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Information about the Rural Financial Counselling Service in Queensland



This fact sheet provides background information on the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) in Queensland for entities interested in submitting an application for the 2016 to 2019 merit-based competitive grants round.

About the Rural Financial Counselling Service

Since 1986, the Department of Agriculture has been funding the RFCS to provide free, financial counselling services nationally to farmers, fishing enterprises and small, related businesses suffering financial hardship.

The main services offered by counsellors are to assist and support an eligible client to:

- understand his or her financial position and the viability of his or her enterprise
- identify options to improve their financial position
- develop and implement a business plan.

Under the RFCS 2016 to 2019 grants round, forest growers and harvesters will also be eligible for this service. From April 2016, the RFCS will operate in 12 regions across Australia.

The 2016 to 2019 grants round

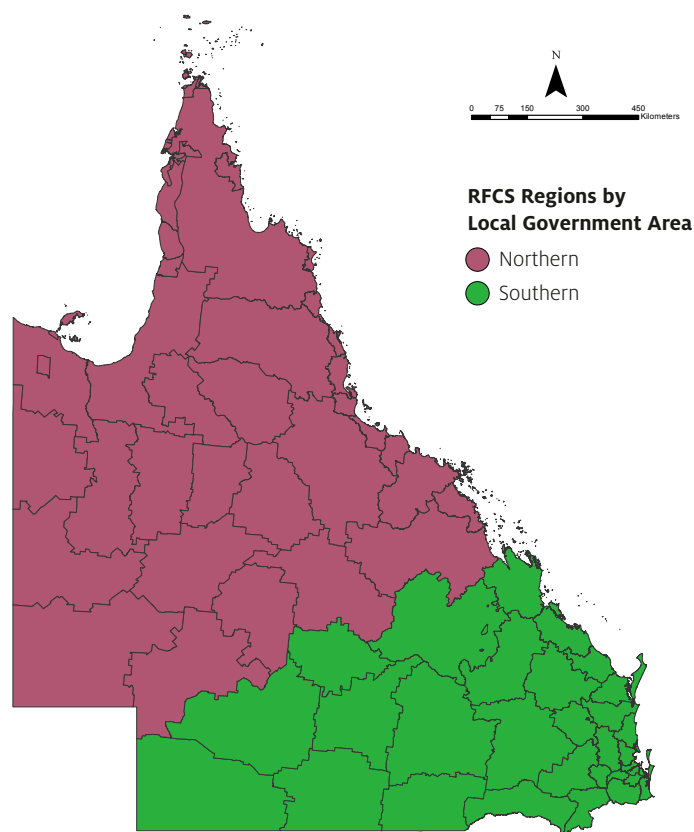
The RFCS 2016 to 2019 merit-based competitive grants round is open to entities wishing to deliver the RFCS on a not-for-profit basis. The grants round is open until midday (AEDT) 16 October 2015. An assessment panel, comprising federal and state government officials, will assess applications. The panel will recommend eligible applicants to the Australian Government Minister for Agriculture for final decision.

Current providers have had their contracts extended to 31 March 2016 to ensure a smooth transition between providers, if required. Any new providers will start in January 2016 but will not begin delivering the new RFCS programme until 1 April 2016. This will give them time to familiarise themselves with their regions and clients.

There will be no interruption to the RFCS clients during this transition and services will continue as usual.

Key points

- Rural financial counsellors support farmers, fishing enterprises, forest growers and harvesters, and small, related businesses suffering financial hardship.
- The new grants round is open to entities qualified to deliver the RFCS on a not-for-profit basis.
- The grants round is open until midday (AEDT) 16 October 2015.
- For further information on the RFCS grants round please visit agriculture.gov.au/rfcs or phone 1800 686 175.



Farming in Queensland

From April 2016, Queensland (QLD) will have two RFCS regions. A more detailed map of the QLD RFCS regions and associated local government areas can be found on the Department of Agriculture's website.

Region	Kilometres of rural productive land	Number of farm businesses
QLD Northern	729 210 km ²	5 530
QLD Southern	759 439 km ²	11 013

The main agriculture industries are:

- beef producers (12 740 enterprises)
- sheep producers (2 700 enterprises)
- sugar cane growers (2 900 enterprises)
- mixed grains and livestock producers (1 060 enterprises)
- fruit and nut growers (1 630 enterprises)
- fisher enterprises (1 500 enterprises).fisher enterprises (1 150 enterprises).

Approximate numbers from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, Farm Survey Results, 30 June 2014.

Forest enterprises are mainly located along the coast from Rockhampton to the NSW border. There is also some forestry around Cardwell, Ingham, Atherton Tablelands and Cooktown.

Location of industries

- Queensland's sugar cane and horticultural industries are located along the eastern seaboard. Dairy and small beef cattle operations, fruit and nut trees and crops such as wheat, sorghum and cotton extend well into the hinterland areas.
- The South West, Central West, lower Gulf region and Cape York are mostly made up of extensive pastoral operations. Many corporate enterprises are located in these areas.
- Coastal Queensland consists of sub-tropical agriculture in the south, dry tropics in Central Queensland, and wet tropics in the north.

Current client numbers in Queensland

There are currently approximately 23 counsellors servicing 1 030 clients in QLD.

Region	Number of RFCS clients	Number of rural financial counsellors
QLD Northern	630	11
QLD Southern	400	12
QLD Total	1 030	23

RFCS regions will change in the new grants round; therefore, these numbers are indicative only.



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agriculture.gov.au/rfcs