

Improving Multidisciplinary Responses

Feedback for applicants

The Department of Social Services (the department) has provided the following general feedback for applicants of the Improving Multidisciplinary Responses grant opportunity.

Overview

The application period opened on 9 February 2023 and closed on 5 April 2023. The grant opportunity received 49 applications.

The grant opportunity will provide up to \$44 million (GST exclusive) for up to 4 years to First Nations organisations across Australia aiming to enhance and support holistic responses to First Nations families with multiple and complex needs in culturally, geographically and socially diverse contexts.

The program is a priority action under *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021 – 2031* (Safe and Supported). The program is a measure in the Commonwealth Implementation Plan under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Closing the Gap) to achieve Target 12. *By 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45%.*

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 the department for final decision on whether an application did not meet the eligibility and/or compliance criteria.


The department assessed and considered eligible and compliant applications through a targeted competitive grant process. Additional eligibility checks were determined with First Nation peak bodies, communities and the state and territory governments. To be eligible applicants needed to be an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation or other First Nations Organisation. In the case of consortium eligibility, the lead organisation needed to be a First Nations Organisation.

To embed Priority Reform 1 under Closing the Gap, the department established the Selection Advisory Panel (Panel) comprising of 50% Governments representation and 50% independent First Nations representation with subject matter expertise in the child and family sector. The department committed to shared-decision making with First Nations people for this program.

The Panel considered and assessed applications and provided advice to inform the funding recommendations to the Financial Delegate, the Minister for Social Services.

Consideration of assessed applications was, based on:

- how well it met the assessment criterion
- the extent to which it compared to other applications
- whether it provided value with relevant money.



The Panel considered the extent to which an application represented value with relevant money, based on:

- the overall objectives to be achieved in providing the grant
- extent to which the geographic location of the application matched identified priorities
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrated it would contribute to meeting the outcomes and objectives
- how the grant activities would target groups or individuals and
- how it compared to other applications.

As part of the Panel deliberations, the department undertook interviews with shortlisted applicants to discuss elements of applications to assist with the recommendation process. As part of the interview process the department did not accept additional or new information, they sought to clarify information provided by applicants. Conducting of interviews occurred via videoconference or teleconference.

Each applicant was required to address the following assessment criterion:

Criterion 1: Describe how your proposed project will improve holistic service delivery to First Nations communities, particularly to First Nations children and families with multiple and complex needs. This should include how community benefit/project success will be measured and evaluated.

Criterion 2: Describe how the proposed project will contribute to the Improving Multidisciplinary Responses program objectives.

Criterion 3: Describe how local/regional First Nations community and stakeholders will be involved in the co-design of the project design, implementation and evaluation throughout the life of the project.

Criterion 4: Describe how your organisation and any partners will establish strong relationships with key services/organisations and your ability to work collaboratively.

The preferred applicants demonstrated their ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines based on the strength of their responses to the assessment criterion.

The Community Grants Hub notified applicants of the outcome in writing, where applications did not meet the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

Selection results

There was a strong interest in the program and applications were of a high standard. Assessment of applications was in accordance to 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 criterion.

Criterion 1: Describe how your proposed project would improve holistic service delivery to First Nations communities, particularly to First Nations children and families with multiple and complex needs. This should include how community benefit/project success would be measured and evaluated.

In responding to this criterion, applications should have:

- demonstrated an understanding of the needs of First Nations children and families with multiple and complex needs and First Nations communities, for example through community or statistical data and information and link how the project will respond to the community's identified needs
- described how the project would benefit the First Nations community, including, LGBTIQ+SB identifying children and families, children and carers with a disability and/or families with multiple and complex needs (aside from the benefits the project will deliver to the organisation and workforce)
- described how the project would deliver on the objectives and outcomes of Improving Multidisciplinary Responses and contribute to Target 12 (to reduce the rate of over-representation of First Nations children in out-of-home care by 45%) in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- described the intended impact, scale and proposed geographical locations for the project and how the project would be best suited for the proposed geographical location
- described the benefits to the community and how project success would be measured and evaluated.

Strength

Strong applications:

- included relevant and recent statistical or community data
- linked the identified community needs to their initiative and
- included information and understanding of First Nations communities across Australia and specific information within their communities and programs location/s.

Strong applications:

- included detailed explanation of how their program would address the needs of LGBTIQ+SB youth and children and carers with a disability and
- included examples and outcomes of supporting these cohorts previously.

Strong applications:

- described their organisation's skills, experience and employee qualifications
- clearly articulated the issue their model would address and what aspects of the care spectrum their model targeted (prevention, early intervention, crisis and/or recovery support) and
- included a detailed program logic and activity work plan.

Strength

Strong applications:

- included the scope of the targeted geographical area
- outlined what geographical area would benefit from the model
- included how the community would be involved in the development of the model and
- applications targeting multiple locations provided detailed explanations of the benefits for each community, noting the multifaceted nature of First Nations communities and avoiding a one size fits all approach.

Strong applications:

- included an evaluation framework or described how they intend to work with a third party engaged by the government to undertake program level evaluation and
- outlined their process for analysing information and data, and applying this to their initiative.

Criterion 2: Describe how the proposed project will contribute to the Improving Multidisciplinary Responses program objectives.

In responding to this criterion, applications should have:

- provided a description of the proposed project and activities and how it addressed the objectives and outcomes of the grant activities including how the initiative would be designed, implemented and evaluated
- given examples of previous work undertaken to enhance delivery of holistic responses to First Nations children and families with multiple and complex needs or the capacity to work across systems and to lead activities that address systemic issues and gaps that impact on children and families with multiple and complex needs. This includes, but is not limited to, family support, child protection, disability, alcohol and other drugs, health services, domestic and family violence, mental health, trauma, and healing services
- given examples of incorporating the needs of LGBTIQ+SB identifying children and families, children and carers with a disability
- demonstrated the organisation's ability to both monitor and deliver reporting milestones set out in a grant agreement.

Strength

Strong applications:

- demonstrated how the initiative would support sustainable holistic service delivery
- included a focus on workforce capability
- outlined how the model would streamline current processes, address known gaps or support families access the right services and maintain their engagement for longer
- included details on how the community will co-design the model and
- outlined their process for trialling their model and analysing information and data to refine the model.

Strong applications:

- demonstrated sound knowledge of intersecting sectors and systems
- demonstrated sound knowledge of drivers of child neglect and abuse
- demonstrated their understanding of pathways into support services that families would interact with and current barriers
- provided previous examples of strong leadership in the child and family service delivery sector and
- demonstrated the ability to draw out relevant learnings from previous work and apply.

Strong applications:

- demonstrated an understanding of intersectionality, and the compounding nature of marginalisation

Strong applications:

- included a project plan with identified key milestones and deliverables
 - described how they would collect information, including method and frequency
 - outlined their process for analysing information and data and
 - identified potential areas for delays and include risk mitigation strategies.
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Criterion 3: Describe how local/regional First Nations community and stakeholders would be involved in the co-design of the project design, implementation and evaluation throughout the life of the project.

In responding to this criterion, applications should have:

- explained why the First Nations local governance group providing the letter of support is appropriate to provide this endorsement and the role they play in their community
- described how their project would engage with the community and align the model with local priorities
- described what ongoing involvement, oversight and endorsement in the co-design of the model the local governance bodies would have throughout the life of the project
- described how their organisation would ensure the models were inclusive, accessible and equitable and how First Nations experts or representatives would be involved in co-designing the models (including LGBTQIA+SB and disability services providers)
- described how their organisation would create and support culturally responsive and safe environments and processes for staff and community members who support the project.

Strength

Strong applications:

- demonstrated the cultural connection within their community
- demonstrated how the organisation was accepted by their community and
- provided examples of the governance group's previous work, undertaken by the organisation, with the community to improve outcomes for children and families.

Strong applications:

- outlined the engagement platforms they would use to identify community priorities – this included yarning sessions, community meetings, workshops, local governance bodies, local coordinators and service providers.

Strong applications:

- outlined the governance body that would be endorsing the model and
- included specific reporting requirements including frequency to the governance body.

Strong applications:

- demonstrated a true understanding of inclusivity and accessibility, providing examples on how they planned to work with the LGBTQIA+ community and families with a disability, further expanding on how they would engage differently with this cohort to ensure their needs and priorities were addressed in the model.

Strong applications:

- outlined their staff's proven capability to engage sensitively while respecting community protocols such as separate engagement with men and women.

Criterion 4: Describe how your organisation and any partners would establish strong relationships with key services/organisations and your ability to work collaboratively.

In responding to this criterion, applications should have

- described how their organisation (and any partners) would establish strong relationships with key services and organisations and their ability to work collaboratively
- given examples of their previous experience in working together with community, including local, regional and other organisations as well as how they improved outcomes for families and communities
- described how their organisations would work together with organisations and communities to achieve outcomes that improve service systems responses to better address the needs of First Nations families with multiple and complex needs and
- included information about the way partners would work, for example Memoranda of Understanding, Service Agreements.

Strength

Strong applications:

- identified which key services/organisations they would work with
- outlined previous/existing relationships they can leverage and
- demonstrated strong collaborative skills and sound negotiating skills in previous partnerships/ communities.

Strong applications:

- provided examples of previous successful partnership and their achievements
- provided examples of governance process used to establish and nurture strong working relationships with various stakeholders and
- included support letters from organisations they have previously worked with.

Strong applications:

- specified which organisations in their communities they would partner with and the roles and responsibilities each party would have
- outlined their process to engage community members in the development of their initiative and
- included letters of support from organisations they hoped to collaborate with.

Strong applications:

- included undertaking the completion of documentation such as a Memoranda of Understanding or a Service Agreement as well as a conflict management and resolution framework.

Individual feedback

The department will not provide individual feedback for this grant opportunity.
