

# Grant writing tips for non-DRFA (resilience and risk reduction) funding programs

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## About

Grant funding is highly competitive. Assessors will be reviewing many applications so it's crucial that you present a concise and easy to read application that addresses all stated requirements. Please see below a list of tips to support you with your application.

### Tip 1: Thoroughly review the guidelines

Before starting to write your application, you need to:

- familiarise yourself with the grant funding guidelines, process requirements and application forms
- check the eligibility criteria
- ensure that you understand the objectives of the program and can clearly demonstrate how your project will meet these objectives
- read any accompanying documents (e.g. terms and conditions, frequently asked questions, application tip sheets)
- check you have enough time to lodge your application ahead of the closing date.

Guidelines often identify key criteria that your application will be marked against. It is important that you can demonstrate the links within your application.

### Tip 2: Plan your project

To be able to effectively convey the purpose of your project, you should first gather the following information:

- project description, including aims and objectives (what your project will be doing)
- key personnel (who needs to be involved)
- project schedule (how long the project is expected to take)
- proposed budget (how much it will cost)
- what resources are required to deliver the project.

Funding programs will often require additional documentation (outside of the application form), i.e. budget breakdown, project logic, evidence of stakeholder engagement, risk assessments, etc. Ensure that you are familiar with what mandatory documentation needs to be completed and identify the key people within your organisation that will be required to contribute content.

### Tip 3: Research the funding body and previous grant recipients

Funding programs are often oversubscribed. To increase your chances of success, it is recommended that you research successful projects from previous funding rounds (where available), as this can help identify where previous grants have been awarded and may provide opportunities to align project ideas to previously successful projects.

### Tip 4: Completing the application form

Review the application form to see what is required and plan how much time it will take to complete. Remember that most funding programs will not accept late applications unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Application forms will have selection criteria that need to be addressed. Always assume that the reader knows nothing about your project or your organisation. Your responses need to provide sufficient detail that a reader with no prior knowledge will be able to understand the purpose of the project.

Any claim you make you should be evidence based (i.e. capability to deliver the project). A good approach is to use the STAR method (situation, task, action, result). For instance, “our organisation has delivered X number of projects (provide details), on time, within budget”. Ensure that you provide examples and any supporting data/evidence.

Clearly demonstrate the need for the project, the benefits it will provide and to whom (e.g. use geographic markers, identify vulnerable community groups, key community infrastructure, etc.). If the need for the project is unable to be well defined or understood, the chances of the project being approved significantly decrease. When completing the application form, ensure that you are telling the reader what the problem is, why it is a problem and why it should be recommended for funding. Sell your story.

If you are considering submitting a joint application with a partner organisation, connect with your community and show how your project will benefit the broader community.

Additional tips:

- Write in a consistent writing style and tone – use the grant guidelines as a reference for the type of language to use (avoid conversational language, jargon, and acronyms).
- Use concise language – keep your answers and paragraphs short.
- Write your application so it's easily understood by an assessor who may be unfamiliar with your industry.
- Include keywords from the guidelines and assessment criteria where appropriate.
- Write factually, the information you submit must be accurate and may be audited.
- Avoid using vague, speculative or emotive words (e.g. believe, hope, expect, may, could, might).
- Write unique answers to all questions – although some questions may sound similar, the assessor will be seeking new information (check the guidelines for clarification).
- Be positive in stating what your project will achieve if your application is successful but avoid exaggerated claims – the assessor will look for realistic outcomes and claims must be able to be substantiated.
- Demonstrate your project's likelihood of success, acknowledging risks to achieving its aims and how these will be managed. Your application will often need to detail the following:
  - what activities and outputs your project will deliver
  - what are the benefits of your project to your organisation, including long-term broader benefits
  - why your project needs funding and why it represents value for money
  - outline the key drivers of risk and uncertainty and how you will manage them
  - how you will successfully bring the project to completion
  - ensure your response adheres to any character/word limits.

## Tip 5: Budget

Every request for funding will require a budget breakdown. It is important to ensure that this budget is accurate, covers all aspects of the project (financial and in-kind), and includes an appropriate contingency within the budget to manage cost overruns. Generally, budgets should detail both cash (e.g. capital or loans) and in-kind (e.g. volunteer time, borrowed equipment) contributions to the project. It's helpful to show how the value of in-kind items has been calculated. Donated materials and equipment can be valued at the cost to buy items new or hire the costs. Labour should be valued at the going hourly rate.

Remember that the budget is another opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the project, readiness to commence, and ability to complete the project on time and within budget.

Some other tips include:

- Make sure you have provided current information (e.g. quotes that were sourced over a year ago may no longer be valid to support your application).
- Check your requested funding is within any minimum or maximum limits.
- Read the guidelines thoroughly to make sure the items/activities you are requesting funding for are eligible.
- Include all costs, factoring in administrative overheads (where eligible).
- Explain how the requested funding amount was calculated as this is especially useful if the requested amount differs to the amounts included in the invoices/quotes supplied.
- Check that your organisation has the financial capacity to carry any costs before funding is able to be paid to you.
- Review your budget to make sure it's accurate and adds up.
- Be ready to provide evidence about what approved items you have spent the grant money on, as part of the acquittal process. You may be required to provide detailed invoices/quotes from suppliers as evidence of your project costs and how you will achieve your aims.
- Ensure the activities are eligible costs under the grant guidelines, that any goods/services purchased are issued/dated within the eligible time period and outline all relevant services to be provided including itemised costs.

## Examples of a good budget and insufficient budget

### Example of a good project budget

#	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)
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$1,052,000</b>	<b>\$530,000</b>	<b>\$522,000</b>

### Examples of an insufficient project budget

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

\*lack of information to make an accurate assessment and no indication how the co-contribution will be met

#	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)
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$340,000</b>	<b>\$210,000</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>

\*lack of information to make an accurate assessment, timeline is not feasible, project costs do not equate to the total

## Tip 6: Timeframes

When planning your project schedule, consider the required approval timeframes for the funding program (time required for the agency to review applications and announce successful applicants) which may impact your projects commencement date. When applying for funding ensure you can meet the delivery timeframes associated with the program. You should not apply for funding if you will not be able to deliver the project on time, or where you need to start the project prior to approval to commence. Announcement of successful projects is not the same as being able to commence. There is often a significant time period between announcement, and the ability to commence the project (which will also include establishment of project funding agreements, payment etc). A lot of funding programs will not allow you to change the timeframes substantially (either commencement or completion dates), so it is important that you review the program timeframes to ensure that you are able to successfully deliver.

## Tip 7: Independent review

It is recommended that grant applicants use your networks and ask someone completely independent of the project to review the application and provide feedback. If someone independent is not able to understand the need for the project based on what has been drafted, then further work on your application is recommended to improve your chances of success.

If you engage a professional writer or third party to assist you with preparing and lodging your application, you must make sure that:

- any necessary authority forms enabling them to represent you are completed and approved by the funding agency
- you fully understand, approve and authorise any submissions made on your behalf
- you have allocated enough time to engage the third party in this process so that your application is lodged by the deadline.