



Strengthening Drought Resilience on Country

Feedback for Applicants

Thank you for your interest in the Strengthening Drought Resilience on Country grant opportunity. We appreciate the time and effort you put into your application.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the Department) is providing the following general feedback for grant applicants to support future grant applications.

Summary of the Grant Opportunity

Application period: opened 12 August 2025 and closed 16 December 2025.

Applications received: 61

Summary of the round: The Program was a part of the Australian Government's commitment to building drought and climate resilience in partnership with First Nations peoples in regional, rural and remote communities. \$12 million (GST exclusive) is available over 3 years from 2025–26 to 2027–28, to First Nations businesses and organisations as Delivery Partners.

Conflict of Interest Management for Assessment Staff

All Community Grants Hub, Departmental staff and contracted assessors were required to declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest before participating in the assessment process. Where a conflict was identified, appropriate steps were taken to manage it, which could include:

- Excluding the team member from undertaking assessment related to the affected application(s).
- Documenting the conflict and the management action in accordance with the Department's Conflict of Interest Policy.

Selection Process

The Community Grants Hub reviewed all applications to confirm they met the eligibility and compliance requirements for the grant opportunity. This information was provided to the Department's Grant Opportunity Delegate, who made the final decision on whether each identified grant application met those requirements. Grant Applicants whose applications were identified as ineligible or non-compliant were notified of the outcome in writing by the Community Grants Hub.

Following completion of these checks, the Department undertook the preliminary assessment of all eligible and compliant applications through a Targeted Competitive grant process. This involved assessing applications against the published selection criteria and any additional requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

Following the preliminary assessment, the Department convened a Selection Advisory Panel to make final recommendations to the Financial Delegate. The Selection Advisory Panel was made up of subject matter experts whose role was to review the assessed applications, provide advice, and make recommendations to the Grant Opportunity Delegate.

Before participating in the assessment process, all Selection Advisory Panel members were required to declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest. In cases where a conflict was identified, appropriate management strategies were applied to ensure the integrity of the process. These strategies included:

- Excluding the panel member from discussions or decisions related to the affected application(s).
- Documenting the conflict and the management action in accordance with the Department's Conflict of Interest Policy.

In undertaking their role on the Selection Advisory Panel, panel members were required to consider:

- Whether applications met all eligibility and compliance requirements listed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.
- How well responses addressed the published assessment criteria.
- The overall quality of applications compared to others received.
- The completeness and relevance of supporting attachments.
- Whether the proposed project demonstrated value for money.
- How the proposed activities aligned with the objectives of the grant opportunity.
- Any risks identified and the strategies proposed to manage those risks.

Selection Results

There was strong interest in this grant opportunity, and applications were of a high standard. The preferred applicant(s) demonstrated their ability to meet the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines based on the strength of their responses to the published assessment criteria. Applicants were notified of the outcome of their application in writing at the end of the selection period.

The following feedback is provided to assist grant applicants in understanding what comprised a strong application and what quality responses looked like against the requirements of the grant opportunity.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Read the supporting information before applying:

Use the Grant Opportunity Guidelines, Questions and Answers and any supporting guidance, such as webinars, to understand what is being asked before starting to draft your application.

Applications that reflected a clear understanding of the requirements and addressed the criteria in a structured way were highly regarded. This is supported by:

- Showing a clear understanding of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines, Questions and Answers and application questions, which was reflected in how clearly responses aligned to the assessment criteria.
- If you are unsure how much detail to include, use the available guidance materials and webinars to help shape your response before submitting.

Eligible entity types:

The grant opportunity was open to First Nations businesses and organisations to act as delivery partners. Applications needed to clearly demonstrate that the applicant met the entity type requirements set out in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

- Most applications clearly demonstrated eligibility as an appropriate entity type under the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

- Where relevant, applications clearly explained organisational arrangements and the role of delivery partners.

Eligibility:

Applications that addressed the eligibility requirements clearly provided consistent information about the organisation, proposed delivery approach and any relevant partnerships.

- Applications that were easier to assess set out how they met the eligibility requirements in a direct and consistent way.
- This included clear organisational details, delivery arrangements and, where relevant, partnership or consortium information.
- All applications were assessed for both eligibility and compliance.

Compliance:

Compliance focused on whether the application form was completed properly and whether responses and supporting information addressed what was asked.

- Many applications met the core compliance requirements and followed the structure of the application form.
- Applications could be strengthened by completing all sections fully and ensuring each response directly addresses the question asked.

Attachments and evidence:

- Applications included clear, relevant documentation where appropriate to support their responses and demonstrated organisational capability.
- As attachments were not mandatory in all cases, applications could be strengthened by including supporting material that aligns with and adds detail to the information provided in the application.

Value for money and risk:

Applications provided a clear understanding of how proposed activities represent value for money, including how resources would be used to achieve outcomes for communities.

- They also outlined considered approaches to identifying and managing risks.
- There are opportunities to further strengthen applications by clearly linking costs to activities and outcomes, and by providing additional detail on how potential risks would be managed in practice.

Criterion 1: Your Organisation (30%)

When addressing the criterion, applicants:

- Detailed a strong and lasting organisational structure (or Plan, if a newly formed organisation) including how (if a consortium) the lead organisation would ensure collaboration while meeting the contractual and legislative requirements.
- Demonstrated their expertise (skills and capabilities) in leading successful projects in rural and remote regions in Australia.
- Provided details of established relationships with First Nations community/stakeholder networks in the region(s) including how, if relevant, they would leverage previous project successes (including individual project members).
- Outlined their organisation's reliable and efficient administrative processes including financial systems and governance structure, providing evidence of grant management capabilities including Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property and Indigenous Data Sovereignty protocols.

- Identified specific skill sets for the project, and how they have been or would be acquired (such as, recruitment round, consultation, tender, sub-contracting). Skill sets can include grant management, staff management, financial guidance, agricultural practices, traditional knowledge management and so on.

What applicants generally addressed well:

- Applicants demonstrated strong organisational capability, supported by established governance, systems and experience delivering projects in their regions.
- Applications clearly explained organisational roles, responsibilities and administrative arrangements, including grant management capability.
- They also showed practical and achievable delivery arrangements, including how the right skills and experience would support implementation.

Common gaps observed:

- Across applications, there was a strong foundation to build on, with many demonstrating clear intent to deliver community-led activities grounded in local priorities and traditional knowledge.
- There are opportunities to further strengthen how these approaches are translated into delivery, including expanding on roles, responsibilities and ways of working with communities and sub-grantees.
- Applications could expand on how engagement with communities would continue over time and inform adjustments during delivery.
- Clearer connections between proposed activities, local priorities and longer-term outcomes would help reinforce the overall impact.
- There are opportunities to more clearly demonstrate how activities align with drought resilience priorities.
- Applicants could strengthen responses by providing more detailed information and supporting evidence, including clearer articulation of partnerships, resourcing and approaches to reporting and evidence collection, including how cultural protocols Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property and Indigenous Data Sovereignty would be managed.

Criterion 2: Your Community (30%)

When addressing the criterion, applicants:

- Outlined how they would determine their region(s) needs and priorities, and ensure project activities would be tailored to address the specific drought and climate risks impacting First Nations communities.
- Described how they would adopt and extend known practices and methods to build drought and climate resilience.
- Outlined genuine and respectful relationship building strategies with the community and how they would work collaboratively to deliver the project, including any previous examples of their strategies.
- Described how they would create and implement a complete and culturally appropriate communication plan, to encourage participation and share knowledge and learnings from projects.
- Detailed how they would collaborate and coordinate regional activities for lasting resilience that positively impacts and benefits the project region.

- Detailed how their project aligned with other regional objectives for ongoing cultural, economic, social and environmental outcomes.

What applicants generally addressed well:

- Applicants demonstrated a strong understanding of their communities, including local priorities, needs and strengths across their regions.
- They showed clear intent for proposed activities to align with community identified priorities and build on local knowledge.
- Applications outlined community-led approaches, describing how activities would be shaped through listening, collaboration and shared decision making.

Common gaps observed:

- There are opportunities to further strengthen how community engagement and co-design would be implemented in practice, including how organisations will continue to listen and respond to community input over time.
- Applicants could provide clearer detail on how local priority activities align with existing initiatives and broader community outcomes.
- Applicants could strengthen responses by providing more detailed information and supporting evidence of community support, including clearer articulation of how activities contribute to drought resilience priorities identified by communities.

Criterion 3: Your grant project (30%)

When addressing the criterion, applicants:

- Explained their project goals and outlined how they would help the region build resilience to drought and climate risks.
- Explained the potential project activities and stages that would help First Nations communities build resilience to drought and climate change, including the collaborative practices that would strengthen how the project is informed by culture and Country.
- Explained how the project might use new and innovative on-ground activities that may link with Traditional Knowledge and/or practices, to help First Nations peoples build resilience to drought and climate change, including strengthening cultural continuation and connection to Country.
- Detailed how their project would be managed (including any partners/consortia) to deliver efficient and effective outcomes for stakeholders; including outlining processes that will be used to assess, select and report on recipient activities, particularly in accordance with the principles of the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024 and the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.
- Detailed the project structure with evidence on how they would support activities with robust governance practises and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), including how they will address Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property and Indigenous Data Sovereignty protocols.
- Described how the project has the potential to be flexible and evolve with community feedback, emerging issues and changing needs.

What applicants generally addressed well:

- Applicants outlined considered projects that reflected an understanding of community priorities and regional context.
- They demonstrated clear intent to support community-led delivery, including how activities would be shaped through co-design, collaboration and shared decision making.

- Applicants described how they would enable and support delivery, including responding to community input over time.
- They showed a clear intent for activities to contribute to drought resilience outcomes relevant to their regions.
- Applications described practical delivery approaches, including how activities would be implemented, monitored and adapted over time.

Common gaps observed:

- There are opportunities to further strengthen how organisations would support delivery in practice, including outlining roles, responsibilities and coordination with communities and subgrantees.
- Applications could expand on how co-design would be facilitated over time, including how community input would inform the refinement of activities during delivery.
- Clearer connections between proposed activities and intended outcomes would help reinforce the overall impact of the project.
- There are opportunities to more clearly demonstrate how activities are expected to contribute to drought resilience priorities identified by communities.
- Applicants could strengthen responses by providing more detail on how progress, outcomes and learning would be understood over time.

Criterion 4: Your budget (10%)

When addressing the criterion, applicants:

- Detailed how the project proposal demonstrated value for money, including outlining the public good benefits to be achieved, as a result of the project.
- Outlined how the project would provide opportunities to strengthen drought and climate resilience for transformational change after the project ends.
- Listed any contributions (cash and/or in-kind, if applicable) to maximise program outcomes, where appropriate and described how they would contribute to delivery of grant activities, including other government, private and/or philanthropic sources.
- Outlined how the project could uplift a community and promote avenues for economic self-determination.
- Demonstrated the financial health of their organisation, including how they effectively manage resources. Applicants disclosed any factors that may have impacted their organisation's financial health, planning and priorities and how they mitigated those factors.

Common gaps observed:

- Applicants may benefit from considering the timing of funding requests, including whether funding is needed in the first financial year, and ensuring early project obligations such as activity work plans and MEL plans are appropriately planned for and costed within the overall budget.

Tips for Future Applications

- Start early and read the **Grant Opportunity Guidelines** carefully.
- Check eligibility and gather required evidence before drafting your application.
- Provide complete, relevant attachments and references.
- Address each assessment criterion directly and clearly.
- Explain how your proposed activities deliver outcomes and demonstrate **value for money**.
- Identify risks and outline strategies for managing them.

Next Steps

- Individual feedback will be sent to all unsuccessful applicants from the Department along with an invitation to participate in a Capability Building initiative.
- If you would like to know about upcoming grants opportunities for funding, you can [register](#) to receive email alerts with [GrantConnect](#) the Australian Government's grants information system.