



Frequently Asked Questions

Cultural Flows Planning for Cultural Economies

This grant opportunity aims to help Basin First Nations get ready to own and manage water entitlements for the spiritual, cultural, environmental, social, and economic benefit of their Nation.

1. What are the eligibility criteria?

Applicants need to meet the entity type requirements in section 4 of the guidelines. You must be one of the legal entity types listed.

You must also *be* or *be partnering* with a First Nations group or organisation recognised as a Basin Traditional Owner(s) or able to demonstrate a traditional connection to the relevant area for which you are applying. This must be verifiable using one of the methods in section 4.2 of the guidelines.

See guidelines – section 4.2

2. My Mob doesn't have Native Title or Traditional Owner status – can we apply?

Yes, if your Mob can demonstrate a traditional connection to the relevant area of the Murray—Darling Basin.

You can submit a *Declaration of Connection to Country* with your application as an alternative form of evidence.

See guidelines – section 4.2

3. What is a Declaration of Connection to Country?

A signed (and witnessed) declaration made by a culturally authorised individual(s) representing a specific Nation, lands and/or water. For this program, it can be used in lieu of Traditional Owner status to identify representatives of cultural and ancestral connection. The declaration must:

Identify the group

- full name and relevant community/Nation affiliation
- relationship to ancestors or historical figures connected to the land or water

State the connection to Country

- describe the land/water area in question (geographical description)
- explain the basis of the connection (eg ancestral ties, continued Cultural practices, oral histories)

Provide supporting evidence

- traditional knowledge, cultural responsibilities, or laws that affirm the connection
- references to family lineage and historical occupation
- endorsements from Elders or community organisations

Acknowledge the purpose of the declaration

- that is, to confirm eligibility for the grant opportunity

See guidelines – section 4.2

4. How will you determine Cultural authority for grant projects?

We will not determine Cultural authority.

The program includes many ways for Nations to demonstrate their Cultural authority, to ensure that all Basin Nations have the same opportunity to access funding under the program.

We recognise the potential for conflict in and between communities and have a responsibility to not cause further harm.

Part of this responsibility is to verify connection to Traditional Country for grant eligibility. This is understandably a sensitive theme for First Nations peoples, especially for those disconnected from traditional communities and Country due to colonisation.

Issues may arise around contested territories in grant applications. As settling disputes around Cultural authority is Nation business, we will not make any determination of Cultural authority on contested territories. The grant program is non-competitive and enables multiple groups navigating a contested territory to be eligible for grant funding.

While assessing applications we will consider the distribution of grant funds where different applicants apply to undertake the same project or project activity in the same portion of the Basin. Where possible, we will contact the relevant Nations, clans or family groups to seek their consent to have further discussions in an effort to reduce duplication. Should consent not be given, the applications will be assessed as is.

5. Are co-contributions required?

No, grants can fund up to 100% of eligible project expenditure.

You and/or your project partners may choose to contribute:

- cash to increase your budget above the grant amount
- in-kind goods, services and labour that benefit your project.

Contributions are not mandatory. If you choose not to make a co-contribution, this will not disadvantage your application.

6. Why does my application need an Australian Business Number (ABN)?

An ABN is needed to verify your legitimacy to receive funds for your project. An ABN also helps the government manage grant payments and associated taxes.

7. We don't have an ABN. Can we apply?

Yes, if you are otherwise eligible.

You can set up your own ABN, at no cost. For more information on obtaining an ABN see the Australian Business Register website at <https://www.abr.gov.au/business-super-funds-charities/applying-abn>.

If you do not want to apply for an ABN, you may submit a joint application with an organisation that is able and agrees to obtain and manage funds on your behalf. The organisation must be a legal entity that is eligible to apply and must be the lead organisation on your joint application. Evidence of the arrangement is required. We recommend that you have a clear and agreed process with your project partners to ensure you have ongoing control of your project.

Consider which of these options is most suitable for your circumstances.

See guidelines – sections 4.1 and 7.2

8. What are the responsibilities of a lead organisation in a joint application?

The lead organisation must fill out the application form and provide evidence of a formal arrangement with other parties to the application.

The lead organisation must provide evidence of the Traditional Owner status of the relevant party or parties in the application.

Members of the group must make the decision to enter the arrangement with the lead organisation. They must not be forced or coerced into participating in a joint application.

If we give your group a grant, the lead organisation:

- signs the grant agreement
- receives grant payments
- is responsible for making sure your group follows the rules in the grant agreement, including all reporting requirements
- is responsible for managing communication between group members, including any conflict resolution.

9. Can an organisation lead on multiple joint applications?

Yes, an organisation can act as lead organisation on more than one grant application.

10. What is the maximum grant amount for a joint application?

For joint applications, where multiple Basin First Nations and/or groups within a Nation form a consortium to deliver an eligible project(s), the maximum grant amount is the combined amount that each Nation/group could otherwise have applied for individually (ie up to \$300,000 each).

First Nations and/or groups within a Nation can participate in more than one grant, however the total maximum grant amount they can receive across all grants is the amount that they would have received if they had applied individually (ie \$300,000).

Joint applications must clearly outline how much of the funding is apportioned to each member group (as applicable).

11. What does it mean that each group can apply for up to \$300,000?

We recognise that clans or family groups within a Nation may have their own plans or goals for Cultural flows. To support self-determination, the grant is designed for clan and family groups to be able to develop their own application for Cultural flows planning.

The maximum grant amount (up to \$300,000) will not be impacted if there is another family or clan group within your Nation who is also applying for a grant, as long as the projects are different or will be undertaken in different portions of the Basin.

12. We don't have ready or reliable access to the internet – how do we apply?

Applications are preferred through the secure online grants portal at <https://portal.business.gov.au/>.

If you have technology challenges however, we can accept paper-based applications.

To request a hard copy application form, please:

- ring the contact centre on 13 28 46
- email the program team at culturalflows@industry.gov.au

We will post the application form to you. We will include a postage-paid return envelope so that you can submit your application by post.

Hard copy application forms cannot be requested after Wednesday 1 October 2025 – 2 weeks before the application close date.

Paper-based applications sent via mail must be sent prior to the application closing date. You must provide us proof of postage if we request it.

13. Will grants be awarded on a first-come first-served basis?

No, assessment of applications will not commence until after applications close on 15 October 2025.

All applications submitted during the application period will be treated equally. There is no advantage in submitting an application early in the application period, although you may choose to do so.

14. My Mob is not experienced in writing grant applications – others are. Will we be disadvantaged?

No, this grant opportunity is a non-competitive process.

Applications will be assessed on their individual merits, including value for money. They will not be compared to other applications.

All applications that meet the funding hurdle (50% or more for each selection criteria) will be recommended for grant funding. Higher scoring applications will not be favoured over lower scoring applications that meet the funding hurdle.

In preparing your application, make sure you:

- read and understand the guidelines
- provide all information requested
- address all eligibility and assessment criteria
- include all necessary attachments.

15. What are the assessment criteria?

The Committee will assess your application against the following (equally weighted) assessment criteria:

- Criterion 1 – alignment with the objectives and intended outcomes of the Program
- Criterion 2 – capacity, capability and resources to deliver the project

Applications must score more than 50% against each criterion to be recommended for funding.

16. Our Mob is just starting our Cultural flows journey. Will we be disadvantaged over other Nations that are well down the track?

No, you can apply for funding to start new Cultural flow plans, or revise/refresh or complete existing Cultural flow plans.

17. Can we use grant money to buy water?

No. Grant funding cannot be used to buy water entitlements.

We recognise that the government's system for managing water is complex and difficult to navigate. Before you can even buy water in the Basin, there are many steps you need to take to get set up in the right way.

This grant program will support Basin First Nations to take all the steps they need to be *ready* to buy water.

See guidelines – section 5.4

18. Water Access Licence – why is this an eligible expense?

In the Basin, the language used to refer to water use rights (entitlements, allocations, licences and irrigation rights) is different in each state.

For example, in NSW, a water access licence is a licence required to extract water from rivers or aquifers to use for irrigation, industrial or commercial purposes. You need to have a water access licence *before* you can buy water.

Because this licence is something that Basin First Nations might need to be *ready* to buy water, but does not involve actually purchasing water, it is an eligible expense. Equivalent licences in all Basin states are considered eligible expenses.

19. Can we apply if we already receive grant funding for our cultural flow planning?

It depends.

You cannot receive other grants for the same activities from other Commonwealth, state or territory granting programs.

You can apply for funding for different Cultural flow activities, that are not funded from another grant.

20. Does our project have to run for 2 full years?

No. Projects can take 2 years or less, depending on how long you will need to complete your project. However, all projects must be completed by 28 March 2028.

See *guidelines* – section 3.2

21. Can we start our project before being awarded a grant?

If you are awarded a grant, we are not responsible for any expenditure you incur in relation to the project prior to the execution of a grant agreement and cannot make any payments until a grant agreement is executed.

The grant agreement will include the agreed project start date. You cannot incur project expenditure prior to this date.

22. How long will it take to receive the grant funds?

After signing the grant agreement, the initial payment will take around 10 business days to show up in your nominated bank account.

We will make payments according to an agreed schedule set out in the grant agreement.

Payments are subject to satisfactory progress on the project.

Business.gov.au grants portal

23. What is the grants portal?

The grants portal allows you to apply for Australian Government grants and services in a secure online environment. You can also use the portal to manage any requirements around a grant you may receive. These requirements may include:

- inviting other participants to be involved in the process
- entering into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth
- regular reporting on your progress
- providing evidence of your progress or costs
- reviewing a record of payments
- varying your agreement if necessary.

24. Where can I get help registering for and using the portal?

If you need help with the portal, contact us on 13 28 46.

Or you can find grants portal FAQs at <https://portal.business.gov.au/Home/FAQ>

This covers information such as:

- how to create a portal account
- how to start a new application
- internet browsers supported by the portal
- privacy protections
- saving your application
- accessing and editing your saved draft application
- adding participants to your application
- submitting your application
- application ID
- printing your submitted application

25. Can I go back and edit or delete my submitted application?

No. Once your application has been submitted, you cannot edit or delete the application through the portal.

Contact us at culturalflows@industry.gov.au if there is a problem with your submitted application. We can revert your application to draft, so that you can edit and resubmit.

This option is not available after 13 October 2025, so that you have time to resubmit your application prior to the close date.

26. Who can submit an application form?

The application form must be completed by anyone authorised by your organisation to do so.

Whoever submits the application form must read the Applicant Declaration and agree to the declaration and confirm all statements to be true.

27. Any final tips?

We encourage you to finalise and submit your application prior to the close date where possible.

This will protect against any last-minute issues that might arise in submitting your application.

If you have any technical issues submitting your application, contact culturalflows@industry.gov.au asap and *prior to the close time*.

Applications cannot be accepted after 5.00pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time 15 October 2025.

Please take account of time zone differences when submitting your application.

28. Need more information?

For more information call 13 28 46 or email culturalflows@industry.gov.au

We aim to respond to your questions within 1-2 business days.

Where we respond to questions of relevance, we will share the same response and information with all potential applicants.

We may publish answers to these questions by updating these FAQs.