



ACT
Government

Disaster Ready Fund Round Two - ACT Administration Guidelines

Guideline for the management of the
Disaster Ready Fund Round 2 application
process within the ACT

Security and Emergency Management Division
Justice and Community Safety Directorate

December 2023

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Introduction

The Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) is the Australian Government's flagship disaster resilience and risk reduction initiative, which delivers projects that support Australians to manage the physical and social impacts of disasters caused by climate change and other natural hazards.

The DRF has been established under the *Disaster Ready Fund Act 2019* and is administered through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

The primary objectives of the DRF are to:

1. Increase the understanding of natural hazard disaster impacts, as a first step towards reducing disaster impacts in the future;
2. Increase the resilience, adaptive capacity and/or preparedness of governments, community service organisations and affected communities to minimise the potential impact of natural hazards and avert disasters; and
3. Reduce the exposure to risk, harm and/or severity of a natural hazard's impacts, including reducing the recovery burden for governments, cohorts at disproportionate disaster risk, and/or affected communities.

The DRF helps give effect to the [National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework's](#) (NDRRF) national priorities by supporting and enabling locally led and owned place-based disaster risk reduction efforts. It also helps to implement the [National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy \(2021\)](#) by enhancing community understanding of and resilience to climate change impacts, and by driving investment and action through collaboration with relevant partners.

The Australian Government announced up to \$1 billion will be committed through the DRF over five years, from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2028. Each financial year, up to \$200 million will be made available to states and territories for disaster risk reduction and resilience building projects through the DRF.

These Administration Guidelines focus on how the ACT Government will administer the ACT's application for Round Two of the DRF, which will provide up to \$200 million nationally from 2024-2025.

Who can apply

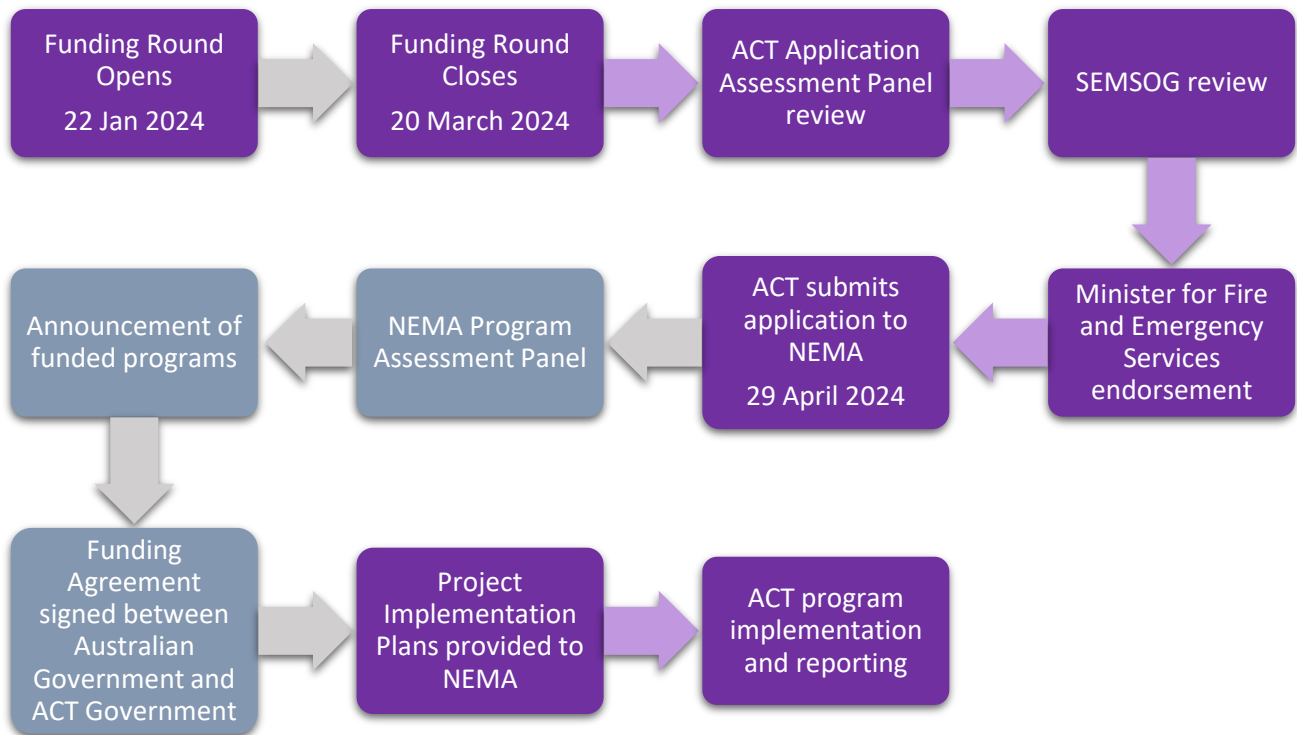
Only state and territory governments are eligible to make a submission to NEMA for the DRF. However, the ACT's submission can include applications from other organisations if they are endorsed by the ACT Government.

The ACT Government will consider project applications put forward by:

- ACT Government agencies
- Non-Government Organisations
- Peak bodies
- Local Government
- Universities and research institutions
- Community groups
- Businesses (noting projects cannot be focused on generating profit or commercial gain).

Consortiums of organisations or groups are also able to apply.

Overview of DRF Round Two Application Process



Before submitting an application

Before submitting an application to the ACT Government for Round Two of the DRF, proponents need to:

- Read the NEMA DRF Round Two Program Guidelines (Program Guidelines). NEMA's Guidelines include detailed information about project eligibility, co-contribution requirements and assessment criteria that is not covered in these Administrative Guidelines.
- Engage and consult with relevant stakeholders, including the ACT Government.
 - The DRF Round Two application form requires details about stakeholder engagement that has occurred to support the project proposal. High quality applications will be able to provide evidence of stakeholder engagement and support, including with First Nations people where relevant.
 - Organisations that are external to the ACT Government are expected to have discussed their proposal with the relevant area of the ACT Government before submitting an application. If you are not sure how to get in contact with the relevant area of the ACT Government, please go to www.act.gov.au or email DRF@act.gov.au for guidance.
- Complete the ACT Government's Application Checklist to ensure your application meets all of the requirements.
- Obtain approval/endorsement of your application at a relevant level within your organisation.

- For ACT Government entities, this would be at the Director General level, their delegate or equivalent. You do not have to obtain Ministerial endorsement of your proposal, noting that the ACT Minister for Fire and Emergency Services will endorse all applications before they are submitted to NEMA. However, if you want to seek your Minister's endorsement please build this into your timeframes.
- For external organisations, please adhere to your internal governance structures to identify an appropriate delegate.

How to Apply

The DRF Round Two application templates, and supporting material, is available on the ACT Government website. A 'how to guide' developed by NEMA is also available to help complete the application form.

Proponents are required to provide three documents as part of their application:

- DRF Project Application Form
- A Project Logic analysis
- Indicative Budget

Up to 5 supporting documents are also able to be included.

Applications must be submitted via email to DRF@act.gov.au before **5pm, 20 March 2024**.

How Applications will be Assessed

The Security and Emergency Management Division (SEMD) within the ACT Government has been authorised to perform the function of central coordination point for all applications from across the ACT Government and ACT community for DRF consideration. Secretariat functions for the assessment of applications are administered by SEMD.

The ACT is committed to establishing a fair, equitable, accountable, and timely process to assess, approve and submit ACT Government submissions to the DRF funding rounds.

Applications from across the ACT to the funding stream will be reviewed by senior executive representatives from across ACT Government. This will be done through the establishment of an Application Assessment Panel (AAP) which will assess applications based on the merit of information given and in compliance with the DRF Round Two Program Guidelines provided by NEMA.

Levels of Review

There are four levels of assessment and review. The four levels ensures that a valid, transparent, and accountable process is undertaken to assess, review and approve applications for submission to the DRF.

Level 1 - Quality Assurance Check

The Secretariat will ensure that all required paperwork is provided with each application before further packaging and distribution to the Application Assessment Panel (AAP). The Secretariat will liaise with the relevant applicant if any necessary documentation is missing from the application.

An initial scan will identify whether proposals have addressed all relevant assessment criteria. Funding applications must successfully address the criteria specified in the DRF Round Two Program Guidelines for the AAP to consider the application on merit.

Level 2 – Application Assessment Panel

Assessment of applications is carried out by the AAP. The AAP consists of senior executive representative from specified agencies that have investment and interest in strategic resilience building and disaster risk reduction. Agencies with membership on the AAP will have the authority to vote on an application.

The Terms of Reference for the AAP are at [Annex A](#).

The AAP will be given documentation relating to a funding round in advance of any meeting to provide adequate time to identify any conflict of interest, familiarise themselves with the application and request additional information to be obtained by the Secretariat if required.

The AAP are not to make additional enquiries of any application prior to and in isolation to the AAP meeting. Any contact or additional information required will be administered through the Secretariat and remain transparent to all AAP members.

The AAP will assess whether the application is suitable for submission based on the eligibility and merit principles outlined below. Projects will be prioritised according to the strength of their alignment with these principles.

| Assessment Principle | Description | Scoring |
|---|--|--|
| a) Meets the DRF eligibility criteria | The application is consistent with the eligibility criteria defined in the DRF Round Two Program Guidelines. | No score assigned – this is a threshold criteria and only applications that meet this criteria will progress for further assessment |
| b) Invests in the challenges ahead with measurable progress towards resilience | The project demonstrates potential to achieve real progress to building resilience against known and assessed threats, or potential future threats, and supports this with evidence. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Limited evidence of the threat(s) being mitigated and intended future impact.2. Some evidence of the threat(s) being mitigated and intended future impact.3. Good evidence of the threat(s) being mitigated and intended future impact.4. Strong evidence of the threat(s) being mitigated and intended future impact. |
| c) Supports innovation or | The project delivers, or provides opportunities to deliver, | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Is an extension of a current funded program. |

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| demonstrates opportunities | innovative or improved approaches to risk reduction and resilience building. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Identifies resilience building innovation/opportunities. 3. Identifies and supports resilience building innovation/opportunities. 4. Identifies, supports, and implements innovation/opportunities. |
| d) Provides a tangible impact or return on investment | The project is sustainable or provides sustainable benefits and delivers returns for building resilience across and with the ACT Government and ACT community. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No tangible return on investment identified, project not sustainable. 2. Tangible return on investment identified but not evidenced, project unlikely to be sustainable. 3. Tangible return on investment is evidenced, project likely to be sustainable. 4. Tangible and sustainable return on investment evidenced, project is sustainable. |
| e) Likelihood of Success | The project is likely to succeed based on the capability and experience of the applicant, alignment with policy directions, and support from stakeholders. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not likely to succeed. 2. Some chance of success. 3. Moderate chance of success. 4. High change of success. |
| f) Impact | The project application overall is of high quality and impact. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor. 2. Good. 3. Very Good. 4. Exceptional. |

Scoring

Each application is discussed at the AAP meeting and each AAP member (without conflicts of interest) gives a preliminary scoring for that application. The preliminary scores can be used to determine the overall AAP score that will be recorded for the application.

The final scores against each of the assessment criteria is determined through agreement by all AAP members. The final scores and overall score are recorded on the assessment sheet along with any comments the AAP choose to include for the purpose of feedback or progression to submission. No individual AAP member score or comments are recorded on the summary sheet. Individual scores and comments are only recorded in the meeting minutes.

The total score that can be assigned per application is 20 (based on a maximum score of 4 across 5 criteria).

An application may be designated Not Recommended for Assessment (NRFA) by the AAP if during preliminary scoring it lacks significant and substantial merit; presents serious ethical problems or risks the protection or deterioration of life/assets/government. Applications designated as NRFA do not proceed to further assessment or review.

Project Alignment

Where one or more project applications achieve the same outcome or objectives then the AAP may request that the applying agencies align the individual projects into a single project.

Priority Ranking

NEMA requires jurisdictions to rank each project in its application as either 'highly suitable' or 'suitable'. Projects ranked as 'not suitable' will not be included in the submission to NEMA.

The AAP will rank applications based on the matrix below.

| Ranking | Description | Alignment with AAP score |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Highly Suitable | An excellent application that demonstrates strong alignment with the DRF selection criteria. The project has clearly articulated with well-defined objectives and scope and is supported by strong evidence (qualitative and/or quantitative) to demonstrate the project will achieve its aims. Risks to project success may be present, but the Applicant has identified mitigation strategies and controls to manage the risk. | Has a total score of between 15 and 20 |
| Suitable | A good application that demonstrates alignment with the DRF selection criteria. The project has sound objectives and is supported by evidence (qualitative and/or quantitative) to demonstrate its positive impact. Risks to project success may be present, but the applicant has identified mitigation strategies and controls to manage the risk. | Has a total score of between 9 and 14 |
| Not Suitable | An unsatisfactory response with uncertainty as to the project's relevance, feasibility and/or likely impact, including inadequate links to the DRF's objectives and value with relevant money considerations. May contain significant risks that prevent the project from succeeding. | Has a total score of between 4 and 8, was deemed NSFA or did not meet the DRF eligibility criteria. |

Confidentiality

All applications are to be managed, handled and document marked as **SENSITIVE**.

SEMD and AAP members are to adhere to all JACS confidentiality and information management policies during the conduct of their duties in administering, assessing, and progressing DRF applications.

Level 3 – SEMSOG Endorsement

The third level of review is performed by the Security and Emergency Management Senior Officials Group (SEMSOG). SEMSOG is the ACT's executive body for security and emergency management matters and sets the strategic direction for emergency management in the ACT.

Endorsement by SEMSOG is on the assessment and advice of the AAP. SEMSOG should approve the submissions before progressing to the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services for endorsement.

Level 4 – Ministerial Endorsement

The fourth level, for endorsement, is the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services. Only applications that are recommended by both the AAP and SEMSOG are put forward for endorsement by the Minister.

Ministerial endorsement is a requirement for DRF submissions and must be evidenced with a letter of endorsement within 10 days of the closing date of the funding round. SEMD arranges the letter of endorsement from the Minister after SEMSOG endorsement.

After the application process

Feedback

Applicants may receive a copy of their application assessment summary sheets upon request through DRF@act.gov.au and upon approval of the AAP Chair.

Applicants will be offered the opportunity to obtain feedback on their application through the AAP Secretariat after the ACT has provided its DRF submission to NEMA.

Unsuccessful projects will not be given an opportunity to resubmit their application for that funding round but may review their application for future funding rounds to address the feedback provided.

Appeals

Due to the short timeframes allocated by NEMA between funding Round One opening and closing the ability to undertake an appeal of any application within the timeframes of the funding round is difficult. Applicants should use the feedback opportunity to obtain information that will allow them to submit stronger applications in future DRF funding rounds.

Successful Projects

Successful projects are expected to be announced by the Minister for Emergency Management in July 2024. A funding agreement will be signed between the Commonwealth and the ACT Government, confirming funding amounts and reporting requirements.

Successful project proponents will be required to develop a project Implementation Plan within 3 months of the funding agreement being signed and report quarterly on progress.

Application Assessment Panel (AAP) Terms of Reference

Objective

The objective of the AAP is to select the most appropriate and relevant submissions for funding opportunities that affords the ACT to undertake programs to reduce disaster risk and build disaster resilience.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the AAP are to:

1. Undertake a fair, transparent and equitable assessment of all funding applications.
2. Ensure assessment is undertaken using the criteria and guidance set by the National Emergency Management Agency and the assessment process outlined in the ACT's DRF Round Two Administrative Guidelines.
3. Document all reasoning for scores allocated to applications.
4. Nominate the most appropriate applications to be considered and endorsed by the ACT Security and Emergency Management Senior Officials Group.

Chairperson & Deputy Chairperson

The AAP is chaired by the Executive Group Manager, Security and Emergency Management Division (SEMD) and a Deputy Chair will be nominated by the Chair from the membership.

Membership

The membership of the AAP will be composed of eight representatives and the Chair. The representatives must be of senior executive level and sourced from the following ACT Government business areas. One representative must be from an independent body.

- Executive Group Manager, Security and Emergency Management Division, JACS (the Chair)
- Policy and Strategy – Chief Minister, Treasury, Economic Development Directorate
- Treasury - Chief Minister, Treasury, Economic Development Directorate.
- ACTIA - Chief Minister, Treasury, Economic Development Directorate.
- Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate
- Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate
- Emergency Services Agency
- Office for Climate Action
- Community Services Directorate
- Nominated non-government agency
- *Executive Branch Manager, Emergency Management, SEMD (Advisor, non-voting)*

Agencies required to provide membership are to identify the appropriate representative. If an agency representative is required to be changed for any reason the agency is responsible for advising the AAP secretariat as soon as possible.

Voting members who are unable to attend a meeting may delegate their voting responsibilities prior to the meeting and in writing to the Chair.

The non-government agency representative is determined by the Chair of the AAP and should be appropriate representation of community. An appropriate representation is from the Joint Advisory Council Chairs (JACC), administered through CMTEDD Policy and Cabinet Division.

Secretariat

Secretariat functions for the AAP are undertaken by SEMD. The Secretariat will ensure meetings invitations and administration is undertaken on behalf of the Chair and members in a timely and efficient manner.

AAP members will receive all submissions for initial review within 5 business days of the application closing date (20 March 2024) and in preparation for the first meeting of the AAP.

Meeting Schedule

AAP meetings are conducted within two weeks of the application closing date (20 March 2024). One or more meetings may be scheduled for the purpose of undertaking the assessment. Meetings are scheduled to allow for the assessed and recommended applications to go through the approval process of SEMSOG and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services before NEMA's closing date of 29 April 2024.

Voting

The AAP must undertake a vote on applications to be progressed to submission after assessment and scoring. Voting outcomes should be unanimous and based on scoring criteria and any additional criteria as deemed required.

If the decision is not unanimous, the final decision on whether an application should progress to submission falls to the Chair. The dissenting member's rationale must be reflected in the minutes of the meeting.

Additional Criteria

As applicable the AAP may request additional review criteria to be established. Any additional criteria must be applied to all applications. Additional criteria may be applied where applications are of high quality and further analysis of suitable submissions is required.

Conflict of Interest

In the case of a perceived conflict of interest (e.g. an AAP member assessing their own agency's proposal) the AAP member must declare this to the Chair upon becoming aware of the applications and prior to commencement of the assessment process. Depending on the nature of the conflict of interest, the Chair may elect to exclude the member from voting on those applications.