

Developing the long term

Newsflash

From the CEO's desk



Good Afternoon!

As follow up to our advice about the launch of the National Stronger Regions Fund (NSRF) in May, RDA's NSRF briefings and grants workshops in Normanton, Mount Isa and Townsville and by teleconference, the RDA – Queensland Treasury statistics workshop by teleconference, and one-on-one consultations, we would like to share with you some key insights and points to assist you in determining if you submit an application and what will be competitive.

We are also echoing the points made by the Deputy Prime Minister last week in our QLD RDAs' meeting.

There is a bit of "tough love" below as we truly wish to see good projects with strong applications come through to ensure more success in our region. On the other hand, we do not wish to see you waste your valuable time on weak applications that won't stand a chance. RDA has been, and will continue to be happy to provide your team with one-on-one advice. Please do not hesitate to make an appointment for us to talk about your application. (The feedback so far has been that our advice has been welcomed, very helpful and highly valued)

There is \$200 million available in Round 2. There are more than 500 councils and around 600,000 not-for-profits that can consider applying. \$25 million out of \$200 million is quarantined for projects asking for up to \$1 million.

In Round 1 we saw 3 of the 7 projects that were successful in Queensland come from the Townsville and North West Queensland region. Mount Isa, Charters Towers and Burke Shire Councils submitted good projects with strong applications. This was great news, but we also saw a lot of people put in a lot of time that was not productive for them. The following is designed to be a check list for you in considering your application. The Guidelines are most important and are the true source for all information but I have taken the liberty to share some insights to help you with your application considerations as we wish to see your organisation's valuable time spent wisely and productively. This is a 10 minute version of the 3 hour workshops we have been doing, some of which were attended by some of your staff.

1. This is a highly competitive fund. In Round 1, there were 405 applicants of which 51 were successful. i.e. 12.8% were successful.
 - **Tip – good projects with strong, well -written applications will be well regarded. Good projects with poor applications will not get up. The 4 selection criteria are critical – more on that below.**
2. There are strict eligibility criteria. In Round 1, 133 applications were ruled ineligible. 72% of these were due to lack of evidence of confirmed partnership funding. Many did not submit all the right documents and/or a strong case to show construction could start within 12 months of signing the funding agreement. Hence sadly a lot of time was wasted by submitting applications that were not eligible. I cannot stress enough how important it is to be able to tick every box for eligibility and to comply with all documentation requirements.
 - **Tip – ensure you have an eligible project and can meet all documentation requirements. The Australian National Audit Office oversees this and other grants. There is no flexibility on eligibility.**
 - **Tip – we recommend you attach documents as per the requirements in the guidelines on page 19 of the GMS Portal Application User Guide. Do not bundle several required documents into one larger document.**
3. Criteria 1 – economic growth
State the facts about the situation of economic growth or decline that you are addressing – using data from www.qgso.qld.gov.au; www.abs.gov.au; industry data; surveys; reports as a good starting point
 - Advise how your project will make a difference to these issues
 - Quantify the outcomes you expect to achieve in regard to addressing these issues – e.g. directly or indirectly increasing jobs by y percent / x number; maintaining x jobs in an area that is facing decline; delivery of infrastructure that will enable private sector investment of \$x and y number of associated jobs – but back up with evidence to support your claims e.g. cost benefit analysis
 - Make statements about any other social/ community impacts and benefits that will be positive – using numbers where possible, other qualifying statements – but back up with evidence to support your claims
 - **Tip – we highly recommend that you do not make an application if you cannot satisfy this as the highest ranked criteria at 43%.**
4. Criteria 2 – addressing disadvantage
State the facts about the situation of disadvantage that you are addressing – unemployment; low income; low education levels etc - using data from www.qgso.qld.gov.au; www.abs.gov.au; surveys; reports as a good starting point
 - Advise how your project will make a difference to these issues
 - Quantify the outcomes you expect to achieve in regard to addressing these issues – but back up with evidence to support your claims – once again cost benefit analysis is important

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- Make statements about any other social/ community impacts and benefits that will be positive – using numbers where possible, other qualifying statements – but back up with evidence to support your claims
 - **Tip – we highly recommend that you do not make an application if you cannot satisfy this as the second highest ranked criteria at 28%.**
5. Criteria 3 – partnership
- This is where you prove your financial partnerships, your in-kind support including volunteers and the level of support you have for this project.
 - **Tip – partner cash contributions in addition to the mandatory 50% matching funding will be considered favourably**
 - **Tip – demonstration of regional, local and broad-based partnerships is essential. i.e. Letters of support from Federal MPs, Senators, State MPs, Mayors, Chambers, Regional Economic Development Organisations, community organisations can demonstrate your project is well-supported and is hence less risky and is likely to succeed**
 - **Tip – don't forget to include in-kind support for equipment or services and volunteer time as a value to your project**
6. Criteria 4 – viability and sustainability
- **Tip – this is where you prove the project is investment ready – that is – ready for construction within 12 months of signing the funding agreement – so you must be very advanced with infrastructure designs, planning, costings and approvals to demonstrate that your project is not a high risk proposal**
 - **Tip – this is where you show you have good governance, project planning, risk management plans, experience in delivering capital projects and can budget and afford the on-going maintenance**

If your project is not well-developed for Round 2, we recommend considering developing your project for Round 3.

For more information, please visit our website www.rdanwq.org.au/resources-and-links/grants-programs.

RDA has been pleased to assist many project proponents with individual advice and we are happy to continue doing this.

We will also be happy to provide a letter of support on the following basis.

1. We receive a copy of your full draft application form or the answers in a word document as soon as possible and no later than 22 July so that we can get a letter back to you by 29 July to meet the 31 July NSRF deadline. Due to time limits, we do not need to see all the attachments and trust that you have them in hand.
2. If we consider the project to be weak or the application to be weak, we will provide advice for improvements before we can provide a letter of support.

I hope the above is helpful to your organisation in planning NSRF applications!

Cheers
Glenys

Glenys Schuntner
Chief Executive Officer