DAFF was comprised of subject matter experts. The panel assessed applications and provided advice to inform DAFF's funding recommendations to the Drought Minister.

Applications were assessed on merit, based on:

- whether the application represented value for money
- the initial preliminary score against the assessment criteria
- overall objective/s to be achieved in providing the grant
- whether the proposed project was in scope
- alignment with both the FDF's funding plan and the program's objectives and outcomes
- the relative value of the grant sought, and percentage of co-contribution or in-kind assistance
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrated it would contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives of the program
- how the grant activities would target groups or individuals
- the risks, financial, fraud and other, the applicant or project poses for the department
- the risks the applicant or project poses for the Commonwealth.

Each applicant was required to address the following selection criteria:

### **Criterion 1: Relevance of the project to the drought resilience of Australian agriculture (25%)**

Describe the project's potential contribution to the drought resilience of Australian agriculture in accordance with the program objectives.

### **Criterion 2: Methodology and scalability (35%)**

Describe how the project will increase adoption of the practice and technology at a large scale.

### **Criterion 3: Demonstrate value for money (20%)**

Describe how your proposed activities represent value for money in the use of public funding.

### **Criterion 4: Capability to deliver the project (20%)**

Describe the project risks and capability to manage those risks.

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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

18 organisations were selected to deliver their proposed projects.

Broadly speaking, strong applications clearly supported drought resilience and had well-designed methodologies. Applicants demonstrated that they were well-placed to deliver, achieve meaningful impacts and promote outcomes of the project with broader audiences and across wide geographic areas. Evidence of strong, effective partnerships was also clear in these applications.

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

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## Criterion 1.

Relevance of the project to the drought resilience of Australian agriculture (25%)

Describe the project's potential contribution to the drought resilience of Australian agriculture in accordance with the program objectives.

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants identified:

- the existing research and development, practice or technology was to be the focus of the project, and why they are confident it can support improved resilience to droughts
- the potential of the practice to improve drought resilience in the context of the Australian agriculture sector – for example, is it potentially relevant to a broad range of producers, large value of production, or otherwise have large relative potential socio-economic benefits?
- the drought resilience practice or technology in the project is proven, not new or novel
- the primary focus of the project, including for demonstrations, is adoption of the practice, not research and development into the practice
- alignment with 2 or more of the Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub's regional priorities (see below) as relevant for the region/s their project will be implemented in.

Strength	Example
Strong applicants were able to describe the existing research and development, practice or technology was to be the focus of the project, and why they were confident it would support improved resilience to future drought.	<p>Strong responses described a well-developed, clearly articulated and well researched project. The applicant provided evidence of proven drought resilience practices/technology which were current and directly related to/and strongly influenced their proposal.</p> <p>The applicant conveyed confidence in their projects capability by identifying the existing research achievements and how they would apply it to ensure their project's success; to improve drought resilience.</p>
Strong applicants were able to describe the potential of the practice to improve drought resilience in the context of the Australian agriculture sector – for example, was it potentially relevant to a broad range of producers, large value of production, or otherwise have large relative potential socio-economic benefits?	<p>Strong responses demonstrated a holistic approach to the application. The applicant identified the economic, environmental and social impacts of their project and how it specifically related to helping farmers.</p> <p>The applicant elaborated how their project would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ help reduce the impacts of drought on agricultural productivity; demonstrating value for money and contributing to the public good</li><li>▪ be adopted at large scale; specifically beyond the life of the grant, influencing long term agricultural change</li></ul>





Strength	Example
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ support farmers prepare for and recover from drought; supporting the communities in which they live.</li> </ul>
Strength	Example
<p>Strong applicants were able to describe the drought resilience practice or technology in their project was proven, not new or novel.</p>	<p>Strong responses described how the applicant supported their project by providing evidence from industry or academia, including testimonials of peer stakeholders to prove their technologies/ practices were established and proven, and they also had potential for extension and adoption.</p>
<p>Strong applicants were able to describe the primary focus of the project (including demonstrations) were to promote adoption of the practice, not research and development into the practice.</p>	<p>Strong responses described detailed strategies/plans for delivering outcomes, which strongly relied on farmers with firsthand experience to drive the uptake. On-farm demonstrations, field days and collaborative regional workshops showed a clear commitment to adoption. The applicant focused on the broader community/public sector benefits of farmers and measured success by how farmers would show interest in adopting their practices.</p>
<p>Strong applicants were able to describe the alignment with 2 or more of the Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub’s regional priorities as relevant for the region/s their project was to be implemented in.</p>	<p>Strong responses showed the applicant had researched their relevant Drought Hub’s regional priorities in-depth. They had consulted with the Hubs and referenced/or provided evidence (Letters of Support) they had engaged industry and/or community backing for their project.</p> <p>The applicant understood their target audience, and outlined they had a strong comprehension of the region they intended to support and conduct their demonstrations.</p>

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## Criterion 2.

### Methodology and scalability (35%)

Describe how the project will increase adoption of the practice and technology at a large scale.

Applicants demonstrated this through identifying:

- the methodology for the project – what activities they would deliver, and how? Why these would lead to increased practice change at a large scale?
- what do they expected the reach of the project to be and how it would this translate into uptake (for example, number of farmers adopting new drought resilient practices)?
- how would the project lead to increased adoption beyond the life of the funding? How would project outputs support longer term practice change?
- who would they collaborate with on the project to promote adoption and greater utilisation of the new practice or technology?

Strength	Example
Strong applicants were able to clearly describe the methodology for the project – what activities they were to deliver, and how; e.g. why the project would lead to increased practice change at a large scale.	Strong responses described what methodical ideology the applicant applied to the project. Strong applications clearly outlined the extension/and or adoption activities and how they intended to increase/deliver (frequency, knowledge, precision or quality of) the practice and compare the data, to prove practice change had occurred.
Strong applicants were able to describe what they expected the reach of the project to be and how it would translate into uptake (for example, number of farmers adopting new drought resilient practices).	Strong responses clearly listed who the applicant would contact and liaise with to achieve successful extension <u>and</u> adoption. They detailed their engagement strategy, including targets and how they would be measured – including any stakeholder/partnership capability or barriers and risks.
Strong applicants were able to describe how the project would lead to increased adoption beyond the life of the funding and how the project outputs support longer term practice change.	Strong responses clearly showed the applicant understood the definition of large scale and could effectively articulate how their project would deliver it. The applicant detailed the projects longevity, and its impacts on their region with clear starting and finishing points. The applicant detailed how their project would continue contributing to large scale adoption after funding had ceased.
Strong applicants were able to clearly identify who they were collaborating with on	Strong responses clearly identified a broad range of partners or collaborators who would assist in

the project to promote adoption and greater utilisation of the new practice or technology.

enabling the project's success. The applicant described clear lines of responsibility for delivering defined tasks -including timelines, labour, training and so on.

### Criterion 3

Demonstrate value for money (20%)

Describe how your proposed activities represent value for money in the use of public funding.

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants outlined:

- the anticipated scale of impacts and benefits of the project relative to the funding sought
- the level and nature of co-contributions from the lead organisation, collaborators and end-users
- any leveraging of related government, private, philanthropic or other investments
- what the public good benefits of the project are (such as for industry and First Nations people and communities) and how they outweigh any private benefits
- what are the benefits for project participants and providers of the practice or technology
- why the required funding cannot be sourced privately or through commercial avenues.

Strength	Example
Strong applicants were able to demonstrate the anticipated scale of impacts and benefits of the project relative to the funding sought.	Strong responses clearly showed how the ratio of the requested amount of funding was proportionate to the scope/scale of the project. Applicants were realistic in the funds and resources they considered necessary to successfully complete the project within the timeline.
Strong applicants were able to commit to the level and nature of co-contributions from the lead organisation, collaborators and end-users.	Strong applicants supplied their own financial contribution or in-kind, indicating a strong dedication to the success of their project through personal investment. Their co-contributions were proportional to, and in some cases larger than the requested amount of grant funding.
Strong applicants were able to describe any leveraging of related government, private, philanthropic or other investments.	Strong responses provided by applicants outlined where previous investments had occurred from state government, philanthropy, private or RDCs and where they used this potential to leverage existing partnerships to ensure the adoption of practice.





Strength	Example
<p>Strong applicants were able to describe the public good benefits of the project (including to the broader agriculture sector, rural communities, First Nations people) and how they outweigh any private benefits.</p>	<p>Strong responses demonstrated genuine engagement with partners, for example, they demonstrated respectful consultation, acknowledgement and involvement of First Nations peoples and organisations.</p> <p>Well written applications positively impacted the whole of the community, contributing to the public good, therefore, outweighing any private benefit (such as infrastructure delivery on a privately owned site).</p>
Strength	Example
<p>Strong applicants were able to outline the benefits for project participants and providers of the practice or technology.</p>	<p>Strong responses described how applicants would accelerate adoption through multiple platforms, for example, "peer to peer" learning, conducting on-farm demonstrations, and sharing experiences to educate/share their practice/technology. They listed scenarios/approaches of how participants would be positively impacted by long term/sustained adoption.</p>
<p>Strong applicants were able to demonstrate/describe why the required funding cannot be sourced privately or through commercial avenues.</p>	<p>Strong responses clearly explained why their project had a broad public benefit and could not be sourced through commercial ventures.</p>

### Criterion 4

Capability to deliver the project (20%)

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants outlined:

- the skills and expertise of project participants, including established stakeholder relationships, project management, scientific rigour, monitoring and evaluation and communications
- project risks and capability to manage those risks.

Strength	Example
<p>Strong applicants were able to demonstrate the skills and expertise of their project team, including established stakeholder</p>	<p>Strong responses described the strength of the team they were proposing, including who the partners</p>



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Strength	Example
relationships, project management, scientific rigour, monitoring and evaluation and communications.	were, their skill sets and who was responsible for the delivery of each element of the project.
Strong applicants were able to clearly identify the key project risks, and their demonstrated team skills for managing those risks.	Strong responses were clear on who would be delivering key aspects of the project, including identifying partners and subcontractors.  Strong applicants clearly understood the scope of their project, its possibilities and risks. To address the large scale required, strong applications showed they had adequate resources (staffing, materials, financial backing) to deliver.

## Individual feedback

Individual feedback will be available. Applicants seeking individual feedback should submit requests to [DroughtResilience@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:DroughtResilience@agriculture.gov.au). Requests for individual feedback will only be accepted within 20 business days of receipt of the outcome of your application. We will provide feedback within 30 business days of receipt of the request.