Regional Development Australia
CENTRAL WEST

10 tips for
Successful Grant Writing

Regional Development Australia Central West

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This guide has been developed to provide individuals, organisations and communities in the Central West NSW region with key tips on how to prepare and submit applications for grant funding.

DISCLAIMER

Cover image: Emily Elizabeth Bradley: Canola, Woodstock

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Introduction

Government and other organisations provide funds, in the form of grants, in order to effect change. The grant funding enables organisations to deliver projects, programs and services into our region to build community capacity and create opportunities for business growth and investment.

Organisations, businesses and individuals across the Central West region are passionate about their projects and have a bucket list of programs, facilities and services that they require funding for. However, grant writing can be daunting.

This guide has been prepared to provide some tips to get you started on your grant funding quest. Regional Development Australia Central West is here to help and can provide you with assistance to source appropriate funds and advice on the application process.

In addition, subscribe to our fortnightly newsletter which will also provide regular updates on the latest grants available.

Visit www.rdacentralwest.org.au/grants-news-sign-up/

Good luck!

Ruth Fagan
Chair, RDA Central West

rdacentralwest.org.au

1. Are You Grant Ready?

Planning is the key. It is a lot easier to find appropriate funding for a well-planned project, than to try and fit the project to the funding.

A high-quality grant application takes time and planning. Your project should be planned well before the grant application opens, and should be ready to go or 'shovel-ready' when you submit your application. Some things to think about during the planning process:

- Scope your project – what do you need, why do you need it, how long will it take to construct it or get it up and running or can it be developed in stages? The more detail that you can include within the project scope, the easier it will be to apply for a grant.

- Understand where your project fits within your local community, your town, your region, the industry sector, the state or the nation. Discuss your project with relevant stakeholders to gain their support and refine the project scope if necessary to ensure that your project aligns with regional priorities. This will give you the best chance of securing funding.

- Preliminary costings should be sought early on in the planning process. This provides you with an estimate of how much money you need, and which funds you should apply for.

- Do you have the organisational capacity to deliver the project? The funding body will need to have confidence in your organisation's ability to deliver the project on time and on budget.
- Do you need a Development Application (DA) or approval from Crown Lands or another organisation? Approvals take time to complete, submit and approve!
- Understand the amount of work that goes into the writing process – the amount of commitment to a grant application is usually proportionate to the size of the funds you are seeking. Large projects require a significant amount of time, evidence and writing to demonstrate project worth and the organisation's ability to deliver the project.
- Do not underestimate the amount of time it takes to submit a successful grant application.

Working Dog: Rebecca Bennett

2. Looking for Grants

Get online, do your research and find the best source of funding for your individual project.

Grants and other sources of funding for regional and community development projects are usually provided by federal, state and local governments and industry organisations. However, there is an increasing number of private and philanthropic organisations available to fund projects.

Subscribe to newsletters that provide information including the RDA Central West grants newsletter. Local Members of Parliament, both State and Federal, often have a newsletter outlining other opportunities.

- Follow social media feeds of organisations and agencies that provide grants or funding for your type of project.
- Have a look around at your council to see what grants, funding and support they have to offer. Check in with the contact person to discuss your project.
- Do your research. Review previous rounds – when they opened and the types of projects that received funding – so you know what the grant is all about.
- Read through other successful grant applications, if you can access them. This can provide you with background on what is needed to be successful.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

COMMUNITY AND 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.
www.nsw.gov.au/working-and-business	Information about a range of grants and funding opportunities for businesses in NSW.
www.infrastructure.nsw.gov.au/restart-nsw/	Funding opportunities for community and regional infrastructure projects.
www.frrr.org.au	The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal offers numerous grants for rural projects.
www.ausindustry.gov.au	AusIndustry offers grants specifically for small business projects.
www.sport.nsw.gov.au/clubs/grants	The Office of Sport provides grants to nurture sporting talent, help build sports facilities and develop the industry as a whole.
https://www.arts.gov.au/funding-and-support	Australian Government funding and support programs for the arts sector.
http://regionalartsnsw.com.au/grants/	Arts and cultural grants for people living in regional NSW.
PRIVATE	
www.ourcommunity.com.au	Information on business and community services and funding on a 'user pays' system.
www.philanthropy.org.au	Lists over 350 Australian trusts and foundations, their contact details and their funding preferences.

3. Define the Need

*"Because we need the funding"
is not a satisfactory response to project need.
Clearly describe the need for your
project in the community and the outcomes
that the project will deliver.*

A critical part of any application is to define the need. That is – why is this project important for your community or organisation? Some things to consider when defining the need:

- Use research to support your ideas. Being able to quote quality research makes your application credible and shows that you have planned your project.

- Demonstrate community need – are there any community surveys, consultations or plans that mention the need for your project? If time permits, survey the key stakeholders or hold a workshop to gather feedback and support.

- Organise letters of support from community leaders, businesses groups and other stakeholders that outline the need for the project.

- Review the key regional plans including State Government, council, industry groups and regional organisations to determine how your project fits into the broad strategic direction of government. This is important for you to be awarded many government grants.

Wheels of Progress: Emily Elizabeth Bradley

4. Quantify the Outcomes

You will need to consider if your project is realistic, achievable and can be sustained into the future.

Grant providers are outcome focused – they are seeking maximum outcomes and benefits for the community, from their dollars. They want you to describe and quantify these outcomes during the application process. Your outcomes should be supported by research and data. All claims need to be substantiated.

Employment or jobs

Large projects, especially infrastructure projects, are seeking to quantify how many jobs will be created during the project, as well as on-going upon completion of the project. There are many economic models that can help you determine this. RDA Central West can provide advice on economic modelling.

Health

Source research that supports the health outcomes of your project. For example – improved health leads to increased productivity as well as less impact on the health system.

Transport

Transport outcomes include increased safety, time, amenity and reduced congestion. Active and public transport outcomes have additional benefits for the community.

Education

Increased levels of education and training in a community can lead to higher wages and lower unemployment. RDA Central West has access to REMPLAN data that can support your case.

Tourism

For the visitor economy, it is important to define the region. Is your project bringing visitors to the region, the state or Australia? How will you determine where your visitors come from, how long will they stay and how much they will spend? Collect information and data from other providers or similar events to support your application.

Other benefits

Increased land and housing values, increased amenity, the value of heritage, cultural or social facilities within a community and environmental benefits are other outcomes associated with projects. It is often hard to quantify these benefits and you may need to bring in an expert consultant if this is vital to your project.

5. The Application

Read the question!
Make sure that you answer the
question that is asked - not give the answer
you think they want to hear...

The application document for a grant fund appear in many different formats. It is recommended that very early in the process you determine if you can download a sample application or alternatively, copy and paste the questions into a word processing document, where you can prepare your responses. You are then aware of how much work is involved in completing the application.

- Answer the question that is asked. Do not add unnecessary information – just answer the question.

- Stick to the word/character limit. The application form will likely cut off your response to fit to the word/character limit or not accept it at all. It is difficult to review and shorten the response when you are under pressure at the last minute. If it does accept the response – the assessor many not read or accept your response if it is outside the word/character limit.

- Keep your data and resources for the application well-ordered and easily accessible so you are not constantly searching for relevant information.

- Ensure that your responses are consistent between questions. For example, make sure the costs and budgets are the same throughout the responses as well as the project name, organisation name, locations etc. You do not need the assessors to be flicking back and forth to clarify your project information.

- Do not assume that the same person is reading each question – for large, competitive grant applications, different people may be allocated different questions to assess. Therefore, you cannot assume that information contained in a previous response will have been read by the person assessing the next response.

- Write the grant application clearly and boldly. This is your project, and you need to demonstrate the importance of your project to the assessor.

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6. The Money

Make sure that the numbers add up . . . check the figures in your written statements and budgets to ensure that all costs, budgets and funding requests are accurate and consistent throughout the application.

The money is what it is all about. So, you need to ensure that you have all your facts and figures correct.

It is important to get the costs associated with delivering the project finalised early on in the project planning. This will enable you to determine how much money you are seeking, and which grant funds will be appropriate to apply for. Some things to consider:

- Do you need quotes to verify the costs? How many quotes does the grant fund require (if any)?
- For many infrastructure projects, the costs may need to be verified by a quantity surveyor – this may take some time …
- Are your costs inclusive or exclusive of GST? Make sure your numbers throughout the document are consistent and reflect what the grant fund is asking.
- Do you have any co-funding committed to the project, and do you have this in writing?

- Partial funding is common in grant funding allocation. Can you break your project into parts to allow funding organisations to commit to some of your project? Whilst this may not be the ideal outcome that you want, it may be the best outcome that there is.
- In-kind support – this should be costed as if it was being delivered as part of the project.
- Have you allowed for contingency costs – what are the industry acceptable margins?
- Do you need lump sum payments, or should payments be linked to milestones?
- Balance your budgets! Check across the entire application!

Two Bridges: Terry Everson

7. Gather the Supporting Documents

Supporting documents can make or break your application – don't leave it to the last minute.

Different grant funds have different requirements. Some have supporting documents that are mandatory – some are optional. Do not provide documents that are not required.

Review requirements at the start of the process as these documents can take some time to collect and collate. High quality supporting documents may be the difference in your project being reviewed for funding.

Letters of support

Letters of support provide credibility and support for the project within the community. Gather as many as you can from key stakeholders. However, they should be relevant to the project, and they should not all read the same!

Make sure that you brief the person writing the letter of support and provide them with enough information. Also, allow them ample time to complete the letter.

Business case

Some larger projects require a business case. Some have templates. Others give you free range. The length and depth of the business case is usually reflective of the size of the project.

If you require a business case – start early! They are often long, detailed documents that require you to gather lots of information from a range of stakeholders.

If you can afford some graphic design or have a template – use it … good design can sell your project.

Economic assessments

Larger and complex infrastructure projects may require a cost-benefit analysis or economic impact assessment. You may need to engage someone to complete this for you if the capability is not present within your organisation. You will need to provide clear costs, timeframes and other financial information in order for this to be completed.

Photos, maps and diagrams

"A picture tells a thousand words". The grant assessor may not know anything about your project or about your community. Maps and photos can bring your project to life and convey much more than many paragraphs or words may.

Annual reports or financial statements

Some grants require a copy of your annual report or financial statements. Some are very specific about what they require. If you cannot provide them in the format that is required (i.e. financial vs calendar year etc) then contact the funding agency for advice.

Subcontractor agreements

If the application is being submitted from more than one organisation, you may need to provide evidence about the arrangements that are in place between the organisations – e.g. subcontractor, partnerships etc.

Co-funding agreements

If you have received other funding for your project you may need to provide letters or documents that show the funds that have been committed. This may also include in-kind support.

CVs

The experience and expertise of key people involved in delivering the project is often required. Seek up to date information from the key people early on in the application process.

Truck Lights at Night: Emily Elizabeth Bradley

Family Adventure: Doug Goninan

8. Evaluation

*Evaluation is critical.
It is important that you are able to
assess how your project will meet the
stated outcomes and objectives.*

As part of the application process for many grant funds, you will be asked how you will evaluate the success of the project. It is important to consider evaluation during project planning and implement the evaluation tools at project commencement to ensure that information and data is collected in a timely manner.

Methods for measuring the effectiveness of your project include:

- collecting qualitative and quantitative data
- questionnaires
- informal and formal interviews
- focus groups
- testimonials
- observations
- journal entries.

Sunset: Ella Gibson

9. The Final Check

Do not leave submission until the last minute. Applications submitted online can sometimes strike problems when lots of organisations are uploading at the same time.

Proofread all documents, including the application, thoroughly!

Allow time to get someone who is unfamiliar with the project and/or your organisation to read the documents and see if they are sold! They can also ensure that the industry jargon is eliminated from your application.

Make sure that the budget adds up! Do all the elements in each section match? This can often be a make-or-break part of an application progressing to the next stage.

Do you have all the parts of the application that are required? Mandatory documents are ... mandatory!

Make sure the person that is responsible for final sign off is there when you need them. It can sometimes be hard to track them down at the last minute to get final approval with the clock ticking.

Ensure that you submit on time! It always takes more time than you think to upload documents, to print documents, to email documents, to get that letter of support back from a key stakeholder or to get the budget signed off from finance. Do not leave this to the last minute. If you miss the deadline – it is very likely you will miss the money.

If you are unsuccessful, seek feedback. This could be the difference in getting future funding.

Grenfell Painted Silo in Front of the Milky Way: Christine Smith

10. How RDA Central West Can Assist You

RDA Central West is here to help you when looking for grants and preparing grant applications.

1. Finding the correct grant

We can help you look for a grant and provide you with advice. We can also help you scope your project to ensure that it meets the criteria to be eligible for submission.

2. Economic development tools

We have access to *REMPLAN ECONOMY,* which can be used to benchmark, model impacts and assess the value of specific events and investments. We can help you use REMPLAN economy to support your application and access other relevant data sources.

3. Community tools

We also have access to *REMPLAN COMMUNITY* which offers valuable insights to understand the unique characteristics of our communities and how they are changing over time. This data provides a powerful evidence base to guide decision making, strategy and policy.

4. Letters of support

We can provide a letter of support for government funded grant programs. Please contact us about your project and application and we can discuss providing a letter of support.

5. Reviewing your application

We can provide some feedback on your application where possible. However, please allow enough time for this to happen.

6. Advocacy

We are here to help you with large, regional projects that reflect the strategic direction of the region. We can often advocate to all levels of government on your behalf so make a time to discuss your project with us.

Fire Time: Ebony Hewitt