

\$250,000 Tourism Infrastructure Grant

Planning to Improve Your Tourism Infrastructure Want the Government to PAY for it?

The Tourism Industry Regional Development Fund (TIRF) provides **\$48.5 million** over 4 years to increase the quality and range of visitor experiences in regional Australia.

Grants of up to **\$250,000** (GST exclusive) will be offered for projects which improve or refurbish existing products or services or offer innovative new experiences (outside Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane).

Projects may include (but are not limited to):

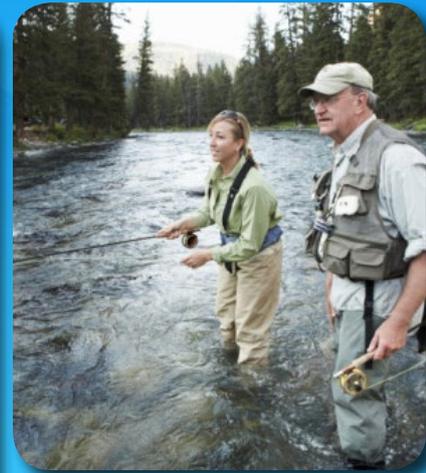
- Accommodation upgrades with project funding spent on items such as fixed room fittings to improve the quality and accessibility by a target market
- Upgrades of attraction or accommodation facilities with project funding spent on items such as amenities blocks or activity areas
- Infrastructure or access solutions which protect or enhance the asset or environment or allow increased visitation
- Restoration or conversion of historical products or experiences
- Niche / local activity product development such as themed cycling / walking / riding trails
- Specific themed infrastructure to attract a key or new market
- Unique exhibitions, attractions, festival, event or interactive experiences
- Adding new style of accommodation or attraction to existing stock for specific market

Assessment criteria include:

- Alignment with Tourism 2020 goals
- Strategic and collaborative value of the project for its region
- Expected outcomes from the innovation or improvement
- Capacity to deliver the project within agreed timeframes

The TIRF grant is ideal for tourism providers wishing to undertake infrastructure projects in 2014 and who are currently planning for these projects.

Grant Solutions has significant experience with tourism grants, having previously helped our clients to obtain \$100,000 TQUAL and \$250,000 TIRF grants.



*"Not only did **Grant Solutions** explain how these grants really work, but you also developed a **strategy** which positioned my project in a way that significantly increased my chances of being successful.*

*In my opinion, Grant Solutions should be the **first point of call** for companies applying for a government Grant."*

Ross Booth, VIC



*"**Grant Solutions** provided an invaluable service by helping us navigate through ... complex waters of the Federal government to ... deliver a **\$250,000** result.*

*I therefore **highly recommend** Grant Solutions to any company seriously considering applying for a government grant.*

Joe Hayes, QLD

You're 3 Steps Away From The \$250,000 TIRF Grant

(TIRF Round 2 Closing @ 11.59pm August 7th, 2013)

Dear Australian Tourism Operator,

The last 4 years have been tough for the Tourism industry with the sector experiencing a number of challenges including:

- The high Aussie dollar (which increased from 60 US cents to above \$1US dollar) decreasing the number of overseas tourists while also encouraging Australians to take their holidays overseas
- Reduced tourist willingness to spend due to financial and economic uncertainty
- Increase in operating costs (wages and equipment) as prices continue to increase way above inflation
- Competition from existing and new players – who are pushing prices down and eroding your (already slim) profit margin.

On top of everything your business also needs to deal with government bureaucracy in the form of licences, permits, BAS, and Tax.

Fortunately, the Australian Government has finally recognised the burden faced by Australian tourism operators and the value of their contribution to the broad economy.

In fact, did you know that your business and Australian tourism:

- Is relied upon by 500,000+ Australians for employment
- Contributes \$33 billion per year to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Australia
- Employs 1 in every 12 working Australians
- Is Australia's largest service export (contributing 8% of Australia's total export earnings)
- Generates wealth across the country (around 46 cents from every dollar of tourism expenditure occurs in regional Australia).

The Australian Government has therefore allocated \$48.5 million over 4 years for TIRF Grants to stimulate sustainable economic growth in the Australian tourism industry. The \$250,000 grant is provided to improve tourism infrastructure in regional areas and for innovative tourism projects.

Don't be Fooled by a 'Free' Lunch

The \$48.5 million TIRF program can certainly help you to further develop your tourism business. However, you may be reluctant to invest time and energy to complete the grant application.

After all, the vast majority of grant applications are unsuccessful.

Submitting a TIRF grant application that is rejected not only lowers morale but wastes valuable resources ... with nothing to show for it but a letter of rejection (even if it's politely worded ... giving you hope but not funding).

"If you're considering using Grant Solutions – just do it!

These guys know exactly what to do and they're bloody good at it!

The final application was on my desk 2 days before the deadline... which is very uncommon in my industry where everything is done at the last minute or often late."

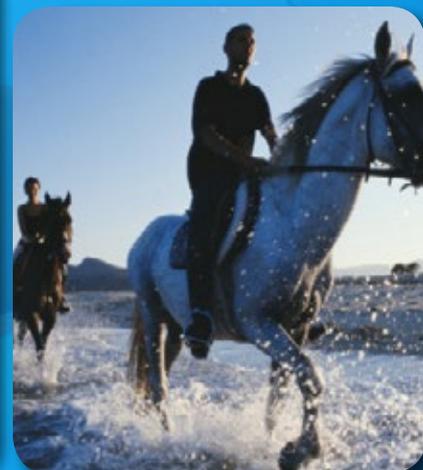
Stephen Souris, QLD



"Grant Solutions helped us identify exactly what we had to do in order to stand out from the flood of other grant applicants.

It astounded me that at the end of our discussion, I was left with 2 A4 pages of notes comprised of ideas that I had never before thought off"

James Meager, TAS



This was particularly true with NRRHIP (a similar infrastructure program to TIRF) - which was extremely competitive.

In fact, did you know that...

86% of Applicants were Unsuccessful!

That's right... almost 9 out of 10 people who applied in NHRIP Round 4, were rejected. This should give you some indication of how competitive the TIRF program will be.

This round in particular is expected to attract significantly more applications (compared to the previous round) because:

- Previously unsuccessful applicants will be re-applying
- Previously successful applicants will be applying again (for additional funding)
- Tourism operators who were previously unaware of the program will also apply

More tourism operators applying for government funding will mean more competition - with the majority of applications being declined.

That's why BEFORE you even consider starting a TIRF application, answer the following 3 questions:

1. When was the last time you successfully applied for a **competitive** government grant?
2. Do you have **time** to read through 100+ pages of guidelines and supporting material?
3. Do you even know **where** to start?

We've been working with business owners and managers for over 6 years and have realised that while they're good at operational aspects, they don't know what to do when it comes to applying for government grants.

Most of them:

- Are too stressed to think and have no idea what is expected of them
- Leave grant applications to the last minute... (often until it's too late)
- Provide vague, brief and cryptic answers which often don't address the selection criteria
- Have no concept of project management and what a 'proper budget' should look like

Can you relate to any (or all) of the above?

If you've said **Yes**, then we can help you.



*"After a couple of phone calls (inquiring about our project) **Grant Solutions** developed a unique submission strategy that **virtually guaranteed** our application would be successful.*

*The finished product was a true testament to **your skills** in writing grant applications.*

*The proposed project remained essentially unchanged ... but its **how Grant Solutions communicated** its value that I believe made the difference this time around!"*

Lesley Scott, NSW



*"I wanted to work with the **best in the industry** and picked **Grant Solutions**.*

*When I found out that there were hundreds of other companies applying for the same grant, I was glad that **Grant Solutions** was on our side."*

Gary Ng, NSW

Introducing the TIRF Grant 'Solution'

We offer a 'done-for-you' tailored service which includes:

- A **diagnostic consultation** to fully understand your project
- A comprehensive **7 page** pre-application guide
- Project strategy development to maximise your chances of success
- Writing and completing the application **on your behalf**
- Inclusion of **10 relevant statistics** to support & strengthen your argument
- Comprehensive **demography analysis** identifying local service needs
- Actuarial analysis calculations to **justify the benefits** of your project
- **Coaching and mentoring** throughout the process
- Letter of Support Template (along with **15 sources** to approach)
- Independent quality assurance
- A Comprehensive Checklist prior to application submission

Our unique grant submission methodology will **maximise** your chance of being successful while **minimising** your involvement (as you probably have better things to do than to 'stuff around' with grant paperwork).

We've recently completed a large number of grant projects and received positive feedback from our clients (who rated us on average 9 out of 10).

Many clients also expressed their 'surprise' at the amount of work involved—something they only realised once we delivered them the final application (which **exceeded** their expectations).

However, the most important part (and this is what you should focus on) is that almost all of these 20+ clients were successful in obtaining between \$300,000 - \$500,000 in grant funding. That's right, we had over 20 clients who were successful in getting grants because they've used our service!

Compensated for Results rather than Effort

Best of all, Grant Solutions is primarily compensated on results (rather than effort). A major component of our compensation is **only** charged if the grant application is approved.

Our consultants understand the tourism industry, have scrutinised the tourism policy papers and know what the government is looking for. We have also been featured in the Public Accountant Magazine (August 2012 issue) with a 3 page article (which we'll be happy to forward to you) covering the **common mistakes** made by grant applicants and how to avoid them.

We therefore expect that our clients will be successful (providing they are eligible and have genuine merit) while identical projects of non-clients will be deemed unsuccessful. The key point of difference will be our ability to communicate the value of these projects in a way that gets them 'across the line'.



*"There's no way we could have produced the **same level of detail** on our own. Even if we had spent 3 weeks working full time on it, I still don't think we'd be able to produce a submission that would come close to what Grant Solutions delivered"*

Andrew Karamesinis, VIC



*"A few weeks before the deadline I wanted to walk away ... due to challenges with stakeholders. Everything felt overwhelming and I **didn't know what to do**. I'm deeply grateful for the coaching and encouragement from Grant Solutions."*

If I would have walked away, it would have been frustrating in retrospect because we needed the money"

Dave Allan, NSW

Grant Solutions has successfully obtained grants between **\$30,000** and **\$7,000,000** so we are very comfortable with applying for \$250,000.

In the 4th NRRHIP program round, Grant Solutions submitted 4 client application and **'got the money'** for all of them. Sure, it wasn't easy (our consultants spent 50+ hours per application) but each client got the result they were looking for (over \$100,000 for their projects).

In fact, 2 of our clients **unsuccessfully** applied themselves for previous NRRHIP rounds ... and didn't want to (nor could they afford to) be rejected again.

This time, they used our services... and were successful.

Why Do Most Applications Fail?

The majority of unsuccessful submissions **do** have significant merit... but they are unable to successfully communicate that merit through the application form. Even if they do a good job... there is still **too much competition** (302 applicants for 42 funded in NRRHIP Round 4).

So ask yourself... is it worthwhile to invest **50+ hours** into the grant application process, knowing that your chances of success is around **10%**?

Or wouldn't you rather invest that time into your business... and let Grant Solutions handle the **TIRF** application (so your chances of 'getting \$250,000' increases dramatically)?

Can the \$250,000 TIRF Grant Help You?

If you're wondering if the TIRF grant is for you... ask yourself the following questions:

Are you...

1. Looking to grow and expand your business?
2. Unable to attract additional staff due to lack of space or equipment?
3. Feeling constrained due to lack of capital?

If you've answered **YES** to any of these questions, then we can help you expand by getting the **TIRF** infrastructure grant to fund your project.

There is However a Catch ... and It's Important

We **won't be** able to handle the anticipated number of tourism providers needing our services. We'll try to help as many clients as possible, but once we've reached capacity... 'all bets are off'.

There will be a waiting list but regrettably many will miss out. We want to help everyone... but will be forced to say 'no' to prevent our team from being overloaded and overwhelmed (especially as the demand for the program increases).

*"We liked how Grant Solutions provided **clear guidance** on what supporting documentation we had to get & also for preparing the checklist just before submitting the application.*

*It is **great that a practice located on top of a mountain in a rural area can still access your services** and remember to stay in touch."*

Sue Orr, QLD



*When looking for grant consulting company, we wanted a firm who **could hit the ground running**... and Grant Solutions certainly did.*

*Sure, everyone can fill out a grant application form (after all it's just words on a page) ... but not everyone can **win government grants**. The fact that Grant Solutions submitted 4 similar applications (all being successful) previously certainly played a big role in our decision!*

Sue McDonald, VIC



On previous occasions clients have:

- Tried to reach us outside of office hours (including Saturday & Sunday)
- Offered compensation far above our standard fees
- Claimed we accepted them as clients (when we only said 'maybe')

In each case these requests were **regrettably** but **firmly** declined (as we've already had a long waiting list).

Realistically you probably have only a few days to decide before that decision is made for you. We're happy to answer questions, provided that you've carefully read all the information provided in this guide.

Please keep in mind that we'll be working at capacity and our priority will be to assist **existing** clients with their projects (rather than focusing on acquiring new clients).

Sounds FAIR doesn't it? We think so and so do many of our satisfied clients.

Interested? These are the Next Steps

For further information about TIRF & Grant Solutions:

1. **W:** GrantSolutions.com.au/TIRF
2. **E:** info@GrantSolutions.com.au
3. **P:** (03) 9505 0023

To Your TIRF Success,



Ross Turetsky MBA, BCom, BInfosys

Managing Director, Grant Solutions



"As an allied health professional & business owner, I found applying for a grant a time consuming & overwhelming prospect.

*I found your guidance very valuable as **you stepped me through the application with practical help** on how to gather and best present the required information.*

*Grant Solutions saved me a large amount of time and effort and I am **very happy to recommend your help to others** who are daunted by grant applications."*

Margaret Banff, NSW

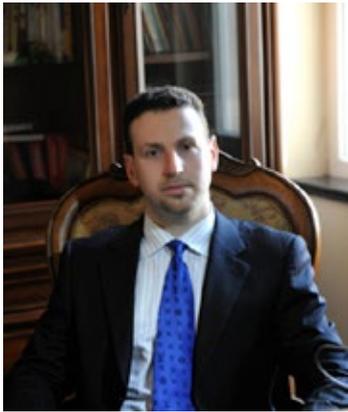


"Grant Solutions helped us develop a funding submission that was of high quality. Their wealth of knowledge & industry expertise was valuable in this process.

*Grant Solutions ensured that we would receive **value for money** & we certainly did!"*

Donna Coniglia, VIC

About Grant Solutions



Grant Solutions is a national consulting firm specialising in obtaining competitive government funding for businesses and tourism providers.

We've found that while businesses excel in their day to day activities, they are **unaware** of available grant opportunities. The businesses that are aware of government grants simply do not have the resources and experience to adequately prepare an application.

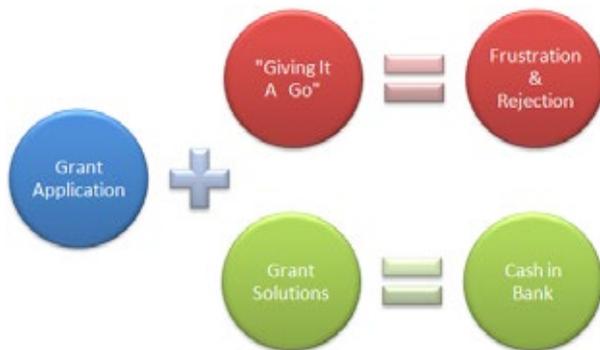
Grant Solutions solves this problem by submitting grant application on behalf of clients ... successfully getting the money.

Ross Turetsky **MBA, BCom, BInfoSys** (Melbourne University), the founder of Grant Solutions is recognised as one of Australia's experts in government grants. He guest-lectured at Monash University and was invited to appear on national television (Channel 7).

Ross is also widely quoted in the business media (The Age, Sydney Morning Herald, Brisbane Times, BusinessDay) and occasionally presents at national and international conferences.

Why Use Our Services

Government grants are **highly competitive**, attracting vast number of applications (sometimes 5,000+ in each funding round). Despite spending valuable resources, jumping through hoops and filling out mountains of paperwork, most businesses are unsuccessful in obtaining funding.



We change this. By engaging our services, tourism providers are almost guaranteed funding.

We work on a Success basis and receive a fee equivalent to a percentage of the successful grant.

We have previous experience working with government and a high success rate in grant applications.

For further information about TIRF & Grant Solutions:

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*"Grant Solutions **made things easy** by sending sample documents (budget and risks).*

*They also **quality assured** our application to ensure it was compliant and met a high standard.*

*We will continue using Grant Solutions in the future and **recommend the company** to our friends and colleagues."*

John Hodgson, VIC



"Seeing the final product made me appreciate the amount of work that went into our application.

***Everything was backed** by statistics, numbers, an actuarial analysis, references and so much compounding proof, which made our project look **bulletproof**"*

Mandie Scott, QLD



Don't take it for granted!

The eight common grant mistakes – and how to avoid making them. By Ross Turetsky

So you've heard there are grants available for your project. Sounds great, yes? If you're like most people, you're probably already visualising what you could do with the money. However, before you jump for joy and tell everyone about it, I need to share with you something that will upset your plans. You're not going to get a cent of that grant money. In fact, the only thing that awaits you is confusion, frustration, rejection and despair. Surprised? Most people are – especially after they've done the hard work and submitted the application.

The unfortunate reality is that in any competitive funding program, only a minority of applicants get funded. The vast majority of applicants get a politely written rejection letter ... you know, the one that says you were "good", but compared with others, "not good enough".

Now I know it's something you don't want to hear, but it's also something you must hear. There is no conspiracy and the government is not out to get you. The fact of the matter is, there are simply more projects than there is funding available. The ratio of applications to grants is often as high as 10 to one.

To boost your chances of success, and save you the heartache of wasting time by setting about an application the wrong way, here are some of the common grant mistakes to avoid. Knowing these will help you rise above the competition.

Mistakes, and how to avoid them

1. Not assessing eligibility before applying

The idea of getting "free money" is very appealing to most businesses, especially when these grants are specifically designed to support the activities the businesses are already undertaking. Much like buying a lottery ticket and hoping for the best, businesses sometimes adopt the attitude of "you need to be in it to win it" rather than carefully assessing the eligibility requirements.

This is a problem because, in many cases, businesses are ineligible for grants they're applying for. Yes, their activities as a whole may be eligible but the specific project seeking grant money may not be. Applications that fail to meet eligibility requirements do not even get assessed as they're screened and rejected in the first instance.

Before spending time preparing a grant submission, the applicant needs to be 100 per cent certain of their eligibility for the grant. While grants are typically awarded on merit (compared to other applicants) eligibility is the first hurdle which must be met regardless of other applicants.

2. Not fully assessing the amount of work involved

Businesses generally underestimate the amount of work involved in putting together a grant application. They also do not fully appreciate that doing 'business as usual' activities is very different from selling a project in a 30 plus page grant application (with 10 or more attachments). Or maybe they're aware of the application but feel overwhelmed, thus procrastinating until they're very close to the submission deadline. We commonly experience a significant increase in grant enquiries less than one month prior to the submission deadline, especially two weeks before. This is a problem

because it creates unnecessary stress and uncertainty for the business.

In addition, businesses often invest time and energy into starting the application process, for example, by contacting the funding source for information and answering a few application questions, only to realise how much effort is really involved. This may cause them to abandon the application or to submit what they have prepared even though it may be incomplete, flawed and poorly presented. Simply stated, there is a world of difference between an application finished a few days early and one 'hot off the printer'.

It's important that businesses assess the amount of work the grant application is likely to require. This estimate should be realistic and take into account any dependencies and lag time involved in obtaining various documents from third parties, such as audited financial records.

This level of upfront analysis allows businesses to make Go / No Go decisions before investing their limited resources into the grant application. For example, if you estimate that an application requires



100 hours of effort, don't start the process unless you're willing to allocate that time. To even imagine that 100 hours of work could be condensed into five 20 hour days is just unrealistic. In short, estimate – and don't start things you're unlikely to finish.

3. Not assessing the amount of competition involved

Businesses often assume that just because they're eligible, they are almost guaranteed funding. Unfortunately this is not the case and the reality is quite different. There are always more projects than there is funding available. This becomes an even bigger issue when the Government actively promotes the funding program, thereby ensuring that you will be competing with many other applicants, sometimes numbering in the thousands.

The worst category to apply for funding is small business start-ups, especially if the program does not require matching funding. These types of programs typically attract applicants who have plenty of ideas and spare time but no money.

To get some idea of the possibility of success and the level of competition, you should find out how many people previously applied, how many were successful and also the overall quality of the submissions. This information is freely available from the funding source (even if you do have to mention the Freedom of Information Act a number of times to any 'reluctant' public sector employee). This information is crucial in determining the likelihood of the application being successful ... and whether or not it's worthwhile to apply.

4. Not making grant applications a priority

Most businesses do not have a grant strategy in place, applying for grants only as an afterthought rather than seeing them as an important part of their funding strategy. This means that when a company does decide to apply, the application is rushed and delegated to someone who is available rather than to the most qualified person.

Businesses treat grants as a gamble ... and that's exactly how applications are submitted: "give it a go, but don't spend too much time on it" as there are other 'real' things that need to be done.

For example, the CEO may hear about a possible grant and ask a manager to see if the company is eligible. After all, it would be silly not to take advantage of these incentives. The manager, however, is likely to have other 'business as usual' priorities which are clearly mapped out in their performance plan and directly related to their bonus structure. What is not clearly mapped out and related to the bonus is the grant! The manager therefore needs to make a decision between focusing on the grant (for the company) or their usual business activities (for their bonus). Not a hard choice to make really!

It's not surprising that the manager is likely to place more priority on the 'business as usual' activities than on the grant application. After all, grants are hard to get and there will be no negative consequences if the application is unsuccessful. However, if they don't carry out their usual day-to-day activities, they are likely to miss out on a bonus and may even be seen as under-performing. Without priority, grant applications tend to be left to the last minute and submitted with minimal regard, more so to 'tick a box' rather than to have a real shot at getting the money.

Grants applications should be done by dedicated individuals who (ideally) have some 'skin' in the game and in an ideal situation, grant submitters should be paid a bonus only if the grant is successful, in order to align incentives.

5. Not being assertive

When applicants do talk to customer representatives, they often come across as very disorganised and not sure of themselves. For example, if they don't fully understand the information presented, they are afraid to ask a follow-up question, simply moving on the next question or even ending the call in order to avoid looking stupid.

This is a problem because it's hard to know the competency level of the person speaking to you on the phone. For example, you could be speaking to a customer services representative who is very familiar with the grant. Or, more likely, you could be speaking to someone who has 10 sheets of paper in front of them, one page for each grant, each with 10 questions they can answer. For example, AusIndustry offers more than 100 different grant programs and the staff taking your



In any competitive funding program, only a minority of applicants get funded.

call simply can't be expected to know all of them by heart. So if you don't understand the answer, keep on asking even if that means asking to be transferred to a more knowledgeable staff member.

Applicants should be confident and assertive when talking with grant representatives. If something is not clear, ask them to repeat themselves or request another explanation. There is nothing wrong with asking people to repeat themselves. It's not as if they're doing you a favour ... it's their job. If you don't ask, you won't get.

6. Not using the application forms provided

Government departments often require grant applicants to use pro forma 'locked down' Word documents in order to collect only the information required and to minimise the variation across applications. Unfortunately, some of these pro forma versions have unintended bugs – errors that should have been fixed but haven't. These bugs are extremely frustrating as they make it difficult to enter the required information. They also prevent use of the spell checker and other commonly used tools. This glitch has caused many applicants to abandon the pro forma and simply attach Word documents containing their responses.

This is a problem because the forms have been created for a reason – to make the applications look exactly the same and reduce bias. This approach also ensures that only the required information is collected. Applications not in the pre-set format are typically

regarded with suspicion for at least two reasons (both of which reduce the chances of the application being successful). First, they don't follow instructions as outlined in the information guide (a big minus). And second, their application stands out from others, making them harder to compare.

Applicants should allocate additional time to ensure they can transfer the information as required. Yes, it is frustrating ... but so is not getting the money.

7. Not understanding funding objectives

Businesses short on time don't adequately plan their grant applications, leaping straight into the selection criteria without fully understanding what the Government is trying to achieve through the grant program. These leaps are typically made by the same managers who are evaluated on progress made rather than on the success of the application. These managers are already busy and don't have the time to speak with the funding source – time that could be used for writing the grant criteria. After all, just typing information into the application form seems far more productive than being stuck on hold for 20 minutes or more while you wait to talk to a government employee regarding the application. This is a problem because not fully understanding the selection criteria increases the chances of not fully addressing them. Remember that grants are judged on their merit relative to other applicants. If other applicants go above and beyond what is required, you will miss out on getting the grant even if you did a good job. Applicants need to use every opportunity to increase their chances of success, including speaking with a customer representative at the funding source to get a better idea of what is required for the application. Obviously, not everything can be included in the information guide so talking to people who run the program (or even assess the application) will greatly increase your chances of being successful.

8. Missing the first round of a multi-round grant program

When a new grant programs become available, businesses are often reluctant to apply for the first round. Some feel that there is not enough guidance from the funding

source, which may be true as it's their first time as well. Others are unsure of their chance of success. There are also those that try to put in an application but life gets in the way and they defer their application to subsequent round.

Missing out on the first funding round is a problem for several reasons. Generally, more funding is allocated for round one, especially in three to four year programs. In fact, most of the money is allocated during the first year even if the funding is provided for three to four years. Also, the grant funding might be withdrawn for political or economic reasons at any time. In the past, funding rounds have been cancelled because of changes to government (federal, state, or local council).

So unless the round is formally opened, and project funds are committed against it, there is simply no guarantee that the funding will still be available when you want to apply for it. Other businesses are also less likely to apply on the first round and more likely to apply in subsequent rounds, so there is a higher chance of being selected in round one against a smaller pool of competitors.

To increase your chances of being successful, you need to apply as early as you can. Remember that applying in the first round typically does not exclude you from applying in subsequent rounds, so there is nothing to lose and much to gain. ○

Want more information?

The [business.gov.au](http://www.business.gov.au) website has a 'grants and assistance finder' function which includes information on more than 600 grants available to businesses around Australia. In addition, you can use a search function to find business and advisory services in your local area.

Ross Turetsky is managing director of Grant Solutions (www.grantsolutions.com.au). He can be contacted through the website.

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Don't discount factoring

- the ability to utilise the cash flow to obtain early settlement discounts from suppliers/creditors (up to five per cent)
- factoring reduces management time spent on chasing slow payers, allowing business managers to concentrate on areas more appropriate to their responsibilities, such as driving new volume.

Suitable for many, but not for all

While an increasing number of Australian businesses are engaging debtor finance to support growth strategies, it isn't suitable for all organisations. Circumstances where debtor finance may not be appropriate for a company include instances where:

- invoices are payable on a progress basis (common in the construction industry)
- invoices arise from a retail or consumer transaction (debtor finance is restricted to business-to-business debts only)
- trading terms exceed 60-90 days from delivery month end
- the debtor has, or may have, a right of set-off (for example, where the debtor is also a creditor)
- a single or small number of debtors represent a very large percentage of the debtor's ledger (this is called high concentration and is a business risk in case of disputed debt or debtor failure).

Notwithstanding the fact that some businesses are not suitable for debtor finance facilities, the ongoing volatility and uncertainty in the economy heightens the importance for all organisations to have sound credit lines in place. With funding through traditional overdraft facilities remaining difficult to access, a growing number of businesses are seeking alternatives. The debtor finance market is benefiting from this shift in how businesses think about credit, with an increasing number turning to discounting and factoring arrangements to improve cash flow and pursue growth strategies. ○

Hooman Zahrai is chairman of the Institute for Factors and Discounters of Australia and New Zealand (IFD), which represents the interests of the major providers in Australia and New Zealand.

Grant Solutions Press Release for Round 4 - Celebrating 100% NRRHIP Success!

Melbourne, Australia July 6, 2010

The results of the latest NRRHIP funding round (a competitive program providing \$46 million for infrastructure and equipment in small rural towns) were announced today. The 4th round attracted 302 applicants from all across Australia, 42 of them (including 4 clients of Grant Solutions) being successful.

Each of the 42 successful applicants received a personal phone call congratulating them ... with the official confirmation (funding agreement, bank account details, and etc) due to arrive shortly. Concurrently, 260 letters were sent to unsuccessful applicants, providing an opportunity to obtain application feedback and to reapply for the 5th NRRHIP round.

Ross Turetsky, Managing Director of Grant Solutions, explains ... "With 302 NRRHIP submissions, an application had to be in the top 13.9% to be approved". Grant Solutions submitted 4 NRRHIP applications on behalf of their clients, and all were successful.

Getting comfortable in his ultra-ergonomic office chair, Ross is not surprised by this exceptional result (the probability of which is just 0.04%) ... he expected it.

"Two of our clients applied by themselves last year... and were unsuccessful... so they came to Grant Solutions because they wanted a different outcome this time around".

"Getting government grants is our core business. This is what we do during business hours and what I primarily 'think about' after hours". Ross admits that running Grant Solutions is certainly not a typical 9-5 arrangement. "When your clients depend on you... there is no such thing as 'downtime'...at least not in practice".

So what's the secret to getting NRRHIP grants?

"Well, it's a LOT of hard work... which is why most applicants don't put in enough time and effort" Ross explains. "Our consultants spent days reading through NRRHIP guidelines and policy documents, trying to understand what outcomes the government was trying to achieve with the allocated funding.

They also talked to prospective NRRHIP clients, trying to understand their projects... in order to establish eligibility and merit potential. Senior consultants then developed a grant application strategy and spent around 70-90 hours addressing the selection criteria. Quality assurance then further refined the applications until they were close to 100%".

In the next couple of months, Grant Solutions will travel around Australia, presenting their clients with large commemorative cheques. "These days when an applicant is successful, the government pays electronically... companies don't even get a cheque. So we'll make the day memorable by giving clients a large commemorative cheque and perhaps a bottle of bubbly". It's also a good PR exercise for Grant Solutions.

"When businesses contact us, some don't believe our success rate is close to 100% ...especially in competitive programs where 75%+ of applicants are rejected". Having photos with clients holding large cheques should help address this... although there will still be skeptics. That doesn't bother Ross, who believes that they'll eventually come to Grant Solutions once their friends and business associates get government grants with our help.

"I've long ago learned that it's nearly impossible to convince anyone of anything... and that's why we only work with clients who want to work with us" says Ross. Fortunately for Grant Solutions, their 100% success rate with NRRHIP applications will ensure a flood of enquiries for the next grant round.

Tourism providers will need to act quickly as Grant Solutions is only accepting a limited number of clients for TIRF Round 2 (Closing @ 11.59 pm August 7th, 2013).

Outstanding Results – Near Perfect Grant Success

Melbourne, Australia November 18, 2011

Six months after the PCIG program closed in June 2011 – the results were published on the Government website. PCIG, which provides up to \$500,000 towards upgrading existing infrastructure and equipment, was heavily oversubscribed with applicants.

Out of the hundreds of businesses that applied for the program, only a small number of applicants (around 10%) were successful in obtaining the funding.

The reality is that there are always far more applicants seeking funding than there is funding available – so most miss out. That's unless you were a client of Grant Solutions – a Melbourne headquartered consulting company specialising in grant applications. It turns out that almost all of their 20+ clients were successful.

"We knew the results would come out on November 18th as one of our clients was informed of his success by an MP on November 17th. Everyone in the office was excited and I sent a High Priority email to all clients – so they could get ready for the good news", explains Ross Turetsky, the Managing Director of Grant Solutions.

During the previous 6 weeks, Grant Solutions obtained weekly updates from the government department and passed them to their clients – who needed to know when they could start their project. "It was an intense 6 weeks as some of our clients were being evicted because their building had to be demolished. Yet, they couldn't start the fit out on their new building before results were announced".

According to the guidelines, applicants who start their project prior to signing the agreement with the government risk becoming ineligible and lose their grant. "This is the easiest way to 'stuff it up' and have the money taken away from you. Too many people from round 1 lost their grants because they got excited and started the project too early," explains Ross.

"Today, the results from government were sent directly to all applicants via email – so we didn't actually know how many of our clients were successful (apart from the one who already knew yesterday). So we opened up our client list and started a tally each time a client called, emailed or SMSed."

"The good news came very quickly from our excited clients, with the tally quickly rising to 3, then 6, then 8, then 10. By about 2pm, there were 12 successful clients. At that time I was thinking – we got 12 grants in a single round – wow. That is truly amazing", says Ross Turetsky with a grin on his face.

"But it wasn't all", he continues in a softer tone.

"It just so happened that I had a dental appointment at 3pm and needed to leave the office. At 2.55pm, I was sitting in the dentist waiting room. I got an SMS from my team saying that the results were published on the government website – and that almost all of our 20+ clients were successful."

"I just couldn't believe it – we got over 20!" Ross exclaims, tapping discreetly on his wooden table as a sign of luck.

What makes the results even more remarkable is the diversity of projects.

- Some clients applied previously by themselves and were unsuccessful
- Many clients came from affluent areas (e.g. Sydney North Shores)
- A few businesses were located in metro areas (without service shortage)
- All were applying for large grants (\$300,000 to \$500,000)

Yet despite these factors (including different locations e.g. VIC, QLD, WA, NSW, SA), 20+ businesses were successful. The only common trait that these successful clients had was that they all used the **Grant Advantage Plus** service by Grant Solutions.

Sheer Luck – Or Is There More To It?

After a few minutes of conversation (and a 2nd glass of Baileys on the rocks), Ross gradually starts to reveal the real story of what happened behind the scenes.

“Look, all kidding aside – we knew we were going to crush it – and that’s exactly what happened.”

“We were so confident about our chances that we used these numbers in our yearly financial projections. From an accounting point of view, this was extremely risky as generally only 10% of grant applications are successful so statistically we should have only counted on 2-3 clients being successful – rather than the 20+ who actually got the grant.”

“But all of this is after-the-fact commentary”, Ross pauses, leans back on his ergonomic chair and looks outside his office window. “If you really want to know the ‘secret’ of how Grant Solutions got this result, – I’ll tell you, but I’m not sure if you’ll like it.”

“I placed my life on hold for 4 months, worked 7 days a week and thought of nothing else except my clients and their projects. That was the easy part – the hard part was getting that level of commitment from the rest of my team. Fortunately, we have a wonderful team who understood what this program means to our clients and to Grant Solutions.”

“We all pulled together - everyone doing their very best to ensure outstanding quality from start to finish. A team of 4 people worked on each application, with some applications going through 5 levels of quality assurance before being handed over to the client for submission. Fortunately for Grant Solutions and our clients, we live in a merit-based society – so after assessing the quality of submitted application, Canberra awarded the grant to almost all our clients.”

“During the project, our clients developed a deep level of trust in us. So when the applications were ready for submission and we asked for them to be hand delivered to Canberra, 9 clients drove or caught an interstate flight in order to personally do so (rather than send it via a courier – which is what we had in mind originally).”

Andre, who drove for 6 hours to Canberra and back, summed it up nicely – “so much effort has been spent on this application. I don’t want to leave anything to chance”. His efforts did not go to waste as he was awarded \$500,000 towards his project. Sue took a flight from QLD and was ‘over the moon’ when she found out that her projects were approved – getting \$1,000,000 in total for 2 neighbouring sites.

Focusing on Fewer Clients to Deliver Outstanding Quality

Even before the results were available, Grant Solutions surveyed their clients to get some feedback on the services provided and received an average of 9 out of 10. Some clients gave 9 simply because they don’t believe in giving 10 out of principle as there is no room for improvement.

This too didn’t happen by accident - being planned well in advance. Two months before the PCIG program officially opened, Grant Solutions knew it was going to be a ‘game changer’ and the company had to prepare accordingly. One of the key decisions made by the executive team was to accept fewer clients – but focus more on the quality of each accepted client.

The focus was always on ensuring that their existing clients were going to be successful – rather than trying to sign up new clients and hope that things would turn out OK. As a result of limiting their numbers, Grant Solutions was officially booked out 4 weeks before the program closed and had to turn away around 15 perspective clients who wanted to use the service.

It got pretty intense especially in the last 4 weeks before the applications closed. The phone rang from 7am to 11pm. “We directed all calls to voicemail which enabled them to be screened. Once we were booked out, there was little point in taking calls from people interested in using our service. However, perspective clients were desperate to contact us and just couldn’t understand that we were at capacity.

We told everyone months in advance that our focus would be on ensuring results for existing clients (rather than trying to obtain new ones) and that’s exactly what happened.”

"We even had 1 business who tried to trick us into accepting them as a client (2 weeks before the grant deadline) by claiming we reserved a place for them. It sounds funny now, but back then we were completely overwhelmed, and accepting new clients would have posed a serious risk in our ability to deliver."

"I suspect that businesses who tried to contact us knew that we were booked out (it was clearly stated on our website). However, it's just human nature – they just continued calling, hoping that we had some spots available. Others thought it was a marketing trick and we had plenty of capacity, so they continued calling."

"Unfortunately that was not the case, even 4 weeks prior to the submission we were at capacity and gasping for air. It got very close – 1 or 2 difficult clients would have pushed us over the edge. Fortunately we had a careful screening process when selecting clients. This minimised the amount of drama and ultimately delivered successful results to our many clients."

Learning the Hard Way – Happy Client Shares Her Story

Sue McDonald, a manager from Castlemaine Victoria, is one such satisfied client. In 2010, Grant Solutions helped her Lyttleton business secure \$391,000. Sue applied by herself previously in 2009 for the same program but was unsuccessful – that's when she approached Grant Solutions.

"I've always had a lot of faith in Ross and his team. After having our 2 hour consultation, I quickly realised that there is more to applying for grants than I originally thought. I became a believer very quickly but my boss Danny was a bit harder to convince. However, I persevered and it turned out to be the right thing to do as we ultimately got the money."

Sue was very happy with the service and wrote a letter of thanks – which Ross later placed on the Grant Solutions' website. "Before long, I was getting multiple phone calls a day from businesses around Australia asking about Grant Solutions", Sue says.

"One business even called me 3 times so it was pretty interesting. I told everyone that Grant Solutions worked for us and that the company would probably work for them. I'm not sure how many of them went ahead but I assume that most probably would – as these grants are just too hard to submit without expert help. Our division offered to provide a letter of support, but that was pretty much all – leaving me to complete a long bureaucratic document in my 'spare time' (as if I had any)."

Sue continues "around June (2011), the phone calls slowed down – as obviously the grant deadline approached and that's the last I've heard of it. It was only recently that our nearby florist delivered a beautiful flower arrangement and chocolates from Grant Solutions. It turns out that over 20 of Ross' clients were successful in getting the grant and he wanted to thank me for saying good things about the company when people called."

"I was happy to recommend Grant Solutions – because I know how much the grant helped us. We were able to almost double the size of our building by having additional rooms. This not only reduced the patient waiting time but also made the working environment more comfortable and less stressful. So to have Grant Solutions help 20+ clients get similar grants is just fantastic. I'm sure they will greatly benefit from the grant, just like Lyttleton did."

Celebrating and Documenting Success - Upcoming Case Study

Grant Solutions has received over 20 testimonials from satisfied clients and plans to release them in a case study shortly. Apart from the case study detailing this achievement, Ross and the executive team are also planning to travel around Australia and award clients with commemorative cheques to earmark this special occasion.

"It's a great feeling speaking to someone who has just been awarded \$300,000 to \$500,000." Ross states, "This is what ultimately motivates our team to continue innovating and refining our skills – and this round is certainly a testament to that. All the hard work that we have put in for the 4 months have paid off and we are committed to continue achieving this level of success in future grants!"

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