



**MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND
ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT**
GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

GRANT AWARD GUIDELINES
2018

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the requirements that applicants must consider when accessing a grant that is administered by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM).

WHAT IS A GRANT?

A grant is a way the Government funds your ideas and projects to provide public services, stimulate the economy, and build resilience to climate change and disasters.

THE GRANT LIFECYCLE

The grant cycle follows a linear lifecycle that includes creating funding opportunity, applying, making award decisions, and successfully implementing the award.

The specific actions along the lifecycle are grouped into three main phases.

1. Pre-Award Phase – Funding Opportunities and Application Review
2. Award Phase – Award Decision and Notifications
3. Post Award – Implementation, Reporting and Closeout

PRE-AWARD PHASE

The pre-award phase represents the beginning of the grant life-cycle, which includes announcing opportunities, submitting applications, and reviewing applications.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT

The MFEM will publish Grant opportunities when these are available. This is noting that some grant opportunities have specific timeframes for application, while others, have no fixed timeframes.

Publishing Grant opportunities will include how to access the pertinent information and requirements for an applicant to assess their eligibility, competency, and interest in the funding opportunity.

The funding opportunities will be published on the MFEM website, under the Development tab, on the Development Coordination Division facebook page, and in the local media.

COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION

Before jumping into the process and filing out the application, you (i.e. the organisation), should spend time analysing your own capabilities, as compared to the specific eligibility and technical requirements detailed in the application instructions. This could be in the format of the Concept Note in Te Tarai Vaka, or in the instance of the Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund or any other Fund that MFEM determines, the required structure for such funds.

Grant awards will only be provided to organisation's who are registered under the Incorporated Societies Act 1994, and its subsequent amendments; and agencies who have been legally mandated to conduct activities relevant to a grant award application.

Your application must also include a copy of your organisation's bank account summary. This is to help validate that your organisation is operational and conducts financial transactions.

The application process may be lengthy, particularly if you are progressed to the 'Planning' stage. But this is critical when considering the importance of carrying out the related work and the competition that you may face for funding.

While specific steps vary depending on the type of grant that you are applying for, major components of the 'Concept' and 'Planning' stages, includes developing your ideas, conducting research, writing your concept and breaking this down further in the 'Planning' stage.

In developing your Concept, you must follow the Te Tarai Vaka Activity Management System. You must also note that when applying for support from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Adaptation Fund, or any other fund that MFEM so designates, that you will be required to submit further information.

Any submission includes careful consideration of any environmental and social risks and impacts, as per the MFEM Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework. Where there are gender implications, you must consider the MFEM Gender Policy, in particular its tools, to determine the risks and impacts, and required mechanisms to address these. You should contact MFEM if you have any further queries.

Submissions of a project Concept should be made to the Budget, and the Development Coordination Divisions of the MFEM.

It is important to note, that if you are applying for GCF support, you are required to first approach the National Designated Authority (NDA), which is the Director of the Climate Change Cook Islands, a division within the Office of the Prime Minister.

Should it be identified that the MFEM may be the Accredited Entity for your project, then you must comply with the MFEM processes, including the implementation of the MFEM's Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework and Gender Policy and tools requirements.

APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Where there is an application submission deadline, once it passes, the Technical Appraisal Team (also acting as the Grant Award Evaluation Committee), get to work, reviewing the applications. The specific process for reviewing an application may vary, based on the type of award, and the specific requirements.

The generally applicable steps are as follows:

- 1) Initial screening to ensure that the application is complete and qualifies for the grant. If basic requirements are not met, your application is likely to be rejected.
- 2) Programmatic review and assessment of the substance of your application. This stage includes review of the Environmental and Social safeguard risks and impacts. Again, this stage varies depending on the type of proposed project and grant.
- 3) Financial review of cost of your application. While an application may have the technical and programmatic capability, your budget also needs to be well-documented and reflect the requirements of the grant program.
- 4) Recommendations will be made to the National Sustainable Development Commission (NSDC), acting as the Grant Approval Authority, as to whether your application should proceed for funding or to the 'Planning' (full project design) stage.
- 5) Where the application meets all requirements of the grant at the Concept stage, an award decision is made and you will be notified.
- 6) Where the project 'Concept' has been approved, with the condition that the project progresses to the 'Planning' stage, a full project plan/design is required. This includes a comprehensive consideration of environmental and social safeguards, and the implications of the project on gender relations. You will consult with the MFEM on the appropriate environmental and social safeguard requirements for your project.

- 7) You should be familiar with the Te Tarai Vaka Activity Management System, MFEM's Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework, Gender Policy and Tools and fiduciary criteria; or in the case of climate change related proposals, the MFEM Grant Evaluation Procedure for Climate Financing Mechanisms.
- 8) Should the Technical Appraisal Team require more information, they will notify you. MFEM will also be able to assist you to ensure compliance with its policies, procedures and systems.

AWARD PHASE

Once all technical assessments have been completed and approved, the award phase begins. The final decision and approval rests with the NSDC (acting as the Grant Approval Authority). The NSDC are expected to ensure that recommendations for award are fair and unbiased.

NOTICE OF AWARD

Once the final award decision is made, MFEM will send a letter of advice with a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA). The GFA is a legally binding document. When your organisation accepts the grant, by signing the GFA, you become legally obligated to carry out the full terms and conditions of the grant. Attached to the Grant Funding Agreement will be the Grant Financing Agreement.

As a grant award recipient, you are subject to the MFEM legislative requirements and to its relevant policies, procedures and systems, including MFEM's Anti- Fraud and Anti- Corruption Policy and Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism Financing Policy.

The Grant Beneficiary Procurement Rules will also be attached to the Grant Funding Agreement. You are required as an awardee, to follow the Procurement Rules and Procedures. Any non-compliance will have consequences on the continuation of your grant award.

POST AWARD PHASE

The post award phase comprises of a significant amount of work over the grant duration. This includes, implementing the grant, reporting on progress, and completing the close out. MFEM will be there to assist and ensure that your organisation complies with the grant terms and conditions. Your job is to faithfully and diligently carry out the grant program.

REPORTING

The MFEM oversees the monitoring of your progress and expenditures through the required activity monitoring and reporting procedures, including those related to environmental and social safeguard standards. This will be spelt out in the GFA.

While the majority of grant award recipients carry out grants ethically and efficiently, these monitoring procedures are necessary to maintain transparency and to prevent fraud and abuse.

The MFEM will have a Development Program Manager designated to each grant. They will work with you, and will be your contact point throughout the life of the grant. They are the ones who will review, report and conduct site visits (or appoint a representative to undertake these tasks). It is better to prevent issues by talking to your Development Program Manager to clarify grant terms or expectations than it is to submit a report and wait for problems to be identified and recourse initiated.

The specific reporting requirements and schedules can vary for each grant. These requirements will be outlined in your GFA.

AUDITING

Both MFEM and grant award recipients must be audited. Grant recipients are expected to present audited accounts as required in the GFA.

Follow up on audit findings will be conducted to ensure that the appropriate and timely corrective action has been undertaken.

CLOSE OUT

The close out step is where the grant process ends. In order to complete a closeout, the award recipient must submit the final financial and programmatic reports required under the grant, as specified in the GFA.

The MFEM will review these reports to ensure compliance with all grant terms and conditions, as well, as to make sure that you spent all funds appropriately.

MFEM will confirm that the grant recipient has completed all the required grant work and all the applicable administrative tasks. Until MFEM confirms this, you are still responsible for fulfilling all the terms and conditions of the grant.

The closeout period can take several points if there are financial concerns or questions to reconcile. Also, if your organisation has acquired any property, plant, equipment or other fixed assets, using grant funding, the closeout step is when you must make sure to handle these assets exactly as the grant stipulates, which includes completing the appropriate reports in relation to this.

Lastly, you are required to retain your grant records for at least seven years from the date of the final expenditure report.

GETTING STARTED CHECKLIST

- Familiarise yourself with the overall Grants Lifecycle
- Determine your eligibility
- Identify the right types of funding opportunities for you
- Learn about the reporting requirements that you will need to comply with if awarded funding
- Confirm that you are eligible to apply for that grant
- Apply for the grant

GRANT LIFECYCLE

Pre Award Phase		
MFEM Actions	Lifestyle steps	Applicants Actions
MFEM formally announces the funding opportunity, advertising it to the public through its website, social and local media	<i>Announcing an opportunity</i>	
	<i>Searching for Opportunities</i>	Potential Applicants will find funding opportunities that they are eligible for and match their organization
	<i>Completing an application</i>	Completing an application may take time, depending on the type of project and grant. Potential applicants will follow the instructions in the published funding opportunities and submit the application to the DCD and Budget Division of MFEM
When an application is submitted it is received and screened for compliance if it passes, it will progress to the Technical Appraisal Team	<i>Receiving the Application</i>	Once received by MFEM the applicant will be notified in writing at this point the grant application processing begins
	<i>Staying in the Loop</i>	Applicants can track the status of their application by communicating with MFEM
The review process depends on the grant type and project proposal complexity. MFEM will update application on the status of their application.	<i>Finishing the Review Process</i>	

Award Phase		
MFEM Actions	Lifestyle steps	Applicants Actions
When the review process has been completed the applicant will be notified whether or not they have been awarded a grant. MFEM begins working with the recipient to finalise the legal grant funding agreement. Following this, funds are disbursed according to the GFA	<i>Notifying the Grant award recipient</i>	
	<i>Beginning the work</i>	After applicant receives notice of award and the funds disbursed, they will begin the project. The grant award recipient will be responsible for the administrative, financial and programmer requirements of the award

Post Award Phase		
MFEM Actions	Lifestyle steps	Applicants Actions
<p>After a grant award has been disbursed, the development program manager oversees the awardees reporting compliance. The process extends across the life of the grant award and involves reviewing reports submitted by the awardee. Representatives from MFEM may preform site visits. Oversight may also concern the form of auditing.</p>	<p><i>Providing support and Oversight</i></p>	
	<p><i>Reporting your progress</i></p>	<p>Award recipients conduct two main types of reporting to MFEM on a regular basis, financial and programmatic reporting. These reports provide information about the overall financial status and project performance of the grant project, recipients must also respond to any audit requests pertaining to the grant.</p>
<p>As reports and financial data are passed to MFEM, both the awardee and MFEM ensure that all requirements are being met. Upon completing all the closeout requirements including review of the final financial and technical reports from the awardee. The grant lifestyle comes to an end.</p>	<p><i>Award closeout</i></p>	