



Package assisting small exporters

PASE project grants – Round 2 programme guidelines



Application Opening date:	Friday, 24 February 2017
Application Closing date and time:	5:00pm (AEDT) on Monday 27 March 2017
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, please contact The Package Assisting Small Exporters team at exportrebate@agriculture.gov.au or on 1800 900 090 .
	Questions should be sent no later than 24 March 2017
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1 Programme background

In the 2014-15 budget, the government committed \$15 million over four years to support small exporters. This election commitment included three components:

- 1) Rebates offered to small exporters for export certification registration costs in 2014-15 only;
- 2) Review of export fees and charges, through government-industry consultative committees in 2014-15; and
- 3) The balance of funding would be used for projects that would directly benefit small exporters – PASE grants.

Government-industry consultative committees were asked to propose projects to the Minister that the sector believes would directly benefit small exporters, particularly projects that would improve their market access.

This funding became available upon completion of the fees and charges review and distributed in rounds.

The policy is known as the Package Assisting Small Exporters (PASE) grants. This document sets out the programme guidelines for the third component of the PASE programme – the projects to benefit small exporters.

The scope of the PASE grants is for exports of dairy, egg / fish, grain and plant, horticulture, and meat products, as defined in the Export Control Act 1982 and its subordinate legislation.

The PASE grants had approximately \$10 million available for distribution.

Grants are available over three financial years; from 2015–16 to 2017–18.

Round 1 projects utilised over \$8.5 million, inclusive of project administration costs.

2 Programme objectives

The primary objective of the final component of the PASE programme is to:

- improve market access for small exporters of dairy, egg / fish, grain and plant products, horticulture and meat products.

3 Programme evaluation

An evaluation of the programme will be undertaken in the final year of programme activity, 2018.

It will examine whether the programme has met its stated objectives and whether the activities funded under the programme had a positive impact on small exporters. It will also go further to examine how the funding resulted in positive impacts.

Successful applicants will be required to provide information to assist in the programme evaluation, such as benefits realised / to be realised from the project, financial records and milestone tracking.

4 Programme operation

The projects component of PASE has approximately \$10 million available. To date, 41 projects have been approved for funding, totalling approximately \$8.5 million.

Approximately \$2 million is available to meet the program objectives. This funding will be distributed through Round 2 and, if any issues emerge or other priorities arise, the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources may use his discretion to consider other projects accordingly. It is expected that, in these cases, the assessment criteria outlined in these guidelines will remain applicable.

Grants were initially available over three financial years from 2015–16 to 2017–18. Project funding is now available from 2016-17 to 2017-18.

Funding under Round 2 will be available across all industries in scope.

Delivery of funding will be primarily on a competitive basis.

Other forms of financial arrangements with partners and/or applicants may also result as a consequence of arising issues or changing priorities in order to deliver the objectives of the PASE programme.

Round 1 projects must be delivered between 2015-16 and 2017-18.

Round 2 projects must be delivered between 2016-17 and 2017-18.

All projects must finish by 30 June 2018.

Payment for projects may be split across the relevant financial years.

5 Key programme dates

The funding for projects has been available from 1 July 2015, pending the completion of the second component of PASE – Fees and charges review.

Applications for Round 1 closed at 5pm on 30 April 2015. Applicants were advised of the outcome of their application in mid-2015.

Round 2 applications must be received by 5:00pm on 27 March 2017.

It is anticipated that Round 2 applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application by May/June 2017. If delays occur, applicants will be advised accordingly.

6 Who is eligible to apply

The following can apply for a grant:

- organisations that are legal entities with an Australian Business Number (ABN) capable of entering into a legally binding and enforceable deed with the Commonwealth. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to:
 - a company incorporated under the Corporation Act 2001 (Cth)
 - an incorporated association incorporated under the various State and Territory association incorporation legislation
 - an indigenous corporation incorporated under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (Cth)
 - Australian State or Territory departments and agencies
 - a body corporate created under State or Territory legislation including a local government and a university
 - a legally constituted partnership.
- individuals are also eligible to apply for grant funding.

For each project, the department will only enter into a single grant agreement with a single legal entity.

The department will not execute grant agreements with trusts – only trustees are eligible to execute grant agreements.

If a partnership intends to execute a grant agreement, the executing partner must have authorisation from all other partners to execute the grant agreement.

The following projects will not be eligible for funding 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).

7 What qualifies for funding

Activities that qualify for funding include activities that:

- address the programme objectives, and
- are relevant to one or more of the commodity sectors (dairy, eggs / fish, grain and plant products, horticulture, meat).

Only costs that are directly incurred in carrying out the project are eligible for funding.

8 What does NOT qualify for funding

Costs incurred that are not directly related to carrying out 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, international travel, travel and living allowances.
- financial support for feasibility studies.
- hospitality or catering beyond reasonable 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.

9 How to apply

An application can be completed via:

<https://forms.business.gov.au/smartforms/servlet/SmartForm.html?formCode=PRD00-DAWRAPP&FRID=4-48M9459&RegID=4-48OC2PI>

Applications and supporting documentation must be received by the department by 5:00pm (AEST) on 27 March 2017.

Applications that do not meet the advertised closing date will not be accepted.

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 Conflict of Interest Management Plan has been developed for this programme, and any conflicts will be managed in accordance with this plan.

This includes a register of notified conflicts of interest being maintained by the department throughout the application process.

The register will include applicant's conflicts of interest as well as those of the selection panel and department officers.

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

- sign and keep up to date 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.

11 False and misleading information

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

12 Confidential Information

All applicants must identify any information contained within their applications or supporting 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.

13 Freedom of Information

All documents in the possession of the department, including those in relation to PASE programme applications and projects, are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act).

The FOI Act creates a general right of access to documents in the possession of the department.

Unless a document falls under an exemption provision, it will be made available to the public if requested under the FOI Act.

For more information about the FOI process, or to make a FOI request, please review the information at the following link: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/about/accessing-information/foi>.

14 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 this application form is for the purposes of assessing eligibility of your application for PASE and related purposes. If the relevant personal information requested in this application is not provided by you, the department will be unable to assess your 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, such as Industry Consultative Committee (ICC) members for the purposes of assessment of applications or as otherwise permitted by the Privacy Act provided the disclosure is consistent with the Privacy Act.

The department's Privacy Policy, including information about access and correction of your personal information, can be found on the department's website.

Applicants may contact the department about their personal information or to make a complaint using the following contact details:

Telephone: Switchboard 02 6272 3933

Email: privacy@agriculture.gov.au

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

15 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 coordinator via exportrebate@agriculture.gov.au.

The department may request clarification of 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.

16 Selection of suitable applications

Department officers will undertake an initial assessment of applications to determine whether applicants meet all eligibility requirements as described in these guidelines.

Industry Consultative Committees (ICCs) have been tasked by the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources with making recommendations on suitable projects.

A panel has been established for the export commodities identified for the PASE grants (dairy, eggs / fish, grain and plant products, horticulture and meat).

The panel will include a member from each sector's ICC, and an officer from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

The department will then make recommendations to the Minister for approval.

17 Application assessment and criteria

Suitable projects will be selected through a competitive merit-based process.

Applications will be examined initially by departmental officers to ensure that the application meets eligibility requirements as outlined in Package Assisting Small Exporters – PASE grants - Round 2 programme guidelines. The department will allocate each application to the Assessment Panel for their assessment.

Each eligible application will be scored and ranked against all other applications received.

Applications that meet the assessment criteria to a high level are more likely to be funded.

Each criterion is weighted. The weighted scores for all criteria will be added together and a total score used to determine the applicant's ranking against the criteria.

The criteria are weighted as follows: criterion A (60 per cent); criterion B (20 per cent) and criterion C (20 per cent).

If necessary to differentiate between applications, assessors will give preference to projects that have potential benefits for more than one export commodity.

The assessment criteria are outlined below.

Criterion A Contribution to programme objectives (60 per cent weighting)

Assessors may consider:

- Alignment with the ‘Objectives of the programme’ described in section 2 of these guidelines.
- How the project will deliver clear and measurable achievements.
- Plan for extending, communicating and sharing project outcomes.
- Market access focus:
 - Projects should have the potential for gains in market access to be realised. These gains should be identified as either short, medium or long term gains, and ideally be quantifiable.
- Clear, measurable benefits to small exporters:
 - Projects will need to identify potential benefits to small exporters, and the core objectives of the project should relate to small exporters.
 - Potential benefits to small exporters will include those that are identifiable and measurable, such as the expected costs of the project and anticipated benefits in dollar terms.
- Broad impact and strategic vision:
 - Projects should be consistent with market access priorities (applicants should ensure they have consulted with their Peak Industry Body or the Chair of the relevant Industry Consultative Committee to align their projects with the commodity specific export strategies and market development priorities).
 - Projects will ideally have a broad impact within an industry sector – that is, the benefits of the project will ideally be realised by more than one or two companies.
 - Projects should have the potential for longer term benefits to be realised by the broader industry sector.

Criterion B Risk management (20 per cent weighting)

Assessors may consider:

- How the applicant proposes to deliver project outcomes 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. This includes, if relevant, how potential partnerships will be managed to ensure complexities that could compromise the project outcomes are not introduced, but at the same time demonstrate strong participation by all partners.
- Detailed risk mitigation strategies.
- Demonstration of industry support for the project.

Criterion C Cost benefit analysis (20 per cent weighting)

Assessors may consider:

- Expected costs of the projects in dollar terms.
- Anticipated benefits in dollar terms.
- Any other relevant non-financial benefits associated with the project.

Criterion D Additional considerations

In differentiating between applications, assessors will give preference to projects that have potential benefits for more than one of the listed export commodity groups.

The Assessment Panel will assess all applications deemed to meet the eligibility requirements.

The Assessment Panel will examine each application on its own merit against the criteria and attach a score rating.

Applications will be scored and ranked based on the scores against the selection criteria (quantitative assessment) as well as a qualitative assessment against the merit criteria.

Applications must meet a minimum score to be considered to be 'satisfactory'.

The panel will then rank the applications, drawing on additional considerations where relevant.

The Assessment Panel will discuss all applications and jointly reach a ranking order for all eligible applications.

The recommendations made by the Assessment Panel will be presented to the Export Standards Branch in the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources for submission to the Minister for decision.

The Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources will make the final decisions on which applications are approved to be offered 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.

18 Notification of funding decisions

The department reserves the right to negotiate with approved 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 outcomes.

Successful applicants will receive a letter of offer outlining the grant and the amount of funding to be allocated. 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 23 for information about lodging a complaint. Feedback on unsuccessful applications

will be available on request by contacting the programme coordinator (exportrebate@agriculture.gov.au).

19 Funding conditions

Successful applicants will be required to sign a grant agreement with the Commonwealth. A sample of the grant agreement can be viewed at <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/export/from-australia/package-assisting-small-exporters>. A hard copy of the draft grant agreement can be made available by contacting the department via email to exportrebate@agriculture.gov.au.

The draft 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 all parties.

The grant agreement will outline the work to be delivered in the project and the reporting requirements. Reporting requirements in the grant agreement will reflect the risk level of the project.

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

20 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.
- Project reports covering activities, outputs, outcomes and all necessary information required to verify results, and provide evidence of achievement.
- A statutory declaration declaring that funds have been expended as outlined in the project application, and in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in the grant agreement.
- A final report on the project's outcomes against the programme objectives, including quantitative information on outcomes achieved.
- Other evidence that documents the work undertaken and outcomes of the project, for example, photos, websites, media articles or similar.
- Evidence of receipt and use of project partner cash contributions. If cash contributions are not received and used for the project, the applicant may be required to repay some or all of the grant money received to the Commonwealth.

21 Management of funding agreements and evaluation

The department will manage funding agreements 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.

22 Complaints handling process

There will be no appeal mechanism for unsuccessful applicants, nor will applications be reviewed. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the way an application has been handled by the department, they can contact the programme coordinator via exportrebate@agriculture.gov.au and lodge a complaint.

The complaint will then be reviewed by one or more independent areas of 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.

23 Additional Information

Receipt of funding from this programme may result in an applicant's business or institution being ineligible for support from other government programmes.

Applicants are advised that funding 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.