Strong and Resilient Communities – Inclusive Communities Grant

Feedback for applicants

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

Assessment of applications was in accordance to the procedure detailed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines and outlined in the selection process below.

Overview

The application submission period opened on 14 December 2023 and closed on 20 February 2024.

The SARC – IC Grants aim to support vulnerable and disadvantaged people on pathways to self-reliance and empowerment through local community-driven solutions which support them to participate socially and/or economically. The SARC – IC Grants will focus on supporting people of working age (15 to 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 to be delivered from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2026.

Selection Process

The Community Grants Hub (the Hub) undertook the initial screening for organisation eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the grant opportunity 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 Hub undertook the preliminary assessment on all applications through an open competitive grant process. Applications which had undergone 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.

When assessing and deliberating on applications the panel took into consideration a number of factors incorporating the inclusion or exclusion of late applications, the volume of applications received, meeting the identified requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines and the available funding envelope.

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

- whether it provides value with relevant money
- the initial preliminary score against the assessment criteria

- if the project demonstrated a significant reframe of an existing project

- how effectively applicants addressed the assessment criteria and explained the project

- whether the proposed project is in scope

- whether the activities to be delivered are suited to short-term one-off funding

- the relative value of the grant applied for

- extent to which the geographical location of the application matches the priorities and objectives of SARC – IC

- how well it compares to other applications

- 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 aligned with government strategies, plans and priorities.

- the risks (financial, fraud and other) that the application or project poses to the department

- the risk that the applicant or project poses for 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 Grant Opportunity Guidelines based on the strength of their responses to the assessment criterion.

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

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

Criterion 1

Need for the project in the community and relevance to government priorities (20%)

When addressing the criterion strong applications described:

- The problem or need their project would address, including evidence (for example, statistics, research, supporting evidence of unmet need or service gap, consultation with the target cohort.11), and how it aligned with the objectives of SARC – IC Grants (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 – Objectives for a description of the program objectives, which also includes the target cohorts).

- Any collaborations, 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, with reference to statistical evidence, data and research, that clearly links 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, subject matter experts and/or project stakeholders, and described how these consultations identified the problem or need related to the target cohort/s and their communities.

- 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

Describe the project (30%)

When addressing the criterion strong applications:

- Provided a detailed description of their project, including how it will be delivered and any information about delivery partners.

- Outlined how they would recruit participants and staff for the project.

- Described how their project aligned with Australian Government strategies or plans that address disadvantage of the 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 2022-2032.12).

Strong applications:

- Described what activities would be delivered under the project, as well as the time frames and frequency in which these activities would be delivered across the grant period.

- Outlined their planned recruitment strategies for both participants and staff, including but not limited to promotional activities, timeframes, and participant numbers.

- Named and linked their project to relevant Australian Government strategies or plans and addressed how the project activities will contribute to the attainment of its key objectives.

- Demonstrated how their project was a significant reframe or different/complementary to existing services.

Criterion 3

Describe the intended outcomes of the project (30%)

When addressing the criterion strong applications:

- Explained the intended short and medium term outcomes of their project and how these were linked to the outcomes of SARC – IC Grants (see section 2.2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines – Outcomes).

- Outlined how the intended outcomes of their project were sustained for the cohort/s in the long term.

- Explained how they would measure the intended outcomes of the project, including any tools or strategies to be utilised and at what point in the project they would be used.

Strong applications:

- Clearly explained how the intended short and medium-term outcomes would reduce the problems identified, and how these benefits would be sustained in the long term, while distinguishing between project outputs and project outcomes.

- Clearly linked the project outcomes to the outcomes of SARC rather than just rephrasing the outcomes listed in the guidelines.

- Clearly linked the project activities to the intended outcomes.

- Outlined their plan/s to collect data, named and detailed specific measurement tools, provided a clear timeline and explained how these aspects will be utilised to measure intended outcomes.

Criterion 4

Capability to deliver the project and governance arrangements to support delivery (20%)
When addressing the criterion strong applications:

- 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 Grants, including how staff would continue to be appropriately skilled and supported.

- Demonstrated how their organisation would leverage existing relationships and work with other services to deliver the project.

- Described their process for ensuring all reporting requirements in section 12.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines – Keeping us informed would be met.

Strong applications:

- Outlined the organisation's history of delivering services and reachability within the state/territory.

- 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 (for example. Working with Children Check).

- Listed and described in detail existing relationships and partnerships with other organisations or businesses, and how these relationships will be leveraged to support the delivery of the project.

- Outlined what reporting process and systems they have in place and what steps they will take to ensure all reporting requirements are met.

Individual feedback

Individual feedback will not be provided for this grant opportunity.