



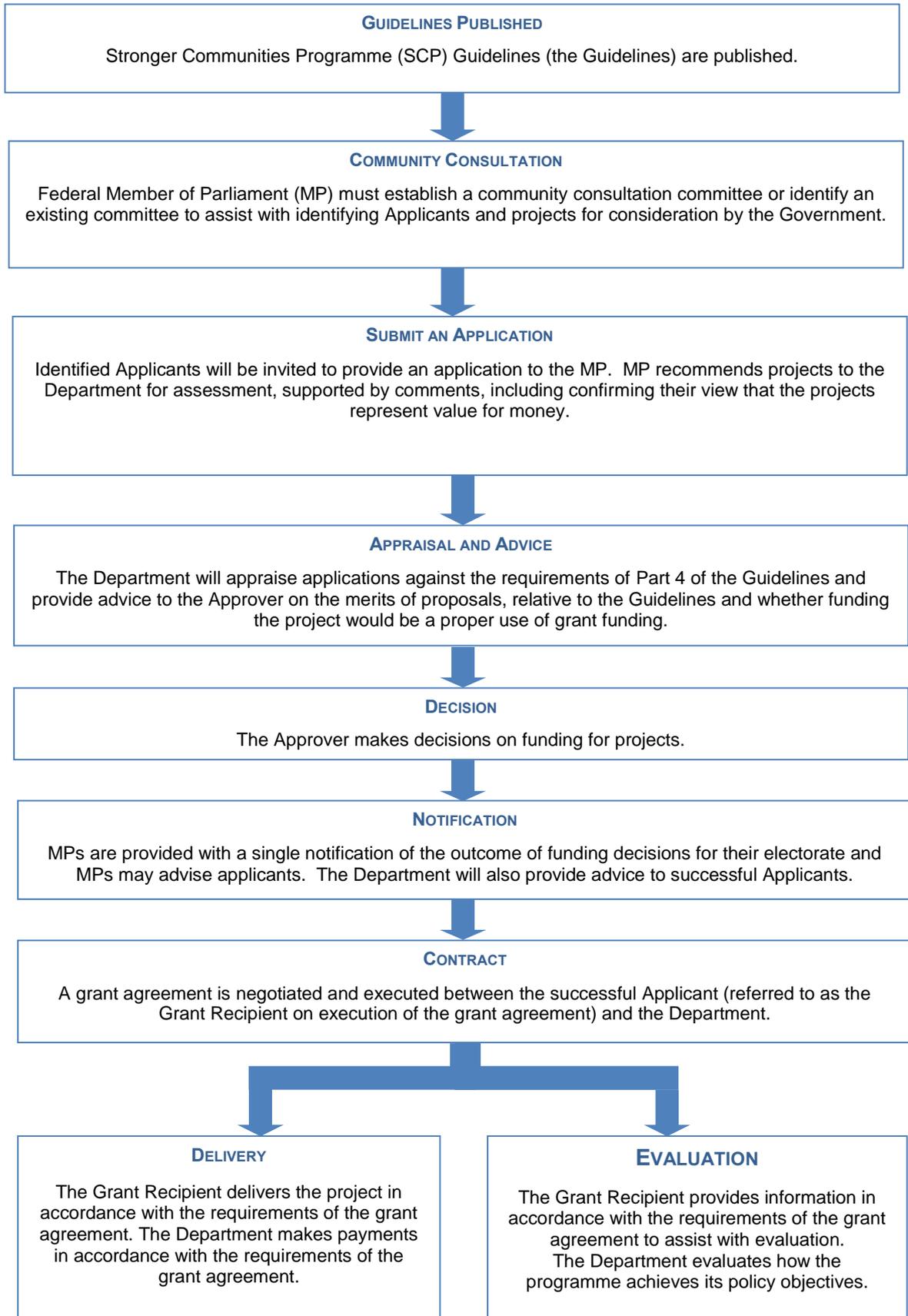
Grant Programme Guidelines

STRONGER COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME

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Grant Programme Process Flowchart



1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

The Stronger Communities Programme (SCP) is a new programme designed to deliver social benefits across Australia. The Government is providing \$45 million over two years, commencing in 2015-16, to fund small capital projects in local communities in each of the 150 Federal Electorates.

Funding of \$150,000 per year over two years will be available to support projects in each of the Electorates. Applicants must seek a grant of at least \$5,000 and up to a maximum of \$20,000 and must match the SCP grant in cash or in-kind on at least a dollar for dollar basis.

The input of the community is a key priority of the SCP. Each Member of Parliament must establish a community consultation committee to assist with identifying projects for consideration by the Government.

Applications for grant funding will be appraised against the Guidelines and whether funding the project would be a proper¹ use of grant funding. Decisions on projects to be funded will be taken by the Approver (an officer of the Department).

The Guidelines apply to all projects seeking funding from the SCP. The Guidelines outline the objectives and desired outcomes of the SCP, eligibility requirements, the application and selection process, roles and responsibilities, and funding arrangements.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to read these Guidelines in conjunction with the Frequently Asked Questions which are available on the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development website at <http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/SCP>.

1.2. Programme objective and outcomes

The objective of the SCP is to fund small capital projects which will deliver social benefits.

The desired outcome of the programme is to improve local community participation, cohesion and contribute to vibrant and viable communities.

1.3. Programme coverage

This Programme is optional for Members of Parliament to participate or not to participate in. Should a Member of Parliament choose to participate in the Programme, they will need to source and recommend applications in accordance with these Guidelines and within the specified timeframes.

Should a Member of Parliament choose not to participate in the Programme, the \$150,000 allocated per year to that electorate will be returned to Budget.

Funding that is not fully allocated to an electorate in any one year will not be available for allocation in subsequent years and it will not be available for allocation to other electorates, but will be returned to budget.

¹ Proper' is defined in the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* as meaning 'efficient, effective, economical and ethical'.

Members of Parliament may only recommend projects for consideration of funding up to a maximum combined cost of \$150,000 in each of the two years of the Programme.

The Department does not undertake a comparative assessment of projects against other projects within the \$150,000 per year funding envelope. Prioritisation of projects and ensuring the total funding sought is within the electorate's nominal allocation is the responsibility of the Member of Parliament.

1.4. Roles and responsibilities

The *Process Flowchart* on page 3 outlines the roles and responsibilities of each party.

The SCP is administered by the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development (the Department).

The Member of Parliament is responsible for undertaking community consultation to identify potential applicants and projects for consideration. As part of this process, the Member of Parliament must establish a committee, consisting of representatives from the local community or consult with an existing committee.

Following consultation, the Member of Parliament will identify eligible projects that will improve local community participation and cohesion and/or contribute to vibrant and viable communities.

Applicants will complete, and provide to the Member of Parliament, an online application form for projects that have been identified through the consultation process.

The Member of Parliament will select projects totalling no more than \$150,000 per year and submit these projects to the Department for assessment against the requirements of the Guidelines.

The Department provides advice to the Approver on the merits of projects relative to the requirements of the Guidelines.

The Approver considers the Department's advice, information provided by the Applicant and advice from the Member of Parliament in making decisions on projects to be funded.

For the purposes of these Guidelines, the Applicant means the organisation that submits the application and will be the organisation which enters into the grant agreement if grant funding is approved. On entering into the grant agreement, this organisation will be referred to as the Grant Recipient. The Approver is a delegated officer in the Infrastructure Investment SCP Division in the Department with authority to make funding decision associated with the SCP.

2. Key Dates

Key Dates	
SCP Announced	12 May 2015
Guidelines Published	25 June 2015
Information sessions for MPs	25 June 2015
System open for MPs to advise selected proponents to lodge applications for projects to receive payments in 2015-16	Late August 2015
MPs submit recommended projects to the Department to enable assessment and payment in 2015-16	By 30 October 2015
Assessments Completed (target date depending on numbers of proposals)	30 January 2016
System open for MPs to advise selected proponents to lodge applications for projects to receive payments in 2016-17	15 February 2016
MPs submit recommended projects to the Department to enable assessment and payment in 2016-17	By 30 April 2016
Assessment Completed (target depending on numbers of proposals)	31 July 2016

All key dates will be published on the Department's website. Any recommendations submitted by Members of Parliament after 30 October 2015 and 30 April 2016 will be assessed after all previously submitted recommendations have been processed.

3. How to Apply

3.1. Application process

Through the community consultation processes the Member of Parliament will identify eligible projects and Applicants. Those invited to apply by the Member of Parliament will be provided with an electronic link and asked to fill out an online application form. Only Applicants that have been identified to apply will be provided with the link.

Following completion of the application form, it will be provided electronically to the Member of Parliament, who will select projects from his or her electorate, totalling no more than \$150,000 per year, and submit these projects to the Department for assessment against the requirements of the Guidelines.

Recommended applications totalling up to the \$150,000 limit can be submitted by the Member of Parliament at any time and should be submitted by no later than 5.00pm local time on 30 October 2015 for 2015-16 payments and 30 April 2016 for 2016-17 payments. Applications should be submitted as a complete electorate package to enable timely processing and will be assessed in order of lodgement.

Applicants or Members of Parliament may be contacted to clarify information that has been provided.

3.2. Application requirements

Applicants must provide all of the information required in the application form.

Co-funding from Applicants is mandatory. Applicants must match the SCP grant in cash or in-kind on at least a dollar for dollar basis. Cash or in-kind partner funding must be confirmed and can be provided by any organisation including, but not limited to, the Applicant, private donations and sponsorships, local, state or territory government, not-for-profit organisations and private sector companies. The Applicant must identify these sources and provide confirmation of funding. For example, if the local council is to provide a level of funding then a letter from the council endorsing its commitment would be expected.

Grants from other Australian Government initiatives cannot be included as part of the Applicant's matching funding. Total funding for the project from the Australian Government cannot exceed 50 per cent of the total project cost.

3.3. How to submit an application

Applications must be provided to the Member of Parliament by the Applicant via the online application form on the Department's Grant Management System (GMS) Portal. The online application form is accessed through a link provided to the Applicant by the Member of Parliament at the completion of the consultation process. Supporting documents are uploaded with the application, however each supporting document must not exceed 15 megabytes in size and must not exceed 45 characters in length for the file name.

The Member of Parliament will complete an eligibility assessment and provide comments on each application before submitting applications to the Department via the GMS. Further information on lodging an application is available in the GMS Portal User Guide at www.infrastructure.gov.au/scp.

4. Selection Process

Based on information provided in the application and advice from the Member of Parliament, the Department will undertake an appraisal against the requirements of this Part 4 of the Guidelines to determine whether SCP funding may be approved.

4.1 Eligibility

The following eligibility requirements must be met in order to be considered for SCP funding:

- the applicant must be an eligible applicant (see 4.1.1);
- the project must be an eligible project (see 4.1.2);
- funding sought from the SCP must be at least \$5,000 and no more than \$20,000;
- match the SCP grant in cash or in-kind on at least a dollar for dollar basis; and
- all partner funding is confirmed.

4.1.1. Applicant Eligibility

To be eligible for funding an Applicant must:

- be a community based not-for-profit organisation in its own right that is not owned by a state or territory government; or
- be a local governing body, as defined at Attachment A of the Guidelines; and
- a legal entity with a current Australian Business Number (ABN).

The following organisations are not eligible for funding:

- state and territory governments;
- state and territory government-owned entities;
- state and territory government-owned not-for-profit organisations;
- universities, technical colleges, schools and hospitals;
- other organisations which are primarily supported by other Australian Government programmes or initiatives;
- Regional Development Australia committees; and
- for-profit organisations.

4.1.2. Project Eligibility

To be eligible for funding a project must:

- be for capital purchases/activities; and
- contribute to an improvement in local community participation and cohesion and contribute to the vibrancy and viability of the community
 - claims against this requirement must be described.

The following items are considered to be ineligible for funding:

- expenditure incurred prior to the announcement that the project has been successful in its application for funding;
- provision of services and support activities;
- payment of salaries for existing staff or contractors;
- recurring or ongoing expenditure (eg annual maintenance);
- projects that seek funding to stage events, exhibit a display or for filming;
- projects to undertake studies or investigations;
- purchase of land or buildings; or
- projects that involve the development of private or commercial ventures including licensed areas of registered clubs.

The Australian Government reserves the right not to fund any project if there is any information known about the applicant or their personnel which might suggest that they, their business or their activities would be inconsistent with the policies and/or expectations of the Australian Government or that might suggest the project could be used for purposes and/or by individuals or groups which are inconsistent with the policies and/or expectations of the Australian Government.

4.2 Risk

Projects which involve risks that, in the view of the Approver, cannot be efficiently and effectively managed may not be funded.

The Department will consider the following factors, and other factors it deems appropriate, to determine whether a project has a risk profile which is acceptable to the Australian government:

- does the project involve complex project/activities for which planning is required, and does the plan have acceptable delivery claims (scope, time, cost, quality);
- does the project involve reasonable (rather than excessive) cost having regard to the quality and quantity of deliverables that are proposed;
- is there any adverse information known about the applicant or their personnel that might suggest Commonwealth funding could be at risk, misused or mismanaged; and
- is the project/activities dependent on other projects/programmes/funding, and how will this dependency effect implementation.

5. Decisions

5.1. Value with relevant money

Value with relevant money is achieved when the processes, actions and behaviours employed by the Australian Government and Grant Recipients result in public resources being used in an efficient, effective, economical and ethical manner. Public resources are defined in the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* as 'relevant money, relevant property, or appropriations'.

In the context of selecting individual candidates for funding the SCP seeks to promote value with relevant money by selecting for funding, those projects that have met the requirements of the Guidelines.

Value with relevant money will also be considered on an ongoing basis during and after the delivery of the project, including by ensuring that Australian Government funding is expended and acquitted in accordance with contracted requirements and all other conditions of funding are met, and through monitoring and evaluating the extent to which a funded project achieves its objectives and contributes to the outcomes of the SCP.

5.2. Decisions on projects to be funded

Following advice from the Department on the merits of a proposal relative to the Guidelines, the Approver will make decisions on whether funding a project would be a proper use of public resources.

The Approver may require additional conditions and management strategies be attached to the grant funding based on the outcomes of the assessment and any identified risks.

Should a project not be approved, the Member of Parliament will be provided with the opportunity by the Government to submit a new or alternative project.

5.3. Advice to the Applicant

Members of Parliament will be advised by the Department in writing of the funding decisions as soon as possible after the Approver has made a decision, so that each Member of Parliament is able to inform successful applicants in their electorate.

The Department will not be able to respond to requests from Members of Parliament who are seeking early or advance decisions for an application in their electorate due to external timing pressures.

Following written advice to Members of Parliament, the Department will also write to successful Applicants. Those letters will detail any specific conditions attached to the funding. Funding approvals will also be listed on the Department's website and include Applicants name, location, project description and funding amount.

6. Conditions of Funding

6.1. Contractual arrangements

Applicants that have been selected to receive grant funding will be required to enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth of Australia, represented by the Department.

The grant agreement, in the form of a letter of offer, states the obligations of the Grant Recipient and the Department. Grant Recipients are advised to be aware of the obligations and requirements set out in the letter of offer, and should seek legal advice where needed. A template of the letter of offer is available on the Department's website from 1 September 2015, at www.infrastructure.gov.au/scp.

The Grant Recipient should not make financial commitments for funded activities based on the approval of funding or public announcements. Financial commitments entered into before a letter of offer has been accepted with the Department are done so at the risk of the Grant Recipient.

Grant Recipients will be required to keep all evidence of expenditure for two years after the completion of the project and provide this evidence upon request by the Department. Project audits will be made through a representative sample.

6.2. Evaluation

A Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy forms part of the Department's programme delivery arrangements, and will assess the extent to which the SCP is achieving its policy objectives and provide valuable input to the development of future programmes.

Applicants are required to provide information, as requested, to support the collection of data and inform the evaluation of the SCP.

7. Payment of Funding

7.1. Payment arrangements

Grant funding will be made in a single payment. Before any payment can be made, Grant Recipients will be required to provide a tax invoice for the amount of the payment, bank details to enable payment and evidence of the commitment to spend eg. order with supplier or invoice from the supplier.

7.2. GST implications

Grants under SCP are not subject to GST. Applicants are to provide quotes that are both GST exclusive and inclusive and whether they are GST registered or not.

For those applicants that are GST registered the grant amount will be the GST exclusive amount and for the non GST registered organisation the grant amount will be the GST inclusive amount.

It is recommended that GST registered Grant Recipients seek guidance about the implications in receiving funding from a tax advisor or the Australian Taxation Office at www.ato.gov.au prior to submitting an application.

8. Probity

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that the process for providing funding is transparent and in accordance with published Guidelines. The Guidelines may be varied from time-to-time by the Australian Government, as needed or to reflect its priorities. Amended Guidelines will be published on the Department's website.

8.1. Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest may exist if, for example, the Applicant, the Member of Parliament or any of their personnel:

- has a relationship (whether professional, commercial or personal) with a party who is able to influence the application appraisal process, such as a Department staff member;
- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the Applicant or Member of Parliament in carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently; or
- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they have received or will receive political donations or personal gain as a result of the granting of funding.

Each Applicant and Member of Parliament will be required to declare any actual, apparent or potential conflicts of interest.

Where an Applicant or Member of Parliament subsequently identifies an actual, apparent, or potential conflict of interest in relation to the application for funding, the Applicant or Member of Parliament must inform the Department in writing immediately.

Department employees will manage any conflict of interest in accordance with the Department's Accountable Authority Instruction for probity.

8.2. Confidential information

Information submitted by the Applicant may be provided to other organisations. Applicants should identify any information submitted which they wish to be considered as confidential, supported by reasons for the request. The Australian Government reserves the right to accept or refuse a request to treat information as confidential.

The Privacy Act 1988 applies to the handling of personal information about individuals obtained in the course of the delivery of the SCP.

Grant Recipients must not act or engage in any practice which, if done or engaged in by the Commonwealth, would be a breach of an Information Privacy Principle contained at Section 14 of the *Privacy Act 1988*.

9. Contact Details

Questions about the SCP, including the eligibility criteria and the application process can be emailed to SCP@infrastructure.gov.au. Questions should be clear and concise. Questions that are directly relevant to the SCP will be included in a Frequently Asked Questions document and placed on the Department's website.

Any enquires relating funding decisions or complaints should be directed to:

General Manager
Stronger Communities Programme
Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601
E: SCP@infrastructure.gov.au

10. Attachments

A: Eligible Local Governing Bodies

Attachment A

Eligible Local Governing Bodies

A *local governing body* is defined by the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995* (Cwlth) as either:

- a) a local governing body established by or under a law of a State, other than a body whose sole or principal function is to provide a particular service, such as the supply of electricity or water ('State' in the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995* (Cwlth) includes the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory); or
- b) a body declared by the Minister, on the advice of the relevant State Minister, by notice published in the *Gazette*, to be a local governing body for the purposes of this Act.

In addition, for the purposes of the SCP, the following organisations will be considered local governing bodies:

- ACT Government
- Five Indigenous local governing bodies in South Australia (Anangu Pitjantjatjara, Maralinga, Gerard, Nepabunna and Yalata);
- Outback Communities Authority, formerly the Outback Areas Community Development Trust, in South Australia;
- Trust Account in the Northern Territory;
- Silverton and Tibooburra villages in New South Wales;
- Cocos (Keeling) Islands Shire Council;
- Shire of Christmas Island;
- Norfolk Island Administration; and
- Lord Howe Island governed by New South Wales.