



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture
and Water Resources**



Rural Research and Development (R&D) for Profit

Grant programme guidelines

For more information

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Rural R&D for Profit

1. Programme overview

Rural R&D for Profit (the programme) is a \$200 million competitive grants programme providing grants to rural research and development corporations (RDCs) for collaborative research which enhances farm-gate profitability and supports the continued innovation of Australia's primary industries. The programme began in 2014-2015 as a four year programme due to finish in 2017-18 with funding of \$100 million. As part of the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper the Government committed to extend the programme to a total of eight years and increase funding with a further \$100 million bringing the total programme value to \$200 million. The programme will conclude on 30 June 2022.

The programme funds research which focuses on delivering cutting edge technologies and making research accessible for primary producers, while better leveraging coordination and cooperation between stakeholders.

Australia's primary industries have a strong tradition of innovation and adapting to change. Today, our agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors face a number of national and global challenges including rising input costs, growing world food demand, the threat of pests and diseases and climate variability. Recent studies also suggest the growth rate of productivity in Australian agriculture has slowed. The Australian Government is responding to this with additional investment in nationally coordinated, strategic research that delivers real outcomes for primary producers.

Evidence shows that research and development (R&D) makes a significant contribution to growth in agricultural productivity. Since the 1930s, the Australian Government and industry have jointly invested in research for the benefit of industry and the community, most recently through the RDCs. The government also works with the state and territory governments, universities and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) through the National Primary Industries Research Development and Extension (RD&E) Framework to encourage greater collaboration and coordination in the investment of RD&E resources nationally. The government currently provides funding of approximately \$250 million per year to the RDCs to match the funding provided through industry R&D levies.

The programme is administered by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (the department). Under the programme, grants are available to the RDCs, as established national R&D funding bodies, to provide national industry benefits as well as benefits to the wider community. The Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Regulations 1997 provide legislative authority for expenditure under this programme.

For the purposes of the programme, 'primary producers' and 'primary industries' refer respectively to producers and industries in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors.

2. Objective of the programme

The objective of the programme is to realise significant productivity and profitability improvements for primary producers, through:

- a) generating knowledge, technologies, products or processes that benefit primary producers;

- b) strengthening pathways to extend the results of rural R&D, including understanding the barriers to adoption; and
- c) establishing and fostering industry and research collaborations that form the basis for ongoing innovation and growth of Australian agriculture.

3. Programme evaluation

The department will monitor the administration of the grant rounds and projects as part of its usual grants management process and implement improvements and efficiencies as identified.

An evaluation of the programme will be undertaken in the fourth year of the programme and will examine whether the programme is meeting its stated objectives and consider if the programme guidelines and objectives need refinement. A further evaluation will be undertaken in the eighth (and final) year of the programme to measure performance against outcomes and objectives and assess whether, and how, the activities funded under the programme had a positive impact on primary producers.

The programme evaluation is also designed to help identify research gaps and frame future investment. This will be supported by successful applicants meeting all requirements of their grant agreement, particularly reporting and providing project information. This will assist the department in its evaluation of the programme and each project's role in meeting the programme objective.

Successful applicants may be required to provide information to assist in the programme evaluation.

4. How the grant programme will operate

The programme is a \$200 million competitive grants programme that commenced with Round 1 in 2014-15. Funding awarded under round 1 was approximately \$26.7 million. The balance of funding is available over the financial years 2015-16 to 2021-22. The opening and closing dates for each round and other key dates will be publicised on the [department's website](#).

This is a co-investment programme—the applicant and/or partner organisation(s) must provide cash co-investment contributions to each project. In-kind contributions will also be accepted. The requested Commonwealth grant should not exceed 50 per cent of the total project cost. Where in-kind contributions are used, they must be specified, justified and reasonable within the context of the proposed project.

Projects may run over multiple years, and the department may release guidance on Commonwealth preferences for project funding profiles for each round on the department's website.

Projects will generally not be funded for longer than five years. Any applications that request grant funding for more than five years should explain the reasons why a longer-term project is needed, articulate expected interim results and benefits for producers (within the first five years of the project) and include stop/go points within the project's planned activities.

Where research gaps have been identified and/or priorities have not been met after running an application process for a round, the Minister for Agriculture may consider other forms of financial arrangements such as commissioned projects or targeted processes to further the

objective of the programme. It is expected that, in these cases, the assessment criteria and processes outlined in these guidelines will remain applicable.

See Section 12 of these guidelines for information about how applications are assessed.

5. The programme priorities

Through the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, the government has developed a set of clear, farmer-oriented priorities to target rural RD&E funding.

Applications must address one or more of the following programme priorities:

1. ***advanced technology***, to enhance innovation of products, processes and practices across the food and fibre supply chains through technologies such as robotics, digitisation, big data, genetics and precision agriculture

For example, RD&E relating to sensors, GPS technology, drones, data utilisation, software tools, autonomous systems, or developing new or improved products.

By applying advanced technology, including technologies from other industries, the project should help primary producers increase yields, reduce costs, manage risks, benchmark performance and/or exploit opportunities in the supply chain or markets to increase returns.

2. ***biosecurity***, to improve understanding and evidence of pest and disease pathways to help direct biosecurity resources to their best uses, minimising biosecurity threats and improving market access for primary producers.

For example, RD&E relating to surveillance systems, diagnostics, pre- and post-harvest controls, disinfestation treatments, data management and interpretation or sterile insect technology.

By improving biosecurity measures the project should help primary producers reduce costs, increase productivity and competitiveness, protect and industries, manage risks or gain, maintain or regain market access.

3. ***soil, water and managing natural resources*** to manage soil health, improve water use efficiency and certainty of supply, sustainably develop new production areas and improve resilience to climate events and impacts.

For example, RD&E relating to integrated management practices at a farm or regional level, nutrient use efficiency, managing soil and water efficiency and constraints, managing soil carbon, or weed and/or pest animal management.

The project should help producers improve soil, water and natural resource management practices for productivity, long-term use and profit, and improved environmental outcomes.

4. ***adoption of R&D***, focusing on flexible delivery of extension services that meet primary producers' needs and recognising the growing role of private service delivery.

For example, RD&E relating to extension delivery options and infrastructure, reducing barriers to adoption, improving private sector extension services or innovative means for co-ordinated delivery of extension services.

The project should facilitate producer adoption of new technological innovations and research and development outcomes to increase productivity growth and profitability. This priority is not intended to replace state or privately provided extension services.

Adoption of research outputs is key to the success of the programme. The applicants must consider how primary producers will use the outcomes and must build pathways to adoption or benefit into projects.

6. Key programme dates

For each round of the programme, key dates will be published on the department’s website. The key dates will indicate when:

- the programme guidelines will be released
- applications will open
- applications will close
- the assessment period is expected to begin and end
- the outcome of the round is expected to be announced
- projects are expected to begin.

Project milestone and final payment dates will be defined in grant agreements with successful applicants.

The key dates for round two of the programme are:

Milestone	Anticipated Dates
Applications Open (Round 2) and guidelines released	September 2015
Applications Close	1 December 2015 (5:00 PM AEDT)
Assessment period	December 2015 – February 2016
Announcement of successful projects	April 2016
Grant agreements signed and commencement of successful projects	May-June 2016

7. Eligibility

7.1 Who is eligible to apply for funding?

Only the 15 rural RDCs are eligible to apply for funding under the programme. The RDCs are:

- Australian Egg Corporation Limited
- Australian Grape and Wine Authority
- Australian Livestock Export Corporation Limited
- Australian Meat Processor Corporation Limited
- Australian Pork Limited
- Australian Wool Innovation Limited
- Cotton Research and Development Corporation
- Dairy Australia Limited
- Fisheries Research and Development Corporation
- Forest and Wood Products Australia Limited
- Grains Research and Development Corporation
- Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited
- Meat and Livestock Australia Limited
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
- Sugar Research Australia Limited

RDCs must partner with one or more researchers, research agencies, RDCs, funding bodies, businesses, producer groups or not-for-profit organisations. Partners may be international organisations, however grant funding must expect to achieve demonstrable benefits for Australian primary industries.

Where two or more RDCs seek a grant as a consortium, one RDC member of the consortium must be appointed as the applicant. The applicant will submit the application and be the legal entity that, if successful, enters into a grant agreement with the department.

The applicant must have the agreement of the other project partner(s) to submit the application, including agreement to partners' roles and responsibilities and any confirmed cash and/or in-kind contributions committed to the project. Project partners will be treated as subcontractors for the purposes of the grant agreement.

7.2 Eligible applications

To be eligible, a project application must meet each of the requirements below.

1. Programme priorities: the application and the research and development to be undertaken in the project must address one or more of the programme priorities.
2. Partnership: the applicant must partner with one or more researchers, research agencies, RDCs, funding bodies, businesses, producer groups or not-for-profit organisations.

3. Co-investment: the applicant and partner organisations must contribute to the project as follows:
 - a. The requested Commonwealth grant should not exceed 50 per cent of the total project cost.
 - b. The applicant and partners must contribute cash equal to at least half the amount of the Commonwealth grant.
 - c. In-kind contributions will be accepted subject to compliance with eligibility criteria 3.a and 3.b above. In-kind costs must be specified and justified within the context of the project.
 - d. The applicant must have written confirmation of each project partner/s contribution to the project.
4. Pathways to adoption: the application must outline pathways to adoption or benefit by primary producers of the outcomes of the project.

7.3 Ineligible applications

The following projects will not be funded under the programme:

- Projects that duplicate or replicate activities for which the applicant or a project partner is already receiving, or has previously received, funding from the Commonwealth or from another source (e.g. a state or local government or private sector programme).
- Projects that deliver extension services that are not directly related to research or development undertaken as part of this programme.

7.4 Eligible costs

Only costs that are directly incurred in carrying out or administering the project are eligible for funding. These include (but are not limited to):

- Costs of laboratory and/or field analyses, including non-capital equipment and costs of running equipment.
- Data analysis.
- Field work costs.
- Travel where it is directly related to carrying out the project.
- Development of communications material as required to make project information available.

7.5 Ineligible costs

Costs incurred that are not directly related to carrying out or administering the project are ineligible for funding. These include (but are not limited to):

- Preparation of application materials.
- Protecting or patenting intellectual property.
- Activities of a distinctly commercial or proprietary nature that are aimed at selling or attracting investment.

- Developing, building or producing commercial prototypes to commercialise a research project outcome.
- Creation of new institutions.
- Establishing new commercial ventures.
- Core business expenses not directly related to carrying out the project, including administrative, overhead and infrastructure costs, staff salaries and relocation costs, living allowances, and travel.
- Financial support for feasibility studies.
- Hospitality or catering beyond costs for providing refreshments at project workshops or field days.
- Purchasing of infrastructure, major equipment or activities that could be considered part of normal business or ongoing operations, unless integral to delivery of the project.

8. How to apply

An application form can be obtained by contacting the department via email at RuralR&D@agriculture.gov.au or by phone on 02 6272 5603.

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions on the application form. Applications must be received by the department by the deadline for the funding round published on the department's website.

The department may post Frequently Asked Questions on the application process on the [department's website](#).

8.1 Application checklist

Ensure that you have:

- read and understood the programme guidelines. If you have questions, please read the Frequently Asked Questions provided on the [department's website](#), or contact the department by email or phone.
- met the eligibility criteria including obtaining partners and addressing one or more of the funding priorities published by the department for the funding round.
- provided correct budget details, otherwise assessment of the application will be more difficult.
- used a current application form.
- had an authorised person sign the form.
- submitted the application form by the deadline published on the department's website.

8.2 Late applications

Applications that do not meet the published closing date may not be accepted. The department may consider the submission of late applications under extenuating circumstances provided an alternative timeframe has been agreed prior to the closing date or the delay is a result of an issue with the department's information and communication

technology systems. Requests for an extension of time to lodge an application must be made in writing to the programme manager by email to RuralR&D@agriculture.gov.au. Any decision by the department to accept or not accept a late application will be final.

8.3 Corrections

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure their application is complete and correct. The department will not accept responsibility for any misunderstanding arising from the failure by an applicant to comply with the guidelines, or arising from any discrepancies, ambiguities, inconsistencies or errors in an application.

If an applicant discovers any material discrepancy, ambiguity, inconsistency or errors in their application, they must immediately bring it to the attention of the department by emailing the programme manager at RuralR&D@agriculture.gov.au. The department may request clarification information from an applicant and allow them to remedy any discrepancy, ambiguity, inconsistency or errors in an application. The department may consider information submitted by an applicant after the closing date for the purpose of resolving any material discrepancy, ambiguity, inconsistency or errors in an application provided that no new information has been added, which has not been referred to in the original application. The department's decision will be final and will be made at its absolute discretion.

8.4 Receipt of applications

All applications will be registered and acknowledged by email.

9. False and misleading information

Applicants should be aware that the intentional giving of false or misleading information is an offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)*.

10. Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises where a person makes a decision or exercises a power in a way that may be, or may be perceived to be, influenced by either material personal interest (financial or non-financial) or material personal associations.

Applicants are required to advise whether any actual or potential or perceived conflicts of interest exist in relation to their application.

If a conflict of interests arises, or appears likely to arise, the applicant must:

- make full disclosure of all relevant information relating to the conflict in their application; or
- bring it to the attention of the department in writing if the conflict arises after the application has been received; and
- outline the steps the applicant intends to take to resolve or otherwise deal with the conflict.

The department reserves the right to reject an application if it is not satisfied that there are arrangements in place to appropriately address or manage a perceived or actual conflict of interest.

A register of notified conflicts of interest will be maintained by the department throughout the application and assessment process. The register will include applicant's conflicts of interest as well as those of the expert assessment panel and departmental officers.

All persons involved in the assessment of applications will be required to:

- sign and update as needed conflict of interest declarations which will ensure the appropriate identification and management of any conflicts of interest, and
- comply with the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct.

The department will manage identified conflicts of interest in accordance with the programme's conflict of interest management plan.

11. Assessment criteria

Assessment criteria will be used to determine a project's relative ranking and suitability for funding and relevance to achieving the programme objective. Applications that meet the assessment criteria to a high level are more likely to be funded.

The assessment criteria for determining merit based scores are outlined below. All five assessment criteria (a to e below) are equally weighted and will be scored on merit.

a) Contribution to programme objective

Assessors may consider:

- Alignment with the Rural R&D for Profit programme objective.
- How the project will deliver clear and measurable achievements against the selected priority or priorities.
- Plan for extending, communicating and sharing project outcomes, and the likelihood of adoption.

b) Scientific or technical basis

Assessors may consider:

- Demonstrated need for the project including understanding of published literature relating to the proposed research and any assumptions and the strengths and weaknesses of previous work.
- Extent the proposed research and/or development is new and innovative; takes into account existing research and/or development; addresses a research gap associated with the identified research need.
- How well the application demonstrates that the project team is appropriate to undertake the work.

c) Benefits and collaborations

Assessors may consider whether projects:

- Have potential benefits for more than one primary industry.
- Form new research and/or extension collaborations for ongoing innovation and growth of Australian agriculture.

- Demonstrate quantifiable expected returns on investment for producers.
- Would not otherwise be undertaken. For example, due to the project having a large scale, broad scope and/or requiring cross-sectoral collaboration.

d) Risk management

Assessors may consider:

- How the applicant will deliver project outputs on time and within budget.
- Governance arrangements for the project, including the applicant's capacity for reporting and project management and the way in which partnerships will operate, both administratively and practically.
- Detailed risk identification and mitigation planning, and data management strategies.
- The risk and value for money on the basis of responses to all other assessment criteria.
- Demonstration of industry support for the project.

e) Budget and costs

Assessors may consider:

- Whether budget items are eligible, reasonable and relevant to the project activities, recognising the project and a sense of its scale.
- Whether total budget is comparable with the outputs of the overall project, taking into account the expected public benefit to be derived from the project.
- The value and composition of the cash co-investment and/or in-kind contribution of applicants and project partners, over the life of the project.

12. How applications are assessed

Successful projects will be selected through a competitive merit-based process and approved by the Minister based on the recommendations of the department, informed by an expert assessment panel (the panel).

The department will appoint a panel of up to eight members to provide industry, technical and scientific expertise in the assessment of applications. Panel members will have relevant experience in science, research and development programmes, innovation and rural industries. The department will provide secretariat support to the panel.

Applications will be examined initially by departmental officers to ensure that the application meets eligibility requirements as outlined in these guidelines. All eligible applications will be provided to the panel. Only eligible applications will be assessed by the panel.

Eligible applications will be assessed individually by assigned panel members against the Assessment Criteria.

Following individual assessment and scoring by panel members, the panel will then meet to determine a final score and rank for overall merit against all other eligible applications received. Ranking of eligible applications will be in order of merit.

The panel will make recommendations to the department on eligible applications which:

- could be funded without change

- could be funded subject to certain conditions being met
- should not be pursued further.

In cases where an application is recommended for grant funding, and the grant is approved, the department will negotiate with the applicant based on the conditions of funding approval. A grant may not be awarded where the applicant is unable or unwilling to meet the conditions of the recommendation.

The Minister will make the final decisions on which applications are successful and approved for funding. All decisions made by the Minister about applications are final and there is no right of appeal. Feedback will be provided to those applicants or project partners who request it.

13. Notification of funding decisions

The department reserves the right to negotiate with applicants on any aspect of the grant prior to the execution of the grant agreement, including supporting fewer projects/activities, offering less funding than the amount for which applicants applied, or seeking further outputs.

Successful applicants will receive a letter of offer outlining the approved grant amount and any conditions of the approval. The letter of offer does not constitute a grant agreement and successful applicants must not begin a project until a grant agreement has been negotiated and executed between the department and the successful applicant.

Where an application is unsuccessful, applicants will be notified in writing by the department. See Section 20 for information about lodging a complaint.

Feedback on unsuccessful applications will be available on request by contacting the programme manager at RuralR&D@agriculture.gov.au.

14. Funding conditions

Successful applicants will be required to sign a grant agreement with the Commonwealth. For projects considered low risk, the agreement template is the Whole of Government Low Risk Funding Deed. A template of the Whole of Government Low Risk Funding Deed can be viewed at agriculture.gov.au/rd4profit. A hard copy of the agreement can be made available by contacting the department via email to RuralR&D@agriculture.gov.au or by phone 02 6272 5603.

The grant agreement template contains the terms and conditions of the grant. Applicants should read the draft grant agreement before submitting their application and should seek independent legal advice before entering into a grant agreement. No legally binding relationship exists until a grant agreement is signed by both parties.

The agreement will outline the work to be delivered in the project and the reporting requirements.

Successful applicants may not include expenditure of funds received from the Commonwealth under this programme as expenditure for which they claim matching funding from the Commonwealth.

If a successful applicant fails to comply with any requirements in the agreement, the applicant may be required to repay some or all of the grant money received.

For projects longer than five years in duration, the agreement will include requirements for the delivery of interim results at stop/go points to determine if the project should proceed beyond those points.

15. Management of funding deeds and evaluation

The department will manage funding deeds and department delegates will make decisions about variations during the life of the agreement. Department officials and others may contact grantees during or after the grant as part of programme evaluation.

16. Privacy statement

Personal information means any information or opinion about an identified, or reasonably identifiable, individual.

Sensitive personal information means any information or opinion about an individual's racial or ethnic origin, political opinion or association, religious beliefs or affiliations, philosophical beliefs, sexual preferences or practices, trade or professional associations and memberships, union membership, criminal record, health or genetic information and biometric information or templates.

The collection of personal information by the department in relation to the application form is for the purposes of assessing eligibility of the application for the Rural R&D for Profit programme and related purposes. If the relevant personal information requested in this application is not provided, the department will be unable to assess the application's eligibility for this programme.

Personal Information provided to the department is for the purposes of administration or evaluation of the programme and assessment of an application. In providing personal information, applicants consent to the department using the information for the above mentioned purposes and other related purposes.

The department may disclose an applicant's personal information to relevant parties that may be engaged for the purposes of assessment of applications and programme evaluation or as otherwise permitted by the Act provided the disclosure is consistent with the Act.

The department's Privacy Policy, including information about access to and correction of your personal information, can be found at: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/about/accessing-information>

To contact the department about personal information or to make a complaint:

Telephone: Switchboard +61 2 6272 3933

Email: privacy@agriculture.gov.au

Post: Privacy Contact Officer, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, GPO Box 858, Canberra ACT 2601.

17. Confidential information

All applicants must identify any information contained within their applications or in any documentation that they consider should be treated as confidential and provide reasons for the request. The department reserves the right to accept or refuse a request to treat information as confidential.

Information provided to the department that has not been accepted as confidential by the department may be shared or published, as determined by the department.

Confidential information may be released as required by law or Parliamentary privilege.

18. Publication of information about successful applicants

Applicants should note that basic information for awarded grants will be published on the department's website in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines. This includes:

- name of the person or entity receiving the grant
- project title and purpose
- amount of funding received
- term of the grant
- funding location.

By submitting an application for funding under this grant programme, the applicant consents to publication of the above information by the department should they be awarded funding under this grant programme.

19. Project reporting

As a recipient of public money, all successful applicants must report on the completion and outcomes of the project undertaken with the funds received. All reporting requirements will be detailed in the grant agreement. These may include:

- Milestone reports, annual reporting, financial acquittals and audited financial statements.
- A statutory declaration declaring that funds have been expended as outlined in the project application, and in accordance with the grant agreement. This should include a statement relating to project partner cash and/or in kind receipt and expenditure.
- A final report on the project's outcomes against the programme objective, including quantitative information on outcomes achieved and independent expert analysis of expected and or demonstrated quantifiable returns on investment.

20. Complaints handling process

If an applicant is dissatisfied with the way an application has been handled by the department, they can contact the programme manager at RuralR&D@agriculture.gov.au and lodge a complaint. The department will not reconsider applications as part of the complaints process. Instead, the complaint will be considered internally within the department by a departmental officer independent from the original process, and the applicant will receive a response from the department.

If no resolution is achieved, an applicant may contact the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#). The Commonwealth Ombudsman will usually not investigate a complaint unless the matter has first been raised with the department and the department has been provided with a reasonable opportunity to respond.

21. Additional Information

Receipt of a grant from this programme may result in an applicant's business or institution being ineligible for support from other government programmes. Applicants are advised that a grant may have taxation implications and that they should seek independent taxation and financial advice from a suitably qualified professional before submitting their application. GST is payable on grants and the grant agreement will include GST where applicable. Applicants should seek advice on the legal implications of their acceptance of a grant.

22. Contact us

Telephone: 02 6272 5603
Email: RuralR&D@agriculture.gov.au
Website: agriculture.gov.au/rd4profit
Postal address: Rural R&D for Profit
Innovation Section
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601