



Future Drought Fund: Scaling Success Program

Feedback for applicants

Thank you for your interest in the Future Drought Fund: Scaling Success Program: 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 17 October 2025 and closed 4 December 2025.
- **Applications received:** 89

Summary of the round: The Scaling Success Program enabled selected Future Drought Fund projects to have an impact beyond their initial scope, capitalising on existing success.

Previous projects targeted improved drought and climate resilience for the public good of the Australian agriculture sector, landscapes, and communities as a primary focus.

The Australian Government announced a total of up to \$37 million GST exclusive over 3 years from 2025–26 to 2027–28 for the Scaling Success Program. Up to \$27 million GST exclusive is available for 2 years from 2025–26 to 2027–28 for this grant opportunity through a Targeted Competitive (Invite Only) grant process.

Conflict of Interest Management for Assessment Staff

All Community Grants Hub, Departmental staff, independent assessors, and Selection Advisory Panel members were required to declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest before participating in the assessment process. Where a conflict was identified, appropriate management strategies were applied to ensure the integrity of the process, which could include:

- Exclusion from undertaking assessment related to the affected application(s).
- Assigning the application(s) to an alternate assessor.
- 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 due diligence assessment of all eligible and compliant applications. This involved quality assurance checks to ensure applications meet minimum standards before progressing to assessment.

- The assessment stage followed completion of due diligence, compliance, and eligibility checks. This stage evaluated applications against the intent of the program, the published assessment criteria and any additional requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. Assessments were primarily conducted by independent external assessors with relevant technical expertise.
- Following this assessment, the Department convened a Selection Advisory Panel comprised of subject matter experts who reviewed and ranked applications and provided advice to inform the funding recommendations to the Financial Delegate.

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.

Application Tips

Read the supporting information before applying:

When preparing an application, ensure you:

- Understand the Grant Opportunity Guidelines and they are referred to
- only provided templates are used
- refer to the FAQ's and ask questions
- access Webinars which provide an overview of the Program
- reach out to the Community Grants Hub for any questions.

Compliance:

When preparing an application, ensure:

- application is submitted before the closing time
- mandatory attachments on provided templates are submitted
- no false or misleading information in the application
- all the selection criteria are addressed.

Attachments and evidence:

When preparing an application, ensure:

- a clear and concise written application addressing the mandatory selection criteria
- well designed and evidenced-based budget
- clear understanding of the Theory of Change requirements
- farmer and farmer-led organisations clearly outlined
- all consortia members and sub-contractors listed in the application.

Value for money and risk:

When preparing an application, ensure:

- justified the size of funding through scale of impact
- brought significant partner investment to the table
- leveraged existing work rather than duplicating it
- clearly quantified who benefits and how much
- showed both public value and farmer benefit
- strong in co-contributions of both cash and in-kind
- project delivers substantial benefits as externalities and public good
- excellent engagement with farmers and farmer-led organisations
- a detailed risk matrix, identified potential risk/s and mitigation measures to manage said risk/s.

Criterion 1: Describe how your grant activity will ‘scale’ your previous project funded under the FDF.

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants:

- Explained how their previous project was successful in building drought and climate resilience.
- Justified why the previous project should be ‘scaled’. How the activities they planned to undertake demonstrated the impact of the initial project would have been increased. Provided direct link between the previous project and the new activities planned.
- Demonstrated how scaling their project would have expanded, extended, reinvigorated, adapted and/or pivoted to new and different contexts, for greater and sustained drought and climate resilience.

What strong applications did well:

Strong applications provided a well-developed, succinct project synopsis demonstrating how scaling their project would have expanded, extended, reinvigorated, adapted and/or pivoted to new and different contexts, for greater and sustained drought and climate resilience.

- Strong applications demonstrated a clear, evidence-based foundation of drought resilience outcomes, justifying scaling through identified adoption gaps and demand, and presenting a coherent, logical expansion of activities that broadens reach, deepens impact, and adapts proven approaches to new contexts.

Key takeaway:

Strong applications didn’t just say they would scale – they showed:

- what worked (with evidence)
- why it needs scaling (clear rationale)
- how scaling will increase impact (specific, linked activities)
- where and for whom it will expand (clear contexts and audiences).

Common gaps observed:

Common gaps observed was inconsistent articulation of scaling rationale amongst applications with limited use of quantitative evidence, and weak alignment between past learnings and proposed next steps.

Criterion 2: Describe how the design of the project would have contributed to drought and climate resilience in Australian agriculture, and the strategic objectives of the FDF, based on established outcomes from the previous project that would have advanced knowledge, skills and transformative practices.

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants:

- Described innovative, proven, and evidence-based practices, technologies or approaches that were demonstrated and implemented in comparison to other practices, technologies, or approaches, including evidence to justify claims of potential impact.
- Identified target audiences, how engagement would have occurred, including dissemination of results and promotion of the project to support transformational change. This included fostering collaboration to improve integration, coordination, communication, planning and implementation of drought and climate resilience activities, and avoiding unnecessary duplication, across multiple scales including farm, community, regional and national levels.
- Described intended collaborations to deliver capability. Successful projects involved a range of partners, which could have included farmers, farming system groups and natural resource management organisations. Where appropriate, this could have involved meaningful engagement with First Nations people, groups or entities/organisations.
- Explained how communication and extension activities would have fostered collaboration and promoted adoption of successful drought and climate resilience activities, and increased participation and outcomes for a diverse range of people, businesses and landscapes involved in the agricultural sector and rural, regional and remote communities, including First Nations people.

What strong applications did well:

Strong applications demonstrated proven, innovative practices are being scaled through a well-designed, collaborative and targeted extension approach that drives adoption and delivers measurable, sustained drought and climate resilience outcomes across multiple levels of the agricultural system.

Strong applications articulated well-designed, evidence-based projects that leveraged strong partnerships and large-scale extension networks to deliver proven practices through targeted engagement, resulting in credible, scalable, and system-wide drought resilience outcomes.

Common gaps observed:

- Some common gaps observed relate to weaker articulation of the link between project design and drought resilience outcomes, insufficient evidence and quantification of impact, and underdeveloped engagement, collaboration and adoption pathways.

Criterion 3: Describe how your proposed activities would have represented value for money in the use of public funding.

When addressing the criterion strong applicants have:

- Provided a budget, using the mandatory template, demonstrating how the project was value for money, including the public and private good benefits.
- Listed all co-contributions (cash and/or in-kind) and described how they contributed to delivery of grant activities.
- Outlined if the project would have leveraged other government, private and philanthropic investments. This could have included aligning with and delivering relevant Regional Drought Resilience Plan actions, value adding to trials undertaken by Long-Term Trials for

Drought Resilient Farming Practices, and/or seeking support from Drought Resilience Innovation and Adoption Hubs, Nodes and other members.

- Described the anticipated scale of impacts and benefits of the project relative to the funding sought.

What strong applications did well:

Strong applications demonstrated value for money by leveraging substantial co-investment and existing infrastructure to deliver large-scale, low-risk, and adoption-focused projects that generate significant public and private benefits relative to the funding sought.

Key Takeaway – Strong applications:

- justified the size of funding through scale of impact
- brought significant partner investment to the table
- leveraged existing work rather than duplicating it
- clearly quantified who benefits and how much
- showed both public value and farmer benefit.

Common gaps observed:

- Some common gaps identified was a lack of clear, evidence-based linkage between investment and impact, combined with insufficient budget transparency, weak articulation of co-contributions and leverage, and underdeveloped justification of public benefit and adoption pathways.

Criterion 4: Describe the capacity, capability and resources, including personnel and facilities, that would have enabled you to successfully deliver the project and its MEL activities.

When addressing this criterion strong applicants:

- Provided a Theory of Change, using the mandatory template, and demonstrated, using examples of prior experience where applicable, their understanding and ability to apply program logic and Theory of Change in project design and implementation. This included how the project would have contributed to and monitored Program objectives and outcomes and aligned with the 3 FDF strategic objectives of building economic, environmental and social resilience prior to, during and following drought and broader climate impacts, through systematic application of MEL.
- Outlined methodology, design and conduct of the project, including MEL. Planned MEL activities were efficient, robust and in alignment with fund-level monitoring, evaluation and learning expectations, and were designed to deliver efficient and effective outcomes for stakeholders.
- Described the knowledge, skills and experience of all project participants, including consortium partners. This included details of access to facilities, equipment, technology, demonstration sites and other resources where relevant for project delivery.
- Summarised their ability to manage and deliver long-term projects on time and within budget, including experience in project management, governance, administration, budgeting, MEL, risk management and communications.
- Identified a data management strategy including data standards, data management, stewardship arrangements, and interoperability of the data, as well as the intellectual property (IP) strategy including any protection mechanisms that were employed and any essential background IP 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 ICIP, FPIC and Indigenous Data Sovereignty protocols in relation to collecting, using, owning and sharing Indigenous Data and data collected as part of MEL indicators monitoring.

What strong applications did well:

- Strong applications demonstrated capacity and capability by bringing together experienced, well-governed consortia with proven delivery track records, robust Theory of Change and MEL frameworks, and strong data and resource systems—ensuring confident, coordinated, and adaptive delivery of complex, large-scale drought resilience projects.
- Key Takeaway – strong applications:
 - combined proven evidence
 - clear scaling logic
 - strong partnerships
 - proven **well designed extensions**
 - robust value-for -money and delivery capability.

Common gaps observed:

- Common gaps observed in the applications was an insufficient depth and integration in Theory of Change and MEL, unclear governance and roles within complex consortia, and underdeveloped detail around data, risk, and implementation—reducing confidence in the project’s ability to deliver, measure, and adapt effectively at scale.

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 available upon request. Applicants seeking individual feedback should submit requests to scaling.success@aff.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 40 days of receipt of the request.

If you would like to know about upcoming grants opportunities for funding, you can [register](#)¹ to receive email alerts with [GrantConnect](#)² the Australian Government’s grants information system.

¹ <https://www.grants.gov.au/RegisteredUser/Register>

² <https://www.grants.gov.au/RegisteredUser/Login>