



Australian Government

Department of Industry,
Innovation and Science

Department of Infrastructure
and Regional Development

Business

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Programme Guidelines

Stronger Communities Programme Round 3

Version – June 2017

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1. Stronger Communities Programme - Round 3 process

The Stronger Communities Programme is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

The Stronger Communities Programme is an investment by the Australian Government to help deliver social benefits across Australia by funding small capital projects in each of the 150 federal electorates. The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science (we) will be administering the programme on behalf of the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development.



The grant opportunity opens

Federal Members of Parliament (MPs) identify potential applicants and projects, in consultation with their community consultation committee. MPs must establish a community consultation committee or consult an existing committee to assist in identifying applicants/projects.

After consulting with the community, MPs will invite selected applicants to submit an application online via business.gov.au. We will advertise opening of grants on GrantConnect and business.gov.au.



Invited applicants complete and submit a grant application



We assess all grant applications

We assess the applications for completeness and against all the eligibility criteria.



Grant decisions are made

The Departmental Approver decides which applications are successful taking into consideration the proper use of public resources.



Notification of the outcome

Your MP will advise you of the outcome of your application and we will then provide written confirmation.



We enter into a grant agreement

We will enter into a grant agreement with successful applicants and pay the grant.



Delivery of grant

You undertake the grant activity as set out in your grant agreement. We monitor your progress.



Evaluation of the Stronger Communities Programme

We evaluate the specific grant activity and the Stronger Communities Programme as a whole. We base this on information you provide to us and that we collect from various sources.

2. Introduction

These guidelines contain information for the Stronger Communities Programme (the programme) for applicants.

The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science (the department) is responsible for administering the programme on behalf of the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, according to the requirements of the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#)¹(CGRGs).

The programme will fund projects to be completed in 2017-18.

Applications open: 9.00am (AEST), 7 August 2017

Applications close: 5.00pm (AEST), 28 September 2017

We will publish the [opening and closing dates](#) and times and any other relevant information on [business.gov.au](#).

We have defined key terms used in these guidelines in Appendix A.

You should read these programme guidelines carefully before you fill out an application.

3. Programme overview

The Stronger Communities Programme supports the Australian Government's commitment to deliver social benefits in communities across Australia by funding small capital projects in each of the 150 federal electorates. Round 3 of the programme will provide \$22.5 million.

The programme's intended outcomes are to improve local community participation and contribute to vibrant and viable communities.

Community consultation is a critical element of the programme. Each MP will identify potential applicants and projects in their electorate in consultation with their community.

Grants will be awarded through a closed non-competitive process where invited applications identified by your local MP will be assessed against the programme eligibility criteria.

Applicants will be required to provide co-funding towards their project. Grant funding will be up to 50 per cent of eligible project costs, see section 5.1.

4. Community consultation

Each MP must consult with either an existing consultation committee or establish a new consultation committee, with representatives from the local community, to identify potential applicants and projects in their electorate. The identified projects must be consistent with the intended programme outcomes and criteria. MPs must advise the department of the basis for project selection.

The MP will invite identified potential applicants to apply for a specific project and send them a link to an online application form and then provide this information to the department.

You submit your completed application form to the department. We assess all applications for eligibility and completeness.

¹ <http://www.finance.gov.au/resource-management/grants/>

5. Grant amount and grant period

5.1 Grants available

Each electorate has a total funding pool of \$150,000 that can be allocated to successful applications. A maximum of 20 projects will be funded in each electorate.

For each project, the grant amount will be up to 50 per cent of eligible project costs.

- The minimum grant amount is \$2,500.
- The maximum grant amount is \$20,000.

Total funding for the project from the Commonwealth cannot exceed 50 per cent of the total project cost. You can fund your share of eligible project costs from any source including state and local government. Your contribution can be either cash or in-kind.

5.2 Project duration

Your project should be completed by 30 June 2018. If a project runs beyond this period, an exemption should be sought in writing from the Australian Government.

6. Eligibility criteria

We cannot consider your application if you do not satisfy all eligibility criteria.

6.1 Who is eligible?

To be eligible you must have an Australian Business Number (ABN) and be one of the following entities:

- a local government agency or body as defined in Appendix A
- a not for profit organisation that is a legal entity. You are required to demonstrate your 'not for profit' status through one of the following:
 - current Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission's (ACNC) Registration
 - state or territory incorporated association status
 - constitutional documents or articles of association that demonstrate the not-for-profit character of the organisation
- a trustee on behalf of a property trust with responsibility for a community asset.

For the purposes of the programme, we also consider the following organisations to be local governing bodies.

- Anangu Pitjantjatjara, Maralinga, Gerard, Nepabunna and Yalata local governing bodies in SA
- Cocos (Keeling) Islands Shire Council
- Lord Howe Island Board
- Norfolk Island Regional Council
- The Outback Communities Authority
- The Shire of Christmas Island
- The Silverton and Tibooburra villages in NSW
- The Trust Account in the NT and
- ACT Government.

Joint applications are acceptable, provided you have a lead applicant who is the main driver of the project and is eligible to apply. You must have a formal arrangement in place with all parties.

For further information on joint applications, refer to section 8.2.

6.2 Who is not eligible?

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- a for profit organisation
- an individual
- a partnership
- a Commonwealth, state or territory government agency or body (including government business enterprises) with the exception of those organisations referred to in section 6.1
- a university, technical college, school or hospital
- a Regional Development Australia Committee.

6.3 Additional eligibility requirements

In order to be eligible you must:

- have a plan for how you will carry out the project and identify the budget for your project
- be able to meet your share of the project costs as outlined in section 5.1
- provide the relevant mandatory attachments outlined in section 8.1
- have been invited by your MP to make an application for your project. The grant amount and project applied for must be the same as what is reported by your local MP to the department.

We cannot waive the eligibility criteria under any circumstances.

6.4 Eligible projects

To be eligible your project:

- must include eligible activities and eligible expenditure
- must have at least \$5,000 in eligible expenditure
- must deliver social benefits to your community
- should be scheduled for completion by 30 June 2018.

If your project will be located on school grounds or involves school property, the project must deliver social benefits to the broader community.

The projects listed below are a guide of the types of projects that are eligible:

- upgrades, construction and fit-out of community spaces, e.g. men's sheds
- fit-out of community centres, health centres, e.g. kitchen upgrades and equipment purchases such as computers, TVs and furniture and fittings
- bike paths
- sporting facilities upgrades including new scoreboards, spectator seating, goalposts, new turf, fit-out of changes rooms, new canteen, new lights, medical equipment, upgrade drainage and water systems, gymnasiums
- streetscapes
- skate parks

- purchase of equipment for local SES
- upgrade of facilities to provide disabled access
- purchase of vehicles and trailers for community transport/services, surf lifesaving, medical transport
- park furniture upgrade or installation including shade/shelters, BBQs, toilet facilities, drinking fountains.

We may also approve other projects that align with the programme outcomes. If you require clarification about eligible projects [contact us](#) at business.gov.au or by calling 13 28 46.

6.5 Eligible activities

Eligible activities must directly relate to the project and can include:

- purchase of materials
- equipment hire, lease or purchase directly related to the project
- fit out, alterations and/ or extensions to existing premises
- modifications to leased buildings or grounds for example refurbishing where you have support from the owner.

We may also consider other activities to be eligible.

6.6 Eligible expenditure

You can only spend grant funds and co-contributions on eligible expenditure on an agreed project as defined in your grant agreement.

Eligible expenditure items include:

- costs you incur in order to obtain planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals during the project period. However, associated fees paid to the Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments are not eligible costs
- capital expenditure for the purchase of assets such as office furniture and equipment, motor vehicles, computers, printers or photocopiers
- costs involved in the purchase or upgrade/hire of software (including user licences) and ICT hardware
- costs associated with contractors who undertake project activities.

The Programme Delegate makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

6.7 Ineligible expenditure

Expenditure items that are not eligible are:

- provision of services and support activities (e.g. volunteer time to run the programme)
- payment of salaries for existing staff or contractors
- recurring or ongoing expenditure (e.g. annual maintenance)
- projects that seek funding to stage events, exhibit a display or for filming
- projects to undertake studies or investigations
- purchase of land or buildings
- projects that involve the development of private or commercial ventures

- projects that involve the development of licensed and gambling areas in registered clubs.

We will not fund projects that you have already started or where contracts are already in place at the time of application. You should not start your project until you enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth. If you choose to start your project before you enter into a grant agreement, any costs incurred are at your own risk.

6.8 Financial and in-kind contributions

Your financial and in-kind contributions must be for eligible activities and be a contribution to the delivery of the capital project. You cannot use funding from other Commonwealth sources to fund your share of project costs.

7. How we assess your application (selection process)

Your MP, with help from the community, will identify potential projects with a total value of \$150,000 that are consistent with the intended programme outcomes and eligibility criteria. The MP will invite identified potential applicants to apply and send them a link to an online application form.

It is important to note that being invited to submit an application by your MP, does not guarantee that your application will be successful.

We will assess your application for completeness and against all the eligibility criteria.

To be recommended for funding, your project must meet all eligibility criteria as these projects provide the best value for money.

If the selection process identifies unintentional errors in your application, we may contact you to correct or clarify the errors, but you cannot make any material alteration or addition.

7.1 Final decision

The Departmental Approver decides which grants to approve taking into account the eligibility assessment of the department, any reputational risk to the Australian Government, information you provide, and the availability of grant funds.

If you are successful, you will receive a notification from your MP and a letter of approval from the department.

If you are unsuccessful, you will receive a notification from your MP and we will notify you in writing.

The Departmental Approver's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of applications for funding
- the amount of grant funding awarded
- the terms and conditions of funding.

We cannot review decisions about your application.

The Departmental Approver will make decisions on whether funding a project will be a proper use of public resources and ensure sufficient programme funds are available.

8. How to apply

Before applying, you should read and understand these guidelines, the sample application form and the sample grant agreement. View the sample [grant agreement](#) at business.gov.au.

To apply, you must:

- have been invited by your MP to submit an application for your project
- complete the online [Stronger Communities Programme application form](#) on [business.gov.au](#)
- provide all the information requested
- address all eligibility criteria
- include all necessary attachments.

We may ask you to justify your project costs. You should have evidence for the costs that you include in your project budget that you can provide on request.

When you submit your online application, we will provide you with an automated receipt number and a link. The link goes to a page where you can enter your email address to receive acknowledgment and a copy of your complete application.

You are responsible for making sure your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the *Criminal Code 1995* (Cth). We will investigate any false or misleading information and may not progress your application. If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should call us immediately on 13 28 46.

If we find an error or information that is missing, we may ask for clarification or additional information from you that will not change the nature of your application. However, we can refuse to accept any additional information from you that would change your submission after the application closing time.

If you need further guidance around the application process or if you are unable to submit an application online [contact us](#) at [business.gov.au](#) or by calling 13 28 46.

8.1 Attachments to the application

We may require the following documents with your application:

- where making modifications to leased buildings or grounds, written consent from the owner to confirm approval of the project
- evidence of your not-for-profit status (if applicable)
- photographic evidence of the project site prior to project start (if applicable).

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with the instructions provided within the form. You should only attach requested documents. We will not consider information in attachments that we do not request.

8.2 Joint applications

We recognise that some organisations may want to join together as a group to deliver a project. In these circumstances, you must appoint a lead organisation. Only the lead organisation can submit the application form and enter into the grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The application should identify all other members of the proposed group and provide a letter of support from each of the project partners. Each letter of support should include:

- details of the partner organisation
- an overview of how the partner organisation will work with the lead organisation and any other partner organisations in the group to successfully complete the project
- the roles/ responsibilities the partner organisation will undertake, and the resources it will contribute (if any)

- details of a nominated management level contact officer.

9. If your application is successful

9.1 Grant agreement

You must enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth. A sample [grant agreement](#) is available on [business.gov.au](#).

We must execute a grant agreement with you before we can make any payments. We are not responsible for any of your project expenditure until a grant agreement is executed.

We will use an approval letter as your grant agreement. This grant agreement comprises your completed application form and the approval letter we send advising that your application has been successful. We consider the agreement to be executed (take effect) from the date of our approval letter.

The funding approval may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the Minister. We will identify these in the letter of approval.

If you enter an agreement under the Stronger Communities Programme you cannot receive other grants for the same activities from other Commonwealth granting programmes.

The Commonwealth may recover grant funds if there is a breach of the grant agreement.

9.2 How we pay the grant

The grant agreement will state the:

- maximum grant amount we will pay
- proportion of eligible expenditure covered by the grant (grant percentage).

We will not exceed the maximum grant amount under any circumstances. If you incur extra eligible expenditure, you must meet it yourself.

We will pay 100 per cent of the grant on execution of the grant agreement. You will be required to report how you spent the grant funds at the completion of the project.

9.3 How we monitor your project

On completion of your project, you must submit a final report in line with the grant agreement. We will provide a sample template for this report as an appendix in the grant agreement. You will also be able to download the sample grant agreement and report template from [business.gov.au](#). We will remind you of your reporting obligations before a report is due.

In your final report you must:

- include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
- identify the total eligible expenditure incurred for the project
- be submitted within 90 days of completing the project
- be in the format provided in the grant agreement.

We may ask you for ad-hoc reports on your project. This may be to provide an update on progress, or any significant delays or difficulties in completing the project.

We require you to keep all the evidence of expenditure for two years after the completion of the project and provide this evidence upon request. We will undertake project audits through a

representative sample. Occasionally we may need to re-examine claims, seek further information or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

9.4 Compliance visits

We may visit you during the project period or after you finish your project to review your compliance with the grant agreement. We may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement. We will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

9.5 Keeping us informed

You should let us know if anything is likely to affect your project or organisation.

We need to know of any key changes to your organisation or its business activities, particularly if they affect your ability to complete your project, carry on business and pay debts due.

You must also inform us of any changes to your:

- name
- addresses
- nominated contact details
- bank account details.

If you become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the grant agreement you must contact us immediately.

You must notify us of events relating to your project and provide an opportunity for the Minister or their representative to attend.

9.6 Evaluation

We may evaluate the programme to determine the extent to which the funded activity is contributing to the programme objectives and outcomes. We may use information from your application and project reports for this purpose. We may also interview you, or ask you for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the programme was in achieving its outcomes. We may contact you up to one year after you finish your project for more information to assist with this evaluation.

9.7 Tax obligations

If you are registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST), we will add GST to your grant payment and provide you with a recipient created tax invoice.

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek assistance from the [Australian Taxation Office](#). We do not provide advice on tax.

10. Conflicts of interest

10.1 Your conflict of interest responsibilities

A conflict of interest will occur if your private interests conflict with your obligations under the grant. Conflicts of interest could affect the awarding or performance of your grant. A conflict of interest can be:

- real (or actual)

- apparent (or perceived)
- potential.

We will ask you to declare, as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If you later identify that there is an actual, apparent, or potential conflict of interest or that one might arise in relation to your grant, you must inform us in writing immediately.

10.2 Our conflict of interest responsibilities

We recognise that conflicts of interest may arise with our staff, technical experts, advisory committee members, MPs and their staff, and others delivering the programme between:

- their programme duties, roles and responsibilities and
- their private interests.

We manage our conflicts of interest according to the *APS Code of Conduct (section 13 (7) of the Public Service Act 1999)*. We publish our conflict of interest policy on the [Department of Industry, Innovation and Science²](#) website.

Programme officials must declare any conflicts of interest. If we consider a conflict of interest is a cause for concern, that official will not take part in the assessment of applications under the programme.

MPs must declare any conflicts of interest to the community consultation committee and the department.

11. How we use your information

Unless the information you provide to us is:

- confidential information as per 11.1, or
- personal information as per 11.2.

We may share the information with other government agencies for a relevant Commonwealth purpose such as:

- to improve the effective administration, monitoring and evaluation of Australian Government programmes
- for research
- to announce the awarding of grants.

11.1 How we handle your confidential information

We will treat the information you give us as sensitive and therefore confidential if it meets one of the four conditions below:

1. You clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential.

²

<http://www.industry.gov.au/AboutUs/InformationPublicationScheme/Ourpolicies/Pages/Library%20Card/ConflictofInterestInsideTradeExpectationsofInnovationEmployees.aspx>

2. The information is commercially sensitive.
3. Disclosing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else.
4. You provide the information with an understanding that it will stay confidential.

11.1.1 When we may disclose confidential information

We may disclose confidential information:

- to our Commonwealth employees and contractors, to help us manage the programme effectively
- to the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- to the responsible Minister or Assistant Minister
- to a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

We may also disclose confidential information if:

- we are required or authorised by law to disclose it
- you agree to the information being disclosed, or
- someone other than us has made the confidential information public.

11.2 How we use your personal information

We must treat your personal information according to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) and the *Privacy Act 1988*. This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- to whom we give your personal information.

We may give the personal information we collect from you to our employees and contractors, and other Commonwealth employees and contractors, so we can:

- manage the programme
- research, assess, monitor and analyse our programmes and activities.

We, or the Minister, may:

- announce the names of successful applicants to the public
- publish personal information on the department's websites.

You may read our [Privacy Policy](#)³ on the department's website for more information on:

- what is personal information
- how we collect, use, disclose and store your personal information
- how you can access and correct your personal information.

11.3 Public announcement

We will publish non-sensitive details of successful projects on [the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development website](#). We are required to do this by the *Commonwealth Grants Rules*

³ <http://www.industry.gov.au/Pages/PrivacyPolicy.aspx>

and *Guidelines* and the [Australian Government Public Data Policy Statement](#)⁴, unless otherwise prohibited by law. This information may include:

- name of your organisation
- title of the project
- description of the project and its aims
- amount of grant funding awarded
- Australian Business Number
- business location
- your organisation's industry sector.

We publish this information to ensure open access to non-sensitive data within Australian Government agencies to enable greater innovation and productivity across all sectors of the Australian economy.

11.4 Freedom of information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) applies to all documents we create, receive or store about the programme. If someone requests a document under the FOI Act, we will release it (though we may need to consult with you and/or other parties first) unless it meets one of the exemptions set out in the FOI Act.

12. Grant acknowledgement

If you make a public statement about a project funded under the programme, we require you to acknowledge the grant by using the following:

'This project received grant funding from the Australian Government.'

13. Enquiries and feedback

For further information or clarification, you can contact us on 13 28 46 or by [web chat](#) or through our [online enquiry form](#) on [business.gov.au](#).

We may publish answers to your questions on our website as Frequently Asked Questions.

The AusIndustry [Customer Service Charter](#) is available at [business.gov.au](#). AusIndustry uses customer satisfaction surveys to improve its business operations and service.

If you have a complaint, call us on 13 28 46. We will refer your complaint to the appropriate manager.

If you are not satisfied with the way we handle your complaint, you can contact:

Head of Division
AusIndustry Business Services
GPO Box 2013
CANBERRA ACT 2601

⁴ <http://www.dpmc.gov.au/resource-centre/data/australian-government-public-data-policy-statement>

You can also contact the [Commonwealth Ombudsman⁵](#) with your complaint (call 1300 362 072). There is no fee for making a complaint, and the Ombudsman may conduct an independent investigation.

⁵ <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>

Appendix A. Definitions of key terms

Term	Definition
Application form	The document issued by the Programme Delegate that applicants use to apply for funding under the programme.
AusIndustry	The division of the same name within the department.
Community Consultation Committee	Committee either established or identified by the MP who assist the MP to identify projects for consideration by the Department.
Department	The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science.
Departmental Approver	An officer of the Department delegated by the Minister to make decisions in relation to the programme.
Federal Electorate	A geographical area of Australia (known as an electoral division or electorate) represented by a member of Parliament elected at a House of Representatives election.
Eligible activities	The activities undertaken by a grantee in relation to a project that are eligible for funding support as set out in section 6.5.
Eligible application	An application or proposal for grant funding under the programme that the Departmental Approver has determined is eligible in accordance with these guidelines.
Eligible expenditure	The expenditure incurred by a grantee on a project and which is eligible for funding support as set out in section 6.6.
Grant funding or grant funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth to grantees under the programme.
Grantee	The recipient of grant funding under a grant agreement.
Guidelines	Guidelines that provide the framework for the administration of the programme.
Local government body or agency	A local governing body as defined in the <i>Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995</i> (Cth).
Minister	The Minister for Regional Development.
Non-income-tax-exempt	Not exempt from income tax under Division 50 of the <i>Income Tax Assessment Act 1997</i> (Cth) or under Division 1AB of Part III of the <i>Income Tax Assessment Act 1936</i> (Cth).
Personal information	Has the same meaning as in the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i> (Cth).
Private or commercial ventures	A business enterprise in which something is risked in the hope of profit.

Term	Definition
Programme Delegate	An employee of the department who is authorised by the Minister, or is otherwise duly authorised, to carry out the relevant functions in respect of the programme (and all initiatives under the programme).
Programme funding or Programme funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth for the programme.
Project	A project described in an application for grant funding under the programme.