Fact sheet – First Nations startups

#10 Grants

What are grants and are they right for you?

If you have a strategic business or community project with a need for funding, then grants may be of interest to you.

Grants are awards of non-dilutive capital to businesses, individuals or community organisations. They are often issued by philanthropic organisations or administered by Government Departments (at the Federal, State or Local Government level) where they are often competitive programs in line with specific policy priorities. While there are exceptions, they are most often awarded on a co-contribution basis. This means recipients must be able to source non-grant funding for a set portion of their project to receive funding for the remainder. Grants can be paid upfront, but are most often paid based on set milestones agreed in advance of the project. Grant issuers view awarded grants as an investment, and they expect a return on that investment in the form of jobs, economic growth and community benefits. First Nations community benefits are usually seen as particularly favourable.

It's also important to remember what grants aren't – they aren't free money and in general, are not awarded to investigate what projects you might be able to undertake. Instead, they are awarded for specific projects with tangible benefits. Grants can also take a long time to assess, so remember when planning your projects that grants usually won't support any expenditure that you have already committed to. Be mindful that receiving a grant is just the beginning, as grant administrators often seek reporting which can vary in length. Often recipients underestimate how much work reporting and acquitting grants may require.

Grant readiness

Grant programs are constantly changing and can open and close in very short timeframes. This means organisations often have very little time to build and submit a competitive application. Luckily, they are often structured in very similar ways, so you can maximise your chances of success with good forward planning. To be grant-ready, you should:

1. Think ahead – have a good idea of any major projects or expenditure items for the next one to two years
2. Keep an up-to-date business plan – document your purpose, achievements and future direction
3. Think about outcomes and collaborations – keep in mind the impact of your activities and whether it aligns to strategic priorities of others

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4. Build a repository of documentation for major projects – depending on the complexity of the project, this might include project plans, GANTT charts, revenue models, risk assessments and CVs for key project staff
5. Speak with an advisor – BDO has access to GrantGuru, a major database tracking all grants available at Federal, State and Local Government levels in Australia, and can generate tailored reports for your business at any time

Where to find grants

TThe Federal Government's grants and programs finder can help you search for grants provided by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. Grants may also be available through non-government organisations.
There are both government and non-government grant finder's available to help you search for grants. These include:

- Australian Government's Grant Information System
- Grants and Programs Finder
- The Grants Hub - Indigenous Grants

Grants relevant to First Nations businesses

Examples of grants for First Nations businesses are set out in the table below. Please note that the eligibility criteria and dates to apply for these grants vary.

Grant	Available Funding
IBA Start up Finance Package	Maximum $150,000 package with up to 30% offered as a grant
Qld Government - Female Founders Co-Investment Fund	$50,000 to $200,000 for Qld businesses
Creative Australia - Arts Business: First Nations Development Fund	Between $10,000 to $50,000
Federal Government - Aboriginal Tourism Development in NT Parks and Reserves Grant Program	Between $10,000- $50,000 for NT Aboriginal tourism businesses
NIAA Grants – Community Initiated Proposals	Funded under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS)

Please see our other Fact Sheets for First Nations startups here.

For more information, please contact: probonoteam@hopgoodganim.com.au

Disclaimer
The content of this fact sheet is current at September 2026 and is intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter only. The fact sheet does not constitute legal advice. Obtaining specialist advice about your specific circumstances is recommended.

