

Regional Cultural Fund Digitisation Round

Frequently Asked Questions and Top Tips



This document provides potential applicants to Regional Cultural Fund (RCF) Digitisation Round with answers to frequently asked questions about applying. We have also included some 'Top Tips' based on feedback from previous rounds of the RCF.

In the interests of transparency and equity, this document will be updated throughout the application period to include any answers to FAQs received by potential applicants.

Top Tip: Completing your SmartyGrants application

- Ensure that you have all required supporting documentation ready to upload
- Ensure that you save your application regularly as you progress
- Ensure all mandatory questions marked * are completed
- Upload letters of support where these are required
- Make sure that you have received a confirmation email from SmartyGrants notifying you of your successful submission of your application

Top Tip: Involvement of First Nations people

It is very important that your local Aboriginal community are consulted with before, during and after the project. It is essential that correct protocols around consulting and working with Aboriginal cultural heritage are adhered to, documented and evidenced in your application. Consideration will be given in the assessment of applications where the consultation period to fully develop the cultural protocols for particular collections, groups or areas will extend over the project period. The consultation plan itself with evidenced program of Aboriginal community consultation could be considered itself to be a project milestone, should the actual digitisation of collection items be a future outcome.

Top Tip: Be true and accurate

Your application and associated documentation will be the basis on which, if successful, a funding agreement will be drafted. So make sure your scope, timeline and budget figures are all spot on.

Top Tip: Addressing RCF objectives and assessment criteria

Make sure your application addresses the RCF objectives and assessment criteria. These outline what the RCF as a whole and specifically the Digitisation Round sets out to achieve and will guide assessors when scoring your application. The objectives are in the RCF Digitisation Round Guidelines and on the Create NSW website.

Top Tip: Presenting the project budget in SmartyGrants

Applicants should check that enough detail is provided for each line item and that the total income and expenditure balance. Do not forget the budget income must reflect co contribution (in cash and/or in kind) from both the hub and spokes.

The use of amalgamated quotes (costing multiple work items inside one budget line item) makes it difficult for the assessment panel to clearly identify costs applicable to the project. Where applicants choose to use amalgamated quotes then commentary should be given that clearly explains the relevance of each line item that is contained within the amalgamated quote as it relates to the budget. Evidence of the quotes should be given.

Top Tip: Co-Contribution

Co-contribution in cash, in-kind or a combination of both is mandatory. A larger proportion of co-contribution demonstrates commitment to resourcing and the ongoing viability of the digitisation project model and may be viewed favourably by the assessment panel.

Cash means budgeted dollar amounts that will be spent on the project. In-kind means the contribution of goods, commodities or services instead of money.

The project budget should include contributions from the hub, as well as from spokes. It is common for volunteer organisations to undervalue their in-kind contribution, so Councils are encouraged to assist them to quantify their involvement. For example, if Joe from the historical society is digitising three days a week, what is the industry standard payment per hour for this.

Top Tip: Project delivery

Some previous applications to the RCF demonstrated limited consideration and planning for how the project would be delivered (governance, management, milestones, timeframes, evaluation). Applicants are encouraged to provide evidence of who will manage the project stakeholders, expertise of staff and volunteers, how the project will be managed and delivered (including dates and location of digitisation sessions) and the steps taken to achieve completion. The RCF evaluates its projects, so include evaluation steps in your project.

Top Tip: Viability

Applicants should consider how digitisation and stakeholder engagement (not limited to spokes, but more broadly) will continue to occur after the RCF funded activities have been completed. Applicants must demonstrate their ability to maintain and operate the equipment and program into the future without the requirement of further NSW Government support. This includes storing digital assets and making them publicly available.

Top Tip: Community Engagement

You must produce a signed agreement with each of your spokes. This is mandatory and a simple template has been provided. Make sure you and your spokes list out what you and they will do, and what your shared expectations are. The Department does not manage your spokes – this is a direct collaboration between you and your spokes. We are here, of course to assist with M&G NSW standardised training in *Crystal Clear* guidelines for hubs and spokes.

Importantly, community engagement should be broader than just your spokes – it should involve the local community, neighbouring regions and the local Aboriginal community.

Top Tip: Reviewing your application

Allow enough time to properly review your application before submitting. Even ask a colleague as a ‘second set of eyes’. When submitting your application through SmartyGrants, you will be prompted to review your application.

Things to double check when reviewing:

- Contact details are correct
- Project description properly reflects your project’s aims (this will be used to promote your project if you are successful in receiving funding)
- Amount requested and total project cost cannot be the same – you must demonstrate co-contribution
- All attachments have been uploaded and the files are the correct ones, named so the assessment panel can easily identify them
- You have filled out all sections of the mandatory Project Plan template, had it approved and have uploaded it
- Attachments are correctly referenced in the SmartyGrants application itself, so the assessment panel knows what supporting evidence is in the uploads
- You have uploaded the Hub/Spoke Agreement, signed with each of your spokes

The final sign off is made by the head of your organisation such as the CEO or General Manager who has appropriate financial and legal delegation.

FAQs

Q: What is considered regional NSW?

A: Regional NSW is defined under the Regional Growth Fund as any local government area outside of greater Sydney metropolitan, Wollongong and Newcastle.

Q: Can I have more time to do my application? What if the internet goes down?

A: No. For fairness, all applications must be submitted by the deadline of midday (12pm) 29 January 2021. For this reason, it is recommended that you commence compiling your application as soon as possible and not leave it until the deadline day to submit in SmartyGrants. We have made the Project Plan template downloadable, so you don’t have to work on it online.

If you have any technical difficulties, it is better to know about this before the actual deadline. If you do experience connectivity issues, contact the Department immediately and capture proof of the issue.

Q: Why do I need evidence of the support of my spokes? – we’ve been working with them for years

A: This is a specific project with a set amount of time and resources, so you will need the spokes to understand this. In many cases, this will mean you will work differently than you have in the past.

Q: Why do I need to consider ‘other options or alternative approaches’ in the Project Plan? I already know what my project needs to be.

A: The purpose of looking at different ways of doing your project is to prove to the assessors that you have chosen the best way to meet your objectives and those of the RCF. As assessors read your Project Plan they may begin to think there is a better way of achieving your objective, so you need to explain why your way is the best way.

It may be because it’s the best value for money, it might deliver the best outcomes, there may be reasons why other options are not possible or there may be an example that is specific to your project/region.

Q: Is it mandatory for applicants to use the Project Plan template?

A: Yes. If you have your own Plan already, information from this should be transferred into the template and the budget must be inputted into the SmartyGrants application form budget tables. You may also submit your own Project Plan as a support document.

Q: What does ‘operational expenditure’ refer to?

A: Operational expenditure refers to what it will cost to run your digitisation program beyond the completion of your RCF funded project. When completing the Ongoing Operational Budget, consider and include any increased and ongoing costs arising from the completion of your project. This could be staff, travel, upgrading software, equipment maintenance and repair, digital storage costs, website upgrades for example.

Completing this section in full will give the assessors confidence that your Council will be able to maintain the hub and spoke digitisation activities and is operationally viable into the future.

Q: What does Estimated Total Cost (ETC) mean and how does this relate to my project?

A: Estimated Total Cost (ETC) refers to the total budget for your project. It does not mean the amount you have requested from the Regional Cultural Fund.

For example:

RCF Request Own Contribution Estimated Total Cost (ETC)

\$300,000 + \$50,000 = \$350,000

ETC is the most accurate financial representation of the size, risk and complexity of your project as it considers the project as a whole.

Your own contribution refers to the Council hub and the spokes. Own contribution can be cash or in-kind or a combination.

Q: Do I need to add a contingency amount to my budget? Is it OK to add this to my budget in the application even though it would increase the total cost of the project?

A: Yes, you do. All applicants must include a sufficient contingency amount in their budget to allow for risks such as unforeseeable program delays or changes in quotes. Applicants should consider the accuracy of their costings. This will then determine the level of contingency that should be available. Riskier projects, such as those with many spokes should allow for more. An explanation of how you calculated your contingency amount should be detailed in the budget section of your application.

An appropriate amount will differ between projects.

Q: Is there a standard rate for volunteer / in-kind labour?

A: There is no standard rate. The cost of volunteer labour is dependent on the type of work being undertaken and should reflect the cost if you were to otherwise pay someone to do that work. For example, if a volunteer accountant donated their time to your project that would probably be a higher value than in-kind cleaning.

Any claim of volunteer labour should be backed up by evidence of the cost. This may be a quote of what the works would have cost, or in the case of a cleaner, a reasonable hourly rate multiplied by the hours worked. This evidence should be referenced in the comments section in your Budget.

Q: Do costs need to be verified?

A: Absolutely! Having costs verified by evidence such as quotes or even a well-supported estimate is crucial to giving the assessors confidence in the accuracy of your costs. If your costs are not accurate, it will put your project at risk of not being completed on time and to budget. For this reason, an appropriate amount should be allocated to your contingency in order to cover any unexpected increase in your costs.

Q: What should letters of support say?

A: Letters of support should be specific to your project, not just general support for the organisation. They should clearly identify the supporter and their relationship to the project.

Q: How do I properly reference my attachments?

A: Referencing attachments will make it much easier for the assessors to find exactly what document you are referring to in your Project Plan. Here is an example of how to reference attachments. Ensure that you are consistent with how you reference throughout your Project

Plan.

Attached Documents:

Attachment A – Project Budget

Attachment B – Quotes from ABC Computer Software Inc.

Reference in your SmartyGrants application form :

*The full budget for our project can be found at **Attachment A**. The budget assesses all project costs associated with delivering the improved digitisation studio equipment set-up along with the costs associated with resourcing the project. To ensure costs are accurate, we obtained quotes from ABC Computer Software Inc. that can be found at **Attachment B**.*

Q: What is *Crystal Clear* and why do I have to fit in with it?

A: During 2018 and 2019, Create NSW worked with Museums and Galleries of NSW to develop digitisation standards that would be useful for small to medium regional collecting organisations. This was part of a larger project to move toward more consistent digitisation standards across NSW. *Crystal Clear* is the name of the standards and guidance document. It is downloadable at <https://mqnsw.org.au/sector/resources/online-resources/digital/crystal-clear-standards-and-guidance-for-digitising-regional-collections/>.

Potential applicants can request the link to a free webinar that explains *Crystal Clear* at any time during the application period, so you understand it. This is available to representatives from potential spokes as well, so all parties know what will be preferred.

Additional, more in-depth training in the *Crystal Clear* standards and guidance for digitising regional collections will be provided to successful recipients.

Should the *Crystal Clear* standards be extended or expanded in technical detail at any point, revisions will be communicated to applicants.

Q: What is *Collections and Stories* and why do we have to share our digital images and associated files?

A: During 2018 and 2019, as part of scoping of a statewide regional digitisation approach, several regional museums participated in developing a pilot website - *Collections and Stories*. The website is a story-based prototype that presents objects and stories from several regional museums and knits these stories together, showcasing collections across regions. Successful applicants will be required to share digitised collection items and associated data to this web site. A preview of the *Collections and Stories* website can be viewed at <http://collections-and-stories.net.au/>.

Applicants should consider this general advice in the context of their own projects and apply as appropriate.

