Australian Government
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Disability Advocacy Support Program – Service Delivery (GO8390)

Feedback for applicants

Thank you for your interest in the Disability Advocacy Support Program Service Delivery grant opportunity. We appreciate the time and effort you put into your application.

As outlined in the GO8390 Grant Opportunity Guidelines (Guidelines), the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the department) has prepared general feedback for this grant opportunity to highlight the qualities of strong grant applications and areas where less competitive applications could have been strengthened.

Significant competition for funding

Up to $184 million (GST exclusive) over 6 financial years (2026-27 to 2031-32) was available under this grant opportunity. The grant round was highly competitive and oversubscribed, with total funding requests over **$1.2 billion (GST exclusive)**.

Summary of the Grant Opportunity

Application period: The round opened 21 May 2026 and closed on 16 July 2026.

Applications received: 146

Summary of the round:

The goal of the Disability Advocacy Support Program is to ensure people with disability, especially those at most risk of harm, are empowered to exercise their rights, make their own choices and access the supports and services they require to fully participate in an inclusive Australian community.

The purpose of the Service Delivery grant opportunity is to fund organisations to provide individual disability advocacy support to people with disability, their families, carers and kin in defined service areas across Australia.

Conflict of Interest Management for Assessment and Selection Staff

All department staff were required to declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest before participating in the assessment and selection process. Where a conflict was identified, appropriate steps were taken to manage it, which could include:

- Excluding the team member from undertaking assessment related to the affected application(s).
- Assigning the application(s) to an alternate assessor.

- Documenting the conflict and the management action in accordance with the department's Conflict of Interest Policy.

To maintain probity and fairness during the selection process, the Selection Advisory Committee engaged an independent external probity advisor to support its deliberations.

Selection Process

- The department reviewed all applications to confirm they met the eligibility and compliance requirements for the grant opportunity.

- The department undertook a preliminary assessment of all eligible and compliant applications against the published selection criteria and any additional requirements outlined in the Guidelines. Quality assurance checks were undertaken to confirm the accuracy and consistency of preliminary assessments.

- A score out of five was applied to each of the three assessment criteria (for a maximum total of 15 possible). Applications that scored Average or above against each of the 3 assessment criteria would be considered for funding.

- Suitable applications progressed to an internal Selection Advisory Committee made up of subject matter experts whose role was to review assessed applications, provide advice, and make recommendations to the Decision Maker.

- In undertaking their role on the Selection Advisory Committee, panel members were required to consider relevant value for money per the Guidelines, including:
    - the overall objective/s to be achieved in providing the grant
    - the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives
    - the relative value of the grant sought
    - the extent to which the geographic location of the application matches identified priorities
    - how the grant activities will target groups or individuals.

- The Deputy Secretary of the Disability and Carers Group (the Decision Maker) decided which grants(s) to approve considering the recommendations of Selection Advisory Committee and the availability of grant funds.

- The department could not support many otherwise suitable applications due to limited funding and the volume of highly competitive applications received.

General feedback

Submission period

- All applicants should monitor GrantConnect for any addendums to the Guidelines, Questions and Answers, Attachment Pack templates or other key documents throughout the grant application period.
- The department fielded numerous questions during the grant opportunity. The department reminds all applicants it cannot assist you to address assessment criteria, determine eligibility or complete your application.

Late application requests

- Late application requests for this grant opportunity were only accepted for exceptional circumstances as outlined in the Guidelines. The department requested statutory declarations to verify the reasons given for all late application requests.

Ineligible and non-compliant applications

- The department outlined eligibility criteria in the Guidelines for all applicants. This also extended to proposed members in consortium applications.
- Some applicants were found not to be eligible to apply due to being an ineligible entity type, for example, not being registered as a charity or a not-for profit.
- Some applicants did not provide sufficient evidence verifying correct bank details in a timely manner, preventing further consideration of their applications.
- Applicants were required to attach evidence of the organisation having a stated mission to advance the rights of people with disability, particularly against the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD).
    - Most applicants that did not meet this requirement was due to not providing an attachment.
    - The department accepted a variety of attachments for consideration as evidence. This included board-endorsed statements, governance documents, mission statements, strategic plans, and annual reports.
    - Some applications were found non-compliant where the department was not satisfied, from the evidence provided, that an applicant sufficiently demonstrated a stated mission to advance the rights of people with disability, particularly against the UNCRPD.

Overall feedback on applications

Quality assurance of applications

- Some applications had incomplete responses in their application form or attachments or included drafting notes.
- It is important applications are checked before submission. The department **may** ask for clarification or additional information from you that will not change the nature of your application or proposal, but it should not be assumed the department will always request further information if there is a mistake in your application.

Not providing enough evidence to support claims

- It should not be assumed that assessors will have knowledge of your organisation and the services it provides.
- A demonstration of claims requires evidence. Responses often described what the applicant intended to do without sufficiently explaining how it would be delivered, or how it would contribute to the program objectives and outcomes.
- Claims about experience, coverage, partnerships, proposed activities, capability or financial sustainability were not always supported by examples or evidence.

Not aligning proposed services to the required activities

- Applicants should read all available guidance for a grant opportunity, including Guidelines, Questions and Answers and Attachment Packs, when preparing applications.
- Some applications did not sufficiently explain how their proposed service models aligned with the requirement for individual disability advocacy supports to be predominately delivered in-person.
- Some applications repeated wording in the Guidelines in their responses to assessment criteria or the attachments, rather than tailoring their response to demonstrate how their application specifically aligns to the program's requirements.

Failing to respond to requests for further information in a timely manner

- It is **critical** you respond to any requests for further information by the requested due dates, and with the correct supporting evidence. Delays risk applications being found ineligible or non-compliant.

Increased competitiveness among smaller or localised funding requests

- Many applications requested high amounts of funding to deliver services in smaller geographic regions but were less competitive compared to proposals offering greater scale of coverage (including through consortiums) in similar areas for comparably similar funding.
- The grant opportunity was oversubscribed by funding requests to deliver services in metropolitan regions, meaning greater competition among applicants.

Incomplete applications or missing attachments

- Some applications had incomplete responses or still included drafting notes.
- Some applications were missing the required attachments.
- Some applications had critical information missing that impacted an application's compliance. For example, budget templates **must** include the total funding requested over the grant period or the department cannot verify any discrepancies between an application and the proposed activity budget.
- Some applicants attempted to restructure the attachment pack templates, causing issues with formatting or broken formulas in the budget template.
- There were optional tabs in the amended Attachment Pack for applicants who wished to apply for more than 40 service areas but could not do so through the online form. Some applicants did not clearly declare as instructed if they intended to do this or completed the attachment pack without being required to.

Criterion 1: Alignment with grant opportunity objectives and outcomes

This criterion asked applicants to describe how their proposed grant activities would contribute to the objectives and outcomes of the grant opportunity, including advancing the rights of people with disability, addressing inequality and disadvantage, engaging relevant stakeholders, evaluating activities and contributing to Closing the Gap targets.

An Activity Work Plan was a mandatory requirement for this criterion.

Strong applications:

- Clearly explained how the proposed disability advocacy model and activities aligned with the grant objectives and intended outcomes.
- Demonstrated an understanding of the barriers, inequality and disadvantage experienced by people with disability, and provided practical examples of how the proposed activity would address these barriers.
- Went beyond identifying stakeholders by explaining how collaboration, partnerships and referral relationships would operate and contribute to program outcomes.
- Demonstrated a sound understanding of local or regional need and relevant barriers and inequality experienced by people with disability, including where particular communities or cohorts required targeted or culturally responsive advocacy, and provided practical examples of how the proposed activity would address these.

Common gaps observed:

- Some applicants did not sufficiently explain how proposed activities would achieve grant objectives and outcomes.

- Stakeholders were listed without enough information about their roles, responsibilities or how collaboration would contribute to successful delivery, including consortium partnerships.
- Some applicants did not adequately explain how service coverage would operate in practice, particularly for statewide, regional or remote service areas.
- Insufficient explanation of how performance would be measured, monitored or evaluated, or how findings would inform service improvement.

Criterion 2: Organisational capacity and capability to deliver the grant activities

This criterion asked applicants to demonstrate their organisation's capacity and capability to deliver the proposed grant activities, including relevant experience and expertise, personnel and partnerships, project planning and risk management, and stakeholder relationships that would support effective delivery.

A Risk Management Plan was a mandatory requirement for this criterion.

Strong applications:

- Demonstrated substantial and directly relevant experience in disability advocacy, including experience delivering individual or citizen advocacy and supporting disability cohorts or priority communities.
- Clearly identified the skills, experience and expertise of personnel who would deliver and oversee the activity, with practical examples or evidence.
- Demonstrated that appropriate staff, infrastructure, intake and referral processes, governance arrangements and organisational systems were already in place or could be effectively mobilised to deliver the activity.
- Explained how established governance and management arrangements would provide effective oversight of program delivery.

Common gaps observed:

- Limited evidence of previous individual disability advocacy experience or did not clearly explain how experience in other service areas would translate to disability advocacy.
- Some applicants did not sufficiently explain or substantiate resources or implementation arrangements to support proposed expansion in staffing, geographic coverage or client numbers.
- Limited detail was provided about project management frameworks, governance structures or arrangements for managing comparable projects, and risk management arrangements were not always sufficiently detailed.

- Consortium and partnership arrangements lacked clear descriptions of roles, responsibilities and how the capabilities of different organisations would work together.
- Some applicants identified extensive stakeholder networks without adequately explaining how those relationships would support delivery of the activity.

Criterion 3: Efficient and economical use of grant funds

This criterion asked applicants to describe how they would use grant funding efficiently and economically, including how proposed expenditure would support the grant objectives and outcomes, provide value with relevant money, deliver high-quality outcomes cost-effectively, adhere to ethical principles and be supported by the organisation's financial sustainability.

An Indicative Activity Budget template was a mandatory requirement for this criterion.

Strong applications:

- Presented budgets that were clearly connected to the proposed delivery model, staffing profile, geographic coverage and expected service volumes, proportionate to the scale and complexity of proposed activities.
- Demonstrated how existing infrastructure, workforce, community networks or operating arrangements would be leveraged to support efficient delivery.
- Clearly explained arrangements for the ethical, transparent and accountable use of public funds, including board oversight, financial delegations, financial controls, audits and reporting.
- Provided evidence of financial viability, sustainability and experience administering government funded programs, including evidence of established financial management arrangements.

Common gaps observed:

- Some budget items had minimal to no justification, creating uncertainty about how the proposed expenditure related to delivery. For example, not providing the number of positions that might be employed under proposed salary costs.
- Insufficient detail to determine how proposed expenditure supported the Activity Work Plan and proposed service model.
- Financial governance arrangements were sometimes not adequately described to ensure financial risks would be managed.

Outcome notification

All applicants have been notified of the outcome directly by the department.

Individual feedback will not be provided for this grant opportunity.