Australian
Early
Development
Census
An Australian Government Initiative

Our **Children**
Our **Communities**
Our **Future**

Investigating & Accessing Funding

A guideline for community

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Since 2002, the Australian Government has worked in partnership with eminent child health research institutes, The Centre for Community Child Health at The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Melbourne, and the Telethon Kids Institute, Perth to deliver the Australian Early Development Census program to communities nationwide. The Australian Government continues to work with its partners, and with state and territory governments to implement the AEDC.

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1. Purpose of this guideline

This guideline is a resource to support Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) stakeholders in communities to seek out and apply for funding. While many responses to the AEDC do not require additional funding, some communities may require short term funding to enable them to establish a program or drive collaboration. The information contained within this guideline is designed to support the exploration of alternative funding options to enable these responses to the AEDC that cannot be funded within existing budgets, and to provide some useful strategies around formulating successful applications.

2. Identifying potential sources of funding

Funding for community initiatives to improve outcomes for children can be obtained from a range of different sources. Available funding can be classified into three categories:

Government Grants

These include national, state/territory, and local governing organisations (such as councils and regional bodies) that may make grant funding available.

Independent Philanthropic Grants

Not-for-profit and charitable organisations are generally the intended recipients of the funds disbursed by philanthropic foundation funds.

Corporate Grants

Many businesses, such as banks, building societies and retail corporations, make grant funding available for community programs through their philanthropic division.

Funding for community initiatives to improve outcomes for children can be obtained from a range of different sources.

3. Investigating potential sources of funding

Applying for grant funding for a community project can be time consuming. Often, the most time consuming aspect is finding information about available grants and assessing whether the funding body's grant rules align with your project.

Before you begin

It is important to note that funding bodies all have their own specific motives, processes and protocols for disbursing funds. Being aware of these differences and incorporating them into funding applications can increase the effectiveness of applications. Before you begin, there are three things to consider in relation to each potential funding body that can help you to tailor your application:

What type of projects do they typically fund?

Consider if the funded projects tend to focus on specific areas such as rural development or literacy programs.

What is the funding body's average funding allocation?

Consider whether the dollar amounts that have been awarded in the past, to fund projects with a similar scale or purpose, would be enough for your proposed initiative.

Being aware of these differences and incorporating them into funding applications can increase the effectiveness of applications.

What are the motivations of the funding bodies?

A variety of factors motivate funding bodies to support a community project. These may include political considerations, the desire to support a particular sector, such as health research, or an intention to promote their organisation as a responsible corporate citizen. Submissions that appeal to the motivations of the funding body are more likely to be successful.

Initial investigation

Following are suggestions for where to start looking for grant funding opportunities.

Local Government grants

Local governments may offer grant funding that seeks to support initiatives in their communities. This can be a great place to start the search for grants to support responses to the AEDC. Funding information, as well as the details of community development officers and grant funding round information, can usually be found on local government websites.

Direct targeting

Another method of investigating funding sources is to select larger corporations (for example, Woolworths, ANZ bank, etc.), which have a presence in the community. If a corporation has a corporate giving program it will usually be promoted on their website, providing the opportunity to become familiar with the kinds of initiatives they are supporting in local communities. This will also allow consideration of whether the proposed response falls within the scope of the funding body's intention.

Online searches

An online search, based on the three main categories detailed in section 2 above, may be useful for finding additional funding that is available for specific purposes.

The appendix of this guideline contains a list of websites and online publications that will be a helpful starting point for online searches.

AEDC community stories

Researching how others have gained funding for similar initiatives can also be a good starting point for finding relevant grant information. A range of AEDC community and school projects are available at www.aedc.gov.au/communities/community-stories.

Subscription-based opportunities

In addition to information about funding opportunities that is freely available, some funding information is catalogued on subscription-based websites. Subscription-based funding databases may be a useful resource for organisations that are likely to seek ongoing or multiple funding sources.

4. Preparatory work

Creating systems

Keeping track of essential details will assist in the preparation of timely, professional funding submissions. The use or creation of systems, including spreadsheets or databases, enables community organisations to keep track of various details, which may include:

- a shortlist of the funding sources, grants and opportunities
- existing agreements with other funding bodies including outstanding acquittals
- the commencement dates of formal grant funding rounds
- the name, title and contact details of designated liaison officers
- the application process for each submission
- the due dates for the various grant submissions
- required attachments, for example financial audit certificates, registration documents
- reporting requirements

Note: that some funding bodies may have email subscription lists that you can sign up to in order to stay up-to-date with new grant funding, grant funding round commencement dates, etc.

Creating relationships

> Keeping track of essential details will assist in the preparation of timely, professional funding submissions.

In some circumstances, it can be beneficial to establish relationships with funding bodies. There are a number of ways to create relationships and this depends on the funding body and their aims. Consider whether the following are appropriate ways to promote your work, find out about funding opportunities, and establish working relationships with funding bodies. Note that it is sometimes the case that corporate funding bodies will want to promote their relationship with community projects over the life span of the project, including named sponsorship. When investigating funding opportunities, consider what is right for the project and how much sponsorship involvement is feasible within the scope of the project.

Personal contact

> Consider whether the following are appropriate ways to promote your work, find out about funding opportunities, and establish working relationships with funding bodies.

Making contact with community development officers for government and funding bodies can assist in establishing professional relationships that can support funding applications. Where possible, face-to-face meetings with funding body representatives can help generate support for grant applications. Face-to-face contact provides the opportunity to present the AEDC and other data that demonstrate a need within the community. Discussing the planned responses to address this need can give funding bodies the chance to see how their contribution would be used, and the difference it could make in the lives of children and families in the community.

Attending meetings

Meetings, such as council meetings, shareholder meetings or annual general meetings, also afford an opportunity to establish relationships to support grant funding applications. Additionally, these meetings present opportunities to share information about the proposed initiative with a wide audience; and thus have the potential to generate support for funding applications.

Attending grant information sessions

Some funding bodies hold grant information sessions, which are designed to support the process of preparing a successful application in accordance with the funding body's intentions.

These sessions are an ideal opportunity to ask questions and access any extra information that may be of use in the preparation of a formal grant application.

5. Further considerations in preparation of applications

Eligibility

It is essential that all eligibility criteria be satisfied when funding is being sought. As well as general eligibility criteria, some funding organisations make funding available under more specific eligibility categories. These may include:

- rural and remote communities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals or communities
- individuals or groups with specific characteristics (migrant families, low income, single parents, etc.)

Funding applications will usually be required to provide supporting evidence and documentation to demonstrate eligibility.

Supporting infrastructure

The viability of the community organisation or group(s) seeking funding will have implications for the funding application. Generally speaking, community organisations

or groups involved in the submission will be required to demonstrate that they are professionally organised, with a cohesive business plan, have relevant finances in order and that they are compliant with all relevant legislation.

Charitable Status

Charitable endorsement status of the body seeking funding can affect a philanthropic foundation's legal ability to fund projects. Most philanthropic foundations can only fund organisations endorsed by the Australian Tax Office with one or both of the following charitable statuses:

- Deductible gift recipient (DGR) or
- Income tax exempt charitable entity

Alternatively, the funding applicants may have a notice of endorsement for charity tax concessions. It is important to clarify your organisation's charitable status before applying for grant monies.

Funding applications will usually be required to provide supporting evidence and documentation to demonstrate eligibility.

6. Identifying and establishing the case for funding

Demonstrating need

Successful grant applications are usually based on projects that have clearly identifiable aims, strategies and intended outcomes. Well-written funding applications ensure this essential information is effectively and clearly incorporated into the application, thereby establishing a compelling argument for funding.

Successful grant applications are usually based on projects that have clearly identifiable aims, strategies and intended outcomes.

Specifically, successful grant applications need to articulate answers to the following questions:

What is the data telling us?

Data sources are available to help communities identify what they are doing well and where they might need to provide additional services or supports. Data can be used to document challenges within a community, highlight vulnerabilities, create a coherent picture of any gaps that exist in service provision, demonstrate a need for additional resources, or justify the implementation of new initiatives.

The AEDC provides a basis to quantify and make explicit the needs that exist for children and their families in an area or community. The data tells us where children are doing well and where children are not doing so well. It may be helpful to show the AEDC results for the community compared to the state/territory and national results to help put them in context. Is there a particular need within the community compared to the rest of the state/territory? It may also be useful to show the variation in the AEDC results for the various local communities within the broader local government area. Are there certain pockets of higher need within the broader community, or are there similar levels of developmental vulnerability across the community? It might also be useful to compare the AEDC results for the community over time. Have there been changes in community AEDC results between collections (every three years)?

The AEDC provides a basis to quantify and make explicit the needs that exist for children and their families in an area or community.

Presenting the AEDC data alongside demographic information about your community can help build a picture of the children and families within your community. Does the community have a lot of young or single parents? What percentage of adults in the community have completed high school? Are there lots of families who speak English as a second language, and need language support? Is there high unemployment, or high socio-economic disadvantage within the community? How many children aged 0 to 5 years live within the community? What are their characteristics? Providing a description of the community based on the social and demographic characteristics of the children and families who live there can help provide context within your grant application. This data can be accessed from sites such as the Social Health Atlas produced by the Public Health Information Development Unit phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases.

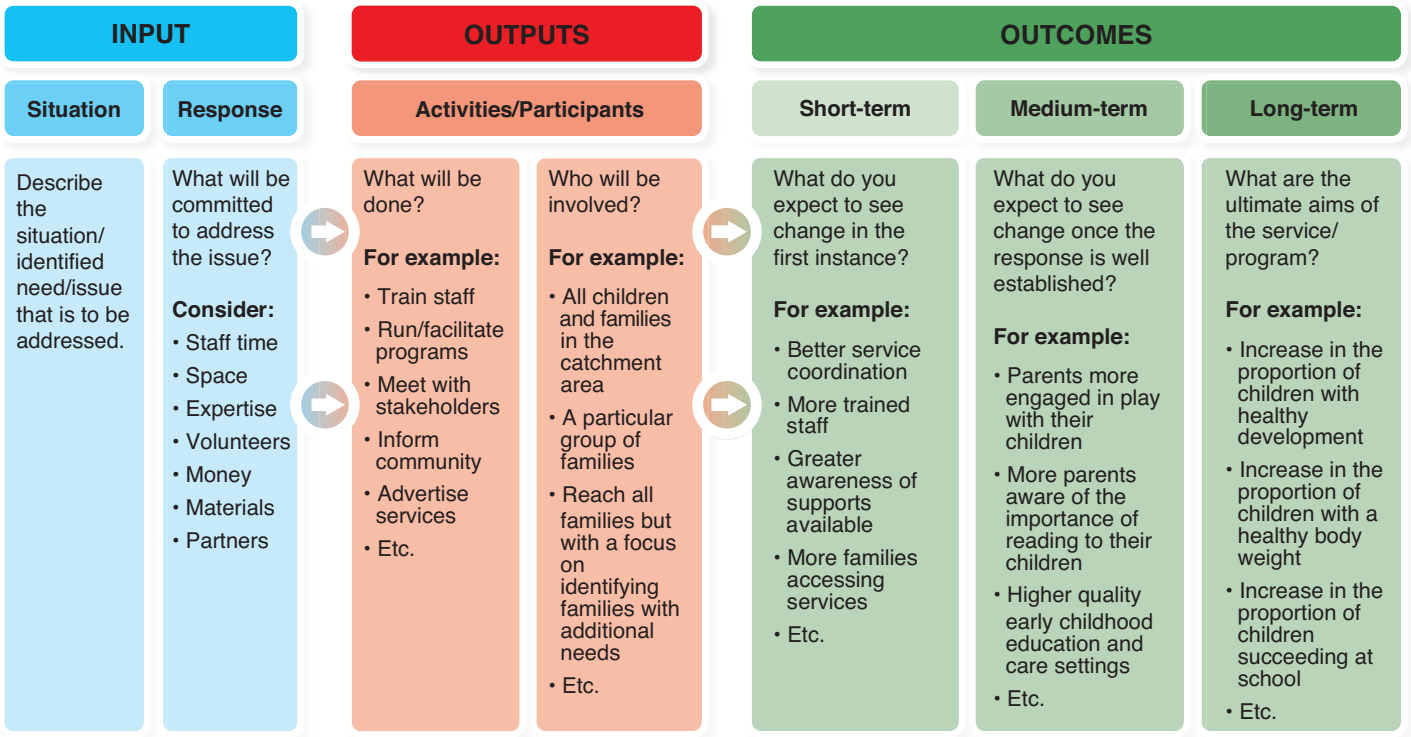
Presenting the AEDC data alongside demographic information about your community can help build a picture of the children and families within your community.

How will the need be addressed?

It is important to make it as easy as possible for the funding body to assess the grant application. A well-documented plan makes it easier for a funding body assess the merits of the grant application. The plan should make clear:

- the situation
- the proposed response or inputs
- who will be involved
- the target population
- the outcomes (short, medium, and long term)

Figure 1: Program logic example.



A program logic model is one way of presenting this information clearly. Figure 1 is an example of a way to present program logic.

Who is the target population?

Clearly articulating the target population for the program or initiative will enable the funding body to assess whether the proposed program or initiative meets their funding criteria. A good grant application will:

- describe the characteristics of the community
- identify who will be engaged in the program or initiative and why (e.g., is it all families or families who meet a particular criteria)
- include estimates of how many people the program or initiative aims to engage

How will you reach the target population?

Detailing how the program or initiative will be achieved, allows the funding body to assess the likely success of the program or initiative. A good application should make clear whether the population to be reached is the whole population or a sub-population in a geographic area. If the target population is a group that is usually difficult to engage in services and supports, the grant application should indicate what would be done to reach this group, how success in reaching the group will be monitored and the approach adjusted as required. If some families are likely to face barriers to accessing services and supports in the community, the application should state what these barriers are and how the proposed response will address any barriers. Detailing this in the grant application will enable the funding body to assess whether the proposed scope of works are likely to have the desired impact.

> If some families are likely to face barriers to accessing services and supports in the community, the application should state what these barriers are and how the proposed response will address any barriers.

How will the plan be implemented?

Action Plan

A clearly articulated action plan can increase the success of the application. Each activity to be undertaken should be clearly identified and the steps required for their implementation clearly documented.

An action plan will include:

- timelines
- activities
- associated costs and resources
- funding sources and
- strategies for recruitment of children and families into the program or service

Prior to being used in support of a funding application the action plan is also an invaluable tool for ensuring that all collaborating stakeholders are working to the same information. Any discrepancies or inconsistencies of approach will be highlighted and can be resolved before the plan is put to external bodies in request of financial support.

7. The written application – a summary

The golden rule of writing a successful funding application is to ensure it responds to the application criteria. Specifically addressing the application's questions is essential, as is providing all requested evidence and information. Preparing a generic application which is then submitted in response to all grant funding opportunities will greatly diminish the chances of an application's success.

A summary of the general tips for writing a persuasive application are summarised below.

Use a strengths-based approach

It is important to draw on the strengths of the community or organisation to demonstrate a capacity to meet the identified needs. In describing the organisation or group of bodies applying for funding, a strengths-based approach is extremely persuasive. By writing about the achievements and capacity of the community, the grant funding bodies are more likely to draw the inference that funding would be utilised effectively.

Create context and use data as evidence

As discussed above, using the AEDC and other data can be an effective way to demonstrate a tangible need for support. It will be essential to establish need. Using the AEDC and other data in support of arguments can strengthen applications. The AEDC provides objective and reliable data that can be used to highlight the need for resources, services or programs. Used in support of claims about the community or a need in the community, specific data about the population makes a strong case for funding.

Provide detail

Good grant applications demonstrate that the proposal is based on detailed planning. By outlining objectives, methods, implementation timelines and evaluation criterion, a compelling argument is made for funding. For example, including a program logic which describes intended outcomes and how these will be measured demonstrates the standard of accountability to which the project will be held (see Figue 1 on page 6 for a program logic example). Further detail could include explaining that outputs may incorporate numbers of participants, clinical outcomes, or behavioural changes, for example a reduction in school absenteeism.

Demonstrate sustainability

Funding bodies generally look for value for money. One way to demonstrate value is to show how one-time funding will create a sustainable solution to an ongoing issue. Programs that require ongoing funding for success are less attractive to funding bodies than those where an initial investment can be made that has lasting impact. Perhaps the program builds in a sustainable source of funding that can be established and built up during the course of the funding period, or maybe the program requires an initial investment to acquire materials or expertise that is then maintained by the community thereafter. It is worth considering how the program will maintain viability after the funding period and detailing this in the application.

Preparing a generic application which is then submitted in response to all grant funding opportunities will greatly diminish the chances of an application's success.

Checking the finished application

Finally, it is worthwhile noting that someone should be responsible for ensuring that the standard steps required by any written submission occur in a timely fashion, well ahead of the deadline. These include editing, proofreading and reviewing the application. This is also to ensure that practical considerations, for example, the time taken to obtain necessary attachments, have been factored into the preparation process, and a final check has taken place.

Entrusting this responsibility to a designated individual or team ensures these steps will not be overlooked in the busy application process.

At the completion of the written application, having someone with a good eye for detail conduct a final check is extremely beneficial, and ensures that all changes have been made and that the application submitted to the funding body is of the highest standard and stands the very best chance of being awarded funding.

It is worth considering how the program will maintain viability after the funding period and detailing this in the application.

8. Appendix

The following are some suggested national websites that provide a useful starting point to search for funding opportunities. (Please note you will need to search under your home State or Territory for state-specific opportunities.)

Grants and program finder

This guided search tool will assist you in discovering grants, funding opportunities, and support programs offered by the Australian government.

Our Community Group

The Our Community Group provides advice, connections, training, databases and tools for Australian community groups, as well as services for business, government and the general public.

Pro Bono Australia

Pro Bono Australia provides online news service and other information specifically for the Australian Not for Profit Sector. Pro Bono Australia also publishes the Guide to Giving, an online directory of Charities and Not for Profit Organisations for organisations seeking to contribute to the not-for-profit sector.

Community grants: A quick guide

This guide provides links to select financial assistance sources for community groups, excluding scholarships, fellowships, or research grants.

Community Grants Hub

The Community Grants Hub (the Hub) provides a shared-services arrangement to deliver grant administration services on behalf of Australian Government client agencies to support their policy outcomes.

The Grants Hub

The Grants Hub is an award-winning business that offers an easy-to-use grants search website, helping organizations find available funding opportunities across Australia. Launched in June 2013, the platform combines technology and grants expertise to streamline the grant-seeking process. The business operates entirely online, allowing members to search for grants remotely, and has been recognized with several awards for its innovation and service. The Grants Hub is committed to continuous improvement and aims to be the simplest way to find grants in Australia.

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For more information about the Australian Early Development Census,
please visit the AEDC web site: www.aedc.gov.au