

Preparing Successful Grant Applications

Regional Development Australia Darling Downs and South West Inc. has prepared this guide to assist individuals, organisations and communities in the Darling Downs and South West QLD to better understand how to successfully apply for funding assistance.

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Introduction

The process to complete an application for funding can be challenging and is often approached with a degree of apprehension.

Our guidebook to getting a grant has been developed to de-mystify the procedures and the jargon.

It will encourage you to really sharpen your focus and concentrate on your project. A good project will attract funding, but no amount of funding will save a bad one!

On behalf of the team at Regional Development Australia Darling Downs and South West, we trust this guide provides a useful tool which you can refer to when you are completing your application.



Trudi Bartlett

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Before you begin

Do you require funding to fulfil a need, solve a problem and create real outcomes?

Most grant applications are unsuccessful. In fact, only about 25% of applications receive funding. Only the best submissions will proceed, so ensuring that your application will stand out is extremely important.

To ensure a high-quality application, you need to be mindful of the amount of work involved in the process. You will need a lot of time and patience, attention to detail and determination.

You will also need some level of skill in research and data collation, writing, budgeting, and digital literacy. If you feel you are lacking in any of these areas, then it is important to include other people with those skills in the process.

Regional Development Australia Darling Downs and South West may be able to assist in these areas or can connect you with service providers who have the expertise to help you bring the application up to a high level.

This guide will assist you to:

- Identify which grants will support your project
- Conduct research and collect supporting material for your proposal
- Clarify the different components of grant applications
- Learn to write an effective application
- Have confidence in the result

This guide is not intended to replace internal policies, procedures and guidance or any criteria set out in funding and grant application guides. The tips contained within this guide are to assist with planning and building content for preparing submissions.

The importance of planning

All successful funding applications started with a plan. If you have not given great thought to and planned out your project, you are most likely not ready to start preparing the application. As the saying goes, failing to plan is planning to fail.

Planning and preparation are essential for a good submission and it is usually the application with the best planning, research and attention to detail that comes first in the race for competitive grants. Developing your project idea and the associated concepts will take time, as will gaining support from other organisations and collecting all the information you need.

It is a good idea to develop a project plan and is often essential for larger projects. Contact Regional Development Australia Darling Downs and South West, or your local council for support.

The first step is to ensure that you have done your homework and gathered all the information you need. Organise all your information into an easily accessible format. You will often be able to use various parts for different proposals or applications. In many cases the information collated for one proposal will be relevant and useful for other proposals.

You will need to understand where your project fits within the following parameters:

- the local community
- the town or city
- the region
- the industry sectors
- the state
- the country

Projects that will contravene planning laws or that do not fit into a regional strategic direction are not an attractive proposition for funding providers. Most funding providers will not fund these types of projects.

The types of information you need to gather will depend on the proposed project and the funding application however as a general guide you should consider the following factors.

Know your organisation – its services, its objectives, and its mission (what is the organisation doing today and where is it going in the future?). Develop an organisational statement that describes your purpose, structure, administrative and financial processes, client base, and products or services. This will increase your application's credibility.

Collect background information that will support your application including case studies, research articles, statistics, expert opinions, published articles etc. This information will provide you with facts to support your application when you write it.

Establish the need for funding – do you need to extend a product or service, to address an identified gap, or meet an emerging need in the community? Ensure you can provide results of needs or gap assessments, survey outcomes, community consultations and reports. They can provide evidence to support your application. Consultation with other organisations or groups may also assist in the identification of the need for funding.

Identify advocates who can support your application – these are individuals, groups or organisations who can support your organisation and your application. Develop a contact database of possible advocates and prepare letters or emails inviting their support for your application. Follow-up with a phone call.

Familiarise yourself with the application process – get to know the application guidelines and the process. Be mindful of the language used throughout the application form. If you are unsure of something, contact the funding body and request clarification. Keep to the deadlines as one minute late could be too late.

Finding appropriate funding for a well-planned project is far easier than fitting the project to the funding.

Developing the plan

A good plan requires some background work

What is the need or the problem?

In determining a need or problem, it is beneficial to liaise with a range of stakeholders who might be involved, affected or may be able to provide valuable input its solution. This will greatly assist in identifying the exact issue(s) that a project is required to address, and what the outcomes of the remedy may be.

Community consultation, including workshops, meetings, letters, newsletters, and surveys, to name a few is good practice for any funding application.

You should strive to obtain letters of support for your project from community organisations, local businesses, and/or community leaders. The more evidence of community support you can provide, the more apparent the need for your project is. In many cases, evidence of community support is an application requirement.

If your project is addressing several needs or issues, prioritising the projects in order of preference or importance is good practice. Factor in desired results, the urgency of each issue, and possible timeframes. Involve a group of key stakeholders in this process to ensure the resulting list reflects the overall desired outcomes of the project.

Engage with your local council early on, as they may be able to assist. You may require information on by-laws or legislation. It is also useful to confirm the project fits into the strategic direction of the council.

What is the solution?

Once you have defined the need or the problem and prioritised the issues, you need to determine the solution.

Grant providers will invariably ask you to describe the positive long-term outcomes and benefits that your project will bring to the community. It is important for you to describe this clearly and concisely as it will help to emphasise the need for the project.

The expected benefits from a project will often vary depending on local circumstances. Some communities experience high levels of unemployment and have little opportunity for training or job skills development, for example. These issues need to be thoroughly addressed in the project plan. Demonstrate the significance of the problem and explain how the project proposes to resolve the problem. Provide evidence where possible.

Ensure your project is realistic and achievable. If your project is designed to be an ongoing concern, build project sustainability into your plan. Sustainable funding can come from a mix of funding sources (e.g. membership, donations, fees and charges, special events) and will allow you to continue operating over time.

While most grants will only constitute a one-time payment, some funding providers offer programs that cover periods longer than 12 months. In most cases, however, providers will not fund your project for longer than three years, so it is important to establish how to financially manage the project once the initial funding period has lapsed.

It is extremely important to determine if your organisation can implement the project or can access the requisite skills. For example, if your project is to construct a building, you will need to demonstrate that you have access to the relevant people, materials and skills required.

What are the specifics? Who, what, when, where, why, how?

The following list of questions will help you to assess the progress of your plan and to identify any parts which may have been overlooked:

Who?

Who are the people that will make up the project working group/or steering committee?

Who are the project's beneficiaries?

Who are the major stakeholders and what is their capacity to help with the project (financial and other support)?

Who is the project manager (i.e. who will be responsible for the application, receiving the money and the results)?

What?

What is the project and what will it contribute to your community?

What will it do?

What is the purpose of the project (i.e. community benefit, tourism development, business development, employment creation, social or environmental benefit)?

What risks are associated with the project?

What are the barriers that could prevent the project from completing?

What are the expected results?

What is required to ensure the results of the project last?

When?

When will the project start and be completed?

When will the results be known?

Where?

Where will the project occur? Be reasonably precise.

Where will the project cover (will its impact extend nationally, state-wide, regionally, council area, or local area)?

Why?

Why is the project required? Is the project a want or a need? Do you have community support? What problem are you trying to solve and why are you trying to solve it? What benefit(s) are you trying to achieve?

Why is this project important to your area (i.e. economic dependency, population retention, unemployment, socio-economic conditions)?

How?

How will the project be implemented? What is the methodology? What skills are required to implement it?

How much will it cost?

How much other funding is required? Where will it come from?

How much is available in cash and in-kind resources? How will it be implemented and/or operated (i.e. steering committees, management structures)? Are there any special skills or resources needed?

How will you know if the project has been successful?

How will you measure success?

Finding the right grants

Grants for regional or community development activities are typically provided by government sources, however there are many philanthropic organisations, such as trusts and foundations, and businesses that offer grants for projects directed towards various causes.

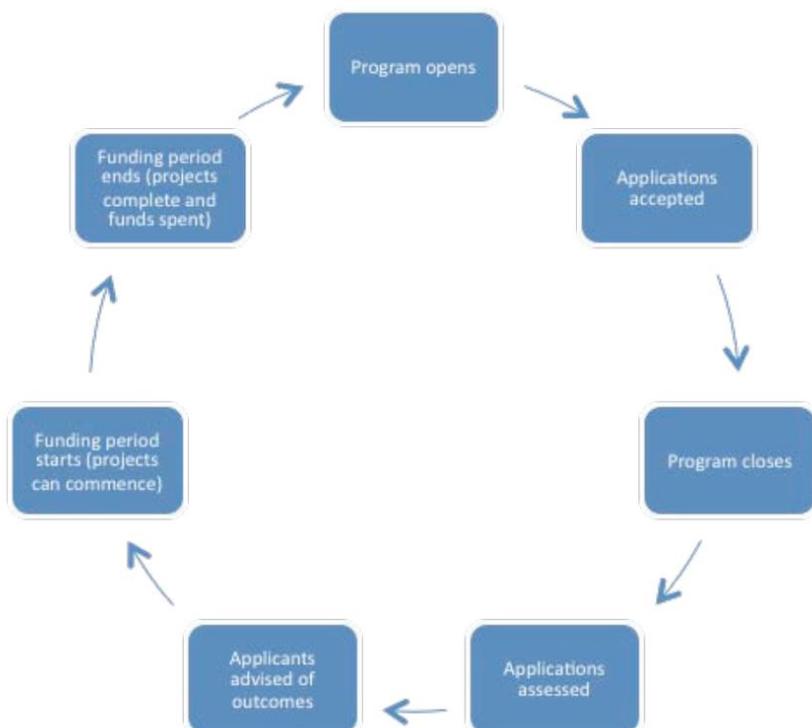
The first challenge is trying to identify grants programs and funding opportunities that are right for your organisations and the types of services or programs your organisation provides.

Government grant funding is facilitated through designated programs with specific terms and conditions. This ensures accountability to the government in terms of how the funds are spent. It is helpful to research the policies of funding providers to determine whether your project will satisfy their requirements. Typically, grant program will have a guidelines document which outlines the specific requirements.

Grant funding in Australia is a highly competitive process and your project will be assessed against many others for available funds. Most funding programs will be over-subscribed, so to have the best chance of success, your application will need to be of a very high quality and contain sufficient evidence to back up your proposal.

Many funding providers offer their grants in rounds in which there is a non-negotiable opening and closing date for each round of funding. These programs are offered at least annually. Most government grants have defined life cycles, generally around two to three years and are usually linked to a term of government.

Most funding programs with set closing dates follow an application process similar to the following diagram:



Being aware of funding cycles helps ensure that your organisation seeks grants for projects wherever it can and makes provision for using its own money for projects for which grants are not available.

When your organisation is looking for funding opportunities, it is worth taking a wide view of your operations. Thinking broadly about your activities, members and supporters could make you eligible for a range of grants from governments, foundations, philanthropic organisations, and council. When researching opportunities, consider the following:

- Visit a range of national, state, and local government websites as they generally provide information on the programs they offer. Some agencies produce e-bulletins or newsletters which detail funding opportunities. Ask to be included on their mailing list for all future correspondence.
- Monitor the media as most funding programs are advertised through media channels. State and Federal Members of Parliament often circulate media releases to announce new programs.
- Look at sources of philanthropy, which in some cases is not advertised.

It is important to find a grant which suits your organisational context and will be reflected in the planning outcomes and objectives of your project. Try some of the sources listed below to find information on potential funding for community projects. The Regional Development Australia Darling Downs and South West website also provides a useful list of links you can research to find the most current and most suitable grant for your organisation.

Once you have identified grants that you might qualify for, it is important to pick the one that is right for your organisation and your proposed area of work. There is a big difference between being eligible for a grants program and being competitive and ultimately successful. It is important to have a critical eye when assessing whether to proceed with an application. Meeting only one or two of the assessment criteria is rarely good enough. Most funding programs have fact sheets, application forms and guidelines. Use these documents to help you make your selection.

Potential Funding Sources

Government	www.business.gov.au	Information on Australian Government grant programs.
	www.regional.gov.au	Lists major Australian Government programs and services for people in regional and rural communities.
	ww.frrr.org.au	The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal offers numerous grants for rural projects.
	www.industry.gov.au	Information on grants specifically for industry and emerging technologies and markets
	www.ourcommunity.com.au	Information on business and community services and funding on a 'user pays' system.
Private	www.philanthropy.org.au	Lists over 350 Australian trusts and foundations, their contact details, and their funding preferences.

These are just a very small number of funding providers who offer grants. Check out www.rda-ddsw.org.au/funding for more funding programs available around the Darling Downs and South West QLD.

Once you have a shortlist of potential grants, use the checklist below to assist in finding the best match between the grant requirements and your project. If you answer no to any of the questions, you may need to look to other sources to find a grant better suited to your project:

	Yes	No
Does the grant align with our mission?		
Is the grant only offered to applicants in certain locations? Do we satisfy the location criteria?		
Does the project match the funding priorities?		
Are the deadlines achievable?		
If successful, can we meet any contractual obligations imposed by the funding provider?		
Will we need external assistance to meet these obligations?		
Does the grant impose a funding limit for projects and/or organisations?		
Can we complete our project within those funding limits?		
Is our project like other projects funded by the agency? Does it complement them?		
Based on the funding guidelines, do we qualify?		

Choosing multiple funding sources

Many funding providers will require you to contribute to the funding of the project. This can include both cash and 'in-kind' contributions. In-kind support is a contribution to the project

that has monetary value but has been provided in the form of goods or services such as property, equipment, services and volunteer labour or personnel time.

Applicants are required to provide detail of any other committed contributions (cash and in-kind) from project partners. This is to show they are:

- necessary and reasonable for achieving the projects goals and objectives
- a genuine cost to the contributor
- applicable to the project time frame or period to which the cost applies

All contributions should be documented with evidence contained in the project's records. Funding providers will request records for evidence of the value assigned to in-kind contributions.

Diversifying your funding sources is a good idea as it spreads the risk involved with the project and provides the funders with security in that you are financially resourced and are committed to the project. You can secure a range of project partners to share in your project.

These partners can be from local government, state government, local businesses, and other grant programs to name a few. Engaging multiple partners in a project this way is known as co-funding.

A common method of co-funding involves an arrangement where funding is provided by a range of sources so one source of funds can be matched with another. This often occurs between federal and state government programs and is known as leveraging.

Two or more grants or funding opportunities can be applied for at the same time. Usually the applications will correspond to different stages or sections of the same project to 'leverage' each other. While this strategy can be successful, it is difficult to pull off.

Look for funding partners who will benefit from your project. Look for a 'win-win' scenario for all participants. Often partners can provide more benefits to your project than just funding. These include assisting in development, lobbying through their networks, and guiding the long-term management, among others.

To give your project the greatest chance of achieving sustainable success, aim to access funding from various places, where feasible.

In-kind contributions such as labour and materials, venue use, expert advice etc, should all be valued at normal purchase rates. For example, if a venue donates the use of their facilities, it should be budgeted at the same rate it would cost to hire the venue.

Components of a good application

With your project plan in place and a few potential funding sources identified, you are progressing well towards preparing the application. Before you start writing, ensure you have researched and understand the grant requirements. This is imperative, along with understanding all the questions on the application form (if there one). There is a glossary at the end of this guide which will help you understand some of the terminology used in applications and what details the questions are asking for.

Most funding provider websites include lists of previously successful projects. Look through these to see if any are conceptually like yours. It can be a good idea to contact the successful applicant directly and request a copy of their proposal.

Find out the contact person for the grants program. Call them to discuss the particulars of the grant program you are interested in.

The more information and confirmation of details you have up-front, the better placed you will be to begin writing your application.

The questions in the table below are a good example of what you should ask. The information in the responses will be valuable when writing your application.

QUESTION	CHECK
What projects have previously been funded – what are the funding providers looking for?	
Does your project suit the guidelines and fit within the funding priorities? If not, then ask if they know of any other funding sources that may assist?	
What is the selection/assessment process? Enquire about the deadlines so you can assess your ability to meet them.	
Is your organisation eligible?	
Who is involved in the selection process? Think about any potential influences or conflicts.	
Are you speaking to a key decision maker? If not, ask them to be candid in describing the assessment process.	
Can a representative come to your work environment to gain first-hand knowledge of the project? This will give them a better idea of your capacity to deliver.	
Are there any contractual obligations you will need to agree to if successful? What reporting requirements will there be? Are there any marketing or publicity obligations that will need to be fulfilled?	
Is an audit report required on completion? Who pays for this? Is there a draft contract you can review?	

Preparing the application

All application forms are slightly different however, most will require you to provide details in (but not limited to) the following areas:

1	Goals/Objective	What do you want to achieve?
2	Rationale	Why do you want to do it?
3	Outcomes	What will be the result? How will success be defined and measured?
4	Methodology	How do you plan to do it? Who is going to help you? When do you want to do it?
5	Budget	How much will it cost?
6	Evaluation	What happens post-completion?

1. Goals/Objectives

Develop clear goals and objectives for your project. The goal of the project is the result or desired outcome of the project - what you want the project to achieve. For example, if

your project is building a new community centre, the goal may be to provide the community and surrounding regions with previously unavailable facilities.

The objectives of the project are specific, measurable statements of what must be accomplished to reach the project goal - how you plan to achieve your goal (i.e. the steps you need to take). There is usually more than one objective for a project. Continuing the example above, the objectives might be to:

- Design, plan and construct a building with facilities to service the community
- Develop and implement a marketing plan to attract new users to the centre
- Develop a management plan for on-going maintenance of the centre

Begin by jotting down dot points, ideas, or a few words in each section. Flesh them out and turn them into sentences at a later point. Most applications will go through many iterations, so do not panic if you do not get it right the first time.

2. Rationale

This should cover the specific situation, opportunity, problem, issue and need of the community or region that your proposal addresses. Ensure your statements are supported by third-party research and evidence to justify the issue.

Demonstrate why the project is important and that a relevant problem or need exists by including the following:

- Background on the events/issues that led to the need
- An outline of the problem in its current state and how it could be improved.
- A description of the target population or group
- A definition of the problem to be addressed and service area needs
- A needs statement that is motivating to convince the funding body that the project is important.
- A statement on why your organisation has the credentials and is the most appropriate to receive the funding.

Be clear and concise in your descriptions.

3. Outcomes

Project outcomes are the long-term results and/or the benefits they will provide. These must be articulated very carefully. You will need to document how you will determine the outcome of the project, what your performance indicators are and how you will measure them and at what point you can consider the project a success.

Demonstrate that you will be able to accomplish these things by including in your application:

- A list of outcomes for all beneficiaries of the project
- A metric for each outcome (e.g. survey, number, quantitative data)
- When the measurement will be taken

While qualitative data is much harder to collate, it is extremely valuable. Surveys, discussion groups, and interviews all provide valuable data and should not be underestimated.

4. Methodology

Describe the process to be followed to achieve the outcomes. Identify a rational and direct description of the proposed project and detail the time it will take to accomplish your objectives. Ensure you clearly articulate your unique methods and project design.

It is important to explain the impact your proposed activities will have, how they will benefit the community/region and who will carry out the activities. It may be necessary to place time frames on your project/program, including long-term strategies for maintaining the on-going project/program if required. Your methodology may include a:

- Statement of problems and objectives
- Clear description and explanation of the impact of the project and its activities
- The sequence, flow and relationship of activities.
- Planned staffing for the activities planned.
- Start and finish dates for each activity.
- The number of hours required to complete activities.
- Personnel and non-personnel resources required.
- Project milestones

5. Budget

The budget is where thorough planning of your project and what you intend to do will pay off. It is very difficult to cost a project and work out a budget if you do not know what you want to accomplish.

A common mistake made by applicants is not putting enough preparation and time into this section of their application. It is one of the most important parts and goes a long way towards showing your ability to financially manage the grant.

The budget should cover all costs associated with people and staff, consultants, equipment, resources, operational costs, training etc. Make sure that what you are requesting is in line with what the guidelines stipulate. Is your budget relevant to the project?

Use the checklist below to make sure your budget covers all the necessary costs.

BUDGET REQUIREMENTS	CHECK
Separate personnel costs (salary and fringe benefits) and facility operating expenses (rent/mortgage, utilities, maintenance, taxes), travel, postage, equipment costs, supplies, and insurance, etc. List actual committed and pending income only.	
Clearly define costs that are to be met by the funding provider and all other funding sources.	
Outline administrative and program costs. Be realistic and honest. For specific projects, include separate budgets for general operating costs and the special project.	
Show income and expenses in column form. Include income from all relevant sources (e.g. fees for service, government funds, corporate/private grants, and individual donations, etc.)	
Include project costs to be incurred at the time of the program's implementation not at the time of writing. Remember, there could be a wait of several months before approval and commencement.	
Do not include miscellaneous or contingency categories without a clear explanation, e.g. contingency for a quote that may increase will be returned if not required.	

Detail fringe benefits separately from salaries. Detail all other costs.	
List all donated services, including volunteers and indirect costs where appropriate.	
Focus on the cost-benefit ratio. Clarify how grant dollars will be maximised through the budget, how the grant will leverage other funding and what the long-term benefits will be.	
Ensure there is consistency between the project description, budget narration, and budget line items.	
Aim for management efficiency. For example, if a position is already funded through another body, can that individual's time be allocated for project oversight at no additional cost? Recruit a board member or local expert to donate training services or fiscal management services, and then show this in-kind contribution in the budget.	
If major pieces of equipment drive up total budget costs, investigate whether the equipment can reasonably be shared with other non-profit organisations or whether second-hand equipment would provide a reasonable substitute. Would the program rather fund a hire purchase lease agreement?	
Include an inflation factor and projected salary increases when applying for grants that cover multiple years.	
Beware of including minimal costs for letterhead, postage, photocopying, and utilities, if not essential to project operations. The funding body could perceive these expenses as part of normal operating costs and view relatively trivial line items as artificial budget inflation.	
Do not include non-essential travel in the budget for a project that only has local impact.	
Use only whole numbers (no cents) with proper formatting: \$1,000 (not 1000).	
Do not include a "miscellaneous" or "sundries" budget category. Small expenses should properly be allocated for supplies, transportation, photocopying, or a similarly appropriate category.	

Funding is very rarely given retrospectively, so if you have already completed the project or part of the project, it will generally be ineligible. Plan the commencement of your project carefully to take this into account.

Do not make erroneous claims for funding. Ensure that all your proposed expenses have been properly costed and you can justify them.

6. Evaluation

Evaluating your project provides the necessary information to improve it as it develops and progresses and at completion. Information is collected to assess whether the project is proceeding as planned and whether it is meeting its stated goals and objectives according to a proposed timeline.

The evaluation is used to determine if the project is meeting its outcomes and objectives and meriting the funding it is asking for. On the other hand, it identifies if the project needs improvement.

Evaluation activities (design, data collection etc.) should ideally begin soon after the project has commenced. The information gathered may identify recommendations to continue, modify, and/or delete project activities and strategies. The project evaluator will usually be a member of the organisation proposing the project.

Project evaluations can also include examinations of specific parts of the project. This may be a specific goal or objective of the project as well as the time frame in which the goal was to be accomplished. An evaluation of a goal could look at the extent to which it may have been met and clarify the extent to which the goal contributes to the success or failure of the overall project. Sometimes this may mean the goals or objectives must be changed slightly and then re-evaluated later.

Methods for measuring the effectiveness of your activities during evaluation may include:

- Collecting qualitative and quantitative data
- Data collection on a planned schedule
- Observations from community members
- Questionnaires
- Informal and formal interviews
- Focus groups

This checklist will help you make sure you cover the different types of data you might need for evaluating your project:

EVALUATION/MEASUREMENT	CHECK
Were the appropriate participants selected and involved in the planned activities?	
Did the activities and strategies match those described in the plan? If not, are changes in activities justified and described?	
Were the appropriate resources (including people) used, and are the resources working in accordance with the proposed plan? Were the appropriate materials and equipment obtained?	
Were activities conducted according to the proposed timeline? Did the most appropriate personnel conduct them?	
Was a management plan developed and followed?	
To what extent did the project or program meet each overall goal?	
What was the benefit of each goal or objective? Describe how it benefited each goal/objective	
What components were the most effective?	
Were the results worth the project's cost?	
Is this project sustainable?	

Project evaluation should not be deferred until after the project has completed. It is often too late to change some of the activities that could have improved the program. Evaluation should begin soon after the project has commenced.

Adding the final touches

Include the following components in your final application submission:

A covering letter – this should be short (half a page), motivating, say something different, and stress a need or unique application for the funding.

A title page – the title of a project is very important. It is generally the first thing that captures the attention of a reader. It should:

- Be creative but not misleading
- Be designed to catch the reader's attention without misleading them
- Describe the project
- Express the result of the project not the methods

A summary – the summary is the most important part of the proposal. It is the part of the proposal that is most frequently read. The summary must be succinct and motivating. This should be written after the full proposal is completed to ensure an adequate summary of concepts are captured and should describe:

- The objectives
- The approach
- The evaluation

It should not be a list but a concise outline of the proposal.

Letters of Support

Letters of support should be included to prove the applicant's credibility and show community support for the project. When requesting letters of support, it is often helpful to provide a template. This is particularly the case for people or organisations that have not written one before. It also ensures that the letter communicates what you intend it to.

Use the checklist below for some tips on how to obtain effective letters of support.

TIP		CHECK
Collect as many as possible	Be sure to target key groups that are of relevance to the application. Individual community members can be relevant if they are seen to be a beneficiary of the project.	
Do not compromise the application	Do not use people who are too close to the assessment processes. Be aware of conflicts of interest.	
Always brief prospective supporters	Ensure the letter of support contains relevant statements about your application and communicates the right message. Funding providers may contact the people supporting your project so ensure they are well informed.	

Attachments

Different funding providers will request different numbers and types of attachments to include with an application. Be sure to follow the guidelines and do not include unnecessary material. For complex proposals without attachment restrictions, a careful selection of the following material might be appropriate:

- Proof of non-profit status
- Organisational brochure
- Newsletter
- Annual reports and audited financial statements
- Relevant journal articles or press clippings
- Statistical report that documents the need for the project
- Letters of support

- Subcontractor agreements, partnership statements from cooperating agencies, pledge of financial support from co-funders, showing financial or in-kind commitment
- Budget narrative, organization operating budget
- Resumes for key personnel, job descriptions for new project staff, and/or biographical statements for project consultants

Include a table of contents for the attachments along with a three to four-line summary of each. This will clarify the documents for the funding provider. Specify each attachment in the table of contents.

Writing style

Grant funding in Australia is extremely competitive so you want to write an application that stands out. It takes a lot of trial and error to write an excellent application, so do not be put off by multiple drafts. You can use the checklist below to make sure your application is well written and really gets noticed.

Where possible, include photos, maps, and diagrams in the application to explain how everything fits together; as they say, a picture tells a thousand words!

TIP	CHECK
Do not assume prior knowledge. Write as if the reader is unfamiliar with your project, area, town, and municipality and capacity to deliver.	
Try to include all relevant information unless there is a strict word or page limit. In this case, include other information as an attachment.	
Be concise, accurate and avoid too much flowery language; the reader will assess hundreds of applications, so make yours memorable.	
Avoid words like if, could, may and might. Instead, boldly declare that the grant will create a positive outcome. Avoid uncertain words like believe, hope, anticipate, etc.	
Read and answer all the questions. Have someone you trust who is unaware of the project proofread for you.	
Use short sentences followed by dot points to identify the key areas of your project. These can then be expanded upon and developed to emphasise your main points.	
Where practical, use the exact key words used in the guidelines, but make sure you know what they mean. Different funding providers may have a different interpretation. Contact them if you are unsure.	
Footnote your application when stressing important information. Be sure to reference supporting documents. It is a good idea to note them down during your research. The documents can also be included as attachments if necessary.	
List any referees the funding providers can contact about your application. Always ask their permission and send them a copy of your full application to read.	
Address the questions and do not add anything that is not required. Remember - quality not quantity. Constantly refer to the question to prevent rambling.	
If you feel a question is not relevant, do not leave it blank, state why. Contact the funding provider and check that you understand what they are asking, otherwise your application may be returned, and the assessment period stalled.	

Tailor your application according to the funding you are applying for; never send off the same generic proposal to various funding agencies.	
Stick to the word limit but keep it short and sweet; do not fill up space with rambling.	
Make sure someone edits a final draft of the application; if they do not understand what you've written, it is unlikely the funding providers will.	
Prepare your application electronically. This is a requirement for most funding agencies.	
Electronically spell and grammar check the application; poor spelling and grammar is unacceptable and looks sloppy. Have at least one other person proofread your application.	
Ensure you submit the correct number of copies and retain one electronic 'master' copy and multiple hard (signed) copies of the finished application.	

Always get the application to the funding provider *before* the deadline. Never send a half-finished application to the funding provider as this will undermine your credibility and future success in the program or other programs administered by that agency. It is much safer to delay and get it right for a subsequent round.

Lodging the application

If you have completed all the checklists, signed all the forms, made it through the guidebook and had your application proof-read and double checked, you are ready to lodge.

The assessment process will take time so be patient. You will generally be advised of receipt of your application, the anticipated processing time, and an indicative time when successful applicants will be notified and/ or announced. If you do not hear from the funding agency, be sure to contact them to make sure your application was submitted successfully

Keep a record of this correspondence in case any problems arise later. On receiving the news that your project was successful in obtaining funding you can begin work on your project. **DO NOT** begin any part of your project until you have confirmation of funding and a contract has been signed.

Grant applications take a lot of work and acknowledging that is important, especially if a team of people was needed to complete the work. Thank you letters to everyone involved (including the funding provider) is a great way of showing your appreciation. Providing ongoing updates to those who have invested interest in the project as it progresses through the assessment process is also a good method of maintaining enthusiasm and support for the project.

Project Delivery & Acquittal

Funding Agreements

A funding agreement is a legal document which sets out the arrangements under which a grant is provided, received, managed, and acquitted.

A funding agreement is designed to ensure that grant money is spent appropriately and that the project will proceed according to plan. The agreement will outline your organisation's reporting and acquittal responsibilities.

Project Management

Reporting

As part of the funding agreement, your organisation will need to provide reports to the funding agency to confirm the progress of your project and how the funding money is being spent. Some funding programs require reporting at different stages during the project; others require reporting upon the project's completion

It is important to keep good records of project milestones and expenditure details, including receipts and any other information relating to the implementation of your project. This information will make the reporting process easier and faster.

Acknowledgement

The funding agreement will outline the responsibilities your organisation has in acknowledging your grant. Some examples of acknowledging the funding body include:

- Displaying the funding agency's logo on signage
- Including the funding agency's logo and description of the grant program in promotional material associated with the project
- Acknowledging receipt of the funding on your organisation's website

Acquittal

Acquitting a grant involves providing the funding body with information on how you spent the grant money you received. This usually involves reporting on the objectives of the project and how they were met, project evaluation, feedback from stakeholders and financial reporting including receipts and invoices.

Any funds that are not spent on the project usually must be returned to the funding body.

We hope this guide has been informative and provided you with a good foundation for your next grant application. Best of luck from all of us at Regional Development Australia Darling Downs and South West

If your application is unsuccessful, give your funding provider a call to find out why. Take detailed notes and resubmit your application for the next round.

Glossary

The following list of terms should help you to understand what you will need to refer to in your application:

Methodology	This is a list of actions and tasks – usually required in chronological order.
Milestones	These are tasks which must be completed before moving on to the next stage of the project. Often this is linked to a payment and reporting schedule.
Rationale	What has led to the problem that the project is intended to fix?
Objectives	Objectives should be measurable, specific statements of what needs to be accomplished for the project to be successful.
Outputs	The physical results of the project.
Inputs	Employment costs, volunteer hours, other labour, materials, and the expertise that has gone into the completion of the project.
Outcomes	Usually a part of the evaluation process, outcomes define the effect the project has on the original need or problem.
Performance Measure	Performance measures identify the actual difference the project has made through collecting quantitative data. Quantitative data can also be measured by physical counting, surveys or polls, interviews, or community feedback.
Performance Indicator	Performance indicators are small measurements throughout the project, usually related to costs and timing or milestones to ensure that the project is on track.
Sustainability	Unless agreed by the funding providers, there should be a strong case for NOT needing further government support to keep your outcomes happening.
Project Viability	A viable project shows clear evidence of good planning in timing, methodology and costing, especially in terms of value for money. Also relates to the expertise of those undertaking the work and those managing the process.
Applicant Viability	A viable applicant usually has a good record of previous projects undertaken of this nature. Evidence of skills and expertise to undertake and complete the project OR the access to the skills and expertise necessary.