



Extension and Adoption of Drought Resilience Farming Practices Grants Program webinar

Webinar Transcript

22 November 2022

Introduction

An online information session was held on 22 November 2022, to provide an overview of the Extension and Adoption of DRFP Grants Program, and answer questions submitted by audience members/potential applicants. This is a transcript of the webinar.

Hosts

Kimberley Shrives and Dave Johnson

Transcript

[Webinar begins]

Kimberley Shrives: Hello. My name is Kimberley Shrives and on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, I'd like to welcome you to this information session on the Future Drought Fund's Extension and Adoption of Drought Resilience, Farming Practices grants opportunity. Before we start, I would like to begin with an acknowledgement of country. I'd like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we're broadcasting from today. I'd like to pay my respects to their elders past and present. I would also like to pay my respects to the traditional custodians of all the lands on which you may be joining us from today and to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that may be joining us. I would also like to advise that this session is being recorded.

Kimberley Shrives: In this information session we will provide you information on future drought fund, program focus, what projects we are and aren't looking for, the application process and assessment criteria, eligible and ineligible criteria and some useful links to help you complete your application. Most importantly, we'll be taking questions from you. If you have questions during the session, simply type them into the question on your screen. You can put a question in the chat right from the start, however, will come back and try to answer as many of your questions as we can during the Q and A session at the end.

Kimberley Shrives: We will only be able to provide general responses to answers as due to strict rules around departmental probity, we cannot comment on specific projects or applications. We unfortunately, won't be able to answer everyone's questions today, as I'm sure there will be many. But we'll be posting all your Q and A's on the community grants hub Q and A page, as well as a recording of this session on the department's website in the coming days.



Kimberley Shrives: I'd now like to introduce our Program Manager, Dave Johnson. Dave is the director of the Landscapes, Innovation and Adoption program management team and is responsible for administering this program.

Dave Johnson: Thanks, Kimberley and good afternoon, everyone. It's great to have you joining us today. It's great to have you here. We really want to help you, give you the information that you need to put in a really good application for this program. So, thanks.

Kimberley Shrives: We also have representatives from the Future Drought Fund team in the background, to receive your questions and help with the answers as we go along. Alright, let's get started. The Future Drought Fund has an important role in helping farmers and their communities get ready for drought. We know drought is a natural part of the Australian landscape and droughts are likely to become more frequent and severe with climate change. That's why the Australian government makes \$100 million available each year through the Future Drought Fund for programs to improve the drought preparedness of Australian agriculture. The fund represents a shift in drought policy from a reliance on in drought support to investing more in drought preparedness.

Kimberley Shrives: An independent consultative committee guides the fund's investment in the areas of better climate information, better planning, better practises, and better prepared communities. This program is all about farmers adopting better practices and technologies to get ahead of the drought cycle. The program has at least \$14.3 million available to get proven research and development adopted by farmers to increase their profitability and sustainability through future droughts. So, Dave, can you tell us a bit about the program?

Dave Johnson: Yeah, sure, thanks, Kimberley. So, this program aims to fund projects that help farmers and communities adopt proven practices and technologies at a large scale. The grants of up to \$3 million are available to eligible organisations to work with farmers to deliver the extension and the adoption activities over 24 months, with the aim of large-scale adoption. This could be achieved through a range of different activities, and this isn't a full list, but just a couple of examples could include things like local regional events, extension or demonstration to promote large scale uptake by farmers of existing and proven practices and technologies. It could include extension materials produced and distributed at extension events and field days and so on. And it could also include training to facilitate large scale uptake of these practices and technologies that are known to improve drought resilience. And as you mentioned earlier, Kimberley, the goal is large scale adoption of the practise or technology by farmers not just delivering the extension activity, we want to see widespread practice change through adoption.

Dave Johnson: The grants will be provided through a competitive grant process through the Community Grants Hub, and the grant guidelines are available on their website, and I'll mention probably again, but a really important day for you to all note, is that applications close on the ninth of January 2023 at 9pm. That's Australian Eastern daylight time and late applications will not be accepted. So really, make sure you take a note of that, if you are putting an application in nine PM on the ninth of January 2023.



Kimberley Shrives: Thanks, Dave. So, can you tell us what kind of projects you're looking to fund under the program?

Dave Johnson: Yes, so when you're completing your application, applicants need to show how their project will do a number of things. Firstly, how will it reduce the impacts of drought on agricultural productivity and or enable a quicker recovery of farmers and their lands from drought. They need to have the potential to be adopted at a large scale and either across landscapes, regions, industries and or multiple farms. The projects will also need to deliver extension and adoption activities, and they will also need to deliver public benefits. So, what I'm hearing is that the project should have a strong and primary focus on drought resilience, be adoptable by farmers at a large scale, have a strong promotional plan to achieve large scale uptake of the practise or technology though farmers during and after the grant period and be in the best interest of the public. That about sums it up.

Kimberley Shrives: Let's unpack that a little to help applicants understand it a little more and guide their application. Can you explain to everyone what you mean by drought resilience?

Dave Johnson: Yes, certainly. So, when we look at the definition of drought resilience, it's defined as the ability to adapt, reorganise or transform in response to changing temperatures and increasing variability and scarcity of rainfall for improved economic, environmental and social wellbeing. Applicants' practices and technologies must target improved future drought resilience as their primary focus. That is, they must seek to support two things.

Dave Johnson: Firstly, the continued agricultural productivity and profitability during times of drought and secondly, faster recovery of agricultural productivity and profitability following times of drought. Applicants must really and clearly demonstrate how their project will deliver future drought resilience, not just mention the words drought, resilience in there, and this is a really crucial requirement. If your project is to be successful, we expect there to be a higher competition for the funding that's available, so you need to be very clear on how your project will deliver drought, resilience adoption, at scale. And if you have an existing project out there that's looking for funding, please don't just add in the words drought resilience and think that you will be successful because we will only be look, funding projects that have drought resilience quite clearly as their central focus and which clearly deliver to the program objectives.

Kimberley Shrives: And what about large scale adoption?

Dave Johnson: Yeah, as we mentioned earlier, we're interested in projects that drive that adoption at a large scale. Which means we're looking for a project that could be adopted across the entire sector or industry, or even an entire state. Some examples might be how to better manage livestock or specifically related to broad acre cropping, for example, or to the cotton industry. So, we're also interested in projects that such as alternative cropping that can support the farming productivity when conditions are dry.

Kimberley Shrives: And I'm anticipating questions around public benefits. How can applicants show the public could behind their projects?



Dave Johnson: It's a really good question. Public good benefits are a key funding requirement for all programs under the Future Drought Fund Act. And public benefit includes economic and productivity growth and environmental improvements that are valued by the government and the community. And funded projects can involve private benefit, but these private benefits need to be more than offset by the public benefit and or co contributions from non-government sources.

Kimberley Shrives: Okay, perhaps now it would be useful to talk about what projects we're not looking for.

Dave Johnson: Yeah, good one. So, we're not looking for projects that do not primarily address drought resilience. If you've got a project that's out there about something else, that's not what we're after. So, as I said, if you've got a project that you previously submitted an application for under another program, so a water program, and you're thinking about changing a few words for water to drought resilience and throw that in here or there, that's not what we want, and you won't be successful in this process. So, we don't want you to waste your time doing that. We only want well thought out applications that address the assessment criteria and are primarily drought resilience focused. We're also not looking for projects that can't be adopted by farmers on a large scale. As we said, large scale usually refers to either large numbers or a large area, so we don't want projects that are localised to a very specific area or a very small industry.

Dave Johnson: For example, projects that focus on one farm regardless of its size or projects where we identified that the practice or technology being closed just isn't scalable across industries, then and that's not what we're looking for. There is some flexibility here in the definition of what we mean by large scale, and that you could, for example, propose a project that focuses on an extensive, extensive catchment area. We're really aiming to achieve widespread uptake of these practices and technologies to increase that drought resilience. And this can only be achieved if the extension and adoption activities that you'll be undertaking reach a lot of people. You also need to outline in your application how are you going to promote the practices and technologies an achieve the large-scale adoption in the 24 months and beyond for this program. So, adoption needs to occur during the activity period. But we're also not looking for projects that will financially benefit a single organisation or a person, as we discussed earlier. Public benefit must be the primary focus, and you'll also need to explain why your activity cannot be funded privately.

Kimberley Shrives: There's a lot of opportunity on offer through these grants. So how does an organisation go about applying?

Dave Johnson: To apply, you must complete the online application form via the Community Grants Hub. Make sure you provide all the information that they request. Address the eligibility and assessment criteria, include all of the attachments that you required to attach, and make sure you get your applications submitted by the ninth of January 2023 before nine PM. That's Australian Eastern daylight time, and no late applications will be accepted after this date. The key, I think, in making good application, is reading the assessment criteria with the guidelines carefully. Succinctly answer the criteria in the delegated areas.



Dave Johnson: So, on screen now is a list of the criteria, and their weighting, and there are different word limits for each of the criteria, ranging from 500 to 900 words. You must address all of the criteria in the specific text box, but I might just briefly go into a bit more detail on criteria one. The relevance of the project to drought resilience of Australian agriculture, because there's a couple of distinct matters in there that you need to address in this criteria. You must demonstrate how your project will contribute to building drought resilience in Australia. And we're looking for projects whose main purpose is to support farmers to continue to be productive in drought or improve their recovery after drought. This criteria also asks you to describe how your practice or technology is already proven.

Dave Johnson: Unfortunately, we can't fund practices in this grant that are more innovative or still being developed. There's more information on the guidelines about what's considered a proven practice or technology. And with the other criteria, you must also outline your ability to manage this project, including your experience, expertise, and your ability to manage the risks and that's described earlier, demonstrate the value for money and the public good. The innovation hubs are funded by the Future Drought Fund with the purpose of connecting farmers with drought experts and you'll see that you're asked to address how your project will support, at least two drought, resilience adoption and innovation Hub regional priorities. So, the hubs have worked extensively with stakeholders to identify their recent drought resilience priorities. You can find links to each Hubs priority in the grant guidelines, and you must show how your project supports these priorities.

Dave Johnson: The idea behind this requirement is quite simple, really. It's to ensure that what you're proposing fits in with the priorities identified by the hub in the region, where you'll be delivering your project. Look, it just simply makes really good sense. We're all working towards the most important priorities in each region. And look, we hope that it's relatively easy for you to identify at least two Hub priorities that your project would address. And if you work across multiple regions, you may well identify many more than just two hub priorities that are clearly relevant. And to be clear, we would hope that once funding is agreed, all successful projects would seek to liaise with their local Future Drought Fund Hub to make the most of any synergies and avoid any duplication. But we emphasise that we're not expecting you to be tied to a Hub in any joint management or delivery sense. And once again you can find the list of the links to each hubs' priority list in the grant guidelines.

Kimberley Shrives: Thanks, Dave. Are there additional documents that applicants need to provide?

Dave Johnson: Yes, there are. There's a budget template which all applicants must complete, as well as a letter of support document, which only lead applicants of a consortium must submit. There is a Trustee Deed document required if you're applying as a trustee on behalf of the trust. And your application will be considered non-compliant, and it won't proceed to assessment if you're online, application is not completed correctly. If you haven't got the required attachments, if they're not provided or if you don't use the mandatory templates, and I'd emphasise that one about the budget, please make sure you use the budget template. Don't have your own spreadsheet that you might develop for your budget and try and attach that. You must use the budget template in the at the grant



guidelines. You can find out more information about these requirements under Section 7.1 of the grant guidelines.

Kimberley Shrives: That's really good to know. Are there other things you suggest people before they start their application? Yes, look, I think read and understand the grant guidelines. That, and particularly the objective of the program and the assessment criteria. That's really important. And you know, this is the most important document for completing your application, it's got the details of everything you'll need and everything we've discussed so far and a lot more. I'd also suggest reading through the Questions and Answers document, which is available on the website and looking at a sample Commonwealth Standard Agreement, so you know what you're applying for. These key documents are available on the Community Grants Hub website. Once you register, and most times you'll probably find the answers to the questions that you're looking for in these documents. Otherwise, you can contact the Community Grants Hub for help.

Kimberley Shrives: Let's talk now about who can apply for the grant. Yes, on screen now is a list of who's eligible to apply. But there are some caveats. The key takeaway is that the applicant or the lead applicant if you're a part of a consortium, must be an eligible Australian entity. So, there's two things about that. This means that you must be able to enter into a legally binding and enforceable agreement with the Commonwealth. You must have an Australian business number and Australian bank account. The second thing is, we encourage international entities to apply to, but they must partner with an eligible Australian entity who will be the lead applicant. And it's the lead applicant that's solely accountable to the Commonwealth for delivering the grant activity.

Kimberley Shrives: Are there other eligibility criteria?

Dave Johnson: Yes, there are. And the two that I mention now, publicly funded research and development organisations such as the CSIRO and RDCs, research corporations, they must partner with an agricultural extension organisation and farmers, and this is to encourage collaboration around practical farmer focused approaches. And a trustee, can apply on behalf of the trust if they are an eligible Australian entity and there are more details about who's eligible to apply in the grant guidelines, and they're a great source, a great resource that spells out all the eligibility requirements in detail and the Community Grants Hub, as we said before, is always available to help with their interpretation.

Kimberley Shrives: So, if we have eligibility criteria, it must mean we have in-eligibility criteria. Let's start with who is not eligible.

Dave Johnson: So, on screen there is a list of those not eligible to apply and that includes individuals and state and territory departments.

Kimberley Shrives: So, that means that individuals can not apply for this grant?

Dave Johnson: In a way, it does, however, ineligible entities like individuals, sole traders, international organisations, they can still be part of a consortium within an Australian eligible entity as the lead. So, if you have a suitable project, we encourage you to partner with an eligible entity.



Kimberley Shrives: Great. Are there any special requirements if the consortium does apply?

Dave Johnson: Yes. If you're applying as a lead of a consortia, you must provide a mandatory letter of support outlining all the consortia partners. And look, we've got an example letter on the website that you can have a look at to use as part of your application form. You also need to outline whether these consortia will co-contribute cash or in kind when completing your mandatory budget. And that's also attached as part of the application form.

Kimberley Shrives: Okay, what about how grantees will be able to spend the grant money? What types of eligible expenditures should they be proposing?

Dave Johnson: Yeah, on this slide I've got some examples of eligible expenditures, and these are just examples. There are a range of items and services the grant money can be spent on, and you need to make sure that you outline your expenditure in your mandatory budget template, including what you'll be spending the grant money on and what you and your consortia will spend the co-contributions on. Applicants will be required to contribute co-investment, co-funding to the delivery of the project. The extent of co contribution offered will be taken into account in assessing the relative competitiveness of application.

Dave Johnson: So, there's no magic number, no minimum that you have to hit. But we do expect co-investment and the more co-investment you've got the stronger your application will be on that criteria and any kind of in-kind expenditure must also be included and look any in kind or non-cash expenditure can include things like labour facilities, equipment and services that either you or your project partners are providing.

Kimberley Shrives: Okay, Dave, so then what about ineligible expenditure.

Dave Johnson: Yeah, on the screen. Now you'll see a list of ineligible expenditure. I'm not going to go through all of those. This can be found under section 5.4 of the grant guidelines. And look, it's important to note you can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure that you've incurred on an agreed project as defined in your grant agreement. So, to be eligible, expenditure has to be, firstly, a direct cost of the project, and secondly, it has to be incurred by you for the required project activities. And you must incur that project expenditure between the grant activity start and completion date for it to be eligible unless it's stated otherwise. You can look at the grant guidelines of the Q and A on the landing page for a more comprehensive list.

Kimberley Shrives: Thanks, Dave. I might also just take some time to remind everyone to pop their questions in the chat box, as the team are on hand to review them for the Q and A session and thanks those who have already done that. So, Dave, let's recap. Can you please go over some of the key dates again for us?

Dave Johnson: Sure thing, Kimberley. So, the closing date for applications is the ninth of January 2023 before nine PM and that's Australian Eastern Daylight time. Applications can only be submitted through the Community Grants Hub, the Grants Connect website, so don't think about trying to send emails or anything else through. It has to be through the website. Commonly asked questions can be found on the Community Grants Hub Q and A page. And if you can't find the answer that you're after there, you can submit a request



through the website via email or a phone call. That document, the Q and A, is updated as more questions come in so that everybody gets the same information and please note the community grants will close that question period off on the 22nd of December 2022.

Dave Johnson: So, make sure you get any additional questions in before that date, if you have any. As I mentioned, the Q and a Web page will be updated regularly, so it's always good if you go and have a look and see if there's any new questions and answers been added since the last time, because they may well be addressing exact questions that you have thought about yourself. We expect that the outcome of the process successful grantees will be notified in April 2023. And the grant activity start date is expected to be June 2023 for 24 months for two years.

Kimberley Shrives: Thanks, Dave. We've come to the end of the information session. So now it's time to answer your questions. So, we'll just remind everyone that we can only answer questions that are generic in nature. This is to ensure everyone has the same opportunity to apply, and no one gets information that makes that makes the playing field unlevel. Our first question is from Ian and Ian asks, in what form are the co-contributions to be? Cash or in-kind?

Dave Johnson: Ian, more information on the co-contribution is at appendix A. The Grant opportunity guidelines has got some more information there, and you can find that once you register on the website to apply. So, it can be cash or in-kind or a combination of both. Thanks.

Kimberley Shrives: The next question is from Dale. Thanks, Dale. What is the definition of infrastructure? Is it just building or erected structures, including fencing, and are things like earth works to slow water movement and aid infiltration excluded?

Dave Johnson: Yes, a small-scale infrastructure is eligible. For more information on that infrastructure, refer to the guidelines section five. There are some more details about that in there.

Kimberley Shrives: Our next question comes from Rachel. Can you define staff training? Is training project deliverers in facilitation and extension considered staff training?

Dave Johnson: Yeah. Staff training needs to directly support the achievements of the program and project outcomes. And there is a maximum of 5 percent, GST exclusive of the grant that can be spent on training. And you can see the details of that under section 5.3 in the Guidelines.

Kimberley Shrives: The next question is anonymous. But the question is, is there a definition of large scale?

Dave Johnson: By large scale, we need a large number of farmers adopting farming practices to support improved drought resilience, either across landscapes, regions, industry, and all multiple farms. But I guess what we're getting at is that it's getting that adoption at a large scale across large areas and as many people as possible.



Kimberley Shrives: Next question is – practice change can take a long time to demonstrate. Do you have to demonstrate the practice change or adoption within the 24 months?

Dave Johnson: Yeah, it's a really good question. You must be able to deliver activities that will drive large scale adoption of an Australian or international, R and D drought resilience practice or technology within the activity period. That's the two years from June 23. You must be able to demonstrate that there has been that large scale adoption during that period.

Kimberley Shrives: The next question is asking whether we can submit more than one application.

Dave Johnson: Yes, you certainly can submit more than one application for different projects, However, as it's spelled out in the grant guidelines, if there's more than one application for the same project, the latest application is the one that will progress. The previous ones won't be considered.

Kimberley Shrives: The next question is where are the new Q and A's (questions and answers) posted on the grant portal, during the application period? The Q and A document doesn't seem to be being updated.

Dave Johnson: Okay, well, it probably hasn't yet, because it's only just been started. But any amendments to that Q and A document will be added at the end of the document. So, it will be the same document, you just need to open it up and go in and have a look at the end, and then you'll see the additional questions are added further down.

Kimberley Shrives: Thanks. Our next question comes from Jay. Thanks Jay. Jay is asking whether a single application can include multiple technologies and or practices for adoption?

Dave Johnson: Look, as long as you can still achieve large scale adoption for each practice and technology. Please ensure that you clarify this in your budget template and the relevant criteria. But absolutely.

Kimberley Shrives: The next question is another anonymous question, and the question is, are there any requirements for matching funds in either cash or in-kind?

Dave Johnson: No, there's no mandatory amount for matching funds. However, the extent of contribution that you make will be taken into account in assessing the relative competitiveness of applications. Obviously, the more co-investment that you contribute under that criteria, the more likely it will be successful with your application.

Kimberley Shrives: Thanks, Dave. I just would like to take a small moment again to thank those who have been submitting questions.

Dave Johnson: The one thing I would say is from my experience with grant programs before, is that you can always anticipate that you will get some sort of a computer issue somewhere along the line. And I would really strongly encourage people to think about that nine PM on the ninth of January deadline, for getting your application in, as the absolute last point. You



know we appreciate you put a lot of time and effort into getting applications together, and we would hate you to be sitting there struggling as you approach nine o'clock and then not able to submit your application on time because of something that was a computer glitch or whatever. But look, we're being really upfront that late applications won't be accepted. So, I'd really emphasise if you can plan to get it in early.

Kimberley Shrives: We've had a huge number of people join the webinar, which is absolutely fantastic. And with projects between \$100,000 and 3 million dollars, you know there's not a lot of projects or potentially not a large number of projects that will be funded with that available funding. I will take this opportunity to remind everybody that any questions that don't come through to us here in the studio today will be responded to on the Question-and-Answer page that will go up on the community grants page.

Dave Johnson: What you might add Kimberley, from previous grant processes is that the Community Grants Hub are a great resource. If you've got queries, they can help you interpret what the criteria from the guidelines are. They can make sure you've got the right information, but the one thing they can't do and or nor can we, in this seminar is give you any feedback about your particular idea, or your particular project. We make sure that the process is run very cleanly and that everybody gets an equal opportunity to put their best application in. And so do the community Grants hub. They have gone to great pains to make sure that nobody gets any kind of advantage or disadvantage by being told something that they could interpret incorrectly. Look at the guidelines and make sure that your project is going to match.

Kimberley Shrives: The next question is whether an RDC can partner with a drought hub and if the drought hub applies as the lead?

Dave Johnson: It's a really good question, and a Commonwealth funded R and D corporation must partner or enter as a consortium member, with an on-farm entity to ensure that the extension and adoption activities are actually relevant to farmers in the region. So, partnering with the drought hub as the lead would certainly be appropriate, and the details for that are under section 4.1 and 4.3 of the guidelines.

Kimberley Shrives: Yeah, thanks, Dave. I'd like to thank all of you who have dialled in for today. I think that we have exhausted the questions that are coming through to the studio, so I might just call this to an end. And you can still forward questions through to the team and we will publish those on the community grants hub website in the next few days. Thanks for tuning in and again. If you want to re watch this video, it will be available on the Future Drought Fund website in the coming days. Thanks so much for attending. And all the best with your applications.

[Webinar ends]