



Grant Opportunity Guidelines

Regional Australia Intergovernmental Shared Inquiry Program

Opening date:	30 March 2021
Closing date and time:	5.00 pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time or Australian Eastern Standard Time on 13 April 2021 Please take account of time zone differences when submitting your application.
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Administering entity:	Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, contact us on 13 28 46.
Date guidelines released:	30 March 2021 8 April 2021 (update closing date) 23 February 2022 (extension of project)
Type of grant opportunity:	Closed non-competitive

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1. Regional Australia Intergovernmental Shared Inquiry Program processes

The Regional Australia Intergovernmental Shared Inquiry Program processes is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

This grant opportunity is part of the above grant program which contributes to Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (DITRDC) Outcome 3. The DITRDC works with stakeholders to plan and design the grant program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#).



The grant opportunity opens

We publish the grant guidelines on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.



You complete and submit a grant application

You complete the application form, addressing all the eligibility and assessment criteria in order for your application to be considered.



We assess your grant application

We review your application against eligibility criteria and notify you if you are not eligible.
We assess your eligible application against the assessment criteria including an overall consideration of value with relevant money.



We make grant recommendations

We provide advice to the decision maker on the merits of your application.



Grant decisions are made

The decision maker decides whether your application is successful.



We notify you of the outcome

We advise you of the outcome of your application.



We enter into a grant agreement

If successful, we will enter into a grant agreement with you. The type of grant agreement is based on the nature of the grant and proportional to the risks involved.



Delivery of grant

You undertake the grant activity as set out in your grant agreement. We manage the grant by working with you, monitoring your progress and making payments.



Evaluation of the Regional Australia Intergovernmental Shared Inquiry Program

We evaluate the specific grant activity and Regional Australia Intergovernmental Shared Inquiry Program as a whole. We base this on information you provide to us and that we collect from various sources.

2. About the grant program

The Regional Australia Intergovernmental Shared Inquiry Program (the program) will run over two years from 2020-21 to 2021-22. The purpose of the grant is to enable delivery of the Intergovernmental Shared Inquiry Program (ISIP).

The ISIP is a collaborative partnership between the Regional Australia Institute, Commonwealth, state and territory departments with responsibility for regional development, and select universities, to deliver targeted research on the opportunities and challenges facing regional communities. The research is used to better inform and co-ordinate government policy responses. Research topics are agreed by co-funding jurisdictions on an annual basis.

The ISIP contributes to achieving the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications Outcome 3: Strengthening the sustainability, capacity and diversity of our cities and regional economies including through facilitating local partnerships between all levels of government and local communities; through reforms that stimulate economic growth; and providing grants and financial assistance.

The objectives of the program are:

- research topical opportunities and challenges facing communities in regional Australia
- undertake analysis and data collection to develop an evidence base to inform government decision making.

The intended outcomes of the program are:

- identify emerging regional issues and policy solutions
- improve understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing communities in regional Australia
- improve collaboration and decision making – based on research, analysis and evidence – amongst government, RAI and regional universities.

We administer the program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines \(CGRGs\)](#)¹.

2.1. About the Regional Australia Intergovernmental Shared Inquiry Program grant opportunity

These guidelines contain information for the Regional Australia Intergovernmental Shared Inquiry Program grant opportunity.

This document sets out:

- the eligibility and assessment criteria
- how we consider and assess grant applications
- how we notify applicants and enter into grant agreements with grantees
- how we monitor and evaluate grantees' performance
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (the department) is responsible for administering this grant opportunity on behalf of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.

¹ <https://www.finance.gov.au/government/commonwealth-grants/commonwealth-grants-rules-guidelines>

We have defined key terms used in these guidelines in the glossary at section 14.

You should read this document carefully before you fill out an application.

3. Grant amount and grant period

The Australian Government has announced a total of \$400,000 plus GST over two years for the program.

3.1. Grants available

The grant amount will be up to \$400,000 plus GST.

3.2. Project period

You may start your project from 15 March 2021. You should complete your project by 30 June 2022.

4. Eligibility criteria

4.1. Who is eligible?

To be eligible you must be the Regional Australia Institute Ltd (ABN 65 152 955 667).

The Regional Australia Institute Ltd has been identified as the appropriate recipient because:

- it has an established process to deliver the intended program outcomes, including through its Regional Advisory Council, and a proven advocacy function that addresses the pressing issues facing regional Australia
- the nature of the grant activity is specifically dependent on the network, skills and reputation of the Regional Australia Institute Ltd.

4.2. Who is not eligible?

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- an organisation, or your project partner is an organisation, included on the National Redress Scheme's website on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme' (www.nationalredress.gov.au).

5. What the grant money can be used for

5.1. Eligible activities

To be eligible your project must:

- be aimed at conducting research, analysis and data collection to develop an evidence base on research themes agreed by co-funding jurisdictions.

Eligible activities may include:

- researching and analysing disaster recovery and resilience activities and assistance in regional Australia
- delivering collaborative workshops
- engaging with key stakeholders
- reporting and providing evidence to inform government decision making
- presenting and/or briefing program participants on research and report findings.

We may also approve other activities.

5.2. Eligible expenditure

You can only spend grant funds on eligible expenditure you have incurred on an agreed project as defined in your grant agreement.

Eligible expenditure items are:

- direct labour costs of employees you directly employ on the core elements of the project. We consider a person an employee when you pay a regular salary or wage, out of which you make regular tax instalment deductions
- up to 30 per cent labour on costs to cover employer paid superannuation, payroll tax, workers compensation insurance, and overheads such as office rent and the provision of computers for staff directly working on the project
- contract expenditure covering the cost of eligible project activities that are contracted to others. All contractors must have a written contract prior to starting any project work. Invoices from contractors must contain a detailed description and breakdown of the work including hours and hourly rates
- domestic travel limited to the reasonable cost of accommodation and transportation required to conduct agreed project activities in Australia
- staff training that directly supports the achievement of project outcomes
- the cost of an independent audit of project expenditure up to a maximum of 1 per cent of total eligible project expenditure.

We may update the guidance on eligible and ineligible expenditure from time to time. If your application is successful, the version in place when you submitted your application applies to your project.

If your application is successful, we may ask you to verify project costs that you provided in your application. You may need to provide evidence such as quotes for major costs.

Not all expenditure on your project may be eligible for grant funding. The Program Delegate (who is a manager within the department with responsibility for the program) makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be a direct cost of the project
- be incurred by you for required project audit activities.

You must incur the project expenditure between the project start and end date for it to be eligible unless stated otherwise.

You must incur the project expenditure between the project start and end date for it to be eligible unless stated otherwise. You may commence your project from 15 March 2021.

5.3. What you cannot use the grant for

Expenditure items that are not eligible are:

- overseas travel
- routine operational expenses, including communications, accommodation, office computing facilities, printing and stationery, postage, legal and accounting fees and bank charges

- costs related to preparing the grant application, preparing any project reports (except costs of independent audit reports we require) and preparing any project variation requests.

6. The assessment criteria (Assessment of proposal)

The grant is subject to an acceptable proposal that includes:

- contact name and position details
- project description
- project start and end date
- details of project milestones including the key activities relevant to each milestone
- details of project governance
- evaluation strategy and timetable (including measures of success/key performance indicators)
- details of project partners and collaborators, including their funding contributions for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial years
- project budget (split over financial years).

In assessing your proposal, we will consider whether:

- your project aligns with the policy intent
- your project is appropriately costed and represents value with relevant money
- your proposed activities and expenditure are eligible
- you can deliver your project on time and to budget as identified in supporting documents
- the level of risk associated with the project and its implementation is manageable and acceptable.

7. How to apply

Before applying you should read and understand these guidelines, published on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

To apply, you must:

- complete the [online application form](#) via business.gov.au
- provide all the information requested
- address all eligibility criteria
- include all necessary attachments.

You can view and print a copy of your submitted application on the portal for your own records.

You are responsible for making sure your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth). If we consider that you have provided false or misleading information we may not progress your application. If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should call us immediately on 13 28 46.

If we find an error or information that is missing, we may ask for clarification or additional information from you that will not change the nature of your application. However, we can refuse to accept any additional information from you that would change your submission after the application closing time.

If you need further guidance around the application process, or if you are unable to submit an application online, [contact us](#) at business.gov.au or by calling 13 28 46.

7.1. Attachments to the application

You must provide the following documents with your application:

- detailed project plan, by financial year (2020-21 to 2021-22)
- evaluation strategy and timetable, including measures of success/key performance indicators
- detailed and itemised project budget, including but not limited to disaggregation by project component and financial year (2020-21 to 2021-22)
- evidence of funding commitments by each project participant for each financial year (2020-21 to 2021-22), including university partners
- risk management plan, describing how you propose to monitor, manage and report identified risks including risks that may arise during your project.

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with the instructions provided within the form. You should only attach requested documents. We will not consider information in attachments that we do not request.

7.2. Timing of grant opportunity

You can only submit an application between the published opening and closing dates. We cannot accept late applications.

If you are successful we expect you will be able to commence your project around March 2021.

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Activity	Timeframe
Assessment of application	2 weeks
Approval of outcomes of selection process	1 week
Negotiations and award of grant agreements	1 week
Earliest start date of project	February/March 2021
End date of grant commitment	30 June 2022

8. The grant selection process

We review your application against the eligibility criteria. If eligible, we will then assess it against the assessment criteria. Only eligible applications will proceed to the assessment stage.

We consider your application on its merits, based on:

- how well it meets the criteria
- whether it provides value with relevant money.

When assessing whether the application represents value with relevant money, we will have regard to:

- the overall objectives of the grant opportunity
- the evidence provided to demonstrate how your project contributes to meeting those objectives
- the relative value of the grant sought.

If the selection process identifies unintentional errors in your application, we may contact you to correct or clarify the errors, but you cannot make any material alteration or addition.

8.1. Who will approve grants?

The Program Delegate decides which grants to approve taking into account the application assessment and the availability of grant funds.

The Program Delegate's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the grant approval
- the grant funding to be awarded
- any conditions attached to the offer of grant funding
- any variations to the project such as extensions of time.

We cannot review decisions about the merits of your application.

The Program Delegate will not approve funding if there is insufficient program funds available across relevant financial years for the program.

9. Notification of application outcomes

We will advise you of the outcome of your application in writing. If you are successful, we advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant.

10. Successful grant applications

10.1. Grant agreement

You must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The grant agreement has general terms and conditions that cannot be changed. A sample [grant agreement](#) is available on [business.gov.au](#) and GrantConnect.

We must execute a grant agreement with you before we can make any payments. Execute means both you and the Commonwealth have signed the agreement. We are not responsible for any expenditure you incur until a grant agreement is executed.

The approval of your grant may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the Program Delegate. We will identify these in the offer of grant funding.

We will use the Commonwealth standard grant agreement.

The Commonwealth may recover grant funds if there is a breach of the grant agreement.

You will have 30 days from the date of a written offer to execute this grant agreement with the Commonwealth. During this time, we will work with you to finalise details.

The offer may lapse if both parties do not sign the grant agreement within this time. Under certain circumstances, we may extend this period. We base the approval of your grant on the information you provide in your application. We will review any required changes to these details to ensure they do not impact the project as approved by the Program Delegate.

10.2. Project/Activity specific legislation, policies and industry standards

You must comply with all relevant laws and regulations in undertaking your project. You must also comply with the specific legislation/policies/industry standards that follow. It is a condition of the grant funding that you meet these requirements. We will include these requirements in your grant agreement.

In particular, you will be required to comply with:

- State/Territory legislation in relation to working with children.

10.3. How we pay the grant

The grant agreement will state the:

- maximum grant amount we will pay
- proportion of eligible expenditure covered by the grant (grant percentage)
- any financial contribution provided by you or a third party.

We will make payments according to an agreed schedule set out in the grant agreement. Payments are subject to satisfactory progress on the project.

10.4. Tax obligations

If you are registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST), where applicable we will add GST to your grant payment and provide you with a recipient created tax invoice. You are required to notify us if your GST registration status changes during the project period. GST does not apply to grant payments to government related entities².

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek assistance from the [Australian Taxation Office](#). We do not provide advice on tax.

11. Announcement of grants

We will publish non-sensitive details of successful projects on GrantConnect. We are required to do this by the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#) (CGRGs) unless otherwise prohibited by law. We may also publish this information on business.gov.au. This information may include:

- name of your organisation
- title of the project
- description of the project and its aims
- amount of grant funding awarded
- Australian Business Number
- business location
- your organisation's industry sector.

12. How we monitor your grant activity

12.1. Keeping us informed

You should let us know if anything is likely to affect your project or organisation.

We need to know of any key changes to your organisation or its business activities, particularly if they affect your ability to complete your project, carry on business and pay debts due.

You must also inform us of any changes to your:

- name
- addresses

² See Australian Taxation Office ruling GSTR 2012/2 available at ato.gov.au

- nominated contact details
- bank account details.

If you become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the grant agreement you must contact us immediately.

You must notify us of events relating to your project and provide an opportunity for the Minister or their representative to attend.

12.2. Reporting

You must submit reports in line with the grant agreement. We will provide the requirements for these reports as appendices in the grant agreement. We will remind you of your reporting obligations before a report is due. We will expect you to report on:

- progress against agreed project milestones
- project expenditure, including expenditure of grant funds
- contributions of participants directly related to the project
- any other information reasonably required by the Commonwealth.

The amount of detail you provide in your reports should be relative to the project size, complexity and grant amount.

We will monitor the progress of your project by assessing reports you submit and may conduct site visits to confirm details of your reports if necessary. Occasionally we may need to re-examine claims, seek further information or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

12.2.1. Progress reports

Progress reports must:

- include details of your progress towards completion of agreed project activities
- include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
- show the total eligible expenditure incurred to date
- include evidence of expenditure
- contributions of project participants, including university partners
- include progress update on securing funding commitments from participants in future years
- be submitted by the report due date (you can submit reports ahead of time if you have completed relevant project activities).

We will only make grant payments when we receive satisfactory progress reports.

You must discuss any project or milestone reporting delays with us as soon as you become aware of them.

12.2.2. End of project report

When you complete the project, you must submit an end of project report.

End of project reports must:

- include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
- identify the total eligible expenditure incurred for the project
- contributions of participants directly related to the project
- include evidence of expenditure

- include evidence of secured funding commitments from participants in future years
- include a declaration that the grant money was spent in accordance with the grant agreement and to report on any underspends of the grant money
- be submitted by the report due date.

12.2.3. Ad-hoc reports

We may ask you for ad-hoc reports on your project. This may be to provide an update on progress, or any significant delays or difficulties in completing the project.

12.3. Independent audits

We may ask you to provide an independent audit report. An audit report will verify that you spent the grant in accordance with the grant agreement. The audit report requires you to prepare a statement of grant income and expenditure. The report template is available on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

12.4. Compliance visits

We may visit you during the project period or at the completion of your project to review your compliance with the grant agreement. We may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement. We will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

12.5. Grant agreement variations

We recognise that unexpected events may affect project progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your grant agreement, including:

- changing project milestones
- changing project activities
- extending the project.

The program does not allow for:

- an increase of grant funds.

If you want to propose changes to the grant agreement, you must put them in writing before the grant agreement end date. We can provide you with a variation request template.

If a delay in the project causes milestone achievement and payment dates to move to a different financial year, you will need a variation to the grant agreement. We can only move funds between financial years if there is enough program funding in the relevant year to allow for the revised payment schedule. If we cannot move the funds, you may lose some grant funding.

You should not assume that a variation request will be successful. We will consider your request based on factors such as:

- how it affects the project outcome
- consistency with the program policy objective, grant opportunity guidelines and any relevant policies of the department
- changes to the timing of grant payments
- availability of program funds.

12.6. Evaluation

The DITRDC will evaluate the grant program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and project reports for this purpose. We may also interview you, or ask you for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the program was in achieving its outcomes.

We may contact you up to two years after you finish your project for more information to assist with this evaluation.

12.7. Grant acknowledgement

If you make a public statement about a project funded under the program, including in media releases, on social media and in a brochure or publication, you must acknowledge the grant by using the following:

‘This project received grant funding from the Australian Government.’

13. Probity

We will make sure that the grant opportunity process is fair, according to the published guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct and is consistent with the CGRGs.

13.1. Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the grant opportunity or program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if our staff, any member of a committee or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel:

- has a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer
- has a relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently or
- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives a grant under the grant program/ grant opportunity.

As part of your application, we will ask you to declare any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or confirm that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If you later identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform us in writing immediately.

Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff are handled as set out in the Australian [Public Service Code of Conduct \(Section 13\(7\)\)](#)³ of the *Public Service Act 1999* (Cth). Committee members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

We publish our [conflict of interest policy](#)⁴ on the department’s website.

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2019C00057>

⁴ https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/July%202018/document/pdf/conflict-of-interest-and-insider-trading-policy.pdf?acsf_files_redirect

13.2. How we use your information

Unless the information you provide to us is:

- confidential information as per 13.2.1, or
- personal information as per 13.2.3,

we may share the information with other government agencies for a relevant Commonwealth purpose such as:

- to improve the effective administration, monitoring and evaluation of Australian Government programs
- for research
- to announce the awarding of grants.

13.2.1. How we handle your confidential information

We will treat the information you give us as sensitive and therefore confidential if it meets all of the following conditions:

- you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
- the information is commercially sensitive
- disclosing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else
- you provide the information with an understanding that it will stay confidential.

13.2.2. When we may disclose confidential information

We may disclose confidential information:

- to our Commonwealth employees and contractors, to help us manage the program effectively
- to the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- to the responsible Minister or Assistant Minister
- to a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

We may also disclose confidential information if

- we are required or authorised by law to disclose it
- you agree to the information being disclosed, or
- someone other than us has made the confidential information public.

13.2.3. How we use your personal information

We must treat your personal information according to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) and the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- to whom we give your personal information.

We may give the personal information we collect from you to our employees and contractors and other Commonwealth employees and contractors, so we can:

- manage the program
- research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities.

We, or the Minister, may:

- announce the names of successful applicants to the public
- publish personal information on the department's websites.

You may read our [Privacy Policy](#)⁵ on the department's website for more information on:

- what is personal information
- how we collect, use, disclose and store your personal information
- how you can access and correct your personal information.

13.2.4. Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about the program, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (FOI Act).

The purpose of the FOI Act is to give members of the public rights of access to information held by the Australian Government and its entities. Under the FOI Act, members of the public can seek access to documents held by the Australian Government. This right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary to protect essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

If someone requests a document under the FOI Act, we will release it (though we may need to consult with you and/or other parties first) unless it meets one of the exemptions set out in the FOI Act.

13.3. Enquiries and feedback

For further information or clarification, you can contact us on 13 28 46 or by [web chat](#) or through our [online enquiry form](#) on business.gov.au.

We may publish answers to your questions on our website as Frequently Asked Questions.

Our [Customer Service Charter](#) is available at business.gov.au. We use customer satisfaction surveys to improve our business operations and service.

If you have a complaint, call us on 13 28 46. We will refer your complaint to the appropriate manager.

If you are not satisfied with the way we handle your complaint, you can contact:

Chief Financial Officer
Corporate and Digital Division
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
GPO Box 2013
CANBERRA ACT 2601

You can also contact the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#)⁶ with your complaint (call 1300 362 072). There is no fee for making a complaint, and the Ombudsman may conduct an independent investigation.

⁵ <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/privacy-policy>

⁶ <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>

14. Glossary

Term	Definition
Application form	The document issued by the Program Delegate that applicants use to apply for funding under the program.
Department	The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.
Eligible activities	The activities undertaken by a grantee in relation to a project that are eligible for funding support as set out in 5.1.
Eligible application	An application or proposal for grant funding under the program that the Program Delegate has determined is eligible for assessment in accordance with these guidelines.
Eligible expenditure	The expenditure incurred by a grantee on a project and which is eligible for funding support as set out in 5.2.
Grant agreement	A legally binding contract between the Commonwealth and a grantee for the grant funding.
Grant funding or grant funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth to grantees under the program.
GrantConnect	The Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRGs.
Grantee	The recipient of grant funding under a grant agreement.
Guidelines	Guidelines that the Minister gives to the department to provide the framework for the administration of the program, as in force from time to time.
Minister	The Commonwealth Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development.
Personal information	Has the same meaning as in the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i> (Cth) which is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. whether the information or opinion is true or not; and b. whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.
Program Delegate	A manager within the department with responsibility for the program.
Program funding or Program funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth for the program.

Term	Definition
Project	A project described in an application for grant funding under the program.