

# National Stronger Regions Fund – Round Three

## FEEDBACK FOR UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

### **FEEDBACK ON ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES**

The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development (the Department) received 479 applications, requesting approximately \$1.4 billion in grant funding.

NSRF has been a highly competitive funding programme and the Department has seen a significant improvement in the strength and quality of applications being submitted in each funding round.

As you may be aware, round three was the last round of NSRF. The Australian Government recently announced the new Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF) to support infrastructure projects and community initiatives in areas outside of major capital cities. You can find the announcement at <http://nationals.org.au/coalition-building-better-regions/>.

Guidelines for the BBRF are currently being finalised. They will define the geographic boundaries for applicants and the types of infrastructure projects and community activities that may be eligible for funding under the BBRF.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

All applications were assessed by the Department to determine whether they complied with the eligibility requirements. Only applications that met the eligibility requirements were then appraised against the assessment criteria (applications without confirmed partner funding were ineligible and not assessed).

### **ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

The Department's assessment process considered claims against four assessment criteria and the evidence provided in support of those claims.

Applications had to meet a minimum benchmark score against each of the four assessment criteria to be recommended for funding to the Ministerial Panel.

#### *Assessment Criterion 1: The extent to which the project contributes to economic growth in the region*

Note this criterion was weighted and contributed 3/7ths of the total score.

- Claims of the project's expected economic benefits need to be clearly defined and quantified, and supported by recent evidence specific to the project.
- Applicants seeking grant requests of more than \$1 million were strongly encouraged in the NSRF Guidelines to provide a cost benefit analysis. Economic analysis defining and quantifying the project's expected economic benefits, and the level of detail in any economic assessment, should have been proportionate with the cost of the project.
- Competitive applications included a business case, a project management plan or similar documents including but not limited to, a demand analysis, research/case studies of similar projects, a need analysis and/or a feasibility studies.
- Applications that failed to define, quantify and provide supporting evidence limited the potential score on this criterion and likely had difficulty in meeting the minimum benchmark for funding.

#### *Assessment Criterion 2: The extent to which the project addresses disadvantage in the region*

Note this criterion was weighted and contributed to 2/7ths of the total score.

- Strong applications described and quantified long and short term benefits and the claims were supported with relevant evidence.
- Applications needed to clearly state what disadvantage the project would address and how the project would address the identified disadvantage. Applications were strengthened if any data references were supported with relevant evidence.
- Applications that failed to address both components of this criterion limited the potential score. Both components needed to be clearly defined, quantified and supported by recent and relevant evidence.

### *Assessment Criterion 3: The extent to which the project increases investment and builds partnerships in the region*

Note this criterion was weighted and contributed to 1/7th of the total score.

- Written confirmation of all cash and in-kind contributions had to be provided. For cash contributions the confirmation had to be in the form of a letter of intent (or similar) from a senior member of the organisation providing the funding and which outlines the amount of the funding committed, the project name, and any conditions attached to the funding commitment.
- Applicants should have addressed the extent and nature of the partnerships, including those of a non-financial nature, that were formed to develop and deliver the project.
- The assessment considered how much partner funding had been confirmed above the minimum requirement and how many partners committed to the project. Both cash and in-kind contributions were taken into account.
- Evidence of partner funding demonstrated that the applicant has been successful in leveraging greater funding and indicates support from different levels of Government or the community/private sector.

### *Assessment Criterion 4: The extent to which the project and proponent are viable and sustainable*

Note this criterion was weighted and contributed to 1/7th of the total score.

This criterion relates to providing confidence the applicant and the project are both viable and sustainable, and the project can be delivered on time, on budget and to the quality/standard required for infrastructure project. Documentation needed to be proportionate with the size and scope of the project being delivered.

- Strong applications provided supporting documentation that demonstrated the project was sufficiently progressed beyond the concept stage and would be delivered and remain viable beyond the period of construction. This could have included:
  - the applicant's financial position;
  - quality of supporting documentation to provide confidence in project delivery;
  - whether all project planning, construction, zoning, environmental, heritage and/or native title approvals had been identified, were in place or would be in place within six months of execution of the Deed of Agreement;
  - whether the project construction would commence within 12 months of signing the Deed of Agreement;
  - applicants' history in managing grant funding; and any other risks associated with project delivery and ongoing management.

## **OTHER AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FUNDING**

In addition to the Department's eligibility requirements and the claims against assessment criteria, an application may have been considered ineligible to receive funding under the NSRF if the project is to be funded under another Australian Government programme.

Under the NSRF programme guidelines, funding for a project from the Australian Government cannot exceed 50 per cent of the total cash project cost.

## **FURTHER QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK**

Project proponents with further enquiries about their project should contact the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development on [nsrf@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:nsrf@infrastructure.gov.au).

Feedback sessions for applicants can be arranged. Project proponents should contact the Department on [nsrf@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:nsrf@infrastructure.gov.au).