



An Australian Government Initiative



NORTHERN TERRITORY

Regional Investment Readiness and Impact Fund (RIRIF)

Guidelines (External)

April 2026

Version: 2.0- Final for Public Release

1. Program Overview

1.1 Purpose

The Regional Investment Readiness and Impact Fund (RIRIF) is a targeted, time-limited grant program designed to support last mile planning and enabling activities for regional projects led by not-for-profit, for-purpose organisations and local government in the Northern Territory (see Definitions).

RIRIF fills a proven gap in the NT funding landscape by supporting project-level investment readiness, not capital delivery. The fund focuses on final-stage planning activities such as business cases, design work, and due diligence that enable regional projects to credibly secure larger implementation funding.

1.2 Program Budget and Timeline

Grant Size:

- Typical range: \$25,000 - \$75,000 (GST exclusive)
- Flexibility for remote/high-cost projects may allow variation

Timeline:

- **Program launch:** 22 April 2026
- **Applications close:** 11:59pm (ACST), 1 June 2026
- **Grant decisions announced:** By 30 June 2026
- **Project completion and acquittal:** By 30 June 2027 (or alternative date by agreement)

RIRIF is a one-off round with a fixed budget and limited timeframe; there is no guarantee of future rounds.

2. Who can Apply

Regional and remote Northern Territory is the primary focus. Greater Darwin/Palmerston will only be considered where the work clearly enables outcomes in regional and remote areas.

2.1 Priority regions

- Central Australia (Alice Springs region)
- Barkly region (Tennant Creek and surrounds)
- Katherine region
- East Arnhem region
- West Arnhem
- Remote and very remote communities

2.2 Applicant Requirements

- Applicants will need to have a physical presence in the Northern Territory, and the proposed project must be located entirely within the NT. The primary focus of this fund is regional and remote NT. Greater Darwin/Palmerston applications will only be considered where the work clearly enables outcomes in regional or remote areas.
- Applicants will need to demonstrate the project's community benefit and justify the expenditure of public funds. This is particularly critical for commercial or private sector applicants. A stronger cash co-contribution will be viewed more favourably in assessment and applicants should demonstrate genuine financial commitment to the project, not just in-kind support.
- Applications from consortiums are encouraged. However, one organisation will need to submit the application and be the party entering into the funding agreement. Evidence of the agreement between consortium members (for example, memorandum of understanding, partnership agreement, or letters of commitment) must be provided with your application.
- Australian Government and NT Government agencies are not eligible to apply but may participate as a supporting partner or consortium member. Land Councils may apply on behalf of an Aboriginal Land Trust.
- Applicants that are not a community-based organisation or local government body must demonstrate that their not-for-profit and/or local government partners are genuine partners in the project with meaningful involvement (see Definitions). Projects that are simply auspiced by a not-for-profit or local government organisation will not be considered genuine partnerships.
- Evidence of genuine partnership and meaningful involvement may include:
 - a signed memorandum of understanding or partnership agreement;
 - clear roles for each partner in project governance and delivery; confirmation of partner contributions (for example, cash, in-kind, staff time, or access to assets); and
 - letters of support that describe how partners will be involved in decision-making and project oversight.
- Hold an Australian Business Number (ABN).
- Hold appropriate public liability insurance. For most projects, this will be at least 10 million. RDA NT may accept a lower level of cover for very small or remote organisations where the nature and scale of activities justify this, or may make increased cover a condition of funding.
- Demonstrate financial capacity to manage grant funds, for example through recent audited financial statements, annual reports, or other appropriate financial information.
- Have no outstanding acquittals or compliance issues with previous RDA NT funding.
- Be in good standing with relevant regulators (for example, ACNC, ORIC).

3. What Can be Funded

3.1 Eligible Activities

RIRIF funds final-stage planning and enabling work that makes a defined project investment-ready:

- **Business Case Development:** Business cases to Australian Government better practice standards; cost-benefit analysis; options analysis; financial modelling
- **Design and Technical Work:** Concept and preliminary design; engineering/architectural planning (pre-construction); cost planning; technical specifications
- **Specialist Studies and Approvals:** Environmental and cultural heritage assessments; geotechnical/hydrological studies; planning and development approvals
- **Governance and Delivery Planning:** Governance structure design; risk assessment; partnership frameworks; stakeholder engagement strategies
- **Workforce and Capacity Planning:** Workforce needs analysis; skills development assessment; local employment and Indigenous participation strategies
- **Community Engagement and Co-Design:** Community consultation; co-design processes; Traditional Owner engagement and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes
- **Funding Submission Preparation:** Submissions to identified external funding programs; grant writing support; investment prospectus development

3.2 What Will NOT Be Funded

- Feasibility studies (projects must be beyond the feasibility stage)
- Construction, capital works, or capital purchases
- General operating costs, core staffing, or organisational overheads
- Project implementation or service delivery
- One-off events or awareness campaigns without a clear project pathway
- Exploratory ideas or concepts without credible implementation routes
- Activities that duplicate or overlap with existing funded work
- Debt repayment, retrospective costs, or activities commenced prior to grant approval
- Political lobbying or advocacy activities
- Activities primarily benefiting for-profit entities without clear community benefit
- General research or academic studies without direct project application

4. Project Eligibility

4.1 Project Maturity Test

Projects must be beyond the conceptual or exploratory stage. Evidence of maturity includes:

- Prior scoping work or preliminary planning completed
- Governance endorsement from your organisation's board or council
- Demonstrated community support or consultation
- Clear definition of project objectives, scope, and anticipated outcomes
- Realistic understanding of project scale, complexity, and resource requirements

Not eligible: Early-stage ideas, feasibility studies, exploratory concepts, or projects without organisational commitment.

4.2 Implementation Pathway Requirement (MANDATORY)

This is a defining feature of RIRIF and a mandatory gate for all applications. You must:

1. Name at least one specific, realistic external funding source the project will approach
2. Outline the pathway to that funder, including timing (typically within 6–18 months of grant completion)
3. Demonstrate alignment between the proposed planning work and the funder's program requirements
4. Provide evidence the funding program is active, accessible, and aligned with project scale

Acceptable funding pathways include:

- Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government grant programs
- Northern Australian Infrastructure Facility (NAIF)
- Philanthropic foundations with established granting programs
- Corporate partnership programs with documented community investment priorities
- Local government capital works programs
- Aboriginal Investment NT
- Combinations of the above

Not acceptable: Vague references to "seeking funding"; misaligned, expired, or discontinued programs; pathways with no realistic prospect of success.

4.3 Strategic Alignment

Projects should align with RDA NT Strategic Plan (2026-2029) one or more of:

- Increase regional investment and capability
- Improve regional liveability and connectivity
- Support First Nations economic participation
- Strengthen regional economic diversification

Other alignment:

- Regional Investment Framework principles (productivity, connectivity, liveability)
- Community-identified priorities through local planning processes

4.4 Deliverability

Projects must demonstrate:

- Activities can be realistically completed by 30 June 2027
- Budget is appropriate, detailed, and aligned with proposed scope
- Applicant has capacity (or access to capacity) to manage the project
- Risks are identified and mitigation strategies are outlined
- Governance and decision-making processes are clear
- Procurement approach is appropriate and compliant

4.5 Co-Contribution Requirement

Given RIRIF supports projects at their most advanced planning stage, applicants are expected to have already committed cash to progressing this work. A credible cash co-contribution demonstrates the project has real organisational backing, not just a good idea.

A stronger cash contribution will be viewed more favourably in the assessment process.

Acceptable:

- Cash contribution from your organisation's own funds
- Secured cash funding from other sources for related project components

Not acceptable as sole co-contribution:

- In-kind contributions (volunteer time, general overheads, existing staff time)
- Existing infrastructure or assets not specifically dedicated to the project

Note: In-kind contributions may be included in your overall project budget to demonstrate scale and commitment but cannot substitute for the required cash contribution. A smaller co-contribution may be considered for very small or remote organisations where strong strategic benefit is demonstrated and genuine financial constraints are evidenced. Evidence of financial constraint may include audited financial statements or other financial information showing limited surplus capacity, or similar documentation confirming the organisation's inability to contribute at a higher level.

5. How to Apply

5.1 Application Requirements

Your application must include:

- Completed Application Form:
Organisation details; project title and executive summary (200 words); project description (1,500 words max); budget and co-contribution details; implementation pathway
- Supporting Documentation:
ABN/incorporation certificate; board resolution; public liability insurance certificate; audited financial statements (or, for very small organisations that are not required to obtain an audit, equivalent financial information acceptable to RDA NT); letters of support/board resolutions; evidence of project maturity; budget; project plan; evidence of cash contribution
- Declarations:
Conflicts of interest; relationships with RDA NT Committee members or staff; compliance with legal and regulatory requirements; accuracy of information

5.2 Submission

Applications must be submitted via the online link <https://form.jotform.com/261038010289047> . Email and postal applications will not be accepted. Incomplete applications may be deemed ineligible.

Closing date: 11:59 PM ACST, 1 June 2026. Late applications will not be accepted unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated (see Definitions) and prior approval is granted by the RDA NT CEO. Any approval of a late application and the reasons for it will be documented.

6 Assessment Process

6.1 Assessment Committee

Applications will be assessed by a Committee comprising:

- RDA NT Subcommittee members
- RDA NT CEO
- External representative (selected by RDA NT Subcommittee)

6.2 Assessment Criteria and Weightings

Criterion	Weighting	Key Considerations
1. Implementation Pathway	20%	Credibility and realism of identified external funding source; alignment between planning work and funder requirements; clarity of timeline and next steps; strength of evidence that pathway is viable
2. Strategic Alignment & Regional Impact	20%	Alignment with RDA NT Strategic Plan and Regional Investment Framework; anticipated economic, social, or liveability outcomes; contribution to regional priorities; benefit to First Nations communities
3. Project Maturity & Readiness	15%	Evidence of prior planning or scoping; governance and organisational endorsement; community support; clarity of project definition; realistic understanding of scale and complexity
4. Deliverability & Project Management	15%	Feasibility of completing activities within timeframe; appropriateness and detail of budget; organisational capacity

		and track record; risk identification and mitigation; governance and decision-making
5. Value for Money	15%	Reasonableness of budget relative to scope; appropriateness of co-contribution; cost-effectiveness; leverage of grant funds; potential return on investment
6. Collaboration, Innovation & Best Practice.	15%	Quality and depth of partnerships; collaborative and innovative approach; adoption of best practice; alignment with other regional initiatives; potential for learning and replication; willingness to include RDA NT in project governance.
Total	100%	

Each criterion scored 0–5: **5=Excellent, 4=Very Good, 3=Good, 2=Acceptable, 1=Poor, 0=Not addressed.** Scores are multiplied by weightings to produce a total out of 5.0.

6.3 Strategic Considerations and Portfolio Balance

In addition to the scored criteria, the Assessment Committee will apply strategic portfolio considerations to ensure a balanced allocation of funding. Strategic considerations will only be applied after applications have been scored and ranked.

Strategic considerations may include:

- geographic distribution and regional balance across NT regions;
- portfolio diversity across sectors and project types;
- support for priority cohorts (for example, Aboriginal organisations, very remote communities, small regional councils);
- complementarity with other RDA NT strategic initiatives; and
- overall program risk profile and risk management.

Strategic considerations may be used to:

- differentiate between closely scored applications; or
- adjust the ordering of applications within a limited range where this is necessary to achieve a balanced portfolio.

Any funding recommendation that departs from the ranked order based on strategic considerations will be documented.

6.4 Assessment Outcomes

- **Successful applicants** will be notified in writing and invited to enter a Grant Agreement.
- **Unsuccessful applicants** will be notified in writing with high-level feedback.
- **Notification timeframe:** By 30 June 2026 (or earlier if feasible).
- **No appeals process:** Decisions are final. Unsuccessful applicants may request feedback for future applications.

The Assessment Committee will maintain a written record of funding recommendations, including any instances where strategic considerations result in a lower-ranked application being funded ahead of a higher-ranked application and the reasons for that decision.

7. If You Are Successful

7.1 Grant Agreement

You must enter into a legally binding Grant Agreement before funds are released, covering:

- Scope of funded activities and deliverables
- Project milestones and timeline
- Budget and approved expenditure categories
- Reporting and acquittal requirements
- Payment schedule (typically milestone-based)
- Intellectual property and publicity requirements
- Variation and termination provisions
- General terms and conditions including engagement in an evaluation process

7.2 Payment Arrangements

- **Grants under \$30,000:** Single upfront payment (subject to satisfactory documentation)
- **Grants \$30,000 and above (preferred):** 50% on execution of Grant Agreement; 40% on achievement of agreed milestone; 10% on project completion and satisfactory acquittal
- Payment arrangements may be varied based on project circumstances and risk assessment.

7.3 Reporting Requirements

- **Progress Reports:** Quarterly or at milestones — activities, expenditure, risks, variations
- **Financial Acquittal:** Final financial statement with evidence of expenditure and co-contribution
- **Project Completion Report:** Final outcomes, deliverables (business case, design work, specialist studies, etc.), lessons learned, next steps toward external funding
- **Post-Completion Follow-Up:** 12–18 month survey on funding outcomes and project progress

7.4 Acknowledgement and Publicity

Grantees must:

- Acknowledge RDA NT and Australian Government funding in all project materials, publications, and communications
- Use approved RDA NT and Australian Government logos and branding
- Participate in publicity activities and case studies as reasonably requested
- Provide high-quality images and content for RDA NT promotional purposes

7.5 Intellectual Property

Unless otherwise specified in the Grant Agreement:

- Grantees retain ownership of intellectual property created through the project.
- RDA NT is granted a non-exclusive, perpetual, royalty-free licence to use, reproduce, adapt, and communicate project outputs and related project information for the purposes of:
 - regional development planning and policy;
 - program evaluation and reporting to funders; and
 - non-commercial sharing of learnings and project updates with other regional stakeholders and the broader community, including through RDA NT’s website, newsletters, social media, and other communication channels.

RDA NT will not commercialise grantee intellectual property or disclose commercially sensitive information beyond what is reasonably required for these purposes, unless otherwise agreed in writing. Additional or different intellectual property arrangements may be negotiated in the Grant Agreement where applicants bring significant pre-existing proprietary intellectual property to the project.

7.6 Evaluation Obligations

Grantees must:

- participate in program evaluation activities as reasonably requested by RDA NT, including surveys, interviews, and feedback processes;
- contribute to case studies documenting your project’s approach, outcomes, and lessons learned for the regional development sector;
- report on outcomes and impact, not just outputs. Your project completion report must include a clear account of what changed as a result of the funded work;
- complete a 12–18 month follow-up survey after project completion, providing an update on whether external funding was secured and the status of your project; and
- provide feedback on the grant process to help RDA NT improve future funding programs.

Information collected through evaluation may be used by RDA NT for program reporting, advocacy, and non-commercial communications in line with the intellectual property arrangements set out in section 7.5.

Why this matters: RDA NT needs to demonstrate the impact of this fund to make the case for future investment in regional project readiness. Your participation in evaluation is not optional — it is a condition of funding and will be written into your Grant Agreement.

7.7 Variations and Scope Changes

- **Minor variations:** May be approved by RDA NT CEO
- **Significant variations:** Require written approval from Assessment Committee or RDA NT Board
- **All variation requests:** Must be submitted in writing with justification
- **Budget variations:** Exceeding 10% of total project cost require formal approval

7.8 Termination and Repayment

RDA NT may suspend or terminate funding if:

- the grantee fails to comply with Grant Agreement conditions;
- the project is not progressing satisfactorily or within agreed timeframes;
- the grantee becomes insolvent or ceases operations;
- false or misleading information was provided in the application or in reporting; or
- funds are used for ineligible purposes.

In such cases, RDA NT may require repayment of all or part of the grant funding. Any requirement for repayment operates as a contractual debt only and is not secured. In determining whether to seek full or partial repayment, RDA NT will consider:

- the proportion of project activities completed;
- whether funded outputs of enduring value have been delivered;
- the extent to which funds have been applied to eligible versus ineligible purposes; and
- where the grantee is insolvent, the grantee’s financial position and the public interest.

7.9 RDA NT Participation in Project Governance

For all funded projects, RDA NT will either be member of your project steering group or governance committee; or an alternative engagement/ updating mechanism will be implemented as part of the grant agreement. This can support:

- Real-time monitoring of project progress
- Early identification and management of risks
- Maintenance of strategic alignment with regional priorities
- Facilitation of connections to external funders and partners
- Building of organisational capability through mentoring and support
- Applicants should welcome RDA NT participation and include this in project governance planning.

8. Support and Assistance

RDA NT will conduct online information sessions on 30 April 2026. From time to time, RDA NT may also deliver in-person information or grant-writing overview sessions in specific regions. These sessions will provide general information about the RIRIF program, eligibility, assessment criteria, and the application process, but will not provide individual coaching on specific applications

RDA NT can provide guidance on data sources (where to access) and answer general program questions but cannot draft or edit application content, advise on the likelihood of a specific project being funded, or provide tailored grant-writing services to individual applicants. Key information from any information or grant-writing session (for example, slides or recordings where available) will be made accessible to all prospective applicants.

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Enquiries: Email: admin@rdant.com.au | Phone: 89 41 7550 | www.rdant.com.au

9. Key Messages

RIRIF IS:	RIRIF IS NOT:
✓ A "last mile" planning fund	✗ A capital works or construction fund
✓ Focused on projects with real prospects of external funding	✗ For early-stage ideas, exploratory concepts, or feasibility studies
✓ Supporting NFPs, Aboriginal organisations, and local government	✗ Open to projects without credible implementation pathways
✓ Filling a proven gap in the NT funding landscape	✗ A substitute for organisational core funding
✓ Aligns with RDA NT's Strategic Plan	

10. Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can we apply if we are based in Darwin?

A: Greater Darwin/Palmerston applications will only be considered where the work clearly enables outcomes in regional or remote areas.

Q: Can a business apply on its own?

A: No. RIRIF is not designed as a stand-alone grant program for private businesses. Businesses may participate as project partners, but the application must be led by an eligible organisation such as a not-for-profit, for-purpose, Aboriginal-controlled organisation, local government body, or similar eligible entity with an ABN, and the project must deliver broader regional or community benefit.

Q: Do we need our cash co-contribution fully secured before applying?

A: You must demonstrate commitment and provide evidence. The stronger your cash contribution, the more favourably your application will be viewed.

Q: Can we include feasibility studies?

A: No. RIRIF is for "last mile" planning. Projects must be beyond the feasibility stage.

Q: What if we are unsure which external funder to approach?

A: Identifying at least one specific, realistic external funding source is mandatory. Research this before applying.

Q: Can we apply for more than \$75,000?

A: The typical range is \$25,000–\$75,000. Variation may be considered for remote/high-cost projects with strong justification.

Q: What if our project takes longer than expected?

A: The Grant Agreement will include reasonable flexibility provisions for genuine delays. All projects must be completed by 30 June 2027.

Q: Will RDA NT help us write our application?

A: RDA NT can provide guidance on data sources and answer general questions but cannot assist with application content. Consider engaging independent grant writing support.

For additional questions and any updates issued during the application period, applicants should refer to the RDA NT website.

11. Definitions

For the purposes of these Guidelines:

For-purpose organisation means an entity that:

- not operated for the profit or gain of individual members, owners, or shareholders; and
- reinvests any surplus to further its stated community, charitable, social, cultural, environmental, or regional development purpose; and
- includes, without limitation, charities registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), incorporated associations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations, companies limited by guarantee, and similar not-for-profit structures.

Genuine partnership means a formal, documented relationship (such as a memorandum of understanding, partnership agreement, or contract) in which partners share design input, decision-making, and responsibility for project outcomes.

Meaningful involvement means that the not-for-profit or local government partner has a clear and active role in project governance and delivery (for example, membership of a steering group, co-design responsibilities, or co-funding), and is not merely fulfilling an administrative or nominal role.

Simply auspiced refers to arrangements where a not-for-profit or local government organisation acts only as a funding conduit or legal host (for example, holding the grant agreement and bank account) without substantive decision-making authority, resourcing, or ongoing responsibilities in the project.

Exceptional circumstances (late applications) means events that are outside the applicant’s control and that directly prevent submission of an application by the closing time (for example, natural disasters, widespread telecommunications outages, or serious illness of key personnel).

Project outputs means the tangible deliverables produced using RIRIF funding, such as business cases, designs, technical studies, governance frameworks, or similar planning documents.

Version: 4.0 | Date: 21 April 2026 | Prepared by: RDA NT CEO | Reviewed by: RIRIF Subcommittee

Signed (CEO):

