



Drought Resilience Innovation Grants: webinar transcript

On 9 August 2021, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment presented a webinar on the Future Drought Fund's Drought Resilience Innovation Grants grant opportunity.

This is a transcript of the webinar.

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[Webinar begins]

Andrew Bell: Hello there. Good morning. Happy Monday. Welcome. I'm Andrew Bell. And on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, I'd like to welcome you to this information session on the Drought Resilience Innovation Grants. And before we go any further, we begin, as we should always do, by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we are broadcasting from today here in Canberra. I'd like to pay my respects to their elders past, present, and emerging. Yumalundi. Welcome.

Andrew Bell: So, thanks for registering. And I know for some of you, the process was a wee bit frustrating, but thank you so much for getting through it, and literally hundreds of you have, so there's a lot of information you're wanting to hear. So what's ahead for the next hour or so. Well, in this information session, we'll start by talking about the Future Drought Fund itself, the essentials of that. Then we'll explore the Innovation grants themselves, including that all important, what's needed when you apply for one of the grants or more of the grants.

Andrew Bell: And then throughout the session and at the end of the session, we'll be taking the kind of questions you want to ask. And if you do have a question during the session, type them into the Q&A box on your screen. Now these need to be questions about the process, the guidelines. We can't answer questions about specifics because applications have already come in. We can't talk to those. This is about the big picture and what you need to do to get involved in the process. So it's about process, about guidelines, about how you do it rather than specific proposals. Now, we'll be posting the Q&As with a transcript of this session on the website in coming days. And that means, if we're unable to answer your question during the session, it will be included in those Q&As. And by the way, any questions posted will not include identifying information.

Andrew Bell: Housekeeping done, let's meet the people who are going to be talking about this and answering your questions in the next hour. Travis Bover is the Assistant Secretary of Future Drought Fund branch at DAWE, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. And also, Louise Palfreyman. Hello, Louise. Director of Policy and Engagement team at the FDF. Hello, Travis. And formally, hello, Louise. Welcome, welcome, welcome. Now we also have representatives behind the



camera from the FDF team who are beavering away to find out the information that you need to know as you ask your questions. Thank you to them and to the production team here in the studio in Canberra. Right, let's get to tin tacks. Now, Travis, let's get an overview of the Future Drought Fund for those joining us who aren't entirely clear on what it is and what it might be able to do.

Travis Bover: Thanks, Andrew. And hi everyone online. I'm very happy to give an overview of the Future Drought Fund. Drought is an enduring feature of the Australian landscape and it can have significant economic, social, and environmental impacts, as we all know. So, the Australian Government is committed to providing farmers and communities with the tools that they need to prepare for, manage, and sustain their livelihoods through periods of drought. And that's why the Future Drought Fund was established.

Travis Bover: The drought (fund) makes \$100 million available every year for programs to improve the drought preparedness of Australian agriculture and associated communities. Our programs are about preparing for future droughts. They're not about in drought support for people experiencing the impacts of drought right now. There's a range of other programs that are available for that.

Travis Bover: We have an independent consultative committee that guides our work and it developed a four year drought resilience funding plan through broad consultation with farmers, communities, agribusiness and others right round Australia. The plan sets out strategies and actions for improving drought resilience and preparedness. The committee also advises the Agriculture Minister on programs to implement the funding plan.

Travis Bover: We've just ticked over into our second year of the fund's operation. The first round of programs was announced on the 1st of July last year, 2020, and they're all well underway. The 2021 Budget announced a second round of programs building on the first, which we're now getting underway. This includes the Innovation Grants program that we're discussing today.

Travis Bover: The programs fall under the five themes or strategies that are shown on the slide on the screen, innovation, better risk management, better climate information, more resilient communities and better land management. I won't go through all of these themes in detail today. But anyone wanting to know more about the Future Drought Fund programs can visit our website and you can also register your interest on our Have Your Say website. By signing up, you'll receive the latest news and information about the fund. Website details will be provided at the end of the presentation.

Andrew Bell: Travis, will the grants we're about to be talking about be targeting drought affected areas or areas deemed at risk, just those? Is there a list of areas that people can find out where these grants are available?

Travis Bover: So, as I mentioned, the Future Drought Fund is about preparing for future droughts, it's not about responding to current droughts. So really what we're looking for is all areas of Australia are potentially at risk of drought in one way or another, so all areas of Australia are ultimately eligible to apply under this process.



Andrew Bell: Now we're here today to talk about innovation, one of the five themes of the fund. So, innovation, what's the fund doing in that area?

Travis Bover: Yeah. So, innovation is our biggest area of investment, so over \$120 million allocated out to 2023-24. And that's because new practices and technologies are a keyway in which Australian agriculture can become more resilient to drought. There's good evidence of this already. At 2016, a Western Australian study, for example, found that improvements in technology, agronomy and cultivars has improved water use efficiency of crops at a greater rate than rainfalls decline.

Travis Bover: So essential to our work on innovation are 8 Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs launched earlier this year. These Hubs are intended to transform the way we drive and deliver innovation through a focus on responsiveness to end user and regional needs and opportunities, extension, adoption, and commercialisation of existing research, and collaboration across research, development, extension, adoption, and commercialisation organisations.

Travis Bover: We're also—under the theme of innovation—developing a national Drought Resilience Research and Adoption Investment Plan to identify the highest priorities for investment. Early findings of that investment plan were discussed at a Science to Practice forum that we held at the end of June, and videos of that are available on our website. We're going to have those science to practice forums annually as part of our work on innovation. And interim investment plan is expected to be released soon, and we'll be seeking input to support its further development. And then finally under our theme of innovation, we had the Innovation Grants program that we're talking about today.

Andrew Bell: So, before we go on to Louise, you mentioned the adoption innovation Hubs. What's their role in this process? So, will the Hubs prepare applications for others? Do they need to be consulted? How do they fit into the landscape?

Travis Bover: Yeah. So, in the first instance of this expression of interest stage, it's open to all. So, there's no requirement to work with a Hub, there's no requirement for applications to come through a Hub, anyone can apply. You're welcome, of course, to consult your Hub if you feel that would be a valuable thing. Hubs and all of them component members are also eligible to apply as well. Later on in the process with our Ideas grant, which we'll come to later, for people who are awarded an Ideas grant, part of what we'll do is connect those people to their relevant Hubs so that they can further develop their ideas. But that's later in the process rather than the beginning.

Andrew Bell: Thanks, Travis. Now to Louise. Let's get on to the real meat and potatoes of this, and that's the Innovation Grants themselves. Get into the detail. What can you tell us about that?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah, sure. So, the Innovation Grants have been developed to fund projects that are going to help our Australian farmers and communities to improve their drought resilience with innovative approaches. So, if we want our farmers and communities and the businesses that depend on our farmers to thrive through future droughts, we're going to need lots of new ideas and practices and technologies, different ways of doing business.



Louise Palfreyman: So, these Innovation Grants are focused on development, extension, adoption, and early-stage commercialisation activities. It's a competitive process being run through the Community Grants Hub. These grants are a unique opportunity. So, we're wanting to build a pipeline of mature and innovative proposals that are going to have the potential to have broad scale change, either regionally or nationally.

Louise Palfreyman: We're really looking for those bright sparks out there who've got ideas that could transform agricultural practices with technology, business models to make Australian farming and agribusiness and communities more resilient to drought. So, the guidelines have been released, that happened on the 29th of July, and applications are going to close at 9:00 PM on the 8th of September. And you can access information about these on our website or by contacting the Community Grants directly.

Louise Palfreyman: So, there's 3 different types of grants on offer. So, the first one is an Ideas grant, that's been referenced already. That's for \$50,000 for 1 year. This grant recognises that there are good ideas out there, and it's going to help the grantees to undertake some co-design and to further the development of that project. They might need to engage some experts to help with this project development. It's a safe fail pathway, so it's going to support testing and the development of the ideas that are really merit worthy, but they carry a bit of uncertainty and may be a high level of risk while they're in this development phase. So, these grantees will be given some help and invited to meet with the relevant Drought And Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub, just to get some advice on those next steps and useful connections.

Louise Palfreyman: So, the second type of grant that we've got available is called a Proof-of-Concept grant. That's for up to \$120,000 for 12 months. And these grants support feasibility or viability testing for a new innovative idea and that's intended to deliver a new product or process or service, something that's going to help build out that resilience. Grantees might develop a prototype. They might be running a demonstration to test feasibility, testing protocols, exploring a market opportunity for a product, process, or service. The idea is that this might de-risk some projects and resolve some technical or other issue that's hampering the development of that innovative product, service, or process. So, this indeed is as well as safe fail pathway.

Louise Palfreyman: So, the line last one I'm going to speak about is the Innovation grants. So, this is the larger grant, it's worth between \$300,000 and 1.1 million each year for 3 years. And these large grants can support new ideas being developed and tested and shared across farms and regions and industries, communities. We're really looking for projects that are going to improve drought resilience and deliver broad scale change, regional and national application. So, it provides opportunities to draw research and knowledge through to end users and in ways that are going to help farmers and agricultural dependent communities and business to implement new practices, new technologies.

Louise Palfreyman: So, these 3 different sorts of grants that we have on offer means that we can support a variety of proposals through this Innovation grants process and for projects at all different stages of the maturity of the idea or the proposal. So, we're pretty excited about this process and we're looking forward to see what comes forward.



Andrew Bell: Great. We're going to get a little bit more into the, not so much of the weeds, but the real important stuff of the process in just a moment. But we're already getting questions in. Thank you very much for typing into the Q&A box. So, I'll just ask a couple of those before we go any further. You mentioned research there, Louise, do these Innovation grants fund research pure and simple?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah. So, the grants focus on development, extension, adoption and commercialisation, but applied research will also be funded. And that's done in the context of those other activities. We know that that might be needed to address some information gaps or to do some testing and trialling, so it is permissible. But projects that are just about fundamental or basic research aren't on the cards for these Innovation grants.

Andrew Bell: You mentioned commercialisation, which is a lovely segue to you, Travis, can you explain a bit more about what's possible under commercialisation? Are there things that are off limits?

Travis Bover: Yes, there are. So, we've thought carefully about where to pitch our role in the commercialisation space. And one of the things that we've had regard to our other Australian Government programs, particularly in the advancing commercialisation program run by the Department of Industry and Science. So, it's focused on, as the title suggests, accelerating commercialisation. Where we're trying to focus is just before that basically, which is, I know a little bit vague, but what we're looking for are ideas that aren't quite mature enough to go into that advancing commercialisation stream and help them build their maturity to a point where they can do that.

Travis Bover: So, we're looking for, well we're potentially willing, I should say, to fund early-stage commercialisation activities such as developing prototypes, exploring market opportunities, understanding IP, intellectual property issues, early mapping of commercialisation pathways. What we won't do, and this is set out in pretty explicit terms in the guidelines, is the core commercialisation things such as developing your actual IP strategy, developing your business plan, going out and talking to potential investors to raise capital during the first product to market. There are the programs that are available for those sorts of activities, we're in the space just before that.

Andrew Bell: Right. Well, let's actually continue on that theme, Travis. And let's get to what you are looking for and sending out the kind of things people should be thinking about.

Travis Bover: Sure thing. So fundamentally what we're looking for are good ideas. And as Louise set out, we've structured the program so there are a number of streams, so good ideas, whether they're mature or need some work to get to a point of maturity where hopefully we're able to support them. So that's the basis of it.

Travis Bover: But proposals going beyond that need to do 3 things. So first of all, you have to address 1 or more of our funding objectives. Our funding plan has triple bottom line objectives to improve drought resilience, economic resilience, environmental resilience, and social resilience. So, we're



looking for proposals that basically improve drought resilience that will equip farmers, agricultural dependent communities, and businesses to prepare for drought conditions in the future.

Travis Bover: Secondly, you have to address 1 or more of the investment priorities that are up on the screen at the moment. And then thirdly, your proposal must also deliver public good benefits. So public good is a core requirement under the Future Drought Fund Funding Plan. Public goods can include contribution to economic and productivity growth, improvements to the environment that are valued by the community and the government, and increased social connection and resilience in regional communities. Your project can involve private benefits, and we recognise that that's the reality a lot of the time, but what we're looking for is a balance between private and public benefits and that the public benefits outweigh just the private benefits.

Andrew Bell: Can I just ask you from looking at that list and representing, I hope, the audience, is you've got 9 points there. The more points you tick, does that give you a better chance or it's not as simple as that?

Travis Bover: I don't think it's as simple as that. And look, one of the things that people could probably take away from the 9 points is that this is the first time we've run an Innovation grants round and we've deliberately cast it quite broad because we want to see what sort of ideas are out there. And again, we've structured the program in a way where we hope that we can find the best ways of supporting the best ideas.

Andrew Bell: Opportunity is knocking. Louise, talking about that opportunity, how do we apply? How does someone go about? Because there might be some rolling of eyes thinking it's going to be immense paperwork, difficult, and all the rest of it. So how do people apply?

Louise Palfreyman: Well, I guess there's 2 key stages in our process. It's going to start with the Expression of Interest phase, that's what's open now. So basically what we need you to do is to tell us what your innovative idea is and how you're going to put that plan into action. So, you can express interest in 1 or more different grants. You can go for an Ideas grant, a Proof-of-Concept grant, or an Innovation grant.

Louise Palfreyman: Each different grant that you're going for needs a different application for a different proposal. An independent selection panel is going to have a look at these expressions of interest and the most competitive applications for the Innovation grant and the Proof-of-Concept grants will be pushed through to a next stage. So, by invitation, there will be a targeted competitive grant round, and that's going to require a second stage application. It will be a full grant application, but you'll be able to build on what you've already submitted. The Ideas grants, however, they're going to be awarded based on the EOIs that you've submitted.

Louise Palfreyman: And one important thing to note about the process is we're going to use the Expression of Interest process to move applications to the most appropriate funding stream. And by this I mean, you might've put an application in for an Innovation grant or a Proof-of-Concept grant, but we might see that that is a really merit worthy idea, but we may not think that it's developed sufficiently for that funding stream. And what we might do is to offer an Ideas grant based on the



merit of the proposal, but then it might require some development. So, these Ideas grants are designed to keep on developing these ideas. We've got a short video on our website, if you want to have a look at that, which it goes through this process again if people are looking for further guidance.

Andrew Bell: And if I can throw to you, Travis, how about the paperwork involved? I mean, you said you're casting the net wide. In doing that, are you trying to make the paperwork as unchallenging as possible or as reducing the headache that people feel just looking at paperwork sometimes?

Travis Bover: Yeah, great question. And we have made a very conscious effort to try to reduce the amount of paperwork, especially at this Expression of Interest stage. Just one of our early learnings from the Future Drought Fund from other programs is, there's always going to be processes associated with applying for public funds, but we don't want the paperwork associated with it to defeat the ultimate objective of finding the best ideas and finding ways of supporting them.

Travis Bover: So that's one of the reasons why we started with an Expression of Interest process. We want to make it as easy as possible for people to put forward their good ideas so that we can have a look at them. And if they've got merit, then we can work with you to do the more detailed paperwork that ultimately we need to do to support the allocation of public funds, but try to keep it as light touch as possible at this first stage.

Andrew Bell: But clearly it's not just back of envelope stuff. So Louise, are there any reading materials that can help people as they scribble down their ideas and then turn those into an application?

Louise Palfreyman: Absolutely. So, we'll be encouraging people to be reading the guidelines as the key bit of information. They've got all the things that you need to put into your EOI to help us to assess it.

Andrew Bell: And where would you find those guidelines? The website?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah, on the website, go to the Community Grants website.

Andrew Bell: So that's really important. That's the first place you need to go. So, if people are interested in applying, they know where to get the guidelines. And then we get into the real sharp end of the process. There's a deadline and all the rest of it. Can we just go over applications when they need to be in, etc, etc?

Louise Palfreyman: Sure. So, the applications need to be in on the 8th of September at 9:00 PM. And that closing date is firm, anything that is submitted by the closing time will be assessed and no late applications will be accepted. So, the assessment process for the Innovation grants and the Proof-of-Concept grants, it's going to take about 6 weeks following that closing date. And once the assessment is complete, we'll be in touch with those successful applicants who are going to move to the next stage.



Andrew Bell: And to be absolutely clear, that 9:00 PM is Australian Eastern Time? For our friends in the centre and the west.

Louise Palfreyman: That's right.

Andrew Bell: So consult local guides for details, but I'm sure you're all used to that. Right. Louise, let's have a quick recap before we go on. I'm a lay person, I want to know, I want to understand the stages and the grant process. So first off, I've got an idea, I submit my EOI for 1 or more of the grant types, 8th of September at 9 o'clock there online.

Louise Palfreyman: That's right.

Andrew Bell: Right. I get my EOI in, the selection panel do their assessment. And then they could go 1 of 2 ways?

Louise Palfreyman: That's right.

Andrew Bell: So, the first way is my Innovation grant or Proof-of-Concept EOI is considered competitive, and so then I have to do a little bit more paperwork with a full application. And that's that competitive round?

Louise Palfreyman: Targeted, competitive.

Andrew Bell: Right. And then path 2, I've got a good idea, but it needs a little bit more work. What happens then?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah. So those are Ideas grants, we're going to award them based on the EOI. You don't need to submit more applications. We would need a little bit more paperwork. The successful ideas do need a contract in place, but that's the level of burden, I guess, for those early stage ideas.

Andrew Bell: And look at those key dates and also website details up on the screen now. Right then, the grants are there to be had, but who is able to bid for them? Let's talk about eligibility. Travis, who can apply in the first instance?

Travis Bover: Sure. So be able to apply for a grant, the applicant or the lead applicant if we're talking about a consortium, must be an eligible entity, be based in Australia, and be capable of entering into a legally binding and enforceable agreement with the Commonwealth.

Andrew Bell: So, what is an eligible entity? That sounds a bit highfalutin.

Travis Bover: It is, it's a bit of a technical term. And on the screen there, you can see a definition of it if you like. But basically to be eligible, you have to have an Australian business number or an ABN, and be one of those entities listed on the screen. Consortia are welcome to apply and we do absolutely in the Future Drought Fund encourage collaboration and working together. Each consortium must nominate a lead applicant and the lead applicant must be an eligible entity. And it's



the lead applicant that are ultimately, if successful, would enter into the contract on behalf of the consortium.

Andrew Bell: Talking of consortia, and I think Louise you're across this, how do individuals or organisations form those consortia? Are there any rules and regs concerning that?

Louise Palfreyman: Well, the main requirement is that the lead applicant is one of those eligible entities. So the list is on the screen, you'll be looking down there to see if you're on the list, I'm sure. And I guess that's the main requirement, you're able to enter the contract with the Commonwealth, and the behind the scenes arrangements that you have with consortium members is important. But the key one is that the person entering the contract is able to.

Andrew Bell: Well, that leads us to who isn't able to apply for grants. So non eligibility, is there another long list there?

Louise Palfreyman: There's a shorter list-

Andrew Bell: That's good.

Louise Palfreyman: ... on the non-eligible entities. And that's on the screen now too. And what people can do is, if you're on the screen, clearly these are not eligible to enter a contract with us for this process. However, ineligible entities can be part of a consortium. So, if you've got a great idea or you're wanting to partner with someone, that's terrific. We'd say you need to be working with others to form a consortium to put into an application into this particular process. So the grant guidelines have some information about consortiums on them. But really the key one is, if you need to form a consortium, if you are on the ineligible list but you really want to participate, is you need to find another group that can.

Andrew Bell: All that conversations on various levels, we're going to go on to talk about consortia in a minute. But let's just pause. Key questions are already coming in. So, let's answer some of them as they come in response to the various slides. One question, and I think it's probably one you're going to hear over and over, Louise, what do you mean by the public good?

Louise Palfreyman: Mm-hmm, good question. So the public good is, I guess, something that is not retained by an individual for private commercial gain. Determining where the private good is and the public good involves the consideration of, I guess, what are the activities planned? What is going to be the outcome that's expected? Who's going to reap the benefits from those outcomes?

Louise Palfreyman: So public benefits can be derived from a whole bunch of different sources. It might be through providing information or services that are going to help drive practice change, it could be about contributions to productivity or improvements on the environment or something that's going to increase the social resilience of our community. So there's lots of things there, but what is really important is to work through what is the private benefit and what's the public benefit, and where's the balance there.



Andrew Bell: Right. And resilience is a big word in these conversations we're going to have. Before we move on to another topic, one for Travis here. And the question is, can I apply for funding if I'm receiving funding already from the FDF or received funding for the same activity? Can you add on, is that possible?

Travis Bover: Yeah. It's a great question. But the basic principle is you can't get paid twice for the same activity. But we do recognise that a lot of people are quite clever in terms of how they leverage these sorts of funding opportunities, and there might be two connected activities where one is funded from another FDF program or another government program and you're looking to leverage that, supplement that with some funding from here. Those sorts of things we're open to as long as we're not funding those same activity twice. So if you're thinking along those lines, then we'd encourage you to provide us with enough information so that we can clearly see that we're not funding the same activity twice, we're actually helping you to access those leverage opportunities that you're probably looking for.

Andrew Bell: Thanks for that, Travis. And thanks for your questions. We've had many hundreds already by the way, and a reminder that all questions will be responded to in transcripts and additional material after this event. And it's lovely to have you with us. More than 400 people with us at the moment, so it shows you the interest in these grants. Right. We've talked about consortia, let's talk about them. What kind of organisations... and we've touched on eligibility, but let's go a little bit more into that because clearly people might want to be coming together. So Louise, what eligibility requirements across a consortium are you looking for?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah, well, I think that the main thing that I'd just be emphasising to people is, the key thing is the lead applicant for the consortium needs to meet the eligibility requirements as mentioned. To help people make connections and potentially form consortia, we've got an interactive tool on our website and a map to help people register their interest so they can collaborate.

Andrew Bell: So, this means you're having conversations in a new way, there might be people out there thinking in the same way and you can connect with them and that's how you do it?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah. That's right. So people who want to join in and work with others to submit a proposal, they might be able to form a consortium. And what they need to do is to jump online and leave their details. And so you can put a pin on the map and you can describe your concept and who you're looking to work with to, I guess, further your project, further your idea.

Andrew Bell: And it's a grand opportunity as well to meet people who are thinking the same way far, far away.

Louise Palfreyman: That's right. Imagine what you could do together.

Andrew Bell: Yeah, that's great. So that website resource is there. So in whatever form we are, we're interested, we found out we're eligible, again, the how, how to apply and also what to be thinking about before you even start to apply.



Louise Palfreyman: Sure. So, I guess the most important thing is to read the guidelines. I know it sounds simple, but it's pretty fundamental. That's where the rules all are about what we can and can't do and assess. So, you can go to the Community Grants website, again, they have the guidelines there. They've also got some questions and answers that we've already taken, and there'll be more there as we get more questions in. And of course, the ones from today will be added to that list as well.

Andrew Bell: And it's all part of the process, I guess. That's throwing the net wide. There's going to be a lot of questions. But I guess the watchword is, always read the instructions, it does help. So, you've read the instructions, what do you do next?

Louise Palfreyman: Well, you just need to jump online, you need to go to the Community Grants website and complete the application form. You need to provide all the information that's requested from you there or the boxes and things. You need to make your pitch, address the selection criteria that's outlined in the guidelines, and you submit your application. The applications are going to close at 9:00 PM, Australian Eastern Standard Time, on the 8th of September 2021.

Andrew Bell: And during that process, if people need help, what kind of help is on offer?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah. Well, I'm hoping that the guidelines actually answer most of your questions and those questions and answers that are already on the website. But if you do need help, there's a phone number to call the Community Grants team.

Andrew Bell: Right. We're going to go to a Q&A session more formally in a little while. We're about halfway through this process now. So keep the questions coming in. But before we get there, there's an old adage in journalism, tell it, tell it and tell it again. And information is power. The more information you have, the better prepared you are. So Louise, can we just go through point by point, those deadlines, those important bits of information?

Louise Palfreyman: Sure, sure. Okay. So, the guidelines have been released, that happened on the 29th of July. Any questions and answers that you want to ask of us, they have to be submitted no later than 5:00 PM on the second of September. And the closing date and the time, again, is 9 o'clock, 9:00 PM, Australian Eastern Standard Time, on the 8th of September. For the Innovation grants and the Proof-of-Concept grants, the ones that have got a pass through to a next stage, this will be happening and opening on the 28th of October. Yeah, that's it.

Andrew Bell: Right. So those are those deadlines, those dates, those things that you need to know, but you also have questions around those things which are set in stone. And this is where we'll be fielding as many questions as we can get to. So let's start. Commercialisation seems to be a topic that's interesting people. And someone has asked, You've talked about commercialisation and then said proposals should be about the greater public good rather than private goods, so we... So can you address that because it's a grey area, isn't it? I'm guessing you can't do chapter and verse about that.

Travis Bover: Yeah, that's exactly right, and we totally acknowledged that. So it is a grey area and we've provided as much guidance as we can through the guidelines and through sessions such as



this. Ultimately, one of the things that the EOI form asks you to do, and the guidelines asks you to do is to turn your mind to and clearly set out for us where you see this with the private benefits and the public benefits, and think it through, outline it for us so we can think it through and be satisfied that there is a balance there. There's always going to be a mix of private and public benefit, it's about convincing us that there's sufficient public benefit alongside the private benefit for public funds to be investing in.

Andrew Bell: Yeah, it's the balance that you were talking about, Louise.

Louise Palfreyman: It's the balance.

Andrew Bell: Yeah. Talking about balance, is there a limit to the number of EOIs you can submit? Someone is asking, Can you submit more than one EOI in each level? And indeed, 3 different EOIs for an Ideas grant? I mean, how long is a piece of string?

Louise Palfreyman: Well, we might have people who have been sitting on some wonderful inventions and ideas that they've been working on for some time. You can submit as many applications as you like. I'd suggest you submit one application for each different proposal. And yeah, feel free to submit what you have on offer, I guess, and just work up the proposal, answer the questions, and we'll have a look at them when they come in. There's no restrictions on that.

Andrew Bell: Travis, we've had a question about your early comment about early commercialisation pathway versus the Department of Industry commercialisation acceleration. Can we have a bit more explanation on that?

Travis Bover: Yeah, sure. So our guidelines and the types of commercialisation activities that are eligible and are not eligible are very much crafted with a view of what's eligible under the Accelerating Commercialisation program as well. So if you compare the 2 and the guidelines for the Accelerating Commercialisation program available from the industry website, you'll see that the sorts of activities that are eligible under their program are around demonstrating commercial opportunities such as developing business models, IP strategies, attracting investors, capital, realising commercial outcomes, such as making first sales. They're the sorts of things that they are supporting, and therefore we're not supporting those through our program.

Travis Bover: We're supporting activities that may allow ideas to move to that stage, but aren't quite there yet. So that would be, for example, again, instead of developing a business model, developing IP strategy, we would support potentially as part of a broader set of activities, some work to start to understand what your business strategy might be, what your strategy might be for raising capital and equity, what IP issues you'll need to grapple with in order to develop a strategy.

Andrew Bell: Okay. It might even be a yes, no answer, is aqua agriculture included in this grant process Travis?

Travis Bover: Aquaculture?



Andrew Bell: Yeah.

Travis Bover: So I might actually take that one on notice. That's one that's come up in the past as well. And I think, I just want to make sure that we're consistent with what we've set out in the guidelines. So if people will forgive me on that, we'll just make sure we get it right rather than answer now.

Andrew Bell: Which is an indication of how vital and how active this process is, which gives it its excitement. Talking of excitement, someone asking, What's a blue sky opportunity? Louise.

Louise Palfreyman: That's a good question. I guess we are throwing the gates open somewhat here, aren't we? In the guidelines, one of the investment priorities is a blue sky opportunity. It means that you're addressing at least 2 of, I guess, our big funding objectives. So the objectives being economic resilience, environmental resilience, social resilience. So we're throwing the door open for people who've got out of the box ideas.

Louise Palfreyman: We've written up these investment priorities, but we'd be happy to acknowledge that there might be something out there, something really innovative that could be wonderful for building drought resilience in Australia. And if that's you, if you've got an idea, please put in an application, we'd love to see it, explain about how it does address those priorities.

Andrew Bell: Blue sky. Think global is one of the questions we've been asked, Is it possible to involve international collaborators who have established expertise in say drought productivity? I don't know who can speak to that one.

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah, sure. Yeah. I guess as we've been stressing all along and if you're not eligible to submit an application, it doesn't mean that you're precluded from this process. So international entities can't actually apply on their own right. But there's wonderful research and other development going in other countries and Australia is primed to leverage that great work that's going on overseas. So if you're interested in international collaborations, that's terrific. Just make sure that the lead applicant is able to put in the pitch to us and able to, I guess, work with us for the funding agreement. But it's welcomed that we draw collaboration from all over the place really.

Andrew Bell: So that's yet another element where you're opening that gate, you're casting that net and seeing what comes in. On a very simple basis, someone is asking, Is there a PDF of the complete form so we can see what is required before we even start? So I guess you can lay it all out and see it. Can you download and print?

Louise Palfreyman: I think at the moment, the form is an online "type it in as you go" kind of thing. And we'll see if we can make something else available, but it's not there at the moment.

Andrew Bell: There we go. Great question. In the same vein, Can we please get a copy of the slides or the key headings for various industry and government presentations? And adding best wishes as well, which thank you very much. I guess we've got 400 odd people here, but you want the word to go far and wide.



Louise Palfreyman: Absolutely. We're happy to make... this recording is going to be made available, the transcript, questions and answers, are all going to be made available. We're conscious that actually quite a lot of questions have come in even as people registered, so we'll do our best to get to those. There are some probity requirements about answering questions and answers though, so I guess it's probably important for people to know who are typing into the box. If you're providing information about your great idea, if we answered that question, that will also be publicly available in a question and answer format. And there's a lot of questions that we can't answer. If it's about the merit worthiness of your idea, that's actually like assessing that. So there's probity control that we can and can't do.

Andrew Bell: Yeah. So remember it's about the process and the guidelines and all that kind of thing. Can we just ask this one, which is sort of, pretty fundamental, who is making the decision on this process? Travis, who is this independent panel and how is it put together?

Travis Bover: Yeah, so the department is putting together an independent selection panel. It'll draw from a range of experts in the agricultural innovation space. The selection panel ultimately makes recommendations to the Agriculture Minister and it's the Agriculture Minister that's ultimately responsible for making the final decisions on grants. Before doing so under the Future Drought Fund Act, he actually consults with the board of the Regional Investment Corporation.

Andrew Bell: Right. Going back to the application forms again, and it's interesting to see what interests people and what they want to know upfront, a question here, pretty fundamental, is the online application form the same for the 3 different grant type?

Louise Palfreyman: Yes.

Andrew Bell: Is it identical?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah, it is. So it's the same questions that we're asking for them. It's basically the main questions. There's 2 different assessment criteria: what's your idea? How does it link into our priorities, those funding objectives and the public good around it? And then, how are you going to execute it? So 2 main questions.

Louise Palfreyman: But you'll notice in the guidelines, the stress on the value of the idea and then the capability for you to execute that idea is a bit different between the different grants. For example, for the Ideas grant, we're really focused on, what's the idea? For those large grants, which are worth potentially \$3.3 million over 3 years, we're very interested in, who is undertaking this exercise? How are you going to do it? And all that. A bit of reassurance about the plan in place. So they're quite different proposals because we really throwing the doors out to a whole variety of different things.

Andrew Bell: Yeah. And someone has asked here, well, the two questions, I'm going to collapse them into each other. Someone asking, Can I applied for a grant to install infrastructure like watering systems or a tank? And also someone else asking, Would water and food security projects for Aboriginal and remote communities be applicable for this program?



Louise Palfreyman: How about I take this. There's 2 different questions. So for putting a water tank on your property, I guess there's 2 main things I'd probably emphasise. Firstly, we're looking for really innovative ideas, and also that any proposal has this public good dimension to it. So you'd need to be telling us how you're balancing the public good and the private good. So I think that's probably the main things. There's also some information in the guidelines about the level of infrastructure payments we allow, and you'd have to make it less than 25% of the total grant amount to be putting infrastructure in place. And there's more information on the guidelines about what expenditure is eligible or ineligible. So it gives you a good sense of what you can and can't apply for, if you look at the guidelines.

Andrew Bell: Yeah. And the key is we're looking forward and that is very important. Right. Someone has asked, Can you apply for an Innovation grant that's less than \$300,000, but run is longer for a year? How elastic are the various grant processes?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah. Well, in the guidelines, it says Innovation grants are from \$300,000 up to \$1.1 million per year, and it goes for 3 years. So I think that's pretty set in stone. And the Proof-of-Concept grants could be any amount up to \$120,000. And again, those Ideas grants, it's \$50,000. That's it. One deal.

Andrew Bell: There's another balance here, isn't there? I guess, you've got to have some guidelines, some structure, but you want to be as flexible as possible. Another specific being asked, Travis, how many projects are you going to be funding? Is there a number?

Travis Bover: No, there's no number. And as we were talking about earlier, what we're looking for through this process is the best ideas. So, in the guidelines, we've given some indicative splits in terms of number of projects and amount of funding for those 3 categories, Ideas grants, Proof-of-Concept grants, and the Innovation grants. There's about 20 of each, but we've also said that we're going to be flexible over there. So if we got lots of good ideas that needs some further work, so they're more in the Ideas grant, in Proof-of-Concept grant, end of things, then we might put more money into that. But if we get lots of really mature ideas that are really great opportunities to advance drought resilience for Australian agriculture, then we will reserve the right to tip some more money into that end of the spectrum.

Andrew Bell: And I don't know if you can talk to this or you, Louise. Someone asking, Is there any particular crop or industry focus for this program or across the board, or is it open slather?

Louise Palfreyman: No, you can put in an application in for a specific industry or across a region or grouping up a bunch of different agricultural areas. There are no restrictions on it. But it'd be really good for people to spell it out for us so we really understand the breadth of it, because we are looking for game changers, big impact ideas. And there's a lot of interest in this proposal, so sell it and let us know exactly what you're planning to do, because that's going to really help us to assess these great ideas.

Andrew Bell: Someone asking here about the difference between pure basic research. Given an example of research. Louise, is that your bailiwick?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah, yeah. I can take that. I mean, I guess, I'll probably take that question the other way, what's applied research rather than pure research.

Andrew Bell: Rightio.

Louise Palfreyman: I guess applied research is about solving problems with the context of moving it forward in other dimensions. That pure research is, I guess, sorting out information issues, but it's without that broader application where we're really looking at trying to get things on the ground practical impact for communities. So research is great. We've got lots of it in Australia, which is wonderful. And we're really looking to get things on the ground to have the impact to, I guess, help the drought resilience. And I guess that's where I'd pitch it. Yeah.

Andrew Bell: A question here, so Travis or Louise jump in whichever you feel comfortable answering. Are applicants expected to co-contribute? And if so, in cash or in kind? So the money is there, but would there be an expectation for people to put some money where their ideas are as well?

Travis Bover: Yeah. So I can start and then Louise might finish or even correct me. But look, one of the things that we always look for in these applications is value for money. And one way in which you can improve your value for money of your proposition is co-funding. One of the other things that we've talked a little bit about here is that public versus private good. And one of the ways in which you can offset private goods is by co-contributing. For example, if your activity involves some capital costs, that value is captured entirely privately, then it might be appropriate for that to be your co-contribution and for the government investment, for the public investment to be about how you leverage that, that infrastructure or whatever it is for the public benefit.

Louise Palfreyman: And labour, of course. I mean, that's another example of an activity which could be a co-contribution. It doesn't all have to be cash. Obviously, that's easier to calculate the value of, but you can describe other kind of contributions which go to that balance. Yeah, I guess the only other thing I was thinking about was that in the commercialisation space I guess one thing that we'll be asking for people is, why are you seeking funding from this place, from Innovation grants? And specifically, how come you haven't been able to yield that capital to drive this process forward? Has sufficient funding not being able to be sourced from your investors, your stakeholders, your equity partners? And I guess understanding the story around, I guess, your proposal and where you're at.

Andrew Bell: So have I got this right? The money, whatever it is, could be almost like you've not quite got to that position of having people to attract to an idea or a project, but this support under these Innovation grants will just might tip it over, just take the work a little bit further that it will then become attractive.

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah. Now, that's a possibility. I guess, it's tricky talking about these ideas without something concrete on the table. But I mean, I think that it's part of private, public benefit that we keep on talking about the balance of it. I mean, the best thing to do is to explain it as well as you can in your EOI about the position you're in, who's going to get the benefit, and what you can bring to the table, what you need from us to help it along. Because like we keep on saying, we're all about these great ideas and impact and game changes on the community.



Andrew Bell: Talking about ideas, someone asking here, If you get the \$50,000 for the Idea grant, could you apply and get more funding for the same project as it progresses into the next year? Or is it just a 12-month process?

Travis Bover: It's a 12-month process.

Travis Bover: So the idea is that the Ideas grant and the Proof-of-Concept grant for that matter, can potentially create a pipeline for the future. There might be another Innovation grants around under the Future Drought Fund, we can't commit to that. But equally, there are other government funding programs available as well, or the Ideas grant or Proof-of-Concept grant might be enough to get your idea to a point where it can be commercially supported.

Andrew Bell: And someone else also asking, A project not selected for the Innovation grant, will it then go off either to the Idea grant on the one end or Proof-of-Concept grant? Is there fluidity in that process?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah. So basically any applications that come in will be assessed. And it's the Innovation grants and the Proof-of-Concept grants which we'll be looking at first because they need to be pushed through to a second stage if they're the most competitive ones. But yes, they can be considered for any of them. And as you had noted, those selection criteria are the same for each proposal and projects are likely to be quite different between an Ideas grant and an Innovation grant. But if you explain it well, we can have a look at it. And if we think that you're not in the right category but we could support what seems like a really merit worthy idea, we'll try and do that.

Andrew Bell: So this is all about partnerships on various levels. That's great. You've talked about resilience, both of you, someone's asking if the grant process, the Innovation grants, if it might include wellbeing support. There's something we talk about more and more, which is becoming an increasingly important part of sustaining rural and regional communities. So is that part of this process, if people in their grant application say this will include an element of wellbeing?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah, yeah. Totally. I was going to just point out straightaway that one of the investment priorities is community wellbeing. It's a core part of what we do in the Future Drought Fund, is 1 of the 3 pillars, the triple bottom line. There's plenty of proposals that could come across which would deal with that.

Andrew Bell: And I think going back to the FDF 3-day event we had turning science into actual innovation, that came through very, very strongly during those discussions from all over the country. Again, someone asking, Who owns the intellectual property? Louise.

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah, sure. I'm happy to chat about that one. So I guess intellectual property is a tricky one in one sense, because it depends on the proposal that we're talking about. What's really important is that anyone undertaking an activity needs to have the right to undertake their activity as a first point. But any IP that's generated as part of one of these proposals, I guess, is subject to a bit of a conversation with the department about who might own it.



Louise Palfreyman: One of the important things is that, clearly, IP could generate a substantial private benefit. And I guess what we keep on talking about is that balance. So it might be that IP is created in a project, but actually that the person, the proponent of this proposal is really happy to make it available publicly, demonstrations, pop it on the website, if there's a clear plan to make it public and not to take that benefit, that would be one of the things we'd be looking at about in terms of that balance between private and public, but we're happy to discuss it. And I guess like some things, it depends what we're talking about. You need to think about the activities.

Andrew Bell: We are in a chicken and egg situation, and probably several chicken and egg situations, I'm guessing. Another question here, it's about capital expenditure, Can the Innovation grant funds be used on capital expenditure? And if they can, are there limitations? Who wants to take that?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah. So I think the capital expenditure is subject to some limits in the guidelines, so the eligible activities and it's 25% on capital expenditure. So if you've asked for \$1 million total, you can have no more than a quarter of that expenditure going on the capital expenditure. There's other important things that you need to look down on those guidelines when you're structuring your application for us, because there are limits on other aspects. Administration, for example, is subject to some limits too. So check down the list as you're developing your proposal.

Andrew Bell: Communication, somebody asking, Can the Idea grants look on things like the extension or communication of information that grows in the agriculture community? I guess, I don't want to answer the question myself, but an Idea grant will give us a good idea on how this is going to speak to the resilience issue and future planning around drought.

Travis Bover: Yeah. So again, it's one of those ones that's hard to answer as a hypothetical. The Ideas grants fundamentally are for ideas that look like they have merit, but they're just immature and they need some more exploration. And so if that exploration involves communicating and getting feedback on the idea, for example, then it would prospectively be within scope. But if the idea is doing the communication, then that's not quite the sort of thing that an Ideas grant is seeking to support.

Andrew Bell: And someone else asking, Are matching funds required for an Ideas grant or can you just go it alone with the up to 50 grand from the department?

Louise Palfreyman: Yep, that's a possibility. So if you come forward with an idea and that I guess there's no indication that you can make a contribution, that doesn't rule you out. I guess in a competitive process, I guess there's going to be a range of different ideas and those ideas grants, again, they're really focused on the quality of the idea rather than the execution. So I'd say, for that more than any other of the grant types, I guess, there might be a bit more swing room there, but it's totally possible.

Andrew Bell: I guess we should have discussed originality of idea. But someone here is asking, Will the grants consider ideas coming out of existing work, sort of an extension? And if so, again, what kind of idea? Again, it's a bit, how long is a piece of string, isn't it? But the fundamental is, existing work adaptation or extension, is that possible?



Travis Bover: Yeah. So again, it is a bit of a hypothetical. I guess the points that come to mind for me are, one, so one of the things we're looking for are new ideas, but that doesn't mean it's a brand new idea. It can be something that it's an idea that's been gestating and we're about taking it to the next stage. Two is one of the points that Louise was making earlier of we're very focused on the extension, adoption, commercialisation, and demonstration end of the spectrum. So there might be an idea and what you need is support to extend it or support it adoption or demonstrate it and so forth. So all that's within scope and it really comes down to those details, but hopefully that gives some indications of the guideposts that we would be using.

Andrew Bell: My obsession with lengths of string, question here speaking to that, does the Innovation grant have to go for 3 years? Is 2 years okay?

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah, I think that is fine. I guess it depends on the project.

Andrew Bell: Yeah, that chicken, that egg.

Louise Palfreyman: Yeah, it is very tricky. I guess the limits are probably at the upper end. We can only go up to \$1.1 million per year, that's \$3.3 million across the 3 years. Projects can't go longer than 3 years. But if there's a really great idea and it's going to take 2 years to bang it out and it's going to be wonderful, I can't see why we'd make that excluded at all. So again, the idea, we need to see the detail when it comes through.

Andrew Bell: And I think we've just got time for one last question, and we're looking upwards to that blue sky again here. Our questioner here says, Blue sky does involve basic research, so the question, would you explain what type of blue sky project you're looking for?

Travis Bover: I can jump in on that one. So I do appreciate the confusion there. So when we say blue sky, we're not intending blue sky basic, fundamental, pure research, whatever term you choose. Really what we were wanting to achieve was a catch-all category to be honest with you. We've outlined the key priority areas that align without funding plan. But we didn't want to preclude other things that don't quite fit under one of those headings coming forward. So this was an opportunity for just big ideas. Maybe blue sky ideas wasn't the best term to use in hindsight, but it's just ideas that don't fit neatly under one of those other categories, we still want to hear from them.

Louise Palfreyman: And then it'd be clincher is what we said it's a blue sky is, if it's going towards 2 or more of those triple bottom line objectives, that's how you're going to be able to sell that to us that it's in scope, that it's focused on drought resilience, economic, social, environmental. So particularly if you can cross those boundaries and tick a few boxes, that's going to look competitive.

Andrew Bell: Give it a go. And this literally is a wonderful opportunity. Right. We're coming up to the end of our hour. Thank you so much, Travis and Louise, for answering all those questions and the team for helping us with answering those questions. And thank you for asking them. So we're getting towards the end now. So we've said a lot, we've talked a lot. If people want to go away and then refresh their ideas onto what we have been talking about, what should they be doing, Travis?



Travis Bover: So as Louise mentioned earlier, the grant guidelines, they're the key document that you need to look at if you want to consider this opportunity. They're available on the Community Grants website. There's also a question and answers already on there, and further questions and answers will appear as you submit your questions and we answer them. So keep checking back because there'll be more information posted progressively. The webinar from today and the presentation and so forth will be published on the department's website. And in the meantime, if you have further questions, then submit them through the Community Grants Hub and they'll be answered on that website.

Andrew Bell: Thanks, Travis. Thanks, Louise. And also, thank you to the team behind the camera for supporting us through this last 60 minutes. And one final message from both of you to those watching.

Travis Bover: My final message is we really want to hear good ideas, so put your good ideas forward, we're looking forward to hearing all about them and hopefully supporting them.

Louise Palfreyman: Yep, good luck.

Andrew Bell: Thanks very much, and best of luck to you all. Before we leave you, on the screen is a summary of key dates. Be sure you add them to your diaries in whatever form, if you're interested in applying for a Future Drought Fund Innovation Grant. Thanks very much for sharing your Monday with us. And until the next time, have a good day.

[Webinar ends]