



Professional Advice and Planning Grant

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the purpose of the Professional Advice and Planning Grant?

The Professional Advice and Planning Grant (up to \$5,500, GST inclusive) provides eligible farm enterprises funds to access professional business and financial advice; and planning assistance to help develop written business plans incorporating drought and/or climate variability risk management strategies.

Previous Professional Advice and Planning Grant clients can access an additional \$2,200 to re-evaluate their plans after a minimum of six months, providing clients have applied for and used the re-evaluation grant prior to the program end date of 30 June 2010.

2. How can the Professional Advice and Planning Grant help me?

If you are eligible, the Professional Advice and Planning Grant can:

- assist you in planning to maintain or increase the productivity or profitability of your business.
- provide funding to help you prepare for or manage your business in times drought or climate variability.
- allow you to undertake an independent review of your farming business.

3. What types of professional advice will the Professional Advice and Planning Grant pay for?

Types of advice could include:

- Business management
- Farm Technical Advice (production/agronomic advice)
- Natural Resource Management
- Risk Management

Training and software are not fundable under the Professional Advice and Planning Grant. Advice must relate to obtaining information on drought or risk due to climate variability.

4. Can I use the Professional Advice and Planning Grant for Succession Planning?

Although options for business structures and succession planning may be an important part of business planning, they are not directly linked to drought preparation, management or recovery. While consideration of future business structures and family succession may be part of drought management planning, the grant must not be used for specific advice relating to farm succession such as property transfer or preparation of wills.

5. Who is eligible for the Professional Advice and Planning Grants?

In general farmers are eligible to apply if they:

- are in an area that has been EC declared; and
- have been farming for more than two years; and
- meet an assets test

Farmers in prima facie and interim declared areas are not eligible.

Only one grant per farm business will be issued.

Additional eligibility criteria need to be met.



6. Can I use the Professional Advice and Planning Grant to obtain a viability assessment for the Exceptional Circumstances Interest Rate Subsidy program?

Yes, however, you need to ensure that any viability assessment undertaken for this purpose is in accordance with the Exceptional Circumstances Interest Rate Subsidy viability assessment criteria. Any additional viability assessments will not be funded because the first viability assessment did not meet this criteria.

7. What is the asset test?

Up until 30 June 2010 the total of the off-farm net assets of all the members of the farm enterprise must not exceed \$750,000.

Contact Centrelink on **13 23 16** or visit the Centrelink website: www.centrelink.gov.au for more information.

8. When do I have to apply by?

Applicants must apply for the Professional Advice and Planning Grant by 12 June 2010.

9. When do I have to use my vouchers by?

Vouchers issued by Centrelink will generally have a six month validity date, but unused amounts can be re-issued prior to the end of the program (30 June 2010). Vouchers must be used to pay for fees and services incurred prior to the expiry of up to 12 months after the end of your EC declaration period or before 30 June 2010, whichever is the sooner. Vouchers must be redeemed by service providers before the expiry of six months from the date of service.

10. How do I know if I need a viability assessment?

You will need a viability assessment if your farming enterprise has not been deemed viable in the last 12 months. If your farm business has not undergone a viability assessment within the past 12 months, you must use part of your funding to do so. The viability assessment must be completed before other planning occurs, and your farm enterprise must be found viable before you use any further funding.

If your farming enterprise has undergone a viability assessment within the last 12 months the funding can go directly towards obtaining professional advice to develop a business plan incorporating drought and risk management strategies.

ECIRS recipients applying for the Professional Advice and Planning Grant will not be required to undertake a viability assessment.

11. What if I am not viable?

If your farm enterprise is deemed non-viable, you cannot use the Professional Advice and Planning Grant to obtain further professional advice. However, you will be directed towards other relevant programs such as the Exit Assistance program or other programs that provide similar funding.

12. What is Risk Management?

Risk management is the process of managing uncertainty: it deals with the possibility of future events and the strategies to prevent those events from happening or managing their impact if they do.



13. How would I apply a risk management approach?

The risk management approach must relate to preparing for or managing drought or climate variability. One example would be considering the risks posed by climate change. For Australian agriculture, climate change may mean increases in temperature and reduced rainfall. This could be damaging to plant and livestock viability and production and make drought more common¹. The Professional Advice and Planning Grant can assist you in paying a professional adviser to help you identify these risks and develop strategies to manage them.

14. Who is a Professional Adviser?

A professional adviser is a person who has relevant qualifications to the advice being provided and is a member of a relevant appropriate professional association.

15. What is an appropriate professional association?

The association would need to provide support, peer and professional review and feedback on a regular and formal basis against minimum professional standards. It would also have on-going professional development standards or requirements and have a code of conduct or ethics framework which would need to be upheld with a mechanism for hearing breaches or removing membership or accreditation.

16. Can I get assistance from more than one professional adviser?

Yes, advice from more than one professional adviser is encouraged. It is important that each form of advice is given by a suitably qualified professional.

17. Can I receive Exit Assistance at the same time as receiving assistance through the Professional Advice and Planning Grant?

No. The Professional Advice and Planning Grant is not intended to be used to assist you to exit the industry and you cannot access both programs at the same time. If you decide to exit farming as a result of the Professional Advice and Planning process, then you can transfer to the Exit Assistance measures.

18. Where do I find out more information?

To find out more information about the Professional Advice and Planning Grants contact the Drought Assistance Line on **13 23 16**.

¹ Source: Department of Environment and Heritage 2006, Climate Change Impacts & Risk Management: A Guide for Business and Government, available online at: www.greenhouse.gov.au
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