



Australian Government

**Community
Grants Hub**
Improving your grant experience



Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program

Feedback for applicants

Department of Education (DE) has provided the following General Feedback for applicants of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program grant opportunity.

Overview

The grant opportunity opened for applications on 12 April 2023 and closed on 3 May 2023.

The grant opportunity received 4 applications.

The Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program is a pilot program designed to deliver scholarships to students from regional, rural and remote communities to assist with the cost of boarding fees and associated costs.

The intended outcomes of the scholarship program are:

- to assist students from rural, regional and remote areas with boarding fees, in order to provide a quality education option where local alternatives may not exist or be suitable
- to provide additional financial support to families who are unable to afford boarding school fees and associated costs even with existing government support, with the intention to reduce families' financial contribution towards boarding school fees
- to provide a supported boarding experience for students and families from low socioeconomic status backgrounds or experiencing financial hardship.

Selection Process

The Community Grants Hub (the Hub) undertook the screening for organisation eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. The Hub provided information to DE for the final decision on whether an application did not meet the eligibility and/or compliance criteria outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

DE conducted the preliminary assessment and considered all applications through an open competitive grant process against the selection criteria. The preliminary assessment considered applications on their merits and provided a preliminary score of applications to inform the deliberations of the Selection Advisory Panel.

Each applicant was required to address the following selection criteria:

Criterion 1: Delivering outcomes

Criterion 2: Organisational capability

Criterion 3: Ability to work with students, families, schools and service providers.



The Selection Advisory Panel, established by DE, comprised of DE officials with relevant expertise.

The Selection Advisory Panel assessed eligible applications against the assessment criteria and against other applications. The Selection Advisory Panel assessed whether the applications represented value with money and made final recommendations to the decision maker by taking into account:

- the initial preliminary score against the assessment criteria
- the overall objectives to be achieved in providing the grant, including consideration of factors such as the number of scholarship places to be offered across states and territories, as well as the locations for which the applicants proposed to administer the scholarship program
- the relative value of the grant sought
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrated that it would contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program
- how grant activities would target relevant groups or individuals
- the risks, financial, fraud or other, that the applicant posed for DE
- the risks that the applicant or project posed for the Commonwealth.

The First Assistant Secretary of DE's Improving Student Outcomes Division was the decision maker for this grant round.

Unsuccessful applicants were notified of the grant round outcome in writing.

Selection Results

Applications were of a high standard. Assessment of applications was in accordance with the procedure detailed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines and outlined in the Selection Process above.

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

Preferred applicants provided strong responses to the selection criteria and demonstrated their ability to meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. Provided below is further detail about what constituted a strong response to each criterion.



Criterion 1

Demonstrate your organisation's experience in achieving outcomes for students from regional, rural, and remote communities. When addressing their response applicant's:

- detailed their organisation's experience in supporting education and wellbeing outcomes for boarding students from regional, rural, and remote communities
- detailed their organisation's prior experience in delivering similar projects or programs, such as other scholarship programs or programs to provide a supported student experience, including key achievements of this work
- described related activities their organisation is currently engaged in, and if applicable, planned future business activities
- described their organisation's experience in meeting reporting and performance requirements, including complying with legislative and policy requirements regarding the privacy, confidentiality, and protection of personal information.

Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to demonstrate their organisation's experience in supporting education and wellbeing outcomes for boarding students from regional, rural and remote communities	Strong responses described their organisation's experience in tailoring academic and social wraparound support for students from regional, rural and remote communities.
Strong applications were required to detail their organisation's prior experience in delivering similar projects or programs, such as other scholarship programs or programs to provide a supported student experience, including key achievements of this work.	Strong responses described their organisation's experience in delivering a similar program to support students from regional, rural and remote communities, and outlined the key achievements of these program/s.
Strong applications were required to describe related activities their organisation was currently engaged in, and if applicable, planned future business activities.	Strong responses described related business activities that demonstrated relevant capabilities or alignment with administering Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program scholarships.
Strong applications were required to describe their organisation's experience in meeting reporting and performance requirements, including complying with legislative and policy requirements regarding the privacy, confidentiality and protection of personal information.	Strong responses described an established performance management and reporting approach, including considerations such as acquittal of funds and complying with relevant legislation and policy, including ensuring protection of personal information.



Criterion 2

Demonstrate your organisation’s capability and capacity to successfully administer the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program either across Australia and/or within a specific region, community or area. When addressing their response applicant’s:

- provided evidence of the qualifications and experience of their staff that will support delivery of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program
- detailed how their organisation will administer the scholarship application and selection process, including:
 - communicating the scholarship program to target students, families and school communities, either across Australia and/or within a specific region, community or area
 - selecting eligible scholarship recipients, either across Australia and/or within a specific region, community or area in accordance with the criteria at section 5.2.
- provided a description of their organisation’s demonstrated capacity and capability to support scholarship recipients throughout the scholarship, including a supported transition to boarding, and maintaining a connection to their community
- provided a description of their organisation’s demonstrated capacity and capability to capture and report data on student education, engagement and retention outcomes in line with an agreed monitoring and evaluation framework and in accordance with legislative and policy requirements regarding the privacy, confidentiality and protection of personal information
- provided a detailed description of an effective risk management approach that will minimise risk and ensure that funding can achieve the objectives of the scholarship program.

Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe evidence of the qualifications and experience of their staff to support delivery of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program.	Strong responses described the qualifications and experience of staff who would support delivery of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program.



Strength	Example
<p>Strong applications were required to demonstrate/describe how their organisation would administer the scholarship application and selection process, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ communicating the scholarship program to target students, families and school communities, either across Australia and/or within a specific region, community or area ▪ Selecting eligible scholarship recipients, either across Australia and/or within a specific region, community or area in accordance with the criteria at section 5.2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. 	<p>Strong responses provided detail about how the organisation would administer a scholarship program, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ tailored communication about the scholarship program to target cohorts and communities, with consideration of how to reach students, families and school communities ▪ a scholarship application and selection process that considers the indicative criteria at section 5.2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.
<p>Strong applications were required to provide a description of their organisation’s demonstrated capacity and capability to support scholarship recipients throughout the scholarship, including a supported transition to boarding, and maintaining a connection to their community.</p>	<p>Strong applications described how the organisation would support students though the scholarship, including how the organisation would connect students to appropriate supports and help students maintain a connection to their community – for example, through student support plans, monitoring student feedback regularly, and where relevant through strong community connections with specific regions.</p>
<p>Strong applications were required to describe their organisation’s demonstrated capacity and capability to capture and report data on student education, engagement and retention outcomes in line with an agreed monitoring and evaluation framework and in accordance with legislative and policy requirements regarding the privacy, confidentiality and protection of personal information.</p>	<p>Strong applications described how the organisation would capture and report on student data in line with an agreed monitoring and evaluation framework. Strong applications described a process involving regular engagements with scholarship recipients and demonstrated the capacity and capability to capture and report on student education, engagement and retention outcomes.</p>
<p>Strong applications were required to describe an effective risk management approach that will minimise risk and ensure that funding can achieve the objectives of the scholarship program.</p>	<p>Strong applications described a strong organisational approach to risk management, including maintaining a risk register, regular risk reviews, monitoring of high risks and preparation of risk management plans.</p>



Criterion 3

Demonstrate their organisation’s capability to engage effectively with families, students, boarding schools/facilities and other relevant service providers in the course of administering the scholarship program. When addressing their response applicants:

- demonstrated their organisation’s ability to engage and work with students, families, boarding schools/facilities and other relevant service providers
- demonstrated their organisation understands the types of sensitivities and issues that may need to be managed when supporting students from regional, rural, and remote communities across Australian to access boarding, and how your organisation will manage these when administering the scholarship program
- Noted First Nations students make up a significant proportion of students from regional, rural and remote areas who access boarding, demonstrated their experience working with First Nations communities, their understanding of issues affecting First Nations education outcomes, and demonstrated capability to undertake a culturally safe and trauma informed approach to working with First Nations families
- if applicable, demonstrated their organisation’s existing partnerships with schools/boarding facilities and other relevant service providers or community organisations. If they intend to partner with specific schools or boarding facilities to deliver the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program, they may wish to include advice/confirmation on the availability of boarding places in partner schools in 2024
- if applicable, provided evidence of a Reconciliation Action Plan, community engagement plan and/or other frameworks that contribute to their organisation’s capability to undertake effective engagement with the target family/student cohorts, boarding schools/facilities and other relevant service providers in the course of administering the scholarship program.

Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to demonstrate their organisation’s ability to engage and work with students, families, boarding schools/facilities and other relevant service providers.	Strong responses demonstrated that the organisation had experience and a deep understanding of how to work with students, families, schools and third-party providers while administering the program.
Strong applications were required to demonstrate their organisation understands the types of sensitivities and issues, which may need to be managed when supporting students from regional, rural, and remote communities across Australian to access boarding, and how the organisation will manage these when administering the scholarship program.	Strong responses demonstrated deep understanding of the issues and sensitivities faced by students from regional, rural and remote communities, particularly when accessing boarding. Strong responses described relevant issues and how the organisation would manage these when administering the scholarship program.



Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to demonstrate their organisation’s experience working with First Nations communities, their understanding of issues affecting First Nations education outcomes, and demonstrated capability to undertake a culturally safe and trauma informed approach to working with First Nations families.	Strong responses described relevant issues such as racism, intergenerational trauma and health considerations. Strong responses demonstrated experience working with First Nations communities including a commitment to taking a trauma informed and culturally safe approach.
Strong applications were required to demonstrate, where applicable, their organisation existing partnerships with schools/boarding facilities and other relevant service providers or community organisations.	Strong responses outlined, where applicable, how the organisation would leverage their existing partnerships with schools/boarding facilities and other relevant service providers to administer the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program.
Strong applications were required to, where applicable; provide evidence of frameworks that contributed to their organisation’s capability to undertake effective engagement with the target family/student cohorts, boarding schools/facilities and other relevant service providers in the course of administering the program.	Strong applications provided relevant evidence such as a Reconciliation Action Plan or community engagement framework.

Individual feedback

Individual feedback will not be provided for this grant opportunity.