

Small Business Exceptional Assistance Grant Program Guidelines

About the program

The Small Business Exceptional Assistance Grant program has been established by the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments to provide crucial financial support to small businesses in defined disaster areas that have experienced significant disruptions and losses due to Tropical Cyclone Jasper and the associated flooding, as well as by the South East Queensland storms and subsequent flooding.

The program is designed to assist small businesses that were unable to trade or experienced a minimum 70 per cent reduction in revenue compared to the same period in the previous year. This downturn must have lasted for a continuous period of at least 14 days, directly attributable to these natural disasters. The program aims to help these businesses re-establish their operations and maintain employment, recognising the extraordinary challenges faced during the peak Christmas and New Year trading period.

Program outcomes

The primary outcomes of this program are as follows:

- Financial support to restart small businesses post-disaster
- Assistance for business owners to cover wages and salaries, bills, and essential costs
- Secure employment and business continuity
- Boosted financial stability and resilience of small businesses
- Encouraging business innovation and growth
- Improved well-being and reduced stress for business owners
- Improved community wellness
- Strengthened local economy and preservation of local cultural identity.

Program details

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| Business size | Small businesses with less than 20 employees (headcount) |
| Opening date | 9 am, 31 July 2024 |
| Closing date | 5 pm, 31 October 2024 or until funds are fully allocated |
| Application process | Online application |
| Grant type | Competitive – <i>not all applications may be funded</i> |
| Available funding | Up to \$20,000 (excluding GST) |
| Timeframe | 3 months (maximum 6 months) in exceptional cases |
| Payment | On acceptance of a funding agreement |

Available funding

The program has received a total of \$5 million in funding, providing approved businesses with grants up to \$20,000 each (excluding GST), until funds are fully allocated.

Grant funding is paid directly to the business on acceptance of a funding agreement.

Most grants are considered assessable income for taxation purposes unless exempted by a taxation law. It is recommended that grant recipients seek independent professional advice on their taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office, as the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) does not provide taxation advice.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for this grant, the business must:

- have less than 20 employees (by headcount)
- have an active Australian Business Number (ABN) and be registered for GST
- be located in one of the defined disaster areas for the specific disaster event noted below
- demonstrate that, for a consecutive period of at least 14 days directly due to the impact of the specified disaster event, the business either:
 - was completely unable to conduct trading activities or
 - experienced a decrease in revenue of at least 70% compared to the same 14-day period in the preceding year
- have been operational immediately prior to being affected by the disaster event
- demonstrate an intent to continue or continued in business after the disaster event
- not be insolvent or have owners/directors that are undischarged bankrupt.

To be eligible for assistance, your business must have been affected by one of the following disaster events and be in one of the following defined disaster areas:

1. Communities across northern Queensland affected by Tropical Cyclone Jasper, from 13 to 28 December 2023.
2. Communities within South Queensland affected by a series of severe storms, dangerous winds and intense rainfall from 24 December 2023 to 3 January 2024.

Eligible expenses

Grant funds may be used for extraordinary costs related to re-establishing business operations and sustaining employment. Eligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- paying salaries or wages to employees
- covering rent or rates associated with the business premises
- purchasing goods, equipment or supplies necessary for the business to resume operations
- professional services related to disaster recovery
- marketing expenses aimed at regaining lost customers and re-establishing the business post-disaster.

DESBT will not fund expenses already supported through other disaster grants or loans, such as the Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants, the Disaster Assistance Loan, or the Tourism Exceptional Assistance Grant; or damages or losses funded through insurance claims.

Ineligible expenses

The following expenses are **NOT eligible** for funding:

- costs that are reimbursed through insurance claims or compensated by other grants or loans
- expenses for personal items or services
- purchase of luxury or non-essential items that do not contribute to business recovery
- repayment of existing loans, credit card debts, or financing costs not directly related to disaster recovery
- items bought using crypto-currencies, cash, barter, or services in-kind
- expenses associated with preparing funding applications, reports or associated supporting material
- legal expenses
- expenses incurred prior to the defined disaster event
- expenses that do not align with the intent of the Grant.

DESBT will not fund goods, services, or fees from **related parties**. Related parties include companies with common shareholdings or directors, mutual employees, or immediate family members.

Application and assessment process

Applications are required to be submitted through the SmartyGrants Portal.

To apply, applicants must provide all necessary supporting information and evidence, including:

- 100-point identification check form
- bank statements for the relevant non-trading (closure) or decline in income period
- bank statements highlighting payments (eligible expenses) for which you are seeking grant funding
- photographs, or other substantiating documentation to support that the weather event impacted your business
- other evidence that the business operation was closed for trading for the number of consecutive days being claimed, or the 70 per cent reduction in revenue, for a minimum of 14 consecutive days.

Applicants must provide documentation of eligible expenses incurred, up to the amount applied for, since the disaster at the time of application. In exceptional cases (for example, where a business has remained closed for extended periods), DESBT will consider applications where expenses have not yet been fully incurred.

Lodging an application does not guarantee that funding will be approved. Applications will be assessed, and decisions will be made as soon as practicable, usually within 2-3 weeks of submission. Incomplete applications may be deemed ineligible if insufficient information and supporting documentation has been provided at the time of application.

DESBT considers application submissions or answers from third parties ineligible. Only submit realistic and probable answers and evidence in your application, noting that you may be required to provide this at any time at the discretion of DESBT. DESBT will only consider one application from a business or financial beneficiary under each round.

Applications will be assessed on merit, and applicants will be notified of the outcome in writing. Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with DESBT.

Applications are assessed for compliance against the eligibility criteria within these guidelines and their competitiveness with the program guidelines and assessment criteria; applicants must demonstrate the extent to which the grant-funded activity:

- meets a genuine financial need
- aligns with the program's objectives, such as re-establishing business operations, maintaining employment, and covering extraordinary costs related to recovery
- contributes to community stability and resilience
- demonstrates value for money.

DESBT may equitably distribute successful applications across disaster-affected regions, industry sectors (including priority sectors), and priority areas to represent Queensland's diverse business and economic landscapes.

DESBT has a zero-tolerance approach towards fraud within its grant program administration. Instances of suspected fraud or non-compliance with the funding agreement will be thoroughly investigated, and appropriate action will be taken, including terminating funding agreements, recovering grant funds, and referring to the relevant law enforcement authority.

Funding agreement and payment

Successful grant applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with DESBT to receive funding of up to \$20,000 (excluding GST). Funding is paid on acceptance of the funding agreement.

The funding agreement consists of:

1. the Letter of Agreement
2. any other terms agreed in writing between the parties
3. the Terms and Conditions
4. these Guidelines, and
5. the submitted application.

Successful applicants must advise DESBT of any proposed variations to their funding agreement (see Grant variations).

Acquittal

Successful applicants must provide an acquittal of the funds received. The acquittal report requires details of the grant implementation and impact on the business, including the results and outcomes received.

In conjunction with the acquittal process, DESBT may also audit grants under the program.

Approved applicants must retain all evidence of tax invoices, receipts, bank statements or other similar records to verify that the amounts provided have been used in accordance with approvals for seven years.

Grant variations

If you need to change your grant agreement, including the scope or end date, you **must immediately notify** DESBT by emailing disastergrants@desbt.qld.gov.au to request prior approval. DESBT will review variation requests on an individual basis.

Grant variations without prior DESBT approval may terminate your funding agreement, requiring repayment of some or all the grant funding.

Review of decisions

Small businesses may request a review of a decision made by the Queensland Government regarding the outcome of grant applications within 28 business days of receiving a decision. If you wish to have the decision reviewed, you must provide detailed reasons for overturning the original decision and include any information in your original application that you believe was overlooked. You can find more information regarding the Review of Decisions at <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/starting-business/advice-support/grants/review>.

Survey

DESBT may survey recipients within six months of completing the grant (we'd like to know how you are getting on).

Further information

For more information about grants or your application, call the DESBT **Small Business Hotline on 1300 654 687** or email disastergrants@desbt.qld.gov.au.

Disclaimer

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