Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis

Feedback for applicants

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) has provided the following general feedback for applicants of the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis 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 18 October 2024 and closed on 28 November 2024.

This grant aims to deliver practical, rigorous solutions and strategic advice related to biosecurity risk analysis, encompassing the assessment, management and communication of biosecurity risk. Our biosecurity system plays a critical role in protecting Australia from devastating pest and disease outbreaks and supporting our environment, biodiversity and way of life. Biosecurity risks are increasing in volume and complexity, driven by factors such as climate change, shifting trade and travel patterns and changes in land use, adding pressure to the system and has us managing challenges on multiple fronts.

The Australian Government is committed to investing in a national biosecurity system that provides an appropriate level of protection to Australia's people, our environment and economy from biosecurity threats of today and tomorrow.

Under this grant, the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis (CEBRA) program will support the Commonwealth's vital biosecurity activities by providing evidence-based tools, analyses and advice to significantly improve our national biosecurity system.

To achieve its objectives under this grant opportunity, the CEBRA program will:
  (a) provide strategic advice and guidance on biosecurity trends and risks, and priority areas for research investment (including new approaches or technologies)

  (b) deliver a balanced portfolio of research and develop new and existing methods relevant to biosecurity risk analysis

  (c) engage a range of disciplinary skills relevant to contemporary risk analysis to ensure governments remain at the forefront of biosecurity risk analysis

  (d) assist in developing Australia's biosecurity risk analysis research capability, including its collaboration with and connectedness to capabilities overseas

  (e) engage governments, biosecurity decision makers and the broader biosecurity community in its research findings and outputs

(f) work to promote excellence in biosecurity risk analysis, including collaborating with end users and other research institutions to increase the adoption and impact of research findings and outputs.

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 all applications through a Targeted 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 outlined 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

- Whether the project demonstrated value with relevant money, having regard to:

    o Demonstrated evidence that the applicant will be committed to the CEBRA program and will contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives

    o The outcome of the financial viability assessment

    o Any potential or actual risks (financial, fraud and other) each applicant poses for the department and associated mitigation strategies.

Selection Results

There was a strong interest in the grant opportunity and applications were of a high standard. The preferred applicant 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

Capacity, capability, and resources to deliver CEBRA program

Demonstrate ability to meet program objectives and experience in effectively developing, monitoring, managing, and delivering biosecurity risk research activities.

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants:

- Demonstrated a strong understanding of the Australian biosecurity system, its complexities, and current and emerging risks and trends that would affect biosecurity risk management.

- Demonstrated how previous experience and capability in providing strategic advice in biosecurity risk analysis and research solutions would ensure that objectives of the CEBRA program (see section 2) are met.

- Described their approach to project and resource management, ability to undertake and manage the timely development and delivery of projects, and development of KPIs to track progress against program objectives.

- Described the overall composition of the personnel who will be involved in delivering the CEBRA program to ensure there would be an appropriate mix of skills, experience, and capacity.

Strong applications:

- Demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the Australian biosecurity system, effectively identifying emerging risk such as climate and global trade, enhancing the credibility of their knowledge.

- Provided strong and relevant examples of past experience in biosecurity risk analysis and strategic advisory roles across the biosecurity continuum, and project leadership in managing larger research programs, supporting their ability to deliver CEBRA program effectively.

- Clearly articulated their proposed personnel structure, their relative experience in biosecurity risk analysis research and demonstrated a balanced mix of expertise and necessary skills for program delivery.

Criterion 2

Governance arrangements

Demonstrate sound governance practices to provide strategic oversight and accountability in achieving program objectives.

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants:

- Described proposed governance structure and management arrangements of the CEBRA Board (including roles and responsibilities of the Chair, membership composition, and tenure).

- Demonstrated existing mechanisms in place to deal with conflicts of interest, data management, academic turnover, confidentiality, and accountability.

- Demonstrated their experience in managing and mitigating risks and issues that may arise from program activities.

- Described internal and external quality assurance processes (including peer reviews) for ensuring principled, high quality research findings that will enhance the reputation of the CEBRA program.

Strong applications:

- Presented a thorough and considered governance and risk management framework, ensuring compliance, accountability and research integrity.

- Conveyed a strong understanding of governance board principles, with additional details on membership composition of relevant and respected representatives, decision-making and reporting mechanisms and how they are enforced and monitored.

- Effectively demonstrated a commitment to high quality research outcomes and program credibility, with evidence of existing and successful quality assurance processes, including engagement with the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry and the Ministry for Primary Industries.

Criterion 3

Efficient, Effective, Economical and Ethical Use of Grant Funds

Demonstrate efficient and economical use of grant funds when delivering research activities.

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants:

- Described how the CEBRA program will achieve high quality strategic research outcomes in a cost-effective way.

- Described existing financial control systems in place to manage grant funding and ensure accountable budget compliance.

- Described how any in-kind or other financial contribution made by you will be leveraged to enhance operation and capacity of the CEBRA program.

Strong applications:

- Exhibited a strong understanding of resource optimisation, prioritisation of impact research and leveraging partnerships to enhance outcomes.

- Detailed existing financial control systems that ensure accountable grant management and budget compliance, demonstrating a solid framework for transparency, risk management, and fiscal responsibility.

- Effectively outlined how in-kind and other contributions will be leveraged and relevant to enhancing operational capacity and program sustainability.

Criterion 4

Engagement, collaboration, and partnership

Demonstrate a practical, innovative approach to building and maintaining robust relationships with Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) and relevant stakeholders.

When addressing the criteria, strong applicants:

- Demonstrated existing networks with other research institutions, governments, industry, and the private sector.

- Described the proactive engagement strategy they will use to provide strategic advice and guidance on priority areas of research investment to inform the department, biosecurity decision makers, and key stakeholders including New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries, ensuring continuity of the CEBRA program.

- Described their approach to working collaboratively with departmental project leads in developing the annual work plan and managing expectations and timelines.

Strong applications:

- Demonstrated well-established networks with government agencies, research institutions, industry and private sector, with specific examples of previous partnerships that have contributed to meaningful research outcomes.

- Presented a clear strategy for engaging stakeholders, with evidence demonstrating an understanding of biosecurity decision-making processes and the importance of ensuring continuity of the program.

- Effectively described a structured approach for working collaboratively with departmental project leads, using project management methodologies, robust stakeholder alignment and communication, and transparent milestone tracking. This was supported by examples of past experiences managing multi-stakeholder projects and mitigating potential timeline risks.

Criterion 5
Contribution to research impact

Demonstrate contribution to growing the CEBRA program's domestic and international standing as leaders in world class biosecurity risk analysis research.

When addressing the criterion, strong applicants:

- Described their robust adoption and implementation approach for research findings.

- Describe how their benefits management strategy will ensure intended outcomes of the CEBRA program are met and program success will be measured.

- Demonstrated their past and proposed contribution to meaningful advances in biosecurity risk analysis.

Strong applications:

- Clearly articulated a strong approach to adopting and implementing research findings, providing specific examples showcasing successful implementation of past projects and the measurable impact they had on the management of biosecurity risk.

- Provided a well-structured benefits management strategy, utilising key performance indicators, impact assessments and feedback loops to measure success and outlining how these metrics will be continuously monitored.

- Supported their contributions to biosecurity risk analysis with robust, quantifiable evidence including specific publications, case studies and key collaborations.

Individual feedback

Individual feedback will be available for all applicants. Please submit requests to risk.research@aff.gov.au within 20 business days of receipt of the outcome of your application. Feedback will be provided within 10 business days of receipt of the request.