Australian Government

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Regional PARTNERSHIPS

INTERNAL PROCEDURES MANUAL SEPTEMBER 2004

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of manual / design

This procedural manual is for use by:

- staff at the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) (both at Regional Offices (RO) and National Office (NO)
- Area Consultative Committees (ACCs).

It should be used to assist with any stage of the program administration process, for example:

- development of applications (ACCs)
- assessment of applications (Regional Offices)
- reviewing of assessments (National Office)
- preparing Funding Agreements, reporting, monitoring, acquittal, etc.

This manual should also be used as a tool for training new staff members, of both ACCs and the Department.

The manual has been divided up into the following parts:

Introduction → **Grant Process** → **Attachments**

The parts of the manual have been subdivided as follows:

Introduction	**Grant Process**	**Attachments**
Purpose of manual / design	Application process	Attachments
Roles and Responsibilities	Assessment phases	Glossary
	Post-decision management	

As the ACC and departmental experience of managing *Regional Partnerships* grows, and other common information identified, this document will be added to and updated.

If you have any suggestions for content improvement please e-mail rpops@dotars.gov.au your suggestion to the *Regional Partnerships* Operations Section (RP OPS).

1.2 Updating the Manual

Any updates made to the manual will be made to the intranet version of the manual.

In addition to this a CD version of the manual will be distributed on a three monthly basis. All amendments or inserts will be highlighted in a different colour with a date on the cover alerting people as to when the manual was last updated. A cover sheet will be forwarded with the CD and a nominated person from each team and Regional Office will be responsible for holding the current CD version of the manual. Each time a CD is issued the old CD version needs to be returned to the Regional Partnerships Operations Section (RP OPS) along with the cover sheet acknowledging receipt of the new CD and the return of the old CD.

1.3 Roles and responsibilities

1.3.1 Role of the *Regional Partnerships* Programme

The role of the *Regional Partnerships* Programme is:

- to help deliver the goals and priorities of the Australian Government's regional policy statement*, Stronger Regions, A Stronger Australia* (http://www.dotars.gov.au/regional/statement/index.htm)
- to foster the development of self-reliant communities and regions.

The *Regional Partnerships* programme places considerable emphasis on projects that have the potential to foster inter-regional linkages and greater collaboration between ACC's and other regional stakeholders.

1.3.2 Role of Area Consultative Committees

ACCs are a key facilitator of development in their regions. Under *Regional Partnerships*, ACCs are the primary point of promotion, project and application development and a key provider of independent advice to the Department on all applications from their regions.

1.3.3 Role of the Regional Office

In keeping with the DOTARS' Corporate Plan, Regional Offices assist in achieving the Government's outcome of greater recognition and development of opportunities for local, regional and territory communities.

Regional Offices contribute to the key DOTARS' strategic objective of achieving effective regional development that is integrated across all spheres of government.

Regional Offices will work together as an effective network to continuously improve their performance and share best practice outcomes for the benefit of the community and the Government.

Under *Regional Partnerships*, Regional Offices have the following key functions:

- ACC relationship management
- Regional Programme policy advice and guidance to ACCs, prospective applicants and other regional bodies.
- Project assessment
- Funding Agreement management and project monitoring
- Whole of Government relationships.

1.3.4 Role of the National Office

The National Office plays a number of centralised roles, including:

- quality assurance and packaging of assessments for the Minister's consideration
- announcement of approved projects
- coordinating Ministerial attendance at launches and openings
- managing expenditure, including balancing notional allocations
- over-all policy and operational guidance, maintenance of procedures and manuals
- Funding Agreements for larger private sector applications
- performance improvement
- centrally managing IT and updating websites.

The National Office will undertake activities that are complementary to the activities of the Regional Office.

The National Office is also responsible for distribution of information on policy, checking consistency issues with other Regional Offices and notional funding allocation information. National Office, in consultation with Regional Offices, will also be responsible for developing principles and policies as a result of experience.

1.3.5 Role of the Minister and the Minister's Office

The authority for approval currently rests with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, the Hon De-Anne Kelly MP, referred to throughout as the Minister.

The role of the Minister is to make a final decision to approve or not approve projects. The Minister may not necessarily agree with departmental recommendations. The Minister will sign attached documents, including briefings, minutes and letters.

The role of the Minister's Office is to coordinate packages for the Minister and to liaise with the Department and other relevant stakeholders as appropriate.

Table 1 Key Roles and Activities - ACCs

Key Roles (ACC)	Activities
Promote the programme within the region	• Widely disseminate information, application kits and guidelines within their region • Conduct information seminars in all parts of the region to increase awareness of the programme and the funding opportunities available • Present information on the programme when consulting with State / Territory and Local Government and with community organisations • Ensure their websites and promotional information provide links and reference to the DOTARS' programme information
Build capacity in their regions to maximise community access to development opportunities	• Ensure that ACC membership is broadly representative of the community to enable appropriate access for all sectors • Facilitate access to funding within the region by improving the capability of applicants to prepare and write quality applications, which clearly set out a convincing rationale for the project need, and a clear case for sustainability of the concept • Facilitate delivery of 'submission writing skill' courses, where necessary, to assist applicants prepare quality applications • Maintain close links with the Federal, State and Local Governments, business, other regional development bodies and community groups to encourage cooperation and collaboration • Provide a point of contact for possible referral of applicants
Facilitate high quality, well developed applications from their region	• Provide advice to applicants on preparing a clear and complete application whilst ensuring that ongoing applicant ownership of the concept is maintained. It is not intended that ACCs write a project application for an applicant, but where appropriate, they should: – develop and test the project concept with the applicant – ensure that programme criteria are addressed

Key Roles (ACC)	Activities
	– Coach applicants through completion of the outcomes section of the Application and ensure all relevant areas of the application form are completed in sufficient detail – provide advice on obtaining and demonstrating evidence of broad community (including local government) and/or business support for the project. • Assist applicants in developing project applications that demonstrate adequately: – a strong rationale and regional need for the initiative – sustainability and financial viability – clearly identified outcomes – evidence of sound budget and project management details – a partnership approach to funding – ongoing commitment to the project – that the project will address key priorities in the ACCs Strategic and Business plans, where appropriate.
Provide comments on ACC views on applications from the region	ACC support assists the Minister in establishing whether the project is consistent with regional priorities and the likelihood of ongoing local support for those projects where start up funding is sought from the programme. ACCs must have the opportunity to comment on all applications lodged from their region. ACCs have the flexibility to develop locally appropriate processes (e.g. e-mail, subcommittees) to undertake the following functions. ACCs will: • complete and return the comments template in a timely manner to the Department to assist efficient assessment processes • consider applications against the priorities identified in their strategic regional plan and comment on how applications support these priorities • consider applications against the programme objectives and criteria and provide comments on perceived strengths and weaknesses of the application • rate an application as strong, medium or weak against each criterion

Key Roles (ACC)	Activities
	• comment, where relevant, on competitive neutrality issues such as known competitors or duplication of business activity • provide comments on any other regional issues that they consider may impact on the application. ACC Chairs make their comments on projects directly online in TRAX
Add value to monitoring and evaluation of project outcomes in regions	• Participate on steering committees for projects within their region, as required, in consultation with the Department's Regional Offices to ensure that projects stay on track and achieve sustainable outcomes • Report on an 'as required' basis to the Department on outcomes and issues associated with projects in their regions

Table 2 Key Roles and Activities - Regional Office

Key Roles (RO)	Activities
Manage DOTARS' crucial day to day relationship with ACCs	• Advise and guide ACCs in the regional programme guidelines, policy and processes • Oversight performance of and advise ACC Chairs and Executive Officers on contractual obligations in relation to the programme • Attend regular ACC meetings and provide departmental updates to the Board on programme related matters • Provide timely and relevant feedback on project specific issues such as quality of applications received, building community capacity, attracting partnerships and value of comments received from ACCs
Provide programme policy advice and guidance	• Provide specific and general advice on project development requirements to applicants, ACCs and other regional community bodies • Respond to queries from potential applicants and refer them to ACCs for project development assistance • Present information on the RP programme to relevant forums as part of regional consultations • Ensure timely advice is provided to ACCs, regional bodies and other government agencies on programme guidelines, policy changes and updates
Project assessment	• Prepare thorough and objective analyses of applications, ensuring that assessments provide sufficient and relevant information as required against programme criteria and enter analysis results and a final recommendation into TRAX • Consult with regional stakeholders to inform assessment processes • Feedback policy and process issues to programme managers to enable continuous improvement of practices • Undertake whole of government consultations with other Federal and State agencies to ensure non-duplication of other programmes and to encourage partnerships • Prepare thorough and sound Funding Agreements, liaising closely with the contract management area of National Office, checking with DOTARS' lawyers and programme managers as required • Confirm all project funding and payment details are accurate and up to date

Key Roles (RO)	Activities
	• Maintain systems to ensure accurate and up to date programme and financial reporting • Advise and undertake liaison as required with applicants to ensure understanding of and adherence to contractual obligations • Work with proponents to keep projects on track (and on time) especially with a view to ensuring appropriate levels of programme expenditure • Monitor performance of projects and follow up on reports due and issues arising • Finalise and acquit completed project reporting on outcomes achieved • Alert programme managers to any significant issues encountered with monitoring of projects
Build and maintain whole of government relationships	• As local departmental representatives, attend government forums and regional development consultations to build and maintain partnerships at the local level • Feedback outcomes from whole of government consultations to national programme and policy areas • Establish and maintain readily accessible liaison points for regional and national office staff as various needs arise for regional programme administration • Facilitate a coordinated and integrated consultative process for collaboration on regional programme funding and policy

Table 3 Key Roles and Activities - National Office

Key Roles (NO)	Activities
Quality Assurance	Note: The National Office will not duplicate the Regional Office assessment role • Value add and focus on quality assurance • Ensure that a project briefing does not leave any unanswered questions and adheres to programme policies / principles – does the assessment support the recommendations? • Check that recommendations are consistent with guidelines and policies • Ensure advice to the Minister stands up to parliamentary / public scrutiny • Where the briefing does not meet requirements, discuss to clarify the assessment and agree possible revisions to the briefing / recommendation with Regional Managers • Some questions to be asked about the assessment include: – does it satisfy national consistency requirements? – is the language clear to ensure the basis for a ministerial decision is not ambiguous? • In collaboration with Regional Offices, drive performance • Coordinate whole of government responses. This may also involve assisting Regional Offices in arranging co-funding
National Policy Development and Consistency	• Overall policy and operational guidance, maintenance of procedures and manuals • Monitor the programme to ensure consistency with previous decisions • Provide two-way feedback to Regional Offices on other Regional Office activities and policy developments and feedback any 'thorny' issues
Packaging	Projects are sent to the Minister weekly or as appropriate. Urgent projects may be packaged individually and packages may be

Key Roles (NO)	Activities
Ministerial Documents	delayed if this fits in with the Minister's timetable. • Each package is accompanied by: – the covering brief to the Minister – a summary table of details for all Recommended and Not Recommended projects in the package – a summary of each project, including the considerations against the criteria (both Recommended and Not Recommended) – letters (and envelopes / labels) for each Recommended project, to be signed by the Minister; for: – the successful applicant – the ACC – the Government's representative in that electorate (i.e. a standard letter inviting the representative to announce the project goes to the local MP coalition / non coalition member, the Patron Senator for the area.) • A media release is also sent to the Government's representative along with an abbreviated summary of the project details (recommended projects only) • When cleared by the Branch Head (i.e. AS Regional Communities Branch), the packages are sent electronically to the DLO and Minister's Adviser and copied to Minister Anderson's Adviser, the FAS, Branch Head and Application, Approvals & Contracting Team Leader, cc'd to RP Ops Team leader, AAC Team, RP Ops Finance Officer, Communications Unit, Regional Managers and PLS. • The Branch Head will generally discuss the projects with the Minister's advisor • The paper based package (including envelopes / labels) and 8 copies are sent through Parliamentary Liaison Service (PLS)
Financial Management	• Overall financial management is maintained in the National Office with assistance and input from the Regional Offices • Oversee the notional allocations of funding between the Programme's priorities and regions

2 Application Process Flow

APPLY

Applicant
- downloads application form
- downloads guidelines (which include an eligibility self-check)
- notes suggestion to contact ACC

ACC (if contacted)
- has preliminary discussion with applicant
- checks eligibility
- advises completion of EOI form
- advises contact with local govt (if applicable)
- advises on requests for confidentiality

ACC assists applicant with:
- Developing the project
- identifying / obtaining Partners
- identifying outcomes
- obtaining support for project
- completing application form

Applicant
- lodges the application form (online in TRAX or 'Smart' Form where possible)

ASSESS

National Office
- receives application
- allocates project to relevant RO

Regional Office
- allocates project to the ACC for comment

ACC
- receives application for Comment via TRAX (notification also via email from RO)
- Submits to RO

Regional Office
- assigns project officer
- sends letter to applicant acknowledging application
- completes eligibility check
- completes due diligence review
- advises applicant of the eligibility outcome
- completes an assessment using Assessment Guide putting forward a recommendation (taking into account comments received from ACC)
- Regional Manager reviews assessment
- Regional Manager assigns assessment and recommendation to NO

National Office
- performs quality assurance
- seeks approval from MFFA for multi-year projects
- forwards packages to Parliamentary Secretary

Parliamentary Secretary
- Parl. Sec. makes decision
- notifies MPS, applicants, ACCs (successful projects only)
- notifies NO

MANAGE

National Office
- advises RO of decision by Parl. Sec.

Regional Office (Successful applicants)
- prepares Funding Agreement (with assistance of NO if required)
- manages Funding Agreement
- manages Project Monitoring
- forwards schedules to AES at NO

Regional Office (Unsuccessful applicants)
- advises applicants and relevant ACCs of decision by Parl. Sec. (and reasons for non-approval)

National Office (Unsuccessful applicants)
(if requested)
- processes review application

Successful Applicant
- submits all reports to RO
- completes funded Activity

Regional Office
- evaluates reports
- reviews and acquits final report

2.1 Application Guidelines

Application guidelines are available at:

http://www.regionalpartnershiips.gov.au/guidelines.aspx

2.2 Initial contact from applicant

Applicants should contact ACC's in the first instance. ACC's are the primary point of promotion, project and application development for *Regional Partnerships*. Acting as facilitators, ACC's are the first point of call for assisting communities to apply for *Regional Partnerships* funding assistance.

2.2.1 Expression of Interest

Although there is no formal Expression Of Interest (EOI) form or process, ACC's should encourage applicants to submit an informal EOI. The EOI can then be used by ACC's as a brief project description to help them determine whether an application fits the Regional Partnerships guidelines. All ACC's are encouraged to use the EOI template http://www.acc.gov.au/members/downloads/rp_eoi.doc that was sent out by the Assistant Secretary, Regional Communities Branch on
22 March 2004.

2.3 Developing Proposals

2.3.1 The ACCs Role

When receiving an application proposal and assisting in the development of applications, the ACC should:

- ensure all relevant areas of the application form are complete
- provide advice on further development of the application and possible sources of co-funding, as required – see Co-Funding section.

ACCs could assist applicants in the following (**it is not expected** that ACCs will undertake these activities for applicants):

- negotiating and obtaining funding partners
- organising referees
- letters of support
- obtaining local government commitment to ongoing maintenance costs (where relevant)
- obtaining formal commitments from numerous sources

- identifying outcomes (using **Error! Reference source not found.** as a guide)
- identifying the resource implications associated with measuring the performance of a project's outcomes
- ascertaining evidence or intelligence about the project's impact on other businesses or groups, gathering evidence of budget costs, etc.

Specifically, ACCs should:

- ensure that applications include carefully thought out outcomes and project milestones. In developing the proposal, ACCs should encourage applicants to identify realistic timeframes for projects. To assist ACCs in this, Attachment D includes a guide for gathering better performance information in Funding Agreements, and Attachment A includes a guide for completing the 'outcomes' section of the *Regional Partnerships* application form
- ensure applicants understand that (if approved) support / funding is only available for the life of the Funded Project / Funding Agreement and that if supported, applicants are required to provide regular performance and financial reports
- remind applicants that consideration of their applications is subject to the provision of all information as required in the application form
- remind applicants that DOTARS may in some instances require additional information from them before a full assessment can be undertaken against the claims stated in their application
- advise applicants that advice may be sought from other agencies during the assessment process
- ensure that applicant is aware of, and has complied with, relevant State / Federal statutory requirements (e.g. environment)
- refer applicants to a sample Funding Agreement so they are aware of the standard clauses.

ACCs should make applicants aware that:

- priority will be given to projects that can obtain significant contributions from other sources
- they will need to provide evidence / verification of their own contribution(s) from other sources. If they are unable to provide evidence immediately, any funding approved will be conditional until they can do so. It is the applicant's responsibility to manage these circumstances.
- they must notify the Regional Office of any changes to budgets that may occur after an application has been submitted and after an application has been funded.
- they may require Statistical Clearing House (SCH) clearance for their project if it is a survey (refer http://www.sch.abs.gov.au/) See also SCH requirements.
- Regional Partnerships is a discretionary grants programme and therefore meeting the assessment criteria does not guarantee funding.

- independent and impartial assessments of applications are undertaken by DOTARS and while the support of the ACC is important, it does not guarantee approval of an application.

Table 4 Receiving and Developing Applications - ACC Checklist

Ensure the applicant is aware of:	
• discretionary competitive nature of *Regional Partnerships*	❑
• privacy / disclosure provisions	❑
• Funding Agreement obligations, should an application be successful	❑
• non-retrospective requirements in relation to project expenditure	❑
• financial disclosure requirements for commercial projects	❑
• Statistical Clearing House requirements (where relevant)	❑
Assist applicant in developing and testing project concept	❑
Assist applicant, where necessary, in developing project plan and completing the 'outcomes' section of the application	❑
Assist applicant, where necessary, in identifying and obtaining project partners	❑
Assist applicant, where necessary, in completing the application form:	
• ensure all programme criteria are addressed	❑
• coach applicants through completion of the outcomes section of the Application and ensure all relevant areas of the application form are completed in sufficient detail	❑
• provide advice on obtaining and demonstrating evidence of broad community and/or business support for the project	❑
• ensure evidence of a sound budget and project management details are provided	❑
• ensure sustainability and viability of the project and ongoing commitment to the project	❑
• ensure application is consistent with the ACC Business Plan and Strategic Regional Plan	❑

2.3.2 Developing proposals - specific issues (ACC)

Specific issues to consider when developing proposals include:

- Discretionary competitive nature of the Programme
- Non-retrospective requirements in relation to project expenditure
- Financial disclosure requirements for commercial projects
- Private Sector Applicants
- Statistical Clearing House (SCH) requirements
- Co-Funding by applicants / other partners
- Support/Approval – Local Government
- Budget Guidance

2.3.3 Discretionary competitive nature of the Programme

Regional Partnerships is a discretionary grant programme, therefore funding is not guaranteed. Funding support can only be provided where there is available funding within the programme. The funding of projects is at the discretion of the Minister, therefore meeting the assessment criteria does not guarantee funding.

2.3.4 Non-retrospective requirements in relation to project expenditure

The Australian Government will not fund retrospective costs in relation to a project. *Regional Partnerships* funding cannot be used to pay any project costs incurred prior to the applicant being advised the Minister has approved the project.

Retrospective funding is defined as funding to meet any expenditure, or commitment to expenditure, prior to the applicant being advised in writing the Minister has approved the project. Whilst the date of formal advice that a project has been approved is the test of whether a payment would be retrospective or not, the Department’s advice is that proponents not commit to expenditure on a project prior to the Funding Agreement being signed by both parties.

Retrospective funding is precluded under Regional Partnerships for two reasons. First, by retrospectively funding a project, the Government may be perceived as having been unduly influenced or having agreed to fund a project before due process was followed. Secondly, if an applicant has been able to secure funding to commence a project (whether this be capital or borrowings), generally speaking it is unlikely that it will be able to demonstrate a sufficient level of need for Australian Government support.

Where there are time critical issues relating to a project (particularly in a commercial sense), the applicant (and ACC) should advise the Regional Office as soon as possible to ensure this can be taken into account in the processing the applications.

We have undertaken to 'fast track' (where possible) the assessment of projects to avoid retrospectivity issues rather than be faced with rejecting good projects on the grounds of retrospectivity, but this can only be achieved if the Department is advised as early as possible about such timing issues.

Contributions made to a project, by the applicant, prior to the project being approved are not to be considered as a financial contribution to the project.

Where a project has been staged, funding committed to prior stages can be counted as an in-kind contribution to the project if – and only if – the two stages are dependant on each other and form a single overall project. If either "stage" can be used without the other they should be treated as a stand alone project.

2.3.5 Financial disclosure requirements for commercial projects

Applicants who are proposing a project of a commercial nature are required to provide:

- an outline of the organisation's / sponsor's ownership and management structure, including details of partners and/or directors. Include their full names, dates of birth, current residential addresses and where able, drivers licence numbers.
- audited Profit and Loss and Balance Sheet statements for the last 3 financial years
- authorised statement of financial position
- tax returns for the last 3 financial years
- the business plan for the project including, where applicable:
  - industry data / research
  - cash flow projection for the project period + 3 years. Include assumption used and key / sensitive factors in the projections. It could include investment analysis details such as rates of return, liquidity and debt analysis assumptions.
  - marketing strategy and assumptions
  - SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis
  - a list of pecuniary interests relevant to the project.

These applicants will also be subject to due diligence checks and greater scrutiny than many other types of projects (DOTARS will arrange these checks).

2.3.6 Private Sector Applicants

Few Australian Government grant programmes deal directly with the private sector and most grant programmes' processes don't fully accommodate the different nature of the relationship.

Expectations – particularly on the applicant's side – can differ markedly from those in programmes dealing with state and local government bodies and non-profit organisations.

There are primarily two types of information that are to be considered when dealing with the private sector:

- information the applicant should know about Australian Government processes and requirements prior to submitting and during the application process, specifically:
  - disclosure of information
  - financial matters
  - due diligence
  - Funding Agreement issues
- information the Australian Government requires from the applicant to process its application.
- issues are explained in more detail at Attachment B.

2.3.7 Statistical Clearing House (SCH) requirements

The SCH is operated within the Methodology Division of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

- All surveys that are directed to 50 or more businesses and that are conducted by or on behalf of any Australian Government agency (where the Australian Government funds >50% of the survey cost) are subject to clearance by the SCH.
- DOTARS may include SCH clearance as a milestone in the Funding Agreement.
- When reviewing a survey, the SCH ensures that it is necessary and that the survey design follows best practices. The SCH will identify any improvements that can be made to enhance the value and useability of survey outputs.
- Surveys are assessed against specified review criteria. Surveys that satisfy the review criteria will receive a registered approval number that must be used on questionnaires and explanatory material sent to businesses.
- In the clearing process, the SCH looks for evidence that:
  - there is no adequate alternative source of information available and no reasonable alternative means of obtaining the required information with less respondent burden
  - the survey methodology is appropriate for the objectives of the survey
  - a representative group of businesses or business associations have been consulted about the nature and objectives of the survey, data availability, and the assessment of respondent burden
  - appropriate standards and classifications have been used.
- For further information about the SCH and the clearance process and requirements:
  - refer to the website at www.sch.abs.gov.au
  - e-mail statistical.clearing.house@abs.gov.au
  - phone (02) 6252 5285.

- Applicants should be made aware that they will need to allow time for the survey to pass through the SCH when determining the timing of their projects.

2.3.8 Co-Funding by applicants / other Partners

Under *Regional Partnerships*, applicants and other partners are expected to make a financial contribution to the project. The guidelines are deliberately flexible in describing what is expected from applicants to allow for the difference in capacity of communities and regions to contribute.

While there will always be an element of judgement involved, the following 'rules of thumb' can be used when advising applicants about what is required:

- A contribution of 50% will generally be expected from applicants and their partners (this may be cash or a combination of cash and in-kind, depending on the project)
- Where there are special circumstances, a lower contribution may be acceptable
- In other cases, particularly where the applicant is from the private sector and/or the project involves a commercial activity, a minimum of 50-70% will be required.

Examples of special circumstances where a contribution of less than 50% from the applicant and their partners may be acceptable include:

- Projects serving very small communities which have a low average income base and/or are remote
- Projects in areas suffering from economic decline and/or natural disaster or drought
- The applicant is a local council in a remote area with a low rate base, the majority of people have low incomes, and it can be demonstrated that the council has contributed as much as it is capable of, given the funding it receives from all sources.

2.3.9 Support / Approval - Local Government

Local Government plays a key role in the Australian community as democratically elected community representatives.

To meet planning and/or other regulatory requirements, projects may require formal approval from the relevant local council. Support from the local council is often a good demonstration of broad community support and commitment. Local government often carries the responsibility for ongoing maintenance of community projects so it is important that they commit to this responsibility prior to the project commencing.

The applicants should be encouraged to discuss the project with their local government and to seek support. To facilitate this, initially all local governments will be contacted by the Department to obtain referral contacts for the new programme for use by applicants and ACCs. The Department will also inform local governments of the new programme and explain their role under the programme. The Department will provide this information as a resource, so that ACCs can facilitate contact by applicants with local government where appropriate.

It is suggested that ACCs undertake their own consultations with local government in order to build a relationship with contacts, and where necessary, to explain further local government's role under the new programme.

Details about local governments can be found at

- Commonwealth Regional Information Service (CRIS) on 1800 026 222
- DOTARS at: http://www.dotars.gov.au/explore.aspx?facet=Local+Government

For those projects that may require:

- planning and/or development approval and/or
- an environmental impact statement; and/or
- ongoing funding and/or
- support from local government for the maintenance of a community facility; and/or
- letters of support for applications if the project forms part of local government economic / social or community plans,

the applicant should be referred to their relevant local government for comment on the likelihood of approval and/or a statement of ongoing support as relevant.

The ACC needs to also ensure that the applicant understands that if local government comment is not included at the time the application is submitted to the Department (for those applications that require it), the project assessment may be placed 'on hold' until comments from the local government are obtained.

Proposals that cover more than one LGA (e.g. where the community facility is to be shared by several local councils) will need to seek comment from all councils involved.

2.3.10 Budget Guidance

Applicants need to clearly define their anticipated project outcomes / milestones and ensure that these outcomes are realistic, measurable and achievable. The application form requests information on how the project will be implemented, the proposed timeframe and actions to be taken, appropriate performance indicators, contract milestones and monitoring. *Regional Partnerships* progress payments will be determined on the basis of project activity milestones.

Some issues that could be considered when reviewing or assisting an applicant prepare a budget are:

- Are items appropriate?
- Are budget costs reasonable? (i.e. costs outlined in the budget are not inflated, they have been validated and there is no duplication of funding from other sources)
- Are all items listed in the budget submitted integral to the project itself? (i.e. if a particular item was deleted, would that compromise the ability of the project to achieve objectives?)

Where estimated "other" costs exceed 10%, the additional line items should be separated out.

Partnership funding

- Is the level of co-funding adequate for the project type?
- Has the co-funding been confirmed? Has the applicant applied to other organisations if they are listed as contributing funding?
- Is the co-funding contribution (cash or in-kind) actually a contribution to the project itself or ongoing operations?

GST

Applicants should note that *Regional Partnerships* services are taxable supplies. Applicants are required to provide a GST exclusive amount in their application. DOTARS then adds the 10% for GST. See below for an example of different GST scenarios:

- If an applicant has sought, for example, $5,000 from RP, the additional 10% for GST would come from the department's GST-tax-input credits). That is, the applicant would get all the funding and remit the GST to ATO themselves. The applicant when doing their BAS will note that they have received $X of GST'ble revenues which will include the $5,500 they got from RP and that they have incurred expenditure of $Y on GST expenses. The applicant will remit the difference between the amount of GST revenue collected and the amount of GST expense they have incurred if revenue is greater or they will receive a credit from ATO if their expense is greater.
- If however, the applicant is not GST registered they should enter the GST inclusive amount in their application. This will allow them to receive the full amount of the $5,500 from RP because they cannot claim tax input credits, not being GST registered.
- If the applicant then becomes GST registered after they have submitted their application, the approval is for "up to $5,500 RP funds" but the contract can be for less from RP and the remainder to come from the Department's "GST fund".
- If the applicant becomes GST registered after RP has executed the contract then a variation to amend the manner in which RP pays the applicant the money would be required.
- If RP has already paid the applicant all of the money there is nothing that we can do about it.
- If on the other hand RP has paid some money RP would need to do a variation to note the manner in which RP would pay the applicant the remaining money. The applicant would not be able to claim GST for the money already paid by RP when they weren't registered.
- If the applicant was not GST registered at the time of submitting their application but was waiting for registration, however when they filled out their application they requested GST exclusive costs in error, and therefore received funding approval for

"up to $5000 from RP". The applicant then received GST registration before the contract was negotiated and finalised. RP could in actual fact treat the applicant as though they had been GST registered at the time they submitted their application. However a note detailing what had happened would need to be included the next package brief to the Minister.

For specific tax advice, applicants should be referred to the Australian Taxation Office.

Value for money

As well as being an overarching criterion for *Regional Partnerships*, value for money applies to the purchase of equipment and services to be used to deliver a project.

The Australian Government seeks to ensure value for money in its expenditure of funds and, as such, the principles underlying Australian Government procurement policy including open competition, value for money, being ethical and fair, should be followed when purchasing services. Procurement processes should be open and defensible as well as providing value for money.

The following is a guide to the purchasing policies expected of applicants:

< $5000	minimum of 1 written quotation required
$5000 - $50 000	minimum of 3 written quotations required
More than $50 001	calling of a formal open tender is required, or limited tender in a particularly specialised market.

Equipment and Assets

Project funds should not be used to purchase assets that are not listed in the funding and budget details in the application form, without written approval from the Australian Government. Identify any equipment that is required for the project, providing details of any proposed purchase of assets, the funding source that will meet the purchase costs, and alternative methods of acquiring the equipment.

2.4 Eligibility

2.4.1 Eligibility - Organisation Type (ACC)

When ACCs are approached with an application / project proposal, applicant and project eligibility should be checked. This will minimise wasted time for the applicant, ACCs and the Department at a later stage.

An eligibility check is available to applicants at www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au.

Some applicants who may be ineligible may be able to be sponsored by an eligible organisation.

Some non-departmental government agencies, including statutory authorities, Land Councils, Government Business Enterprises and Tertiary Education Institutions would only be able to apply where the applicant can demonstrate that:

- there is no alternative eligible community-based organisation or private sector entity available to be the applicant
- the funding will not be used for operational expenses, core business or for employment and associated costs, e.g. co-ordination, facilitation, management fees etc.

It would be the applicant's responsibility to provide evidence to satisfy these requirements.

The following table (Table 5) gives examples of the types of organisations that are eligible to apply for funding and those that are ineligible.

Table 5 Eligibility (Organisation Type)

Organisation type	Eligible?
Non-profit organisations, including registered charities	YES
Private enterprise, except where the project is to produce a plan or undertake studies / research	YES
Local Government	YES
Community Councils (Indigenous Councils)	YES
*Some non-departmental government agencies, including Statutory authorities, Land Councils, Government Business Enterprises and Tertiary Education Institutions	YES
Cooperatives (considered a commercial enterprise if, according to its rules, its profits are distributed to its members)	YES
Entities that are not registered as a legal entity under State or Federal Government law, where a registered organisation has agreed to accept and administer the funding on the applicant's behalf	YES
Area Consultative Committees	NO
Federal and State Government Departments	NO
Individuals, unless a sole trader	NO
Private enterprise and Cooperatives that are considered commercial enterprises, requesting funding for planning, studies or research	NO
Third parties seeking funds on behalf of others	NO

*This would only apply where the applicant can demonstrate that:

- There is no alternative eligible community-based organisation or private sector entity available to be the applicant, and
- The funding will not be used for operational expenses, core business or for employment and associated costs, e.g. co-ordination, facilitation, management fees etc

2.4.2 Eligibility - Project Types (ACC)

The following table gives examples of the types of projects that are ineligible for funding under *Regional Partnerships*.

Table 6 Eligibility (Project Types)

Project Type	Eligible?
The project competes directly with existing businesses (unless it can be demonstrated that there is an unsatisfied demand for the product or service, or the product or service is to be provided in a new way).	NO
The project could be perceived as cost shifting (i.e. substituting or duplicating funding from other sources including government and the private sector).	NO
*Project proposals that can not obtain or have not yet obtained the relevant approvals or licenses to progress. Relevant approvals and licenses being those necessary to allow the project to proceed. (However there are a very small number of cases where there is an exception to this rule. See bottom of this table for details.)	NO
The project is requesting funding for: • costs that are not directly and specifically related to the project (e.g. ongoing staff wages, rent, overheads and administrative costs of the existing operations) • overseas travel • relocation costs • retrospective costs (applicants should not plan to begin a project dependent on *Regional Partnerships* funding before exchanging and signing a Funding Agreement).	NO
One-off conferences, seminars, competitions, expos or festivals that do not have a clear path to sustainable economic or social benefits for the community.	NO
Access to services where the project duplicates a service or activity already available or accessible within the community or region.	NO
Seed funding for the development of a prospectus.	NO
Generic economic and community development workers	NO

* An exception may be granted where:

- the applicant is a community-based organisation; or
- the cost of applying for an approval/licence is a high proportion of the project cost.

The assessor's recommendation would also need to be conditional on approvals being obtained.

To cover off the risk associated with these exceptions a provision must be included in the Funding Agreement to ensure that the first payment cannot be made until the necessary approvals/licences have been obtained, and possibly a timeframe for obtaining the approval as well.

2.4.3 Other factors affecting eligibility

Experience has shown that the following are also unlikely to be funded, because they are unlikely to meet the selection criteria:

- applicants who are bankrupt or convicted of fraudulent activities (over the past 5 years)
- applicants who have failed to complete projects, or who have not met reporting requirements in the past (unless there are mitigating circumstances)
- applicants who do not have the relevant expertise / skills / ability to manage the project (where the applicant does not appear to have a track record in managing projects of the type proposed, referees will be contacted to determine whether individual members have the required expertise / experience)
- applicants who do not have the funds to employ or retain appropriate resources to undertake the project
- projects for the development of further funding submissions or grant applications.

2.4.4 Eligibility - Applications outside Funding Guidelines (ACC)

Where an ACC is presented with a draft application clearly outside DOTARS' funding guidelines, assistance should be provided by the ACC in directing the applicant to alternative funding sources e.g.:

- GrantsLINK www.grantslink.gov.au
- Commonwealth Regional Information Service (www.regionalaustralia.gov.au or Freecall 1800 026 222)
- DOTARS' Regional Offices
- State bodies

2.5 Types of projects funded – Characteristics / Case Studies

The advice provided here on the types of projects funded under *Regional Partnerships* is not intended to cover every part of the programme's guidelines. DOTARS will look favourably upon projects that will result in positive outcomes to elements of the **'triple bottom line':**

- social
- environmental
- economic

Characteristics of good project applications are outlined below and are consistent with the **four priorities of the programme**:

(1) Strengthening Growth and Opportunities	**(2) Improving Access to Services**	**(3) Supporting Planning**	**(4) Assisting Structural Adjustment for Identified Communities**

2.5.1 Strengthening Growth & Opportunities - Case Study

Applications consistent with this priority would seek funding that will capitalise on regional competitive strengths and advantages to deliver economic and social benefits through job creation, business growth and new opportunities.

This may include projects that will strengthen the economic activity of a region or community by fostering new enterprises or value-adding initiatives that build on existing resources and/or production.

It can also include those initiatives that expand current enterprises into new markets or that attract a greater client base to a region (e.g. increased tourism activity).

Projects will need to demonstrate that the demand for the increase in activity or new enterprise exists and the market can sustain the increased level of service or production.

Project plans must also demonstrate the long-term viability of the enterprise beyond the funding period, and how the project links to broader regional development strategies.

CASE STUDY 1
A very small inland NSW town has been labelled by some as one of NSW's worst postcodes in terms of social disadvantage, but this is a poor reflection of a small town of about 1000 people (and another 1000 people in the surrounding areas) who are reinvigorating this town. One of their projects is to purchase, restore and reopen the local theatre as a venue for a multitude of general community, cultural and social activities, including a cinema and community owned theatre. The theatre will also provide a training centre in the area of building skills, restoration, management, administration, hospitality and service performing arts as well as providing a source of employment for permanent and casual staff and subcontractors, including the project manager. The project is expected to benefit the town by providing: • employment and training opportunities • a step forward in the reconciliation process between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples • a tangible representation of the hope and pride in their community that many local residents feel.

CASE STUDY 2
Tahune Forest Airwalk Visitor Centre is an exciting tourism project that adds another jewel to Tasmania's tourist attractions. Australian Government funding contributed to the infrastructure, power, sewerage and building of the international standard visitor centre. The project has demonstrated excellent partnerships between Federal and Local Government and private industry providers. The attraction has exceeded all expectations, with over 140,000 visitors in its first year and more than twice the number of predicted jobs created at the centre. Visitors to the region have increased threefold, and there has been a dramatic increase in accommodation, hospitality and retail industries in a disadvantaged area of Tasmania.

CASE STUDY 3
At Ravenshoe, the Ravenshoe Timbers Project received funding to purchase a state of the art timber-joining machine for Ravenshoe Timbers. This machine would help the company and its Australian product enter the lucrative Japanese export market. The new machine, the first of its kind in Australia, can create a visually seamless joint to pieces of timber and will add a new dimension to the company's timber products. To a small town like Ravenshoe, the creation of 27 new full time positions and the upgrading of a further 26 casual positions to full time is an enormous boost. The project is building a platform for surrounding businesses to grow from and encourages the cultivation of sustainable timber plantations.

2.5.2 Supporting Planning - Case Study

Projects that align to this priority should be seeking funding for business plans and viability studies to ensure sound evidence is in place to attract support from a range of sources for projects in the regions.

Applications should demonstrate a clear plan and commitment for implementation of the findings at the conclusion of the project. Usually this would include the commitment of sufficient resources from the proponent organisation to implement the plan or study.

Such an application would also need to identify who will use the study or plan and who will be responsible for implementing any recommendations.

A commitment to the project would need to be demonstrated by all relevant stakeholders.

Note: A feasibility study, business plan or marketing study would not be funded for an individual business or enterprise.

CASE STUDY 1
In the Great Southern Region of Western Australia, a project was funded that aimed to develop a Regional Industry Capability Study and Development Plan for farm forestry. This plan will be used as a strategic document to attract investment and to build a sustainable farm forestry industry in this region that will provide a range of environmental, economic and social benefits.

CASE STUDY 2
A proposal was submitted that sought to demonstrate by a trial air/sea run that perishable goods (i.e. mangoes) can be transported satisfactorily to the lucrative European markets. This project will transport mangoes sourced from the Burdekin mango growing area of Nth Queensland and move them by air/sea with a total transit time of 21days. The purpose of the trial was to determine that the system (now in place) worked. It provides significant opportunities for the industry to access the lucrative European markets.

CASE STUDY 3
The Southern Illawarra Agriculture Diversification Project identifies what can be physically grown in the targeted area, assess market profitability and potential in reference to domestic/export/food processing industry and assess opportunities with regard to water reuse schemes, impact of land tenures, sub division and planning regulations.

2.5.3 Improving Access to Services - Case Study

Projects that align to this priority should establish community infrastructure and the viable business mix that is essential to delivering basic services (e.g. banking, postal, government), for smaller communities (less than 5000 population) that have been most affected by the withdrawal or lack of services.

Applications should demonstrate that the service or activity proposed is not already available or accessible within the community or region.

The reason for the need to establish this service should be outlined, along with any likely flow-on effects from improving access to services.

CASE STUDY 1
The senior citizens of a small coastal town situated between Taree and Forster in NSW own and run a community bus. It provides a door-to-door pick-up service to various medical appointments for the elderly and disabled members of the community. The bus is also generously available for the local primary school, play groups, pre-school and other community organisations in the district. However, the bus was starting to suffer with the salt air, so the senior citizens of the town, together with their small but effective army of volunteers, applied for a grant to construct a bus shelter to protect their much used bus. Typical of Australia's community spirit, the bus shelter was built by volunteer tradesman and other volunteers from the community, with the grant helping out with the purchase of building materials. The Senior Citizens Association of this town also worked with DOTARS in the Rural Transaction Centre's programme to help secure for their community the installation of a Medicare Easyclaim booth in the local pharmacy.

CASE STUDY 2
An example of our commitment to improving access to services in small communities can be seen in the official opening in NSW of Mathoura Rural Transaction Centre (RTC). This Rural Transaction Centre returns online banking services through Bendigo Bank to a rural community where they had been lost. In addition there will be a raft of other services, which never existed such as, Medicare Easyclaim and Centrelink services. The Federal Government provided $462,000 to partner the Murray Shire Council in the venture, which shows the Regional Partnership approach in action. The co-location of the RTC with a Community Technology Centre will provide a great boost to technology skills in the area and considerably strengthen the local community.

2.5.4 Assisting Structural Adjustment - Case Study

The Government will determine if a community or region is specifically identified for *Regional Partnerships* structural adjustment funding.

Projects under this priority would provide assistance to communities experiencing economic and social stress due to changes in the international and national economy and environment. This priority aims to secure communities' futures by providing transitional assistance that will strengthen the economic diversity, social relations, environmental sustainability, and community organisations within a community's locality.

These applications should include the current status of the industry or region and refer to previous studies or strategies that provide a rationale for the project.

The proposal needs to provide evidence that growth potential exists in the region and that the region can compete successfully.

The proposal must also explain how the project will make a significant contribution to growth, employment, social and environmental outcomes.

The project plan must outline the pathway to self-sufficiency for the project.

CASE STUDY 1
In an inland NSW town, jobs have been generated by a project funded in Bega – the Bega Co-operative Society Ltd. Eleven new full time jobs were projected for this project and to date this has been exceeded with 20 people being employed. Bega introduced a new mozzarella line and a new profit stream to the Bega Cheese's business, which has directly benefited its owners – the Bega Valley dairy farmers. Government assistance in this instance has meant the new profit stream has allowed the co-operative to return an additional income stream to its members. This result has provided the Bega Valley farmers with drought support over the recent months. While they have been affected by the impact of drought and the need to buy handfeed, the impact has not been as severe as in other regions, thanks to this return of profits.

CASE STUDY 2
Significant assistance has been provided to Malanda, in the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland, with an Infrastructure Development Project. The project provided for essential water supply infrastructure, road access and parking areas for the site (which was donated) for a 60-bed aged care facility to serve the Eacham Shire, including the first dementia-care accommodation in the district. A projection of 65 new full time jobs was made. At least this number of full time positions has been created in the facility. With the benefit of this funding, this company was ready to expand almost immediately after completion. Local businesses have contracts to supply the facility, furthering the economic growth of the region.

2.5.5 Project types with additional considerations (RO)

Some project types will have additional considerations:

- Planning projects
- Infrastructure projects
- Services projects
- Capacity building projects
- Airports

The following (table 7) given examples of these types of projects.

Table 7 Project types with additional considerations

Project types with additional considerations
Planning projects • Are there other plans in the community that this project will duplicate? • Is there an expectation that *Regional Partnerships* will be requested for future funding (for implementation)? • Is there an indication of the source of future funding to implement findings? • Is the project likely to receive planning / development approval if the report is positive (e.g. feasibility studies)? **Infrastructure projects** • Are there other buildings in the community that could be used instead? Renovate / modify for the same use? • Does the applicant need local government support for this project in the form of: – Statutory approval e.g. Land zoning, Development Approvals, Building approval – On-going maintenance costs e.g. operation costs, maintenance of infrastructure, maintenance of grounds, public liability costs • What proportion of the total project costs do the funds sought from the Australian Government represent? • If approved, it may be appropriate for the clause 7.6 of the long form of the standard contract to be included, allowing the Commonwealth to recoup a portion of the funds if the asset is sold. **Services projects** • Will the project duplicate existing services? Is there a demand for a duplicate service? • Is this an extension / enhancement of existing services? **Employment projects:** • How many jobs are likely to be created? Is the employment outcomes projected realistic for the activity?

- Are they reliant on this project or would they happen anyway?
- Are they short term (during the duration - e.g. construction jobs) or are they ongoing?
- Are the employment outcomes projected reflected reasonably in the cash flow projections (min $22,000 for each FTE)?
- How has the applicant indicated the on-going employment outcomes are sustainable? How will wages be funding after the implementation?
- How has the applicant indicated the employment outcomes will be verified?

Capacity building projects

- How will capacity be maintained in the area? What happens if key people leave the area?
- Does the project exclude people or will it benefit the broader community?

Airports

If assessors come across Airport related projects they should seek advice from the Aviation Policy area. However set out below is some general guidance:

- RP will only consider funding airports in specific circumstances
  - A proposal to expand facilities at an airport should:
    - Be in an area unable to expand facilities at an airport within 2 hours drive*
    - Represent a true partnership of all relevant interest groups – not just the owner and the Commonwealth
    - Establish both significant regional development potential and community benefits; and
    - Not represent a commercial business seeking to gain a competitive advantage

    *where a community is isolated from another airport at some times during the year (eg due to regular flooding), it would not be considered able to access the services.
- RP funding should:
  - Represent a reasonable proportion of the total project cost, taking into account the degree of community benefit arising from the project. (Note: community benefit may include increased employment in a region that has high unemployment. In the case of Airports, we would be looking for additional community benefits)
  - Not be used for maintenance. (Like all other maintenance costs the owners should be expecting these costs and providing for them); and
  - Be subject to the requirements that apply for commercial ventures, including establishing no other alternative funding sources (eg business loans) and project viability checks etc.
- Where the project is for the consolidation airports within close proximity (ie a rationalisation and more efficient use of infrastructure), we should be keen to assist as it is consistent with Government policy and moving towards the preferred model.

- Where funding for an airport is recommended the Brief will be sent to the relevant area of DOTARS for information and comment before it goes to the Minister.

2.6 Confidentiality

In certain circumstances the Department will classify Application and Funding Agreement information as commercial-in-confidence. These circumstances include those required under legislation and where the applicant has made a claim for confidentiality and the Department agrees to the request.

As the Department does not automatically classify commercial information as commercial-in-confidence, the applicants must make claims for confidentiality and obtain the Department's agreement to the classification, before submitting their applications.

It should be noted that the Australian Government is subject to requirements that result in disclosure of some application and Funding Agreement information. Parliament and its committees have the power to require the disclosure of Australian Government Funding Agreements and Funding Agreement information. These requirements override the protection provided by a commercial-in-confidence classification.

While each application is required to have its own file, a separate file should be created for confidential information (again, one confidential file where necessary for each project).

2.6.1 Confidentiality request - Application form

In the first instance, applicants should be referred to the *Regional Partnerships* website for information and the application form. Where the applicant does not have internet access, the Regional Office / ACC should provide a hard copy of the relevant information.

2.6.2 Filing requests for confidentiality

For consistency of treatment of requests for confidentiality (pre-application) it is suggested that Regional Offices each create their own common file for all requests so that they are centrally located in each office.

2.6.3 Assessing a request for confidentiality

Requests for confidentiality should be sent to the relevant Regional Office for assessment.

Firstly ascertain if the information is covered by other legislation e.g.

- Patents Act 1990 and Designs Act 1906
- Privacy Act 1988

- Public Service Act 1999

If it is covered by other legislation, classify appropriately. If not, apply the **four criteria** shown below.

2.6.4 Criteria

In order for a claim for confidentiality to be successful, the applicant must demonstrate that the information meets the following **four** criteria:

Criterion 1 **The information to be protected must be identified in specific rather than global terms**

- Look for how the information has been identified. For example, clauses or parts of clauses within a Funding Agreement, or particular information.
- The information in question must not be something that is trivial or within the public domain.
- A confidentiality claim should not be made or accepted in relation to innocuous material.

Criterion 2 **That the information must have the necessary quality of confidentiality**

Things to look for:

- the value of the information to the entity.
- whether that value may be destroyed or diminished through disclosure.

Information has commercial value to an entity if it is valuable for the purposes of carrying on the commercial activity in which that entity is engaged. It may be valuable because it is important or essential to the profitability or the viability of a continuing business or commercial operation. Information also has commercial value to an entity if a genuine, arms-length buyer would be prepared to pay to obtain that information.

The information must have continuing sensitivity for the entity whose information has been confided. It is not sufficient that the confider merely wanted the information protected.

At the time the claim is made the information must be known only by a limited number of parties.

Examples of information having commercial value include production costs, profit margins, pricing structures (if they reveal whether a profit or loss in supply is being made), research and development strategies.

Establish if the process or device has been developed for use by an entity for the purposes of its continuing business operations:

- is it of a technical nature (trade secret)?

- is it known outside the business of the owner of that information?
- is it known by persons engaged in the owner's business?
- what measures have been taken by the owner to guard the secrecy of the information?
- what is the value of the information to the owner and to his/her competitors?
- what effort and money has been spent by the owner in developing the information?
- with what ease or difficulty might others acquire or duplicate the secret?

Examples include: industrial processes, formulae, product mixes, customer lists, engineering and design drawings and diagrams and accounting techniques.

Criterion 3

That disclosure would cause detriment to the contractor or other third party

Consider:

- whether disclosure of information would cause harm to the 'owner' of the information
- whether that value may be destroyed or diminished through disclosure
- whether a genuine, arms-length buyer would be prepared to pay to obtain that information

Investment of time and money is not a sufficient indicator in itself.

Old and out of date information may not have remaining commercial value.

Examples of information could be production costs, profit margins, pricing structures and research and development strategies

Identification of real risk of commercial damage to its interests flowing from disclosure would need to be identified by the applicant.

Criterion 4

That the information was provided under an understanding that it would remain confidential (normally only applicable if the application has already been lodged)

Consider the circumstances under which the information was provided (e.g. the documentation alerting to the activity indicates information provided will be treated as confidential as in a tender process, Funding Agreement negotiation or verbally and that confidentiality will be maintained).

2.6.5 Examples of information that may legitimately be protected

- Trade secrets
- Proprietary information (e.g. information about how a particular technical or business solution is to be provided).
- A contractor's internal costing information or information about its profit margins
- Pricing structures (where this information would reveal whether a contractor was making a profit or loss on the supply of a particular good or service)
- Intellectual property matters where these relate to a contractor's competitive position
- The following are examples of the types of commercial information that would not generally be considered to be legitimately confidential:
  - performance and financial guarantees
  - indemnities
  - the price of an individual item, or group of items of goods or services
  - rebate, liquidated damages and service credits clauses
  - performance measures that are to apply to the Funding Agreement
  - clauses which describe how intellectual property rights are to be dealt with
  - payment arrangements.

If uncertainty as to classification still remains following the process above then refer to the *Guidance on Confidentiality of Contractor's Commercial Information February 2003* found on the Department of Finance and Administration's website at www.dofa.gov.au or call the Applications and Approvals Section in National Office. If you believe you require legal advice, please discuss this with National Office.

2.6.6 Confidentiality classification - Guide

The following table is a guide to assisting in determining if requests for confidentiality classification meet the required criteria.

Table 8 Confidentiality classification - Guide

Confidentiality			
Consideration	**Assessment**		**Result**
	Column A	**Column B**	
Has the information requested to be classified been clearly identified? For example, does the information contain: • intellectual property • trade secrets • proprietary information • internal costing information • pricing structures	Yes - Continue	No - seek clarification. If answer is still no then information will not qualify	If answer is 'Yes' go to next step
Is the information commercially sensitive? For example:			If the information on balance, in your judgement is commercially sensitive and disclosure would cause detriment: classify
• Has the applicant established the value of the information?	Yes	No	
• Will the value be destroyed or diminished through disclosure?	Yes	No	
• Does the information have continuing sensitivity for the entity whose information has been confided?	Yes	No	
• Is the information known only by a limited number of parties?	Yes	No	
• Has the process or device been developed for use by an entity for the purposes of its continuing business operations?	Yes	No	
• Is the information of a technical nature?	Yes	No	

Confidentiality			
Consideration	**Assessment**		**Result**
	Column A	**Column B**	
Has the information requested to be classified been clearly identified? For example, does the information contain: • intellectual property • trade secrets • proprietary information • internal costing information • pricing structures	Yes - Continue	No - seek clarification. If answer is still no then information will not qualify	If answer is 'Yes' go to next step
Is the information commercially sensitive? For example:			If the information on balance, in your judgement is commercially sensitive and disclosure would cause detriment: classify
• Has the applicant established the value of the information?	Yes	No	
• Will the value be destroyed or diminished through disclosure?	Yes	No	
• Does the information have continuing sensitivity for the entity whose information has been confided?	Yes	No	
• Is the information known only by a limited number of parties?	Yes	No	
• Is the information known outside the business of the owner of that information? (It should not be known outside the business of the owner)	No	No	
• Is it known by persons engaged in the owner's business?	Yes	Yes	
• Have measures been taken by the owner to guard the secrecy of the information?	Yes	No	
• Is the information valuable to the owner and his/her competitors?	Yes	No	
• The effort and money spent by the owner in developing the information? (this information in itself is not enough to qualify under this criterion)	Extensive	Not extensive	

Confidentiality			
Consideration	**Assessment**		**Result**
	Column A	**Column B**	
Has the information requested to be classified been clearly identified? For example, does the information contain: • intellectual property • trade secrets • proprietary information • internal costing information • pricing structures	Yes - Continue	No - seek clarification. If answer is still no then information will not qualify	If answer is 'Yes' go to next step
Is the information commercially sensitive? For example:			If the information on balance, in your judgement is commercially sensitive and disclosure would cause detriment: classify
• Has the applicant established the value of the information?	Yes	No	
• Will the value be destroyed or diminished through disclosure?	Yes	No	
• Does the information have continuing sensitivity for the entity whose information has been confided?	Yes	No	
• Is the information known only by a limited number of parties?	Yes	No	
• How difficult would it be for others to acquire or duplicate the information?	Difficult	Not difficult	
Would disclosure cause detriment to the contractor or other third party? For example:			If the information on balance, in your judgement is commercially sensitive and disclosure would cause detriment: classify.
• Would disclosure cause harm to the 'owner' of the information?	Yes	No	
• Will disclosure destroy or diminish the value of the information?	Yes	No	
• Would a genuine, arms-length buyer be prepared to pay to obtain that information?	Yes	No	
• Is the only argument for classification the investment of time and money?	No	Yes	

Confidentiality			
Consideration	**Assessment**		**Result**
	Column A	**Column B**	
Has the information requested to be classified been clearly identified? For example, does the information contain: • intellectual property • trade secrets • proprietary information • internal costing information • pricing structures	Yes - Continue	No - seek clarification. If answer is still no then information will not qualify	If answer is 'Yes' go to next step
Is the information commercially sensitive? For example:			If the information on balance, in your judgement is commercially sensitive and disclosure would cause detriment: classify
• Has the applicant established the value of the information?	Yes	No	
• Will the value be destroyed or diminished through disclosure?	Yes	No	
• Does the information have continuing sensitivity for the entity whose information has been confided?	Yes	No	
• Is the information known only by a limited number of parties?	Yes	No	
• Is the information old and out of date? If so does it still have remaining commercial value?	Yes	No	
• Has applicant identified real risk of commercial damage to its interests?	Yes	No	
Was the information provided on the understanding that it would be treated confidentially? (Only relevant post submission). For example:			If 'Yes' the information qualifies
• Did the documentation calling for applications or tender advise that information will be treated as confidential or lead to the applicant forming a view that the information will be treated in confidence?	Yes	No	

Confidentiality			
Consideration	**Assessment**		**Result**
	Column A	**Column B**	
Has the information requested to be classified been clearly identified? For example, does the information contain: • intellectual property • trade secrets • proprietary information • internal costing information • pricing structures	Yes - Continue	No - seek clarification. If answer is still no then information will not qualify	If answer is 'Yes' go to next step
Is the information commercially sensitive? For example:			If the information on balance, in your judgement is commercially sensitive and disclosure would cause detriment: classify
• Has the applicant established the value of the information?	Yes	No	
• Will the value be destroyed or diminished through disclosure?	Yes	No	
• Does the information have continuing sensitivity for the entity whose information has been confided?	Yes	No	
• Is the information known only by a limited number of parties?	Yes	No	
Other Issues **Some information under general law needs to be maintained as confidential irrespective of contractual obligations.** For example:			
• Patents Act 1990 • Privacy Act 1988 • Public Service Act 1999	Yes	Yes	Classify
If all criteria above are met the information should be classified	In majority	Minority	Classify

Note: the Australian Government cannot provide an absolute guarantee of confidentiality because certain confidential information may be required to be disclosed by law or to the Parliament or the Auditor-General.

2.6.6.1 Approved requests for confidentiality – entering into TRAX

Applicants requesting confidentiality should still be encouraged to submit the remaining details of their applications on-line. However, those sections of the application that have been approved as commercial-in-confidence should not be entered into TRAX at this time.

A commercial-in-confidence claim should appear as early as possible in the TRAX fields – 'project description' would appear to be the most appropriate area for this at this stage. The fields where the classified information would normally appear should indicate why they are empty (i.e. the information is classified).

2.6.6.2 Filing Applications

Applications should be filed according to existing Records Management procedures.

2.6.6.3 Administration of Claims – TRAX process

An automated process for handling requests and subsequent approvals of commercial-in-confidence information may to be developed in the longer term. Further information about classifying files in DOTARS is available at:

http://intranet/services/records/classifying_files_in_DOTARS.htm

2.6.7 Freedom of Information

- An application under the FOI Act 1992 cannot be lodged with an ACC. It would have to be lodged with DOTARS.
- ACC comments are regarded as being advice to the Minister and as such are exempt documents under Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act.
- It is important that confidentiality is maintained about the advice and recommendations that ACCs are providing about applications.
- Also, information can only be released following consultation with the document's author and interested parties.

Please speak to your Regional Office Manager in the first instance should you have any FOI related requests.

2.7 *Submitting Applications*

Listed below are all the methods now available to applicants when applying for Regional Partnerships assistance.

- An applicant can submit an application on-line via TRAX
- An applicant can download the electronic 'smart' form (located at http://www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au/docs/application.aspx), fill in off line and send to the Department. This could be posted, e-mailed to regionalpartnerships@dotars.gov.au or hand delivered and could be in the form of electronic, CD or floppy disk.
- An applicant can fill in the word based form (for paper based applications only) and send to the Department or ACC for entry into TRAX. This could be sent by post. There are two additional word versions available on the web site to cater for the varying version of word software.
- For those applicants that do not have access to MS Word, there is the option of downloading the application through Acrobat Reader (for paper based applications only).

  ACC's are also available to assist applicants to prepare and submit applications using the various methods above. The TRAX User Manual or the TRAX helpdesk 1900 005 494 are available to assist the ACC with any problems experienced submitting applications through TRAX.

Applicants submitting their application on-line should read the Guide to the on-line Regional Partnerships application. The guide is available in TRAX at: www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au .

2.7.1 Application form - TRAX

For applications that are submitted directly by the applicant through TRAX, all other relevant documents should be mailed / e-mailed / faxed to the relevant Regional Office. When the applicant clicks the 'submit application' button, the application is sent to the National Office 'in box' and contains a reference number assigned by TRAX. The National Office then allocates the application to the relevant Regional Office, via TRAX, for assessment. For assistance on how to enter an application into TRAX follow the link to the Quick Reference Guide: TRAX 2 5 RP-QuickReference-Applications-Claims-1.doc.

2.7.2 Application Form - 'Smart' Form

All 'smart' application forms are submitted via e-mail, to either the Regional or National Office. A DOTARS officer at either location must then enter the details into TRAX. See TRAX User Manual – Entering an RP application into TRAX for detailed steps on how to enter an application see Quick Reference Guide link above. Those staff responsible for entering smart forms onto TRAX must go through the process of ensuring that all relevant data is entered into TRAX and that correct procedures are followed to facilitate appropriate responses to the applications. This includes:

- Check the application once received and note any information missing;
- Using a standard template, an e-mail will be sent to the nominated contact in the application form asking that they provide the relevant data by return e-mail. In some cases a fax may need to be used. A record of all communications between the Department and the applicant will be kept electronically and in paper format.
- Once all necessary information relating to an application is received the allocated Departmental officer will then log on to the 'applicant portal' in TRAX by creating a username based on the 'nominated contact' in the application e.g. (fgreen) and a password that is the day of the week and date of entry to TRAX e.g. (Tuesday0304).
- The allocated Department officer will then enter the application information into TRAX ensuring that text entered is unambiguous and suitable for all readers, including the delegate and Ministers. TRAX reports on all projects (approved and not approved) are provided to Ministers – the Department may be questioned as to their content. TRAX reports may also be the subject of Freedom of Information requests for applicants.
- The allocated Department officer will be required to summarise / rework the information where information in the 'Assessment Parts 1 & 2' in TRAX exceeds the word limit. If this is the case these summarised sections will need to be e-mailed to the 'nominated contact' for verification.
- When all information is complete (and any amendments verified) the application will be submitted by the allocated Department officer.
- All information associated with the application should be held together and provided to the allocated Regional Office project officer by mail. Regional Office staff will then keep electronic copies of the application and all related e-mails / correspondence with the applicant's nominated contact on their local G Drive in the a project specific folder.
- A copy of the submitted application will also be e-mailed or faxed to the applicant.

2.7.3 Application Form – MS Word

Applicants can also submit hard copy applications by posting it to the relevant Regional Office.

2.8 Receiving and Recording Applications

2.8.1 Receiving and Allocating Applications (National Office)

The National Office, Applications, Approvals & Contracts Section, receives all final versions of applications via the TRAX inbox. All other applications are received either via e-mail or hardcopy which are then entered into TRAX by either the National Office or Regional Office and then submitted through TRAX. The Applications, Approvals & Contracts Section can then access those applications through the TRAX intake submission in-basket for recording and allocating to the appropriate Regional Office. The Regional Manager then assigns the application to a Regional Officer depending on the function being performed. For information on how to allocate and assign applications in TRAX follow the link below to the TRAX Quick Reference Guide to allocating a project: TRAX 2 5 RP-QuickReference-Allocate-Assess-Monitor-1.doc .

2.8.2 Records Management (Regional Office)

When Project Officer receives a new application form, they should create a registry file for the project. All applications are required to have their own registry file. To create this file:

- Complete a file request form
  See http://entr/resources/forms/form_file_request.doc for the form
- Follow naming conventions
  The file title should contain '*Regional Partnerships*' <Project title>. Any other additions to the file title are up to the relevant regional office to decide. However you may wish to capture the TRAX Portfolio number, either in the file title or by some other means. Be aware that there are acronyms that won't be accepted in a title (for example RP or TRAX). Keep it simple.
- Email the file request form to the Records Management Unit.
  More detailed information about file creation / management is available at http://transard/forms/recordkeeping_in_DOTARS.htm.

It is important to determine what level information should be classified at, and how to reclassify information.

The originator of a file must decide on the initial file classification, and confirm this with a senior officer if the classification is not normal or standard. The classification given to a file must reflect the highest classification of the papers that will be contained within that file; and conform to the guidelines provided in the Protective Security Manual and the Guidance on Confidentiality of Contractors' Commercial Information. (See Confidentiality Section).

It is an APS requirement to have a complete paper trail therefore it is important that everyone should ensure they:

- Record contact with funding recipients on a regular basis.
- Record project status.
- Record dates and content of discussions eg: requests for variations to Funding Agreements.
- Record contact with other related bodies i.e. ACC NO
- Print copies of emails, letters, faxes, etc for the file.
- Record electronic documents in TRAX eg: emails, letters, etc.

2.9 Handling amendments to applications in TRAX

Amendment information can either be volunteered by the applicant or else requested by either the assessor, advisory panel or by the final decision-maker. The information can be received by post, fax, phone, e-mail or in person. It is normally placed on the project hardcopy file and is noted on the project's database record.

The original application itself, however, is never amended and a departmental officer is aware of the information and is in control of any action arising.

Amendments may be 'non-material', (e.g. change of phone number/address, addition of ABN), or they may be 'material' changes, (e.g. additional funding partners, changes to dollar amounts), or details that sufficiently alter the application to warrant re-assessment or withdrawal.

When a request to amend is received, the departmental officer would make a judgement as to whether the amendment amounts to a material change and whether the application is still at a stage where amendment can be agreed.

2.9.1 Material Changes

'Material' is defined as one that would significantly affect the assessment of the application.

Any information that significantly affects the assessment of the original application should be treated as a 'material' change. Examples include major budget changes, major change to the applicant body or project location, change of essential personnel (specialist / project officers) and so on

Where the amendment is considered material, the applicant would be advised of the decision and asked to consider whether to continue, withdraw or submit a fresh application.

2.9.2 Non-Material Changes

'Non-material' is defined as a minor change that does not significantly change the assessment of the application. Examples would include spelling / name changes, confirmation or addition of funding partners, changes to applicant body membership, minor budget changes, GST status, etc.

Currently, TRAX enables applicants to change only the contact details themselves without having to notify DOTARS.

Where the amendment is considered non-material, the officer would make the change and, importantly, verify the change with the applicant in writing. Either the application itself could be changed or else the RO comment field could be used to hold the information, especially where the information was requested by DOTARS (but note that this field is restricted to 250 words). All documentation would be placed on file.

2.9.3 How to amend Applications

- An applicant can only ask to amend an application outside TRAX by means of a phone call, e-mail, or letter to RO or NO personnel.
- The request should be referred (outside TRAX) to the assigned Project Officer, who has authority to unlock the application to permit amendment. A ‘button’ is available to the Project Officer in the ‘My-In-Basket Form’, via the Applicant Files link. The button enables access to the Amendment Form in TRAX.
- The assigned Project Officer then selects an amender. Only the selected amender can amend the application. The selected amender may be the assigned Project Officer or another person that may potentially include the applicant contact.
- Once unlocked, all parts of the application can be amended. There is no capacity to restrict or delimit access to pre-determined fields.
- Once amended and submitted, a new version of the application is created and both the new one and the original are saved as read only.
- Any further amendments submitted at a later stage should be saved as additional versions.
- Changes made are not highlighted. Manual comparison of the two (or more) versions is required.

3 The Assessment Phases

This section of the manual should assist in obtaining a high standard of assessments by all users, and consequently maintain this standard for all projects irrespective of the quality of applications.

Assessors should ensure that information is entered into TRAX as their assessment or review proceeds, and that all relevant documentary information is noted in TRAX and put on a paper file. For example, application forms, business plans, supplementary project information, and other relevant correspondence received from the applicant should be noted in TRAX as soon as practicable after the material is received. Supporting information should also be stored on the local G: drive of the appropriate Regional Office, organised with separate folders for each project. In addition all papers relating to a project should be stored on the appropriate project paper file.

These documents may be received by the Department in either hardcopy format (mail or fax) or e-mail.

It is expected that TRAX will, at a later stage, include the capacity to attach documents to the project application record. This facility should make it easier for DOTARS to handle additional information without the same need to amend the application and seek applicant verification of amendments. This facility however is still not currently available in the 2.5 release.

Once a Regional Officer has been assigned a new project (note you cannot enter an assessment in TRAX until the step is assigned to you), the following assessment phases should take place:

- Assign project to relevant ACC representative for review
- Undertake eligibility check outside of TRAX
- Undertake Due Diligence check in TRAX
- Undertake full formal assessment in TRAX
- Regional Manager review of assessment and assigns to National Office
- National Office performs Quality Assurance check.

To add an assessment in TRAX follow the link to the TRAX Quick Reference Guide for assistance: TRAX 2 5 SR-QuickReference-Applications-Assessment-1.doc .

3.1 ACC Review Comments

A major strength of ACC's is in the diversity of committee members (representing business, community and government across the whole region). These members know and understand the challenges facing a region, and their comments on applications are therefore valuable.

After an application has been allocated to the relevant Regional Office via TRAX, the Regional Office then assigns the application to the relevant ACC EO (ie ACC review step), this will create an automatic notification to the ACC to advise them that the review step needs to take place.

The ACC's will then review the application against:

- the seven review questions in TRAX (follow TRAX Quick Reference Guide link below for assistance in TRAX and Attachment F *Guide to ACC Comments*) TRAX 2 5 RP-QuickReference-Allocate-Assess-Monitor-1.doc
- their regional priorities as set out in their Strategic Regional Plan.

The ACC's will also need to advise the Department on the following:

- whether or not further development of the application is required
- whether or not there are any regional issues that the ACC considers will impact (positively or negatively) on the proposal
- whether, in the ACC's view, the project is consistent with the **criteria** for the programme, as outlined in the Programme Guidelines:

(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**
Outcomes	Partnerships and Support	Project and Applicant Viability	Whether the project is likely to result in an unfair competitive advantage

ACCs may find the Attachment G useful in providing their members with a brief summary of projects sent to the ACC for comment. This is based on a project synopsis sheet used by North East Victoria ACC.

3.1.1 Submitting the ACC Review Comments

Once the ACC has completed their comments in the TRAX database, the ACC should click save and then Back to Portfolio to send it back to the relevant Regional Office. For those projects that were developed in consultation with the ACC, comments should be sent to the Department within 10 working days. However, ACCs are not required to meet this timeframe for projects they have not been consulted on.

The Department will advise the applicant and the ACC that further development is/is not required. This can be facilitated through the ACC, and the application will be placed on hold until issues are resolved.

Where ACC comments on an application are not consistent with the Department's recommendation, the Minister will be advised in the assessor's report.

Table 9 Applications – Checklist for ACC Comments

Comments on applications: checklist for ACCs	
Consider application against priorities identified in the Strategic Regional Plan	❑
Comment on how applications support these priorities	❑
Consider application against programme objectives and criteria. Provide comments on perceived strengths and weaknesses of the application	❑
Rate application against each criterion	❑
Provide comments on regional issues that may impact on application, including if it falls into other plans for the region complete	❑
Submit comments template online via 'TRAX'	❑

3.2 Eligibility Check

Before the eligibility check commences applicants are sent a letter advising them their application has been received and they can expect to hear from the Department regarding their eligibility. This letter can now be generated from TRAX. See also Attachment C for manual template letter.

Within 5 days of receipt of applications, Regional Office departmental officers should undertake a preliminary assessment to ensure that all material / information have been provided by the applicant. Use the checklist on the following page (Table 10) to aid in the preliminary eligibility check.

3.2.1 Preliminary advice to applicants (RO)

Within 10 working days, the applicant must be contacted by Regional Office staff to advise them:

- if any required information is lacking (with a checklist of required items included in the advice). This will result in the application being placed on hold until receipt of all relevant information - letter can now be generated through TRAX. See also standard letter template at Attachment H. Note: where an applicant does not respond to provide additional information, a second letter Attachment M can be sent advising if no further information is provided, the project will be considered withdrawn and no further action with be taken; OR
- that the application has failed to pass the eligibility check (see standard letter template at Attachment I; OR
- that assessment of the application has commenced (where the application passed the pre-eligibility check).

  This advice will emphasise that no commitment to funding should be assumed and that the programme is a discretionary grant programme now generated by TRAX see also Attachment J for manual template letter.

  Once the applicant has been sent this last letter advising them that an assessment has commenced, there should be no further indication given on the likely timing or progress of the assessment.

  The Department has been specifically requested NOT to advise applicants that their projects are with the Minister or with National Office.

3.2.2 Eligibility Check (RO)

Table 10 Eligibility Checklist - Regional Office

Eligibility questions to consider	Application References	Result / Outcome of check	
Applicant / Application Information			
Applicant type			❐
Is the applicant organisation eligible?	Refer eligibility table	Yes – continue No – include reason for ineligibility in the acknowledgment letter	❐
Has a valid ABN/ACN been provided?	Refer Option 1 - Q 1b, Option 2 & 3 - Q1b Refer www.asic.gov.au	Yes – continue No – include this in the acknowledgment letter requesting a valid ABN be provided Pending – complete the screen in TRAX	❐
Has the Declaration been signed? (Or the application submitted electronically?)	Refer Declaration	Yes – continue No – include this in the acknowledgment letter requesting signature. Not required for electronic versions	❐
Are the relevant questions completed?			
Has a copy of the registration certificate been received?	Refer Option 1 - Q 1a, Option 2 & 3- Q 1a	Yes – continue No – include this in the acknowledgment letter.	❐
Has the applicant provided contact details for two referees?	Refer Option 1 – Q 2, Option 2 & 3 – Q 8 Refer Referee Details (TRAX)	Yes – continue No - include this in the acknowledgment letter requesting details be provided	❐
Has the project location been identified?	Refer Option 1 – Q 2, Option 2 & 3– Q 6 Refer Part 2 location (TRAX)	Yes – update Federal Electorate in TRAX (refer screen once this is available in TRAX. In mean time, enter postcodes at http://www.aec.gov.au/esearch/)	❐

Eligibility questions to consider	Application References	Result / Outcome of check	
		No – include this in the acknowledgment letter requesting it be provided	
Has the applicant included details about their own contribution?	Refer Option 1 – Q 4, Option 2&3 – Q 9 Refer Part 3 and 4 (TRAX)	Yes – continue No – include this in the acknowledgment letter requesting it be provided	❒
Does the Applicant contributions + Partner contributions + RP funding requests = total project cost?	Option 1 – Q 4, Option 2&3 – Q 9 Refer Parts 3, 4 and 6 (TRAX)	Yes – continue No – include this in the acknowledgment letter requesting clarification	❒
Project Eligibility			
Is requested funding for: overseas travel; relocation costs; retrospective costs; items not directly and specifically related to the project?	Refer Option 1 – Q6, Option 2&3 – Q11 Refer Part 6 (TRAX)	Yes – Not eligible, include this in the acknowledgment letter requesting clarification No - Continue	❒
Is the project a one-off event without a clear path to sustainable economic or social benefits for the community?	Option 1 – Q8, Option 2&3 – Q13 Refer Part 10, Q3 (TRAX)	Yes – Not eligible No – Continue	❒
Is this seed funding for the development of a prospectus?	Option 1 – Q8, Option 2&3 - Q13, Refer Part 10, Q1 (TRAX)	Yes – Not eligible No - Continue	❒
Is this for generic economic and community development workers	Option 1 – Q8, Option 2&3 – Q13 Refer Part 10 (TRAX)	Yes - No - continue	❒
Applicant and Project Viability			
Are there any critical timeframes for the project?	Refer Option 1 – Q 7, Option 2&3 – Q 12	Yes – do these have an affect on the timing of assessment and decision-making? No – continue	❒

Eligibility questions to consider	Application References	Result / Outcome of check	
Will this project operate in a commercial environment			
Has the applicant provided information on the project's impact on other businesses / groups?	Refer Option 1 – Q 10, Option 2/3 – Q 15 Refer Part 10 (TRAX)	Yes – continue No – include this in the acknowledgment letter requesting it be provided	❒
Does the project duplicate a service or activity already available or accessible within the community or region?	Refer Option 1 – Q8 & 10, Option 2 – Q13 & 15 Refer Part 10, Q1 and 6 (TRAX)	Yes – include this in the acknowledgement letter requesting clarification. No - continue	❒
Does the project compete directly with existing businesses without demonstrated unsatisfied demand, or a new delivery method?	Refer Option 1 – Q8 & 10, Option 2&3 – Q13 & 15 Refer Part 10, Q1 and 6 (TRAX)	Yes -	❒
Is the project able to proceed without Local Government support? If not, has it been committed?	Option 1 – Part 13 Q 11, Option 2&3 – Q 16 Refer Part 10 (TRAX)	Yes – confirm the commitment of the support No – include this in the acknowledgment letter requesting evidence be provided	❒
Is the project waiting on relevant planning / development approvals?	Refer Option 1 – Q8, Option 2&3 Q13 Refer Part 10, Q2 (TRAX)	Yes – Generally this is not acceptable. However there are some special circumstances No - continue	❒
Has the applicant indicated how the project will be sustainable, where applicable?	Refer Option 1 – Q 14, Option 2/3 – Q 19 Refer Part 10 (TRAX)	Yes – continue No - include this in the acknowledgment letter requesting evidence be provided	❒
Does the project comply with relevant State / and or Federal statutory requirements? (e.g. environment)	Refer Option 1 – Q11, Option 2 & 3 Q16 Refer Part 10 – Q7 (TRAX)	Yes – Have they provided evidence No – Include this in acknowledgment letter requesting evidence to be provided	

Eligibility questions to consider	Application References	Result / Outcome of check	
Has the applicant addressed the need for funding beyond the life of the project if relevant?	Refer Option 1 Q14 – Option 2&3 - Q19 Refer Part 10 – Q10 (TRAX)	Yes – continue No – include this in the acknowledgment letter requesting further details be provided.	❐
If a plan is needed for the project, has a plan been completed and attached?	Refer Option 1 – Q 8c, Option 2/3 – Q 13c Refer Part 10 - Q3(TRAX)	Yes – continue No – include this in the acknowledgment letter advising the applicant to contact the ACC, and to attach evidence of the plan	❐
Has all the relevant supporting documentation been received?	Refer Option 1 – Q6,8,11,12 Option 2 & 3 – Q13,16,17 Refer Part 9 & 10 (TRAX)	Yes – continue No – include this in the acknowledgment letter advising the applicant to attach relevant information	❐
Could the project be perceived as cost shifting?	Refer Option 1 – Q8, Option 2&3 - Q13 Refer Part 10 – Q1 TRAX	Yes – include this in the acknowledgment letter advising applicant to clarify	❐
Advising the applicant			
Complete a letter of acknowledgment outlining additional information required and the relevant ACC contact details	See section on Preliminary advice to applicants (RO)	Complete a letter of acknowledgment outlining additional information required and the relevant ACC contact details	❐
Update TRAX and complete 'office use only' section		Update TRAX and complete 'office use only' section	❐
Print a copy of the letter and place on the hard copy file noting the date it was posted		Print a copy of the letter and place on the hard copy file noting the date it was posted	❐

3.2.3 Regional Office: Requesting additional information

When contacting applicants and requesting additional information please use your judgement and consider:

- If it is a simple request, phone the applicant and follow-up with an acknowledgment letter requesting further information

- If there is a lot of information required, does the application need a lot of additional development and should the applicant be referred back to the ACC?
- Will the information not provided initially hold up the full assessment? If not would it be more appropriate to request ALL additional information at full assessment.

All additional information received after an application has been submitted must be received in writing regardless of the type of information.

3.2.4 Emerging Issues - Register (NO)

During the assessment phases Regional Offices will come across different issues from time to time. In order to maximise consistency of decision making, an issues register is maintained at National Office to advise the Regional Network of some issues being considered elsewhere and their outcome. Regional Officers are encouraged to discuss specific issues that arise and assessment approaches with National Office staff before making a recommendation.

All issues raised with the National Office will be recorded on the issues register which will be circulated once a month. All issues raised will remain on the register for a period of six months. At which time all key policy issues will be transferred to the RP Internal Procedures Manual.

Responsibility for the issues register will lie with the person responsible for maintaining the manual. All issues raised and their outcome should be copied to the person maintaining the issues register and manual. This will ensure that all relevant issues discussed are circulated and incorporated into the RP Internal Procedures Manual.

Table 11 Assessment Checklist - Regional Office

Assessment Checklist - Regional Office	
ACC comments template received	❑
Completed eligibility check (see eligibility checklist)	❑
• All information requested from the eligibility check received	❑
• Enter the information received following eligibility check into TRAX	❑
• Generate reports	
– ACC comments template	❑
– Application Form	❑
– Eligibility check outcomes	❑
Assessment (refer assessment guide)	
• Determine level of risk assessment required	❑
– Applicant	❑
– Project	❑
• Arrange risk assessment as required	❑
• Applicant risk assessment	❑
– Complete applicant assessment request form	❑
– Send applicant assessment package to independent assessor	❑
– Receive applicant assessment outcome from independent assessor	❑
– Update TRAX	❑
– Continue assessment	❑
• Project risk assessment	❑
– Complete project assessment authorisation form	❑
– Send to National Office	❑
– Receive National Office approval	❑
– Complete project assessment request form	❑
– Send project assessment package to independent assessor	❑
– Receive project assessment outcome from independent assessor	❑
– Input risk assessment results into TRAX	❑
– Continue assessment	❑

Assessment Checklist - Regional Office	
– Assess ‘outcomes’	❑
– Assess ‘partnerships’	❑
– Assess ‘support’	❑
– Determine ‘value for money’	❑
• Complete the ‘Office use only’ section of TRAX	❑
– Priority classification	❑
– Project type	❑
– Target group classification	❑
– Which is the relevant ACC for the project?	❑
– Primary / secondary electorates	❑
• Ensure all fields in TRAX completed	❑
• Advise the Regional Office Manager that the assessment is complete	❑
• Regional Office Manager completes a recommendation	❑
• Regional Office forwards assessment, application and recommendation to the National Office	❑

3.3 Assessing Risk and Viability

This section is currently under major review and therefore has been removed. If advice is necessary contact the Applications, Approvals and Contracts Section.

3.4 *Formal Assessment Guide (RO)*

The assessment of an application involves a number of steps with the end result of the assessment process being a recommendation being made to the Minister.

Regional Office undertakes the assessment process entering the information directly into TRAX.

In addition the following table (Table 12) covers the type of information raised in TRAX and is structured under each of the *Regional Partnerships* criteria. As you will see Table 12 covers:

- definition
- reference material
- cross reference with TRAX
- application documentation (e.g. application form, ACC comments template and a series of questions) to assist the assessors target analysis.

It also includes:

- the bench marking of each of these criteria
- analysis specific to particular project types e.g. infrastructure, service
- a few case studies to provide examples of assessment for each of the criteria.

3.4.1 The Style Guide

The Style Guide is another useful document that has been developed to assist assessors understand the type of information required to allow the successful generation of the brief and related documents required for the Ministerial Decision package. The Style Guide is available at: http://intranet/Programmes_Group/docs/RP_Style_Guide.doc.

Table 12 Assessment Guide - Regional Office

Regional Office: Assessing Outcomes, Partnerships, Support, Project Viability, Value for Money

OUTCOMES

Definition:

The consequence of the project. Outcomes can be negative or positive. Projects should have a positive outcome (i.e. provide benefits) e.g. increased employment.

The applicant should have included a clear statement that identifies the main outcome(s) the project seeks to achieve.

Examples of typical outcomes:

- Increased employment opportunities
- Increase in business activities and opportunities (including new businesses and expansion of existing businesses, business diversification)
- Increased local private and public investment, including infrastructure investment
- Increased community capacity to develop and manage opportunities
- Completion of well supported strategic plans which identify priorities, partners and provide a framework for activities / projects
- Enhanced planning capacity within the region
- Increase in viable new or enhanced services which are well utilised and which meet community needs.

TRAX Input:

Information addressing outcomes will be entered into:

- Regional Office Formal Assessment – Project outcomes, output, rationale and methodology
- Regional Office Formal Assessment – Performance measures
- Regional Office Formal Assessment – Impact of the project on other businesses or groups

Regional Office: Assessing Outcomes, Partnerships, Support, Project Viability, Value for Money
Application references: • Application Q8,9,14 • Attachments to application form e.g. Feasibility study, project plan • ACC comments Other useful references: • ABS Statistics e.g. Accessibility / Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA), Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) The application needs to establish the: • rationale for the project is sound • expected outcomes are consistent with the rationale • expected outcomes fit within one of the four Regional Partnerships' priorities • methodology is sound • output is consistent with the outcomes • performance measures for outcomes are sound • project is competitively neutral. **Analysis:** • What are the outcomes? (i.e. what are the project's achievements?) • Who will the project benefit? The broader community? A particular community? • Are there unintended beneficiaries? Is this positive or negative? • What will the benefits to this community be? • Is the outcome achievable? • Will the project's output deliver the expected outcomes?

Regional Office: Assessing Outcomes, Partnerships, Support, Project Viability, Value for Money

- Has the applicant established that there is a need for the project?
- Will the outcomes meet the needs (rationale)?
- How was the need identified?
- Is the methodology reasonable for the outcomes and output?
- How will the outcomes be measured?
- Are these measures appropriate for the outcomes?
- Has the applicant considered the resources implications for measuring the outcomes?
- Does the applicant have, or have access to, the resources to measure the outcomes?
- Are there attachments to support the expected outcomes, rationale, methodology etc?
- Are the statements in the application form consistent with the attached evidence?
- What part of the project will RP fund?
- Are the milestones reasonable and achievable?
- Do the ACC comments reflect and support claims made by the applicant in the application form?
- Is there any indication the project will require recurrent funding?

Examples of evidence:

- Supporting feasibility study
- Supporting petitions
- Consistent with the ACC Strategic Regional Plan
- Consistent with the Local Government Plan

Regional Office: Assessing Outcomes, Partnerships, Support, Project Viability, Value for Money

PARTNERSHIPS

Definition:

An individual or organisation that makes a financial and/or in-kind contribution to the project. Often referred to as co-funding or cocktail funding.

Partnerships will:

- maximise the outcomes for each contribution
- minimise the risk of project failure if partners withdraw
- demonstrate support
- increase the commitment to the project's success
- improve the project's sustainability

TRAX Input:

- Regional Office Formal Assessment – Partnerships

Application references:

- Application form questions: 11 and 12
- Attachments to application form
- ACC comments

Other useful references:

- Grantslink www.grantslink.gov.au
- Commonwealth Regional Information Service (CHRIS)
- Relevant State Government agencies
- Contact the applicant's Local Government

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• Contact industry bodies **Analysis:** • Does the project have partners? • Is *Regional Partnerships* the most appropriate source of funding for this project? • What proportion of the project is the applicant funding? Cash or in-kind? • Do the applicant's financial statements indicate the applicant can commit to the stated contribution? • Does the applicant's contribution indicate a strong commitment to the project? (Is there a 'hurt factor' or does the Australian Government bear the risk?) • What proportion of the project is RP requested to fund? (Is there a 'factor' or does the Australian Government bear the risk?) • Are there any other partners in the project? Are they providing cash or in-kind support? • Is there anybody missing from the list of partners (eg community, industry, council, state Govt)? • What is the nature of in-kind support? If it is a cost that is already incurred regardless of the project, it should not be included (e.g. security offered in a building with donated office space). An employee's attendance at steering committees may be accepted as an in-kind contribution where the time spent represents an opportunity cost to the employer, but not if the task falls within the employee's usual duties. Assessors should consider the true value of any in-kind contribution, measuring it by what savings would be made if it was not being offered to a project and what is forgone to provide it. • Are partner's contributions 'substantial'? Consider the size of the community, the type of contribution, who the partners are, the size of the project, access to other funding sources in the community (e.g. is the local government making a small contribution to all projects in its region?) • Are there other government agencies that should be partners in this project? Has the applicant approached these agencies? What are the outcomes? • Is the project industry specific? Is the appropriate industry / peak body involved? • Where the project is industry specific has the relevant industry and stakeholders provided cash contribution? • Do the partnership contributions (including applicant's contributions and expected *Regional Partnerships* contributions) and

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cost of the project balance?

- Is the cash to in-kind contribution reasonable for the type of project?
- Are there any conditions on partner contributions? What are the impacts of these?
- Is the calculation of the in-kind contributions reasonable / consistent with the costs for the region? (e.g. labour costs in more remote regions may be higher).
- What is the status of the contributions? Do these need to be confirmed?
- Are the partners consistent with the support?
- Have the financial contributions from both the applicant and other sources been verified?
- Is the contribution retrospective – i.e. is the applicant seeking recognition of a contribution already made prior to the expected start date for the project. Retrospective funding is not eligible.

Examples of evidence:

- Average $ contribution per person in the community
- Copies of local government meeting minutes
- Letter of funding commitment
- Copy of letter advising outcome of funding application

Contact the partner to confirm status (document this contact)

SUPPORT

Definition:

An agreement or encouragement for the project to proceed. Community support for the project is critical to the long term success and ownership of the project.

TRAX Input:

Information addressing outcomes will be entered into Regional Office Formal Assessment – Support (including local

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government commitment). **Application references:** • Application form questions: 9 and 17 • Attachments to application form • ACC comments **Analysis:** • Does the project have support? • Is the support consistent with the type of project? • Has there been sufficient consultation in the community about the project? • Is there a need for ongoing community involvement? Is there the required commitment? • Is there evidence of support from the appropriate groups / communities / individuals / organisations that this project impacts on? • Does the applicant need local government support for this project in the form of: – Statutory approval e.g. zoning of land, Development Approvals, Building approval – On-going maintenance costs e.g. operation costs, maintenance of infrastructure, maintenance of grounds, public liability costs • Has this commitment to support been obtained? • Is the evidence of support commensurate with the project type / scale / outcomes etc? **Examples of evidence:** • Partnerships • Sponsor for the project

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- Letters of support
- Letters of commitment
- Petitions in favour of the project
- Positive outcomes from community consultations

Volunteer labour

PROJECT VIABILITY

Definition:

Evidence that the project outcomes are sustainable beyond the funding period, and that the project has been appropriately costed.

Purpose:

- To ensure that the projects funded by the Australian Government will not need further funding to enable the outcomes to be completed or sustained.

TRAX Input:

Information addressing outcomes will be entered into:

- Due Diligence – Project Viability
- Regional Office Formal Assessment – Project Viability
- Regional Office Formal Assessment – Budget Issues

Application references:

- Questions 8 - 14
- Attached Business Plans, Cash Flow projections, evidence of ongoing support from other sources, exit strategy.
- Independent ‘commercial risk’ assessment if undertaken.
- Advice from other Australian Government agencies (to verify demand for product / services for commercial activities) if sought.

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Other useful references:

Industry reports / analysis where relevant.

Analysis:

Project viability – general

- What evidence is there that the outcomes of the project will be sustained beyond the project-funding period?
- What are the implications if this *Regional Partnerships* application is not successful?
- Is there a detailed and comprehensive project plan? Does it identify all of the critical stages of the project?
- Are there any barriers to achieving the milestones and outcomes? Has the applicant addressed or planned for these?
- Is government approval required for any aspect of this project e.g.:
  - Statutory approval e.g. zoning of land,
  - Development Approvals,
  - Building approval,
  - EPA assessments
  - Has this approval been sought / received?

Project viability – non-commercial activity

- Does the project have a specific end point? If so, does the project plan identify how the project will be 'closed down'?
- If the project doesn't have an end point, does the project plan indicate
  - who will manage the project activities at the end of the funding period?
  - how the project will meet ongoing costs (e.g. operation costs, maintenance of infrastructure, maintenance of grounds, public liability costs) associated with the project beyond the funding period?
  - what will happen to project assets in the event that the project is wound up some time in the future?

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Project viability – commercial activity

- Has the applicant established a commercial demand for their product / service? Has this been independently verified?
- Has a cash flow projection for the commercial activity been included and does it demonstrate the business to be self-sustaining beyond the funding period?
- What is the maximum working capital deficit identified in the cash flow projection and has the applicant demonstrated how this would be met?
- Have all reasonable costs been incorporated into the budget?
- Has the applicant identified the business assumptions on which their projections are based and are these reasonable?
- Has the applicant identified a 'worse case' scenario or solely the best case scenario?

Project budgeting - general

- Does the budget balance?
- Are the costs inclusive or exclusive?
- Is the budget adequate to support the planned activities?
- Are there quotes attached for the cost items?
- Is funding being sought for retrospective activities?
- Are the costs reasonable for the region?
- Is the funding to be fully expended within the life of the project?
- What level of co-funding (cash) has been identified? Have these been confirmed? How?
- What level of co-funding (in-kind) has been identified? Are the cost equivalents fair? Have these been confirmed (where they are critical to project)?
- Has each milestone of the project been separately costed? Will these (or combinations of these) represent reasonable payment milestones?

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- Will the applicant (and partners) be contributing funds to the project equitably throughout the project (i.e., not all of Australian Government funds spent first before applicant funds involved)?

Examples of evidence:

- Applicant (and partners) co-contribution to project – as evidenced by:
  - bank statements for three successive months of minimum balance to meet co-contribution
  - letter of advice of approval of bank loan for said purpose
  - line of credit against mortgage of available credit,
  - convertible securities to value of contribution, or equivalent.

Benchmarks:

Do the costs categorised as “other” exceed 10% or $5000 (whichever is the lesser amount)? If so, request a cost breakdown from the applicant.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Definition:

The project will deliver its outcomes through the most efficient and effective means.

Value for money is determined by taking into account the total request for *Regional Partnerships* funding and the project and applicant meeting *Regional Partnerships*’ assessment criteria, as well as the degree to which they meet regional priorities.

Purpose:

To identify those projects that demonstrate better value for money by achieving their outcomes through the most efficient and effective means by

- being a priority for the region and
- by securing appropriate funding from other sources and/or
- have exhausted other funding options.

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TRAX Input:

- Regional Office Formal Assessment – Value for Money

Application references:

- Assessment against each criteria
- ACC comments
- Additional information obtained through the assessment process

Analysis:

- Does the project align with *Regional Partnerships*' priorities?
- Are the applicant's claims substantiated?
- Does the application meet the assessment criteria?
- Is the project a priority for the region?
- Is the project a cross regional, state or national priority?
- Is the request for RP funding commensurate with the outcomes and regional priority?
- What are the risks to the Department in funding the project? (e.g. is it setting a precedent?)
- Are there any other issues not addressed by the individual criteria?

Examples of evidence:

- Additional consideration / information
- Additional community support

3.5 *Applications Seeking Small Grants*

Small grants are defined as those that are $25,000 or less.

Small grants of $25,000 or less carry relatively low risk for the Australian Government. Therefore, the amount of information required to adequately assess the risk, and level of project monitoring, can be reduced accordingly.

Applicants seeking smaller grants will soon be able to apply using a “smart” word application form which will have a TRAX interface. This is still under development.

The current lodgement and allocation process will remain the same however the turn around time is expected to be much quicker.

ACC’s where possible should ensure that applicants have provided sufficient information to enable the assessment of the applicant’s claims against the assessment criteria prior to the application being lodged.

3.5.1 ACC Comments

ACC comments should provide simple yes or no answers (or short sentence if necessary). The following questions will need to be considered by the ACC:

- Is the proposal consistent with the Strategic Regional Plan?
- Is the proposal needed?
- Is the applicant capable of undertaking the project?

The ACC should complete their comments in TRAX and submit them within seven days.

3.5.2 Simplified Assessment Process

Regional Offices should assess small grant applications on the basis of the information supplied in the application form only.

A quick eligibility check should be undertaken before commencing the assessment and the applicant notified in writing if they are eligible.

TRAX at this stage has not been designed for the small grants assessment. Development work is underway to address this problem. In the meantime an assessment template located at Attachment A can be used.

The assessment should concentrate on whether the application clearly and adequately addresses the programmes key assessment criteria ie:

- Definitive outcomes
- Good partnerships
- Evidence of project sustainability.

The budget is often not clear therefore the following budget issues need to be checked:

- Is the budget adequate to support the planned activity?
- Does the budget seem reasonable?
- Does the budget balance?
- Is the partnerships contribution adequate?

The assessment should also concentrate on justifying or supporting the assessor's decision. The assessment does not have to go into the detail of covering off every eventuality.

All other standard template letters and media releases etc remain the same and are located at Attachment K.

All other procedures for Quality Assurance and packaging remain consistent with normal application procedures.

Where an applicant or project activity is clearly ineligible, according to RP guidelines, the normal process should be followed ie the applicant is advised by the Regional Office that the project is ineligible and no further action is taken on the project. The standard unsuccessful letter template can be used (Attachment L).

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services is the decision maker.

3.6 Competitive neutrality

In considering a proposal it is important to also consider the financial risk assessment in conjunction with issues of competitive neutrality. This is to ensure Regional Partnerships does not give any unfair advantage to an organisation when another organisation in the same location or same market are offering the same product or service.

The types of issues the assessor should be thinking about are detailed below:

What is the **product** exactly? What is the **market**, where and who?

What is the scale of **competition**? Who else is already making / doing it? Who could be disadvantaged? Does the project compete directly with local businesses, or those located in the region, state or nationally? Consider whether *Regional Partnerships* would provide assistance to a business that was competing at a state or national level.

Has the proponent demonstrated a **demand** for the product through market research and a business plan? Have they considered marketing their product, including costs, method and how will competitors react?

Consider the **supply** chain, what are the impacts and who may be disadvantaged. The proponent should provide a comprehensive outline of what the market is and reasons for seeking funds to intervene in the market.

If the proposal is for the provision of additional **services** such as a financial institution, check what services are currently being provided through a Post Office e.g. GiroPost, or other bank agencies often located in small businesses. Also need to carefully consider number of proposed transactions and how fee for service is calculated.

Can the proponent demonstrate they are adding value, will the proponent be using innovative, best practice or new technologies, is it tried and tested or is there considerable risk associated with commercialising the new **technology**? Has the proponent considered the risks and do they have alternative solutions. Who owns the intellectual property for the new technology?

What will be the **benefits** to the business and the region if *Regional Partnerships* funds were provided? Will they be economic benefits e.g. job creation, providing new skills, will there be appropriate training provided, will the business bring in a new skilled workforce, if so is this appropriate in this region, what is the unemployment in the community. What will the **impact** be on neighbouring regions, is there likely to be shift in labour market, will there be sufficient housing and other services available for a new expanded workforce.

Will the benefits be **social**, if so what are they, how will they be delivered and measured. Examples may include the community securing key infrastructure and services, the social benefits that flow from creating employment, improved education and training opportunities, health benefits, increased community capacity, pride and wellbeing and managing volunteer burnout.

If the assessor feels there is a competitive neutrality issue and the applicant has not addressed this issue sufficiently they should place the onus back on to the applicant and ask them to provide strong evidence that demonstrates there is no competition with other like businesses in the town. The evidence could be in the form of letters of support from other like businesses that could be disadvantaged if the project were to go ahead. In addition, the applicant should provide copies of any research carried out that helped provide evidence that there was a demand for such a service or that they were entering into an untapped market.

3.7 Regional Manager's Review

When the assessment is completed by a Regional Office staff member, a review check by the Regional Manager is then undertaken and a final recommendation submitted in TRAX. For assistance in undertaking this step in TRAX follow the link to the TRAX Quick Reference Guide (Step 5): TRAX 2 5 RP-QuickReference-Allocate-Assess-Monitor-1.doc

The Regional Manager should take into consideration:

- whether or not the application is consistent with the Regional Partnership guidelines
- whether / how the project will contribute to programme objectives
- confirm that the project does not duplicate activities and/or services already available in the community or adversely impact on competitors
- whether or not the application is consistent with regional priorities

The Regional Manager should then ensure that the assessment is transmitted via TRAX to the National Office for the QA review and batching.

3.8 Strategic Opportunities Notional Allocation (SONA)

Procedures for Strategic Opportunities Notional Allocation (SONA) under the *Regional Partnerships* Programme.

A portion of the *Regional Partnerships* programme (RP) funding is available each financial year for new projects that are seen as strategic opportunities.

The Strategic Opportunities Notional Allocation (SONA) will allow the Government to respond quickly and easily to a diverse range of situations which may fall outside the administrative constraints of RP, but which are consistent with the purposes of RP. The procedures for managing SONA projects are set out below.

3.8.1 Types of projects that can be considered

SONA projects and initiatives need to be consistent with the goals and priorities of either *Regional Partnerships* or the Stronger Regions, A Stronger Australia statement and must meet the majority of the Regional Partnership programme's selection criteria.

Projects that could be considered under SONA include those that meet a broad national need, for example, they:

- are of national or cross-regional significance;
- are a whole of government response; or
- respond to a significant event, such as a regional economic or social crisis, where support is not available from existing relief programmes.

In addition SONA may be used to address programme constraints of a more administrative nature. Examples include:

- where funding for a high priority project would significantly exceed the relevant ACC's notional allocation and approval cannot be delayed until sufficient RP funding becomes available; or
- where a decision not to support a project is reversed following formal review and additional funding flexibility is required; or
- where a project or initiative would require the waiver of some specific part of the guidelines or eligibility criteria in order to be funded (e.g. the waiver that enabled normally ineligible proponents, Australia Post and Centrelink, to participate in Rural Transaction Centres (RTCs).

3.8.2 Funding

A notional allocation of funds will be established for SONA each year. Just like an ACC notional allocation, SONA represents a notional guide to the amount of funds available for SONA projects. The SONA allocation is not an additional source of funding. Projects approved under SONA are funded from the same pool of *Regional Partnerships* funds as normal RP projects.

There is no obligation to commit all of the SONA allocation as the funding can be used to fund normal RP projects if necessary. However, to ensure RP funding is utilised effectively and does not remain unspent, the SONA allocation will be progressively reduced to a pre-determined level at the beginning of each quarter of the financial year (see example below). Any uncommitted amounts above these levels will be returned to the general RP funding pool. SONA will be finally closed off at the beginning of each June.

Example (for 2003-04)

Period	Maximum allocation available at start of period*	% of full year allocation
1 July – 30 September	$3.000m	100%
1 Oct – 31 December	$2.000m	66%
1 Jan 04 – 31 Mar 04	$1.000m	33%
1 April 04 – 30 June 04	$0.500m	16%

*Footnote: The allocation available may actually be less than the maximum cited in the example table above if there had been higher levels of approvals in previous quarters. For example, if approvals of $1.5 million were made in the first quarter, then the maximum allocation available in the second quarter would be $1.5 million not $2.0 million as shown in the table above.

3.8.3 Will SONA be advertised?

SONA arrangements will not be advertised and specific applications for consideration under SONA arrangements will not normally be called for.

3.8.4 Where will SONA projects come from?

SONA projects may come from a number of sources. Some may come through the normal channels via an ACC and Regional Office. Other potential SONA projects may originate from representations made to the Minister, Parliamentary Secretary or other members of Parliament.

In addition, projects may come from:

- direct representations to the Department
- the Standing Committee on Regional Development
- a commitment made by the Government.

3.8.5 Who decides whether a project is suitable for consideration under SONA?

The decision on whether projects are suitable for consideration under SONA will be made by the Branch Head of Regional Communities Branch in National Office. The decision will be made in consultation with the Directors of the *Regional Partnerships* Operations and Applications, Approvals and Contracts Sections and the relevant Regional Office. If the decision is made that the project is suitable for SONA, the *Regional Partnerships* Operations Section will be responsible for quality assurance and any other issues that need to be managed by National Office. (Standard applications will continue to be managed by the Applications, Approvals and Contracts Section).

3.8.6 Managing SONA projects

Where possible, SONA projects should follow the usual processes for RP projects, that is, the proponent submits an application, the application is assessed by the Regional Office in consultation with the relevant ACC and National Office reviews the assessment to ensure quality and consistency.

However, as some SONA projects will go beyond addressing the needs of one region, it may be necessary to vary this process in some respects, primarily to allow for consultation with a larger than usual number of ACCs and other stakeholders.

For this reason, an ACC with a potential SONA project should contact the Regional Office as soon as possible to discuss it. Regional Offices are also encouraged to provide National Office with an ‘early alert’ that a SONA project is being considered.

An ‘early alert’ will enable discussions to take place between the Regional Office and National Office on the project’s suitability for SONA arrangements and the process for managing the application before undue expectations are raised and time and effort is invested in developing the application.

3.8.7 Consultation and assessment for SONA projects

The exact process will depend on the nature of the project, but some broad rules of thumb are as follows:

- Whenever possible, the consultation and assessment process for SONA projects should be managed by a Regional Office to ensure that the assessment process (Regional Office) and the quality assurance process (Central Office) are kept distinct. Where a project has come through a Regional Office, that Regional Office will generally continue to manage the project once the decision has been made to consider it under SONA. Where the project has been developed at National Office level, it will generally be referred to the Regional Office closest to the area in which the application originated for assessment.
- On rare occasions, the decision may be taken for National Office to manage the consultation and/or assessment of a SONA project. This is most likely to occur with projects of national significance or whole of government projects which did not originate through the usual ACC/RO channels and which require extensive consultation with other departments or agencies at national level.
- In the case of projects with national scope, it is more appropriate and timely to seek comments from the CRG instead of individual ACCs. In this case, the consultation process would be facilitated by National Office. However, a Regional Office may still be required to manage consultation on any local dimensions of the project such as the capacity of the proponent.
- For cross-regional projects it will generally be up to the Regional Office to request comment from the relevant ACC(s). The ACC covering the area the application comes from may be required to consult with other affected ACCs. Alternatively, the Department may choose to seek comment from a State Representative on the Chairs Reference Group (CRG).

3.8.8 Project Approval - SONA

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services and the Minister for Trade will be the delegate in consultation, where appropriate, with the Minister for Transport and Regional Services. The amount of funding for a project will be at her/his discretion but within the confines of funds available for SONA at that time.

National Office will make a recommendation to the delegate to either approve or not approve the project based on a review of the assessment received from the Regional Office. SONA projects will be included in regular approval packages wherever possible.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services and the Minister for Trade, in consultation where appropriate, with the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, will have the final decision on whether the project is suitable for funding through SONA.

3.8.9 Reporting

All decisions relating to SONA applications, and the reasons for the decisions, will normally be tracked through TRAX. Successful SONA projects will be placed on the public record via media releases as well as being published on the Department's website. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via a letter from the Department outlining the reasons as to why the project was unsuccessful. The letter may be sent by the Regional Office or National Office, depending on who was responsible for managing the project.

3.8.10 Contracting and Monitoring

The majority of Funding Agreements under SONA will still be prepared by the National Office, although there may be instances where a contract could be prepared, and possibly managed, by a Regional Office. See contract section for further information on how to raise a contract.

3.9 *Quality Assurance*

3.9.1 Quality Assurance check - National Office

The National Office performs a quality assurance review of assessments, including corporate governance and ensuring outcomes / outputs required by policy are met. The purpose of this review stage is to ensure national consistency of assessments. The review process has been designed in a way that it addresses a standard set of questions which are answered directly into TRAX. Follow the link below to the TRAX Quick Reference Guide, (Step 6) for how to complete the National Office review in TRAX:
TRAX 2 5 RP-QuickReference-Allocate-Assess-Monitor-1.doc

Ministers cannot be expected to defend decisions where seemingly similar projects are treated differently. Our challenge is to ensure consistency both locationally and over time. For example, where a project from Western Australia is declined in one batch, and then a seemingly similar project in the same or an earlier batch from Queensland is funded. However, often seemingly similar projects may have regional circumstances that are not immediately obvious but may legitimately influence a recommendation. National Office needs to ensure these circumstances are identified in the assessment.

Where assessments do not meet requirements, National Office will discuss and agree possible revisions to the assessment / recommendation with Regional Managers.

3.9.2 Multi-Year Projects and Multi Year Payments

MFFA Approval

Approval must be obtained from the Minister for Finance and Administration (MFFA) for all discretionary grants or projects whose implementation exceeds twelve calendar months.

Multi-Year Project

A multi-year grant applies when RP payments take place over more than 12 months. It does not apply to the length of the project – rather the period of time that we are committed to making payments. For example a project starting in May 04, with the first payment from DOTARS made in Aug 04 and the last made in Feb 05 and the project itself finishes in December 06 would not be a classified as a multi-year-grant.

Discretionary Grants - Definition

Discretionary grants are payments where the Portfolio Minister or paying agency has discretion in determining whether or not a particular applicant receives funding and may or may not impose conditions in return for the grant. The payment can be made to an organisation or individual and includes ad hoc grants that are made on a one-off basis, as well as grants renewed under continuing programmes. Discretionary grants should be linked to the deliver y of specific projects, services or activities. They should not be used to fund general operating, research or national secretariat expenses.

Discretionary Grants Central Register (DGCR)

The Department of Finance and Administration (DOFA) has established a central repository and reporting system containing information on all discretionary grants, the Discretionary Grants Central Register (DGCR).

3.9.3 Finalising projects for packaging

Once the Quality Assurance review has been undertaken by the National Office the steps as shown in the following checklist are undertaken to prepare the necessary paperwork for a Ministerial Package.

Ministerial Package Checklist	
Clear Summary and media release with EL2	❑
Save cleared summary in RP Projects folder: RPXXX Project Title summary	❑
Save checked letters in RP Projects folder: RPXXX Project Title letters	❑
Update project summary attachment in Coalition MP Senator letter so that it is the same as the Project Summary, i.e. incorporate any amendments	❑
Email media release to Veronika Sain in Communications for clearance	❑
Save cleared media release in RP Projects with 'cleared' at the beginning of title: RPXXX Project title cleared media release	❑
Check letters for grammar and style	❑
Update Attachment A in: Package Info folder / Package xx folder	❑
Pass a hard copy of Project Summary, letters and media release with the words 'ready to go' to package compiler	❑

3.10 *Ministerial decision and announcement*

The current authority for approval currently rests with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, referred to throughout as the Minister.

3.10.1 Packaging projects for Ministerial decision

The National Office will be responsible for packaging projects cleared for submission to the Minister.

Recommended and Not Recommended project reports are generated and grouped for forwarding to the Minister. Packages can now be generated through TRAX, follow the link below to the TRAX Quick Reference Guide (step 7) for how to generate Ministers Package in TRAX:

TRAX 2 5 RP-QuickReference-Allocate-Assess-Monitor-1.doc

Manual templates are also available at Attachment K. The package is sent to the Parliamentary Secretary's DLO and Advisor, Minister Anderson's DLO and Advisor, PLS, FAS, Branch Head, Director and team and Regional Managers.

A package of projects is forwarded to the Ministers office every Friday. Weekly packaging allows a regular and frequent flow of RP announcements to occur and for the Government to respond to urgent applications for funding.

In each package, projects will be grouped according to whether they are recommended, not recommended or Multi-Year grants.

There will be no minimum number of projects required for a package.

Package Inclusions

- A brief / minute to the Minister which covers background information on projects approved and not approved in the package.
- Individual project summaries and reasons for recommendation. The summary also details:
  - application identifying number
  - package number
  - project title
  - organisation name
  - organisation contact
  - location
  - primary electorate
  - local ACC

- ACC contact
- project summary
- applicant bid
- project co-funding
- project duration
- ACC priority
- project assessment
- DOTARS recommendation
- recommended funding including financial year split and GST components.

• Draft letters (For assistance with generating letters from TRAX follow the link TRAX Docs for linking to RP Manual\TRAX 2 5 User Manual v02.doc or see Attachment K for manual templates)

- draft letters for Minister to sign to the coalition MPs and/or patron Senators for approved projects including attachment detailing project summary and draft media release
- draft letters for Minister to sign to the relevant ACC Chairs for approved projects and an official Ministerial invitation to attend Departmental event form
- draft letters for Minister to sign to the non-coalition / independent Member (if applicable) for approved projects including attachment detailing project summary
- draft letters, for the Minister to sign, to the project applicants for approved projects from the Minister.

3.10.2 Approval process

On return of signed approval from the Minister's Office, TRAX will be updated to reflect the decision made. Regional Offices will be advised at this point of approval / non approval of projects.

Note: The Ministers preference is for local MPs or Senators to have the opportunity to advise successful proponents on behalf of the Government. This means that DOTARS may find that applicants and ACCs are aware that a project is successful before staff in either National Office or Regional Office have been notified. This situation should be managed by DOTARS staff tactfully.

Regional Offices will be advised where a project has been unsuccessful and asked to notify the applicants on behalf of the Department (see unsuccessful letter template).

3.10.3 Announcement

The Minister will sign documentation in preparation for the announcement of 'approved' projects.

- The Minister is provided with the following letters regarding successful applicants:
  - Letter to coalition MP and/or Patron Senator
  - Letter to ACC
  - Letter to non-coalition / independent Member (if applicable)
  - Letter to applicant

  The MP / Patron Senator is notified a project has been funded and is invited to advise the applicants and make arrangements for announcement. Two or three days after this, advice to the successful applicants and ACCs will be despatched by the Minister's Office. Advice to non-coalition MPs will also be despatched by the Minister's office (if applicable). See Attachment K for template letters etc included in ministerial package
- The signed minute is returned to National Office.
- The Regional Office should follow up advice of successful applications, once announced, within ten working days of receiving notification of funding approval with a contract, or in complex cases, begin negotiation of the terms of the contract.
- The Regional Office will send advice in the form of a letter to applicants whose projects were 'Not approved' and the relevant ACC. This advice will include specific reasons for non-approval. These reasons should directly relate to programme criteria.
- The Regional Office will be the primary contact for unsuccessful applicants and/or where reconsideration is sought. For information on the Review Process for unsuccessful applications, see Review Process.

- For information on processes involved in inviting a Minister to attend an event, including project launches etc refer to the section below.
- Media Releases relating to approved projects will be posted on the Minister's Home Page by the Minister's Office. The Department will arrange for details of all projects to be added to the DOTARS website.

3.10.4 Invitations to openings / launches

A template (see Attachment O) that ACCs can use to invite the Minister (or representative) to an opening or launch is sent to them with each letter from the Minister announcing funding approval for their projects. When completed, this template should be forwarded to the relevant Regional Office for action.

- Invitations should come through the Regional Office on e-mail address RegProgsInvites@dotars.gov.au . The Ministers' offices have agreed that any invitations received by them that have not come through the Department will be forwarded to the Department for action.
- When received on this email address, invitations for either Minister to attend an event are to be forwarded to the relevant team within National Office. For example, an ACC event will be forwarded to the ACC team, RTC to the RTC team and Regional Office projects to the Applications, Approvals and Announcements team.
- It is anticipated that most invitations will be directed to the decision maker. Mr Anderson's office has advised that Mrs Kelly should be invited except where the event is in Gwydir or coincides with a trip being undertaken by Mr Anderson. Note: Dairy RAP invitations will be addressed to Minister Warren Truss as the Minister responsible for DRAP.
- The invitation details will be recorded by National Office in a spreadsheet that is accessible by the Ministers' Offices. All Regional Office staff should have read access to this document.
- The spreadsheet is located at G:/Everyone/RegProgs schedules/Ministerial Tracking.xls.
- All invitations received during the course of a week will be forwarded to the relevant Ministers' offices on Friday of that week.
- The DLO will generate briefing requests for launch briefs to ensure they are registered with Parliamentary Liaison Service (PLS).
- The Ministers' offices will then establish whether a Minister can attend.
- In the event that the Minister is unable to attend, the Ministers' Offices will attempt to find a replacement representative – usually the Local Member or a Patron Senator.
- In the event that they are unable to find a representative they will request a departmental or ACC representative attend the event on behalf of the Minister.
- Briefings should be prepared in sufficient time to have it with the Minister's Office one week before the event. See Attachment O for briefing template.

- Briefing is to be cleared through the relevant Area Manager before being sent to National Office.
- Briefing is to be prepared for the relevant Minister even when an alternative representative has been nominated. The Ministers' Office will forward the briefing.

Where the Department or ACC will be asked to represent the Minister, National Office will advise as soon as possible. It should be noted that this decision is usually made quite late when all other options have been unsuccessful.

4 Post-decision management

4.1 Rejection and consequent reconsideration / review / appeal

4.1.1 Advice to unsuccessful applicants

Unsuccessful applicants should be advised in writing within two weeks after the Ministerial announcement is made. This letter should include the specific reason(s) for non-approval (see Attachment L). It should also include an explanation that the Department can arrange a consultation, if they wish to address reasons for non-approval, and that there may be an opportunity to re-submit the application when these issues have been addressed.

If the proponent chooses to discuss with the Department the reasons for non-approval, the relevant officer should try to arrange a face-to-face meeting. An ACC representative will also be available to work through the application.

4.1.2 Review - Circumstances / Reasons

Under certain circumstances, applicants may seek a review of decision. Applicants may seek a review of decision because:

- Their application has been rejected; or
- The Minister offers a lower grant than what was requested; or
- The grant proves to be inadequate for the project due to other circumstances following the assessment process.

4.1.3 Prerequisites for Review

Before a review is undertaken, an applicant's request for review must have met three threshold criteria:

- Applications for review must be made in writing to:
  Assistant Secretary
  Regional Analysis and Performance Branch
  Department of Transport and Regional Services
  GPO Box 594
  Canberra ACT 2601
  requesting a review of the ministerial decision.
- The request should be made in writing within 12 weeks of being advised of the Minister's decision (by letter from the DOTARS Regional Office).
- The proponent should provide a statement of claims that the application has been misinterpreted, misunderstood or that proper procedures have not been followed.

4.1.4 Review Process

The review process is outlined on the website for the information of applicants.

The National Office Analysis and Evaluation (A&E) Section will assess requests for review in consultation with the relevant Regional Office and ACC. A&E will be responsible for determining if the three pre-requisite criteria have been satisfied. The A&E section will advise the applicant in writing within ten days if the request for a review of ministerial decision (ROMD) will be undertaken. Should a ROMD be warranted, the applicant will be given a date when they should expect a response from the Minister. This date will be six weeks after the request has been received by the Assistant Secretary, Regional Analysis and Performance Branch.

If the request does not satisfy the pre-requisite criteria, the application for review should be rejected. A letter will be sent to the applicant explaining that the information provided in their appeal is not consistent with the review guidelines. Where additional information is provided that is not consistent with the review guidelines, they will be informed that they have the option of lodging a new application with the additional information included.

An officer (usually at the APS6 level) other than the original assessor will undertake the review. A list is kept of all National Office APS6 officers in the Regional Programmes Division to enable cases for review to be assigned on a rotating basis.

On completion of the review, the Department will brief the Minister about the outcome of the review. As the Minister is the final decision-maker, the Minister must also make decisions arising from the review.

If the review process recommends that the original decision be overturned, the Department will prepare a letter for the Minister's signature advising the applicant of the next steps in the process. If the original decision stands, the Department will prepare a letter for the Minister to the applicant advising of the outcome of the review and, where relevant, inviting the applicant to consider re-applying.

4.1.5 The Reviewing Officer's Tasks

The reviewing officer is responsible for making a recommendation to uphold or overturn the original decision made on an application, based on their review. The review task must be undertaken within the six week deadline ie the date stated in the letter sent to the applicant notifying them that their review request has been accepted.

The reviewing officer should note that a full re-assessment of the original assessment is not required and should clearly focus on the following:

- the specific issues raised by the applicant in their letter;
- collecting all required evidence to substantiate the applicants claims;
- prepare a report detailing the findings of the review; and
- together with a buddy allocated from the A&E Section, prepare a brief to the Minister advising of the outcome of the review. In addition to the brief a letter the applicant explaining the result of the ROMD should be prepared. Templates are available.

4.1.6 Final Decision

The Minister, as the final decision-maker regarding approval of projects under the *Regional Partnerships* Programme, will also make the final decision in the review process.

Table 13 Post-Decision Management - Regional Office Checklist

Regional Office Checklist – Post-Decision Management	
Post decision management	
Receive advice from National Office regarding Minister's decision	❑
Confirm conditions of approval (e.g. partnership contributions, statutory approvals, project or applicant viability checks, etc)	❑
Send formal advice letter to applicant	❑
If approved, contract forwarded in 10 working days (if routine – longer if legal checks required). Provide recipient 2 weeks to respond.	❑
If not approved, reasons why (state specific criteria not met, where applicable)	❑
Update TRAX	❑
Negotiate with applicant outcomes, milestones and performance measures	❑
Liaise with National Office in development of Funding Agreement	❑
Update conditions of approval	❑
Advise National Office of negotiated milestones and performance measures	❑
Funding Agreement Management	
Put a copy of the Funding Agreement on a project file	❑
Update TRAX with the date contract signed and returned	❑
Ensure reporting dates and milestone payment dates are entered correctly	❑
On receipt of the first tax invoice, process the first payment (check vendor details in SAP, create a Purchase Order in SAP)	❑
Have any changes / variations to the Funding Agreement approved by the delegate and/or renegotiated with the grantee (larger variations, such as those to outcomes, should be made by the National Office)	❑
Payments	
Before making payments, check to ensure that progress reports and/or conditions have been met and approved by the appropriate delegate.	❑
Make project milestone payments on acquittal of previous payments and achievement of milestones	❑
Ensure Purchase Order is raised for full contract amount	❑
Record all payments in TRAX and on the registry file	❑
Final Payment	
Check the report against the contract and earlier reports and complete the TRAX	❑

Regional Office Checklist – Post-Decision Management	
field on final outcomes.	❑
Process the final payment through SAP	❑
Finalise the project on TRAX	❑
Undertake any necessary follow-up with applicants regarding best practice outcome and publicity	❑
Undertake any necessary follow-up with applicants regarding outcomes reports	

4.2 Funding Agreements

Grant recipients (or sponsoring organisations, where applicable) will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement with the Commonwealth.

Applicants should be encouraged to read the Regional Partnerships Funding Agreement before applying (available at www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au).

The RP Funding Agreement is modelled on the Long and Short Form Standardised Funding Agreements developed by the More Accessible Government initiative – a copy is on the *Regional Partnerships* website www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au.

A copy of the departmental guide to the Agreement has been supplied to Regional Offices, and is also on the G: drive. This is not to be shared with external parties on advice from the Attorney's General Department as it may misconstrued as legal advice.

4.2.1 Advice to applicant (contract / funding)

Following approval of funding by the Minister and subsequent advice to ACC's and recipients, the Regional Office Project Officer should make contact with the applicant either by means of a phone call or a letter, this would depend on the complexity of the project. The advice would be along the lines of:

- after negotiating Budget information, Outcomes and Milestones, a draft Funding Agreement will be forwarded within 10 working days. For Agreements that require confirmation by DOTARS' lawyers, this may take longer.
- the successful applicant has 14 days to respond with comments or, if satisfied, execute the Funding Agreement
- that the first payment will not be made until all conditions imposed on the approval of the funding are met.

For assistance on raising a funding agreement in TRAX follow the link below to the TRAX Quick Reference Guide: TRAX 2 5 RP-QuickReference-Manage Agreements Payments-1.doc

For the location of the standard Funding Agreement template follow the link Standardised Funding Agreement.

4.2.2 Funding Agreement preparation

Funding Agreement preparation with negotiated and agreed outcomes, milestones, payment schedules and reporting requirements, is a shared responsibility between the National Office and Regional Offices, as outlined in the table below. It should be noted that no applications will be an annexure to the Funding Agreement.

Table 14 Funding Agreements - Responsibilities

Contracting function	Main Responsibility		
	National	Shared	Regional
Development and version control of RP Funding Agreement	X		
Liaison with legal advisors on content of RP Funding Agreement and discussion with legal advisors on issues requiring legal clarification	X		
Preparation of the Funding Agreement with negotiated and agreed outcomes, milestones; payment schedule and reporting requirements			X
Development and oversight of a Funding Agreement monitoring framework	X		
Monitoring of a funding recipient's performance and progress against agreed outcomes and milestones			X
Processing of payments			X
Liaison with funding recipients and stakeholders			X
Acquittal of expenditure			X
Reviewing progress and other reports received			X
Variations to Funding Agreements		X	
Finalisation of Funding Agreements including payment, any reimbursements required, project termination			X
System input and updates			X
Evaluation and Review		X	

4.2.3 Funding Agreement steps

1. Draft a Funding Agreement in TRAX and send the funding recipient the approved negotiated draft Funding Agreement for comment. Enter the details of the mailing date into the Funding Agreement tracker in TRAX.
2. Prepare a standard letter generated through TRAX also available at Attachment P. This letter contains clear instructions about the funding recipient's obligations relating to the execution and return of the Funding Agreement (i.e. two copies of the Funding Agreement; both copies must be executed). The letter will ask the funding recipient to provide bank account details. This will enable the Department to make EFT payments in line with Government practices, and will indicate a timeframe for return with tax invoice for the first payment.
3. If required, ask the funding recipient to set up a separate bank account to satisfy the Department that they can clearly and easily identify expenditure of RP funds.
4. When the Funding Agreements are returned signed, enter the date in the Funding Agreement tracker and carefully check the Funding Agreement for any changes that may have been made. The DOTARS delegate should execute the Funding Agreement along with a departmental witness.
5. Changes to the Funding Agreement proposed by the funding recipient should be approved by the DOTARS delegate or renegotiated with the funding recipient. If no changes have been made, assess whether funding conditions have been met.
6. Prepare standard letter and return one copy of the signed Funding Agreement to the funding recipient, indicating when the first payment will be made by the Department.
7. Place DOTARS copy of executed Funding Agreement on file.
8. Request vendor number (if required) in SAP from the DOTARS financial services area.

4.2.4 Project Details

Some of the key elements that the Schedule to the Funding Agreement will require details of are:

- the project objective, the Activity Period (i.e. time it will take to deliver the items that PR is funding), Project outcomes and performance measures, and Activity milestones. It will also require details of the funding, reporting and payment arrangements. They need not be lengthy, but they must be clear, as funding recipients will be asked to report against them and satisfactory progress will be essential for the release of progress payments.
- insurances - the insurance requirements will be itemised in the application form
- details of the funding recipient and DOTARS contact officers.

4.2.5 Negotiation – milestones, timelines, payments

The Regional Office should negotiate milestones, timelines and payments with the funding recipient. Negotiations should be based on the milestones identified in the funding application relevant to the approved Activity. In developing appropriate and relevant milestones, it is recommended that the following key questions be considered:

- What are the critical points in the progress of the Activity?
- How will we determine when the Activity has been successfully completed?

These milestones should only be adjusted if it becomes apparent that the funding recipient is unable to achieve them in the time identified, through circumstances out of their control. Reporting and payment schedules should be designed to ensure minimal risk to the Department should the Activity not proceed in the manner expected - refer to the risk management guidelines and ANAO Grants Management Better Practice Guide at www.anao.gov.au.

When making any adjustments ensure that these adjustments will not impact on the project complying with RP programme objectives.

4.2.6 Outcomes and performance measures

Outcomes and performance measures are crucial for evaluating the success of the Programme. They must be clearly defined and set out in the Funding Agreement Schedule (See Attachment D – Guide to gathering better performance information in funding agreements).

4.2.6.1 Funding Agreements – signing by NO and RO officers

Funding Agreements drafted in Regional Offices are to be signed by Regional Managers (subject to delegations). Funding Agreements drafted in National Office are to be signed in National Office.

4.2.7 Funding Agreement Management (RO)

Funding Agreements will be administered in Regional Offices. Progress payments will be subject to the satisfactory demonstration of project progress against milestones and the acquittal of previous funds as outlined in Funding Agreement schedules. Monitoring processes (eventually assisted by TRAX) will be developed to assist in the identification of overdue reports, missed milestones and expenditure slippage.

Regional Office staff should:

- place a copy of the Funding Agreement on a project file
- update TRAX with the date the Funding Agreement is signed and returned
- e-mail copy of funding agreement to Analysis & Evaluation Team
- ensure reporting dates and milestone payment dates are entered correctly
- on receipt of the first tax invoice, process the first payment (check vendor details in SAP, obtain an Internal Order number, create a Purchase Order in SAP). When the delegate releases the purchase order, the first payment will be made directly into the funding recipient's account. A purchase Order must be raised to ensure a commitment has been assigned in SAP. If a Purchase is not raised then SAP will not recognise the commitment.

Occasionally an Activity will not be completed. This could be for a variety of reasons and wherever possible Regional Office staff should consult with the funding recipient and with the National Office to attempt to resolve any issues that may be threatening a project collapse.

Where a satisfactory resolution is not achievable, an Activity, through the Funding Agreement, may have to be terminated. In this situation, Regional Office staff will recover any unspent funds. A letter will be sent to the funding recipient confirming that the project cannot proceed for stated reasons, that the Department is formally terminating the Funding Agreement and requesting a cheque for outstanding funds (to be made out to CPM DOTARS).

The project record should be noted on TRAX and moved to termination stage on the system. Financial records on SAP should be adjusted as required.

4.2.8 Payments

Payments are made on acquittal of previous payments and achievement of milestones, as outlined in the payment schedules in the Funding Agreement Schedule.

Before any payments are made, checks must be made to ensure that progress reports and/or conditions have been met and approved by the appropriate delegate. Any payments must be recorded in TRAX and on the registry file. Funding recipient bank account details must be kept confidential.

Payments should only be made to the grantee organisation – NOT an individual's bank account.

If any fraud or misappropriation is suspected, ensure that this is thoroughly investigated before further payments are made.

All claims for payment should be approved by an appropriate delegate and must be in accordance with the terms of the Funding Agreement.

4.2.8.1 Requesting a Payment

If an applicant is unable to raise their own request for payment in TRAX then the Regional Office or relevant ACC can assist with this task. Follow the link below to the TRAX Quick Reference Guide, managing Funding Agreements and payments, for how to raise a request for payment: TRAX 2 5 RP-QuickReference-Manage Agreements Payments-1.doc.

4.2.8.2 Processing a Request for Payment

Under most circumstances the request for payment is submitted by the funding recipient via TRAX. Once the request has been submitted via TRAX a claim for payment can then be processed appropriately. RO staff have the following options when processing payments:

- Send a request back for amendment. This should be done when the request for payment needs modification or further work. The "Request an Amendment" form has boxes for commentary on why an amendment is required.
- Approve the request. This is used when the request for payment is good enough for a payment to be made. It sends the payment to the financial officer for processing.
- Reject it. This is used when the project is a long way from being able to satisfy the requirements of the payment. It sends the request for payment right back to the beginning (a blank form in the applicant portal in TRAX).

If you require assistance to process the request in TRAX, follow the link: TRAX 2 5 RP-QuickReference-Manage Agreements Payments-1.doc.

4.2.9 Funding Agreement variations

Variations may be as straight forward as extensions of time to complete milestones or may involve complex changes to the nature of the Activity itself.

All variations to the Funding Agreement must be negotiated, and agreed to in writing between the funding recipient and DOTARS.

The relevant Regional Office will develop Funding Agreement variations and novations as required. The body of the Funding Agreement and fundamental changes to the Activity or to conditions imposed on the approval of the funding is not to be varied without National Office / Legal agreement.

Simple variations may take the form of an exchange of letters (see Attachment Q) whereas more complex variations may require the replacement of the superseded Schedule, or Schedule item with an agreed replacement. Advice should be sought from National Office if you are unsure of the appropriate variation requirement.

4.2.10 Protocols for using SAP

Background

SAP protocols for Regional Programmes have been developed following extensive analysis of the payments processes currently used by the various regional programmes. This analysis flowed on from the findings of the 'Payments Process for Regional Programmes' paper discussed at the *Regional Partnerships* Operations and Issues Forum on 24 July 2003.

To enable SAP to be used as an effective management tool, it is important that all National Office / Regional Office staff managing Administered Payments use SAP correctly and in a consistent manner.

Protocols

All NO / RO staff managing Administered payments should ensure they include the following protocols in their current payment practices:

- ensure only one Purchase Order (PO) is created on SAP per contract
- when completing the PO, include estimated delivery dates for all payments (i.e. include dates on the PO for all expected payments under that contract)
- claims for payments (contracted progress payments) that are already covered by POs on SAP do not need to be re-approved.
- consistency in estimating payment dates is important – i.e. allow 60 days between the due date for progress reports (in contract) and the payment
- ensure payment dates / commitment amounts are kept up to date on SAP
- develop a business process to ensure that dates in SAP are changed only at the same time that changes to payment dates are approved as part of a Variation to a Funding Agreement.

4.2.11 *Regional Partnerships* Cost Centre and Cost Element Codes

Financial information for *Regional Partnerships* is maintained in SAP at the Cost Centre level. Cost Centres identify where revenue and expenses reside. Cost Centres differ from Cost Elements, which identify the type of revenue and expense for example, whether a new project is funded under *Regional Partnerships* from the ACC Notional Allocations or from the Strategic Opportunities Notional Allocation.

All *Regional Partnerships* Cost Centre names are prefixed with RP to signal more clearly that *Regional Partnerships* is a single programme.

Table 15 *Regional Partnerships* Cost Centre and Cost Element Codes

Cost Centre Name	Cost Centre	Cost Element Name	Cost Element Code (GL Account code)
RP-*Regional Partnerships* – New Projects	40179	New Projects – ACC Notional Allocations Strategic Opportunities Notional Allocation	54508 54509
RP- Area Consultative Committees	40131	Area Consultative Committees	55146
RP-Diary Regional Assistance Programme	40130	Dairy Regional Assistance Programme	55147
RP-Regional Assistance Programme	40129	Regional Assistance Programme	55148
RP-Regional Solutions Initiative	40096	Regional Solutions Programme	54069
RP-Rural Transaction Centres	40003	Rural Transaction Centres	53615
RP-South-West Forests SAP	40097	Spec Structural Adj Package for SW Forests Reg WA South West Structural Adjustment Package prog Admin Ex	54068 54079
RP-Weipa SAP	40180	Weipa SAP	54510
RP-Wide Bay Burnett SAP	40113	Wide Bay Burnett – Struct Adjst Package-Grant Com Ent. Wide Bay Burnett – Struct Adjst Package Local Gov QLD Wide Bay Burnett – Struct Adjst Package Prog Adm Ex	54419 54424 54427
RP-Namoi Valley SAP	40175	Namoi Valley SAP – CE Namoi Valley SAP – NPI Namoi Valley SAP – LG Namoi Valley SAP – DUED Namoi Valley SAP – PS Namoi Valley SAP - Admin	53770 53771 53772 53774 53775 53776

4.3 Project Monitoring

The diligent monitoring of milestones is a key part of monitoring a Project. The achievement of agreed milestones is an indicator that the funding recipient is meeting the agreed terms and conditions of their funding.

Regional Office staff are responsible for managing the Funding Agreement. This involves desk monitoring and site visits as appropriate, depending on the nature of the project. However effective project monitoring includes more than the funding agreement and site visits. To assist with the monitoring process, a standard set of better practice processes and materials have been developed and provided to the Regional Offices.

4.3.1 Site visits (RO)

The purpose of a site visit is to obtain some level of confidence that Australian Government funding is being spent appropriately and the project is proceeding satisfactorily.

A risk management approach to site visits is recommended. Site visits should be undertaken by Regional Office staff depending on their respective work schedules (i.e. they may coincide with an ACC meeting). Where there is a Steering Committee with ACC representation, site visits may not be necessary. ACCs may be able to assist in remote regions. The standard site visit template can be generated from TRAX. See Attachment T for manual template letter.

A Project Monitoring matrix has been developed by National Office to assist Regional Offices to determine the appropriate number and timing of site visits according to the nature and size of a Project – see Table 16.

4.3.2 Desk monitoring (RO)

Regional staff will undertake desk monitoring of reports received. This involves:

- checking report statements against the Funding Agreement
- satisfying the delegate that information provided is correct
- checking that appropriate acknowledgement of the Australian Government has taken place
- searching websites where appropriate
- requesting copies of documents such as EPA, planning approvals (these should be part of agreed milestones)
- calling relevant bodies to verify claims where relevant (i.e. local councils).

4.3.3 Informal Project monitoring (ACC)

ACCs will play an informal and ad hoc role in Project monitoring. This will predominantly involve being a contact for Regional Offices to provide an 'on-the-ground' perspective on Projects within their area.

It is in ACCs' interests to maintain an ongoing involvement with those Projects that are funded in their region. This enables ACCs to promote to their communities the impact their work is having and to report back to the Department how they have been successful (or not) in the achievement of their goals under both their business plan and their Strategic Regional Plan.

This could be achieved by, for example:

- ACCs assisting approved Projects. In some cases the Department may approach an ACC for greater / more in depth assistance with a Project such as working with a funding recipient and the Department to resolve outstanding Funding Agreement issues (e.g. delays). ACCs may also be invited to participate on steering committees established by a funding recipient for some projects within their region.
- Where possible, reporting to each ACC meeting on the progress of a Project; and/or
- the ACC liaising with their Regional Office and vice versa in relation to any Project that appears to be falling behind or struggling

.

4.3.4 Regional Programmes – Project Risk Thresholds

Table 16 Project Risk Thresholds

Funding Level	Activity	Local Government	Not-for-Profit Organisations	Not-for-Profit - Commercial Activity	Small Private Sector	Large Private Sector
Up to $50,000	Monitoring	Low Risk Desk Top monitoring of performance against milestones - On-site visits where problems identified	Low Risk Desk Top monitoring of performance against milestones - On-site visits where problems identified	Standard Monitoring - Desk Top monitoring of performance against milestones - (min 1 site visit in life of project)	Standard Monitoring - Desk Top monitoring of performance against milestones - (min 1 site visit in life of project)	Standard Monitoring - Desk Top monitoring of performance against milestones - (min 1 site visit in life of project)
	Contract Type - MAG	Long Form	Long Form	Long Form cleared by NO	Long Form cleared by NO	Long Form cleared by NO
$50,000 to $250,000	Monitoring	Standard Monitoring - Desk Top monitoring of performance against milestones - (min 1 site visit in life of project)	Standard Monitoring - Desk Top monitoring of performance against milestones - (min 1 site visit in life of project)	Standard Monitoring - Desk Top monitoring of performance against milestones - (min 1 site visit in life of project)	Standard Monitoring - Desk Top monitoring of performance against milestones - (min 1 site visit in life of project)	Standard Monitoring - Desk Top monitoring of performance against milestones - (min 1 site visit in life of project)
	Contract Type - MAG	Long Form	Long Form	Long Form cleared by NO	Long Form cleared by NO	Long Form cleared by NO
>$250,000	Monitoring	ROs to develop Monitoring plan to co-ordinate visit schedule with milestone schedule. Random visits by RO and NO.	ROs to develop Monitoring plan to co-ordinate visit schedule with milestone schedule. Random visits by RO and NO.	ROs to develop Monitoring plan to co-ordinate visit schedule with milestone schedule. Random visits by RO and NO.	ROs to develop Monitoring plan to co-ordinate visit schedule with milestone schedule. Random visits by RO and NO.	ROs to develop Monitoring plan to co-ordinate visit schedule with milestone schedule. Random visits by RO and NO.
	Contract Type - MAG	Long Form cleared by NO	Long Form cleared by NO	Long Form cleared by NO	Long Form cleared by NO	Long Form cleared by NO

4.4 Project Reporting

Successful applicants will receive funding for an agreed period, the Activity Period, subject to them agreeing to the terms of the Funding Agreement. This will include agreeing to achieve agreed milestones and providing reports as specified in the Funding Agreement. Key reports may include:

- a satisfactory independent audit of accounts in accordance with the Australian Government's requirements
- an acquittal of expenditure against the approved budget for the Activity
- evidence of satisfactory performance and achievement of milestones.
- Outcome Evaluation reports (refer Sub-section 3.7 of the Funding Agreement Schedule) – these will be due some time after completion of the Activity.

4.4.1 Obtaining Reports

Obtaining reports consists of **three** main stages. Initially, the Regional Office may need to send out a **request** to the applicant for progress reports. Secondly, the Regional Office will need to **register** all reports, and thirdly, the office will need to **assess** whether the report supplied meets the requirements as set out in the Funding Agreement.

Outcome Evaluation reports may not be required for every Project. The Analysis and Evaluation Section of National Office will determine which Projects will be the subject of this request. The request may be made at any time after the completion of the RP funded Activity. On receipt of the report a copy should be sent to the Analysis and Evaluation Section and the original placed on file.

The steps relating to obtaining Progress and Post Activity reports are outlined in more detail below:

Request

A report is currently being developed in TRAX to allow the Regional Offices to identify when progress reports and post activity reports are due. This will be available shortly.

The Regional Office should send out the standard letter notice of progress report due (generated through TRAX also or manual template letter is available at Attachment R) 14 days before the report is required requesting them to either lodge Progress Report in TRAX and request for payment, or forward Progress Report in hardcopy form or email (a standard progress Report and Funding Acquittal template is currently being developed by National Office to assist funding recipients to meet this obligation in a uniform manner).

If a hardcopy report is received the Regional Office needs to record receipt of the report in TRAX. A letter of acknowledgment notifying the funding recipient that their progress report has been received and their next progress payment will be made as soon as possible should be sent.

The status of progress reports should be monitored closely in TRAX, and reminder letters (Attachment S) should be sent out to those funding recipients with overdue reports (those over one month overdue). Overdue letters should be followed up, via telephone, within 14 days of sending it to establish why the report has not been received and when it will be forwarded. Any reasons for delay should be recorded in TRAX and any changes made to reporting dates should be updated in TRAX.

If after an additional 14 days a response is still not provided send third and final letter, which states that if report is not received by a specified date debt recovery will be actioned.

Register

The receipt of all reports should be recorded in TRAX. An officer should check that all required documentation has been provided (e.g. budget acquittal, certificates, report against milestones, supporting documentation and audit).

If all documentation has not been provided, contact the funding recipient to provide and record this in the register.

If all documentation has been provided, distribute this documentation to the appropriate people / person in the Regional Office for assessment.

You must register in TRAX who this documentation has been forwarded to.

Assess

An assessment of the Progress Reports and financials against activity milestones, project outcomes and budget must be undertaken.

The performance of the funding recipient in delivering their obligations under the Funding Agreement must be evaluated and noted in TRAX.

A recommendation must be provided to the delegate (ie Regional Manager) noting whether the report and the performance of the funding recipient is acceptable or otherwise in accordance with the contract. This recommendation should note whether the funding recipient has met all obligations and whether they should be eligible to receive further payments. It should also identify any variation requests. This information should be entered into TRAX.

If further confirmation is required to ensure that what is presented in the report is correct, place a request with the local ACC asking for their information on progress of the project.

Further payments should not be made until previous payments have been acquitted in full.

If any fraud or misappropriation of funds is suspected, ensure that this is thoroughly investigated before any further payment is made.

A letter should be sent to the funding recipient stating whether or not they have met their reporting requirements.

4.4.2 Types of Reports

TRAX will issue reports drawn from data derived from application forms, ACC activity reports, Regional Office assessments and activity reports, National Office reviews and activity reports and partnerships and whole of government reports.

The following types of reports may be generated:

- Financial reports
- Contact / action reports
- Partnership and whole of government reports
- Review / policy reports
- Ministerial reports.

Reports can be produced for any number of projects, by ACC, by Regional Office, by State, time, date or a combination of all.

4.4.3 Activities to be recorded - Regional Office

Eligibility Check

When the Regional Office creates a registry file and attaches a hard copy of the application and attachments, TRAX will issue a time and date stamp.

Eligibility check findings – recorded using the database form linked to the application's number

Gaps or lacks in the application, including regarding eligibility, applicant type, documentation, financials, consultation, partnerships, etc

All contact with ACCs, applicants, proposed partnerships, etc

Contact with National Office regarding policy and process issues

Assistance rendered to resolve gaps in the application

Receipt of additional material

Discontinuation of an application

Assessment

All steps involved in assessment of an application against the Programme Guidelines

Whether or not the Regional Office decides to support or not support the application.

Ongoing activities

Contact with ACCs, applicants, proposed partnerships and other interested parties

Departmental information requests for minutes, briefs and ministerials, etc. (those that are non-PLS generated)

4.4.4 Activities to be recorded - National Office

While National Office has a requirement that they report on their activity – specifically in this case regarding the Integrated Regional Programme, TRAX will make this task relatively easy.

Activities to be recorded by National Office include:

- reviewing the Regional Offices' assessments against the Programme Guidelines and Policy
- whether or not the application is recommended or not recommended
- support to, and verification of, partnerships and whole of government cooperation
- contact with ACCs, applicants, proposed partnerships, etc
- contact with Regional Offices regarding policy and process issues
- assistance rendered to resolve gaps in applications
- ministerials.

4.4.5 Reports - TRAX

When inputting data into TRAX, ensure that text entered is unambiguous and suitable for all readers, including the delegate and Ministers. TRAX reports on all projects (approved and not approved) are provided to Ministers - the Department may be questioned as to their content. TRAX reports may also be the subject of Freedom of Information requests for applicants (See Freedom of Information).

4.4.6 Due dates and overdue reports

Regional Office staff should run overdue reports every two weeks. Checking through the report will require individual follow up with each funding recipient as to why the required report has not been received and when it will be forwarded. A template letter sent to the applicant should have a copy of the report template attached. (A standard report template is still being developed. Regional Offices should allow two weeks for a response to a report to be received. If no response, a further letter is sent see Attachment S. There will be three levels of letter to be sent with an escalating tone.

There will often be some negotiation required around reporting and due dates, as in practice, dates may slip for various reasons. However these must remain within reasonable and satisfactory timeframes. The system needs to be updated to reflect any changes made to reporting dates.

Regional Office staff must remain across the circumstances of each Project and be satisfied that progress is being made and that the Project has not stalled. If there are concerns about lack of reports and progress, these need to be discussed on a case by case basis with the Regional Manager and a national programme manager to determine appropriate action. A site visit would be warranted in these circumstances and discussions undertaken with the proponent and the ACC where the ACC is represented on the Steering Committee.

4.4.7 Completion of Activity / Post Activity report by applicant

Regional Office staff will receive advice from the funding recipient that the funded Activity has been completed. This usually arrives in the form of a Post Activity Report, or the staff member follows up on an overdue report.

The Post Activity Report must contain:

- An evaluation that includes:
  - A summary of the funding recipient's performance against the project outcomes and activity milestones specified;
  - Details of mitigating circumstances and remedial action undertaken by the funding recipient in the event an activity milestone was not met or completed in the manner and/or by the time specified;
  - An analysis of the planning, implementation and overall process followed by the funding recipient to deliver the Activity;
  - Any lessons learned throughout the activity; and
  - Any recommendations by the funding recipient on improved practice, relevant to the funding recipient's or DOTARS practices that may assist in the delivery of future activities;

- Copies of any published reports, promotional material, media publicity, pamphlets or other documentation relevant to the project, not already included in the progress report/s; and
- An audited statement of receipts and expenditure may also be required if a long form Funding Agreement was used, and certification in accordance with Clause 9.2 (e) of the Funding Agreement.

The requirements of the Post Activity Report are identified in the Funding Agreement Schedule.

The Regional Office is required to:

- Send the funding recipient a reminder letter 14 days before the report is due:
- Send an acknowledgement letter notifying the funding recipient that the Post Activity Report ahs been received and is being assessed against the Funding Agreement (and earlier progress reports);
- Record the assessment in TRAX;
- Send a letter to the funding recipient stating whether or not they have met their reporting requirements; and
- Record performance in TRAX.

The Regional Office is to provide a recommendation to the Regional Manager noting whether the reports and the performance of funding recipients are acceptable or otherwise, in accordance with the contract. Recommendations are to note whether the funding recipient has met its obligations and therefore are eligible to receive any final payments.

4.5 Finalisation of Project

4.5.1.1 Final payment and audit (if required)

The final payment is processed through SAP and the project completed and finalised on TRAX. Final payment should not be made until the Post Activity Report has been received and accepted by Regional Office. Depending on the Funding Agreement version, an audit and acquittal may be required for both the RP funded Activity and the total Project funding.

Regional Offices should undertake any necessary follow-up with applicants regarding best practice outcome and publicity.

This is particularly important where Outcomes Evaluation reporting has been agreed with the applicant that may extend beyond final payment in the Agreement.

Regional Offices advise funding recipients of the closure of the project.

4.6 Evaluation

An evaluation framework for *Regional Partnerships* was signed off in April 2003.

The evaluation strategy has been developed to measure the success of the programme against its stated objectives.

The key outcomes of the programme are:

- Strengthen growth and opportunities
- Improve access to services – in communities under 5000 people
- Support planning and collaboration – assist communities to identify and explore opportunities and development action agendas
- Assist structural adjustment – in communities severely affected by economic, social and environmental change

Performance measures have been identified that link to the programme's objectives.

A three stage evaluation framework has been developed that will report by programme, project and regional outcomes.

The three key stages are

- Stage 1 Post implementation review
- Stage 2 Mid term review (ongoing)
- Stage 3 Summative (external evaluation undertaken by a selected consultant through a tender process)

The evaluation framework captures outcome information in application forms and Funding Agreements (reporting schedules) as well as through follow-up questionnaires across a random stratified sample of projects.

A copy of the Funding Agreement should be e-mailed to the National Office Analysis and Evaluation Section (AES).

5 Attachments

5.1.1 Attachment A: Guide:*Regional Partnerships* application form Part A

The purpose of this Guide is to assist ACCs and the SR Executive Officers to coach proponents through the completion of **Part A** of the **RP** Application Form.

> It needs to be remembered that the resources allocated to identifying and gathering performance information will directly relate to the objective, size, and scope of the proposed project.

This Guide offers a step-by-step set of questions to prompt proponents as they complete **Part A** together with a corresponding list of likely actions.

Table 17 Guide for completing Part A 'outcomes' of application form

Step-by-step questions	Action
Part A - Project	
What is your project about?	Provide a brief description of the activity. This should contribute to an understanding of the projects objectives
What will **RP / SR** funds contribute to as part of the total funding?	Describe the element(s) of the project for which **RP** funds will be used.
Tell us why your project is needed	You could include some background on the problem, issue or opportunity that has led to the need for this project. This will help further refine the project 'objective'.
Provide a description of how the project will be implemented (i.e. the methodology)	The methodology should be reasonable for the outcomes and outputs (See definition a section 5.1.4.2).
Part A - Outcomes	
Provide a description of your project's expected outcome(s)	Outcomes from an RP project may be economic, social, environmental or community capacity building. The RP guidelines (p4) provides examples of outcomes that successful projects would demonstrate. When stating the outcomes of the project and how you will measure them (Question 14) keep in mind the distinction between outcomes and outputs. **Outcomes** are the result, impact or consequence of a project (e.g.. Decrease in unemployment,

Step-by-step questions	Action
	increase in education, increase in childcare services, delivery of financial services, increase in community capacity). A direct outcome is the immediate consequence of a project. Indirect outcomes are the consequences related to the project but are not the immediate results. An **output** is the product of the project (e.g. A building, a plan, a service, a bus). An output should lead to an outcome.
Have you discussed these outcomes with other partners in the project?	Applicants need to consult with other partners to ensure outcomes are consistent with their expectations.
Tell us how you will measure your project's outcomes	Performance Measures – You should list some performance measures that can qualify or quantify your project outcomes. Some examples of performance measures are listed below. Of course the ones you develop will quantify the outcomes for your particular project. Examples of performance measures: Number of jobs created Number of people with improved skills Type of business created or expanded Number and type of enhanced services Increasing tourism numbers and lengths of stay etc Increase in exports Number and type of people attending grant funded activity Number of people accessing services funded under the grant
At what intervals will you monitor, measure and report on outcomes?	Applicants need to link outcome reporting to Milestone reporting. They may also need to detail any ongoing reporting requirements beyond the project timeframe (if applicable).
What are the most important outcomes you are trying to achieve?	List the main outcome (or outcomes) the project seeks to achieve (the two or three key outcomes only)
Who will gather this information?	Applicants need to identify who will gather performance information.
Costs	
Have the cost and resources associated with gathering	Proponents need to identify the costs and resources needed to gather performance

Step-by-step questions	Action
performance information been considered?	information and consider these in the project budget (where applicable).

5.1.2 Attachment B: Issues when working with private sector applicants

Few Australian Government grants programmes deal directly with the private sector and most grant programmes' processes don't fully accommodate the different nature of the relationship.

Expectations – particularly on the applicant's side – can differ markedly from those in programs dealing with state and local government bodies and non-profit organisations.

There are primarily two types of information that are to be considered when dealing with the private sector:

- information the applicant should know about Australian Government processes and requirements prior to submitting and during the application process, specifically:
  - disclosure of information
  - financial matters
  - due diligence
  - contract issues.
- information the Australian Government requires from the applicant to process their application. Refer to the 'Private Sector Considerations' below.

Disclosure of information

Applicants need to be made aware of what may happen to the information that they provide in their applications and any additional information sought.

- In considering proposals for funding, the information detailed in the application may be shared with relevant Federal, State and/or Local Government agencies, organisations and individuals. This is outlined in the application form declaration.
- The Australian Government may choose to publish the names of successful applicants and summary information about their projects. This is outlined in the application form declaration.
- Only individuals (not companies) are covered by privacy legislation
- Therefore if applicants wish their information to remain confidential / commercial-in-confidence they will have to make a claim for confidentiality with the Department.
- While the Department will seek to honour commercial-in-confidence arrangements the Parliament is not similarly bound.
- Applicants need to be aware that we may require detailed financial information about the applicant beyond the project's term.

Conflict of interest

- Conflict of interest can be both real and perceived

- In small communities with limited numbers of entrepreneurs can lead to extended family networks of commercial interests in a range of fields.
- This leads to a need to have explicit processes and permanent records of how ACC members and staff deal with conflicts of interest - this may need to extend to their spouse and family.

Financial

Applicants need to be made aware of potential effects of a successful application to its business, for example

- Applicants should seek advice from accountant / financial adviser as grants may form part of taxable income.
- Grants to GST registered organisations will be supplied on a GST inclusive basis.
- GST payable on any goods and services purchased by grantees in undertaking their projects must be met by the grantee. Grantees who are GST registered will be able to reclaim these amounts from the ATO as input tax credits.

Due diligence

A standard procedure when considering applications before signing a Funding Agreement is the undertaking of a risk assessment process on projects. The amount of funding sought, project type and applicant type will determine the risk assessment threshold:

- Pre-assessment - Basic checks on an applicant (In house)
- Level 1 – Credentials check on an applicant (Lawpoint website)
- Level 2 - Assessment of applicant's financial risk status (External consultant)
- Level 3 - Assessment of project's commercial risk / suitability (External consultant).
- Private Sector applicants are typically subject to a higher level of risk assessment. Refer to the Assessment section for more details of the risk assessment thresholds.

Contracts issues

- Applicants should read the Standardised Funding Agreement template and be able to comply.
- Audited statements on expenditure of grant funding are a requirement of the grant. The Department is accountable to Parliament on the expenditure of grant funds. Audited statements provide assurance that funds are expended as agreed.
- Separate bank accounts for grant funds may be a requirement of the Funding Agreement.
- The company will be requested to gather evaluation information on their project indicating how outcomes of project have been met and the effect on the wider community of the project e.g., employment outcomes.

Private Sector Considerations

These points are to assist assessors when considering an application from the private sector. These considerations should be read in conjunction with the standard assessment guide (Assessment section)

- What is the product, the market and who are the competitors?
- Who are we dealing with? Individuals, partnerships other legal entities.
- Are they authorised to act on the organisation's behalf?
- What is the applicant's past business history in the community?
- Asset ownership – who owns the assets that are forming part of the application? (Be cautious, especially with unlisted and/or private firms with cross ownerships).
  - Are any of the assets encumbered?
  - The ownership structure of assets may hide the financial strength in a proposal or dilute the ability of the Commonwealth to enforce the Funding Agreement.
- Sales (e.g. turnover) show growth over past 2 and 3 years.
  - Check Earnings before Interest and Tax.
  - Check for director's loans.
  - That current assets versus current liabilities is positive.
- The sustainable competitive advantage of the firm and how it intends to maintain it.
- What capital is required for the project, how will it be funded and how will the debt be serviced?
- The Australian Government may be seen as the financier of last resort and this may be an indicator of project risk
- Other stakeholders may transfer the risk to the Australian Government by encumbering the assets
- On a positive note proponents generally have a high financial stake in ensuring the projects success.
- How often are cash flow forecasts prepared by management?
- When does the firm receive financial performance information?
- Is there a current business plan?
- Have any directors of the firm been subject to bankruptcy proceedings?
- How long has the business been operating, including under current management?
- Company contact point and contact details.
- Visit the premises of the applicants / potential applicants to validate their claims and get a better understanding of their capacity to undertaken the project.

- Ascertain the capacity of the proponent to successfully manage the project.
- Consider threats to the viability of projects due to partial funding requiring redesign and scaling down of projects.
- Has applicant complied with relevant statutory requirements e.g. environment?
- Try and ascertain whether the business plans provided by proponents are based on realistic and substantiated assumptions.
- ABN organisational names may not match the names used for other purposes.
- Is there local support for the project?

5.1.3 Attachment C: *Regional Partnerships* – RP Application Acknowledgment Letter

Our Ref:

[address]

Dear [title] [surname]

Thank you for your application for *Regional Partnerships* funding for the [title] project which was received by the Department on [date].

Assessment of your application has commenced. An assessment officer from the Department may contact you if further information or clarification of any part of your applications is required.

Please note that no commitment to funding your application can be assumed. The *Regional Partnerships* programme is a discretionary funding programme and demand for assistance is high. Therefore, your project may not be funded even if your application rates highly against the assessment criteria for *Regional Partnerships*.

Please also note that information provided to DOTARS as part of your application may be provided to third parties including:

- [name of ACC], your local Area Consultative Committee, which will be asked to provide advice on all applications from its region.
- Other government agencies and consultants used by DOTARS to assess the project and applicant viability, including assessment of financial viability and the ability to complete the projects
- Other government agencies to assist the Department in working out appropriate sources of funding and to inform programme policy and development
- The Commonwealth Parliament to help the Department meet the accountability requirements imposed by legislation and Parliamentary guidelines.

Amendments to your application can only be made by contacting the Department in writing. This correspondence should clearly outline the amendments you wish to make to your application and should be signed off by you or another nominated contact in your organisation for the application. We will advise you in writing of the outcome of your application as soon as possible.

Please call [name] on [phone number] in our [name] Regional Office if you have any queries on this matter.

Yours sincerely

5.1.4 Attachment D: Gathering better performance information in Funding Agreements

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to assist National and Regional office staff, SR Executive Officers and Area Consultative Committee (ACC) staff to understand the Departments requirement to better link Funding Agreements to programme and broader government objectives through enhanced performance reporting. This approach will be the standard for preparation of Funding Agreements in RPs.

It is essential to clearly assign the different roles and responsibilities associated with the collection of performance information. This discussion should begin in the application stage, so this task can be incorporated in the budget and progressed in the reporting schedule of the Funding Agreement.

Obviously, the amount of resources (and associated costs) dedicated to the collection of performance information will be determined by the scale and scope of the project and the level of risk. Smaller or low-risk projects will require less rigorous and resource intensive reporting requirements than larger high-risk projects.

It is intended this document be used as a guide and is not for general distribution.

Background

Since 1999-2000 Australian Government agencies have been required to report on outcomes and outputs rather than on a traditional expenditure inputs and programme basis. Program performance information underpins accountability as reported in Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) and the Annual Report.

Milestones, indicators and performance measures identified in individual Funding Agreements are crucial tools for enhanced agency performance reporting as well as effective project and hence programme management.

When well defined, they provide performance information for more effective Agreement management evaluation (monitoring and risk management) and ensure desired project and programme outcomes are met (i.e. deliverables and effectiveness). They can also signal to project proponents and programme managers when planned results may not be occurring.

Performance measurement and evaluation are inextricably linked – ongoing performance measurement is necessary to a well-developed project / programme evaluation strategy.

Links to National Regional Evaluation Framework (NREF)

By embedding performance measurement in RPs we begin to gather important performance information that can be assessed against a broader set of 'well-being' indicators being developed as part of the Government's NREF. The NREF is a longer-term national evaluation framework being developed in the Regional Policy Division of DOTARS. It seeks to better understand the impact of a number of Australian Government programmes in particular regions over a period of time.

The NREF will consist of a core set of indicators for measuring the health of regions and a set of national principles for evaluating and sharing information across a number of regional projects, programmes and initiatives undertaken by the Government.

At this time, the NREF consists of **three** well-being themes:

- Socio-demographic characteristics e.g.
  - population, education, health and crime
- Socio-economic characteristics e.g.
  - labour market, economic diversity, natural resources, income, home ownership, disadvantage, accessibility and remoteness (ARIA)
- Environmental context e.g.
  - catchment conditions.

5.1.4.1 The Guide

The GUIDE is divided into two parts.

- The first part looks at some **definitions** of key concepts such as outcomes, outputs, milestones, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and performance measures.
- The second presents a hypothetical **example** of a programme and project and builds the KPIs and performance measures in a Reporting Schedule as part of the final Funding Agreement. Under RPs this part of the Funding Agreement is to be negotiated between the project proponent and officers of DOTARS.

Most importantly, by institutionalising this practice in the RPs we ensure the generation of performance information that better measures the impacts and effectiveness of regional projects and programmes. Similarly, by adopting this practice, project applicants and ACCs will be able to better report to their communities on the impacts of their activities.

5.1.4.2 Some Definitions

The following definitions are given to help conceptualise the distinction between milestones, KPIs and performance measures.

Outcomes

The impact sought by government in a given policy arena (or programme / project) – what effect has the project had.

Outputs

The actual deliverable goods and services produced to generate desired outcomes.

Milestones

Payments of grant instalments are generally tied to the achievement of negotiated milestones (deliverables) usually at dates as specified in the Funding Agreement Schedules. Grant instalments, may also be tied to matching instalments from applicants or other contributing parties. Grant instalments should be paid against a negotiated /

agreed tangible output (i.e. against something that is produced / achieved and delivered in the time lines agreed).

Milestones can be thought of as the key ‘outputs’ (deliverable goods and services) identified in the Agreement.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

KPIs are the things that tell us if we have met the outcomes associated with projects and/or programmes. The question to ask here is: how and when will I know that this project (and programme) has been achieved?

Performance Measures

Performance measures provide the qualitative and quantitative measure of the extent to which the outcome has been achieved, or not achieved.

Indicators need to be objective and measurable, and show the extent to which outputs make positive contributions to specified projects and programme outcomes.

5.1.4.3 A Practical Example

The following presents a hypothetical programme and project to demonstrate how milestones and indicators might be used more effectively in a Funding Agreement.

Department outcome

- Increased business, employment and investment opportunities in Australia’s lagging non-metropolitan regions.

Department output

- Regional Development Programmes.

Regional Programme

- Regional Business Development Programme ($20m over 4 years).

Programme Objective

- To support Small Medium Enterprise (SME) development in designated lagging regions as a catalyst to improve economic development, industry diversity and employment opportunities.

Project

- To build a jointly owned R&D facility in a food-processing region with the view to value-add to local food products, increase local employment and lift exports.

Background

Two existing food businesses have agreed to contribute $2 million and are seeking an additional $2 million from government (State and Federal) to establish a food research and development facility in the region.

The individual businesses, on their own, cannot finance or attract the quantity and quality of scientists to undertake research in the region - so a joint approach was formed.

In this example, the Australian Government will contribute a total of $1million to match the State government's contribution - Table (1) below. The Federal and State government's contribution will go to restoring and refitting a disused government building and towards some plant and equipment (as specified in the Schedule).

Note that each milestone payment is contingent on receiving matching funds by the State government and/or applicant (outputs specified in the Schedule).

Attachment D – Table (1): Milestones (outputs)
First payment on signing of Funding Agreement $350,000 (Contingent on matching State funding)
Second Payment on completion of stage one: Site restoration, building repair and stabilisation and restoration as per Schedule – est. May 2003 $300,000 (Contingent on matching State funding)
Third Payment on completion of refit electrical and plumbing etc as per Schedule – est. July 2003 $250,000 (Contingent on matching State funding)
Final payment at lock-up stage and building inspection as per Schedule – est. December 2003. $100,000 (Contingent on matching State funding)

The diligent monitoring of milestones is a key part of project management and therefore programme performance. The achievement of milestones is one indicator that the funding recipient is meeting terms and conditions of funding.

The following table - Table (2) - the Reporting Schedule - details the types of outcomes and performance measures that might be developed for this hypothetical project.

In this example it is agreed that the project proponent will collect performance information for twelve months after the construction stage. An allowance has been specified in the schedule to outsource this function. In addition longer-term performance information will be collected by the State and Australian Government agencies and the costs shared (as specified in the schedule).

Classifying and gathering performance information in this way provides a rich source of qualitative and quantitative information for reporting against project and programme outcomes.

Attachment D -Table (2): Reporting Schedule			
Outcomes	**Time**	**Performance measures**	**Monitoring**
Increased jobs Increased local economic activity	End of construction stage Dec 2003	Number of actual jobs created Full time (direct) (indirect) Part time (direct) (indirect) Material and services sourced locally (% and/or $)	Firm appointed Project Manager with local govt project officer
Actual ongoing jobs Established research agenda Commenced research activity Actual dollars committed to research	12 months after construction	Number of jobs (locals / import) Full time (direct) (indirect) Part time (direct) (indirect) Research Board established and membership Number of research projects underway Dollar value of Research	Manager of research facility with local govt project officer (outsourced)
Actual ongoing jobs Results from research projects Lifting regional R&D performance Business growth Regional growth Increased exports Lifting educational standards	24 months after construction	Number of jobs (locals / imports) Full time (direct) (indirect) Part time (direct) (indirect) Number of new products Number of new research projects Business performance of the partner firms (compared to before project) Impact of local economy (growth in economy) Export figures Links between facility, firms, local High School Level of learning achievement indicators for the region (before and after project)	Manager of research facility DOTARS and State govt agency with local govt project officer

The above Reporting Schedule was constructed by asking three simple questions.

- How will I know when the project is successful (what outcome am I looking for)?
- What performance measures can I use to quantify / qualify the outcome?
- Who will collect the information and when?

Performance information collection strategy

It is essential to clearly assign the different roles and responsibilities associated with the collection of performance information. This discussion should begin in the application stage, so this task can be incorporated in the budget and progressed in the reporting schedule of the Funding Agreement.

Importantly, as there may be some costs associated with the collection of performance information, ACCs and DOTARS staff need to flag this with the applicants early. Similarly, it needs to be made clear who will collect performance information beyond the life of the Funding Agreement (if this is required).

It is intended that in RPs project proponents, DOTARS regional office staff and national office programme managers will negotiate the collection of performance information and document this in the Schedules of the Funding Agreement. Depending on the project ACCs may seek an ongoing role in this process. Collection of performance information may be outsourced by the applicants or undertaken by a third party such as a local government, community group or an educational institution.

> It is important to note that the above example is a best practice example. In practice we would only require two or three key outcomes for each project.
>
> Outcomes reports which are due after completion of a project require a letter to be sent with final payment, or on completion of the project, reminding the applicant that a report is due 6/12 months later and a further reminder sent just before the report is due. On receipt of the report a copy should be sent to the Analysis and Evaluation Section and the original placed on file.

Conclusion

It can be seen from the above practical example that the Australian Government's contribution to the project is not simply funding a building restoration and refit, as the milestones table would indicate. Clearly, the programme objectives are to support SME development as a catalyst to improve economic development, improve education standards, industry diversity and employment opportunities.

By having applicants report on both milestone and outcome performance indicators we get a clearer indication of the projects full impact. Also the information collected assists the Department to report to government against its objectives of increasing business activity, employment growth, and investment activity in lagging regions.

In sum, by collecting the above performance information in the Reporting Schedule of Funding Agreements we are better able to quantify for programme reporting and evaluation purposes. Most importantly, applicants and their partner regional organisations will be able to report back to their local community on the impacts of their activities in a far more detailed and informed way.

5.1.5 Attachment E: Small Grants Project Summary Draft Template

Project ID:	«ID»
Package No:	(Inserted by NO)
Project Title:	«Proj»
Organisation Name:	«Org»
Organisation Contact:	«OrgCon_Title»«OrgCon_Fname»«OrgCon_Sname»«OrgCon_Hon»
Phone:	«Phone»
Location:	«Location»,«State»
Primary Electorate:	«Elect»
Local ACC:	«ACC»

Regional Partnerships Funding Bid:

Project Summary

Outcomes:

Partnerships:

Sustainability:

Other Considerations

DOTARS Recommendation:

Recommended Funding: FY2003-04FY2004-05 FY2005-06 GST AMOUNT TOTAL

Parliamentary Secretary's Decision

☐ Agreed ☐ Disagreed ☐ Further Information Require

5.1.6 Attachment F: ACC Comments Guide

Introduction

In assessing projects for funding under *Regional Partnerships*, the department will determine whether projects deliver value for money to the Australian Government.

Value for money

Definition: The project will deliver its outcomes through the most efficient and effective means.

Value for money is determined by taking into account the total request for *Regional Partnerships* funding and the project and applicant meeting *Regional Partnerships*' assessment criteria, as well as the degree to which they meet regional priorities.

Purpose

To identify those projects that demonstrate better value for money by achieving their outcomes through the most efficient and effective means, securing appropriate funding from other sources and/or have exhausted other funding options.

In determining value for money the department will take into consideration the following:

- Assessment against each criteria
- ACC comments
- Additional information obtained through the assessment process.

ACC comments

ACC comments are intended to capture the ACC's view on applications from the region. They assist the department in establishing whether the project is consistent with regional priorities and the likelihood of ongoing local support for those projects where start up funding is sought from the package.

The following advice is intended to provide guidance to ACCs in completing the comments form. In seeking your comments and rating of projects, the department is calling upon your knowledge and opinion of the project concept, the level of local support for the initiative and the likelihood of sustainable outcomes being achieved.

ACC input is a valuable element of the application process as it is based on your local knowledge, the priorities identified in your ACC's Strategic Regional Plan and your ongoing role in community consultation and feedback.

The guidance material provides:

- a definition of the terminology used in the ACC comments form
- the purpose for which the information is sought
- relevant application form references
- general guidance for ACCs in completing the form and providing comments that will add value to the department's assessment.

Outcomes

Definition: the consequence of the project. Outcomes can be negative or positive. Projects should have a positive outcome i.e. provide benefits for a region (e.g. increased employment, industry expansion, tourism growth).

Purpose

To ensure the:

- rationale for the project is sound
- expected outcomes are consistent with the rationale
- expected outcomes are consistent with *Regional Partnerships*' priorities
- methodology is sound
- output is consistent with the outcomes
- performance measures for outcomes are sound
- project is competitively neutral.

Guidance for ACCs in providing comments:

Based on the applicant's claims and your local knowledge of the ACC region, does the ACC consider that the claimed project outcomes will:

- provide benefits for the community? How? If not, why not?
- lead to additional opportunities in the region? What might these be?
- be achieved? If not, why not?

Does the ACC:

- consider the claims made by the applicant in the application form are justified / achievable?
- consider the outcomes to be suitable for the community?

Who will the project benefit?

Support

Definition: an agreement or encouragement from other regional stakeholders for the project to proceed.

Purpose

Community support for the project is critical to the long term success and ownership of the project.

Guidance for ACCs in providing comments:

Does the ACC consider that:

- the project has support from a broad cross section of the community - appropriate groups / communities / individuals / organisations that this project impacts on? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- there has been sufficient consultation in the community about the project?
- there is a need for ongoing community involvement? Is there the required commitment from the community?
- the applicant needs local government support for this project in the form of:
  - statutory approval e.g. zoning of land, Development Approvals, Building approval?
  - on-going maintenance costs e.g. operation costs, maintenance of infrastructure, maintenance of grounds, public liability costs?

Has this commitment to support has been obtained?

Examples of evidence that could support this:

- Partnership funding
- Sponsor for the project
- Letters of support
- Letters of commitment
- Petitions in favour of the project
- Positive outcomes from community consultations
- Volunteer labour

Partnerships

Definition: an individual or organisation that makes a financial and/or in-kind contribution to the project. Often referred to as co-funding or cocktail funding.

Purpose

To:

- maximise the outcomes for each contribution
- minimise the risk of project failure if partners withdraw.
- demonstrate support in the region
- increase commitment to the project's success
- improve the project's sustainability

Guidance for ACCs in providing comments

Does the ACC consider that:

- the project demonstrates a partnership approach?
- there is evidence of co-funding and partnership support from:
  - government agencies at Federal, State and local levels
  - private sector
  - community organisations? If so, are they providing cash or in-kind support?
- Are the partnership contributions reasonable? In commenting on this, consider:
  - the size of the community
  - the type of contribution
  - who the partners are
  - the relative costs of the region
  - the size of the project
  - access to other funding sources in the community.

Project viability

Definition: Evidence that the project outcomes are sustainable beyond the funding period, and that the project has been appropriately costed.

Purpose

To ensure that the projects funded by the Australian Government will not need further funding to enable the outcomes to be completed or sustained.

Guidance for ACCs in providing comments:

Project viability – general

Does the ACC consider that:

- there is evidence that the outcomes of the project are likely to be sustained beyond the project-funding period?
- the costs are reasonable for the region?
- there is a clear path and local commitment to the next stage of the project? If so, why? If not, why not?
- there are any other linkages to community initiatives or enterprises that may be relevant in underpinning the long-term outcomes?

Project viability – commercial activity

Does the ACC consider there is a commercial demand for the product / service? Why / why not?

Applicant viability

Definition: The applicant has the capacity and ability to ensure the project and its outcome(s) can be achieved within the period of funding and sustained beyond.

Purpose

The project and its outcome(s) are:

- achieved
- met according to expectations and plans
- sustainable
- ongoing beyond the funding period

Guidance for ACCs in providing comments:

- What is the ACC's knowledge or experience of the applicant's capacity to manage the project and achieve the stated outcomes?
- What is the ACC's awareness of other resources and access to appropriate expertise that the applicant has to support it in managing the project?
- If a third party is to manage the project, what is the ACC's knowledge or experience of their capacity to manage and achieve results?

Other groups seeking funding for a similar initiative

In providing comments on whether the ACC is aware of any other entity or community group seeking funds for this or a similar initiative, ACCs should consider whether there is any duplication of the project activity that might adversely impact on the success of the project i.e.

Planning projects

- Are there other plans in the community that this project will duplicate?

Infrastructure projects

- Are there other buildings in the community that could be used instead? Renovate / modify for the same use?

Services projects

- Will the project duplicate existing services? Is there a demand for a duplicate service?
- Is this an extension / enhancement of existing services?

(Actual partnerships to the project should be discussed in the criteria section entitled ‘Partnerships’ – see above for guidance).

Competitive neutrality issues

ACCs are asked to advise whether:

- they are aware of any other businesses operating in the same line of business activity across the region and any possible duplication of existing business or community activity. These should be described in the comments.
- they consider that the project will adversely impact on any other business or business activity in the region and why or why not.

Other aspects

ACCs are asked to provide any additional information that they have not already included in their comments that may be considered pertinent to the application.

Overall recommendation and ranking

5.1.7 Attachment G: ACC Project Synopsis Sheet

ACC Project Synopsis Sheet (for applications ready for ACC comment)		
Project No: ________________________		
Project Title: ____ ____		
Proponent:____		
Expected project outcome(s): ____ ____ ____		
Project length:____		
Programme funds sought:	_________________(Programme) $	
Other Funding Sources and Amount(s)	_________________	$
	_________________	$
	_________________	$
	_________________	$
Total cost of the project:	_________________	$
Project description		
☐ Programme Guidelines have been met		
☐ Project demonstrates value for money		
☐ Project has clear outcomes that provide benefits for the community and create or		

ACC Project Synopsis Sheet (for applications ready for ACC comment)		
enhance opportunities in the community		
☐ Detailed accurate budgets including how funds will be spent		
☐ The application demonstrates that the project is a partnership and has demonstrated community support		
☐ The viability of the project and applicant have been established		
☐ Supporting studies / information available, where necessary		
☐ Community consultations supporting the project have been held		
☐ Community need assessed		
☐ Expected outcomes stated		
☐ Evaluation and monitoring processes detailed		
☐ Linkage to ACC SRP shown		
☐ Local Government support provided, where necessary		
Importance of project to the Region? High ❒ Average ❒ Low ❒		
Staff assessment of project	❒ Recommended	❒ Not Recommended
Reasons:______________________________		

5.1.8 Attachment H: 10-day letter (requesting further information)

Ref [File No]

[address]

Dear [title] [surname]

Thank you for your application seeking *Regional Partnerships* funding for the [title] project which was received by the Department on [date].

The following information is required before your application can be assessed:

[e.g., add or delete as appropriate]

- Responses to questions [xx] on your application
- ABN number at question [xx] on your application
- A copy of the registration form for the applicant organisation
- A description of the [outcomes] [output] [project rationale] at questions [xx}
- An explanation as to why funding beyond the life of the project is requested in this application
- An explanation as to why *Regional Partnerships* is the most appropriate source of funding for this project
- Supporting documentation such as evidence of [community support] [co-funding] [local government support]
- A copy of plans or studies demonstrating the need for this project
- Clarification of your budget to include [applicant co-funding] {*Regional Partnerships* funding request] [other co-funding]

Etc

Please forward the required information by [date four weeks from date of this letter].

If this information is not received by the due date, the Department will deem your application for Regional Partnerships funding to be withdrawn. In this event, no further action will be taken by the Department and your application will need to be resubmitted if you wish it to be considered.

Please call [name] on [phone number] in our [name] Regional Office if you have any queries on this matter.

Yours sincerely

[name]

for Regional Manager

[name] Regional Office

[date]

5.1.9 Attachment I: 10-day letter (application does not meet guidelines)

Ref [File No]

[address]

Dear [title] [surname]

Thank you for your application seeking *Regional Partnerships* funding for the [title] project which was received by the Department on [date].

Unfortunately your application is not eligible for funding under *Regional Partnerships* because

- The applicant is [an Australian Government Department] [a State Government Department] [an Area Consultative Committee] [an individual (other than a sole trader)]
- The applicant is a third party seeking *Regional Partnerships* funding on behalf of others but not under a sponsoring arrangement
- The applicant organisation is not registered under State or Australian Government organisation. That is, the applicant organisation is not an incorporated association, a company, a council, a cooperative or a charity
- The applicant organisation does not have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or an Australian Company Number (ACN), and does not have an application for an ABN or ACN pending
- The applicant is a private sector organisation seeking *Regional Partnerships* funding for a plan or a study.

[delete those not applicable]

Further information on eligibility for funding under the *Regional Partnerships* programme can be found at www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au. Should you wish to further develop your application to ensure it is eligible for consideration for funding under *Regional Partnerships*, it may be helpful for you to contact your local Area

Consultative Committee (ACC), [name of ACC] on [phone number]. ACCs are the Government's primary point of promotion, and project and application development for the *Regional Partnerships* programme.

No further action to assess your application will be taken at this stage unless you specifically request otherwise.

Please call [name] on [phone number] in our [name] Regional Office if you have any queries on this matter.

Yours sincerely

[name]

for Regional Manager

[name] Regional Office

[date]

5.1.10 Attachment J: 10-day letter (application progressed / assessment commenced)

Ref [File No]

[address]

Dear [title] [surname]

Thank you for your application for *Regional Partnerships* funding for the [title] project which was received by the Department on [date].

Assessment of your application has commenced. An assessment officer from the Department may contact you if further information or clarification of any part of your application is required.

Please note that no commitment to funding your application can be assumed. The *Regional Partnerships* programme is a discretionary funding programme and demand for assistance is high. Therefore, your project may not be funded even if your application rates highly against the assessment criteria for *Regional Partnerships*.

Please also note that information provided to DOTARS as part of your application may be provided to third parties including:

- [name of ACC], your local Area Consultative Committee, which will be asked to provide advice on all applications from its region
- other government agencies and consultants used by DOTARS to assess the project and applicant viability, including assessment of financial viability and the ability to complete the projects
- other government agencies to assist the Department in working out appropriate sources of funding and to inform programme policy and development
- the Federal Parliament to help the Department meet the accountability requirements imposed by legislation and Parliamentary guidelines

Amendments to your application can only be made by contacting the Department in writing. This correspondence should clearly outline the amendments you wish to make to your application and should be signed off by you or another nominated contact in your organisation for the application. We will advise you in writing of the outcome of your application as soon as possible.

Please call [name] on [phone number] in our [name] Regional Office if you have any queries on this matter.

Yours sincerely

[name]

for Regional Manager

[name] Regional Office

5.1.11 Attachment K: Ministerial Decision and Announcement Package Templates

5.1.11.1 Ministerial Brief Template

Covering Brief

Our Reference:

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES

cc: Minister for Transport and Regional Services
Secretary
Deputy Secretary
AS Regional Programmes and Territories

SUBJECT: ***REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS (RP)*: PACKAGE XX**

ACTION SOUGHT:

That you note the Department's assessment of the *Regional Partnerships* applications included in this package and agree to fund the recommendations.

ATTACHMENTS:

A. Copies of the Department's assessment of RP applications.

B. Letters and documents to support announcement of approved projects at the local level.

C. Letter and attachments to Minister for Finance and Administration seeking his approval of XX multi-year grant projects.

BACKGROUND:

1. We are continuing to focus on projects for priority assessment. This package contains another XX priority projects.

ISSUES:

Package XX Details

2. This package contains (XX) projects for your consideration. Of these, (XX) are recommended for funding and (XX) have been assessed as not meeting the RP guidelines.
3. Details of the Department's assessment of each project against the programme guidelines are at **Attachment A**.
4. The total RP contribution for the recommended projects in this package is $XX

(GST exclusive).

5. We have prepared the following documents to support the announcement process (refer **Attachment B**):

- a letter from you to relevant local Members of Parliament/Senators advising of approved projects in their electorates/States, together with a draft media release and background information for each of the projects;
- a letter from you to the successful applicants advising of your approval of their application under RP (note: these letters remind applicants of any conditions imposed on the approval of funding and the importance of entering into an agreement with us quickly; and
- a letter from you to the relevant ACC Chairs advising of approved projects in their region, together with a proforma for arranging an official launch of the project.

The Department will advise unsuccessful applicants, providing reasons for non-approval.

6. In addition this package contains one project that requires funding over a period longer than 12 months. Consistent with Cabinet decision JH00/0084/CAB/2 of 10 April 2000 relating to Multi-Year Grants, you are required to write to the Minister for Finance and Administration seeking his prior approval to this grant being made under Regional Partnerships before you are permitted to award and announce funding for it. A draft letter from you to the Minister for Finance and Administration seeking this approval, along with details of the project, is at **Attachment C**.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you:

1. agree to the recommendations at Attachment A relating to Regional Partnerships projects. If you agree, can you please annotate each project assessment in Attachment A;
2. sign the letters to the successful applicants, Local Members of Parliament, Senators, and ACC Chairs advising your approval under *Regional Partnerships* (Attachment B).

Gary Dolman Assistant Secretary Regional Community Liaison Branch XXX 2003 Contact Officer: xx Telephone: 6274 XXXX	Agreed / Not Agreed DE-ANNE KELLY / /

5.1.11.2 Project Summary Template

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS – APPROVED PROJECT

Project ID:	«ID»
Package No:	(Inserted by NO)
Project Title:	«Proj»
Organisation Name:	«Org»
Organisation Contact:	«OrgCon_Title»«OrgCon_Fname»«OrgCon_Sname»«OrgCon_Hon»
Phone:	«Phone»
Location:	«Location»,«State»
Primary Electorate:	«Elect»
Local ACC:	«ACC»
ACC Contact:	«EO»
Phone:	«EO_Phone»

Project Co-Funding

Cash:	«ContribCash»
In-Kind:	«ContribInKind»
Total:	**$0**

Regional Partnerships Funding	Approved Funds	GST Amount	Total
	«RecomFunds»	«GST»	«Total»

Project Summary

«ProjSum»

«RPFundsFor»

5.1.11.3 Letter from Minister to coalition / MP Senator

(To be printed on appropriate letterhead and formatted as outlined in Ministerial Guidelines)

«MPSen_Name»

«MPSen_Title»

«MPSen_Portfolio»

« MPSen_Address1»

« MPSen_Address2»

« MPSen_Salutation»

I am pleased to advise you that I have approved funding under *Regional Partnerships* to the «Org» for its «Proj» project in your «ElectState».

Your personal efforts on their behalf are appreciated.

The sum allocated to the project is «Total» (GST inclusive).

[[Add if appropriate] However, funding for the project has been approved subject to «FundCond».

[Once these conditions have / this condition has been satisfied it] It would be appreciated if you could liaise with the «Org» and the local Area Consultative Committee, «ACC», to make suitable arrangements to announce this funding publicly. The attached draft media release, which includes information on *Regional Partnerships* and details about the successful project, may be of assistance in this regard.

Regional Partnerships is an Australian Government initiative making it simpler for communities to apply for Australian Government support for regional development projects. *Regional Partnerships* is administered by the Department of Transport and Regional Services.

Thank you for your continuing support for *Regional Partnerships*.

Yours sincerely

De-Anne Kelly

5.1.11.4 Letter from Minister to relevant ACC

(To be printed on appropriate letterhead and formatted as outlined in Ministerial Guidelines)

«ChairCon_Title» «ChairCon_Fname» «ChairCon_Sname» «ChairCon_Hon»

«ChairCon_Position » - «ACC»

«ACC_Address1»

«ACC_Address2»

Dear «ChairCon_Title» «ChairCon_Sname»

I am pleased to advise you that I have approved funding under *Regional Partnerships* of «Total»(GST inclusive) to the «Org» for its «Proj» project.

I have advised «MPSen_Name» about the project and invited «HimHer»to issue a media release announcing the project has been funded.

The successful applicant will be contacted by the «insert relevant Regional Office» of the Department of Transport and Regional Services to arrange the Funding Agreement and other details.

At a suitable time you may wish to hold an official launch for the project. I have attached the appropriate pro forma to assist you in this regard.

Thank you for your continuing commitment to the Area Consultative Committee's role and for your active support for *Regional Partnerships*.

Yours sincerely

De-Anne Kelly

5.1.11.5 Letter from Minister to non-coalition / independent member

(To be printed on appropriate letterhead and formatted as outlined in Ministerial Guidelines)

«MPSen_Name»

«MPSen_Title»

« MPSen_Address1»

« MPSen_Address2»

« MPSen_Salutation»

I have recently approved funding under *Regional Partnerships* for the «Org» for its «Proj» project in your «ElecState».

Regional Partnerships is an Australian Government initiative, that makes it simpler for communities to apply for Australian Government support for regional development projects. *Regional Partnerships* is administered by the Department of Transport and Regional Services.

I enclose details of the project that has been successful in your electorate.

Yours sincerely

De-Anne Kelly

5.1.11.6 Letter from Minister to successful applicant

(To be printed on appropriate letterhead and formatted as outlined in Ministerial Guidelines)

«OrgCon_Title» «OrgCon_Fname» «OrgCon_Sname» «OrgCon_Hon»

«OrgCon_Posit»

«Org»

«Post1»

«Post2»

Dear «OrgCon_Title» «OrgCon_Sname»

I am pleased to advise you that I have approved funding under *Regional Partnerships* of «Total» (GST inclusive) to the «Org»for your «Proj» project.

[Funding for the project has been approved «FundCondit»

An officer from my Department will be contacting you shortly to discuss contractual arrangements. You will need to sign a formal Funding Agreement which sets out the terms and conditions under which the funding is provided, and return this document prior to entering into any expenditure commitments for the funding.

Regional Partnerships is a popular source of funding and there are many projects competing for funding. It would be appreciated if contractual arrangements were finalised with my Department within 14 days of receiving a draft Funding Agreement. Please notify my Department if you are unable to meet this timeline.

I have written to «MPSen_Name» advising of this funding approval and asked that «HeShe» liaise with you about suitable arrangements to announce the provision of the funding publicly. I ask your organisation to keep the approval of funding confidential until this has occurred.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate «insert organisation name» on its successful submission and wish you every success with the project.

Yours sincerely

De-Anne Kelly

5.1.11.7 Draft joint localised media release

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FUNDING FOR «LOCATION»

Regional Partnerships Programme funding of more than «Total» has been granted to assist «Proponent__Organisation_Name» ……………..

«MPSen_Title», «MPSen_Name», (fname,Sname) today announced that Australian Government funds would go towards «What_is_RP_being_asked_to_fund»

"«Media2»" «MPSen_Name»(Mr/Mrs/Mrs Sname) said.

"………" NB THIS MEDIA STATEMENT WILL REQUIRE SOME EDITING TO MAKE IT SUITABLE IN THIS CONTEXT

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, De-Anne Kelly, congratulated the local community for working together to access Regional Partnerships funding.

"I would particularly like to thank the local Area Consultative Committee, «ACC» for helping to bring this project to fruition," Mrs Kelly said.

"Regional Partnerships continues the Australian Government's approach of working with local communities to support their ideas. There is $308 million available under Regional Partnerships from 2004-05 to 2007-08".

"Regional Partnerships integrates the Australian Government's key regional programmes, except Sustainable Regions, into one programme, with one set of guidelines and one application form to help communities develop their own future".

"Communities should contact their local Area Consultative Committee* if they wish to seek funding through Regional Partnerships."

****

Media inquiries:

Mrs Kelly's office:	Mr John Stock	(02) 62774702	0408 478 654
«MPSen_Name»'s »(Mr/Mrs/Mrs Sname) office:		(xx)xxx xxxx	xxxx xxx xxx

*For further information go to www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au or www.acc.gov.au

5.1.11.8 Media Release Attachment Template

Media Release - Attachment

Project ID:	xx	
Package No:	xx	
Project Title:	xx	
Organisation Name:	xx	
Organisation Contact:	xx	Phone: xx
Location:	xx	
Primary Electorate:	xx	
Local ACC:	xx	
ACC Contact:	xx	Phone: xx

Project Co-Funding

Cash:	$xx
In-Kind:	$xx
Total:	$xx

***Regional Partnerships* Funding:**	**Approved Funds**	**GST Amount**	**Total**
	$xx	$xx	$xx

Project Summary

5.1.12 Attachment L: Letters from RO re unsuccessful applications

5.1.12.1 Letter to applicant re unsuccessful applications (RO)

«OrgCon_Title» «OrgCon_Fname» «OrgCon_Sname» «OrgCon_Hon»

«OrgCon_Posit»

«Post1»

«Post2»

Dear «OrgCon_Title» «OrgCon_Sname»

I refer to the application by the «Org» for funding under the *Regional Partnerships* programme for the «Proj» project.

Regional Partnerships is a discretionary funding programme and demand for funding is high.

[The project met all assessment criteria. However, there are insufficient funds available to meet all requests.] or

[The application was not successful because:
Select from:

[it did not demonstrate value for money in that…..]

[the application did not demonstrate [sufficiently] that the project would provide benefit for the community by:

- [Meeting a demonstrated need or community demand for the [project's outcomes]
- [Filling a market gap]
- [Adding value to existing resources, products or business]

[the application did not demonstrate that the project would create or enhance opportunities in the community by:

- Establishing new, diversified or expanded business in response to demonstrated markets
- Providing infrastructure that will enhance economic / social opportunities in the region
- Enhancing interaction in the community to facilitate an improvement to the community as a whole
- Delivering diversification of skills and/or demographics in a location

Increasing the uptake of innovation, best practice or new technologies]

[the activities of the project would be in direct competition with other commercial activities in the community / region]

[the application does not demonstrate that the applicant is working with the community / private sector / other departments across all levels of government, and/or that funding options from these sources have been identified.]

[the project does not have contributions from a broad cross-section of the community]

[the project does not have cash contributions from relevant industry and stakeholders]

[the project is a business investment projects and the financial contribution to the project is not in the form of new investment]

[the application does not demonstrate that the project has the support of local government]

[the applicant has not demonstrated the ability or access to expertise to manage the project both during and after funding]

[the project does not demonstrate clear paths to the next stage of development and to sustainable outcomes in the local community]

[the project does not include a commitment, such as funding, for implementation of the plan / study]

[the application does not demonstrate that the project's outcomes will be sustainable beyond the funding period]

[the application does not demonstrate that the project will remain sustainable and viable beyond the funding period]

[the application does not demonstrate that the project will provide an ongoing measurable benefit to the community / region]

[the application does not demonstrate that the project will contribute to the sustainability of the community]

[the application does not demonstrate that the project will deliver benefits to the community through smarter use of existing natural resources]

[the applicant has not demonstrated that the project is financially viable]

[the project does not demonstrate value for money]

[the project is not as high a priority within the region as other projects]

I would like to thank you for your interest and the considerable effort that you put into the development of your application. Should you wish to obtain further information on your application or would like to discuss the matter further, please contact «Officer» on «Phone».

If you are unhappy with the decision on your application, you may seek a review of the Minister's decision. Any request for a review must be received within 12 weeks from the date of this letter. Request for a review will only be considered if the applicant considers that the information supplied has been:

1. misinterpreted
2. misunderstood
3. or that proper procedures have not been followed.

You must write to the Assistant Secretary, Regional Analysis and Performance Branch requesting a Review of Ministerial Decision.

Further information about the review process is available from the *Regional Partnerships* website at www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

«RM»

Regional Manager

«RO»

[date]

5.1.12.2 Letter to ACC re unsuccessful application (RO)

«ChairCon_Title» «ChairCon_Fname» «ChairCon_Sname» «ChairCon_Hon»

«ChairCon_Position»– «ACC»

«ACC_Address1»

«ACC_Address2»

Dear «ChairCon_Title» «ChairCon_Sname»

I refer to the application by the «Org» for funding under the Regional Partnerships programme for its «Proj» project.

Regional Partnerships is a discretionary grants programme and demand for funding is high.

I regret to advise that funding has not been approved for the project.

This Office is writing to [insert contact title][insert contact surname] of [insert organisation] to advise them of the outcome of their application and the reasons for non-approval, and to provide them with details of who can be contacted to further discuss the application. A copy of the letter is enclosed for your information.

I would like to thank you for the assistance that you provided to the applicant in the development of the application and for your continuing commitment to the Area Consultative Committee's role and for your active support for Regional Partnerships.

Yours sincerely

«RM»

Regional Manager

«RO»

«Date»

5.1.12.3 Letter to unsuccessful applicant - not eligible for funding (RO)

Ref [File No]

«OrgCon_Title» «OrgCon_Fname» «OrgCon_Sname» «OrgCon_Hon»

«OrgCon_Posit»

«Org»

«Post1»

«Post2»

Dear «OrgCon_Title» «OrgCon_Sname»

Thank you for your application seeking Regional Partnerships funding for the «Proj» project, which was received by the Department on [date].

Unfortunately your application is not eligible for funding under Regional Partnerships because

□ The applicant is [a Commonwealth Government Department] [a State Government Department] [an Area Consultative Committee] [an individual (other than a sole trader)]

□ The applicant is a third party seeking Regional Partnerships funding on behalf of others but not under a sponsoring arrangement

□ The applicant organisation is not registered under State or Commonwealth organisation. That is, the applicant organisation is not an incorporated association, a company, a council, a cooperative or a charity

□ The applicant organisation does not have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or an Australian Company Number (ACN), and does not have an application for an ABN or ACN pending

□ The applicant is a private sector organisation seeking Regional Partnerships funding for a plan or a study.

[delete those not applicable]

Further information on eligibility for funding under the Regional Partnerships programme can be found at www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au . Should you wish to further develop your application to ensure it is eligible for consideration for funding under Regional Partnerships, it may be helpful for you to contact your local Area Consultative Committee (ACC), «ACC», on «EO_Phone». ACCs are the Government's primary point of promotion, and project and application development for the Regional Partnerships programme.

No further action to assess your application will be taken at this stage unless you specifically request otherwise.

Please call «Officer» on «Phone» in our «RO» Regional Office if you have any queries on this matter.

Yours sincerely

«Officer»

for «RM»

Regional Manager

«RO» Regional Office

28 April 2004

5.1.13 Attachment M: Second letter to Applicant - further information requested (RO)

Ref [File No]

«OrgCon_Title» «OrgCon_Fname» «OrgCon_Sname» «OrgCon_Hon»

«OrgCon_Posit»

«Org»

«Post1»

«Post2»

Dear «OrgCon_Title» «OrgCon_Sname»

I refer to previous correspondence from this Department dated [date] (copy attached) requesting additional information in support of an application from your organisation for Regional Partnerships funding for the «Proj» project.

The Department has not yet received the information it requires in order to complete the assessment of your application against the Regional Partnerships guidelines.

You are requested to forward the required information by [date four weeks from date of this letter].

In the event this information is not received, the Department will deem your application for Regional Partnerships funding to be withdrawn. In this event, no further action will be taken by the Department and your application will need to be re-submitted if you wish it to be considered.

Please call «Officer» on «Phone» in our «RO» Regional Office if you have any queries on this matter.

Yours sincerely

5.1.14 Attachment N: ACCs template for inviting Minister to events

DOTARS **OFFICAL MINISTERIAL INVITATION TO ATTEND DEPARTMENTAL EVENT**			
INVITATION TO:			
OFFICIAL EVENT TITLE:			
DAY AND DATE OF FUNCTION:			
EVENT DESCRIPTION:	☐ **Launch**	☐ **Project Announcement**	☐ **Other**
DETAILS: **FEDERAL ELECTORATE:** **FEDERAL MEMBER:** **ENDORSING AREA CONSULTING COMMITTEE (ACC):** **Amount of Federal Government Funding:** Other: Co-funding: In-kind: Project Proponent:			
Project Background:			
Project Description: **Project Outcomes:** **VENUE:** **ROOM / LOCATION / BUILDING:** **STREET ADDRESS:** **SUBURB / TOWN:** **CONTACT AT VENUE**:			
DETAILS OF INVOLVEMENT: **PLANNED TIME OF ARRIVAL:** **PLANNED TIME OF DEPARTURE:** **EXPECTED ROLE OF MINISTER:** ☐ **Speech** ☐ **Presentation of Certificates** ☐ **Other**			
OTHERS INVITED TO ATTEND:			
CONTACT OFFICER FOR EVENT: Title and Name: Organisation Name: **DEPARTMENTAL CONTACT OFFICER:** Phone No: Fax No: Mobile No:			
NOTE: ALL INVITATIONS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED IN ORDER TO REACH THE MINISTER AT LEAST 21 DAYS PRIOR TO THE EVENT			

5.1.15 Attachment O: Package for inviting Minister/Member to project launch/function

5.1.15.1 Template for inviting Minister to Project launch/function

Proposed date of launch: ____

Address of launch:

____

____

Project title:

____

____

Description of the ACC:

Name of ACC: ____

Chair: ____

Key Goals of the Strategic Regional Plan:

[OPTIONAL - ANY ISSUES THE ACC MAY WANT TO RAISE]

____

____

____

____

____

____

Executive Officer: ____

Contact Details:

____

____

____

____

[For an ACC function you may want to include number of projects funded to date, amount of funding received and other support provided by ACC to small business and indigenous programmes for example]

Project funding:		
Amount of *Regional Partnerships* contribution	**$……………………………….**	
Amount of other contributions and source	**Source**	**Contribution**
Description of in-kind contributions and source	**Source**	$
		$
		$
		$
		Contribution

Project description

Describe the key elements of the project (for example a consultancy, research, survey(s), information exchange, developing networks, guidelines, other strategic planning).

____
____
____
____

Any services, events or products resulting from the project.

____
____
____
____

Key dates for project (commencement, completion and any other relevant milestones).

____
____
____
____

Project objectives

Describe the main objectives of the project (e.g.: filling a market gap, highlighting new industries, creating jobs, providing infrastructure to enhance economic / social opportunities, enhancing interaction in the community to lead to an improvement in the community, strategic planning).

Project outcomes

Describe what the project has achieved in terms of meeting the project objectives and how these link to the achievement of the overall *Regional Partnerships* objectives.

Background information about local area relevant to the project

Rationale for the project – why did the ACC and local community decide the project was needed.

Description of the local area including population, economy and labour market (include where relevant information about key industries, new and emerging industries, unemployment rate, job vacancies, existence of major education or other government institutions (universities, defence, prisons etc), communities of Indigenous Australians).

Any key changes to local economy and labour market that underpin the project (e.g. increase or decrease in population, changes in age profile or ethnic background, changes in industry base).

Agenda for function – should include attendance list if appropriate.

<insert function agenda here>

5.1.15.2 Brief and Attachments

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES

Cc: Minister for Transport and Regional Services
Secretary, Deputy Secretary Yuile
FAS Regional Programmes & Territories

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS (RP) PROJECT – [INSERT PROJECT NAME] – [LOCATION]

PURPOSE: To provide briefing and speaking notes, for the official opening of the [insert name of the project - location] on [insert day and date].

PRIORITY: Routine

BACKGROUND:

The [insert project name of project – location] project was approved for funding of $[insert amount] (GST Exempt- non registered organisation) under RP, and was announced on [insert date]. The project commenced on [insert start date] and is to be completed by 30 June 2004. The project was sponsored by the [insert sponsor name] and endorsed by the [insert endorsee.

Funding was approved to [insert purpose of funding] located at [insert location]. More details about the project at Attachment A.

ATTACHMENTS:

A – Project Details
B – Background information about local area relevant to the project
C – Description of [insert name of ACC]
D – Program for Launch and Guest List
E – Background information on RP and Area Consultative Committee
F – Speaking notes.

RECOMMENDATION

That you note the attached briefing and speaking notes.

Assistant Secretary
Regional Communities Branch

Date

ATTACHMENT A

PROJECT DETAILS

Project Funding

Amount of Australian government (RP) funding	$[insert funding]
Other Co-Funding:	$[insert funding]
Support in-kind	$[insert funding]
Total Project Cost	$[insert total funding]

Project Description

[insert project name – location] project is to [insert description of project] at [location].

The [insert project name and details]

Major Objectives and Outcomes of the project are to:

-
-
-

Project Dates:

Outcomes expected from the proposal include:

-
-

ATTACHMENT B

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL AREA RELEVANT TO THE PROJECT

General Information

(Example of general information)

Extending from the Indian Ocean to the Northern Territory border, the Pilbara covers more than 500,000 square kilometres. Situated in the North West of Western Australian, the Pilbara is a mineral rich region thought to be around 2.8 billion years old.

The region comprises four local government authorities – the Shires of Ashburton, East Pilbara and Roebourne, and the Town of Port Hedland.

The region can be separated into three distinct geographical formations, a vast coastal plain inland ranges and an arid desert region extending into Australia's dry centre.

The Pilbara is a semi arid region characterised by high temperatures, low and variable rainfall and high evaporation. Temperature ranges are generally greater in inland districts away from the moderating effects of onshore winds common to the coastal districts.

Often described as the engine room of the nation because of its immense reserves of natural resources, the Pilbara is also blessed with stunning natural beauty boasting striking landscapes and a rich and diverse cultural heritage.

More than 39,000 people live in the Pilbara enjoying the relaxed community life style, the magnificent climate and unique environment it provides. While most residents live in the reigon's towns, many choose the rugged lifestyle of the pastoral stations.

<u>Electoral Representation</u>

Federal Member:	Mr Barry Haase
Electorate:	Kalgoorlie

<u>State Representation</u>

State Member:	Mr Larry Graham
Electorate:	Pilbara

ATTACHMENT C

DESCRIPTION OF PILBARA AREA CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

(Example words)

Chair: Mr Tony Ford (Acting)

Geographic coverage of ACC:

The Pilbara Area Consultative Committee (ACC) is one of nine ACCs in Western Australia and covers the area from Onslow in the north to Newman in the sough and as far east as the Northern Territory border.

The population of the Pilbara is approximately 39,000

The ACC Vision:

The Pilbara ACC will promote and encourage regional economic, social and environmental enterprise with business, government and the community.

Key Goals of the MWGACC Strategic Regional Plan:

1. Promote the role and services of the PACC to business, government and the community;
2. Improving local community facilities, services, or living amenity;
3. Form ongoing alliances to create Regional Partnerships initiatives;
4. Foster or develop economic diversity within the region;
5. Effectively promote Australian Government funded initiatives to the region and their outcomes;
6. Adding value to existing economic activity and industry;
7. Identify, support and endorse those projects seeking assistance that best reflect the PACC vision;
8. Increasing local and/or indigenous employment opportunities; and
9. Providing or improving tourism infrastructure and servicing.

ACC Memberships

ATTACHMENT D

PROGRAMME FOR OPENING AND GUEST LIST

Venue: [Insert Venue address]

Arrival Time: [Insert arrival time]

Official Opening: [Insert official time of the opening]

Date: [Insert day and date of opening]

Telephone: [Insert contact name and telephone number]

PROGRAMME:

- Opening of the [insert project name – location] by [Local MP]
- Official welcoming speeches will be made at this function
- Morning tea will be provided on conclusion of the official opening

Departure Time: [Insert time duration]

(Example of a Guest)

GUEST LIST

Invited Guests:

Australian Government:

- Mr Barry Haase MP, Member for Kalgoorlie;
- Representatives from Australian Government Departments which have an association with this project;
- Chair and committee members of the Pilbara Area Consultative Committee;

Western Australian Government

- Mr Richard Hancock, Department of Community Development
- Cate Eascott, Department of Community Development
- Damien Miles, Department of Community Development

Local Government

- Bob Neville, Town of Port Hedland
- Chris Jackson, town of Port Hedland
- John Cornelder, Town of Port Hedland

Other:

-
-
-
-

ATTACHMENT E

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAMME

The Australian Government's approach to regional development is to work in partnership with communities, government and the private sector to foster the development of self-reliant communities and regions. This approach is consistent with the Commonwealth's framework for developing Australia's regions: Stronger Regions: A Stronger Australia.

The *Regional Partnerships* Programme, which commenced on 1 July 2003, delivers on this approach and ensures that Australian communities have the resources and flexibility to develop local solutions addressing local needs.

Through *Regional Partnerships* the Australian Government partnership projects that focus on:

- Strengthening growth and opportunities
- Improving access to services
- Supporting planning; and
- Assisting structural adjustment for communities.

The Australian Government has made $308 million available under *Regional Partnerships* from 2004-05 to 2007-08.

Projects funded under *Regional Partnerships* have resulted in increased employment and business prosperity for regional Australia as well as enhanced community and environmental services and facilities.

AREA CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES (ACC's)

Area Consultative Committees are vital players in the region. The ACC's primary roles are:

- To be a key facilitator of change and development in their region;
- To be the link between Government, business and the community; and
- To facilitate whole-of-government responses to opportunities in their communities.

ACC's have a continuing, critical role in fostering the development of projects for consideration under Regional Partnerships and in working with Government to build cohesive, active and strong communities.

The 56 ACC's throughout Australia are an important source of advice to Government on local issues and the Government values their ideas, commitment and ability in developing local solutions to local problems.

Further information on Regional Partnerships is available from ACC's, the Commonwealth Regional Information Service – Freecall 1800 026 222, or the website: www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au.

ATTACHMENT F

(Example of Speaking Notes)

SPEAKING NOTES

- Acknowledge:
  - Julie Beveridge, President Hedland Playgroup Association Inc
  - Bob Neville, Deputy Mayor, Town of Port Hedland and Chair, South Hedland Lotteries House Management Committee
  - Ms Robyn Crane, CEO Pilbara Development Commission
  - Other dignitaries and invited guests
- It is a pleasure to be here representing the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Mrs De-Anne Kelly MP.
- The Outdoor Play Area project is the result of a lot of hard work and dedication from people in this region. I understand that this project, partly funded by the Australian Government under its Regional Partnerships Programme (RP), has enabled the Hedland Playgroup to substantially upgrade the facilities of this important organisation.
- The Australian Government is proud to be associated with this project, and it is a great example of what can be achieved through the Government's regional programmes.
- The Australian Government's RP Programme made a contribution of $22,436 to the project to complement contributions from the Hedland Playgroup Association and the Pilbara Development Commission.
- The Regional Partnerships Programme has provided seed funding to assist communities across metropolitan, regional and remote Australia to generate economic and community benefits by encouraging local community action to boost business growth and create sustainable jobs.
- Through Regional Partnership, the Australian Government will invest in projects that focus on:
  - Strengthening economic and social growth,
  - Improving access to services in small communities,
  - Supporting regional planning, and
  - Helping specific regions adjust to major structural change.
- Excellent projects such as the Outdoor Play Area – Port Hedland will continue to be encouraged under Regional Partnerships.
- On behalf of the Australian Government I would like to congratulate the Hedland Playgroup Association and other supporters, who contributed to this project for their

vision, initiative and hard work in upgrading the facilities for the children of South Hedland.

- In making decisions on the funding of projects such as this, the Government, through the Department of Transport and Regional Services, relies on the advice of Area Consultative Committees (ACCs).
- ACCs, such as the Pilbara ACC, help the government to communicate directly with the community and it is good to see their support for this valuable project that will provide benefits to the Hedland region of Western Australia.
- ACCs are in a position to foster projects and ideas relevant to local areas, and are unquestionably an important network within and between regions – in Western Australia there are 9 ACCs whose members volunteer their time.
- I'd like to commend the hard work and commitment of all concerned in developing this project and I have great pleasure in representing the Australian government and declaring open the improvements to the Outdoor Play Area of the Hedland Playgroup.

5.1.16 Attachment P: Funding Agreement Letter of Offer

Reference:

[name]
[organisation]
[address]
[address]

Dear [insert name of person representing the funding recipient]

The Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS), through its Regional Partnerships programme is pleased to offer your organisation funding as described in the Schedule to the Commonwealth's Funding Agreement (the Funding Agreement), two copies attached.

The Regional Partnerships programme is a popular source of funding and there are many projects competing for approval. If you wish to accept this offer of funding, please sign and date, at page 30 Execution Clause, both copies of the Funding Agreement and return them within 14 days of the date of this letter. Please notify us if you are unable to sign and return them within the specified time.

The agreement between you and the Commonwealth shall consist of this letter, the Funding Agreement signed and dated by both parties at page 30 Execution Clause, the Schedule and any Annexure. These documents form the entire agreement relating to the funding and can only be varied by written agreement.

The agreement will commence only when all Parties have signed and dated in accordance with the requirements at page 30, Execution Clause. Once we have executed both copies of the Funding Agreement we will return one copy to you for your records.

The funding is to be used for the Activity as described in the Schedule, and is subject to your compliance with the requirements of the Funding Agreement, the Schedule and any Annexure. The Funding Agreement sets out our standard terms and conditions for the funding. The Schedule and Annexure set out certain specific details in relation to the funding.

In the event of conflict or inconsistency between this letter, the Funding Agreement, the Schedule or any Annexure, then the material first mentioned has precedence over later mentioned material to the extent of the conflict or inconsistency.

Payment of the funding will be in accordance with the conditions set out at Item 2 of the Schedule, titled Funding and Payment. Please ensure you are familiar with the conditions of this Item. In addition, to comply with Government policy relating to payment by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), we will require the following details of your banking institution:

- Bank Name BSB Number
- Bank Address Account Number

Please contact [insert details] if you have any questions

Your sincerely

[Regional Manager]
[Date]

5.1.17 Attachment Q: Variation to Funding Agreement Letter Template

Our reference:

[name]

[address]

Dear [Insert Title and Name]

Variation to Funding Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia

And

Name of Organisation

The Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) is pleased to offer your organisation a variation to your Funding Agreement with the Commonwealth as per your request dated 26 July 2004.

Following consideration of your request, the Department has agreed to the revised budget. Please replace the existing budget at Annexure A of the Funding Agreement with the revised budget attached.

It is a condition that any agreement to vary or extend the Funding Agreement must be in writing and signed by both parties. In accordance with this requirement, if you wish to accept this variation to the Funding Agreement, please arrange for an authorised officer from your organisation to sign both copies of this letter and initial any attached Funding Agreement replacement pages at the bottom right hand corner. Following signature, one copy must be returned to this office. The other copy may be retained for your records.

An officer from DOTARS will contact you on receipt of your signed acceptance to confirm the variation and discuss any issues related to it. If you require any other assistance please do not hesitate to contact [*insert name*] on [*insert phone number*] or e-mail: [*insert email*].

Yours sincerely

[Insert name of RM]
Regional Manager
Regional Office
Date

We, the undersigned, hereby agree to a variation of the principal Funding Agreement to account for changes to the Leonora Childcare Centre *Regional Partnerships* project, as described at paragraph two of this letter of offer and the attachments, if any

Signature: ……………………………………… Title: …………………………………………..

Name: …………………………………………… Organisation: ……………………………………

5.1.18 Attachment R: Notice of Progress Report Due Letter Template

Our Ref:

[name]

[address]

Dear [insert name of funding recipient]

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS – NOTICE OF PROGRESS REPORT

I am writing in regard to the lodgement of Progress Reports for the Regional Partnerships programme project [**insert project title**], and to remind you that a progress report is due on [**insert date due**].

Please note that there is a need to submit progress reports in a timely manner. The Department bases the progress of projects and makes payments against these reports and it is important to ensure they are submitted within the detailed timeframe.

Your contractual obligations are outlined in the Schedule to the Contract at Clause 3, Reports and non-receipt during this timeframe is considered a breach of contract.

To ensure you are complying with your contractual obligations, please forward to this office by [**insert date**]:

- XX progress report (as per sub-clause 3.3) – due [**insert date**]
- Acquittal of Funds form for the [**insert instalment number**] project instalment
- A copy of Tax Invoice for the [**payment number**] project payment.

The above reports can be submitted online via TRAX through the claims processing module.

You can forward your completed reports to:

Name
Department of Transport and Regional Services
XX Regional Office
PO Box XX
TOWN STATE POSTCODE

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please do not hesitate to contact **XX** on **(XX) XXXX XXXX** or e-mail: **XX.XX@dotars.gov.au**.

5.1.19 Attachment S: Overdue Letter Template

Our Ref:

[name]

[address]

Dear [insert name of funding recipient]

OVERDUE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS PROGRESS REPORT
[Insert project title]

I am writing in regard to the lodgement of Progress Reports for the Regional Partnership programme (RP) [Project Title].

Departmental records show that a report was due on [insert date]. To-date this report has not been received.

I draw your attention to the requirements of item 3.2 of the Schedule of the RP Funding Agreement. Please note this report requires detail of activities and progress of the Project.

You are requested to forward the overdue report at the earliest opportunity. Documentation can be forwarded to:

1. DOTARS PO Box XXX, XXXXX XXX XXXX
2. E-mail: XXX.XXX@dotars.gov.au
3. Fax: (XX) XXXX XXXX.

If you require any assistance in relation to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me on (XX) XXX XXX or e-mail: XXX.XXX@dotars.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

[insert name]
Regional Manager
DOTARS XX Regional Office
XXXXXXX

[insert date]

5.1.20 Attachment T: Site Visit Letter Template

Our Ref:

[Name]
[Organisation]
[Address]
[Town State Postcode]

Dear [Insert name]

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS – CONFIRMATION OF SITE VISIT

As part of the *Regional Partnerships Programme* requirements of managing individual Funding Agreements, a Departmental staff member is required to make a site visit and check how your [Insert project name] project is going.

The purpose of a site visit is to obtain some level of confidence that Australian Government funding is being spent appropriately and the project is proceeding satisfactorily.

I would like to confirm details of a site visit from a Department of Transport and Regional Services member of staff, [insert name]. Details as follows:

RP Project:
Date:
Time:
Venue:

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please do not hesitate to contact [insert staff members name] on [insert phone number] or e-mail: [insert e-mail address].

Thankyou for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Name
Regional Manager
DOTARS XXX Regional Office

[insert date]

5.1.21 Glossary of Terms

ACTIVITY (As referred to in the PR Funding Agreement)

The component of a Project that PR funding will be used for.

AGENCY

Any of various organisational units within Government that deliver services or otherwise service Government objectives.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The delivery of the Minister's decision on an application in the form of a letter, email or public announcement. The latter only occurs if the application is successful.

AREA CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (ACC)

Non-profit, community-based organisations funded by the Australian Government. The network of 56 ACCs serves all regions across Australia. For more information refer to www.acc.gov.au

ASSESS / ASSESSMENT

The process the Department uses to determine a recommendation on a project application to the Minister. Assessment takes into consideration the information provided in the application form, the ACCs comments and recommendation, the outcome of the independent risk assessment and other information made available to the Department about the project or applicant.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The tests applied to an application to ensure that it meets the programme's objective(s).

ATO

Australian Taxation Office

AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS NUMBER

The Australian business number (ABN) is the identifying number business use when dealing with other businesses. For example, you generally need to quote an ABN on your invoices or other documents relating to sales you make to other businesses to avoid having tax withheld from payments to you. You use your ABN in certain dealings with the Tax Office and other government departments and agencies. If you are registered for GST, you also need an ABN on your invoices to make them tax invoices.

CASH SUPPORT

Contributions to a project that are in the form of cash.

CLAIM FOR CONFIDENTIALITY

A request to the department that specific application, including supporting documentation and Funding Agreement information, should be confidential. The Department can assist applicants with the specific requirements for making a claim for confidentiality.

COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGE

See 'Competition / Commercial Advantage'

COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

A commercial project is one in which an objective of the project is to make a profit.

COMMONWEALTH AGENCY

Commonwealth agencies are those agencies listed as receiving Commonwealth budget funding, excluding Commonwealth Government owned corporations.

COMPETITION / COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGE

In providing Australian Government funds to projects, the Department must ensure that these projects will not impact adversely upon other businesses and that the funding process is transparent and publicly defensible.

Projects will not be funded where the project competes directly with existing businesses. Where it can be demonstrated that there is an unsatisfied demand for the product or service, or the product or service is to be provided in a new way, the project is not considered to be in direct competition with a like business. The following test will be applied to determine whether or not an organisation may gain a competitive / commercial advantage:

- Is there a similar or the same type of business / project operating in the region or in close proximity already? If so:
- What products / services does the business provide? Are they the same or similar to the products / services proposed in your project? (i.e. will the project duplicate products / services currently produced in the region?
- What is different or distinct about the products / services that your project wishes to provide?
- If your project was funded, what is the likely impact (if any) on other businesses in the region / in the market?
- For projects that compete on a national basis (e.g. call centres) what is the likely impact on projects in another region?

Consideration will be given to the nature of the competitive advantage to be obtained and the level of impact on any existing business competitors. This should be detailed at Question 15 of the word version of the *Regional Partnerships* application form, or Part 10 of the TRAX version of the application.

CONDUCTED BY OR ON BEHALF OF AN AGENCY (SURVEY)

A survey is considered to be conducted by or on behalf of an agency, if that agency:

- Conducts the survey; or
- Manages the contract for the survey; or
- Contributes 50 per cent or more of the funding for the survey; or

- Commissions a block of questions on a repeated omnibus collection run by a consultant; or
- Has its logo or name prominently displayed on the survey questionnaire.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A conflict of interest arises where a person makes a decision or exercises a power in a way that may be, or may be perceived to be, influenced by either material personal interests (financial or non-financial) or material personal associations.

CONSULTATION

Discussions with stakeholders and others with a view to ensuring that their views are taken into account prior to making decisions

COOPERATIVES

A cooperative is a democratic organisation owned and controlled by the people it serves who join together for a common benefit. A cooperative may be formed for the provision of goods or services to members or for the supply or goods or services to the general public.

COST SHIFTING

Substituting or duplicating funding from other sources including government and the private sector.

Cost shifting applies to those costs that

- organisations might reasonably be expected to make provision for (e.g. maintenance or replacement of equipment) or
- receive funding from other sources (e.g. roads or FAGs funding)

They are costs that organisations can expect to incur or be faced with and should budget for as part of their normal business.

CRIS (COMMONWEALTH REGIONAL INFORMATION SERVICE)

CRIS is the Federal Government's information access service for country people. This program provides people living outside of the capital cities with information about Federal Government programs, agencies and services.

DIRECTED TO BUSINESSES (SURVEY)

Any survey or component of a survey that collects information from businesses is considered to be directed to businesses. Specifically, a survey or component of a survey is considered to be directed to businesses whenever:

- individuals, such as managing directors, are specifically selected because of their position or the information they can provide about the business with which they are associated; or
- An individual is asked to supply information about the business or business activity and will need to complete the form during paid work hours; or

- Business records will need to be referred to in order to complete the questionnaire.

This excludes surveys that collect information from:

- A combination of private individuals and businesses, unless the businesses are given separate questions or included through a distinct selection mechanism; or
- Only Federal, State and Local Government budget funded agencies, public hospitals or public schools; or
- Businesses who are under contractual obligations to agencies and aimed at measuring the businesses' performance against these obligations.

DISCRETIONARY GRANT (PROGRAMME)

A payment where the Portfolio Minister or paying agency has discretion in determining whether a particular applicant receives funding and may impose conditions in return for the grant.

DOTARS

Department of Transport and Regional Services.

DOUBLE DIPPING

The practice of obtaining funding from two or more sources that are unaware that they are paying for some or all of the costs of the same or similar output, project or objective.

DUPLICATION

Applications are not eligible under the guidelines where Australian Government funding is, or could be perceived as, substituting or duplicating funding from a relevant Federal, State / Territory or Local Government agency. Consultation with other agencies will be undertaken as part of the assessment process.

Projects must not involve double funding (i.e. funding for exactly the same line item activity where the whole amount is claimed from both *Regional Partnerships* and another source). Proponents must declare any grants or payments for similar activities received from any source including Federal, State and Local Government.

Regional Partnerships is not to substitute for specific purpose funding. Where a Federal, State or Local Government programme exists to meet a specific need, funding should be accessed through that programme. However, this does not rule out *Regional Partnerships* funds where the specific purpose of funding has been accessed to the maximum funding level, and a genuine gap remains.

Assessors should be satisfied that projects would not proceed, or not in the desired manner or time scale, without assistance. Otherwise, any grant paid simply releases the applicant's funds for other purposes that may not contribute to the objectives of the grant programme. Funds paid in such circumstances provide no added value and also represent an opportunity cost to Government.

EVALUATION (PROGRAMME)

The process of reviewing the overall efficiency, effectiveness and economy, as well as the appropriateness, of a grant programme. This can take place either during routine management review or as the subject of a specific program evaluation.

EVALUATION (PROJECT)

The process of reviewing the overall efficiency, effectiveness and economy of a project. Evaluation also considers the alignment of a project's outcomes to the programme objectives.

FOR PROFIT (ORGANISATION)

An organisation is for-profit if it is carried on for the profit or gain of its individual members. This applies for both direct and indirect gains.

FUNDING AGREEMENT

A legally enforceable agreement setting out the terms and conditions governing funding determined by the grant-giving organisation. The form of the agreement will depend on the intent of the grant and the degree of control required.

GRANTS

(Also see discretionary grant)

A grant is a sum of money given to organisations or individuals for a specified purpose directed at achieving goals and objectives consistent with government policy. In a strict legal sense, a grant is a 'gift from the Crown, which may, or may not, be subject to unilaterally imposed conditions'. However, the term is more generally used to include any funding arrangement where the recipient is selected on merit against a set of criteria. The term 'grant' does not include funding of activities relating primarily to the provision of goods and services directly to a government agency. Guidance on these arrangements is provided by the Australian Government Procurement Guidelines, available at www.finance.gov.au/ctc/publications/purchasing/cpg/commonwealth%5Fprocurement%5Fguide.html

GRANTSLINK

A whole of government website offering direct links to existing information on Australian Government grant programmes. It is accessible at http://www.grantslink.gov.au/

GUIDELINES

A single reference source for policy guidance, administrative procedures and assessment criteria.

IN-KIND SUPPORT

In-kind support to a project is products or services provided to the project that have an intrinsic value, but are not provided as direct cash support (e.g. the use of an office at no charge which would normally be rented out – the value of the rent not charged would be an in-kind contribution).

MILESTONES

Payments of grant instalments are generally tied to the achievement of negotiated milestones (deliverables) usually at specified dates as specified in the Funding Agreement Schedules. Grant instalments, where applicable, can also be tied to matching instalments from applicants or other contributing parties. Grant instalments should be paid against a negotiated / agreed tangible output (i.e. against something that is produced / achieved and delivered in the time lines agreed).

As part of an effective risk management strategy, when negotiating milestones and instalments it is important to consider action / treatment to mitigate risks and action (penalties) to be taken if outputs are not achieved by agreed dates.

MINISTER

Parliamentary Secretary referred to throughout this document as the Minister.

MONITORING

The process by which the grant-giving organisation establishes whether individual grants made under a programme are expended as intended. Can be used in tracking implementation against a project plan.

MORE ACCESSIBLE GOVERNMENT (MAG) WORKING GROUP

Established in June 2000 by the Australian Government, MAG comprises 15 Australian Government agencies working collaboratively to make it easier for communities to access government funding and to streamline grants administration.

NON-PROFIT (ORGANISATION)

An organisation is non-profit if it is not carried on for the profit or gain of its individual members. This applies for direct and indirect gains, and both while the organisation is being carried on and on its winding up. The constitution or governing documents of the organisation should prohibit distribution of profits or gains to individual members.

NOT FOR PROFIT (PROJECT)

A not for profit project is one that is not carried on for profit or gain.

OBJECTIVE

A specific outcome that can be measured.

OUTCOME

The outcome is the result, impact or consequence of a project (e.g. decrease in unemployment, increase in education, increase in child-care services, delivery of financial services, increase in community capacity). A direct outcome is the immediate consequence of a project. Indirect outcomes are the consequences related to the project but are not the immediate results.

`OUTPUT

The output is the product of the project (e.g. a building, a plan, a service, a bus). An output should lead to an outcome.

PARTNER / FUNDING PARTNER / PARTNERSHIP

An individual or organisation that makes a financial and/or in-kind contribution to your project (e.g. a $5000 cash contribution by the local government to the project; $100 worth of material donated by the local hardware business).

PERFORMANCE MEASURE

Performance measures are evidence about performance that is collected and used systematically. In some cases quantified performance measures may not be available and less direct performance indicators may have to be used. Performance measurement is best supported by relevant, accurate, timely, accessible, interpretable and coherent performance information.

PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS (NATURAL JUSTICE)

A principle of administrative law requiring that decision-makers act fairly. That is:

- the person affected by the decision has a right to be heard
- the decision should be made without bias or the appearance of bias
- the decision must be linked to the available evidence.

PROGRAMME

A group of activities that contribute to a common strategic outcome. Usually further divided into sub-programmes and components.

RECIPIENT

An entity that receives a grant.

RETROSPECTIVE COSTS

Any funding to meet any expenditure, or commitment to expenditure, prior to the Funding Agreement being signed by both parties (applicant and Australian Government).

RISK MANAGEMENT

The systematic application of management policies, procedures and practices to the tasks of identifying, analysing, assessing, treating and monitoring risk.

SCH (STATISTICAL CLEARING HOUSE)

The SCH is operated within the Methodology Division of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The SCH is the central clearance point for all Australian Commonwealth Government surveys involving 50 or more businesses. The aim of the clearance process is to reduce the burden placed on businesses in completing Commonwealth Government surveys by eliminating duplication and ensuring that good practice is followed when designing and conducting business surveys.

SELF ELIGIBILITY TEST

A questionnaire designed to assist you in determining if your organisation and project is eligible to apply to *Regional Partnerships* for partnership funding. The test is available at www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au

SELECTION CRITERIA

See 'Assessment Criteria'

SPONSORING ORGANISATION

An organisation that would like to apply for *Regional Partnerships* funding is not registered (e.g. community group). To be eligible to apply for funding, they must be 'sponsored' by an organisation that is both registered, and meets all other eligibility criteria (e.g. local government). The 'sponsor' will administer the grant on the applicant's behalf.

STEERING COMMITTEE

A steering committee is intended to oversight the project and ensure that it progresses and keeps on track as per the contract. This may include ACC representation on some projects.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

A statement of the outcomes at the strategic level which the grant-giving organisation seeks to achieve in the short or longer term.

STRATEGIC REGIONAL PLAN

To guide its local-level activities, each ACC brings community stakeholders together to identify opportunities, priorities and growth strategies for the region. This community consultation enables each ACC to develop a three-year Strategic Regional Plan for its region.

SURVEY

A survey is defined as being an activity involving the collection of data, by a structured set of questions, primarily for the purpose of producing summarised information or scientific inferences. The collection of data can occur by telephone, personal interview, paper or electronic form. Surveys can be conducted as a census or as a sample survey. Surveys exclude administrative collections and qualitative research.

SUSTAINABILITY

The project, where applicable, must be self-supporting beyond the period of DOTARS' funding.

THIRD PARTIES

A consultant decides that a community would benefit from *Regional Partnerships* funding, and submits an application. The consultant (i.e. the 3rd party) would not be eligible, however, as the funding would be paid to the consultant, for them to spend the money within the community. In this case, a community group would need to be the applicant.

TRAX

TRAX is an automated program management system for applicant and program information processing. It allows management of all aspects a grant program's life cycle, including online proposal applications, proposal processing, survey reports, and project monitoring and administration. TRAX can also track information on applicants, application proposals and milestone survey reports at both a summary and detail level.

5.1.22 RP Manual Change Log

Change Number	Date of Issue	Subject	Authoring Area
2003/1	24/09/03	Review of Ministerial decisions	C&M
2003/2	16/12/03	Handling Confidential information	ACCs
2003/3	16/12/03	Packaging projects for Ministerial Decision	A&As
2003/4	16/12/03	Assessment of applicant financial risk and project commercial risk/sustainability	ACCs
2003/5	16/12/03	Existing template letters	Various
2003/6	16/12/03	RP Cost Centre/Cost Element Codes	PP&P
2003/7	16/12/03	Evaluation Guide	A&E
2003/8	16/12/03	Review of assessment templates	A&A
2003/9	16/12/03	Attachments merged with manual	RP Ops
2003/10	16/12/03	Freedom Of Information	RP Ops
2003/11	16/12/03	Strategic Opportunities Notional Allocations	RP Ops
2003/12	16/12/03	Protocols for using SAP	PP&P
2004/1		Eligibility	RP Ops
		Development Approvals	RP Ops
		ROACH	A&As
		Monitoring Projects within a risk management framework	C&M
		Review of Ministerial Decisions	A&E
		Funding Agreement Section	AA&C
		Grant Process flow chart	RP Ops
		Expression of Interest	RP Ops
		Submitting applications – Smart Form	TRAX

				Amending Applications in TRAX		RP Ops
				Multi Year Grants		RP Ops
				Ministerial decision and Annoucement		AA&C
				Transition Arrangements		
				Maintaining the manual		RP Ops
2004/2		10/04/2004		Additional words on retrospective funding.		RP Ops
				GST example of scenarios		RP Ops & AA&C
				Additional words on Development Approvals (clarification)		RP Ops
				Airport eligibility		RP Ops
				Aligning procedures manual with changes in TRAX		RP Ops
				“Pre-assessment section” renamed to “Eligibility Check” section		
				Emerging Issues Register		RP Ops
				Assessing Risk & Viability		AA&C
				The Style Guide		AA&C
				Applications seeking small grants – simplified assessment process		RP Ops
				Additional words on competitive neutrality		RP Ops
				Multi Year Projects		RP Ops
				Finalising projects for packaging		AA&C
				Packaging projects for Ministerial Decision		AA&C
				Review of Ministerial Decisions		RA&PB
				Importance of raising Purchase Orders		RP Ops
				Requesting a payment		TRAX
				Obtaining reports		TRAX

				Post activity report requirements		RP Ops
				Align Template letters with TRAX letters		RP Ops & TRAX
				Ministerial Launch Package		RP Ops