Disaster Ready Fund – Round 4 – Tips for Writing a Good Application

1. Research previous grant recipients

To increase your chances of success, it is recommended that you review successful projects from previous funding rounds as this can help identify what grants have been awarded (is your project unique) and may provide opportunities to align project ideas to previously successful projects.

2. Completing your application

Review the application form to see what is required and plan how much time it will take to complete. Late applications will not be accepted.

The application form has selection criteria that need to be addressed. ***Always assume that the reader knows nothing about your project or your organisation.*** Your responses need to provide sufficient detail that a reader with no prior knowledge will be able to understand the purpose of the project.

Any claim you make you should be evidence based. Clearly demonstrate the need for the project, the benefits it will provide and to whom (e.g. use geographic markers, identify vulnerable community groups, key community infrastructure, etc.). If the need for the project is unable to be well defined or understood, the chances of the project being approved significantly decrease.

Additional tips:

- Write in a consistent writing style and tone — use the grant guidelines as a reference for the type of language to use (avoid conversational language, jargon, and acronyms).
- Use concise language – keep your answers and paragraphs short.
- Write your application so it's easily understood by an assessor who may be unfamiliar with your industry.
- Include keywords from the guidelines and assessment criteria where appropriate.
- Write factually, the information you submit must be accurate and may be audited.
- Avoid using vague, speculative or emotive words (e.g. believe, hope, expect, may, could, might).
- Write unique answers to all questions — although some questions may sound similar, the assessor will be seeking new information (check the guidelines for clarification).
- Be positive in stating what your project will achieve if your application is successful but avoid exaggerated claims — the assessor will look for realistic outcomes and claims must be able to be substantiated.
- Demonstrate your project's likelihood of success, acknowledging risks to achieving its aims and how these will be managed. Your application will often need to detail the following:
    - what activities and outputs your project will deliver
    - what are the benefits of your project to your organisation, including long-term broader benefits
    - why your project needs funding and why it represents value for money
    - outline the key drivers of risk and uncertainty and how you will manage them
    - how you will successfully bring the project to completion
    - ensure your response adheres to any character/word limits.
    - ensure all required fields have been filled in correctly in all documents
- Larger, more complex projects are generally expected to provide more detail against each of the selection criterion.

3. Building a strong business case

- Be specific about the risk being addressed and how the solution addresses the risk.
- Provide context for why areas are at risk and why locations have been prioritised for risk mitigation. Demonstrate the risk experienced or the exposure to risk to justify case and use impacts of past events that have occurred that inform the risk profile.

- Be clear on what the goal is of the proposed solution, what are you protecting:
  - Life/people
  - community
  - assets
  - supply chains
- Include how you will engage, collaborate with diverse cohorts or communities at disproportionate risk. (not just who you will engage with)
- Set out what is the cost of not taking action and build this into the business case for your application (do nothing option).
- Consider what modelling/information already exists and the relevance to your application/proposed solution.
- Draw on available research to justify your business case.
- Demonstrate stakeholder networks, dependencies, relationships which will ensure a successful project (this should be in your project logic)

4. Budget

It is important to ensure that this budget is accurate, covers all aspects of the project (financial and in-kind), and includes an appropriate contingency within the budget to manage cost overruns. Generally, budgets should detail both cash and in-kind (e.g. volunteer time, borrowed equipment) contributions to the project. To show how the value of in-kind items, donated materials and equipment can be valued at the cost to buy items new or hire the costs. Labour should be valued at the going hourly rate.

The budget also needs to demonstrate value for money. Ensure costed items are at a commercially competitive rate (that is not inflated, contingency funding should be used to allow for unexpected expenses and salary and cost increases).

Remember that the budget is another opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the project, readiness to commence, and ability to complete the project on time and within budget.

Some other tips include:

- Make sure you have provided current information (e.g. quotes that were sourced over a year ago may no longer be valid to support your application).
- Read the guidelines thoroughly to make sure the items/activities you are requesting funding for are eligible.
- Include all costs, factoring in administrative overheads (where eligible) and contingencies (depending on the size of your project; also consider the current environment and operating costs)
- Explain how the requested funding amount was calculated
  - Quotes/estimates received
  - recent similar expense
  - industry calculator
- Review your budget to make sure it's accurate and adds up.
- Ensure the activities are eligible costs under the grant guidelines, that any goods/services purchased are issued/dated within the eligible time period and outline all relevant services to be provided including itemised costs.

5. Timeframes

When planning your project schedule, consider:

- the required approval timeframes for the funding program (time required for the agency to review applications and announce successful applicant, approx. 6 months).
- the required timeframe between announcement, and the ability to provide grant funds (establishment of implementation plans and project funding agreements approx. up to 6 months).
- the maximum three (3) year time limit to successfully deliver the project.
- it can take up to one (1) year from application being submitted to commonwealth grant funding being available.

You should not apply for funding if you will not be able to deliver the project on time. Projects can commence prior to implementation plans being approved, but ***cannot*** include the expenditure of any commonwealth grant funds.

6. Independent review and / or expert advice

It is recommended that grant applicants use your networks and ask someone completely independent of the project to review the application and provide feedback. If someone independent is not able to understand the need for the project based on what has been drafted, then further work on your application is recommended to improve your chances of success.

If you're claiming an insurance co-benefits, you need to substantiate your claim with research and technical expert advice.

7. NEMA's advice on excellent Criterion 1 Response (from Round 3)

Excellent Applications demonstrated strong alignment with the DRF assessment criteria. The project was clearly articulated with well-defined objectives and scope and is supported by strong evidence (qualitative and/or quantitative) to demonstrate the project will achieve its aims. Risks to project success may be present, but the Application identified mitigation strategies and controls to manage the risk.

The Application and Project Proposal demonstrated how the project reduces disaster risk, increases resilience, adaptive capacity and/or preparedness for disasters, and/or contributes to understanding disaster risk.

- well-defined and highly relevant project objectives (problem and solution), inputs (resources), outputs (activities) and outcomes (short, medium and long-term).
- a detailed outline and comparison of level(s) of exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards prior to and upon conclusion of the project.
- a clearly articulated and compelling case that shows the potential impact of the project on the identified target area or group/s in terms of:
- increased understanding of natural hazard disaster impacts,
- increased resilience, adaptive capacity and/or preparedness, and/or
- reduced exposure to risk, harm and/or severity of a natural hazard's impacts.
- multiple sources of high-quality evidence (e.g. references to peer reviewed research data and expert advice) to support claims related to levels of disaster risk and expected project benefits.
- a strong commitment to maintain the project benefits beyond the duration of program funding (enduring benefit), and a highly credible explanation of how they will do this is.

This application clearly defined:

- the natural hazard/s the project is addressing, current and future risks posed to the target community (including consideration of climate change impacts) and how these have been assessed, or if there is limited or no existing hazard or risk information, how the project funding will contribute to increasing understanding of the hazard, level of risk and potential future disaster impacts;
- the benefits the project will deliver for the community during and beyond the term of funding, including the estimated level/s of disaster risk, resilience, and/or understanding prior to and upon conclusion of the proposed project, along with any enduring benefits (as defined in Glossary);
- how the project will avoid and manage the potential for maladaptation including any unintentionally negative social, environmental or economic outcomes; and
- for infrastructure projects, how climate change may impact the investment over its intended lifespan, and how these risks will or may be mitigated.

In addition:

- if the project sought to improve understanding of natural hazards and disaster risk, the Project Proposal outlined how the new hazard and risk information would be shared with affected communities; and
- if there are potential co-benefits associated with the project (i.e. benefits that go beyond intended risk reduction, resilience and knowledge outcomes, such as reduced insurance costs), these were identified in the Application and supported by evidence.

8. NEMA's advice on excellent Criterion 2 Response (from Round 3)

The Application and Project Proposal demonstrated this through identifying:

- how the project meets one or more of the DRF objectives and aligns with one or more of the priorities, outcomes and/or national actions identified in the Second National Action Plan; and
- how the project aligns with and/or supports delivery of any existing state, territory, local government or community disaster risk reduction or adaptation plans, policies or frameworks, or how the project will develop or contribute to development of these policies, plans or frameworks where they do not currently exist.
- A highly detailed and convincing explanation of how and to what extent the project activities and intended outcome/s address one or more of the DRF's Objectives, namely to:
    - increase the understanding of natural hazard disaster impacts, as a first step towards reducing disaster impacts in the future;
    - increase the resilience, adaptive capacity and/or preparedness of governments, community service organisations and affected communities to minimise the potential impact of natural hazards and avert disasters; and
    - reduce the exposure to risk, harm and/or severity of a natural hazard's impacts, including reducing the recovery burden for governments and vulnerable and/or affected communities.
- A case that includes specific references to relevant Commonwealth (e.g. National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework), state, territory or local government disaster risk reduction policies and/or risk assessments, and clearly articulates how the project is consistent with or supports those policies and/or assessments.
- Specific references to the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework and the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience. Aligned with the Second National Action Plan priorities: understand disaster risk; accountable decisions; enhanced investment; governance, ownership and responsibility.
- Aligned with DRF objectives and investment principles. Proposals should increase the understanding of natural hazard disaster impacts; increase resilience, adaptive capacity and/or preparedness; and/or reduce the exposure to risk, harm and/or severity of a natural hazards impacts. Proposals are risk informed; aligned with plans; priority targeted; and deliver diverse and equitable outcomes.

9. NEMA's advice on excellent Criterion 3 Response (from Round 3)

High quality applications demonstrated:

- a track record that includes extensive experience successfully managing multiple projects of a similar size and scope.
- a team (applicant plus any delivery partners) that possesses all the required skills and expertise to successfully achieve the target outcomes.
- assumptions were relevant, clear and reasonably detailed.
- some risks may be present, but any concerns or reservations are minor and can be managed.

  - this includes any national interest, financial, legal, regulatory, governance or other issues/risks identified
- a highly detailed project plan (including, but not necessarily limited to, information presented in the Project Logic) that is highly feasible and highly likely to achieve the intended outcomes taking into account the project inputs, outputs, duration, assumptions and risks.
  - addresses scope, implementation methodology, timeframes, budget, community consultation, and risk management.
  - readiness to formally commence the project once Implementation Plans are endorsed and ability to deliver the project within the maximum project period.
- A detailed timeline/schedule for the project, that provides a very high level of confidence that the project can commence quickly and be completed within the project duration
- a budget that is well-justified and appropriate, underpinned by cost estimates (required evidence), for the size and scope of the project, with no significant gaps or other concerns (e.g. excessive claims).
  - value with relevant money
  - new investment vs historical investments
- a co-contribution above the minimum requirement for the applicant type that leverages additional funds (e.g. cash and in-kind contributions) and partnerships.
- a detailed description of how project funds will be used to deliver the project outcomes e.g. – to prevent or mitigate the degree of impacts relating to cascading and systemic risks.
- a highly detailed description of stakeholder engagement activities that shows broad consultation and support from relevant stakeholders such as local government and First Nations communities and how that support will be maintained throughout the project, together with multiple sources of reliable evidence (e.g. endorsement from community group(s) or local council; outcomes from a community survey; community contributions to the project such as cash or in kind contributions (time, assets etc.); collaboration with other organisations within the area; community participation in the project).
- compliance with relevant legislative requirements, government policies and industry standards, such as:
  - where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be impacted by the project, how the project will ensure cultural safety in any service delivery?
  - where the project will affect the particular interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, how the project aligns with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and/or will contribute to progress against targets?
- for infrastructure projects applications demonstrated:
  - how the infrastructure and benefits of the project will be operated and maintained into the future;
  - steps taken to get the project ready including:
  - the status of required regulatory and/or development approvals;
  - project designs and costings;
  - authority from the land or infrastructure owner to undertake the project at the nominated site(s); and
  - funding contributions from all sources.
- An application supported by required evidence (subject to the classification of the project):
  - a clear business case
  - cost estimates
  - a cost benefit analysis;

- copies of relevant designs and approvals (e.g. schematic plans, planning permits, development and building approvals, etc.); and
- that the Applicant either owns the land/infrastructure being built/upgraded upon or has the landowner's permission to use the land/infrastructure.

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