



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) Phase 5

Guidelines, Eligibility and Selection Criteria

Instructions for Organisations:

Please read this Guidelines, Eligibility and Selection Criteria document carefully before responding to the Invitation to Submit Activity Proposal.

Section 1: Background

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Pacific media outlets occupy a challenging operating environment. A lack of infrastructure, small and dispersed audiences that can be difficult to reach and a general lack of financial and human resources are ongoing challenges. New challenges have emerged as populations increasingly switch from print to digital media, which poses challenges for traditional advertising revenue. Press freedom is also a consideration in some countries.

1.1.2 Australia has a long history of supporting Pacific media. The Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy, announced in 2022, formalises Australia's commitment to fostering a vibrant and independent media sector in the Pacific. It provides a framework to strengthen and expand Australian broadcasting and media sector engagement across the Pacific.

1.1.3 The Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) is Australia's flagship media capacity building investment. Since its inception in 2008, PACMAS has supported Pacific media through activities such as training for journalists, governance support for media organisations and content co-production, with the goal that Pacific audiences value their local media as sources of credible and high-quality information and content. PACMAS has also helped expand cooperation between Australian and Pacific journalists, and improved broadcast infrastructure in the region.

1.2 Program objectives

1.2.1 PACMAS Phase 5 will build on previous phases of the investment, maintain the momentum of Australia's media support and partnerships in the region, and respond to the challenging operating environment for Pacific media.

1.2.2 DFAT anticipates the following end of program outcomes for phase 5:

EPOPO 1: Targeted Pacific media organisations are more viable, resilient and adaptive, with the capability to respond to digital and AI-driven change and help counter growing information threats.

EPOPO 2: Pacific audiences have access to, value and engage with trusted, accurate, independent and locally relevant public-interest content.

EPOPO 3: Pacific media organisations, associations and networks are stronger, more inclusive, professional and locally led.

1.3 Design process

1.3.1 PACMAS Phase 5 will follow a partner-led design and implement pathway. Early activities flagged in the investment concept note will commence in January 2027 in parallel with the design process.

1.3.2 The successful applicant will lead the design process to create an investment design that meets [DFAT design standards](#) for a partner-led design. The final design will be assessed in accordance with DFAT's quality assurance processes. Following approval by DFAT, implementation will begin in January 2028.

1.3.3 The design for phase 5 will be informed by the phase 4 independent evaluation and DFAT's response to the recommendations contained within (available online).

Section 2: Eligibility

2.1 Applications are invited from eligible organisations or consortia of eligible organisations to deliver PACMAS Phase 5.

2.2 For the purposes of this call for proposals, an eligible organisation is an Australian media organisation, non-governmental organisation (NGO), civil society organisation (CSO), a university, a research institution or a Pacific regional organisation.

2.3 Government agencies, multilateral organisations, managing contractors, commercial service providers and development banks are not eligible organisations, cannot submit applications nor form part of a consortium. This does not limit subsequent subcontract or subgrant arrangements, provided these are consistent with the terms and requirements of the funding agreement with DFAT.

2.4 Consortia must nominate a lead organisation, which will be responsible to DFAT for the performance of the consortium under the agreement and accountable for all funds and compliance requirements.

2.5 An organisation may submit only one proposal as an individual application or consortium lead. There is no limit on the number of proposals for which an organisation can be a consortium partner.

2.6 Organisations submitting proposals must not have any reason preventing them from operating in Australia and the Pacific.

2.7 Organisations should note that individuals with conflicting commitments, and current and former DFAT employees, must not be included in the Activity Proposal or as individuals who may be engaged by the applicant if selected through the assessment process described in this Guideline. DFAT may reject any Activity Proposal which does not disclose the fact that a proposed team member has an existing or continuing commitment to another project or activity.

2.8 Activity Proposals compiled with the assistance of current DFAT employees or former DFAT employees will be excluded from consideration.

2.9 'Former DFAT employee' means a person who was previously employed by DFAT, whose employment ceased within the last 9 months, and who was substantially involved in the design, preparation, appraisal, review and or daily management of the program to which this grant relates.

2.10 All eligible organisations and consortia must demonstrate sufficient financial and organisational capacity to deliver the proposal. DFAT reserves the right to consider administrative efficiency of proposed consortia arrangements as a delivery mechanism.

2.11 DFAT reserves the right to reassess any proposal if, following submission, the membership of the successful consortium proposal changes, including withdrawing consortium member(s).

Section 3: Agreement length and budget

3.1 PACMAS 5 is proposed to be a 10-year investment, including a 1-year design-implement phase, followed by two extensions of 4 and 5 years.

3.2 Progression to the implementation phase is conditional on DFAT approving the proposed design.

3.3 DFAT invites proposals for this period of 10 years, including the first year design-implement phase, with a budget of \$25 million plus capacity for additional funding up to \$50-70 million from bilateral contributions.

Section 4: Preparing proposals

4.1 Applicants should carefully read the Invitation to Submit Activity Proposal document, these Guidelines, Eligibility and Selection Criteria, and the accompanying Investment Concept Note when preparing their proposal.

4.1: Proposal requirements

4.1.1 Eligible proposals must:

- Include all information as required in the Invitation to Submit Activity Proposal document
- Not exceed maximum page counts as stipulated in the Invitation to Submit Activity Proposal document
- Be provided in PDF or Microsoft Word format
- Put forward a proposed program plan that does not exceed \$20 million over 10 years, and options to reflect

4.2: Applicant briefings

4.2.1 Subject to interest DFAT could hold an optional virtual briefing session for prospective applicants.

4.2.2 The briefing session would provide an opportunity for applicants to ask questions about the application process, investment structure and implementation. Answers to such questions will be published on the DFAT website Business Opportunities page.

4.2.3 Applicants who wish to attend the briefing must RSVP to PACMAS@dfat.gov.au by 30 October 2026.

4.3 Submission deadline

4.3.1 The submission deadline is indicated in Section 2 of the Invitation to Submit Activity Proposal.

4.3.2 A full application must be submitted by the closing date as this call for proposals is a one-step process.

4.3.3 Late applications will not be considered.

Section 5: Selection process and criteria

5.1 DFAT will undertake eligibility checks against the eligibility criteria listed in this document and in the Invitation to Submit Activity Proposal document.

5.2 Eligible proposals will progress to the evaluation stage, where they will be assessed by a DFAT Evaluation Committee.

5.3 Following the evaluation process, DFAT may invite highly ranked lead organisations to enter negotiations for a funding agreement with DFAT. As part of these negotiations, DFAT may request modifications to the proposal, including the budget. DFAT will also require lead organisations to meet DFAT's due diligence requirements and other DFAT policies prior to entering into a funding agreement.

5.4 DFAT will notify applicants if proposals are successful or unsuccessful.

5.5 Individualised feedback will not be provided to unsuccessful applicants.

5.6 The Evaluation Committee will review applications against the following criteria and relative weightings:

1. Achieving development impact (40%)

Innovative delivery approach

- How will you achieve PACMAS 5's three End of Program outcomes, underpinned by the core guiding principles set out in the PACMAS Phase 5 Concept Note and taking into account current strategic issues in the Pacific? You should outline a brief workplan under six proposed areas:
 - Capacity and skills
 - Content partnerships
 - Media economics and business practice
 - Media systems
 - Coordination and cooperation
 - Research and analysis

Demonstrated capacity to draw on expertise and relationships

- How will you draw on a range of industry and technical expertise from within your organisation and across the Australian media and professional services sectors, to meet the various needs of Pacific media across all platforms in the delivery of PACMAS 5?
- How will you build and maintain effective relationships and arrangements with key media and community sector stakeholders across the Pacific to achieve shared outcomes?

2. Organisational capacity (30%)

Demonstrated capacity for program design and implementation

- How will you undertake consultation to capture diverse stakeholder views? How will you transition implementation, combining delivery of core activities in parallel to the development of Phase 5 design? How will you manage stakeholder relationships over the life of the program, including regular engagement with stakeholders and strategic communications?

Demonstrated capacity for monitoring and evaluation

- How will you conduct monitoring and evaluation? What key methodologies or techniques will you use to measure the changes created by the investment? You should include broad information on indicators, targets and data collection to measure outcomes using DFAT's Standard on Program Logic as a guide.

Budget and resources plan

- Outline your budget and resources plan, setting out cost assumptions for the timeframe January 2027 to December 2036 with projected funding of AUD 25 million, with capacity for additional bilateral funding totalling AUD 50-70 million.

Demonstrated risk management ability

- How will you plan and manage risks? Identify the most significant risks that may hinder ability to achieve program outcomes and provide a brief description of plans for mitigation, including escalation strategies.

3. Value for money (20%)

- How will you provide value-for money? Will you provide other resources or co-funding to the program? Are there opportunities to leverage other funding or resources to support achievement of program outcomes?

Section 6: Timeline

Table 1: Indicative key dates for Applicants

Date	Activity
Friday 2 October 2026	Call for proposals launched on DFAT Business Notifications.
TBC	Information/Briefing session and Q&A (subject to interest)
Monday 2 November 2026	Final day for applicants to submit questions
Friday 6 November 2026	Final day for DFAT to respond to applicant questions
Monday 16 November 2026	Application closing date
November 2026	Evaluation Committee assessment
December 2026	Applicants notified of outcomes
December 2026	Agreement negotiated with successful applicant
January 2027	Early activities and design phase commence
August 2027	Design approved by DFAT
January 2028	Implementation phase commences