



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture
and Water Resources**



Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation programme

Grant programme guidelines

March 2016



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Figure 1 Programme process flowchart



1 Programme overview

The Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation programme (the ATMAC programme) was established under the accessing premium markets initiative of the [Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper](#). This initiative aims to assist in breaking down technical barriers to trade for Australian agricultural exports and secure new and improved access to premium markets.

Many of our trading partners regard cooperation as an integral part of maintaining bilateral trade relationships. Cooperation can benefit Australia through projects that address regional biosecurity risks, influence regional and international policymaking, and help Australia's agriculture sector to realise export opportunities. This can result in real gains in access, providing additional returns to Australian farmers and food producers.

Programme funding of \$3.1 million (plus GST) is available over four years from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2019. Individual projects will receive from \$55 000 to \$1.65 million (GST inclusive), provided through grants.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (the department) will accept applications for programme funding at any time until 31 December 2018 or until all funds have been allocated. The department will advise on the [Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation programme](#) web page when funding is no longer available for that financial year.

All agreements, payments and project activities should be finalised before 30 June 2019.

2 Programme objective

The programme objective is to open, improve and/or maintain access to overseas markets for Australian agricultural products by building stronger relationships with trading partners, neighbouring countries and international organisations.

The focus of the ATMAC programme is to support projects that aim to achieve the programme objective by:

- undertaking research and development in collaboration with trading partners to help identify, use, open or improve mutually beneficial agricultural trade opportunities
- working with overseas governments and international organisations to develop common regulatory and technical requirements and standards
- building evidence to inform Australia's position on international agricultural trade policy and advocacy of standards
- sharing technical expertise and research to increase trading partners' knowledge of Australia's biosecurity, food safety and compliance regimes and practices, and to increase their preparedness to respond to exotic pest and disease incursions
- promoting good biosecurity risk management practices, improving scientific capabilities and strengthening surveillance efforts in trading partner and neighbouring countries
- helping Australia meet its international obligations, such as commitments made under the World Trade Organization Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement.

The funding priorities for 2015–16 are to:

- help realise market access opportunities created for Australian exporters under recently ratified free trade agreements
- contribute to the negotiation of protocols for new and improved market access.

Funding priorities for subsequent years will be published on the [ATMAC programme](#) web page.

3 Programme evaluation

The department will monitor the ATMAC programme to identify areas for improvement, and the ATMAC grant programme guidelines may be revised as a result. Revised guidelines will be published on the [ATMAC programme](#) web page. Each application will be assessed with reference to the ATMAC grant programme guidelines in place at the time the application is submitted to the department.

The department intends to undertake a mid-term programme review after 30 June 2017 to assess performance against the programme objective and the outcomes of funded projects. The findings may be used to revise funding priorities or inform policy decisions about future funding of projects beyond the life of the programme.

The department intends to commence a full programme evaluation in the final six months of the ATMAC programme to assess the overall performance of the programme and whether it has achieved value for money. The evaluation may include information from milestone reports and end-of-project reports. Feedback may be requested from successful applicants and Australian agricultural sector stakeholders on their perceptions of the programme. The evaluation report may be published on the department's website.

4 How the grant programme will operate

Applications:

- will be accepted on an ongoing, non-competitive basis and assessed against approved ATMAC grant programme guidelines and identified funding priorities on their own merit
- may be sought by the department for projects that target and address identified gaps or challenges, or respond to an urgent trade need.

Applications accepted on an ongoing, non-competitive basis will be considered in the order they are received. If funds are not available, applications will not be considered. If funding for the year has been allocated, the application may be considered in the next financial year unless the ATMAC programme is in its final year.

The department may seek an application for a project where a trade issue arises that needs urgent resolution and no applications have been already submitted for a project that would address the issue. The department may also decide to seek an application where, for example, none of the applications received to date address an identified gap or a challenge that the department considers needs to be addressed.

Any applications sought by the department will be considered in isolation of the applications accepted on an ongoing, non-competitive basis and will take precedence. An invitation to submit an application is no guarantee that funding will be provided. Applications for targeted projects will be assessed in accordance with Section 15.

If less than \$55 000 (GST inclusive) remains in the programme budget near the end of a financial year or the end of the ATMAC programme, the department may award less than \$55 000 to an applicant.

See Table 1 for a guide on programme funding availability for each financial year.

Table 1 Total ATMAC programme funding available, by financial year

2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19
\$50 000	\$1 500 000	\$1 500 000	\$50 000

Successful applicants will be required to enter into an agreement with the Commonwealth before receiving any funding. Funded projects must not start until an agreement is in place.

Payment details will be negotiated as part of each agreement. The department may make payments on entering into the agreement or as milestone payments. Grant payments will be paid on delivery of milestone/s outlined in the agreement.

5 Programme dates

There are no set funding rounds. Applications will be accepted on an ongoing, non-competitive basis until 31 December 2018 or until all funding has been allocated.

6 Who is eligible to apply for funding

To be eligible for funding under the ATMAC programme, applicants, whether an individual or an organisation, must have an Australian Business Number (ABN) and be capable of entering into a legally binding agreement with the Commonwealth. This includes:

- companies incorporated under the *Corporation Act 2001*
- incorporated associations incorporated under state or territory association incorporation legislation
- Indigenous corporations incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*
- body corporates created under state or territory legislation, including local governments and universities
- legally constituted partnerships (all partners must sign or authorise the signing of the agreement)
- state or territory departments and agencies
- individuals.

7 What qualifies for funding

Eligible project activities

Project activities that are likely to meet the programme objective and attract funding include:

- research and development projects
- training programmes
- practical demonstration activities
- supporting delegation visits, missions or technical exchanges
- attending relevant conferences or workshops
- working groups.

Projects may occur in Australia or overseas.

Applicants may apply for funding for projects that benefit partner organisations based overseas, provided they meet all other programme criteria.

Ineligible project activities and costs

Programme funding will not be provided for:

- activities undertaken before an application is approved under the ATMAC programme or before an agreement is signed by both the department and the successful applicant
- activities that support or promote the benefit of a single commercial enterprise
- activities that duplicate or are very similar to those funded under other Australian or state and territory government programmes
- activities that may distort trade or disadvantage Australian agricultural industries
- administrative costs incurred by the applicant in making an application
- costs associated with protecting or patenting intellectual property
- costs associated with projects of a solely commercial nature
- costs not directly incurred in carrying out the project (including overhead costs).

Funding co-contributions, including in-kind contributions by the applicant or a third party, are not required, but will be looked upon favourably, particularly where such contributions are likely to improve project outcomes.

The amount of funding or resources to be contributed by the applicant, industry sector or a third party should be detailed, agreed in writing, signed and attached to the application form.

8 How to apply for funding

Applicants can download an application form from the [ATMAC programme](#) web page.

Applicants should also check the web page for any updates to the ATMAC grant programme guidelines, funding priorities, information on the projects already funded and funding availability.

Applicants should ensure that their proposal is not similar to or covered by projects that have already been funded under the ATMAC programme.

Completed applications and supporting documentation or attachments should be emailed to the programme manager or signed and posted in hard copy to:

Programme Manager
Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation programme
Trade and Market Access Division
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
GPO Box 858
Canberra ACT 2601.

Applications may be submitted at any time up to 31 December 2018. All applications will be assessed in accordance with the assessment plan and ATMAC grant programme guidelines. Failure to address all elements of the application form could result in the application not being recommended for funding by the assessment panel.

Contact the programme manager for information, including inquiries about specific applications.

9 Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest arises where a person makes a decision or exercises a power in a way that may be, or may be perceived to be, influenced by either material personal interest (financial or non-financial) or material personal associations.

Applicants are required to advise whether any actual or potential or perceived conflicts of interest exist in relation to their application.

If a conflict of interest arises, or appears likely to arise, the applicant must:

- make full disclosure of all relevant information about the conflict in their application
- contact the programme manager in writing immediately if the conflict arises after the application has been received
- outline the steps the applicant intends to take to resolve or deal with the conflict.

The department reserves the right to reject an application if it is not satisfied that arrangements are in place to appropriately address or manage a perceived or actual conflict of interest.

The department will maintain a register of notified conflicts of interest throughout the application and assessment process. The register will include the applicant's conflicts of interest and those of the assessment panel, departmental officers involved in the application and assessment process, and any subject matter experts consulted.

Those involved in the assessment process must:

- sign and keep up-to-date conflict of interest declarations to ensure the appropriate identification and management of any conflicts of interest
- comply with the *Public Service Act 1999* and the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct.

The department will appoint a probity officer to advise the assessment panel on probity matters and help ensure that all applications are assessed fairly, uniformly and transparently. The probity officer will report to the assessment panel chair and, if requested by the chair, attend assessment panel meetings.

The programme manager will work with the probity officer and the assessment panel chair to manage any requests to applicants for clarification and consultation with subject matter experts.

The department will manage identified conflicts of interest in accordance with the ATMAC programme's conflict of interest management plan.

10 False and misleading information

Knowingly giving false or misleading information is an offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.

11 Confidential information

Applicants must identify any information in their applications or in any supporting documentation that they want treated as confidential and provide reasons for the request. The department reserves the right to accept or refuse requests to treat information as confidential.

The department may publish or share information that applicants have not marked or had accepted as confidential by the department.

Confidential information may be released as required by law or parliamentary privilege.

12 Freedom of information

All documents held by the department, including those relating to ATMAC programme applications and projects, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act).

The FOI Act creates a general right of access to documents held by the department. Unless a document or information contained with the document falls under an exemption provision, it will be made available to the public if requested under the FOI Act.

For more information about the FOI process, or to make an FOI request, see [accessing information held by the department](#).

13 Privacy statement

'Personal information' means any information or opinion about an identified individual or an individual who is reasonably identifiable.

'Sensitive personal information' is a subset of personal information and includes any information or opinion about an individual's racial or ethnic origin, political opinion or association, religious beliefs or affiliations, philosophical beliefs, sexual preferences or practices, trade or professional associations and memberships, union membership, criminal record, health or genetic information and biometric information or templates.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources collects your personal information, as defined in the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cwlth), to assess your application and for related purposes. If you fail to provide some or all of the personal information requested in this form, the department will not be able to process your application.

The department may disclose your personal information to Australian Government agencies, persons or organisations where necessary for these purposes, provided the disclosure is consistent with the *Privacy Act 1988* and other relevant laws. Your personal information will be used and stored in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles.

See the department's [Privacy Policy](#) to learn more about accessing or correcting personal information or making a complaint. Alternatively, telephone the department on +61 2 6272 3933.

14 Correcting inaccuracies in applications

The department will not accept responsibility for any misunderstanding arising from the failure by an applicant to comply with the ATMAC grant programme guidelines or arising from any discrepancies, ambiguities, inconsistencies or errors in an application. Material inaccuracies are those that may affect the outcome of the assessment process. If an applicant discovers material inaccuracies in their application, they must email the programme manager immediately.

The department may request clarification information from an applicant and ask them to remedy any material inaccuracies. The applicant is not permitted to add new information to the original application. This process will be managed by the programme manager, the probity officer and assessment panel chair. The department's decision will be final.

15 How applications are assessed

15.1 Selection criteria and other considerations

All applications will be registered and treated securely. Access will only be provided to the programme manager, assessment panel and other individuals authorised to assess applications. The department will acknowledge receipt of applications within 10 working days.

The assessment of applications will follow a three-stage process involving evaluation against:

1. eligibility criteria
2. assessment criteria
3. other assessment considerations.

To be recommended for funding, an application must pass each stage of the assessment process.

Stage 1 Eligibility criteria

The applicant (an individual or an organisation) must:

- have an ABN and be capable of entering into a legally binding agreement with the Commonwealth
- seek project funding of at least \$55 000 (GST inclusive).

The programme manager will examine all applications to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria. Eligible applications and applications with incomplete information will be forwarded to the assessment panel for assessment. If all elements of the application form are not addressed, the assessment panel may not recommend the application for funding.

Ineligible applicants will be advised of the reasons for their ineligibility.

Stage 2 Assessment criteria

Each eligible application will be assessed individually by each assessment panel member before being considered by the panel as a whole. The assessment panel will assess eligible applications on their own merit against the weighted assessment criteria, as per the scoring regime and in accordance with the assessment plan.

Weightings will be applied to each criterion as follows:

- Assessment criterion 1: 30 per cent
- Assessment criterion 2: 30 per cent
- Assessment criterion 3: 30 per cent
- Assessment criterion 4: 10 per cent.

Assessment criterion 1

Suitability (30 per cent weighting)—assessment of the suitability of the application will be based on how well the application:

- articulates the project and identifies the activities, activity providers, other parties involved in the project, beneficiaries, outputs and outcomes
- demonstrates that the applicant and/or the intended activity provider has the relevant qualifications and experience to deliver the project effectively
- describes how the project will contribute to achieving the programme objective (see [Programme objective](#)) and one or more of the funding priorities.

Assessment criterion 2

Feasibility (30 per cent weighting)—assessment of whether the application is realistic, reasonable and achievable will be based on how well it demonstrates that:

- the methodology or approach to undertaking the project is technically, logistically or otherwise feasible
- the time frame in which the project will occur is realistic for achieving intended objectives and milestones (where relevant)
- the applicant and/or the intended activity provider has the capacity (for example, resources and competency) to deliver the project on time and to budget and to manage any associated risks
- it is supported by stakeholders in Australia and/or the relevant target market.

Assessment criterion 3

Value for money (30 per cent weighting)—assessment of whether the application represents good value for money will be based on:

- the quality of the detailed budget plan and justifications for the level of funding requested
- details of sources of in-kind or third-party contributions (where applicable) and how this will increase the likelihood of the intended outcome
- the outline of risks associated with the budget plan and details of any risk mitigation strategies
- evidence that it does not duplicate grants or funding provided to the applicant under this or any other Australian, state and territory government programme over the past five years.

Assessment criterion 4

Monitoring and evaluation (10 per cent weighting)—assessment of whether the project can be monitored, evaluated and reported will be based on the applicant's ability to:

- outline how they will monitor, evaluate and report on the project
- provide clear and meaningful performance indicators for the project
- outline the types of evidence they will use to measure the project's success.

Scoring regime

Applications must receive at least a 50 per cent score for each criterion plus an overall score of at least 70 per cent from the assessment panel to progress to Stage 3 (other assessment considerations). The assessment panel must use the scoring regime in Table 2 when assessing applications.

Table 2 Scoring regime to be used by the assessment panel

Rating	Description	Score
Excellent	Exceeds requirements in all ways	9–10
Good	Meets requirements in all ways and exceeds them in some ways	7–8
Satisfactory	Meets requirements and is feasible	5–6
Marginal	Nearly meets requirements and is feasible but may be deficient in some areas	3–4
Poor	Does not meet requirements, has provided insufficient information or is inconsistent with the programme objective	0–2

There is no direct correlation between a high score and the amount of funding that the assessment panel might recommend be awarded for a project. The amount of funding will be dependent on factors such as the availability of ATMAC programme funds and the amount sought in the application. As such, a project with a higher score than a similar project already considered by the assessment panel may be offered a lesser amount or no funding.

Stage 3 Other assessment considerations

For those applications that the assessment panel gives at least a 50 per cent score for each criterion plus an overall score of at least 70 per cent, the assessment panel will consider whether approval of an application, in the context of projects already approved for funding under the ATMAC programme, would help ensure the programme achieves a reasonable:

- focus on funding priorities
- distribution of projects across Australia, its agricultural sectors or industries
- distribution of project types or activities
- balance across trading partners being targeted by applicants.

This is to ensure that, to the extent possible, projects funded under the ATMAC programme are spread across regions, industries, activities and/or trading partners. For example, an eligible application that has scored highly in Stage 2 but is very similar to a project that has already been approved for funding may be refused funding. This helps to mitigate the risk that one industry in one region benefits from the ATMAC programme at the expense of others only because it has submitted several applications before others.

At the end of Stage 3, recommendations on the applications will be provided to the minister or delegate of the department for decision.

Applicants may be asked for clarification if their application contains insufficient information to support their claims. To ensure these applicants do not have an unfair advantage, the probity officer will review the clarification to ensure it does not provide additional information to that requested. On the probity officer's advice, the programme manager will forward the applicant's clarification to the assessment panel for consideration.

The assessment panel may consult subject matter experts when selecting applications. This will be done in association with the probity officer.

Procedures for decision-making take into account potential conflicts of interest (see [Conflict of interest](#)) and confidentiality (see [Confidential information](#)) to ensure impartial selection, on their own merit, of applications according to the three-stage assessment process.

The assessment panel will document its reasons for not recommending applications be funded, including why applications are not recommended for approval following consideration under Stage 3 (other assessment considerations).

The department reserves the right to negotiate with applicants on any aspect of the grant before signing the grant agreement. The department may decide to support fewer projects/activities, offer less funding than the amount applicants applied for or seek further outcomes.

15.2 Who selects suitable applications

Applications received will be assessed by a five-member assessment panel comprising departmental officers with relevant experience.

Departmental officers and assessment panel members will be required to protect the confidentiality of the assessment process and take steps to ensure that any actual or perceived conflict of interest is declared and addressed in a way that does not adversely affect the impartial selection of applications against the three-stage assessment process outlined in Section 15.1.

The assessment panel will assess applications accepted on an ongoing, non-competitive basis in the order they are received.

A decision and notification of the assessment outcome of all applications are expected to occur within 12 weeks of receipt of an application, providing no clarification is required and funding is available.

Assessment panel members should make every effort not to withdraw during the assessment of a specific application. If a member of the assessment panel withdraws, four members will be sufficient for the panel to continue the assessment process.

Applications will be assessed and selected in accordance with the three-stage assessment process (see [Selection criteria and other considerations](#)).

The programme manager will prepare an assessment report, which will be reviewed by the assessment panel and signed off by the assessment panel chair. The report will include a summary and recommendations on applications that could be funded without change, applications that could be funded subject to certain conditions being met, and applications that are not suitable for funding.

The assessment panel may identify any areas where recommended applications could be improved by negotiation or be combined into other coordinated, collaborative projects.

The minister or a delegate of the department may also approve targeted projects as outlined under Section 4.

16 Notifying applicants of funding decisions

Successful applicants will receive a letter of offer outlining the grant and the amount of funding they will be offered. The letter of offer does not constitute a grant agreement. Successful applicants must not begin a project until a grant agreement has been signed by the department and the successful applicant.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing by the department. Applications will not be reviewed. See [Handling applicant complaints](#) for information about lodging a complaint. For feedback on unsuccessful applications, contact the programme manager.

17 Grant agreement

Successful applicants will be required to sign a funding agreement with the Commonwealth, based on the [Commonwealth low-risk grant agreement](#) or a format determined by risk analysis.

The draft funding agreement contains the terms and conditions of the grant. Applicants should read the draft funding agreement before submitting an application and should seek independent legal advice before entering into a funding agreement. No legally binding relationship exists until a funding agreement is signed by all parties.

If a successful applicant fails to comply with any requirements in the funding agreement, they may have to repay some or all of the funding received.

Reporting requirements will reflect the length and complexity of the project. For projects undertaken within the same financial year, applicants may only be required to submit an end-of-project report. Applicants may also be required to submit milestone reports for projects undertaken across multiple financial years, or for more complex projects and/or higher funding undertaken in single years. Reports will cover project outputs, outcomes and all other evidence required to measure success.

18 Publishing information about successful applicants

The department will publish information about awarded grants on the department's [Grants reporting requirements](#) web page in accordance with Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines. Information includes:

- name of the person or entity receiving the grant
- project title and purpose
- amount of funding received
- duration of funding
- project location.

By submitting an application for funding under the ATMAC programme, the applicant consents to the department publishing this information.

19 Management of grant agreements and evaluation

The department will manage agreements and department delegates will make decisions about variations to those agreements during the life of the agreement. Departmental officers and others may contact successful applicants during or after the project as part of the programme evaluation.

20 Handling applicant complaints

The department does not have an appeal mechanism for unsuccessful applicants. Applications will not be reviewed. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the way an application has been handled by the department, they can email the programme manager and lodge a complaint. The complaint will be reviewed by one or more independent areas of the department.

If no resolution is achieved, the applicant can contact the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#). The Ombudsman will usually not investigate a complaint unless the matter has first been raised with the department and the department has been provided with a reasonable opportunity to respond.

21 Taxation, legal and external funding implications

Applicants should seek independent taxation and financial advice from a suitably qualified professional before submitting their application. GST is payable on grants and the funding agreement will include GST where applicable. Applicants should seek advice on the legal implications of their acceptance of a grant. Receipt of programme funding may result in an applicant's business being ineligible for support from other government programmes.

22 Contacts

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