



Frequently Asked Questions

Strengthening Business

1. What is Strengthening Business?

On 11 March 2020, government announced a [Small Business Rebuild Package](#) focused on local government areas (LGAs) that have been most impacted by the Black Summer bushfires.

As part of this, 21 new business facilitators will be deployed across NSW, SA and VIC, to assist bushfire affected businesses through the recovery phase. This new measure will be delivered through the [Strengthening Business](#) element of the [Entrepreneurs' Programme](#) (EP).

Government's commitment to helping fire-affected communities is immediate and Strengthening Business is designed to complement the support recovery programs being rolled out by State agencies.

The Strengthening Business element will draw on the AusIndustry Outreach Networks, state and local business organisations and the experience, knowledge and networks of EP's business facilitators to ensure that bushfire affected businesses are receiving a service that is critical to their rebuild, growth, strength and continued sustainability into the future.

2. What assistance is available under Strengthening Business?

Facilitators will provide tailored assistance to help Australian businesses recover from the effects of bushfire, rebuild their business, support their staff, and work with their customers, suppliers and their community.

Businesses will be provided with advice and information and will also be helped to access the new grants and loans available under the Small Business Rebuild Package, as well as other assistance that is available across Commonwealth, state and local government.

3. Who is eligible for assistance?

To be eligible for facilitator services, a business must:

- be a bushfire affected SME, that is located in one of the Local Government Areas (LGAs) identified by the National Bushfire Recovery Agency
- have a current Australian business number (ABN), and engaged in carrying on the small business at the time of the bushfire in the defined disaster area

The Strengthening Business element is open to businesses from any sector and with any annual turnover. Being eligible for this element of EP does not in itself mean you are automatically eligible for other elements of EP.

4. What are the identified LGAs?

The [National Bushfire Recovery Agency](#) (NBRA) in collaboration with the states of NSW, South Australia, and Victoria, have stipulated the [local government areas](#) that have been the most severely affected by the 2019-20 bushfires.

The needs of bushfire affected businesses outside of these areas will be monitored, with the ability for Strengthening Business to provide assistance in new regions, where it is determined to be required. Refer to the [business.gov.au](#) website for more information.

5. Will Strengthening Business provide financial support?

There is no grant funding attached to Strengthening Business, however, facilitators will work one-on-one with businesses to determine what support a business might access to assist it in its recovery.

6. Will Strengthening Business cost me anything?

No, services provided under the Strengthening Business element of the Entrepreneurs' Programme will not cost you anything. Support provided to businesses under the Strengthening Business element is government's commitment to providing immediate assistance to help Australian businesses recover from the impacts of bushfire, and is designed to complement the support recovery programs being rolled out by State agencies.

7. Who are the facilitators?

The 21 business facilitators are part of a network of highly experienced business people engaged by the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER) to provide expert advice to Australian businesses on all aspects of operating a business: business management, digital infrastructure, client awareness, growth, commercialisation, innovation. Facilitators will draw on this network of experts in their provision of advice and services for individual business.

8. How will the Facilitators help me?

Bushfire affected businesses will get access to a facilitator in their region who will provide:

- An initial business health check
- Tailored advice and assistance to help the business through the recovery and rebuild phase
- A detailed business Roadmap, providing a documented plan and strategies to achieve the immediate, medium and long-term goals of the business
- Facilitation and connections to a range of services, funding, and expert advice
- Strategies to grow your business and become more resilient against future economic instability or natural disaster.

Once the immediate recovery challenges are addressed, facilitators will continue to assist your business to develop strategies to strengthen and grow.

Business advisers will work with you to identify the key challenges, new opportunities and strategies to improve the businesses resilience against future economic instability.

You will be provided with a 'Roadmap', which will outline the short, medium and long term objectives of the business, and document the advice and strategies developed to reach the goals of the business.

Details of the facilitators will be available on the business.gov.au website.

9. How will Facilitators assist me with COVID-19 restrictions?

Facilitators will provide business advisory services remotely via phone, skype, teleconference, email and videoconference, until such time as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Facilitators are intended to be located within the identified LGAs and reside in the areas they service.

10. How long will a Facilitator provide assistance for?

Facilitators can assist your businesses for as long as you need help to recover and rebuild, and to put a plan in place to help you become more resilient against future economic stability.

The Strengthening Business element will run through to 30 June 2022.

11. How do I apply for assistance?

The application process is very simple and should only take a few minutes to complete.

To access facilitator services, applicants must complete an application form, which is available on the business.gov.au website.

12. Need more information?

For more information, visit business.gov.au or call 13 28 46.