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Australian Government
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

# Thriving Suburbs Program – application and assessment process

The Thriving Suburbs Program (the program) application and assessment process incorporates a single stage model to facilitate timely delivery.

The program’s application and assessment process are illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Thriving Suburbs Program - application and selection process**

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| **Step 1 Applications lodged by applicant**  Applications lodged via the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) business.gov.au on-line portal. Applications opened 27 July 2024 and closed 2 September 2024 |
| **Step 4 Multi-party Parliamentary panel assessment**  The multi-party Parliamentary panel (the panel) assess applications against 3 key merit criteria, based on the finding of the departments merit assessment.  **Step 3 Merit Assessment**  The department assess eligible applications against 3 merit criteria.  **Step 2 Eligibility Assessment**  Business Grants Hub within DISR assess eligibility against guideline criteria. |
| **Step 5 Funding recommendation**  The department provides the Minister with all eligible projects in order of merit and make recommendations with regard to program funding available. |
| **Step 6 Minister approves funding**  The Minister decides which applications are successful taking into consideration the department’s merit assessment, the Multi-party Parliamentary Panel’s recommendations, and the availability of funds. |

**Step 1 – Applications lodged**

Applicants lodge applications via the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) online portal at business.gov.au.

Applications opened on 27 July 2024 and were initially scheduled to close of 26 August. Due to feedback received, the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (the Minister) directed that the closing date be extended to 2 September 2024.

**Step 2 – BGH eligibility assessment**

The Business Grants Hub (BGH) in the DISR conducted initial eligibility checks for all applications received.

The BGH assessed applications against eligibility criteria (entity type and status, cash contributions, co-funding commitments, shovel-readiness, land ownership or permission, location, expenditure activities) in accordance with sections 4 and 5 of the Thriving Suburbs Program – Program Guidelines ([the guidelines](https://business.gov.au/grants-and-programs/thriving-suburbs-program)) and the inclusion of documentation outlined within paragraph 7.1 of the guidelines.

Paragraph 4.2 of the guidelines states that: We cannot waive the eligibility criteria under any circumstances.

**Step 3 – Department merit assessment of eligible applications**

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the department) initially merit assessed eligible applications against the following weighted assessment criteria:

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|  | **Criteria** | **Maximum total points** |
| 1 | Contribution to social and community inclusion | 40 |
| 2 | Alignment with Government strategic priorities | 20 |
| 3 | Capacity, capability and resources to deliver and sustain the project | 40 |

In order for an application to be rated as fully meeting the selection criteria, it needed to score at least 60 per cent against each of the three criteria (that is: 24 out of 40; and 12 out of 20).

Only applications assessed as fully meeting assessment criteria, i.e. scoring at least 60 per cent against each assessment criteria, were assessed as being suitable for funding.

The assessment process involved independent assessments by at least two trained and skilled department staff members per project, followed by quality assurance checks and moderation discussions by team leaders for consistency in scoring.

**Step 4 – Multi-party Parliamentary Panel assessment.**

The program utilised a six-member multi-party Parliamentary panel (the panel) with membership chosen by the Minister as follows:

* Ms Anne Stanley MP, Member for Werriwa, NSW, Australian Labor Party (Panel Chair)
* Ms Alicia Payne MP, Member for Canberra, ACT, Australian Labor Party
* Dr Monique Ryan MP, Member for Kooyong, VIC, Independent
* Hon Mr Shayne Neumann MP, Member for Blair, QLD, Australian Labor Party
* Mr Ian Goodenough MP, Member for Moore, WA, Liberal Party of Australia
* Ms Rebekha Sharkie MP, Member for Mayo, SA, Centre Alliance

The role of the panel was to undertake a clear and transparent assessment of all eligible full applications based on their expertise and understanding of urban, suburban and peri-urban needs, priorities and aligned projects. To achieve this, the panel used the department’s initial merit assessment findings to conduct their assessment and provide a final recommendation of meritorious applications to the department.

The panel received a detailed summary of each application, outlining the key information needed for evaluation against specific criteria. They also received comprehensive training and support on how to conduct the assessments.

To ensure impartiality, panel members were prohibited from reviewing applications from their own electorate, or in cases where a perceived or real conflict of interest existed. External probity advisors were appointed to provide independent probity advice, briefings and conflict of interest support to the panel.

The names of the panel members were not made public during the period of assessment. This was to prevent any undue pressure being applied to the panel members during their deliberations.

**Step 5 – Funding recommendation report**

The department provided the Thriving Suburbs Program – Final Recommendations Ministerial brief to the Minister as the decision maker. This information was based on the results of the application merit assessment process, and provided the Minister all eligible projects in order of merit and provided recommendations with regard to the program funding available ($350 million).

**Step 6 – Minister approves funding**

The Minister decided which applications to fund based on the outcomes of the merit assessment and the availability of $350 million in funds.