Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA)
Tip Sheet, September 2026

Guide to preparing a competitive grant application

About

This tip sheet will help you to prepare competitive grant applications for Resilience and Risk Reduction (Non-DRFA) Funding Programs.

Grant funding is competitive and applications are assessed against published program objectives and assessment criteria. Applicants should ensure their responses are clear, structured coherently, evidence-based and demonstrate how the proposed project aligns with the objectives of the funding program.

Assessors may be required to review a large number of applications. Well-structured applications that clearly address each assessment criterion and are supported by appropriate, verifiable evidence are generally easier to assess and score.

These tips have been developed to assist applicants preparing submissions for resilience and risk reduction funding programs outside the Commonwealth Government's Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

Tip 1 - Review the program documentation

Before you begin writing your application:

- Familiarise yourself with the grant guidelines, application form and assessment process.
- Confirm that your organisation and project are eligible.
- Understand the objectives and intended outcomes of the funding program.
- Review the assessment criteria and consider how you will address each criterion with evidence.
- Read all supporting documentation, including terms and conditions, frequently asked questions, application templates and tip sheets.
- Identify any mandatory supporting documentation that must accompany your application
- Allow sufficient time to prepare, review and submit your application before the closing date.

Assessment criteria are the basis on which applications are scored. Structure your application so that each criterion is addressed clearly and directly, using evidence wherever possible.

Tip 2 - Ensure your project is well defined before writing

Effective grant applications are based on well-planned projects. Before preparing your application, gather the information you will need, including:

- a clear project description
- project aims and objectives
- expected project outcomes
- key personnel and governance arrangements
- project schedule and milestones
- proposed budget, including a breakdown of funding sources
- required resources
- procurement requirements, particularly government requirements
- required approvals or permits
- project risks and mitigation strategies
- measures of project success and evaluation methods
- ongoing maintenance or operational requirements.

Many funding programs require additional documentation such as:

- detailed budgets
- project plans or business cases
- risk assessments and mitigation strategies
- evidence of stakeholder engagement
- maps

- quotations
- letters of support
- technical reports
- feasibility studies and designs.

Identify early who (within your organisation) will contribute to each section of the application and allow sufficient time for review and approvals.

Tip 3 - Research the funding body and previous grant recipients

Understanding previously funded projects can help strengthen your application.

Where information is publicly available, review successful projects from previous funding rounds to identify common characteristics, including:

- alignment with program objectives
- demonstrated community need
- partnerships and collaboration
- measurable outcomes
- value for money
- innovation or good practice
- evidence supporting the proposed solution.

This research can help you understand the types of projects the funding body has previously supported and identify opportunities to strengthen your own proposal.

Tip 4 - Completing the application

Allow enough time to complete the application thoroughly. Most funding programs will not accept late applications unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Assume the assessor has no prior knowledge of your organisation, project or community. Your responses should provide sufficient detail for someone unfamiliar with your project to understand:

- the problem
- why it is important
- how your project addresses it
- how the project will contribute to achieving the program objectives and deliver measurable outcomes.

Address every assessment criterion

Structure your responses so that every assessment criterion is clearly addressed. If a criterion asks multiple questions, ensure each part is answered. Use headings or clear paragraphs where appropriate to make your responses easy to read.

Present a clear, evidence-based case demonstrating why the project should be supported

Describe:

- the problem or risk
- who is affected
- why action is required
- what evidence supports the need.

Support statements with verifiable evidence wherever possible. Examples include:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data
- hazard and risk assessments
- disaster impact data
- engineering reports
- infrastructure condition assessments
- strategic plans
- community consultation outcomes
- research publications
- letters of support.

Clearly identify who will benefit from the project, including vulnerable communities, critical infrastructure, businesses, environmental assets or other affected groups.

Demonstrate organisational capability

Assessors need confidence that your organisation can successfully deliver the project.

Provide evidence of:

- previous experience delivering similar projects
- project management capability
- financial management systems
- governance arrangements
- technical expertise
- partnerships and stakeholder support.

When describing previous achievements, support your claims with evidence. The STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) approach can be useful. For example:

'Our organisation has successfully delivered five infrastructure projects valued at over $200 million during the past four years, all completed on time and within budget.'

Explain the project outcomes and benefits

Clearly describe:

- what activities will be undertaken
- what outputs will be delivered
- the short-term outcomes and benefits
- the long-term outcomes and benefits
- community resilience outcomes
- economic, social and environmental benefits
- how project success will be measured.

Where possible, quantify expected outcomes.

Demonstrate project readiness

Explain whether:

- planning has been completed
- approvals have been obtained or identified
- procurement requirements have been considered
- landowner permissions have been secured
- project risks have been assessed and risk mitigation strategies identified
- the project can commence within the required timeframe.

Demonstrate value for money

Explain why the proposed solution represents an effective use of public funding.

Consider including:

- why the proposed solution is appropriate
- how costs have been estimated
- why the level of investment is reasonable
- how benefits compare to costs
- how funding will achieve enduring community outcomes, including resilience additionality.

Partnerships and community support

Where relevant, explain how stakeholders have been involved in developing the project.

Evidence may include:

- letters of support
- consultation outcomes
- partnership agreements
- community engagement activities.

If submitting a joint application, clearly identify the lead applicant and explain the responsibilities of each partner.

Write clearly and consistently

Assessors review many applications. A well-written application that is structured clearly is easier to understand and score.

When writing your application:

- use plain English
- keep sentences and paragraphs concise
- avoid unnecessary jargon, technical language and unexplained acronyms
- use terminology consistent with the grant guidelines
- incorporate relevant keywords from the assessment criteria where appropriate
- write factually and ensure all information is accurate
- avoid vague, speculative or emotive language
- provide unique responses to each question, even where questions appear similar
- support all claims with reputable evidence
- ensure responses comply with any character or word limits.

Be realistic when describing project outcomes. Assessors are looking for achievable, evidence-based claims rather than exaggerated promises.

It is also a good idea to incorporate resilience-specific terminology throughout your application, including concepts such as:

- risk reduction
- community resilience
- natural hazard mitigation
- risk-informed decision-making
- critical infrastructure
- vulnerable communities
- adaptation
- long-term resilience outcomes.

Tips for completing the application	Steps and description
Address every assessment criterion	Structure your responses so that every assessment criterion is clearly addressed. If a criterion asks multiple questions, ensure each part is answered. Use headings or clear paragraphs where appropriate to make your responses easy to read.
Present a clear, evidence-based case demonstrating why the project should be supported	Describe: • the problem or risk • who is affected • why action is required • what evidence supports the need. Support statements with verifiable evidence wherever possible. Examples include: • Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data • hazard and risk assessments • disaster impact data • engineering reports • infrastructure condition assessments • strategic plans • community consultation outcomes • research publications • letters of support. Clearly identify who will benefit from the project, including vulnerable communities, critical infrastructure, businesses, environmental assets or other affected groups.
Demonstrate organisational capability	Assessors need confidence that your organisation can successfully deliver the project. Provide evidence of: • previous experience delivering similar projects • project management capability • financial management systems • governance arrangements • technical expertise • partnerships and stakeholder support. When describing previous achievements, support your claims with evidence. The STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) approach can be useful. For example: 'Our organisation has successfully delivered five infrastructure projects valued at over $200 million during the past four years, all completed on time and within budget.'
Explain the project outcomes and benefits	Clearly describe: • what activities will be undertaken • what outputs will be delivered • the short-term outcomes and benefits • the long-term outcomes and benefits • community resilience outcomes • economic, social and environmental benefits • how project success will be measured. Where possible, quantify expected outcomes.

Demonstrate project readiness	Explain whether: • planning has been completed • approvals have been obtained or identified • procurement requirements have been considered • landowner permissions have been secured • project risks have been assessed and risk mitigation strategies identified • the project can commence within the required timeframe.
Demonstrate value for money	Explain why the proposed solution represents an effective use of public funding. Consider including: • why the proposed solution is appropriate • how costs have been estimated • why the level of investment is reasonable • how benefits compare to costs • how funding will achieve enduring community outcomes, including resilience • additionality.
Partnerships and community support	Where relevant, explain how stakeholders have been involved in developing the project. Evidence may include: • letters of support • consultation outcomes • partnership agreements • community engagement activities. If submitting a joint application, clearly identify the lead applicant and explain the responsibilities of each partner.
Write clearly and consistently	Assessors review many applications. A well-written application that is structured clearly is easier to understand and score. When writing your application: • use plain English • keep sentences and paragraphs concise • avoid unnecessary jargon, technical language and unexplained acronyms • use terminology consistent with the grant guidelines • incorporate relevant keywords from the assessment criteria where appropriate • write factually and ensure all information is accurate • avoid vague, speculative or emotive language • provide unique responses to each question, even where questions appear similar • support all claims with reputable evidence • ensure responses comply with any character or word limits. Be realistic when describing project outcomes. Assessors are looking for achievable, evidence-based claims rather than exaggerated promises. It is also a good idea to incorporate resilience-specific terminology throughout your application, including concepts such as: • risk reduction • community resilience • natural hazard mitigation • risk-informed decision-making • critical infrastructure • vulnerable communities • adaptation • long-term resilience outcomes.

Tip 5 - Prepare a realistic budget

Your budget is an important part of the assessment and demonstrates your understanding of the project and readiness to deliver it. Ensure your budget:

- is current and based on recent cost estimates or quotations
- includes all project costs
- clearly distinguishes cash and in-kind contributions
- explains how in-kind contributions have been valued
- includes appropriate contingency where permitted
- aligns with the project scope and timeline
- is consistent across the application form and supporting documentation.

Where relevant, explain:

- assumptions used in preparing the budget
- how funding amounts were calculated
- why costs represent value for money.

Before submitting your application:

- confirm requested funding falls within program limits
- ensure all requested expenditure is eligible
- include administrative costs only where permitted
- check calculations carefully
- ensure your organisation has the financial capacity to manage cash flow and any unfunded costs.

Remember that funding recipients are generally required to provide evidence during project acquittal that grant funds were spent on approved activities. Keep detailed financial records, invoices and supporting documentation throughout the project.

Examples of a well prepared budget and insufficient budgets

The budget below provides sufficient detail to support an informed assessment of the project. Costs are clearly itemised, funding contributions are identified, project milestones align with the proposed expenditure, and the applicant's co-contribution is clearly demonstrated.

#	Milestone	Timeframe	Total Budget	Commonwealth contribution	Co-contribution
1	Project Plan Development	March 2023	$10,000		$10,000 (in-kind)
2	Contractor Appointment	June 2023	$50,000	$20,000	$30,000 (financial)
3	Project Management and Reporting	June 2023 – June 2025	$15,000	$10,000	$5,000 (in-kind)
4	Stakeholder Engagement (including workshops, information sessions)	July 2023	$7,000		$7,000 (donation)
5	Construction works, material, (earthworks, drainage)	Sept 2023 – Nov 2024	$550,000	$300,000	$250,000 (financial)
6	Completion of works	Nov 24 - Jan 25	$400,000	$200,000	$200,000 (financial)
7	Evaluation and Final Report	March 2025	$10,000		$10,000 (in-kind)
8	Contingency	Ongoing	$10,000		$10,000 (in-financial)
	TOTAL		**$1,052,000**	**$530,000**	**$522,000**

The budget above does not provide sufficient information to enable an accurate assessment of the project, and does not demonstrate how the applicant's co-contribution will be funded or met.

#	Milestone	Timeframe	Total Budget	Commonwealth Contribution	Co-contribution
1	Construction	January 2025	$300,000	$150,000	$150,000
	TOTAL		$300,000	$150,000	$150,000

The budget below does not provide sufficient information to enable an accurate assessment of the project. In addition, the proposed project timeline is not considered feasible, and the individual project costs do not reconcile with the total project budget.

#	Milestone	Timeframe	Total Budget	Commonwealth Contribution	Co-contribution
1	Project Management	March 2023	$10,000		$10,000 (in-kind)
2	Construction	March 2023	$280,000	$180,000	$100,000 (financial)
3	Material	March 2023	$50,000	$30,000	$10,000 (financial)
	TOTAL		**$340,000**	**$210,000**	**$120,000**

Tip 6 - Develop a realistic project schedule

When developing your project schedule, consider:

- application assessment timeframes
- announcement of successful applicants
- execution of funding agreements
- payment schedules
- procurement timeframes
- planning or regulatory approvals
- environmental, cultural heritage or Native Title approvals
- contractor availability
- seasonal or weather constraints
- delivery and installation timeframes.

Do not assume that projects can commence immediately after funding announcements. In many programs, work cannot begin until a funding agreement/schedule has been executed, or written approval has been provided.

Ensure your organisation can realistically complete the project within the published delivery timeframes. Extensions are not always available.

Tip 7 - Seek an independent review

Before submitting your application, ask someone who has not been involved in developing the project to review it.

Ask reviewers to confirm that:

- every assessment criterion has been addressed
- all mandatory attachments are included
- reputable, relevant and current evidence supports each key claim
- budget figures are consistent
- responses comply with published word limits
- the application clearly aligns with program objectives.

If you engage a professional grant writer or third party to assist with your application, ensure that:

- any required authority or representative forms have been completed
- you understand and approve all information submitted on your behalf
- you allow sufficient time to review the application and attachments before submission
- responsibility for the accuracy of the application remains with your organisation.

Tip 8 - Final submission checklist

Before lodging your application, confirm that:

- ✓ Your organisation and project are eligible
- ✓ The project aligns with the published program objectives
- ✓ The proposed activities are eligible under the program guidelines
- ✓ Every assessment criterion has been fully addressed
- ✓ The application clearly demonstrates project need
- ✓ All key claims are supported by verifiable evidence
- ✓ Benefits and outcomes are clearly explained
- ✓ Value for money has been demonstrated
- ✓ Risks have been appropriately considered
- ✓ The project schedule is realistic
- ✓ Budget figures are consistent across all supporting documentation
- ✓ All mandatory attachments have been provided
- ✓ Required approvals have been identified
- ✓ Character and word limits have been met

- ✓ The application has been independently reviewed
- ✓ The application will be submitted before the closing date
- ✓ The application has been authorised by an appropriately delegated officer

Successful applications

Successful applications clearly demonstrate alignment with the funding program objectives, provide evidence of project need, represent value for money and give assessors confidence that the applicant has the capability and capacity to successfully deliver the proposed project within the required timeframe. Taking the time to plan your project, gather supporting evidence and thoroughly review your application before submission will improve its quality and competitiveness.

More information

Queensland Reconstruction Authority

www.qra.qld.gov.au/grant-tips

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