Volunteer Grants 2015

Feedback summary

Overview

The Strengthening Communities Activity aims to build socially cohesive and resilient communities and promote inclusion and participation of disadvantaged people in community life. Volunteer Grants forms part of the Families and Communities Programme/Strengthening Communities Activity.

Volunteer Grants aims to support the efforts of Australia's volunteers. The grants provide small amounts of money, which organisations can use to help their volunteers. Volunteer Grants is part of the Government's work to support the volunteers who help disadvantaged Australian communities and encourage inclusion of vulnerable people in community life.

Selection results

There was a very strong response from community organisations across Australia to the Volunteer Grants 2015 call for applications. Around 5,300 organisations were successful in receiving funding which will assist almost 130,000 volunteers across Australia.

The standard of applications was high overall, making the selection process very competitive. All applications received were assessed against the selection criteria.

Selection process

DSS used an open competitive selection process to ensure all eligible organisations had an equal opportunity to apply and that suitable organisations were recommended for funding.

Each application was considered against the assessment criteria and rated based on how well it met the criteria. The criteria and feedback on how they were assessed are outlined below.

Applications were assessed on how strongly they met one or more of the following priorities:

- Organisations that work with disadvantaged communities, prioritised according to the Socio Economic Indexes for Area (SEIFA)
- Organisations that support individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage. This included:
    - Organisations/sponsored groups located in areas affected by a recent major natural disaster (based on disasters listed on the Disaster Assist website) occurring within the last 12 months up to the closing date for applications
    - Organisations/sponsored groups, which engage volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Organisations, which help more than one disadvantaged group, were assessed more highly
- Organisations that have more volunteers than paid staff
- A higher number of volunteers who will directly use the items being bought
- Organisations with high numbers of volunteers
- Organisations with a smaller operating budget
- A lower total cost for the requested items

Funding has also been spread across Australia, areas of high needs and people experiencing disadvantage.

General feedback for future Volunteer Grants applications

These tips provide guidance in completing applications for Volunteer Grants funding.

Read supporting information before applying

- It is important to read all available information provided about Volunteer Grants when applying for funding, especially the Application Pack provided on the Department's website at www.dss.gov.au.

  o The Application Pack is specific to each funding round and provides information on the intent and purpose of the programme, including important information about applying and timeframes which will help organisations apply for grant funding.

- The Volunteer Grants Application Pack also includes helpful information about the Application Form and provides details on each relevant section. This includes important information on the selection criteria and mandatory information used by the Department to assess an application.

Check the application before it is submitted

- Organisations are encouraged to check their completed Application Form to ensure that all questions are answered prior to making an attempt to submitting the application electronically.

  o It is vital to check that all answers to questions have been entered and saved into the Application Form.

  o Lack of information may impact on the assessment of the application and therefore may impact the overall final score.

  o Check that no fields have been left blank in the Application Form before forwarding to Volunteer Grants for assessment.

- Applications must be completed correctly. The Volunteer Grants Hotline is available to provide technical assistance to organisations in applying for funding. Applications that are not completed correctly may be deemed ineligible.

- Please ensure written answers are accurate, clear and within the specified word limits. Any text provided in excess of the prescribed limit may not be taken into account.

Submitting an application

- Organisations are advised to prepare early and allow plenty of time to meet the application closing date.

  o Please note that it is the responsibility of the organisation to ensure its application is received by the Department by the specified closing date and time.

  o Please also take into account Australian Eastern time zone differences. Applications submitted, or attempted to be submitted after the closing date and time, as stipulated on the Funding Round Summary and Application Form, will not be accepted.

- It is strongly recommended that an application is submitted well before the closing date and time. The Department may not accept an application submitted after the closing date and time if exceptional or unforeseen circumstances do not exist.

- o Late applications will only be accepted as per the <u>Late Application Policy</u> on the Department's website.

- If more than one identical application is received by the Department, through multiple attempts at lodging an application online and/or emailing an application to the Department, the latest most complete application will be assessed.

  - o It is important that contact with the Department is made as soon as possible after the application has been submitted (if in doubt) to confirm that the Department has received the application.

  - o It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that any postal applications are received by the Department. One way of ensuring this, is to register receipt of the application through Australia Post.

Eligibility and compliance

- It is important to note that Volunteer Grants is a very competitive community-based funding opportunity and meeting the selection criteria does not necessarily guarantee success.

- Organisations need to clearly establish their legal entity status to ensure that they have the required legal standing to apply for Volunteer Grants.

  - o Organisations are encouraged to seek information on their legal entity status from their finance officer or accountant.

  - o It is important that the Application Pack is read to understand eligibility requirements.

  - o The Department may request additional supporting documentation to confirm an organisations' entity, such as an Incorporation Certificate or Trust Deed (if a Trustee).

- Items requested are required to meet the eligibility criteria of Volunteer Grants. The description of items needs to be stated clearly and accurately. The total cost of the requested item/s influences the rating of the application, as noted in the Application Pack.

- The minimum and maximum funding limits need to be strictly adhered to when applying for Volunteer Grants funding.