Innovation and Improvement Fund

Guidelines

March 2017
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What is the Innovation and Improvement Fund?

On 3 July 2017 new planning laws will replace the Sustainable Planning Act 2016, as part of the Queensland Government’s commitment to delivering planning reform across Queensland.

The government is committed to supporting councils as they transition to the new planning system, and providing opportunities that will improve the overall performance of the planning system beyond commencement of the new legislation.

The Innovation and Improvement Fund has been established to promote planning improvement and innovation across Queensland. The $4.5 million fund will provide local governments with opportunities to explore and deliver planning innovation and improvement projects that will contribute to creating a better planning system for all Queenslanders.

What are the fund’s objectives?
The objectives of the fund are to:

- ensure opportunities to improve the performance of the state’s land use planning system are identified and maximised
- support councils to realise the benefits of the new planning system for their communities
- assist councils to fulfil their planning obligations for their local communities in the most efficient, cost-effective and appropriate manner
- support local government initiatives that will improve the operation and effectiveness of their planning development assessment frameworks, which deliver economic, social and environmental benefit.

Who can apply for funding?
The fund is only available to local government bodies constituted under the Local Government Act 2009 and the City of Brisbane Act 2010. Eligible local government bodies can apply for funding individually, or in collaboration with the following partners:

- other local government bodies
- Regional Organisations of Councils.

When funding is sought via a partnership or collaboration, a lead council must be nominated to progress the application. The lead council will be responsible for project delivery and acquittal of funds. Any partner councils and organisations associated with a project will need to be identified in the application.

Local government, as the applicants and recipients of funding, will be the primary beneficiaries of the project.

How will the funding be available?
The fund will be distributed in a series of offer rounds. The first round will be open for 10 weeks, commencing on 20 March 2017 and closing 5:00pm AEST, 26 May 2017.

Round two is expected to begin in the second half of 2017, with timing to be confirmed.

Any funding not allocated under a round will be deferred to future rounds. Funding available in each round is to remain flexible and will be reviewed at each offer round, to allow for changing state and local government priorities as part of the planning transition program.

Projects submitted for funding under round one must be ready to commence within three months from the date of formal advice of funding approval. Funding may be withdrawn from projects that have not commenced by that time.
Successful applicants will have up to 12 months from the date of formal advice of funding approval to complete the approved project. Additional delivery time may be considered and approved in exceptional circumstances. Projects not capable of being delivered within this timeframe are encouraged to submit an application for the project in subsequent offer rounds.

How will applications be assessed and approved?
Eligible local government bodies are invited to submit an application for project funding, which will be assessed against key criteria including:

- consistency with the objectives of the fund
- demonstration of threshold criteria that describes the scope of projects eligible under the fund and proposal considerations to be addressed for each proposal/application (described below)
- capacity to deliver the project in the required timeframes.

Assessments will be conducted in accordance with these guidelines.

Applications will be shortlisted and eligible applicants may be asked to provide additional information.

A fund reference group, comprising representatives of the Local Government Association of Queensland, Planning Institute of Australia, and the Council of Mayors South East Queensland will be responsible for assessing applications and providing advice.

There is no obligation to consider submissions made after a funding round has closed.

All applicants will be advised of the outcomes.

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a formal agreement covering matters such as probity, reporting, acquittal and confidentiality requirements.
What are the key assessment criteria?
An application will be required to:

- be consistent with the objectives of the fund
- demonstrate how the project performs against the threshold criteria. It must, as a minimum, demonstrate very strong performance against one of these threshold criteria, or strongly perform against two or more of the criteria, and
- describe the project in accordance with the proposal considerations.

## Threshold criteria

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<th>Criteria theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>State, regional and local development</td>
<td>- The extent to which a project will achieve positive state, regional and local level development and economic, environment and social outcomes.</td>
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| Increased innovation and technology    | - The extent to which the proposal will:  
  - result in the implementation of an innovative business practice, and  
  - introduce or enhance information technology systems for local government and the community, such as public access to documents, information and services. |
| Planning scheme improvements           | - The extent to which the proposal will deliver scheme improvements. (Please note: alignment amendments to bring the scheme into line with requirements of the new planning system under the alignment amendment rules gazetted on 25 November 2016 are excluded from the fund because they can be supported by services provided by the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning’s (DILGP) planning reform and transition support activities.)  
  - Responses to this criteria should demonstrate how the project:  
    - improves the interactivity, accessibility and understanding of the scheme for the community and development industry  
    - improves clarity of the scheme and its operation to ensure the scheme provides a consistent and coherent framework from the strategic outcomes through to the development assessment requirements  
    - modifies the levels of assessment in the planning scheme to ensure proposals are not subject to unnecessary and complicated development assessment processes. |
| Development assessment system improvements | - The extent to which development assessment processes will be refined and streamlined to achieve outcomes efficiently, transparently and effectively.                                                        |
| Information and spatial                | - The extent to which a significant contribution would be made to ensure accurate, reliable, and up-to-date spatial data is available for the local government area.                                              |
# Proposal considerations

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<th>Consideration</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| **Project demand and proposed solution**           | • Describe the need or opportunity the project will address; and the effect the project will have, on the community.  
• Describe how the project will address the need or opportunity, and how and why the project was selected as the most appropriate response to the need or opportunity. |
| **Innovativeness**                                 | • Demonstrate how the project proposal will deliver a different way of addressing the current situation.  
• Demonstrate how the application of new knowledge, technologies or processes can deliver improved efficiencies, effectiveness or quality of outcomes for the local government, community and industry.                                                                                       |
| **Project benefits – local government**            | • Demonstrate how the project directly benefits the local government, preferably in qualitative and quantitative terms.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| **Project benefits – industry and community**      | • Identify, in quantitative and qualitative terms, how the project will benefit the community and regional economy in relation to:  
- the number of jobs supported  
- broader economic development  
- improved community planning outcomes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| **Value for money**                                | • Demonstrate value for money in terms of costs versus benefits.  
• Demonstrate that delivery of the project is feasible.  
• If relevant, demonstrate the sustainability of the project in terms of the council’s commitment and ability to fund the ongoing operation and maintenance of the project, including any co-contribution proposals.                                                                                     |
| **Project ownership**                              | • Demonstrate how ownership of the project that is the subject of the funding will be held by and remain with the lead council and/or partner councils (including its deliverables, outputs and any related intellectual property).                                                                                                                                          |
| **Benefit transference – can it be scaled or replicated?** | • Demonstrate an ability to be used as a model for other councils to learn from, adapt or adopt.  
• May be focussed on a single local government area but potential benefits to other local government areas should be identified and described.                                                                                                                                               |
| **General**                                        | Other general factors that will be considered when assessing applications including:  
• risk management  
• financial soundness  
• the project’s eligibility and strategic merit  
• project readiness  
• the local government’s experience in delivering similar projects and current position to do so.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
Ineligible projects
Funding cannot be sought under the fund for ineligible projects. The following list is not intended to be exhaustive. Applicants are encouraged to contact the department to discuss eligibility.

Ineligible projects, costs and applications include:

- projects that meet eligibility for, or have received funding from, other grants programs administered by DILGP including the:
  - Community Resilience Fund
  - Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program
  - Natural Disaster Resilience Program
- projects related to the support functions being provided by DILGP’s Planning Reform and Transition support programs
- projects already funded under other state or federal grants programs
- projects that are not related to the planning framework, such as:
  - local government internal administrative processes
  - procedures or matters pertaining to other functions of local government such as rating or land management
- applications that seek funding for work already undertaken prior to the relevant fund offer round
- capital works, land acquisition and associated costs, vehicle purchasing or leasing, furnishings, supplies and core business capital equipment
- staffing and project costs (including remuneration of executive officers) of a recurrent or ongoing nature that cannot be accounted for against the proposed project, or which occurred prior to the relevant fund offer round
- projects proposed by non-eligible applicants
- projects that are delivered by a third-party consultant for a lead council, where the ownership of any deliverable (including intellectual property of any aspect of the project) is not retained by the lead council
- projects that are intended to enable the applicant (including the lead council or members of any consortium) to operate a business in competition with the private sector
- projects that will primarily benefit or remain in the ownership of a commercial entity, including members of any applicant consortium.

Funding of projects
Within 30 business days of receiving formal advice of funding approval, successful applicants will be required to sign the department’s Funding Deed of Agreement (deed) prepared for their project.

Based on material submitted in the application, the deed will include details of:

- confirmation of approved funding and details of any co-contribution proposed
- timeframes for the delivery of projects and expenditure of funding
- project performance and reporting requirements related to project activities and deliverables, to be provided to the department in a project management plan (PMP) for approval
- procedures for making requests to modify the approved project and funding arrangements
- requirements in relation to the department’s and applicant’s use, replication, and transferability of relevant aspects of the project to assist other councils
- the necessity to acknowledge funding from the department, in accordance with the department’s funding acknowledgement guide other obligations and responsibilities of the applicant, funding recipients or project consortium members.
How do eligible applicants apply?

- For more information on the fund, visit the fund website where you will find:
  - the current fund guidelines
  - fact sheets and frequently asked questions about the fund
  - the fund application lodgement template
  - a link to the fund application lodgement portal.
- Ensure your application provides responses to all fields in the fund application lodgement template.
- Lodge your application and supporting material using the fund lodgement portal, available from the fund website.
- Submit your application before the offer round closing date. For round one this is 5:00pm AEST, 26 May 2017.

More information

For more information about the fund:

- call the fund management team on 07 3452 7192 or 13 QGOV (13 74 68)
- email any questions or enquiries to: innovationfund@dilgp.qld.gov.au
- contact your local regional office. Visit our website for details.