



September
2015

Information about the Rural Financial Counselling Service in South Australia and the Northern Territory



This fact sheet provides background information on the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) in South Australia and the Northern Territory 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 South Australia and the Northern Territory

From April 2016, South Australia (SA) will have one RFCS region and the contracted service provider will continue to provide a mobile service to the Northern Territory (NT). Detailed maps of the 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
South Australia	521 500 km ²	9 000
Northern Territory	600 000 km ²	460

The main agriculture industries in SA are:

- mixed grains and livestock producers (2 250 enterprises)
- grain growers (2 100 enterprises)
- fruit and nut growers (2 330 enterprises)
- fisher enterprises (1 000 enterprises).

The main agriculture industries in NT are:

- beef cattle (180 enterprises)
- horticulture (130 enterprises)

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

Forest enterprises in SA are mainly located south of Naracoorte from the border and east of Kingston. There are no major forestry activities in the NT.

Current client numbers in South Australia and Northern Territory

There are currently approximately 10 counsellors servicing 260 clients in SA and NT.

Region	Number of RFCS clients	Number of rural financial counsellors	Full-time equivalent counsellors
South Australia	260	10	10
Northern Territory	The RFCS in the Northern Territory has been conducted as a trial from March 2013 to present. A counsellor has spent a week every few months providing mobile services to Northern Territory clients.		



Phone
1800 686 175

Postal Address
18 Marcus Clarke Street, Canberra City ACT 2601



agriculture.gov.au/rfcs