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## Strong and Resilient Communities Activity – Inclusive Communities (SARC – IC) Round 4

### Feedback for applicants

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The Department of Social Services (the department) has provided the following general feedback for applicants of the Strong and Resilient Communities Activity – Inclusive Communities (SARC – IC) Round 4 grant opportunity.

Assessment of applications was in accordance with the procedure detailed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines (the guidelines) and outlined in the selection process below.

### Overview

The application submission period opened on 17 December 2024 and closed on 20 February 2025.

The SARC – IC grants aim to support vulnerable and disadvantaged people on pathways to self-reliance and empowerment through local community-driven solutions that support them to participate socially and/or economically. The SARC – IC grants will focus on supporting people of working age (15-64 years) in geographic areas of high socio-economic disadvantage across all states and territories.

This grant opportunity sought applications for time-limited projects of up to 2 years duration.

### Selection Process

The Community Grants Hub (the Hub) undertook the initial screening for organisation eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the guidelines. This information was provided to the department's grant opportunity delegate for the final decision on whether an application met the eligibility and compliance criteria.

The Hub undertook the preliminary assessment on all applications through an open competitive grant process. Applications which underwent preliminary assessment were provided to the department's selection advisory panel (panel) for deliberation.

The panel established by the department, comprised of subject matter experts who assessed applications and provided advice to inform the funding recommendations to the Financial Delegate, the Minister for Social Services.

The panel's consideration of assessed applications was, based on:

- successful demonstration of the compliance requirements outlined in the guidelines
  - how effectively applicants explained the project and addressed the eligibility requirements outlined in the guidelines
  - whether the application demonstrated a significant reframe of an existing project (if applicable)
  - the volume of applications received and how well applications compared against other applications
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- whether the application sufficiently outlined the cultural capability of the applicant to deliver services to the relevant cohort
- how well the need for the project was described, including how the project will fill gaps in mainstream services
- whether the budget had been clearly justified
- whether the proposed project was in scope
- whether planning for beyond the funding period was clearly articulated
- whether the application had demonstrated evidence of co-design with community or the target cohort
- the provision and appropriateness of the requested attachments
- whether the project demonstrated value with relevant money
- whether the project demonstrated how delivery of SARC – IC activities will successfully achieve SARC – IC - outcomes
- whether the activities to be delivered are suited to short-term one-off funding
- the extent to which the project may overlap with or duplicate services, grants, or programs, delivered by the Commonwealth, state or territory governments
- the extent to which the project aligns with government strategies, plans and priorities
- the risks (financial, fraud and other) that the applicant or project poses for the department and Commonwealth and the proposed risk mitigation strategies included.

## Selection Results

There was a strong interest in the grant opportunity and applications were of a high standard. The preferred applicants demonstrated their ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the guidelines based on the strength of their responses to the assessment criteria.

The Hub notified applicants of the outcome in writing, where their applications did not meet the requirements outlined in the guidelines.

This feedback is provided to assist grant applicants to understand what comprised a strong application and what was quality responses to the assessment criteria.

### Criterion 1

#### Need for the project in the community and relevance to government priorities

When addressing the criterion strong applicants explained:

- The problem or need their project would address, including evidence (for example statistics, research, supporting evidence of the unmet need or service gap, issues identified in consultations with the target cohort), and how it aligned with the objectives of SARC – IC (see section 2.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines – Objectives).
- The demographics of the community their project would target (see section 2.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for a description of the program objectives, which also includes the target cohorts).
- Any collaboration, co-design activities or consultations undertaken with the target cohort/s in the design of the project, including their role in the process and support of the project.

**Strong applications:**

- Presented a well-defined problem or need of the target cohort/s within the specific areas of delivery and addressed how the project will fill gaps in mainstream services, with reference to statistical evidence, data and research, that clearly linked the problems and/or needs with SARC – IC grant objectives.
- Provided a clear description of the target cohort/s and any sub-cohorts, including information around the intended participant age range, ethnicity, and cultural background.
- Provided evidence of consultations with the target cohort/s and/or community, and described how these consultations identified the problem or need.
- Provided a clear description of the role members of the target cohort/s would have in co-designing the project activities with the organisation.

**Criterion 2****Project details**

When addressing the criterion strong applicants explained:

- The project, including how it would be delivered.
- Any information about delivery partners, including how their organisation would leverage these relationships and work with other services to deliver the project.
- How they would recruit participants and staff for the project.
- How their project aligned with existing Australian Government strategies or plans that address the disadvantage experienced by their project's target cohort (for example, Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031, Closing the Gap, and the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032).

**Strong applications:**

- Described what activities would be delivered as well as the timeframes and frequency in which these activities would be delivered across the grant period.
- Listed and described, in detail, existing relationships and partnerships with other organisations or businesses, and how these relationships would be leveraged to support the delivery of the project.
- Outlined planned recruitment strategies for both participants and staff, including but not limited to promotional activities, timeframes, and participant numbers.
- Named and outlined how their project aligned with relevant Australian Government strategies or plans, and addressed how the project activities would contribute to the attainment of its key objectives.
- Demonstrated how their project was a significant reframe of or different/complementary to existing services.

### Criterion 3

#### Project outcomes

When addressing the criterion strong applicants explained:

- The intended short- and medium-term outcomes of their project, and how these were linked to the outcomes of SARC – IC (see section 2.2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines - Outcomes).
- How they would set up participants to continue achieving outcomes beyond the project.
- How they would measure the intended outcomes of their project, including any tools or strategies they would utilise and at what point in the project they would be used (for example, a participant survey facilitated at the beginning and the end of their project).

#### Strong applications:

- Clearly explained how the intended short and medium-term outcomes would reduce the problems identified, while distinguishing between project outputs and project outcomes.
- Clearly articulated how project outcomes would be sustained in the long term.
- Clearly linked the project outcomes to the outcomes of SARC – IC rather than just rephrasing the outcomes listed in the guidelines.
- Clearly linked the project activities to the intended SARC – IC outcomes.
- Outlined their plan/s to collect data, named and detailed specific measurement tools, provided a clear timeline and explained how these aspects would be utilised to measure intended outcomes.

### Criterion 4

#### Capability to deliver the project and governance arrangements to support delivery

When addressing the criterion strong applicants:

- Provided an overview of their organisation, including governance structures, geographical coverage and dispute resolution policies.
- Described the relevant experience, qualifications, and registrations required by staff who would deliver services under SARC – IC, including how staff would continue to be appropriately skilled and supported.
- Described their process for ensuring that all reporting requirements in section 12.2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines would be met.

#### Strong applications:

- Outlined the organisation's history of delivering services and reaching target cohorts within the targeted service delivery area.
- Described the hierarchical structure of the organisation and outlined its relevant policies relating to dispute resolution and risk mitigation strategies.
- Described the roles and responsibilities of the project staff, and outlined their capability, experience and qualifications, as well as the relevant registrations put in place.
- Outlined what reporting process and systems they have in place and what steps they will take to ensure all reporting requirements are met.
- Demonstrated the organisation's cultural capability to deliver services to the target cohort/s.

### Individual feedback

Individual feedback will not be provided for this grant opportunity.