**National Agriculture Traceability Grants Program – Livestock and Animal Traceability Development, Implementation, and Improvement**

General feedback for applicants

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Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601

Telephone 1800 900 090

Web [agriculture.gov.au](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/)

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**Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has provided the following general feedback for applicants of the National Agriculture Traceability Grants Program – Livestock and Animal Traceability Development, Implementation, and Improvement grant round.

### Overview

The grant round opened on Wednesday, 15 May 2024 and closed at 11:00PM AEST on Monday, 8 July 2024, following a one-week extension of the application period. It was an open competitive grant opportunity, awarding grants totalling $4 million (exclusive of GST), with projects to run across 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years.

The grant round received 32 eligible applicants with 11 applications selected for funding by the Grant Round Decision Maker.

The grant round was administered by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

This grant program provides opportunities for successful applicants to contribute to developing, implementing, and improving traceability systems for Australian agricultural industries, specifically in the livestock, animals and animal products sector. The purpose of the grant round is to enhance industry capacity and capability to meet national traceability outcomes and comply with current and emerging requirements. Enhancing traceability for livestock, animals and animal products will support Australia’s access to existing and new markets; enhance our ability to respond to exotic pest, disease, and food safety incidents; and help to demonstrate how our livestock, animal and animal product sectors meet changing consumer expectations. This is consistent with the objectives of the National Agricultural Traceability Strategy 2023 to 2033 (the strategy). Research and insights will demonstrate how the Livestock and Animal Traceability Development, Implementation, and Improvement grant supports the growth of the Australian agricultural sector.

There was a strong interest by stakeholders in the grant round and successful applications were of a very high standard. All applications were assessed according to the procedure detailed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines (GOGs) and the process outlined below.

This feedback is provided to assist grant applicants to understand what generally comprised a strong application and the content of quality responses to the assessment criteria for this grant opportunity.

### Selection Process

DAFF undertook the screening for organisation eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the GOGs. This information was provided to the DAFF delegate for the final decision on whether an application did not meet the eligibility and/or compliance criteria. Ineligible and non-compliant applications did not progress to assessment.

DAFF then assessed and considered all eligible and compliant applications through an Open Competitive grant process. All assessed applications were considered by the Selection Advisory Panel (the panel) - with oversight from an external probity officer. The panel, established by DAFF was convened to review and recommend applications for funding to the Decision Maker. The panel comprised a chair and three members with expertise and knowledge relevant to the grant round.

The panel assessed applications on merit, based on:

* a score against the assessment criteria
* the overall objective(s) to be achieved in providing the grant
* whether the project provided value with relevant money
* the relative value of the grant sought
* the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrated which it would contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives of the grant program as outlined in the GOGs
* the relevant merit of an application compared to other applications with a focus on the objective(s), outcome(s) and overall value for money
* the extent to which the applicant demonstrated a commitment to the program
* how the grant activities would be applied to other commodities or agricultural industries
* the risks, financial, fraud and other, which the applicant or project posed for the department
* the risks which the applicant or project posed for the Commonwealth.

Each applicant was required to address the following selection criteria, worth 20 points each:

* Criterion 1: Project alignment to the grant round purpose, objectives and outcomes
* Criterion 2: Suitability and effectiveness of the project to achieve its aims
* Criterion 3: Capacity, capability and resources to deliver your project
* Criterion 4: Value for money
* Criterion 5: Benefits and opportunities

Preferred applicants were identified based on the strength of their responses to the selection criterion and their demonstrated ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the GOGs.

### Selection Results

The selected organisations provided strong responses to the selection criteria and demonstrated their ability to meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the GOGs. Further detail about what constituted a strong response to each criterion is provided below the general feedback for applicants.

### General feedback for applicants

Successful applicants demonstrated projects which addressed the grant program objectives, outcomes and selection criteria to a high degree; provided value for money; and provided evidence the project outputs could lead to future adoption across multiple agricultural sectors and commodities; and/or demonstrate that it would support the ongoing development, implementation and improvement of agricultural supply chain traceability systems and arrangements for Australian agricultural exports, particularly in the livestock, animals and animal products sector. Successful applicants also provided a detailed proposal, project plan, budget and risk assessment which delivered strong to good responses to all of the assessment criteria, plus provided letters of support from consortium partners and/or key stakeholders.

Unsuccessful applications were determined to have one or more of the following issues:

* a lack of clarity on methodology and project activities and/or how the methodology would achieve the desired program outcomes, or the hypothesis lacked credibility and/or had a low prospect of success
* did not sufficiently address, the program objectives and/or outcomes and/or sufficiently align, with the objectives of the consultation draft National Agricultural Traceability Strategy
* proposed a project which is not in alignment with the GOGs
* sought an overall project budget which appeared to exceed what would be expected to deliver the project
* some elements of the project would duplicate in whole or in part, activities currently funded through another funding source or program
* did not provide sufficient information on outcomes which had a cross sector, commodity or supply chain application
* outcomes would lead to higher private than public benefit
* did not provide supporting evidence which the organisation had the capacity, capability and/or experience to successfully undertake the proposed project
* were not considered value for money or innovative enough compared to other projects submitted under the grant round.

Careful editing should be undertaken for future applications to ensure readability and comprehension. A number of submitted applications provided insufficient detail and were not thoughtfully put together.

### Criterion 1

#### Project alignment to the grant round purpose, objectives and outcomes (20 points)

Applicants had to demonstrate this through identifying:

* the project’s overall aim(s) and why it is important, including how it would align to the identified priority areas for action under the National Agricultural Traceability Strategy
* which grant program objectives and outcome(s) (see section 2.1 of the grant opportunity guidelines) the project would deliver against and how would it achieve them.

Table 1 Strong application examples for Criterion 1

| Strong applications | Example |
| --- | --- |
| Clearly described the project’s overall aims, identified why they were important, and how the project would align to the National Agricultural Traceability Strategy and various frameworks. | Strong responses demonstrated how their project’s overall aim(s) would reduce barriers to adoption of traceability technology and increase regulatory compliance capability, aligning with the strategy.  They clearly provided:   * a list of project aim(s) and identification of why they were important, including impacts on affected stakeholders, a particular commodity, or what the broader impact would be. * clear identification of how the project’s aim(s) would align with the objectives of the strategy. |
| Clearly identified which grant program objectives and outcomes(s) the project would deliver against and described how it would achieve them. | Strong responses outlined a clear methodology, required resources, and identified partnerships which would be used to achieve the relevant program objectives and outcomes.  They clearly provided:   * a proposal which identified relevant grant program objectives and outcomes, with strong articulation of the different aspects of the project, and clear and achievable outcomes. * a proposal which clearly articulated activities, risks and methodology. |

### Criterion 2

#### Suitability and effectiveness of the project to achieve its aims (20 points)

When addressing this criterion, applicants also had to clearly identify:

* the activities they would undertake including how, where and when they would occur
* how the proposed methodology(ies) or approach(es) to undertaking the project activities would assist with achieving the project’s aim(s)
* how progress towards achieving the project’s outcome(s) would be measured
* potential risks to the success of the project and how these would be managed or mitigated.

Table 2 Strong application examples for Criterion 2

| Strong applications | Example |
| --- | --- |
| Clearly described how, where and when project activities would be undertaken. | Strong responses clearly articulated project phases and activities.  They provided:   * how all proposed activities would be undertaken across the project timeframe. * identification of risk points and allowance of slippage time. |
| Clearly described how their proposed methodology(ies) or approach(es) would assist with achieving the project’s aim(s). | Strong responses clearly outlined the project’s aim(s) and how they would achieve the desired program outcomes through the proposed methodology(ies).  They provided:   * a suitable methodology and cross-disciplinary approach. * sufficient details in their methodology(ies) to assess the feasibility of the project and identification of how it would achieve the project’s aim(s). * a well-designed project proposal which appeared achievable based on the clear method. |
| Demonstrated how they would measure progress towards the project’s outcome(s). | Strong responses demonstrated a thorough understanding of how they would define and measure their progress throughout their project timeframe.  They provided:   * a breakdown of the project’s desired outcome(s). * key milestones which were measurable and achievable and were clearly in support of the outcome(s). |
| Demonstrated how they would manage or mitigate potential risks toward project outcome(s). | Strong responses identified potential risks to the success of their projects and outlined how these would be managed or mitigated.  They clearly provided:   * a well-articulated description of the project’s potential risks. * appropriate processes and strategies to manage and mitigate the project’s potential risks. |

### Criterion 3

#### Capacity, capability and resources to deliver your project (20 points)

In addressing this criterion, applicants had to clearly demonstrate:

* their organisation’s ability to deliver the outcomes, their track record (if any) in delivering similar projects, and access to (and availability of) personnel with the right skills and experience relevant to the project
* the specific partner(s) involved in their project and how they will engage with them to inform the project and/or the activities they will undertake to support achieving project outcome(s)
* how they will pro-actively manage and monitor their project, including taking responsibility for oversight.

Table 3 Strong application examples for Criterion 3

| Strong applications | Example |
| --- | --- |
| Described how the organisation would deliver the outcomes and demonstrate their track record in delivering similar projects, and their access to personnel with the right skills and experience. | Strong responses identified the organisation’s capability and experience in research and development together with its capacity to deliver outcomes.  They clearly demonstrated:   * the project could be taken from concept to implementation through their access to personnel with the right skills and experience. * experience through providing details of previous work or research of similar outcomes and budget. * Identification of relevant stakeholders who could fill any organisational gaps in knowledge or experience. |
| Demonstrated how they engaged with specific partners to inform the project and/or the activities they will undertake to support achieving project outcome(s). | Strong responses demonstrated appropriate industry engagement and partner support in their projects.  They provided:   * a clear description of how stakeholders would support achieving the desired project outcome(s), including letters of support from consortium partners and other stakeholders. * identification of the right partners to be involved to ensure the project approach was feasible. * an outline of how relationships would be built beyond their direct network to ensure the project’s success. |
| Demonstrated how the organisation would manage and monitor the project effectively. | Strong responses demonstrated the organisation’s capability to implement, manage and monitor a government funded project and outlined appropriate governance structures.  They provided:   * the proposal used an established platform for their project’s administration and governance. * strong articulation of different aspects of the project. * how the governance structure would engage with risk. * how the project would be governed including relevant partners or consortium partners. |

### Criterion 4

#### Value for money (20 points)

Applicants had to demonstrate this through identifying:

* how the funding requested was proportionate to the aim(s) of their project
* any co-contributions by the organisation or participatory partner(s) in the project
* any future financial or private benefit(s) which may accrue from delivering on the project.

Table 4 Strong application examples for Criterion 4

| Strong applications | Example |
| --- | --- |
| Demonstrated how the funding requested was proportionate to the aim(s) of the project. | Strong responses demonstrated how the requested funding amount was appropriate for the project scope and activities.  They provided:   * a well-articulated budget clearly connected to project activities. * the budget figures were considered appropriate to the cost and implementation of the project activities. |
| Listed any co‑contributions by their organisation or participatory partner(s) in the project. | Strong responses listed any co-contributions.  They clearly provided:   * details of partner(s) who would contribute to the cost of their projects and the extent of their contribution. * details of project partners’ additional support through cash and/or in-kind contributions which would add value to the delivery of the project. |
| Described future financial or private benefit(s) which would be realised from delivering the project. | Strong responses described gains which may accrue from the project.  They clearly described:   * parts of the project which would provide benefit beyond the participating organisations and how those benefits might be shared. * how their project outcomes might be implemented across the agricultural supply chain. |

### Criterion 5

#### Benefits and opportunities (20 points)

Applicants In addressing this criterion, applicants had to clearly demonstrate:

* how and to whom findings or deliverables will be shared or made available
* how their project outcomes could be applied across other agricultural sectors, or the supply chain, in the future to reduce barriers to adoption of agricultural traceability, and support regulatory and commercial compliance capability
* the long-term quantitative and qualitative benefits that their grant activities will deliver to industry and Australian agriculture.

Table 5 Strong application examples for Criterion 5

| Strong applications | Example |
| --- | --- |
| Described how and to whom findings or deliverables would be shared or made available. | Strong responses demonstrated how the findings/deliverables of their project would be made available, and who they would be shared with. They clearly provided:   * details of communication (workshops, reports, presentations, online publications) to inform draft and final findings and recommendations of the project. * stakeholders and partners who would be consulted and ultimately provided with the outcomes and findings at the completion of the project. |
| Described how the project outcomes could be adopted for use and how it could be expanded across different agricultural commodities and products. | Strong responses demonstrated how their projects could be adopted and scaled. They clearly outlined:   * that the regulatory technology solution underpinning their project would be interoperable with other systems. * an education component extending to other industries, and engagement with stakeholders from other agricultural sectors beyond the project’s initial phases. |
| Described their project’s long-term benefits to industry and Australian agriculture. | Strong responses demonstrated how their project would contribute to the development of innovative and practicable proposals to address known data gaps for Australian agriculture. They clearly provided:   * a proposal that was an innovative yet appropriate use of technology in agricultural traceability. * a proposal that had a wide application across commodities other than its targeted commodity. * evidence that the public benefit outweighed the private benefit, and evidence that the project would strengthen sector-wide interoperability. |