



**Community
Grants Hub**
Improving your grant experience



Future Drought Fund Drought Resilience Innovation Challenges Pilot Program

Feedback for applicants

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) has provided the following general feedback for applicants of the Future Drought Fund Drought Resilience Innovation Challenges Pilot Program (the Program) 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 5 August 2025 and closed on 22 October 2025.

The Program will fund projects that help farmers take up innovative, transformational, and sustainable practices and technologies that support drought resilience.

The Program posed 3 complex and multi-dimensional cross-regional, industry or system wide challenges imposed by drought and climate impacts for applicants to respond to with innovative and tailored solutions to address one or more challenges.

The aim of the Program is to help drive and fast-track the availability of existing and emerging high-impact drought resilience approaches, innovative practices, tools and technologies. Ultimately, farmers, agricultural sectors, regions and farming communities will benefit from accelerated access to high-impact, evidence-based innovation that can be taken up to adapt to drought and climate impacts at scale.

The Program is intended to attract innovators and researchers with technology or practices that have reached a proof-of-concept stage but would benefit from accelerated projects to increase the evidence base and speed of development of their innovative solution.

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 final decisions on whether an application met the eligibility and compliance criteria.

The department assessed and considered eligible and compliant applications through an Open Competitive grant process.

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

- Meeting the compliance requirements outlined in the guidelines
- Meeting the eligibility requirements outline in the guidelines
- how well the responses met the assessment criteria
- the volume of applications received and the extent to which applications compared against other applications
- the provision and appropriateness of the requested attachments
- Whether the project demonstrated value with relevant money
- identified risks and the proposed mitigation strategies for the department and the Commonwealth.

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

Relevance of the project to challenges

Broadly described how the project provided an innovative, sustainable and transformative solution to one or more of the Identified Challenges listed in Appendix A, and why the project helped Australian farmers or regional, rural and remote communities.

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants:

- Provided a brief overview of the project which clearly described the scope and scale of the project and how it delivered a demonstrable solution to an Identified Challenge (or multiple) at the cross-regional, cross-sector or national level.
- Described the work that had been undertaken to determine the need Australian farmers or their regional, rural and remote communities had for the innovative output(s) of the project.
- Described an important gap in the continued development of a promising innovation, and the extent to which the grant addressed that gap.

Strong applications:

- In addition to the above, strong applications demonstrated a direct link to agricultural drought resilience and the chosen challenge(s). In particular, while the number of challenges chosen did not impact the strength of an application, strong applicants who chose multiple challenges demonstrated a clear link to all challenges selected. Strong applications were well structured and identified genuine innovation gaps, demonstrating understanding of the needs of the sector and the progress of similar research.

Criterion 2

Project Activities

Described the specific activities undertaken in the project which contributed to transformative change and the adoption of novel and innovative practices or technologies that built drought resilience in Australian agriculture and regional, rural and remote communities, and how these related to the economic, environmental and/or social resilience objectives of the Future Drought Fund (FDF)

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants:

- Detailed the activities that were undertaken as part of the project.
- Outlined the key innovative technologies and practices that were further developed or tested, explained how the approach was novel or different in comparison to other approaches, and included evidence to justify claims of potential impact and transformative outcomes.
- Detailed any communication and extension activities (where applicable) that promoted the public good by fostering collaboration and encouraging adoption of successful drought resilience activities.
- Outlined how the project utilised a collaborative model, including engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders such as farmers and members of farming and regional, rural and remote communities, including First Nations people.
- Outlined how the project activities aligned with and met the objectives of the FDF, including references to the Future Drought Fund Funding Plan (2024–2028) and the Future Drought Fund Investment Strategy.

Strong applications:

- Demonstrated that their project was novel, tailor-made and clearly proposed a bespoke solution to the challenges presented and building drought resilience more broadly.
- In addition to the above, the strong applications demonstrated genuine and meaningful engagement with farmers and/or farmer-led organisations that informed the design of the project and its individual activities. Project activities were presented in a logical and sequential format that was easy to understand. Activities were practical, technically sound, based on previous research and backed with supporting evidence.

Criterion 3

Project Management

Described how the project was managed to enable delivery of the project activities and to monitor the ongoing effectiveness of the project.

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants:

- Provided a Theory of Change as specified in section 7.1 of the guidelines.
- Outlined the methodology, design and conduct of the project, including Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL). MEL activities were planned to be efficient, robust, and aligned with fund-level monitoring, evaluation and learning expectations, and were designed to deliver effective outcomes for stakeholders.

- Described the knowledge, skills and experience of all project participants, including consortium members. Contributions included access to facilities, equipment, technology, demonstration sites and other resources relevant to project delivery.
- Detailed the role of the compulsory Independent Innovation Mentor in the project, including a proposal of which mentor was engaged, along with their experience and credentials.
- Summarised the team's ability to manage and deliver long-term projects on time and within budget, including experience in project management, governance arrangements, administration, budgeting, MEL, risk management and communications.
- Outlined the data management strategy, including data standards, data management practices, stewardship arrangements, and data interoperability.
- Where a First Nations element was included, outlined how First Nations people participated in the project and how benefits accruing to First Nations entities or communities were captured, including cultural, economic and environmental benefits.
- Described the intellectual property (IP) strategy, including protection mechanisms employed and any essential background IP drawn upon. Identified data management strategies including data standards, stewardship arrangements, and interoperability to ensure data and knowledge obtained from activities under the FDF were shared, respected, and made freely available in the public domain. This included consideration of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), where appropriate.
- Considered Indigenous Data Sovereignty, where appropriate. This included data management practices designed to recognise Indigenous Data Sovereignty in relation to collecting, using, owning, and sharing Indigenous Data.

Strong applications:

- The project partners and consortium members had demonstrated appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to successfully deliver the project. The MEL plans were well developed and clear, included details on implementation and outlined specific indicators and how they would be used to enhance project progress and delivery. The chosen innovation mentors were highly suitable, and specific details were provided including relevant qualifications and experience and how they were integrated into the project.

Criterion 4

Value for Money

Described how the project activities represented value for money in the use of public funding.

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants:

- Demonstrated how the project achieved value for money, including both public and private good benefits.
- Described how co-contributions (cash and/or in-kind) supported the delivery of grant activities.
- Provided a budget and listed all co-contributions (cash and/or in-kind) using the mandatory budget template as specified in section 7.1 of the guidelines.
- (Where applicable) Where a Research and Development Corporation was listed in a consortium, detailed financial co-contributions and specifically addressed:

- How additional funding from the FDF promoted the public good versus any private benefit accruing to the Research and Development Corporation or its industry(s); and
- How additional funding increased drought resilience for Australian farmers in a way that could not have been independently achieved by the Research and Development Corporation(s).
- Explained how the project aligned with, and did not duplicate, other drought resilience projects.
- Outlined how the project built on other government, private and philanthropic investments.
- (Where applicable) If the proposed project was based on Regional Drought Resilience Plan (RDRP) actions, identified how it was amalgamated with other RDRPs, regions or industries to promote cross-regional, cross-sector or national outcomes, noting that this program was not intended to fund local or single-region projects.
- Described the anticipated scale of impacts and benefits of the project relative to the funding receive

Strong applications:

- The benefits of the project including economic, social, environmental and public good were clearly, comprehensively and quantitatively defined. The proposed budget was detailed and precise and clearly outlined how the grant funding and additional co-contributions contributed to the delivery of the project activities were to be spent. While co-contributions were not required for funding eligibility, strong applicants demonstrated wider appetite for the proposed innovation by including co-contributions from relevant participants.

Individual feedback

Individual feedback will be provided for this grant opportunity upon request.

Individual feedback will be available upon request. Applicants seeking individual feedback should submit requests to FDFInnovation@agriculture.gov.au. Requests for individual feedback will only be accepted within 20 days of receipt of the outcome of your application. Feedback will be provided within 50 days of receipt of the request.