



Australian Government

Department of Regional Australia,  
Regional Development and Local Government



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

# Regional Development Australia Fund

**15 November 2011 (Updated)**

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Regional Development Australia Fund - Round Two

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## Record of Updates to the Frequently Asked Questions

### Expression of Interest Process

This ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ document is a living document, and will be updated regularly to reflect new questions or issues. The following table provides an indication to the reader of when this document was last updated and the nature of the changes.

| Date Updated     | Pages Updated | Description of Update  |
|------------------|---------------|--|
| 7 November 2011  |               | Document released  |
| 15 November 2011 |               | Insertion of new section on Guidelines and Assessment<br>New Questions 2.10; 5.3; 6.1; 6.2; 6.3; 6.4; 6.5; 6.6;<br>6.7; 6.8; 6.9; 6.10; 6.11 |
|                  |               |  |
|                  |               |  |

# EXPRESSION OF INTEREST PROCESS

## 1. EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

### 1.1. What is the Expression of Interest (EOI) process? Is it new?

- ✦ A new Expression of Interest process has been introduced for Round Two. This process is intended to simplify the application process and reduce the administrative burden on applicants.
- ✦ The EOI is a simple form which seeks key details about the project and applicant.
- ✦ Regional Development Australia (RDA) committees will consider all of the EOIs submitted from across their region and select three viable priority projects to proceed to full application.
- ✦ An EOI form is available on the Department's website [www.regional.gov.au](http://www.regional.gov.au)
- ✦ RDA committee locations and contact details can be found at [www.regional.gov.au](http://www.regional.gov.au)

### 1.2. Why is the EOI process necessary?

- ✦ The EOI process will minimise compliance costs for potential applicants, and provide early certainty about funding for their project.
- ✦ The process also provides for direct regional input into the program.
- ✦ It ensures that RDA committees have enough information to assess the extent to which projects deliver on priorities in the Regional Plan, and meet identified needs of local communities.

### 1.3. Do I have to be an eligible applicant to lodge an EOI?

- ✦ Yes, only eligible applicants may submit an EOI for an eligible project.
- ✦ Applicants must certify that they have read the RDAF Guidelines for Round Two, meet the eligibility criteria, and can provide all of the mandatory eligibility documents by 15 February 2012.
- ✦ The EOI form must be completed in full to be considered by the RDA committee.

### 1.4. Can I submit attachments with my EOI?

- ✦ No, attachments must not be included with fully completed EOIs.
- ✦ Attachments that are provided will not be considered by RDA committees as part of their decision making.

### 1.5. Can I submit more than one EOI?

- ✦ No, applicants may only submit one EOI, which must only be for a single project.
- ✦ If more than one EOI is submitted, the first to be submitted will be reviewed by the RDA committee. Subsequent EOIs will not be considered.

## 1.6. Is there an on-line process to submit EOIs

- ✦ The Expression of Interest form is located on the Department's website at [www.regional.gov.au](http://www.regional.gov.au).
- ✦ The form should be downloaded, completed and emailed to your local RDA committee. Contact details for each committee are also located on the Department's website.
- ✦ The EOI should be copied to the Department at the same time that it is sent to the RDA committee. EOIs should be emailed to [rdaf@regional.gov.au](mailto:rdaf@regional.gov.au).
- ✦ If you are not sure which RDA region you fall in, maps and details of committees are available from [www.rda.gov.au](http://www.rda.gov.au)

## 1.7. Can I change or amend my EOI?

- ✦ No, once submitted, EOIs cannot be changed. Similarly, submitted EOIs cannot be withdrawn, amended and resubmitted.

## 1.8. Where can I find a Regional Plan?

- ✦ A Regional Plan (or Regional Roadmap in South Australia and Queensland) is prepared by every RDA committee. Based on extensive consultation and liaison with all stakeholders within the community, it describes the region and its characteristics, key issues facing the region, and solutions. It also identifies short and long term priorities for action.
- ✦ Regional Plans can be found on the website of each RDA committee (see [www.rda.gov.au](http://www.rda.gov.au) for details of committees).

## 1.9. I am a not-for-profit organisation. Can I submit an EOI?

- ✦ Yes, not-for-profit organisations are still eligible for RDAF.
- ✦ Not-for-profit organisations must have a minimum annual average income of \$1.5 million, and income statements to demonstrate this must be provided.

## 2. ROLE OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA COMMITTEES

### 2.1. What is a Regional Development Australia committee?

- ✦ Regional Development Australia committees bring together all levels of government to support the growth and development of regional Australia.
- ✦ There are 55 committees across Australia who build partnerships between governments, regional development organisations, local businesses, community groups and key regional stakeholders to provide strategic and targeted responses to social, economic and environmental issues affecting regional Australia.
- ✦ Committees are appointed by the Australian Government in conjunction with state and territory governments. Committees are made up of representatives of local government, and leaders from the community and business.

## 2.2. What is the role of RDA committees in the EOI process?

- ✦ RDA committees will review and assess each EOI and select three viable priority projects to proceed to full application.
- ✦ RDA committees will provide feedback to those applicants that do not proceed to full assessment.

## 2.3. What will RDA committees take into account when analysing EOIs?

- ✦ RDA committees have a strong understanding of their region, and local needs and issues.
- ✦ Committees will base their assessment of EOIs on:
  - Priorities in the Regional Plan;
  - Capacity of the project to address needs in the region, with consideration of the geographical spread of projects;
  - Impact of the project on the region and neighbouring regions, with endorsed projects coming from across the region, rather than any one town, locality or Local Government Area;
  - Level of community support; and
  - Readiness to proceed.
- ✦ RDA committees will not assess the eligibility of EOIs. More detail on the role of RDA committees is in the Guidelines for Round Two (section 7.1, section 7.5 and Attachment D).

## 2.4. How will RDA committees handle conflicts of interest?

- ✦ Prior to reviewing EOIs, RDA committee members and staff will agree to conflict of interest requirements. They will also commit to observing stringent confidentiality and conflict of interest protocols.
- ✦ The Department will be providing a probity briefing to all RDA committees, and a Probity Advisor will be available to support committees and their staff.
- ✦ Committee members who have a conflict of interest will not review or vote on the EOI which is the subject of the conflict.

## 2.5. Are the RDA committees the sole decision makers?

- ✦ RDA committees are responsible for reviewing each EOI and determining which of the three viable priority projects will proceed to full application.
- ✦ The Guidelines for Round Two outline the process to be used by RDA committees in prioritising applications (section 7.1 and 7.5 and Attachment D). The Department will review the process followed by RDA committees to ensure compliance with published procedures.
- ✦ RDA committees must provide feedback to those proponents who submitted an EOI on reasons why the project was not selected.

## 2.6. Why do only three EOIs proceed to full application?

- ✦ The EOI process is intended to reduce the compliance costs for applicants.
- ✦ Selecting the three priority projects ensures that only those applicants that can meet the eligibility and selection criteria, and meet an identified local priority or need will complete the full application form.
- ✦ Proponents not proceeding to a full EOI will have early certainty about the status of their application, providing certainty and allowing for contingency planning.

## 2.7. Can I present my case to the RDA committee?

- ✦ No, RDAF Round Two is a competitive merit-based program. To ensure equity and fairness, all proposed projects will only be assessed according to the information included in the EOI.

## 2.8. When will I hear about the outcome of my EOI?

- ✦ RDA committees will provide a complete list of EOIs and the outcomes of their assessment to the Department by Wednesday, 21 December 2011.
- ✦ The Department will advise applicants of the outcome of the EOI in writing by COB on Wednesday, 11 January 2012. At this time, the Department will advise the proponents of the selected priority projects to prepare and submit a full application.
- ✦ A full list of EOIs and projects proceeding to full application will be listed on the Department's website by COB on Wednesday, 11 January 2012.
- ✦ RDA committees may also publish information about its EOI process and the outcomes on its website.

## 2.9. Are all RDA committees following the same process to consider EOIs?

- ✦ Yes, all RDA committees are following the same process.
- ✦ The Department will review and audit the EOI process followed by RDA committees to ensure consistency and compliance.

## 2.10. What if responses to questions in my Expression of Interest go over 350 words?

- ✦ The RDA committee and its members must only consider the first 350 words in each answer. Any text provided beyond this limit should not be part of the RDA committee's consideration or inform its decision-making. Attachments to EOI forms should also not be reviewed assessed or form part of the decision-making process.
- ✦ These requirements are important to ensure equity and fairness in treatment of all proponents of EOIs and adherence to the national process.

### 3. ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT

#### 3.1. What is the Department's role in the EOI process?

- ✦ The Department is not involved in the assessment or decisions on EOIs.
- ✦ Proponents will copy their EOI to the Department for information (EOIs should be sent to [rdaf@regional.gov.au](mailto:rdaf@regional.gov.au)).
- ✦ The Department will receive a complete list of EOIs and the outcomes of their consideration from each RDA committee. By COB on Wednesday, 11 January 2012, the Department will publish a full list of EOIs and outcomes of the RDA committee's assessment on its website. The Department will also invite the proponents of the three priority projects in each RDA region to submit a full application.
- ✦ The Department will review and audit the EOI process followed by RDA committees to ensure consistency and compliance.

### 4. DECISIONS ON EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

#### 4.1. Is the outcome of the EOI appealable?

- ✦ No, the decision of the RDA committee is final.
- ✦ The Department will review and audit the process followed by RDA committees to ensure that the agreed process was followed.

#### 4.2. Will I get feedback if my EOI is not successful?

- ✦ Yes, the RDA committee will provide feedback to all unsuccessful applicants by the end of February 2012.

### 5. FULL APPLICATIONS

#### 5.1. What do I do if I am invited to proceed to a full application?

- ✦ Following receipt of advice from the Department that your project has been selected to proceed to full application, you should review the Guidelines for Round Two and:
  - assemble all of the mandatory documents; and
  - complete the web-based form that will be available from [www.regional.gov.au](http://www.regional.gov.au).
- ✦ Full applications are due by COB on Wednesday, 15 February 2012 (Eastern Daylight Savings Time). Late applications will not be accepted.
- ✦ Questions on the full application process will be added to this document.

#### 5.2. Can I change the nature or scope of my project between the EOI and submitting the full application?

- ✦ No, the project, including nature, scope, total value and grant requested, must be exactly the same in EOI and the full application.
- ✦ RDA committees have considered and agreed to EOIs proceeding to full application based on the information in the EOI form.

### **5.3. I have been selected to proceed to full application. Can my RDA committee or staff member assist me in preparing my full application?**

- ✦ RDA committees are asked to provide feedback to all proponents of EOIs. Proponents of the three priority projects should be given feedback first and, to ensure equity of treatment, this should be given to each proponent on the same day. Feedback to proponents of priority projects can address the strengths and weaknesses of the project and case presented, and highlight areas for improvement.

## **6. Guidelines and Assessment**

### **6.1. Why do not-for-profit organisations need to have an income of \$1.5 million per year?**

- ✦ Not-for-profit organizations must have an average minimum income of \$1.5 million per year, and this must be supported by financial statements. This income threshold ensures that not-for-profit organisations have the capability and capacity to deliver, and sustain without further assistance, large infrastructure projects.
- ✦ Not-for-profit organisations which do not meet the income threshold can still participate in the RDAF program as a member of a consortium which is led by an eligible applicant.

### **6.2. I am a not-for-profit organisation, and we have branches located across Australia. Are we eligible to apply for RDAF in our own right or must our head body submit one application on behalf of all of our branches?**

- ✦ A branch of a not-for-profit organisation can apply for RDAF funding in its own right if it meets the eligibility criteria. The organisation must be incorporated, operate independently, have an ABN and meet the income threshold (an average of \$1.5 million per annum for the most recent three years).
- ✦ Not-for-profit organisations which do not meet these requirements can participate in the RDAF program as a member of a consortium which is led by an eligible applicant.

### **6.3. My not-for-profit organisation has not been in existence for three years. Am I still able to apply for RDAF funding.**

- ✦ *Response being prepared.*

### **6.4. How is income defined for a not-for-profit organisation?**

- ✦ Income is the organisation's total income or revenue. It is generally accepted in Australian accounting practice as regular revenue as identified on a profit and loss statement. It would include all usual forms of revenue, such as merchandise sales, consulting fees, lease payments for rented property, annual operating grants, consulting fees, other general fees and interest earned.
- ✦ Extraordinary items of revenue, such as asset sales, one-off share returns, write downs, asset revaluations and one-off grants, may also be included for the purposes of RDAF.

### **6.5. If a Commonwealth funded body, such as the Australian Antarctic Division or a university, contributes partnership funding to a project, is this defined as a Commonwealth or partner contribution?**

- ✦ Commonwealth funded bodies is a Commonwealth Government organisation for the purposes of RDAF partnership funding requirements. The Australian Antarctic Division is a Federal Government Body under CSIRO and would be classed as Commonwealth funding.
- ✦ Universities while being funded by the Federal Government (as are Local Governments Authorities and a range of other organisations) are independent bodies. Contributions from those organisations would not be classified as Commonwealth funding for the purposes of RDAF partnership funding requirements.

### **6.6. What is meant by “benefits to regions outside of capital cities” (section 4 of the Guidelines)?**

- ✦ Response being prepared.

### **6.7. What is meant by “cash contribution” (section 7 of the Guidelines)?**

- ✦ The Guidelines state that preference will be given to applications which demonstrate partnership funding (dollar for dollar for projects seeking less than \$5 million and one dollar of RDAF funds to two dollars of partnership funds for projects of more than \$5 million). Partnership funding can comprise in-kind contributions and cash contributions. At least 50 percent of the partnership funding must be cash.

### **6.8. What is a “viable project” (Program Overview section of the Guidelines)?**

- ✦ A viable project is one which meets all requirements of the Guidelines, including being ‘shovel ready’.

### **6.9. Some capital cities include regions of considerable socio-economic disadvantage. How will this be taken into account in the assessment process?**

- ✦ The RDAF Advisory Panel is to take the socio-economic status of regions into account when considering applications and making recommendations to the Minister (refer section 7.5 of the Guidelines).

### **6.10. The Guidelines for Round Two state that projects which are the normal responsibility of local governments will not be eligible for RDAF. What is meant by this?**

- ✦ Local government bodies receive funding from a range of sources, including Commonwealth funding through the Financial Assistance Grants scheme. This funding supports the day-to-day operation of council, capital development of council municipalities, and the provision of services which fall within the responsibility of council. RDAF funding is to support infrastructure projects that would not be otherwise undertaken by Council as part of its normal business operations.

### **6.11. Can projects funded by an RDAF grant be sold or otherwise granted to a commercial or business organisation.**

- ✦ The Guidelines state that infrastructure funded by an RDAF grant must be retained in original condition for five years, and this must be confirmed in an Asset Management and Operations Plan (Eligibility Criterion Number 5). Infrastructure cannot be completed with funding from a RDAF grant, and then on-sold to a commercial organisation for a profit.