



DEBRIEF ON ROUND 1 APPLICATIONS

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) would like to thank all applicants for Round 1 of Australian Aid: Friendship Grants.

More than 200 Australian community organisations applied. Applications for activities in 21 countries were received, with Timor-Leste, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea being the most well represented countries. Education, training and healthcare activities were the most well represented activity areas.

This debrief is provided as general feedback against the Eligibility Requirements and Selection Criteria for Round 1 of the Friendship Grants. This debrief collectively identifies the general characteristics of both stronger and weaker applications as they addressed the Selection Criteria. Where possible, these characteristics are further explained with examples. The feedback is not a definitive statement about individual applications.

Generally, the applications that rated highly were those that supported claims with strong evidence and details that demonstrated the capacity of organisations to deliver identified activities.

No further feedback will be provided on specific applications. The Department strongly encourages unsuccessful applicants to apply in future rounds, and encourages interested parties to monitor the Australian Aid: Friendship Grants pages of the DFAT website for further updates.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications were open from 18 June to 28 August 2018, with applicants able to call the Friendship Grants hotline and email DFAT about the grant application process during this period. All applications were assessed for compliance against set eligibility requirements and Selection Criteria, which were available on the Friendship Grants pages of the DFAT website. Representatives from DFAT and independent experts made a multi-step assessment of applications based on merit and diversity, consistent with the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017](#).

ELIGIBILITY AND COMPLIANCE

Applications were initially screened against eligibility and compliance criteria, as set out in the [Friendship Grants Round 1 Guidelines](#).

Common reasons why applicants were found non-compliant included:

- Organisations providing un-audited financial statements.
- Organisations not providing evidence of registration with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, a state or territory regulator, or the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations.
- Organisations not supplying a letter of support from an in-country authority that provided DFAT with the assurance that the government in-country had no objections to the activity or partners involved.
- Organisations proposed activities that were ineligible such as bringing participants to Australia for training and substantial freight.



Unsuccessful applicants are reminded to carefully review eligibility criteria prior to submitting an application in future rounds.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Relevance to Australian Government priorities: Applicants were asked to demonstrate the extent to which the activity complements Australian Government priorities.

Stronger applications:

- Provided evidence of clear links between their proposed activities and Australian Government priorities. This included in-depth analysis of the intended outcomes of their projects and how these could contribute to the strategic objectives of the Australian aid program.
 - For example, organisations working with women and people with disabilities demonstrated clear alignment of their activities with the objectives and approaches of [DFAT's Development for All 2015-2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program](#) and [Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy](#).
 - Strong applications also demonstrated alignment with DFAT's aid investment plans for the country they proposed to be working in, if one was available. For example, activities operating in Papua New Guinea demonstrating understanding of DFAT's [Papua New Guinea Aid Investment Plan](#) and showing how their activities might complement existing Australian Government activities in that country.

Weaker applications or applications found unsuitable:

- Demonstrated a limited understanding of Australian Government priorities and provided weak or no rationale for why funding of their proposed activity aligned with these priorities.
 - For example, those activities involving the purchase of equipment or capital often failed to demonstrate a clear link between how the purchasing of the asset would lead directly to a development impact aligned with the objectives of the Australian aid program.

Development effectiveness: Applicants were asked to demonstrate the extent to which the proposed activity delivers positive, measurable impact for in-country communities.

Stronger applications:

- Supported their claims with clearly defined outcomes for activities and proposed monitoring methods to assess progress and achievement for those outcomes.
 - For example, organisations with stronger applications presented a monitoring approach that used a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators of success and suggested clear methods for capturing information. This included a clear approach to gathering baseline data, for example through undertaking interviews with potential beneficiaries at the start of activities.
 - In addition, organisations with stronger applications demonstrated clear plans to use monitoring data to improve their activities. For example, an applicant working in the health sector demonstrating how data on patients satisfaction could be used to refine their activities and ultimately improve health outcomes.

Weaker applications or applications found unsuitable:

- Demonstrated weak or no plans for monitoring and evaluation.



- For example, referring to data that is unlikely to generate useful findings, or providing indicators not clearly linked to the activity's expected outcomes.

Development approach and sustainability: Applicants were asked to demonstrate the extent to which the activity supports and builds on genuine in-country partnerships and demonstrates sustainability of impact.

Stronger applications:

- Supported their claims with a good understanding of community development principles, placing emphasis on working closely with local communities and authorities and strengthening local systems rather than delivering the services themselves.
- Demonstrated approaches that aimed to enhance the sustainability of the proposed activity through partnerships, local leadership and ownership of the activity.
 - For example, organisations seeking to improve employment or income generation opportunities demonstrated a strong understanding of the market they were working in and had clear plans to engage with business partners who were already working in the market, rather than trying to start a business from scratch.

Weaker applications or applications found unsuitable:

- Demonstrated limited evidence of previous partnerships, work to strengthen partner communities, or existing relationships with communities.
 - For example, applications aiming to improve community-based outcomes such as education, providing little evidence of consultation with communities and failing to provide evidence that a community wanted specific education services.
 - Weaker applications also failed to provide evidence of partnerships that could ensure sustainability. For example, providing evidence that if a school was built that there was a local partner who would continue to operate and maintain the school once Friendship Grants funding had ceased.

Outreach: Applicants were asked to demonstrate the extent to which the organisation will raise awareness of their Friendship Grants activity.

Stronger applications:

- Had clear ideas for outreach, including ways to promote Friendship Grants and the Australian aid program.
 - For example, organisations with stronger applications demonstrated evidence of a wide range of communication channels and activities in their existing outreach activities including content-rich websites, events, newspaper articles, radio interviews and social media.
 - Organisations with stronger applications also demonstrated volume of interest in their activity including through a strong social media following.
 - Some organisations with stronger applications demonstrated innovative methods for maximising the reach and promoting Friendship Grants and the Australian aid program.

Weaker applications or applications found unsuitable:

- Demonstrated little or no evidence of established communication channels or activities which promote the organisation and its work.
 - For example, there were little to no evidence of the organisation's online presence or on social media channels, nor evidence of newspaper articles, radio interviews or outreach activities.



Safeguards: Applicants were asked to demonstrate the extent to which the organisation will carry out the activity in a way that does not harm people or the environment, and is consistent with DFAT safeguarding mechanisms.

Stronger applications:

- Supported their claims by addressing activity-specific risks and appropriate mitigation strategies with an understanding and appreciation of social, activity and financial risks.
- Demonstrated a comprehensive understanding on issues relating to the environment and child protection, and addressed associated risks in their analysis and procedures.
 - For example, organisations with stronger applications outlined a well-documented complaints handling process for volunteers with their policies available online, providing transparency and clear communication channels in case there was a breach of policy. This allows members of the public or counterparts to report any breaches.

Weaker applications or applications found not suitable:

- Demonstrated limited or no analysis of risks, with suggested mitigation measures insufficiently comprehensive relative to the type of activity being undertaken.
 - For example, applicants working closely with children submitted Child Protection Policies that revealed a limited understanding of child protection issues and the requirements of [DFAT's Child Protection Policy](#).
 - Some applicants whose activities appeared to be working with children did not provide Child Protection policies at all.
 - Some also demonstrated limited financial management controls such as clear expenditure approval processes or external financial audits being undertaken.

Risk: The Australian aid program operates in several countries with challenging security environments and weak governance. By their nature, aid investments contain a high degree of risk which requires careful management. Early identification and management of risks contributes to managing aid effectively. Due diligence assessments were undertaken on eligible applicants to determine risks that could be associated with funding organisations and activities.

Some of the common risks identified during the due diligence process included:

- **Financial risks:** Applicants failed to complete financial documentation, including the provision of inadequate financial accounts. This made it difficult to assess the organisation's previous financial performance and their capacity to manage grant funding.
- **Operational risks:** Applicants provided insufficient and/or incomplete information on operational processes and policies. For example, some Codes of Conduct provided were insufficiently comprehensive relative to the challenging environments in which the proposed activities would be undertaken.

Value-For-Money: Applicants were asked to demonstrate the extent to which their proposed activity demonstrated cost effectiveness and efficiency. The assessment of applications against this criteria was a holistic assessment, including factoring in risk.

Diversity: The goal of the Friendship Grants program is to engage a diverse group of Australian community organisations in the delivery of Australian aid in the Indo-Pacific region. Assessments were made on the extent to which organisations reflected the diversity of the Australian community.

Specifically, assessments were made to ensure that selected organisations reflected:

- Australia's cultural and demographic diversity.



- A range of types and sizes of organisation.
- A range of types of activity.
- A broad geographic spread of organisations across Australia.

We would like to congratulate all successful Round 1 Australian Aid: Friendship Grants applicants.

If you have not been successful on this occasion, we strongly encourage you to apply in future rounds should your organisation and proposed activity be eligible.

We encourage you to monitor the Australian Aid: Friendship Grants pages of the DFAT website and social media accounts for updates.

