**National Agriculture Traceability Grants Program – Building Trust in Agricultural Traceability and Credentials in Southeast Asia**

General feedback for applicants

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**Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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This general feedback is provided to assist grant applicants to understand what generally comprised a strong application and the content of quality responses to the assessment criteria for the National Agriculture Traceability Grants Program – Building Trust in Agricultural Traceability and Credentials in Southeast Asia competitive grant round.

### Overview

The grant round opened on 15 February 2024 and closed on 27 March 2024. It was an open competitive grant opportunity offering up to $4 million commencing in the 2024-25 financial year.

The grant round received 43 eligible applications with 11 applications selected for funding by the Grant Round Decision Maker.

The grant round was administered by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

This grant program provides the opportunity for successful applicants to contribute to improving traceability for Australian and regional agricultural industries and consumers. The purpose of the grant round is to strengthen trust in Australia’s commercial agricultural traceability systems and robust credentials in our region by funding activities that increase supply chain transparency, build regional capability business-to-business and support development of sustainable, resilient and data enabled supply chains. This is consistent with the objectives of the [National Agricultural Traceability Strategy 2023 to 2033](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/market-access-trade/national-traceability#toc_0) (the strategy).

There was a strong interest in the grant round and successful applications were of a very high standard. All applications were assessed according to the procedure detailed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines (GOGs) and the process outlined below.

### Selection Process

Applications were assessed through an open-competitive grant process outlined in the GOGs. DAFF assessed applications to determine if they complied with the eligibility requirements of the program, and ineligible and non-compliant applications did not progress to assessment.

All assessed applications were considered by the Selection Advisory Panel (the panel). The panel, established by DAFF was convened to review and recommend applications for funding to the Decision Maker. The panel comprised a chair and two members with expertise and knowledge relevant to the grant round.

The panel assessed applications on merit, based on:

* a score against the assessment criteria
* the overall objective(s) to be achieved in providing the grant
* whether the project provided value with relevant money
* the relative value of the grant sought
* the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrated which it would contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives of the grant program as outlined in the GOGs
* the relevant merit of an application compared to other applications with a focus on the objective(s), outcome(s) and overall value for money
* the extent to which the applicant demonstrated a commitment to the program
* how the grant activities would be applied to other commodities or agricultural industries
* the risks, financial, fraud and other, which the applicant or project posed for the department
* the risks which the applicant or project posed for the Commonwealth.

Each applicant was required to address the following selection criteria:

* Criterion 1: Project alignment to the grant program purpose, objectives and outcomes (25 points)
* Criterion 2: Suitability and effectiveness of the project to achieve its aims (25 points)
* Criterion 3: Capacity, capability, and resources to deliver your project (25 points)
* Criterion 4: Value for money (25 points)

The panel met to consider applications, and applicants recommended for grant funding were identified based on the strength of their responses to the assessment criteria and their demonstrated ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the GOGs. An independent Probity Officer was present at this meeting. The panel subsequently submitted a Selection Report, which provided recommendations of applications to be funded having regard to the grant funds available for decision by the delegated decision maker.

### Selection Results

Eleven applicants were approved for funding under the National Agriculture Traceability Grants Program – Building Trust in Agricultural Traceability and Credentials in Southeast Asia grant round.

The selected organisations provided strong responses to the selection criteria and demonstrated their ability to meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the GOGs. Further detail about what constituted a strong response to each criterion is provided below the general feedback for applicants.

### General feedback for applicants

Successful applicants demonstrated projects which addressed the grant program objectives, outcomes and selection criteria to a high degree; provided value for money; and provided evidence the project outputs could lead to future adoption across multiple agricultural sectors and commodities; and/or outcomes would likely enhance the trust in traceability and credentials between the Australian and Southeast Asian agricultural sector. Successful applicants also provided a detailed proposal, project plan, budget and risk assessment and delivered strong to good responses to all of the assessment criteria, plus provided letters of support from consortium partners and/or key stakeholders.

Careful consideration was needed to ensure that applications align with the GOGs, clearly articulating problems and solutions, demonstrating scalability, feasibility and credibility, and delivering tangible outcomes that benefit industry, including sharing knowledge and technologies across different sectors.

### Criterion 1

#### Project alignment to the grant program purpose, objectives and outcomes (25 points)

Applicants had to demonstrate this through identifying:

* the project’s overall aim(s) and why they were important, including how it would align to the strategy
* how the project was supported by evidence
* which grant program objectives and outcome(s) (see section 2.1 of the grant opportunity guidelines) the project would deliver against and how would it achieve them
* partnership(s) and collaboration in the project, for example across industry, scientific organisations; cooperative research centres; state, territory or local governments; corporate Commonwealth entities; universities; or public and private research organisations
* the long-term benefits the activity would deliver to industry and Australian agriculture and how it would strengthen enduring national and/or international collaboration and partnerships.

Table 1 Strong application examples for Criterion 1

| Strong applications | Example |
| --- | --- |
| Clearly described the project’s overall aims, identified why they were important, and how the project would align to the strategy and various frameworks. | Strong responses demonstrated how their project’s overall aim(s) would enhance trust in agricultural traceability and credentials in Southeast Asia, aligning with the strategy.   They clearly provided:   * a list of project aim(s) and identification of why they were important, including impacts on affected stakeholders, a particular commodity, or what the broader impact would be for the relationship between Australia and Southeast Asia in terms of traceability and credentials, * clear identification of how the project’s aim(s) would align with the objectives of the strategy, and * incorporated feedback from stakeholders to ensure alignment with industry needs and standards. |
| Clearly described how their project was supported by evidence. | Strong responses demonstrated an evidence base for their project. They clearly provided:   * a well-designed and well-written proposal which was built on prior research or proofs of concept, and * reasons for why their chosen method was preferred. |
| Clearly identified which grant program objectives and outcomes(s) the project would deliver against and described how it would achieve them. | Strong responses outlined a clear methodology, required resources, and identified partnerships which would be used to achieve the relevant program objectives and outcomes. They clearly provided:   * a proposal which identified relevant grant program objectives and outcomes, with strong articulation of the different aspects of the project, and clear and achievable outcomes, and * a proposal which clearly articulated activities, risks and methodology. |
| Clearly listed their identified partnerships and collaboration in their projects. | Strong responses demonstrated their proposal had support from related stakeholders, including identification of collaboration partners as well as consortium arrangements where applicable and attached letters of supports.  They clearly provided:   * information on who has been consulted as part of the development of the project, * support from relevant stakeholders including technology partners, scientific organisations or research centres, government agencies and/or across industry, and * a strong consortium arrangement and/or strong relationships with relevant stakeholders with sufficient letters of support from across industry and government. |
| Described their project’s long-term benefits to Australian agriculture. | Strong responses demonstrated how their project would contribute to enhancing the Australian agriculture through enhancing trust in traceability and credentials in the Southeast Asian and Australian Agricultural Trade Sector.  They clearly provided:   * a proposal that was an innovative yet included appropriate use of technology in agricultural traceability, * a proposal that would either enable market access or boost the availability of Australian agricultural products in Southeast Asia markets, * a proposal which had a wide application across commodities other than its targeted commodity, * evidence that the public benefit outweighed the private benefit, and * evidence that the project would strengthen sector-wide interoperability. |

### Criterion 2

#### Suitability and effectiveness of the project to achieve its aims (25 points)

When addressing this criterion, applicants also had to clearly identify:

* the activities they would undertake including where and when they would occur
* how the proposed methodology(ies) or approach(es) to undertaking the project activities would assist with achieving the project’s aim(s)
* the specific partner(s) involved in the project to support achieving project outcome(s)
* how progress towards achieving the project’s outcome(s) would be measured
* potential risks to the success of the project and how these would be managed or mitigated.

Table 2 Strong application examples for Criterion 2

| Strong applications | Example |
| --- | --- |
| Clearly described where and when project activities would be undertaken. | Strong responses clearly articulated project phases and activities.  They provided:   * information on how all proposed activities would be undertaken across the project timeframe, and * identification of risk points and allowance of slippage time. |
| Clearly described how their proposed methodology(ies) or approach(es) would assist with achieving the project’s aim(s) | Strong responses clearly outlined the project’s aim(s) and how they would achieve the desired program outcomes through the proposed methodology(ies).  They provided:   * a suitable methodology and cross-disciplinary approach, * incorporated insights from industry experts and feedback from potential end-users to ensure effectiveness and relevance, * sufficient details in their methodology(ies) to assess the feasibility of the project and identification of how it would achieve the project’s aim(s), * a clear definition and measurement of progress towards project outcomes, * an explanation of how the proposed methodologies not only align with the project’s aims but also addresses scalability challenges by outlining strategies for expanding the project’s reach over time, * feasibility concerns by presenting realistic plans for implementation, incorporating feedback from technical experts and pilot studies to ensure feasibility, * project credibility by showcasing the organisation’s track record, expertise, and support from reputable partners, thereby instilling confidence in project stakeholders, and * a well-designed project proposal which appeared achievable based on the clear method. |
| Clearly describes the current landscape to identify gaps to maximise effectiveness. | Strong responses clearly describe how their proposed project avoids duplicating existing efforts and minimising any negative impact on programs that are already funded.  They provided:   * a thorough understanding of the current landscape and identify gaps where their project can fill without redundancy, and * strategies for ensuring their project complements and enhances existing initiatives, leveraging synergies and partnerships for maximum effectiveness. |
| Demonstrated how their identified partnerships would support achieving project outcome(s). | Strong responses demonstrated appropriate industry engagement and partner support in their projects.  They provided:   * a clear description of how stakeholders would support achieving the desired project outcome(s), including letters of support from consortium partners and other stakeholders, * identification of the right partners to be involved to ensure the project approach was feasible, and * an outline of how relationships would be built beyond their direct network to ensure the project’s success. |
| Demonstrated how they would measure progress towards the project’s outcome(s). | Strong responses demonstrated a thorough understanding of how they would define and measure their progress throughout their project timeframe.  They provided:   * a breakdown of the project’s desired outcome(s), and * key milestones which were measurable and achievable and were clearly in support of the outcome(s). |
| Demonstrated how they would manage or mitigate potential risks toward project outcome(s). | Strong responses identified potential risks to the success of their projects and outlined how these would be managed or mitigated.  They clearly provided:   * a well-articulated description of the project’s potential risks, and * appropriate processes and strategies to manage and mitigate the project’s potential risks. |

### Criterion 3

#### Capacity, capability and resources to deliver your project (25 points)

In addressing this criterion, applicants had to clearly demonstrate:

* their organisation’s ability to deliver the outcomes, their track record (if any) in delivering similar projects, and access to (and availability of) personnel with the right skills and experience relevant to the project
* how they would pro-actively manage and monitor their project, including taking responsibility for oversight
* how their organisation would work with partners, and engage agricultural industry and other relevant stakeholders and end users to inform design and adoption
* how they would manage organisational risks
* how they would manage security (including national and cyber security risks), involvement of international partners and intellectual property protection where applicable.

Table 3 Strong application examples for Criterion 3

| Strong applications | Example |
| --- | --- |
| Described how the organisation would deliver the outcomes and demonstrate their track record in delivering similar projects, and their access to personnel with the right skills and experience. | Strong responses identified the organisation’s capability and experience in research and development together with its capacity to deliver outcomes.  They clearly demonstrated:   * the project could be taken from concept to implementation through their access to personnel with the right skills and experience, * experience through providing details of previous work or research of similar outcomes and budget, and * identification of relevant stakeholders who could fill any organisational gaps in knowledge or experience. |
| Demonstrated how the organisation would manage and monitor the project effectively. | Strong responses demonstrated the organisation’s capability to implement, manage and monitor a government funded project and outlined appropriate governance structures.  They provided:   * evidence of an established platform for their project’s administration and governance, * strong articulation of different aspects of the project, * how the governance structure would engage with risk, and * how the project would be governed including relevant partners or consortium partners. |
| Described how the organisation would work with partners to engage agricultural industry and other relevant stakeholders and end users throughout their project. | Strong responses demonstrated initial engagement and collaboration with identified partners and industry stakeholders.  They clearly provided:   * a thorough understanding of the relevant stakeholders and how to engage to make the project successful, * strategies for engaging industry stakeholders and partners, incorporating feedback from stakeholder to ensure buy-in and collaboration throughout the project lifecycle, and * how to facilitate the adoption of project outcomes which would meet the needs of agricultural stakeholders. |
| Demonstrated how they would effectively manage organisational risks. | Strong responses clearly identified:   * organisation risks which could affect the delivery of the project, and how future risks would be identified, and * how the organisation would manage any obstacles and organisational risks, including linking this to the timeline of delivery. |
| Demonstrated how they would effectively manage security (including national and cyber security risks). | Strong responses demonstrated their capability to identify, manage and mitigate potential security risks including national and cyber security risks.  Responses provided:   * a proposal which was well thought-out and addressed cyber security strongly, including noting the essential eight mitigation strategies from the ACSC’s Strategies to Mitigate Cyber Security Incidents, and * a built-in ability to undertake risk assessments and strategies to mitigate and respond to incidents. |

### Criterion 4

#### Value for money (25 points)

Applicants had to demonstrate this through identifying:

* how the funding requested was proportionate to the aim(s) of their project
* any co-contributions by the organisation or participatory partner(s) in the project
* any future financial or private benefit(s) (for example, commercialisation of product or financial benefit from research) which may accrue from delivering on the project
* how your project outcomes could be applied across other agricultural sectors or the supply chain in the future to reduce barriers to adoption of agricultural traceability and support regulatory and commercial compliance capability.

Table 4 Strong application examples for Criterion 4

| Strong applications | Example |
| --- | --- |
| Demonstrated how the funding requested was proportionate to the aim(s) of the project. | Strong responses demonstrated how the requested funding amount was appropriate for the project scope and activities.  They provided:   * a well-articulated budget clearly connected to project activities, * a clear justification for the requested funding amount in relation to project scope and activities to ensure optimal resource allocation, * a clear explanation of potential financial gains from project outcomes to ensure accurate projection of long-term benefits, and * budget figures that were considered appropriate to the cost and implementation of the project activities. |
| Listed any co-‑contributions by their organisation or participatory partner(s) in the project. | Strong responses listed any co-contributions.  They clearly provided:   * details of partner(s) who would contribute to the cost of their projects and the extent of their contribution, and * details of project partners’ additional support through cash and/or in-kind contributions which would add value to the delivery of the project. |
| Described future financial or private benefit(s) which would be realised from delivering the project. | Strong responses described gains which may accrue from the project.  They clearly described:   * parts of the project which would provide benefit beyond the participating organisations and how those benefits might be shared, and * how their project outcomes might be implemented across the agricultural supply chain. |
| Described how the project would be applied across other agricultural sectors and supply chains in the future to reduce barriers to agricultural traceability. | Strong responses demonstrated how their projects could be adopted and applied.  They clearly outlined:   * the outcomes and basis of their project would be interoperable with other systems, * the outcomes and basis of their project would be applicable to multiple agricultural commodities in the future, and * engagement with stakeholders from other agricultural sectors beyond the project’s initial phases. |