



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Agriculture  
and Water Resources**

# Hydrometric Networks and Remote Sensing Funding Program

## Program Guidelines

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# **1 Overview**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The Australian Government has committed \$20 million to enhance water measurement and monitoring, and compliance capability in all Murray-Darling Basin (Basin) jurisdictions<sup>1</sup>.

Murray-Darling Basin state and territory governments (Basin states) and the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) will be invited to submit proposals to undertake projects to support the development of remote sensing and other relevant technologies across the Basin, and improved hydrometric networks in the northern Basin, that is, the Darling River catchment in south-west Queensland and north-west New South Wales.

A recent Basin-wide review of compliance identified the value of better measurement of diversion through increased use of emerging monitoring technologies such as remote sensing.<sup>2</sup>

Remote sensing (and other relevant technologies) includes the scanning of the earth by satellite or aircraft (including drones) and the systems used to obtain that water information. It is particularly useful for assisting in monitoring floodplain harvesting (where metering is generally not feasible) and for monitoring whether water is present in water storages. It may also be used for monitoring cropping areas and potentially for the protection of environmental flow events.

Hydrometric networks are systems that enable the monitoring and measurement of water and may include physical infrastructure that allows for water data to be sent or shared. It also includes the data information systems used in water management. Projects that improve hydrometric network scope and accuracy, and reliability of data on water storage, flows and extractions will be considered for funding.

This Program seeks to improve the capability of the existing hydrometric network in the northern Basin to measure water diversions and in-stream flows.

## **1.2 Objective**

The objective of the Hydrometric Networks and Remote Sensing Funding Program (Program) is to fund Projects that will contribute to the better measurement of water diversions and in-stream flows through improving hydrometric networks and increasing the use of emerging monitoring technologies such as remote sensing.

The objective of these guidelines is to provide information about the process and requirements for Basin states and the MDBA to make applications for funding of eligible Projects under the Program.

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<sup>1</sup> Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and South Australia

<sup>2</sup> See MDBA, 2017, The Murray-Darling Basin Water Compliance Review - Part A, pages 40, 42

### **1.3 Outcomes**

The intended outcomes of the Program are:

- enhanced and more cost-effective monitoring, measurement and compliance systems across the Basin, and
- improved hydrometric networks in the northern Basin.

It is anticipated that these outcomes will strengthen public confidence in Basin water management.

### **1.4 Funding arrangements**

The Program will be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (department). Where funding for a project is approved, appropriate arrangements will be negotiated and executed between the Commonwealth and the relevant Basin state/s and/or MDBA to support the making of any funding payments for the project. In the case of an arrangement with one or more Basin states, this will likely be a National Partnership Project Agreement, including if States are joint applicants.

In the case of an arrangement with the MDBA, this will likely be in the form of an equivalent funding agreement, recognising MDBA is a Commonwealth agency.

The intent of the Program is to fund projects that are additional to projects or activities underway, and result in increased outputs and improved outcomes than would not otherwise be realised without Program funding.

## 2 Eligibility and applying for funding

### 2.1 Eligible applicants

Applications for funding will only be accepted from Basin states and the MDBA (Applicants) who will be responsible for delivering the Projects. While Applicants may subcontract or collaborate with other relevant organisations to undertake certain, or all, Project activities, the Australian Government will only enter funding agreements with the Applicants.

### 2.2 Eligibility requirements for applications for funding

For an application for funding to be eligible, it must meet the following eligibility requirements:

1. be made using the Hydrometric Networks and Remote Sensing Funding Program Application Form. A separate application form must be completed for each proposed Project for which funding is sought
2. address all relevant fields listed in the form and provide responses to all questions and assessment criteria
3. be made by a Basin state or MDBA
4. commit to implementation of the project consistently with the *Water Act 2007*, the [Murray-Darling Basin Compliance Compact](#) and the *Basin Plan 2012*
5. improve hydrometric networks in the northern Basin or develop remote sensing and other relevant technologies to enhance monitoring, measurement and compliance in all Basin states
6. commence within six months of signing a Project Agreement and be completed by 30 June 2022
7. only seek funding of up to \$3 million under this Program<sup>3</sup> per Project, unless it can be demonstrated that the Project is targeting Basin-wide and/or cross-jurisdictional outcomes, in which case Applicants may seek up to \$10 million.

### 2.3 Ineligible activities

Activities that are ineligible for funding include:

- pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, including activities undertaken prior to the signing of the Project Agreement and/or Schedule
- funding for meters

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<sup>3</sup> If other Commonwealth financial contributions have been sourced, or are intended to be sourced, for the project, details will need to be provided.

- replacement cost of existing hydrometric network infrastructure
- private on-farm water measurement and monitoring projects
- ongoing operational and maintenance costs
- business-as-usual operation and administration costs of the Basin states and MDBA, including staffing of the organisation delivering the Project. This does not extend to consultants or contractors engaged specifically and solely for the purposes of the Project
- anything deemed by the department to be contrary to the objectives of this funding program.

## **2.4 Applying for funding**

Each response should be succinct but provide sufficient detail for a reasonable assessment of the technical aspects of the project, and merits of the Project to be made. Additional information may be provided in attachments.

Applications for funding, including any attachment/s to an application, must be sent to the Program email [hydrometricnetworksprogram@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:hydrometricnetworksprogram@agriculture.gov.au) by the specified closing date. Each file should be no more than 5 MB.

## **2.5 Assessment criteria**

Applications for funding will be assessed against the following assessment criteria:

1. The application demonstrates how the proposed Project outputs will:
  - a) improve hydrometric networks and associated water information systems in the northern Basin in order to provide better data and information on streamflow and consumptive diversions for compliance purposes; or
  - b) develop remote sensing, and other relevant new and emerging technologies to enhance real-time monitoring, measurement and compliance Basin-wide.
2. The application demonstrates the value for money of the Project in terms of outputs for cost and level of risk, and is inclusive of all assessment criteria. Value achieved through approaches such as co-funding will also be considered.
3. The application identifies how the proposed Project will improve water regulators' capability to measure and monitor water use; and/or apply a risk-based approach to compliance activities; and/or enforce compliance. This includes protecting environmental water from consumptive use.
4. The application outcomes should identify and target high priority areas of monitoring and compliance associated with implementation of the Basin Plan and identified in the Basin Compliance Compact. The outcomes may include enhanced network capability and enhanced water data quality, analysis and information insofar as these improve capacity for effective compliance.

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5. In respect of funding for a Project on developing remote sensing or other relevant technologies, the application demonstrates that the relevant Project will be able to be geographically expanded over time to cover the entire Basin, and be integrated or made available for use or adoption by all Basin states and the MDBA.
6. The application demonstrates alignment with other Basin compliance measures or projects proposed or underway that support greater consistency and inter-operability of compliance systems and technologies.
7. The application demonstrates that the proposed Project will provide high quality information, address knowledge gaps, improve transparency and increase public confidence in water management.

### 3 Program processes and timelines

A high level overview of the Program assessment and Project Agreement negotiation process is outlined in Figure 1 (further detail is provided below):

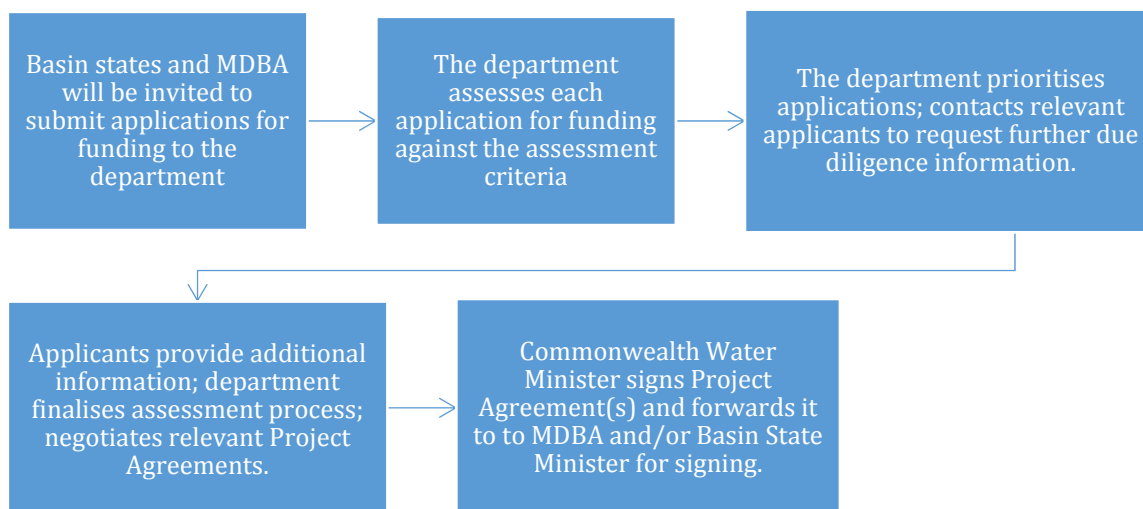


Figure 1: Overview of the Program process

#### 3.1 Process for making applications for funding

The Basin states and MDBA will receive a letter and a copy of these guidelines, inviting them to make an application for funding for a proposed Project under the Program by no later than the closing date specified in the letter. Following which, the Basin states and MDBA will have until this specified closing date to make an application for funding to the department in accordance with the requirements of the guidelines.

#### 3.2 Process for assessing funding applications

All applications received by the specified closing date will be assessed by the department to ensure all relevant eligibility requirements are satisfied, and then against the assessment criteria set out in the guidelines. As part of this a departmental panel will be established to assess the applications against the assessment criteria.

The department will seek advice on applications for funding from independent experts on the matters of technical feasibility, value-for-money and ability of the application to meet the Program objectives. They may also provide advice on additional information that should be sought if the application is progressed. This advice will be used to inform the assessment of the applications against the assessment criteria, and the prioritisation of projects.



### **3.3 Prioritisation of applications**

Applications for funding need to meet all the eligibility requirements and address all the assessment criteria. The prioritisation and selection of projects will then be based on how well the application scores on the assessment criteria, and the following priorities:

1. the ability of a Project to deliver on Program outcomes, including the demonstration of how data and information will be shared and made available to all appropriate jurisdictions and agencies, and how technology will be compatible with other systems as necessary
2. value for money in terms of outputs for cost and level of risk, and is inclusive of all assessment criteria
3. align with the actions and work programs outlined in the Basin Compliance Compact.

### **3.4 Provision of further information and negotiation of agreements**

Once Projects are assessed and prioritised, Applicants will be approached to provide additional information as required to satisfy due diligence prior to the drafting of Project Agreements. This could include information relating to risk management, Project outputs and deliverables. The extent of the additional information requested will depend on the application for funding and the assessment process, including assessment of its feasibility and level of risk.

The provision of applications that provide clear and sufficient evidence of value for money (i.e. outputs, costs and risks) and timely responses for any additional information required by the department will enable the timely development of Project Agreements.

Department officials will work with relevant applicants to draft the Project Agreements and relevant Schedules.

### **3.5 Project commencement and completion**

Projects must commence within six months of signing a Project Agreement and be completed by 30 June 2022. Milestones for each project will be negotiated and determined prior to the finalisation of Project Agreements.

All Applicants will be required to comply with relevant laws, including work health and safety laws, at all times during their participation in the Program.

The Commonwealth is required by law to ensure that it applies the Work Health and Safety Accreditation Scheme (the Scheme) to Commonwealth funded building work. As necessary, successful applicants will administer Commonwealth funding it receives under this contract in accordance with the requirements of the Scheme.

The *Code for the Tendering and Performance of Building Work 2016* also applies to any building work funded through this Program, subject to relevant financial thresholds being met. It is recommended that you contact the department to understand what additional requirements you may need to satisfy where you think the Code may apply to your potential

Project.

Project Agreements will include details of reporting and monitoring to be conducted as part of project implementation to demonstrate how the Project will meet Program outcomes.

### **3.6 Changes to the assessment process**

The department reserves the right to change the assessment or funding processes and timelines. Basin states and the MDBA will be informed of any changes.

Should the program be undersubscribed, the department reserves the right to accept additional applications for funding, or negotiate the extension of Project Agreements. Basin states and the MDBA will be informed as appropriate of any such changes.

## 4 Other matters

### 4.1 False and misleading information

Applicants should be aware that the intentional giving of false or misleading information is a serious offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.

### 4.2 Confidential information

Applicants must identify any information contained within their application for funding or in any documentation that they consider should be treated as confidential and provide reasons for the request. The department reserves the right to accept or refuse a request to treat information as confidential.

Information provided to the department that has not been accepted as confidential may be shared or published, as determined by the department.

Confidential information may be released as required by law or Parliamentary privilege.

### 4.3 Freedom of Information

All documents in the possession of the department, including those in relation to the project proposal and proposed projects under the fund, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act).

The FOI Act creates a general right of access to documents in the possession of the department. Unless a document falls under an exemption provision, it will be made available to the public if requested under the FOI Act.

For more information about the FOI process, or to make a FOI request, please review the information at <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/about/reporting/foi>.

### 4.4 Privacy Notice

The *Privacy Act 1988* (Privacy Act) sets out principles in relation to the management, collection, use and disclosure of personal information by APP entities, such as the department. The department must comply with the Privacy Act when handling personal information.

‘Personal information’ means any information or opinion about an identified, or reasonably identifiable individual:

- i. whether the information or opinion is true or not; and
- ii. whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not

The collection of personal information by the department in relation to the project proposals/plans is for the purposes of assessing project proposals/plans for the funding program, evaluating the funding program and related purposes. If the relevant personal information requested in the project proposals/plans are not provided, the department may not be able to assess the project proposal.

Personal information may be disclosed to relevant parties engaged for the purposes of assessment of project proposals/plans and fund evaluation, the Minister and the Minister's office, on the department's website and to other Australian Government agencies, persons or organisations where necessary for the above purposes, provided the disclosure is consistent with relevant laws, in particular the Privacy Act. Personal information is unlikely to be disclosed to overseas recipients.

By providing the department with personal information, Applicants consent to the collection, use, disclosure and storage of their personal information. Personal information will be used and stored in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles.

The department's Privacy Policy, including information about access to and correction of personal information as well as information about how to make a privacy complaint, can be found at: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/about/privacy>.

## **4.5 Corrections**

The department will not accept responsibility for any misunderstanding arising from the failure by a Basin state or the MDBA to comply with the guidelines or arising from any discrepancies, ambiguities, errors or inconsistencies in a Project Proposal.

If an Applicant discovers any material discrepancy, ambiguity, error or inconsistency in an application for funding, they must immediately bring it to the attention of the department by email at [hydrometricnetworksprogram@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:hydrometricnetworksprogram@agriculture.gov.au). The department may, at its discretion, seek clarification from a Basin state or MDBA to clarify any discrepancy, ambiguity, error or inconsistency.

## **4.6 Notifications of funding decisions**

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of an application for funding in writing. Where unsuccessful, Applicants may contact the department to obtain feedback on their application for funding.

## **4.7 Publication of information about successful projects**

The Commonwealth Water Minister will announce the following information in a variety of media about successful projects:

- the Basin state/s and/or MDBA receiving the funding, along with the project's title and purpose
- anticipated outcomes and benefits of the infrastructure
- amount of funding received
- term of the funding
- funding location
- information on progress as reported to the department.

Note that all Project Agreements with Basin states are published on the Federal Financial Relations website; any Project Agreement/s with the MDBA may also be released.

## **4.8 Reporting requirements**

The Agreement and associated schedules will detail the reporting requirements for funded projects.