



Australian Government
Department of Industry, Science and Resources
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Business Grants Hub

Grant Opportunity Guidelines

News Innovation Fund Grant Program

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Opening date: | 22 April 2026 |
| Closing date and time: | 5.00PM Australian Eastern Standard Time on 4 June 2026 Please take account of time zone differences when submitting your application. |
| Commonwealth policy entity: | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA) |
| Administering entity: | Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) |
| Enquiries: | If you have any questions, contact us on 13 28 46. |
| Date guidelines released: | 31 March 2026 |
| Type of grant opportunity: | Open competitive |

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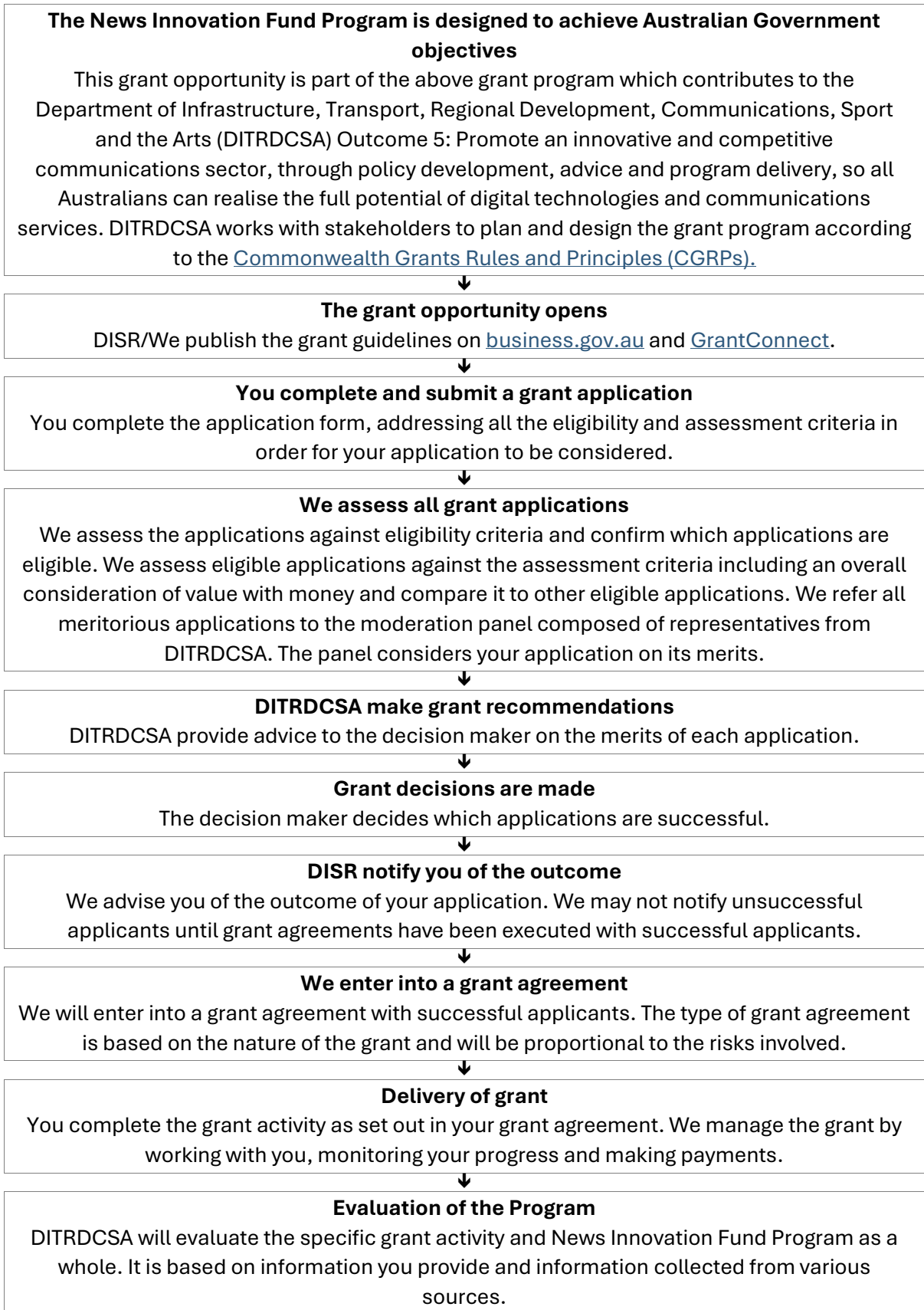
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1. News Innovation Fund processes



1.1. Introduction

These guidelines contain information for the News Innovation Fund Program grant.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant opportunity
- 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.

This grant opportunity and process will be administered by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (the department/DISR/we) on behalf of DITRDCSA.

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.

2. About the Program

The News Innovation Fund Program (the program) will run over 2 financial years from 2026-27 to 2027-28.

The program was announced as part of the [News Media Assistance Program \(News MAP\)](#) which was launched in December 2024 by the Australian Government to support public interest journalism and safeguard media diversity in Australia. News MAP sets out a framework and measures to support public interest journalism and media diversity in Australia – recognising these are critical to a healthy democracy, social cohesion and informed citizens.

The purpose of the program is to support Australian news producers to develop innovative business practices to increase their commercial sustainability and to improve the resilience of the sector in response to significant external pressures through innovative new projects.

The objectives of the program are to:

- encourage innovation in business practices to support and improve the capacity of Australian news producers
- diversify avenues of support for Australian digital news producers, through commercial means
- support Australian news producers to produce core news in the face of disruption.

The intended outcomes of the program are to:

- retain or expand the capacity of Australian news producers to produce and deliver core news content and maintain editorial independence
- maintain, or increase, commercial revenue for Australian digital core news producers
- engage new Australian audiences with existing or expanded digital core news offerings
- help reduce operating costs for Australian digital core news producers with more efficient business practices.

The program is aimed at supporting Australian organisations with a primary purpose of producing core news content, and third-party service enabling organisations based in Australia that provide support to Australian news producers.

Applicants may apply for projects that:

- promote cross-collaboration between Australian core news producers and sector bodies; and/or
- produce products that will be freely shared across the Australian news media sector support increased digital journalism production, capability building and/or commercial sustainability.

The program will have two streams. Eligible applicants can apply for funding for activities that align with the outcomes under the following streams.

Stream 1: Journalism Production

Activities that increase journalism production and distribution including increasing training and staffing.

Applicants may apply for new projects that meet one or more of the following:

- improve or expand core news content produced and distributed digitally
- activities that develop the capacity and capability of Australian organisations to produce or expand their digital core news content,
- establish and support the emergence of new journalism in under-represented areas and/or underserved audiences in Australia (i.e. ‘news deserts’).

Stream 2: Organisational Support

Activities that support internal capacity building and commercial sustainability of Australian core news producers.

Applicants may apply for new projects that:

- develop or engage resources to build organisational and business capacities,
- diversify the avenues of support for the digital core news producers, through commercial means; and/or
- realise innovative economies of scale across multiple organisations in the provision of digital core news content.

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

¹ <https://www.finance.gov.au/government/commonwealth-grants/commonwealth-grants-rules-and-principles-2024>

3. Grant amount and grant period

3.1. Grants available

The Australian Government has announced a total of \$31.5 million over two years for the program.

- The minimum grant amount is \$10,000
- The maximum grant amount is \$9,000,000

For this grant opportunity, an application may be submitted to one of the two Streams outlined at Section 2.1. Applicants must specify the Stream to which they are applying in their application.

Only one application is permitted from any related bodies corporate, which includes a parent organisation and all entities it owns or controls (subsidiaries, affiliates, or related companies). If an organisation submits an application, no other entity within the same related bodies corporate may apply. If more than one application is submitted, only one application will be deemed eligible.

You can be part of one additional joint application.

For assessment purposes, projects will be classified into 3 funding tiers to ensure comparisons are made between projects of similar scale:

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Tier 1 – Small projects: | For projects up to \$100,000 |
| Tier 2 – Medium projects: | For projects between \$100,001 and \$1,000,000 |
| Tier 3 – Large projects: | For projects between \$1,000,001 and \$9,000,000 |

Funding streams and tiers do not represent separate funding pools. All applications will be assessed on merit, and funding will be allocated accordingly.

The grant amount will be up to 100 per cent of eligible expenditure.

You are responsible for the remaining eligible and ineligible project costs.

We cannot fund your project if it receives funding from another Commonwealth Government grant for the same activity.

You can apply for a grant for the same activities under more than one Commonwealth program, but if your application is successful, you must choose either the News Innovation Fund grant or the other program.

3.2. Project period

You must complete your project by 31 March 2028.

4. Eligibility criteria

We cannot consider your application if you do not satisfy all eligibility criteria.

4.1. Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

To be eligible you must:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- be registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST)
- have an account with an Australian financial institution

and be one of the following entities:

- an entity, incorporated in Australia
- an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation registered under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (Cth)
- a company limited by guarantee
- an incorporated trustee on behalf of a trust
- an incorporated association
- a co-operative
- a partnership
- an incorporated not for profit organisation or registered charity
- a sole trader.

Joint applications are acceptable, provided you have a lead organisation who is the main driver of the project and is eligible to apply. For further information on joint applications, refer to section 7.2.

4.2. Additional eligibility requirements

If you are applying as a news organisation, we can only accept applications where you:

- confirm you have been a successful grantee under the News Media Relief Program and you maintain your primary purpose is the creation and distribution of digital core news content, or
- confirm you have been a successful grantee under the Journalism Assistance Fund and you can provide evidence your primary purpose is the creation and distribution of digital core news content, or
- provide evidence your primary purpose is the creation and distribution of digital core news content.

If you are applying as an enabling organisation that provides support to Australian news producers, we can only accept applications:

- where you confirm that you have previously provided enabling support services to Australian news organisations within the last 5 years, or
- that your organisation has capacity to provide these services.

Core news content is content that reports, investigates or explains:

- issues or events that are relevant to engaging Australians in public debate and in informing democratic decision making, or
- current issues or events of public significance for Australians at a local, regional, state or national level.

We cannot waive the eligibility criteria under any circumstances.

4.3. Who is not eligible to apply for a grant?

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- any organisation not included in section 4.1
- 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’
- an employer of 100 or more employees that has not complied with the Workplace Gender Equality Act (2012)
- affiliated with a foreign government, political party, union, financial institution, non-government organisation, or policy lobby group where that affiliation would influence or might be seen to influence, the content produced by the applicant
- insolvent
- a foreign controlled Australian entity (section 820-780 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997)
- a trust (however, an incorporated trustee may apply on behalf of a trust)
- a Commonwealth, state, territory or local government body (including government business enterprises)
- a non-corporate Commonwealth entity
- the Australian Associated Press
- related

5. What the grant money can be used for

5.1. Eligible grant activities

To be eligible your project must be a new activity, that expands or transforms:

- the production and provision of core news content distributed digitally, including new reporting in under-represented areas, or
- the commercial sustainability of an Australian digital core news producers, or
- the internal capacity, capability and resources of an Australian digital core news business.

Eligible activities must directly relate to the project and may include:

Stream 1 – Journalism Production: Expanding news production capacity activities:

- expansion of coverage areas (e.g. new transmission equipment, travel assistance etc.)
- expansion of coverage type (e.g. optimising content production and transformation, accessing or building new distribution platforms, purchasing podcasting or audio production equipment etc.)
- employing new journalists to support the above
- increasing circulation of content (e.g. newsletter distribution, search engine optimisation etc.)
- purchasing research assets
- training or upskilling relating to the production of core news content (e.g. editorial, content production etc.)
- developing resources to support editorial functions to improve quality of content and/or promote broader engagement

- building community partnerships (e.g. driving engagement to new or hard-to-reach audiences, encouraging civic engagement).

Stream 2: Organisational support: Internal capacity and capability building, and commercial sustainability activities:

- building and diversifying revenue streams (e.g. subscriptions, micro-transactions, attracting advertising, marketing, peripheral e-commerce or marketplace environments)
- hiring new support staff
- expanding infrastructure (e.g. purchasing new equipment, fit outs)
- training and upskilling administrative staffing and resources
- developing or engaging external support services (e.g. Web Publishing services, Accounting, Software subscriptions, Legal advice, Human Resources)
- resources for commercial sustainability (e.g. business management, digital hosting or distribution software or interfaces).

5.2. Eligible expenditure

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

Eligible expenditure items are:

- wages of new journalists and content support staff
- domestic travel for training/upskilling of staff or for research and targeted reporting (up to 10 per cent of eligible expenditure)
- cost of training courses and conference fees for training/upskilling of staff
- capital expenditure for the purchase of assets directly related to the project
- alternate advertising
- purchase of equipment including computer/ICT software and hardware
- contracting of external support for any of the following:
 - new Web Publishing services
 - software engineering
 - technical support for installing digital news content production or distribution equipment (e.g. sound production installation)
 - commissioning, for example:
 - commissioning feasibility studies or planning work through to commissioning full IT builds or installations
 - commissioning research to better understand the sector you are targeting and best ways to deliver your content
- developing a content and marketing model for user-generated income via digital subscriptions
- core function expenditure items that do not exceed 10 per cent of total eligible project expenditure. Core function expenditure items include:
 - accounting
 - legal advice
 - human resources
 - in-house marketing and communications
 - wages for administrative support staff.

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 (a manager within the department with responsibility for administering 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 not commence your project until you execute a grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

5.3. What the grant money cannot be used for

Expenditure items that are not eligible are:

- costs of newsprint production and activities related to printing news
- capital expenditure for the purchase of assets where not directly used for the project, such as office furniture and equipment, motor vehicles, computers, printers or photocopiers and the construction, renovation or extension of facilities such as buildings and laboratories
- maintenance costs
- costs of purchasing, leasing, depreciation of, development of land, or of other businesses
- financing costs, including interest
- insurance costs (the participants must affect and maintain adequate insurance or similar coverage for any liability arising as a result of its participation in funded activities)
- debt financing
- recurring or ongoing operational expenditure (including annual maintenance, rent, water and rates, postage and bank charges)
- legal and accounting fees that don't relate specifically to your project
- 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
- travel costs for purposes other than training/upskilling of staff or for research and targeted reporting or that exceed 10 per cent of eligible expenditure.

This list is not exhaustive and applies only to the expenditure of the grant funds. Other costs may be ineligible where we decide that they do not directly support the achievement of the planned outcomes for the project or that they are contrary to the objective of the program.

You must ensure you have adequate funds to meet the costs of any ineligible expenditure associated with the project.

6. The assessment criteria

You must address all assessment criteria in your application. We will assess your application based on the weighting given to each criterion.

The application form asks questions that relate to the assessment criteria below. The amount of detail and supporting evidence you provide in your application should be relative to the project size, complexity and grant amount requested. You should provide evidence to support your answers. The application form displays character limits for each response.

We will only consider awarding funding to applications that have a final score of at least 50 per cent against the assessment criterion.

6.1. Assessment criterion 1

How your project aligns with the program purpose, objectives and outcomes (40 points).

You should address this through identifying:

All applicants:

- a. how your project will deliver innovation in business practices or diversify commercial support for Australian digital news producers, while retaining or expanding capacity to deliver core news content, maintaining editorial independence, increasing commercial revenue and/or engaging new audiences.
- b. how your project supports one or more of the intended objectives under the News MAP Policy Framework: Access, Diversity, Freedom, Quality, Engagement and Representation.

Stream 1 applicants (Journalism Production):

- c. how your project will improve or expand core news content produced and distributed digitally, build organisational capability, and/or support new journalism in under-represented areas.

Stream 2 applicants (Organisational Support):

- d. how your project will strengthen organisational and business capacity and/or diversify revenue and support avenues for digital news publishers.

In addition, joint applicants or enabling service organisations:

- e. how your project will support the improvement or expansion of core news content produced and distributed digitally across multiple organisations, build shared capability, increase commercial sustainability, or deliver economies of scale.

6.2. Assessment criterion 2

Capacity, capability and resources to deliver the project (30 points).

You must demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. your track record managing similar projects and, if applicable, access to partners with the right skills and experience. What project planning experience do you have to manage

and monitor your project? This should address scope, implementation methodology, timeframes, budget, risk management and reporting.

- b. in your detailed project plan and budget (provided as an attachment), all income sources and eligible expenditure relating to the costs of delivering the project. This should also include how you will manage the project including your readiness to commence the project, approvals, administrative costs, community support and completed engagement/consultation.

6.3. Assessment criterion 3

Benefits of your project (30 points).

You must demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. the scale of the project and the size and characteristics of the audience impacted by the project
- b. how your project will achieve the nominated outcomes of the project
- c. how you will measure and monitor your project's performance and outcomes of success (for example, circulation data, audience surveys, or other research that can be used to assess performance).

7. How to apply

Before applying you should read and understand these guidelines, the sample [application form](#) and the sample [grant agreement](#) published on business.gov.au and GrantConnect.

Applicants should read all eligibility and assessment criteria closely and attach detailed evidence that supports the assessment criteria.

You will need to set up an account to access our online [portal](#).

To apply, you must:

- complete and submit the application through the online portal
- provide all the information requested
- address all eligibility and assessment criteria
- include all necessary attachments.

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](#). 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.

After submitting your application, we will not contact you for clarification if we find an error or any missing information.

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

If you need further guidance around the application process, or if you have any issues with the portal, [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:

- a detailed project plan and project budget, commensurate with the tier of funding requested
- where applicable, evidence that your primary purpose is creating core digital news content for your chosen audience, including a link to your internet-based distribution site/s that must:
 - be news content that has been created no earlier than 3 months from the date the application is submitted, and;
 - be provided as an attachment and/or an accessible link.
 - If the link or attachment is behind a paywall provide log in details.
 - If the content is in a language other than English provide both the original content as evidence and a translation of it into English.
- evidence supporting your organisations status as an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) (where applicable)
- trust or partnership deed (where applicable)
- a chart outlining your organisation's ownership structures (related bodies corporate).

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with the instructions provided within the form. You should only attach requested documents. Individual file sizes cannot be greater than 25MB, while the total of all attachments cannot exceed 50MB. We will not consider information in attachments that we do not request.

7.2. Joint (consortia) applications

We recognise that some organisations may want to join together as a group to deliver a project. In these circumstances, you must appoint a lead organisation. Only the lead organisation can submit the application form and enter into the grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The application must identify all other members of the proposed group and include a letter of support from each of the project partners. Each letter of support should include:

- details of the project partner
- an overview of how the project partner will work with the lead organisation and any other project partners in the group to successfully complete the project
- an outline of the relevant experience and/or expertise the project partner will bring to the group
- the roles/responsibilities the project partner will undertake, and the resources it will contribute (if any)
- details of a nominated management level contact officer.

You should consider entering a formal arrangement with all parties in order to reduce risk within your project.

7.3. Timing of grant opportunity processes

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 August 2026.

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

| Activity | Timeframe |
|--|--|
| Assessment of applications | 8 weeks |
| Approval of successful applicants | 6 weeks |
| Negotiations and award of grant agreements | 4 weeks |
| Notification to unsuccessful applicants | 2 weeks |
| Earliest start date of project | From the date your grant agreement is executed |
| Project completion date | 31 March 2028 |
| End date of grant commitment | 30 June 2028 |

7.4. Questions during the application process

If you have any questions during the application period, [contact us](#) at business.gov.au or by calling 13 28 46.

8. The grant selection process

8.1. Assessment of grant applications

We first review your application against the eligibility criteria.

If eligible, your application will be assessed 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
- how it compares to other applications
- whether it provides value with relevant money.²

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

- the overall objective/s of the grant opportunity
- the evidence provided to demonstrate how your project contributes to meeting those objectives
- the relative value of the grant sought
- new and emerging organisations – those organisations that may otherwise meet the eligible activities for this grant but, due to being a new or emerging organisation, may lack

² See glossary for an explanation of 'value with money'.

evidence as an Australian news producer that has successfully undertaken a similar project, or a provider that has produced an enabling service

- News Deserts - Projects that will support the provision of core news content to underserved audiences, meeting those communities' needs of Access, Diversity, Quality, Engagement and Representation under the [News MAP Policy Framework](#). This may include geographic, linguistic, or demographic groups that currently lack sufficient relevant news content
- lasting impact – projects that represent significant departures from existing business practices, or those that demonstrate continued benefits beyond the term of the grant period.

If applications are scored the same, the Program Delegate will consider value with relevant money to recommend applications for funding.

We also consider any national interest, financial, legal/regulatory, governance or other issue or risk that we identify during any due diligence process that we conduct in respect of the applicant. This includes its directors, officers, senior managers, key personnel, its related bodies corporate (as defined in the Corporations Act) or its application that could bring the Australian Government into disrepute if it were to fund the applicant. Such issues and risks include where we consider that funding the application under this grant opportunity is likely to directly conflict with Australian Government policy. Where possible, we will provide you with an opportunity to comment on any material risks identified during this due diligence process prior to our determining the extent (if any) to which those issues or risks affect our assessment of the application and, if so, whether they are sufficient to warrant the exclusion of your application from the assessment process.

8.2. Who will assess applications?

We assess your application against the selection criteria.

We refer all meritorious applications that score over 50 per cent to the moderation panel consists of representatives from DITRDCSA. The panel considers your application on its merits. The moderation panel will be required to perform their duties in accordance with the CGRPs.

The moderation panel may seek additional information about you or your application. They may do this from within the Commonwealth, even if you do not nominate the sources as referees. The moderation panel may also consider information about you or your application that is available as a result of the due diligence process or through the normal course of business.

8.3. Who will approve grants?

The Program Delegate decides which grants to approve taking into account the recommendations of the moderation panel 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.

We cannot review decisions about the merits of your application.

The Program Delegate will not approve funding if there are 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.

9.1. Feedback on your application

If you are unsuccessful, you may ask for feedback within three months of being advised of the outcome. We will give written feedback within one month of your request.

10. Successful grant applications

10.1. The 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 will manage the grant agreement through the online portal. This includes issuing and executing the grant agreement. Execute means both you and the Commonwealth have accepted the agreement. You must not start any News Innovation Fund activities until a grant agreement is executed. We are not responsible for any expenditure you incur and cannot make any payments 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.

If you enter an agreement under the News Innovation Fund Program you cannot receive other grants for the same activities from other Commonwealth, state or territory granting programs.

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

We will use a simple 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. Specific legislation, policies and industry standards

You must comply with all relevant laws, regulations and Australian Government sanctions 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
- Australian Government's Multicultural Access and Equity Policy.

10.3. How we pay the grant

The grant agreement will state the maximum grant amount we will pay.

We will not exceed the maximum grant amount under any circumstances. If you incur extra costs, you must meet them yourself.

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. Grant Payments and GST

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 entities³.

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

If successful, your grant will be listed on the GrantConnect website 21 calendar days after the date of execution.

We will publish non-sensitive details of successful projects on GrantConnect. We are required to do this by the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles \(CGRPs\)](#). Section 5.4. 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.

³ See Australian Taxation Office ruling GSTR 2012/2 available at [ato.gov.au](#)

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
- nominated contact details
- bank account details
- joint partners and related arrangements (if applicable).

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 and outcomes
- project expenditure, including expenditure of grant funds.

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
- show the total eligible expenditure incurred to date
- include evidence of expenditure
- 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. 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.

12.2.3. 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
- 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.

12.3. Audited financial acquittal report

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.

12.4. 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
- extending the timeframe for completing the project but within the maximum time period allowed in program guidelines
- changing project activities.

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. You can submit a variation request via our online portal.

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.

12.5. 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 will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

12.6. Record keeping

We may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement.

12.7. Evaluation

DITRDCA will evaluate the 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.

12.8. Acknowledgement

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

‘This project received grant funding from the Australian Government News Innovation Fund Program.’

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 CGRPs.

These guidelines may be changed from time-to-time by DISR during the application period. When this happens, the revised guidelines will be published on GrantConnect.

13.1. 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:

General Manager
Business Grants Hub
Department of Industry, Science and Resources
GPO Box 2013
CANBERRA ACT 2601

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

13.2. Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the 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\(7\)\)](#) of the [Public Service Act 1999](#). 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. The Commonwealth policy entity also publishes a conflict of interest policy on its website.

13.3. Privacy

Unless the information you provide to us is:

- confidential information as per below, or
- personal information as per below.

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

⁴ <https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/conflict-interest-policy>

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

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, the committee, 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.

13.4. Confidential information

Other than information available in the public domain, you agree not to disclose to any person, other than us, any confidential information relating to the grant application and/or agreement, without our prior written approval. The obligation will not be breached where you are required by law, Parliament or a stock exchange to disclose the relevant information or where the relevant information is publicly available (other than through breach of a confidentiality or non-disclosure obligation).

We may at any time, require you to arrange for you; or your employees, agents or subcontractors to give a written undertaking relating to nondisclosure of our confidential information in a form we consider acceptable.

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.

We may disclose confidential information:

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

- to the committee 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.

13.5. 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.

14. Glossary

| Term | Definition |
|--|---|
| administering entity | When an entity that is not responsible for the policy, is responsible for the administration of part or all of the grant administration processes. |
| administrative staffing | Staffing employed in a capacity other than core news content production, that support the new project or activity. |
| alternate advertising | Advertising activities undertaken in communications channels not owned by the grantee. |
| application form | The document issued by the Program Delegate that applicants use to apply for funding under the program. |
| assessment criteria | The specified principles or standards, against which applications will be judged. These criteria are also used to assess the merits of proposals and, in the case of a competitive grant opportunity, to determine application ranking. |
| audience | The intended or actual individuals or group that engage with, or consume, the publications' news content on offer, which is typically targeted to be relevant to this group. |
| Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles (CGRPs) | Establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and articulate the expectations for all non-corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration. Under this overarching framework, non-corporate Commonwealth entities undertake grants administration based on the mandatory requirements and key principles of grants administration. |
| completion date | The expected date that the grant activity must be completed and the grant spent by |
| content support staff | Employees, other than journalists, who directly support the creation of news content (e.g. photojournalists, copyeditors, camera operators). |
| core news content | Content that reports, investigates or explains: |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. issues or events that are relevant to engaging Australians in public debate and in informing democratic decision making; or b. current issues or events of public significance for Australians at a local, regional, state, or national level. |
| date of effect | Can be the date on which a grant agreement is signed or a specified starting date. Where there is no grant agreement, entities must publish information on individual grants as soon as practicable. |
| Department | The Department of Industry, Science and Resources. |
| DITRDCA | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts DITRDCA |
| decision maker | The person who makes a decision to award a grant. |
| moderation panel | The panel established by DITRDCA to consider and assess eligible applications and make recommendations to the decision maker for funding under the program. The Panel comprises of representatives from DITRDCA. |
| 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. |
| eligibility criteria | Refer to the mandatory criteria which must be met to qualify for a grant. Assessment criteria may apply in addition to eligibility criteria. |
| eligible expenditure | The expenditure incurred by a grantee on a project and which is eligible for funding support as set out in 2. |
| grant | For the purposes of the CGRPs, a 'grant' is an arrangement for the provision of financial assistance by the Commonwealth or on behalf of the Commonwealth: |

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|------------------------------|--|
| | <p>a. under which relevant money⁶ or other Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) money⁷ is to be paid to a grantee other than the Commonwealth; and</p> <p>a. which is intended to help address one or more of the Australian Government’s policy outcomes while assisting the grantee achieve its objectives.</p> |
| grant activity/activities | Refers to the project/tasks/services that the grantee is required to undertake |
| grant agreement | A legally binding contract that sets out the relationship between the Commonwealth and a grantee for the grant funding and specifies the details of the grant. |
| grant funding or grant funds | The funding made available by the Commonwealth to grantees under the program. |
| grant opportunity | Refers to the specific grant round or process where a Commonwealth grant is made available to potential grantees. Grant opportunities may be open or targeted and will reflect the relevant grant selection process. |
| grant program | A ‘program’ carries its natural meaning and is intended to cover a potentially wide range of related activities aimed at achieving government policy outcomes. A grant program is a group of one or more grant opportunities under a single DITRDCSA Portfolio Budget Statement 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 CGRPs. |
| Grantee | The individual/organisation which has been selected to receive a grant |
| Innovation | To significantly change, or make new, an existing practice for the purpose of improving an organisation’s content production or capacity. |
| Minister | The Commonwealth Minister for Communications. |

⁶ Relevant money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 8, Dictionary.

⁷ Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 105, Rules in relation to other CRF money.

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| News Desert | An under-represented area and/or underserved audience, defined by geographic, demographic, cultural, or linguistic boundaries, that lacks access to relevant and localised news content from at least two independent sources. |
| News Media Assistance Program (News MAP) | News MAP sets out a framework and measures to support public interest journalism and media diversity in Australia. |
| News MAP Policy Framework | The framework guides evidence-based and targeted government support that addresses ongoing pressures in the news sector, while balancing the need to maintain the sector's independence. It outlines the key policy objectives of ensuring access, diversity, press freedom, quality, citizen engagement and representation in Australian news. |
| personal information | Has the same meaning as in the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i> (Cth) which is: Information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable: 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 Business Grants Hub in DISR with responsibility for administering the program. |
| program funding or program funds | The funding made available by the Commonwealth for the program. |
| project | A project described in an application for grant funding under the program. |
| Related bodies corporate | As defined in section 50 of the <i>Corporations Act 2001</i> , a related body corporate includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A holding company of the body corporate or ▪ A subsidiary of the body corporate or ▪ A subsidiary of a holding company of the body corporate. |
| research assets | Research outputs relating to the news media sector, including datasets, reports, transcripts, and modelling. |

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| selection criteria | Comprises of eligibility criteria and assessment criteria. |
| targeted reporting | See: Core News Content |
| third party service enabling organisation | An organisation that does not produce core news content itself but is able to provide services, tools or platforms that supports Australian news producers. |
| underserved audience | See: News Desert |
| value with money | <p>Value with money in this document refers to ‘value with relevant money’ which is a judgement based on the grant proposal representing an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public resources and determined from a variety of considerations.</p> <p>When administering a grant opportunity, an official should consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of each proposal including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the quality of the project proposal and activities; ▪ fitness for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives; ▪ that the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the grantee and government’s outcomes being achieved; and ▪ the potential grantee’s relevant experience and performance history. <p>For more information, please refer to the Commonwealth Procurement Rules – Value for Money</p> |