

Topic 13

EMERGE
Supporting Farmer Led Groups

A collaborative project between
TAS FARM INNOVATION HUB
RMCG

Grants and Funding

Grants can help a group turn ideas into action, deliver projects and build its capacity. Funding may be available from government, industry, community organisations, foundations and other funding bodies, with opportunities ranging from small local grants through to larger project funding.

Before applying, be clear about what your group wants to achieve and whether the grant is a good fit. A funding opportunity should support your group's purpose and priorities - not take the group in a different direction simply because funding is available.

Grants can provide the extra resources a group needs to make something happen that might otherwise be out of reach. They can help fund a new project, respond to an identified need or opportunity, trial an idea, purchase equipment, bring in specialist expertise, build skills, undertake research or extend the benefits of the group's work to others.

For an emerging group, a grant can also provide a shared project to work towards, helping build experience, partnerships, confidence and momentum. For established groups, grants can support larger or longer-term priorities and increase the scale or impact of their work.

However, funding also brings commitments. Before pursuing a grant, be clear about what you want to achieve, why funding is needed and whether the opportunity is a good fit for your group. *The grant should help deliver your priorities, not become the reason for having them.*

For emerging groups, consider whether you are eligible to receive funding directly. An unincorporated group may need to work with an incorporated organisation through an auspicing arrangement.

Know what funding can support

Start with the idea and the outcome you want to achieve, then look for the funding that can help make it happen.

Grants are only one option and should not be treated as an ongoing solution for core group costs.

Grants
Government, philanthropic, corporate
Partners and sponsors
Industry, research, local business
Other funding
Loans, incentives, rebates, programs
Group contribution
Membership, cash, volunteer, in-kind

Typical grant themes include research and trials, environmental works, technology and innovation, skills and training, community development, infrastructure/capital investment, drought resilience and disaster recovery.

Where to look for opportunities

Monitor Australian, state and local government grant portals, regional NRM and Landcare newsletters, agricultural industry and research bodies, philanthropic foundations and corporate partners.

GrantConnect and the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) as useful starting points.

business.gov.au is a useful for finding Australian government grants, funding and support programs. The finder allows you to filter opportunities by location, industry, business structure, type of support, purpose and whether programs are open or coming soon. For emerging

groups, it can be used to scan for relevant opportunities and understand what support may be available. The site also provides guidance on getting grant-ready and preparing an application.

TIP: Check the Grants and Programs Finder regularly. New opportunities are added over time, and preparing your project ideas and basic information in advance can help you respond when a suitable grant opens.

Before you apply

Take time to understand what the funder is looking for and what will be expected of your group. Consider:

Does it fit our purpose and priorities? The proposed project should contribute to something your group already wants to achieve. It should advance the group's priorities as well as the funder's agricultural, environmental, regional, or community outcomes.

Are we eligible? Check who can apply and whether incorporation, an ABN, insurance, landholder consent partnership, or an auspicing arrangement is required.

What problem or opportunity are we addressing? Be clear about the need for the project and who will benefit.

What will we deliver? Identify the activities, outputs and outcomes you expect to achieve.

Do we have the capacity to deliver it? Consider the people, skills, time, partnerships and resources required.

What will it cost? Prepare a realistic budget and understand what expenses the grant will and will not cover. Check whether salaries, administration, travel, equipment, and other important costs can actually be funded.

Capacity – can the group deliver within the timeframe, including reporting and acquittal requirements?

Value of applying – similar to capacity, a small grant can take substantial effort to prepare and administer. Weigh the likely benefit against your group's time and effort.

What are we committing to? Check requirements for co-contributions, reporting, acknowledgement, record keeping and project timeframes.

What happens when the funding ends? Consider whether activities need to continue and, if so, how they could be supported.

Decide whether the grant is worth pursuing

Before investing committee time in an application, read the guidelines in full (not just the summary) and make a quick go / no-go assessment. Confirm the grant objectives, your organisation's eligibility, required partnerships, letters of support or landholder consent, and whether mapping or other site information is needed.

Build the case before you write

Prepare a simple project plan covering what, why, who, how, when and cost. Do not assume the assessor knows your group, district, farming system or local challenge. Tell the full story concisely and give enough context for an independent assessor to understand why the project matters.

- **Define the local need** using evidence such as member surveys, local production or environmental data, previous trial results, regional strategies and short case examples.
- **Show who benefits:** farmers, the wider agricultural sector, the local community or environment - and describe the practical change the project will create.
- **Build partnerships** early and seek meaningful letters of support. For on-ground projects, confirm permissions and landholder consent where required.

Preparing a strong application

Your Group Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, or Public Officer is often responsible for grants and funding applications. Provide adequate support to this member as grant writing can be a big task!

A good grant application clearly connects the need, the proposed activities and the outcomes you want to achieve. Use evidence where possible, explain why your group is well placed to deliver the project and make sure the budget matches what you are proposing.

Strong grant application makes it easy for the funder to understand what you want to do, why it matters, how you will do it and what difference it will make.

Read the guidelines first – check that your group and project are eligible and understand what can and cannot be funded.

Answer what is being asked – respond directly to the assessment criteria rather than simply describing your project.

Show the need or opportunity – explain why the project is needed and support this with evidence, local knowledge or member and community experience.

Be clear about the outcome – describe what will be different or better because of the project.

Keep the project achievable – make sure the activities, timeframe, people and resources are realistic.

Prepare a realistic budget – include all relevant costs, check quotes where needed and make sure the budget matches the activities described.

Show that you can deliver – highlight relevant skills, experience, partnerships and support from others.

Use clear, simple language – avoid jargon and assume the assessor does not know your group, community or issue. Use the funder's language (their words) and answer each assessment criterion directly.

Build the application in a logical sequence – establish the need, show how the project aligns with the funder's priorities, define the outcomes and delivery approach, then support the case with a credible budget and evidence.

Allow plenty of time – gathering quotes, approvals, partner commitments and supporting information often takes longer than expected.

Ask someone else to review it – a fresh reader can identify gaps, unclear explanations or errors before submission.

Keep a copy – retain the final application, budget and supporting documents. If successful, these will help guide project delivery and reporting.

Figure 1 is another way of looking at the above steps.



Figure 1 - Steps in preparing a strong grant application

Budget for the whole project

A budget should be transparent and defensible. Provide a clear breakdown of how the funding will be used and explain or justify significant costs - realistic estimates or supplier quotes show that the group has done its homework.

Include the real resources needed to deliver the project: staff or project management, consultants, travel, administration, communications, equipment, venues, insurance, audit and evaluation where relevant. Identify in-kind contributions such as group time, donated services or venue support. Do not over-promise beyond the group's capacity.

Before you hit submit:

- Check eligibility
- Answer every criterion
- Verify the budget
- Confirm attachments and approvals
- Proofread
- Submit early enough to resolve technical issues
- Retain the lodgement receipt.

If you receive a grant

Receiving a grant is an achievement, but it also comes with responsibilities. A grant is usually provided for an agreed purpose, activities, budget and timeframe, so make sure the group understands what it has committed to before starting.

Read and understand the funding agreement – check the approved activities, budget, milestones, reporting requirements and key dates.

Confirm who is responsible – agree who will manage the project, finances, reporting and communication with the funder.

Set up good record keeping – keep the application, funding agreement, budget, approvals, invoices, receipts and other project records together.

Track the budget – regularly compare actual income and expenditure against the approved budget.

Know what can be changed – don't assume you can move money between activities, change the project or extend the timeframe without approval. Check with the funder first.

Meet your reporting requirements – know what reports, financial information, evidence or evaluations are required and when they are due.

Measure what you achieve – collect information as you go to show what was delivered, who benefited and what difference the project made.

Acknowledge the funder – follow any requirements for logos, publicity, media or recognition of funding.

Communicate early if things change – projects don't always go to plan. Contact the funder early if there are delays or challenges with the budget.

Acquitting a grant

Grant acquittal is the process of showing the funder that the grant was used as agreed and achieved what it set out to do. This usually involves submitting a final report outlining activities and outcomes, how the funding was spent, and any evidence required by the funding agreement.

TIP: Keep financial records, receipts, project evidence and outcome information as you go - it will make acquitting the grant much easier.

Finishing a grant-funded project

As the project comes to an end, take time to close it out properly and capture what your group has achieved and learned. In addition to acquitting the grant, consider:

Complete outstanding activities and payments – make sure invoices, reimbursements and other commitments are finalised.

Check the funding agreement – confirm that all deliverables, reporting and acknowledgement requirements have been met.

Review the outcomes – consider what was achieved, what worked well, what didn’t and what you would do differently next time.

Collect and store project records – keep reports, financial records, photos, participant feedback and other evidence together.

Thank and acknowledge people – recognise members, partners, volunteers, participants and others who contributed.

Share the results – let members, stakeholders and the wider community know what was achieved where appropriate.

Consider what happens next – decide whether activities should continue, whether further funding is needed, and who will take responsibility.

Capture useful knowledge and contacts – record lessons, relationships and resources so they are available for future projects.

Celebrate the achievement – take time to recognise the effort involved and the difference the project has made.

TIP: Don’t just close the grant. Capture the learning, relationships and achievements that your group can carry into its next project.

Additional Resources

- **Grower Group Alliance, The Grower Group Toolkit for Effective Farmer Groups (2021)**

  https://www.gga.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/GGA_Grower-Group-Toolkit-WEBSITE.pdf

- **Landcare Tasmania, Good Governance Guide for Tasmanian Landcare Groups (2016)**

  https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/landcaretas/pages/216/attachments/original/1471328479/LT_good_governance_guide_for_landcare_groups_V4.pdf?1471328479

- **Landcare Australia, "Top Tips for Writing a Winning Grant Application" (2025)**

  https://landcareaustralia.org.au/news/top-tips-for-writing-a-winning-grant-application/

Potential Sources of Funding

- **Business.gov.au - filtered for Tasmania**

  https://business.gov.au/grants-and-programs?firstResult=10&cloc=fi46&cind=fi63

- **Airtable**

  https://airtable.com/appprZ9kabPOMRjAC/shr9APenCjachZSGw/tblgR0xuRl0JfOn4i

- **Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal (FRRR) Grants – Strengthening Rural Communities**

  https://frrr.org.au/funding/src-small-vital/#program-guidelines

- **Drought Ready Tasmania (click through to grants and projects)**

  https://droughtready.engagementhub.com.au

- **Tasmanian Grants (SmartyGrants)**

  https://buildingtasmania.smartygrants.com.au



How this resource came about

The Emerge project was funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund to support new, emerging and informal farmer groups to develop their skills and knowledge, and to create this set of resources for use by groups into the future. Groups participating in 2026 received coaching and additional learning opportunities to supplement the content of these resources.

TAS FARM INNOVATION HUB RMCG

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