



Regional PARTNERSHIPS

GUIDELINES



An Australian Government Initiative

The Australian Government's approach to regional development is to work in partnership with communities, government and the private sector to foster the development of self-reliant communities and regions. This approach is consistent with the Commonwealth's framework for developing Australia's regions: *Stronger Regions, A Stronger Australia*. Regional Partnerships is a programme that delivers on the Australian Government's approach to regional development.

*What is
Regional
Partnerships?*

WHAT WILL REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS DO?

Through Regional Partnerships the Australian Government will partner projects that focus on:

*What does
Regional
Partnerships
do?*

- ***strengthening growth and opportunities*** by investing in projects that strengthen and provide greater opportunities for economic and social participation in the community;
- ***improving access to services*** by investing in projects that, in a cost effective and sustainable way, support communities to access services. In particular those communities in regional Australia with a population of less than 5,000;
- ***supporting planning*** by investing in projects that assist communities to identify and explore opportunities and to develop strategies for action;
- ***assisting structural adjustment for communities*** by investing in projects that assist specifically identified communities and regions to adjust to major economic, social or environmental change.

HOW WILL SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS BE DETERMINED?

AREA CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

Your local Area Consultative Committee (ACC) is a primary source of information and assistance in the development of your application. Your ACC is also the Department's primary provider of independent advice on all applications from their region.

Your ACC can:

- provide you with advice on obtaining and providing evidence of broad community and business support for your project;
- assist you with identifying other project partners;
- ensure that all the relevant areas of your application form are completed in sufficient detail.

Your ACC plays a major role in providing the Department with advice, in the form of comments and a recommendation, on your project.

*Area
Consultative
Committee
involvement*

Involving your ACC in the project and application development phase will reduce the assessment time with the Department, so it is in your best interest to consult with your ACC early.

A map showing the location of ACCs and their contact details can be found at www.acc.gov.au or by phoning 1800 026 222 and asking for your nearest ACC location.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government plays a key role in the Australian community as democratically elected community representatives.

You should consult with your local government early in the project and application development phase where your project will require:

- formal statutory approval from the relevant local government to meet planning and other regulatory requirements; and/or
- ongoing maintenance at the end of the funding period.

Project support from the local government is a good demonstration of broad community support. Evidence of the local government's support should be included in your application.

Details about local government can be found at www.alga.asn.au/links/associations.php or by phoning 1800 026 222.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

To ensure the most effective use of Regional Partnerships funds, priority will be given to those projects that demonstrate value for money by achieving their outcomes through the most efficient and effective means, securing appropriate funding from other sources and/or have exhausted other funding options.

Value for money will be determined taking into account the total request for Regional Partnerships funding and meeting the following assessment criteria:

a) Outcomes

Outcomes are your project's achievements or the benefits to your community as a result of your project. Performance information is how you plan to measure the success of your project's outcomes.

Demonstrating your project's outcomes and how you will measure these outcomes assists the Department in identifying if your project is consistent with the priorities of the Australian Government, Regional Partnerships and your community. Performance information will also be included in the Funding Agreement and used for project evaluation if your application is successful.

*Local
Government*

*Assessment
Criteria*

A successful project would demonstrate that it:

- provides benefits for the community by:
 - meeting a demonstrated need or community demand for the project's outcomes;
 - filling a market gap; or
 - adding value to existing resources, products or business.
- creates or enhances opportunities in the community by:
 - establishing new, diversified or expanded business in response to demonstrated markets;
 - creating new economic/employment opportunities, including job creation;
 - providing infrastructure that enhances economic/social opportunities;
 - enhancing interaction in the community that will lead to an improvement to the community as a whole;
 - delivering diversification of skills and/or demographics in a location; or
 - increasing the uptake of innovation, best practice or new technologies.

b) Partnerships and Support

Establishing community support is critical to the long term success and ownership of your project.

Partnerships are a strong demonstration of support. Partnerships are established where individuals, private sector businesses, community/not-for-profit organisations, other organisations and any local, state and/or Australian Government agencies make a financial and/or in-kind contribution to your project.

- The project would demonstrate that it is a partnership if:
 - the applicant is working, where appropriate, with the community, the private sector and other departments across all levels of government; and
 - funding options from these sources have been identified.
- The project would be considered to have demonstrated community support where it has:
 - contributions from a broad cross-section of the community. These contributions may take the form of cash, inkind* such as volunteer

support for the project, letters of support and evidence of endorsement through consultation;

- cash contributions from relevant industry and stakeholders. In the case of business investment projects, the financial contribution should be new investment;
- evidence of support from local government(s).

*ACCs can assist with determining the value of this.

c) *Project and Applicant Viability*

The viability of the project and applicant can be established by demonstrating:

- **that where funding will produce a plan or study, it will:**
 - **demonstrate clear paths to the next stage of development and to sustainable outcomes in the local community, and**
 - **ideally include a commitment, such as funding, for implementation.**
- the ability, or access to expertise, to manage the project both during and after funding; and
- it is sustainable by:
 - the project's outcomes being sustainable beyond the funding period;
 - remaining sustainable and viable beyond the funding period, where the project is ongoing;
 - providing an ongoing measurable benefit to the community or region;
 - contributing to the sustainability of the community; and
 - delivering through smarter use of existing natural resources.

All applications will need to comply with DOTARS' probity and viability requirements. The Department may arrange for an independent financial viability assessment of both the applicant and project.

Additional information will need to be provided to support the application if it is:

- from a private sector and/or for-profit entity;
- seeking more than \$250,000 from Regional Partnerships; and/or
- for a project that will operate in a commercial environment.

The additional information may include (where appropriate):

- financial statements;
- details of ownership and management structure;
- business plan for the project; and
- other information relevant to the application, as requested by the Department.

WHO CAN APPLY FOR FUNDING FROM REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS?

Eligibility

With the exception of the entities listed in *Entities not eligible to apply for Regional Partnerships funding* below, entities registered under State or Commonwealth legislation eg *Corporations Act 2001*, can apply for Regional Partnerships funding. This includes:

- Non-profit organisations;
- Local Government;
- Community Councils (Indigenous Councils);
- Co-operatives;
- Associations;
- Registered Charities;
- Private sector organisations (ie. for-profit entities).

If your organisation is not registered under State or Commonwealth legislation you will need a sponsor. A sponsor is a registered organisation that will administer the funding agreement on your behalf, if your application is successful.

All entities must have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or an Australian Company Number (ACN) to apply for Regional Partnerships funding.

WHO IS NOT ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FUNDING:

Who is not eligible for Regional Partnerships funding?

- Area Consultative Committees;
- Australian and state government departments;
- individuals;
- private enterprise and co-operatives, that are considered commercial enterprises, requesting funding for planning, studies or research; or
- third parties seeking funds on behalf of others.

The Commonwealth cannot enter into a Funding Agreement with entities that do not comply with state or federal law, such as *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*, regardless of the relevance of the non-compliance to the project.

Regional Partnerships is a discretionary programme. The funding of projects, through Regional Partnerships, is at the discretion of the Federal Minister for Transport and Regional Services or the Federal Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government, therefore meeting the assessment criteria does not guarantee funding.

FUNDING LIMITS

Applications will be subject to substantially higher levels of scrutiny where it is:

- from a private sector and/or for-profit entity;
- seeking more than \$250,000 from Regional Partnerships; and/or
- for projects that will operate in a commercial environment.

WHAT PROJECTS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING?

- Where the project competes directly with existing businesses, unless it can be demonstrated that there is an unsatisfied demand for the product or service, or the product or service is to be provided in a new way.
- Applications seeking funds that are, or could be perceived as cost shifting, that is substituting or duplicating funding from other sources including government and the private sector.
- Project proposals that can not obtain or have not yet obtained the relevant approvals or licences to progress will not generally be considered.
- Project proposals that are requesting funding for:
 - costs that are not directly and specifically related to the project eg: ongoing staff wages, rent, overheads and administrative costs of the existing operations;
 - overseas travel;
 - relocation costs;
 - retrospective costs;
 - one off conferences, seminars, competitions, expos or festivals that do not have a clear path to sustainable economic or social benefits for the community;
 - access to services where the project duplicates a service or activity already available or accessible within the community or region;
 - seed funding for the development of prospectuses;
 - generic economic and community development workers; or
 - the development of further funding submissions or funding agreement applications.

Retrospective Costs

The Australian Government cannot fund retrospective costs in relation to a project.

Funding Limits

What projects are not eligible for Regional Partnerships funding?

The Department of Transport and Regional Services defines retrospective funding as **funding to meet any expenditure, or commitment to expenditure, incurred prior to the Funding Agreement being signed by both parties.**

Please note that no commitment to funding your application can be assumed. Regional Partnerships is a discretionary programme and meeting the assessment criteria does not guarantee funding.

The Department's advice is that you should not commit to any expenditure on a project prior to the Funding Agreement being signed by both parties. Where there are time-critical issues relating to a project (particularly in a commercial sense), you should advise your ACC or Regional Office as soon as possible.

ADMINISTRATION

GST AND ABN/ACN

You are required to provide a your Australian Business Number (ABN)/Australian Company Number (ACN) in the application. For further information about obtaining an ABN/ACN please contact the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) on 132 478.

If you do not provide an ABN/ACN, a portion of any payments may be withheld at the top marginal tax rate and remitted to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) on your behalf.

GST registration is also preferable. Successful applicants may need to consider registering for GST depending on the amount of funding received. All applicants are advised to seek their own advice from a qualified professional on the taxation implications of funding from Regional Partnerships.

Funding to non-GST registered organisations will be provided on a GST-inclusive basis. The ATO can also assist you with queries about GST registration.

ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

Successful applicants (or sponsoring organisations, where applicable) will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement with the Commonwealth. This will include:

- a negotiated schedule of payments linked to agreed milestones, outcomes and timeframes;
- professional indemnity and public liability insurance requirements; and
- other reporting requirements as determined by DOTARS.

WHAT ARE THE BUDGETING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS?

You will need to provide a detailed budget in accordance with the application

*GST and
ABN/ACN*

*Accountability
requirements*

*Reporting on a
successful
application*

form. Your ACC can assist you with the development of the budget.

This budget, once finalised, will form part of the Funding Agreement. The approved budget may be different from the proposed budget in the application form. It is important that you provide a well-detailed budget in the application form, as this will be the basis for determining the final approved budget.

Successful applicants will receive funding for the agreed period of the project, subject to satisfactory compliance with the terms of the Funding Agreement. This will include achieving any agreed milestones and outcomes detailed in the application form, and providing reports as specified in the Funding Agreement. Key reports are:

- a satisfactory independent audit of accounts in accordance with the Australian Government's requirements;
- an acquittal of expenditure against the approved budget for the project; and
- evidence of satisfactory performance and achievement of milestones.

The Department may arrange for an evaluation of your project. The milestones, outcomes and performance information detailed in the funding agreement will form a basis for the evaluation.

HOW DO I MAKE AN APPLICATION?

All applications are to be lodged with the Department. Electronic lodgement is preferred and can speed up the application process.

Make your application online at www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au or by obtaining an application form from:

- your local ACC at www.acc.gov.au; or
- the Australian Government Regional Information Service (AGRIS) on freecall 1800 026 222.

To assist organisations seeking funding of \$25,000 or less (GST exclusive), there is now a simplified application form.

E-mail your application to regionalpartnerships@dotars.gov.au. Or post the application to your local DOTARS Regional Office. You can get the address from www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au or freecall 1800 026 222.

Applications to Regional Partnerships can be submitted at any time. There are no closing dates or rounds for the lodgement of applications.

If your application for funding is not approved or the Minister approves a lower amount than requested, you may be able to request to have the decision reviewed.

How to make an application

Obtaining further information

If you have any questions about the Guidelines or the application form, please visit:

- the Regional Partnerships website at www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au;
- your local ACC; or
- call the Australian Government Regional Information Service (AGRIS) on freecall 1800 026 222.

Regional Partnerships