

Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Answers to Questions on Notice

Communications Portfolio

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Topic: Media Diversity in Australia

Hansard Ref: Written (Senator Hanson-Young)

Questions:

Could the department supply a breakdown of allocation of expenditure for the RASPI and PING programs including:

1. A breakdown of funding allotted through the RASPI funding, including organisations and amount funded;
2. The amount of unspent RASPI funding that was rolled into the PING program (\$38.4 million cited in evidence), including the quantum and rationale for the additional \$11 million for the PING;
3. How much PING funding was awarded to small regional and rural publishers;
4. How much PING funding was awarded to large corporate broadcasters;
5. How much is still left in the fund, and how will this be allocated;
6. The selection criteria and process used to award PING funding;
7. The nature of the cadetship funding for regional and small publishers, what funding program(s) this was part of, and whether this has been allocated, is yet to be spent, or considered as unallocated; and
8. An outline of the oversight and transparency measures for the RASPI/PING programs.

Answer:

1. Successful Grantees - Regional and Small Publishers Innovation (RASPI) Fund

The following tables provide details of the successful grantees for each round. The amount for each grantee reflects the amount awarded by the ACMA Authority and is **GST exclusive**. During grant negotiations and as part of managing grants, some grantees withdrew their project or reduced the scope of their projects, resulting in a reduction in the amount paid.

RASPI Fund Round One 2018

Recipient Name	Amount Awarded (GST exclusive)
ACE Radio Broadcasters Pty Ltd	\$50,000.00
Adelphi Printing Pty Ltd	\$41,754.00
Agenda Media Pty Ltd	\$163,636.37
Alexandra Newspapers	\$18,181.82
Central West Media Pty Ltd	\$45,454.55
Elliott Newspaper Group Pty Ltd	\$342,000.00
Huon Newspaper Company Pty Ltd	\$99,469.09

Irish Exile Pty Ltd	\$68,181.82
Jinki Sixteen Pty Ltd	\$80,000.00
Leader Newspaper Pty Ltd *	\$18,181.82
McPherson Newspapers Proprietary Limited (Trading as McPherson Media Group ["MMG"])	\$220,780.00
Mildura Weekly Pty Ltd	\$45,454.55
Nascon Media Pty Ltd	\$34,545.45
North East Media Pty Ltd	\$18,181.82
North East Media Pty Ltd	\$26,441.82
Private Media Operations	\$362,727.28
Private Media Operations	\$414,845.45
Solstice Media Pty Ltd	\$40,000.00
Star News Group Pty Ltd as Trustee for Ian Thomas Family Trust	\$35,909.09
Stormvale Pty Ltd	\$172,000.00
Surf Coast News Australia Pty Ltd	\$275,300.00
The North Western Courier	\$249,727.27
The Saturday Paper Pty Ltd	\$140,000.00
The Saturday Paper Pty Ltd *	\$16,000.00
The Saturday Paper Pty Ltd	\$9,720.00
Trustee for Parkes-Brown Family Trust	\$18,181.82
Warracknabeal Herald Pty Ltd1	\$115,682.91
Warragul Regional Newspaper Pty Ltd	\$99,228.00
Western District Newspaper Pty Ltd	\$221,315.36

* Grantee withdrew project

RASPI Fund Regional Grant Opportunity 2019

Recipient Name	Amount Awarded (GST exclusive)
Alexandra Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$19,547.00
Australian Cybermalls Pty Ltd	\$71,740.00
Barham Media Pty Ltd ATF Shiloh Media Trust	\$60,000.00
Beaconwood Holdings Pty Ltd	\$381,954.00
Buloke Times (VIC) Pty Ltd	\$60,000.00
Business News Australia Pty Ltd	\$286,000.00
Cassowary Coast Independent News Pty. Ltd.	\$39,036.36
Central Coast Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$158,500.00
Condobolin Argus Pty Ltd *	\$84,072.00
Croakey Health Media Ltd	\$142,000.00
Diamond Valley Enterprises Pty Ltd as trustee for Lomas Family Trust	\$94,500.00
Elliott Gippsland Newspapers Pty Ltd trading as Latrobe Valley Express Partnership	\$237,000.00
Elliott Midland Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$215,000.00
Forty South Publishing Pty Ltd	\$249,206.37
Giles Newspapers Pty Ltd ^	\$150,749.11
Gilgandra Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$232,920.00

Gippslandia Ltd	\$265,000.00
GJ Adams Trust	\$104,002.00
Graziher Publishing Pty Ltd	\$170,000.00
Greysen Enterprises Pty Ltd	\$179,091.00
Indigenous Remote Communications Association Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation	\$382,500.00
James Yeates & Sons Pty Ltd	\$78,718.18
Junkies Magazine Australia Pty Ltd	\$291,500.00
King Media Regional Pty Ltd	\$335,341.00
Kvitko Holdings Pty Ltd	\$5,141.20
Local Media Pty Ltd	\$65,454.00
Locolee Pty Ltd trading as Coonamble Times	\$52,000.00
Longreach Printing Company Limited	\$217,475.00
Lynwood Press	\$15,000.00
Maryborough Regional Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$112,000.00
McPherson Newspapers Proprietary Limited (Trading as McPherson Media Group ["MMG"])	\$160,000.00
Mildura Weekly Pty Ltd	\$54,920.00
Moscol Group Pty Ltd	\$60,000.00
Myall Coast Communications Pty Ltd	\$139,382.00
Narrandera Argus Pty Ltd	\$172,680.25
Newcastle Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$211,399.00
Newstate Media Newcastle Pty Ltd	\$82,806.00
Newstate Media Pty Ltd	\$163,150.00
North East Media Pty Ltd	\$317,000.00
Papers & Publications Pty Ltd	\$83,278.55
Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser Pty Ltd	\$104,043.54
Portasea Pty Ltd	\$217,320.00
Propeller Media	\$156,200.00
Quirindi Printing & Publishing Pty Ltd ^	\$40,335.04
Research for Agriculture	\$210,000.00
RFP Enterprises Pty Ltd T/AS Bendigo Magazine	\$90,800.00
SCMH Enterprises Pty Ltd atf the Law Family Trust	\$53,999.70
Shore Media	\$13,930.00
Southern Cross Austereo Pty Ltd	\$250,000.00
Southern Star (NSW) Pty Ltd *	\$95,874.72
Spilled Ink Pty Ltd *	\$17,300.00
Star News Group Pty Ltd as Trustee for Ian Thomas Family Trust	\$170,049.00
Sunraysia Publishing Co Pty Ltd	\$142,775.82
Surf Coast News Australia Pty Ltd	\$129,993.00
Tarrangower Times Pty Ltd	\$102,000.00
The Local Publishing Group Pty Ltd	\$210,000.00
Tropic Group Pty Ltd ATF Tropic Trust	\$55,000.00
Warracknabeal Herald Proprietary Limited	\$102,332.72
Warragul Regional Newspapers P/L	\$205,000.00

Warrumbungle Publications Pty Ltd Trading As Coonabarabran Times	\$72,664.56
Wilkie Watson Publications ^	\$257,841.90
YP Publishers Pty Ltd	\$161,711.49

* Grantee withdrew project

^ Grant agreement terminated due to inability to meet grant conditions

RASPI Fund 2020 Round

Recipient Name	Amount Awarded (GST exclusive)
Alexandra Newspapers	\$90,977.18
Budsoar Pty Ltd T/A Koori Mail	\$214,024.00
Buloke Times (Vic) Pty Ltd	\$30,494.58
Cassowary Coast Independent News Pty. Ltd	\$139,220.00
Central Coast Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$253,000.00
Condobolin Argus Pty Ltd	\$60,980.59
Echo Publications Pty Ltd	\$36,200.00
Elliott Midland Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$34,750.00
GJ Adams Trust	\$238,086.00
Gladdis Enterprises Pty Ltd	\$8,647.28
Inside Story Publishing Pty Ltd	\$93,623.00
Kezkazwin Enterprises Pty Ltd	\$10,000.00
King Media Regional Pty Ltd.	\$99,600.00
Mac Group Publications Pty Ltd	\$24,734.90
Macquarie Publishing Pty Ltd	\$260,000.00
Maryborough Regional Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$149,390.89
Meander Valley Connect Inc. trading as Meander Valley Gazette	\$90,108.18
Monaro Media Group Pty Ltd	\$226,136.96
Moscol Group Pty Ltd	\$46,362.00
Narrandera Argus Pty Ltd	\$88,411.00
NCNEWS PTY LTD	\$84,754.48
Newstate Media Newcastle Pty Ltd	\$132,711.00
Newstate Media Pty Ltd	\$181,800.00
North Central Review Pty Ltd	\$119,410.91
OurNews Pty Ltd as trustee for The Rogers Family Trust	\$99,582.72
Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser Pty Ltd	\$73,884.10
Propeller Media	\$73,089.90
RenewEconomy Pty Ltd	\$224,822.00
Roundbox Media Pty Ltd	\$191,441.94
Skymote Pty Ltd	\$41,685.00
Solstice Media	\$155,875.00
Somerset Media Pty Ltd	\$175,000.00
The Chung Wah Association Inc	\$74,682.00
The Local Publishing Group Pty Ltd	\$108,000.00
The Royal Institution of Australia Incorporated	\$264,104.00
The Trustee for Parkes-Brown Family Trust	\$108,200.00

Warragul Regional Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$55,889.00
Warrandyte Arts & Education Trust	\$38,750.00
Warrumbungle Publications Pty Ltd Trading As Coonabarabran Times	\$84,854.55
Wavelength Group Pty Ltd	\$104,812.25
Wilkie Watson Publications	\$130,981.55
Word & Pixel Perfection Pty Ltd	\$216,745.45
Word Count Media Pty Ltd	\$42,768.00

**Successful Grantees - Regional and Small Publishers Cadetships Program
(administered by the Department)**

Recipient Name	Amount Awarded (GST Inclusive)
Yarrawonga Chronicle and Corowa Free Press Pty Ltd	\$28,678.10
Wilkie Watson Publications	\$57,642.20
Western Sydney Publishing Group	\$28,600.00
Western Star Pty Ltd	\$59,694.80
Western Star Pty Ltd	\$29,847.40
W&L Phillips Pty Ltd Trading as Flow FM and Flow Media	\$85,646.00
Village News Publishing Pty Ltd	\$21,681.00
The South Burnett Times Pty Ltd	\$29,847.40
The North Western Courier Pty Ltd	\$31,544.70
The North Central Review Pty Ltd	\$18,687.90
Surf Coast News Australia Pty Ltd	\$60,357.00
Sunraysia Publishing Company Pty Ltd	\$32,244.30
Star News Group Pty Ltd	\$158,875.20
Stadtic Media Pty Ltd Trading as Twin Town Times	\$24,200.00
Southern Cross Austereo Pty Ltd	\$45,711.60
Solstice Media Pty Ltd	\$59,400.00
Private Media Pty Ltd	\$16,860.80
Portasea Pty Ltd	\$17,607.70
Poet Press	\$81,180.00
Papers and Publications Pty Ltd	\$50,600.00
North East Media Pty Ltd	\$70,719.00
NBN Pty Ltd	\$52,800.00
Narrandera Argus	\$16,500.00
Monaro Media Group Pty Ltd	\$28,036.80
Mildura Weekly Pty Ltd	\$31,510.60
McPherson Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$186,839.40
Mail News Group Pty Ltd	\$52,958.40
Locolee Pty Ltd	\$27,500.00
Grant Broadcasters Pty Ltd	\$180,919.20
Elliott Consolidated Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$29,562.50
Dalby Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$59,694.80

Chinchilla Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$59,694.80
Business News Australia Pty Ltd	\$29,814.40
Bumma Bippera Media Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation	\$31,509.50
Budsoar Pty Ltd T/AS Koori Mail	\$22,000.00
Australian Leisure Media	\$23,100.00
Alexandra Newspapers Pty Ltd	\$26,400.00
Adelphi Printing Pty Ltd as Trustee for the Paton Family Trust	\$29,150.00
ACE Radio Broadcasters Pty Ltd Trading as The Weekly Advertiser	\$24,642.20

Successful Grantees - Regional Journalism Scholarships Program (administered by the Department)

Recipient Name	Amount Awarded (GST Inclusive)
University of South Australia	\$220,000.00
La Trobe University	\$99,000.00
Central Queensland University (CQUniversity)	\$165,000.00
Deakin University	\$173,738.40
Griffith University	\$220,000.00
Curtin University	\$35,200.00
RMIT University	\$292,688.00
Charles Sturt University	\$220,000.00
Murdoch University	\$88,000.00
University of Wollongong	\$105,600.00
University of Technology Sydney	\$220,000.00
Monash University	\$220,000.00
University of Canberra	\$88,000.00
The University of Queensland	\$197,791.00
Bond University	\$88,000.00
University of Melbourne	\$88,000.00

2. On 15 April 2020, the Government announced a package of measures to help sustain Australian media businesses during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The \$70 million Public Interest News Gathering (PING) program will support public interest journalism delivered by commercial television, newspaper and radio businesses in regional Australia. The Australian Associated Press also received funding under the PING Program.

PING was funded with \$33.4 million in new money as well as repurposing unallocated funds of \$36.6 million from the Government's Regional and Small Publishers Jobs and Innovation Package.

3. A total of 92 publishers received a share of the \$18 million allocated to regional publishing under the PING Program. Of the 92 regional publishers, 87 operate as a small business.
4. A total of \$20 million of PING funding was made available for regional commercial television under Stream 1, noting that the broadcasters could only use this funding for regional operations. Five regional commercial television broadcasters (Nine, Southern Cross Austereo, Seven Queensland, WIN and Prime) received funding under this stream.

A total of \$12 million of funding was allocated for regional commercial radio (Stream 2). 13 regional radio broadcasters received funding under this stream, with a mix of larger (Southern Cross Austereo and Grant Broadcasters) and smaller regional commercial radio operators being funded. A list of all grantees is available on GrantConnect as required by the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

5. A total of \$1.7 million has not been allocated under the PING Program. Funding was deducted for a small number of grantees who were unable to meet their obligations in their PING funding agreement. The total amount remaining is subject to a final acquittal process at the completion of the program.
6. The PING Program Guidelines (Guidelines) are at **Attachment A** for reference. Section 3 of the PING Guidelines outlines the process for allocating PING funding. Section 4 of the PING Guidelines outlines the eligibility criteria that had to be met by applicants.
7. In September 2017, the \$60.4 million Regional and Small Publishers Jobs and Innovation (RASPJI) Package was announced by the Government. Programs in the RASPJI package were part of the 2017 media reforms and were designed to help small metropolitan and regional publishers adapt to challenges in the contemporary media environment, create employment opportunities for cadet journalists and support regional students to study journalism. The Package consisted of three programs:
 - A total of \$48.0 million in administered funds was allocated to the Regional and Small Publishers Innovation (RASPI) Fund over three years in 2018-19.
 - A total of \$2.4 million in administered funds was allocated to the Regional Journalism Scholarships Program for two rounds.
 - A total of \$8.0 million in administered funds was allocated to the Regional and Small Publishers Cadetships Program for two rounds.
 - A total of \$2.0 million in departmental funding was provided to the Australian Communications and Media Authority to administer the Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund.

A total of \$1.922 million was committed under the first round of the Cadetships Program. A total of \$0.957 million has been spent to date. Some grantees did not take up the full allocation of funding due to the co-contribution payment arrangement or had difficulties in finding or retaining cadets. A second round was not conducted.

8. Oversight and transparency measures - RASPI program

Administration

The RASPI program is administered by the ACMA under Part 14F of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*. Part 14F allows the ACMA to make grants of financial assistance under RASPI up until 30 June 2022. The ACMA conducted and administered each of the three rounds under the RASPI (Round One, the Regional Grant Opportunity and the 2020 Round) in accordance with published Grant Opportunity Guidelines (Guidelines). The Guidelines used templates provided by the Department of Finance and were developed in consultation with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (the Department). Each set of guidelines has been consistent with the Government's policy requirements for each round. The Guidelines were also reviewed by the Department of Finance and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Documentation for each round was published on GrantConnect, which is the centralised source of information for Australian Government grant opportunities and grants awarded.

Assessment of grant applications and management of grants

The ACMA assessed eligibility and merits of each grant application in accordance with the respective assessment processes outlined in the Guidelines and made decisions on which applicants would be awarded grants. This included, each round, receiving advice from the independent Advisory Committee, with members appointed by the Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts. The identity of each successful applicant and the amount awarded is published on GrantConnect within 21 days after an agreement is executed. Variations to grant agreements are updated on GrantConnect.

Internal audit process

The ACMA has contracted RSM Australia to undertake 3 independent audit reviews of its grants management since the commencement of RASPI in 2018. The first audit, completed in July 2018, focused on the development of the grants management process. The second audit, completed in May 2019, focused on the management of Round One of RASPI. The third audit, which took place from August to November 2020, reviewed the administration of RASPI, including the monitoring, reporting and acquittal of grants awarded in Round One and the Regional Grant Opportunity.

The audits raised no substantive issues regarding administration of the grants program and found that the management of the grants was effective and consistent with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines and the Department of Finance requirements.

The ACMA has progressively improved its administration of RASPI by adopting the recommendations and key actions arising from each audit.

Oversight and transparency measures - PING program

Administration

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications administered the PING Program as part of the Government's COVID relief industry support package. The Department administered the PING Program in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017 and the published PING Grant Guidelines (PING Guidelines). The PING Guidelines used templates provided by the Department of Finance. The Department of Finance and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet reviewed the Guidelines. Documentation was published on GrantConnect.

Assessment of grant applications and management of grants

An internal panel consisting of officials from the Department assessed the eligibility of each grant application, in accordance with the eligibility criteria and funding allocation approach outlined in the PING Guidelines. The identity of each successful applicant and the amount awarded was published on GrantConnect within 21 days after an agreement was executed.

Internal audit process

PriceWaterhouseCoopers is currently conducting an internal audit of the PING program. This is part of an assessment of COVID relief initiatives within the Department. A formal evaluation of the PING program (and the RASPIJ package) will commence shortly following the appointment of an independent consultant. The evaluation will review the administration and management of the programs and their effectiveness for regional public interest journalism. This will inform any future Government initiatives in this area.

Public Interest News Gathering Program

Grant opportunity

Guidelines

Opening date:	7 May 2020
Closing date and time:	17:00 AEST on 29 May 2020
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Administering entity	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, contact the Media Markets Team, via PingProgram@communications.gov.au or call 02 6271 1142 Questions should be sent no later than 25 May 2020
Date guidelines released:	7 May 2020
Type of grant opportunity:	Demand-driven (Eligibility-based)

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1. Public Interest News Gathering Program: Grant opportunity processes

The Public Interest News Gathering program is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications administer the Public Interest News Gathering program in accordance with the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#).



The grant opportunity opens

We publish the grant guidelines on [GrantConnect](#).



You submit a grant application



We assess grant applications

We assess the applications against eligibility criteria.



Grant decisions are made

The decision maker makes a decision about the grant(s).



We notify you of the outcome



We enter into a grant agreement

A simplified grant agreement setting out the terms and conditions for the grant will be provided to successful grant applicants.



Delivery of grant

You undertake the grant activity as set out in your **grant agreement**. We manage the grant by working with you, monitoring your progress and making payments.



Evaluation of the Public Interest News Gathering Program

We evaluate the specific grant activity and Public Interest News Gathering as a whole. We base this on information you provide to us and that we collect from various sources.

1.1 Introduction

These guidelines contain information for the Public Interest News Gathering Program (the Program).

You must read this document before applying for a grant.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant opportunity
- the eligibility criteria
- how grant applications are considered and selected
- how grantees will be monitored and evaluated
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

Key terms used in these guidelines, including terms used to refer to legislation, are explained where they appear or are defined in the Glossary.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (**the Department / We**) is responsible for administering this grant opportunity.

Should the guidelines be inconsistent with any applicable Act, the relevant Act will prevail.

2. About the grant program

The Australian Government has announced a total of \$50 million (GST exclusive) in grants to support the provision of public interest journalism in regional Australia.

The objective of the Program is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

This Program implements the Government's response to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) Digital Platforms Inquiry by replacing the remaining Regional and Small Publishers Jobs and Innovation Package.

Adding to the strong case for support already made by the ACCC is the increasing economic disruption resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The enhanced program will provide direct support for the continued provision of local and regional journalism, which has never been more important than in recent times when communities across Australia need access to trusted sources of news and information.

The Program will meet its objective by enabling regional television and radio broadcasters, and regional publishers, to continue to provide public interest journalism to regional and remote communities across Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We administer the program according to the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines (CGRGs)*¹.

¹ <https://www.finance.gov.au/sites/default/files/commonwealth-grants-rules-and-guidelines.pdf>

3. Grant amount and grant period

3.1 Grants available

There is a total of \$50 million (GST exclusive) available under this Grant Opportunity.

Funding for this Grant Opportunity will be allocated across three streams:

- Stream 1: Regional commercial television, including their online services, which produce and broadcast public interest journalism in regional markets, to be apportioned using a grant funding allocation formula based on their proportion of annual revenue compared to the total combined revenue of eligible Stream 1 applicants.
- Stream 2: Regional commercial radio, including their online services, which produce and broadcast public interest journalism in regional markets, to be apportioned using a grant funding allocation formula based on their proportion of annual revenue compared to the total combined revenue of eligible Stream 2 applicants.
- Stream 3: Regional publishers, which produce and publish public interest journalism in regional markets, to be apportioned using a grant funding allocation formula based on their proportion of annual revenue compared to the total combined revenue of eligible Stream 3 applicants. Grants in Stream 3 will have a minimum grant amount of \$10,000 (exc GST).

There is no maximum grant amount per grantee but grants cannot exceed the amount of available funds. Each applicant may lodge only one application for this Grant Opportunity but can apply for funding through more than one stream.

The Program is a separate program to the Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund (2020 Round), which is being administered by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (the ACMA). Regional publishers are able to apply for funding under both programs. In addition, publishers and content service providers who applied for grants in the previous rounds of the Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund (including applicants who were awarded grants under those rounds) are also permitted to apply for this Grant Opportunity.

This Grant Opportunity will be open for 3 weeks from Thursday, 7 May 2020 until 5:00 pm AEST Friday, 29 May 2020.

Grants will have a duration not exceeding 12 months (commencing from the execution of each applicable grant agreement).

3.2 Nominal grant allocation - Funding allocation formula

Funding will be nominally allocated based on an applicant's certified revenue for the 2018-19 financial year, as a proportion of the total revenue of all eligible applicants for a particular stream.

For each stream:

	Applicant's certified financial revenue	
Nominal grant allocation =	-----	X Stream funding pool
Total applicant certified financial revenue		

Once all applications have been received and screened for eligibility, we will determine the size of each stream funding pool for the purposes of the nominal grant funding allocation formula, taking into consideration factors including the total number of applications received, and the contribution of each sector of applicant to public interest journalism in regional areas. Contribution will be determined by the Department, which will include an assessment of the costs and the level of public interest journalism produced and distributed in regional areas.

3.3 Moderation

We will also have the discretion to adjust down nominal grant allocations by up to 10% of the nominal grant funding determined under the funding allocation formula. Moderation may occur to better support geographical distribution of funds, for example between States and Territories. There is no limit on how much a nominal grant allocation can be adjusted upwards for these purposes.

3.4 Final grant allocation

Subject to execution of a grant funding agreement successful applicants will receive a final grant allocation. The final grant allocation is the nominal grant allocation, adjusted for any moderation as per 3.3 above.

4. Eligibility criteria

We cannot consider your application if it does not satisfy all the eligibility criteria.

4.1 Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

To be eligible to apply for a grant under this Opportunity you must:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN) (the ABN number must be supplied with the application)
- be registered for the purposes of GST
- not be a foreign controlled Australian entity (as defined in the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*)
- not currently be insolvent
- be a Regional Television Broadcaster or Regional Radio Broadcaster, or Regional Publisher

- demonstrate that you provide public interest journalism to local communities. This should include the production and distribution of local news.
- not be formally affiliated with a political party, union, financial institution, Non-Government Organisation or policy lobby group where that affiliation would influence, or might be seen to influence, the content produced by the applicant.

A *Regional Television Broadcaster* is a holder of a regional commercial television broadcasting licence as defined in section 61CU of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (the BSA).

A *Regional Radio Broadcaster* is a holder of a regional commercial radio broadcasting licence as defined in section 61CA of the BSA.

A *Regional Publisher* is a provider where:

- their primary operations are located in a regional area, and
- their news and journalistic output is targeted to readers and audiences in one or more regional areas.

'Regional area' means a radio broadcast licence area that is not a metropolitan licence area. 'Metropolitan licence area' means a metropolitan licence area as defined in section 61CA of the BSA.

Applicants will be required to nominate for funding streams outlined below:

- Stream funding pool 1: Regional Television Broadcasters
- Stream funding pool 2: Regional Radio Broadcasters
- Stream funding pool 3: Regional Publishers

Applicants can apply for funding through more than one stream using the one application.

Organisations that operate in both metropolitan and regional areas are eligible to apply for funding, however if successful, funding will only be provided for their regional operations.

These organisations will need to provide detailed financial evidence demonstrating the proportion of their revenue attributed to regional markets.

Applicants that operate across numerous regional markets are only required to submit one application. Similarly, applicants that are controlled by a metropolitan or international corporation are only required to submit one application.

5. What the grant money can be used for

5.1 Eligible grant activities

Grants awarded under this Opportunity are intended to fund a broad range of activities that relate to the applicant's production and distribution of public interest journalism in support of the objective and outcomes of the Program as outlined in section 2 of the guidelines. In particular to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the grant period.

5.2 Eligible expenditure

Eligible expenditure must primarily be for the applicant's production and distribution of public interest news journalism during the Grant period and without limitation, includes:

- purchase or lease of assets and equipment
- acquisition of relevant content, intellectual property or other rights
- the costs of acquiring technology to assist with production or distribution of content
- salaries for employees that are directly connected to the production of public interest journalism or to the generation of revenue to fund the production of public interest journalism
- costs to assist journalists with content production and distribution
- costs of staff training
- office and travel costs related to public interest journalism
- other costs that directly support the production and distribution of public interest journalism.

5.3 What the grant money cannot be used for

There are several categories of expenses that are not appropriate for funding through a grant made under the Program. These are expenses that are unlikely to align with, or further the achievement of, the objective and outcomes of the Program (see section 2 of these Guidelines).

The following non-exhaustive list provides some examples of activities that cannot be funded by grant money:

- general leadership or administrative staffing costs
- projects that will devolve grants to other bodies
- activities for which the applicant has already received funding from the Australian Government (including from a previous round of the Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund)
- costs related to preparing the grant application, preparing any project reports (except costs of independent audit reports) and preparing any project variation requests
- costs of purchasing, leasing, depreciation or development of land
- building acquisition or modification
- financial costs, including interest
- costs related to obtaining resources used on the project, including job advertising and recruiting and contract negotiations
- site preparation activities which are not directly related to public interest journalism

- routine operational expenses that are not directly related to the production of public interest journalism including communications, accommodation, office computing facilities, printing, stationery, postage, legal and accounting fees and bank charges
- activities paid for using cash/in-kind consideration
- activities involving the acquisition of other businesses by the applicant.

6. How to apply

Before applying, you must read and understand these guidelines and sample grant agreement.

These documents may be found at [GrantConnect](#). Any alterations and addenda² will be published on GrantConnect and by registering on this website you will be automatically notified of any changes. GrantConnect is the authoritative source for grants information.

To apply you must:

- complete the online Grant Opportunity application form on [GrantConnect](#)
- provide all the information requested
- meet all eligibility criteria
- include all necessary attachments
- submit your application to us by 5 pm, 29 May 2020.

You are responsible for ensuring that your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the [Criminal Code Act 1995](#) and we will investigate any false or misleading information and may exclude your application from further consideration.

If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should contact us immediately either by email (PingProgram@communications.gov.au) or by phone (02 6271 1142). We do not have to accept any additional information, nor requests from you to correct your application after the closing time.

You cannot change your application after the closing date and time.

If we find an error or information that is missing, we may ask for clarification or additional information from you that will not change the nature of your application.

You should keep a copy of your application and any supporting documents.

We will acknowledge that we have received your application within one business day.

If you need further guidance around the application process or if you are unable to submit an application online contact us either by email (PingProgram@communications.gov.au) or by phone (02 6271 1142).

² Alterations and addenda include but are not limited to: corrections to currently published documents, changes to close times for applications, Questions and Answers (Q&A) documents and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents

6.1 Revenue disclosure

Applicants will be required to disclose their revenue for financial year 2018-19.

Applicants that also operate in non-regional markets will be required to disaggregate revenue into regional, non-regional and shared services. Only regional revenue will be considered.

Important: The revenue must be derived from broad publishing or broadcast activities that includes the production and distribution of public interest journalism. The revenue figure provided cannot include revenue derived from other business activities not related to the stream. For example, a hypothetical television broadcaster eligible for funding under funding stream 1 cannot include revenue derived from non-television related activities.

If an applicant is unable to specifically disaggregate revenue by either television, radio or publishing sectors (depending which stream they are applying for), then the applicant must estimate the amount of revenue directly derived from the sector for which they are seeking financial assistance. In this case, applicants must provide a reasonable explanation for how they have apportioned their revenue to the particular sector relevant to the stream for which they are applying.

Applicants can apply for funding under multiple streams, however, they will be required to disaggregate revenue by platform.

6.2 Attachments to the application

The following documents may be included with your application:

- a chart that shows the applicant's corporate structure, including subsidiary and parent companies
- for applicants that are ASX listed, a copy of documents submitted to the ASX listing up-to-date shareholding and voting interests
- for applicants that are not ASX listed, a copy of a current ASIC company extract
- a document describing in detail the public interest journalism activity of the applicant including sample articles, or transcripts of broadcasts and information on how the grant funding will be used to meet the objectives of the program set out in section 2, including to maintain their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the grant period
- details of the regional areas where services are provided, which includes public interest journalism activities
- the total expenditure on the production and distribution of public interest journalism for the 2018-19 financial year
- the total labour costs directly associated with the production of regional journalism for the reporting period in the financial year 2018-19
- statistics of the number of journalists employed by the organisation, including a breakdown by geographic spread, average salary and employment type (full-time, part-time, casual and freelance). This should not include personal information (as defined in the *Privacy Act 1988*).

- An audited financial statement (e.g. a profit and loss statement) certified by the Chief Financial Officer or registered Chartered Accountant indicating that your organisation is currently solvent.
- a statement is given in the form of a statutory declaration under the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959* (Cth) from the Chief Financial Officer, or registered Chartered Accountant, indicating that the revenue derived from relevant publication or broadcast activities is true and accurate.

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with the instructions provided within the form. You should only attach requested documents.

The revenue information must be certified either by the Chief Financial Officer, or by a registered Chartered Accountant.

6.3 Timing of grant opportunity

The application period for the Grant Opportunity will open on 7 May 2020 and will close at 5pm AEST on 29 May 2020.

You must submit an application between the published opening and closing dates.

Late applications will generally not be accepted.

Requests for an extension of time to lodge an application must include reasons for the request and be made in writing to us at PingProgram@communications.gov.au prior to the closing date. Requests for an extension received on the closing date will not be accepted.

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Activity	Timeframe
Determining of eligibility	2 weeks
Approval of outcomes of selection process	2 weeks
Negotiations and award of grant agreements	2-3 weeks
Notification to unsuccessful applicants	2 weeks
Earliest start date of grant activity	June 2020
End date of grant activity or agreement	12 months after execution of grant agreement

6.4 Questions during the application process

For any questions during the application period, please email PingProgram@communications.gov.au. We will endeavour to respond to emailed questions within two business days. If the matter is urgent, please contact us by phone on 02 6271 1142.

7. The grant selection process

Your application will be considered through a demand driven grant process.

We will check your application to ensure it meets the eligibility criteria.

Your application will be assessed for eligibility by an assessment panel consisting of officials from the Department.

If the selection process identifies unintentional errors in your application, you may be contacted to correct or explain the information.

Applicants may also be required to participate in a financial viability assessment during the assessment process.

We will provide a report to the decision maker (the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts) on the eligible applications and recommended grant funding amounts. We also provide data outlining the geographic spread of successful applicants in each stream.

7.1.1 Who will approve grants?

The Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts (the decision maker) decides which grants to approve taking into account the availability of grant funds for the purposes of the grant program.

The decision maker's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of the grant
- the grant amount to be awarded
- the terms and conditions of the grant.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

8. Notification of application outcomes

We will advise you of the outcome of your application in writing. If you are successful, we will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant.

9. Successful grant applications

9.1 The grant agreement

You must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

We use the simple grant agreement in this program.

Each agreement has standard terms and conditions that cannot be changed. Sample [grant agreements](#) are available on GrantConnect.

Grantees will be required to maintain existing levels of journalism production and distribution during the grant period.

You should not make financial commitments until a grant agreement has been executed by the Commonwealth.

Your grant agreement may have specific conditions determined by the eligibility process or other considerations made by the decision maker. We will identify these in the agreement. We are committed to achieving value-for-money outcomes while reducing red tape for grantees, so it applies a risk-based approach to managing grant agreements.

The Commonwealth may recover grant funds if there is a breach of the grant agreement.

9.2 How we pay the grant

The grant agreement will specify the total grant amount to be paid for each successful application. The grant agreement will also specify the GST component of goods and services purchased using grant funding that will be paid.

We will not exceed the maximum grant amount under any circumstances.

Grantees will be paid their grant allocation in two instalments upon the following milestones being met:

- **First payment (90% of the final grant allocation):** upon execution of the grant agreement
- **Second payment (10% of the final grant allocation):** following acceptance by the Department of a six monthly Interim Report.

The payment instalments reflect the immediate financial support required by broadcasters and publishers to maintain the provision of public interest journalism during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department will have the discretion to change the instalment percentages when negotiating the funding agreement with the grantee.

We will pay each instalment of the final grant allocation within 10 business days of the milestone being met by the grantee.

9.3 Grant Payments and GST

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek assistance from the [Australian Taxation Office](#).³ We do not provide advice on your particular taxation circumstances.

10. Announcement of grants

If successful, your grant will be listed on the [GrantConnect](#) website within 21 days after the date of effect⁴ as required by section 5.3 of the [CGRGs](#).

Successful grants may also be announced by the Department or the Government at other times.

³ <https://www.ato.gov.au/>

⁴ See glossary

11. How we monitor your grant activity

11.1 Keeping us informed

We need to know of any key changes to an organisation or its business activities, particularly if they affect a grantee's ability to complete the project that is the subject of the grant, carry on the business or pay debts due.

Grantees must also inform us of any changes to their:

- name
- address
- nominated contact details
- bank account details

Grantees must notify us as soon as they become aware of any likely delays to a project or milestone.

Grantees must immediately contact us as soon as they become aware of a breach of the terms and conditions under the grant agreement. This will include a reduction of the production of journalism or the number of journalists engaged.

11.2 Reporting

Grantees must submit reports in line with the terms and conditions in their grant agreements.

Grantees will be required to provide an interim report prior to receiving their second instalment payment (see Section 9.2). A reporting template will be provided. The interim report will need to include:

- a detailed breakdown of the expenditure of the first grant payment
- the total expenditure on public interest journalism related activities for the reporting period
- the total labour costs directly associated with the production of regional journalism for the reporting period
- an update on the data provided in the grant application
- a written statement on how the grant is contributing to the objective and outcomes of the Program (see Section 2)
- a written statement on the impact of the grant on the operations of the Grantee's business.

Grantees will also be required to provide a final report 12 months after the execution of the funding agreement. The final report will need to include updated details provided in the interim report and a final acquittal of grant funding. Acquitting a grant means reporting accurately on the expenditure of grant funding, the activities that were funded and the outcomes achieved in relation to the objective of the Program (see section 2).

We will monitor progress of project activities by assessing reports lodged by grantees and may conduct site visits to confirm details in reports, if necessary. Occasionally, we may need

to re-examine claims, seek further information or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

We assess ongoing risks by monitoring evidence provided by grantees during the term of an agreement.

The Department will have the discretion to change the type of report and frequency dependent on the size of the grant. Any such changes will be made clear in the funding agreement. Consideration may be given to grants with a lower value and lower commensurate risk to have fewer reporting obligations than larger projects of greater value.

11.3 Evaluation

We will evaluate the grant program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and reports for this purpose. We may also interview you, or ask you for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the program was in achieving its outcomes.

We may contact you up to one year after you finish your grant for more information to assist with this evaluation.

12. Probit

The Australian Government will make sure that the grant opportunity process is fair, according to the published guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct and is consistent with the CGRGs.

These guidelines may be changed from time-to-time by the Department. When this happens the revised guidelines will be published on GrantConnect.

12.1 Enquiries and feedback

The Department's feedback and complaints process apply to complaints about this Grant Opportunity. All complaints about a grant process must be provided in writing to the Director, Governance Section.

By email: clientservice@infrastructure.gov.au

By mail: Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Alternatively, you can fill out the online form on the [Department's website](#).

If you do not agree with the way we handled your complaint, you may complain to the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will usually not consider a complaint unless the matter has first been raised directly with us.

Contact details for the Commonwealth Ombudsman are:

Phone (Toll free): 1300 362 072
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Any questions you have about grant decisions for this grant opportunity should be sent to PingProgram@communications.gov.au.

12.2 Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the grant opportunity or program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if the Department's staff, any member of a committee or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel:

- has a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer
- has a relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently or
- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives a grant under the grant program/grant opportunity.

You will be asked to declare, as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If you later identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform the Department in writing immediately.

Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff will be handled as set out in the [Australian Public Service Code of Conduct \(Section 13 \(7\)\)](#) of the [Public Service Act 1999](#). Committee members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

12.3 Privacy

We treat your personal information according to the [Privacy Act 1988](#) and the [Australian Privacy Principles](#). This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- who we give your personal information to.

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone for the primary purpose for which it was collected, unless an exemption applies.

The Australian Government may also use and disclose information about grant applicants and grant recipients under this grant opportunity in any other Australian Government business or function. This includes disclosing grant information on GrantConnect as required for reporting purposes and giving information to the Australian Taxation Office for compliance purposes.

We may share the information you give us with other Commonwealth entities for purposes including government administration, research or service delivery, according to Australian laws.

As part of your application, you declare your ability to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the Australian Privacy Principles and impose the same privacy obligations on officers, employees, agents and subcontractors that you engage to assist with the activity, in respect of personal information you collect, use, store, or disclose in connection with the activity. Accordingly, you must not do anything, which if done by the [relevant Commonwealth entity] would breach an Australian Privacy Principle as defined in the Act.

12.4 Confidential Information

Other than information available in the public domain, you agree not to disclose to any person, other than us, any confidential information relating to the grant application and/or agreement, without prior written approval. The obligation will not be breached where you are required by law, Parliament or a stock exchange to disclose the relevant information or where the relevant information is publicly available (other than through breach of a confidentiality or non-disclosure obligation).

We may at any time, require you to arrange for you; or your employees, agents or subcontractors to give a written undertaking relating to nondisclosure of our confidential information in a form we consider acceptable.

We will keep any information in connection with the grant agreement confidential to the extent that it meets all the three conditions below:

1. you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
2. the information is commercially sensitive
3. revealing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else.

We will not be in breach of any confidentiality agreement if the information is disclosed to:

- the [committee] and other Commonwealth employees and contractors to help us manage the program effectively
- employees and contractors of our department so we can research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities
- employees and contractors of other Commonwealth agencies for any purposes, including government administration, research or service delivery
- other Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government agencies in program reports and consultations
- the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- the responsible Minister or Parliamentary Secretary
- a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

The grant agreement may also include any specific requirements about special categories of information collected, created or held under the grant agreement.

12.5 Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about this grant opportunity, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act).

The purpose of the FOI Act is to give members of the public rights of access to information held by the Australian Government and its entities. Under the FOI Act, members of the public can seek access to documents held by the Australian Government. This right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary to protect essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

All Freedom of Information requests must be referred to the Freedom of Information Coordinator in writing.

By mail: Freedom of Information Coordinator

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and
Communications
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

By email: foi@infrastructure.gov.au

14. Glossary

Term	Definition
accountable authority	see subsection 12(2) of the <i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013</i> (PGPA Act)
administering entity	when an entity that is not responsible for the policy, is responsible for the administration of part or all of the grant administration processes
commencement date	the expected start date for the grant activity
completion date	the expected date that the grant activity must be completed and the grant spent by
co-sponsoring entity	when two or more entities are responsible for the policy and the appropriation for outcomes associated with it
date of effect	can be the date on which a grant agreement is signed or a specified starting date. Where there is no grant agreement, entities must publish information on individual grants as soon as practicable.
decision maker	the person who makes a decision to award a grant.
eligibility criteria	refer to the mandatory criteria which must be met to qualify for a grant. Assessment criteria may apply in addition to eligibility criteria.
Commonwealth entity	a Department of State, or a Parliamentary Department, or a listed entity or a body corporate established by a law of the Commonwealth. See subsections 10(1) and (2) of the PGPA Act.
<u>Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines</u>	establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and articulate the expectations for all non-corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration. Under this overarching framework, non-corporate Commonwealth entities undertake grants administration based on the mandatory requirements and key principles of grants administration.

Term	Definition
grant	<p>for the purposes of the CGRGs, a 'grant' is an arrangement for the provision of financial assistance by the Commonwealth or on behalf of the Commonwealth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="759 467 1378 615">a. under which relevant money⁵ or other <u>Consolidated Revenue Fund</u> (CRF) money⁶ is to be paid to a grantee other than the Commonwealth; and <li data-bbox="759 624 1378 743">b. which is intended to help address one or more of the Australian Government's policy outcomes while assisting the grantee achieve its objectives.
grant activity/activities	refers to the project /tasks /services that the grantee is required to undertake
grant agreement	sets out the relationship between the parties to the agreement, and specifies the details of the grant
<u>GrantConnect</u>	is the Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRGs
grant opportunity	refers to the specific grant round or process where a Commonwealth grant is made available to potential grantees. Grant opportunities may be open or targeted, and will reflect the relevant grant selection process
grant program	a 'program' carries its natural meaning and is intended to cover a potentially wide range of related activities aimed at achieving government policy outcomes. A grant program is a group of one or more grant opportunities under a single [entity] Portfolio Budget Statement Program.
grantee	the individual/organisation which has been selected to receive a grant
interim report	six monthly report required to receive second instalment payment.

⁵ Relevant money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 8, Dictionary.

⁶ Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 105, Rules in relation to other CRF money.

Term	Definition
PBS Program	described within the entity's <u>Portfolio Budget Statement</u> , PBS programs each link to a single outcome and provide transparency for funding decisions. These high level PBS programs often comprise a number of lower level, more publicly recognised programs, some of which will be Grant Programs. A PBS Program may have more than one Grant Program associated with it, and each of these may have one or more grant opportunities
Public interest journalism	Public interest journalism seeks to inform and engage the general public—whether at a local, regional or national level—about important issues of the day. Journalism that investigates, reports on and explains public policy or matters of local or public significance, engages citizens in public debate, or informs democratic decision-making is defined as public interest journalism. For the purpose of the PING program, applicants need to demonstrate how they regularly produce public interest journalism with an Australian perspective, with a commitment to accuracy, accessibility and relevance to a broad audience.
Regional area	A radio broadcast licence area that is not a metropolitan licence area. 'Metropolitan licence area' means a metropolitan licence area as defined in section 61CA of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (the BSA)
Regional Radio Broadcaster	A holder of a regional commercial radio broadcasting licence as defined in section 61CA of the BSA.
Regional Television Broadcaster	A holder of a regional commercial television broadcasting licence as defined in section 61CU of the BSA.
Regional Publisher	A provider where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their primary operations are located in a regional area, and • their news and journalistic output is targeted to readers and audiences in one or more regional areas
selection process	the method used to select potential grantees. This process may involve comparative assessment of applications or the assessment of applications against the eligibility criteria and/or the assessment criteria

Term	Definition
value with money	<p>value with money in this document refers to 'value with relevant money' which is a judgement based on the grant proposal representing an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public resources and determined from a variety of considerations.</p> <p>When administering a grant opportunity, an official should consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of each proposal including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of the project proposal and activities; • fitness for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives; • that the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the grantee and government's outcomes being achieved; and • the potential grantee's relevant experience and performance history.