



Future Drought Fund - The Long-Term Trials of Drought Resilient Farming Practices Program

Feedback for applicants

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has provided the following general feedback for applicants of the Future Drought Fund - The Long-Term Trials of Drought Resilient Farming Practices Program (the Program) grant opportunity.

Overview

The application period opened on 17 January 2023 and closed on 15 March 2023. The grant opportunity received 95 applications.

The Future Drought Fund (FDF) is a long-term investment fund, which provides a sustainable source of funding to help Australian farmers, and agricultural-dependent communities and businesses become more prepared for, and resilient to, the impacts of drought.

The program's over-arching objective is to investigate innovative and transformational cropping, grazing and mixed farming practices through the lens of drought resilience and associated risk management.

The outcomes of the long-term trials are to:

- increase the capacity of farmers to prepare for, and respond to, future droughts and climate change
- enable farmers and other land managers to experiment with the adoption of innovations that build drought resilience
- establish and strengthen networks between stakeholders to improve knowledge sharing and translation of drought resilience practices, systems, and approaches
- increase the uptake of drought resilience innovations on farms to support reduced exposure to drought risks, and improve economic, environmental, and social resilience to drought.



Selection process

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

DAFF assessed and considered all eligible and compliant applications through an Open Competitive grant process. The Selection Advisory Panel (the Panel) considered all eligible and compliant assessed applications. The Panel, established by DAFF was comprised of subject matter experts. The Panel assessed applications and provided advice to inform the funding recommendations to the Financial Delegate.

Consideration of assessed applications was based on:

- how well it met the assessment criterion
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates how it would contribute to meeting the outcomes and objectives of the program including the drought focussed innovative approach
- alignment with both the FDF's Funding Plan and the program's outcomes and objectives
- how the grant activities would include farmers and promote wider adoption of practices, systems, and approaches across farming sectors
- whether it provided value with relevant money
- how it compared to other applications and
- the risks that the applicant or project posed for the department and the Commonwealth including financial, fraud and other.

Each applicant was required to address the following selection criterion:

Criterion 1: Briefly describe the innovative approach you propose to bring to the design of a Long-term Trial.

Criterion 2: Describe the specific elements of your project which contributes to drought resilience in Australian agriculture and the objectives of the Future Drought Fund.

Criterion 3: Describe the capability of your proposed team to deliver the project.

Criterion 4: Describe how your proposed activities represent value for money.

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 selection criterion.

The Community Grants Hub notified applicants of the outcome in writing, where their 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 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.

Provided below is further detail about what constituted a strong response to each criterion.

Criterion 1

Briefly describe the innovative approach you propose to bring to the design of a Long-term Trial (15%)

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants will:

- provided a project synopsis, which described the critical questions that the long-term trial seeks to answer and the proposed scope and scale of the impact on drought resilience. Applications highlighted the innovative nature of the proposal and its use of contemporary best practice methodologies
- briefly described the extent to which the project will contribute to an important gap in knowledge or significant problems in Australia, and outlined the project's alignment to, not duplication of, other drought resilience activities.

Strength

Strong applications provided a well-developed succinct project synopsis including scope and scale of impact on drought resilience, identifying the innovative nature and use of best practices methodologies.

Strong applications were required to identify the projects unique innovative approach and how the project may complement and/or add value to other drought focussed research trials.

Strong applications provided a well-developed and clearly articulated summary of both the innovative approach to be trialled and the value to the current suite of drought resilience knowledge and practices.

Criterion 2

Describe the specific elements of your project, which contributes to drought resilience in Australian agriculture, and the objectives of the Future Drought Fund (40%)

When addressing this criterion, strong applicants:

- described the project objectives in terms of targeted regions/industries/farming systems
- described the scientific methodology, including activity location/s, design and conduct of the long-term trial and how it will improve drought resilience including support of enhanced agricultural productivity, profitability, and sustainability during times of drought and faster recovery following drought
- outlined the key technologies and practices to be tested and provided a comparison to conventional practices including evidence to justify claims of potential impact
- described their data management strategy including data standards, data management and stewardship arrangements as well as key measurements, metrics and data protocols proposed for judging project success. Also included any strategies for analysis, translation, and interoperability of the data into the broader sector
- described the target audiences, how they will engage with them and how the project will produce outputs to support this (for example, monitoring, communications materials, social engagement activity, and so on)
- described how they will promote their trial to support adoption of the drought resilience practice at scale (for example, landscape/farming systems/regions/industries)
- described how the results of the trial (information, services, processes and/or products) from specific locations and seasons could be interpreted and extended to longer timeframes and other climates, soils, or farm business circumstances.

Strength

Strong applications articulated and provided research, including the clear identification of target regions, agricultural sectors, and systems.

Strong applications provided sound evidence of clear objectives, robust methods, and justification of the chosen approach.

Strong applications projects described how they would support agricultural productivity, profitably and sustainability during drought and recovery from drought.

Strong applications included a data management strategy, which adhered to Australian best practice. For example using accepted FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable) data standards. The application provided details of data modelling analysis.

Strong applications provided evidence of target audiences, engagement and or extension strategies methods and tools.

Strong applications utilised and built on existing platforms and networks, with the potential to increase the reach and adoption of the project outcomes across multiple locations and agricultural sectors.

Criterion 3

Describe the capability of your proposed team to deliver the project (30%)

When addressing this criterion, strong applicants:

- outlined the skills and expertise of project participants in relation to, scientific expertise, experimental design, and data stewardship, analysis, and interpretation
- demonstrated their ability to manage long-term projects including experience in project management, governance, administration, budgeting, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, risk management, and communications
- described any intended collaborations, and associated contributions to delivery capability. Successful projects involved a range of partners including farmers, research and development organisations and regionally focussed on-ground organisations
- provided any relevant information relating to stakeholder consultation, such as consultation undertaken to develop the grant application
- described access to facilities, equipment, technology, and other resources
- described their intellectual property (IP) strategy including any protection mechanisms that may be employed and any essential background IP they propose to draw on.

Strength

Strong applications provided well-articulated and applicable project scope, budget, risk management and stakeholder engagement plans.

Strong applications provided evidence of successful management of other large agricultural research trials.

Strong applications detailed team expertise and experience to deliver the project objectives and specific elements of the project design.

Strong applications provided a well-developed stakeholder engagement plan including details of the contributions from consortium members and provided evidence of engagement with other stakeholders such as farmers, research organisations and delivery partners.

Strong applications described the types of collaborations they intend to use to facilitate the delivery of the project.

Strong applications provided a detailed plan of the relevant facilities and equipment required to implement the project successfully.

Strong applications were consistent and provided evidence in line with the eligible expenditure defined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

Strong applications provided a clear, well-articulated IP plan, including specific reference to IP linked to data and technologies and public accessibility.

Criterion 4

Describe how your proposed activities represent value for money (15%)

When addressing this criterion, strong applicants justified, demonstrated, and provided a breakdown:

- how their project proposal is value for money and is suitable for public funding
- the quality and quantity of co-contribution (if applicable)
- any leveraging of related government, private and philanthropic investments (if applicable)
- the anticipated scale of impacts and benefits of the project relative to the funding sought and
- the public good benefits of the project (such as for industry and First Nations people and communities) and how do they outweigh any private benefits.

Strength

Strong applications demonstrated sound justification of the impacts and benefits relative to the funding sought.

Strong applications provided details of how farmers, local regions and communities will directly benefit from the project. The budget was well developed and appropriate for the proposed activities.

Strong applications included details for potential in-kind support and leveraging opportunities.

Strong applications demonstrated excellent evidence of value for money, impact at scale and public rather than private benefit.

Strong applications outlined how the project engages with both the agricultural community and industry to work together towards preparing for drought.

Individual feedback

Individual feedback is available for this grant opportunity. Applicants seeking individual feedback should submit requests to support@communitygrants.gov.au.

We will accept requests 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.