

Do you want to seek additional government funding for programs or projects to meet the needs of your community?

There are many ways to seek further funding from government. This short step-by-step guide explains the process for preparing a budget priorities statement.

A budget priorities statement is different to an election ask. It is an annual submission written by your organisation that asks for money to be allocated for a purpose that you think the government should prioritise.

In contrast, an election ask is a broader tactic that seeks to persuade a political party to make a commitment to funding that is dependent upon their election to office. Elections only occur once every three to four years and it can be difficult to get airtime in among competing priorities.

So, a good time to ask for money is when government is preparing its budget for the next financial year. Ideally, any request for money should reflect your organisation's ongoing engagement with relevant agencies and Ministers, to highlight key issues that you believe are suited for government investment.

Budget submissions need not be complicated. They can be as short as one page and do not need to be written in formal language.



Step 1: Federal or State?

The first step is to consider which tier of government (federal or state) budget cycle you are seeking to influence. Federal Treasury coordinates a formal pre-budget community consultation process every year, but Queensland Treasury does not.

Australian Government

The federal Treasury consultation period is usually publicly announced in December with submissions due in early February. The timing can change, so it is good to keep an eye on the Treasury website's consultation hub: <https://treasury.gov.au/consultation>

A community consultation is where individuals, businesses and organisations are invited to provide their views on priorities for the upcoming budget cycle.

Federal budget submissions should always relate to areas of funding that fall within federal responsibility. For example, priorities about social security, taxation, homelessness, mental health or living affordability, among others.

Previous community organisation budget submissions are listed on the federal Treasury website. You can review these to see how other organisations have structured their submissions.



Queensland Government

Queensland Treasury has a useful budget process outline on its website that describes the budget cycle: <https://www.treasury.qld.gov.au/budget-and-financial-management/queensland-budget/budget-process/>

Timing is key

Budget submissions should be provided to government as early as February to allow you to meet with decision makers and advocate for your position for a June budget.

Step 2: Work out what you are asking for

A budget submission should contain information about the allocation of money for a specific purpose that you think government should prioritise. It is not the place to argue for an entirely new policy framework.

Here are some tips to help you produce a clear submission:

- Stay focused on your organisation's area of operations and expertise
- Plan ahead to the medium term. Remember, a government budget covers a four year period — the current budget year as well as possible spending in the three years following the current budget (this is called the 'forward estimates').
- Be realistic about funding proposals and be prepared to consider staged approaches or 'pilots' for initiatives to 'prove' a concept.
- In lean budget years it is useful to present ideas on how to prioritise spending, how to spend money more efficiently and effectively (providing evidence to support your argument), or how to save money.
- Offer creative ideas for partnerships between state and local governments and community service organisations, where possible and appropriate.

Step 3: Gather evidence to support your case

Your submission will be stronger if you can provide specific evidence that supports your proposal.

You might need to show that there is an unmet need in your sector or service area. In this case, you will need to provide information about your community or your clients to demonstrate that the need exists.

You may be asking for money to extend or continue programs or projects. Your submission will be stronger if you can include evidence from research, evaluations or your own service data to show that the programs or projects you are asking for money for do produce good client outcomes.

Where appropriate, case studies about the clients that your organisation supports can be particularly valuable as they add a human story to the statistics.

Step 4: Link to current government priorities

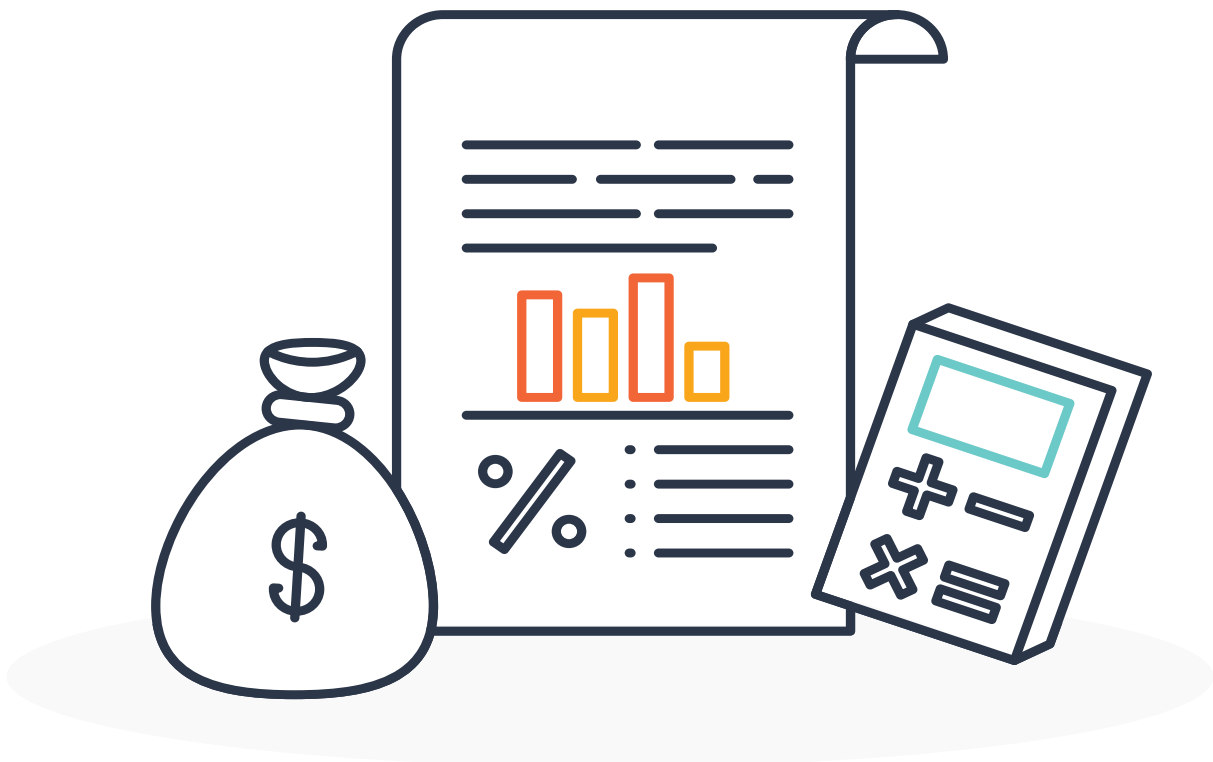
Queensland Government priorities are detailed at:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/about/how-government-works/objectives-for-the-community>

Linking your request to current government priorities will help you to demonstrate alignment between your project or program and broader government priorities. This will help you to argue that your project, if funded, will support government to achieve its identified priorities.

Step 5: Can you estimate what your request will cost?

Where possible and appropriate, provide costings for your request. You might be surprised how accurate your estimates can be — after all, the sector knows the cost of running projects and programs. If you are a small organisation and are struggling to estimate this work, approach organisations you partner with who might be able to help.



Step 6: Start advocating for your request

Before you put your statement together, try to have a meeting or meetings with decision-makers in the relevant department or Minister's office to 'sell' your recommendations. Even better if you can get a meeting with the relevant Minister. Another effective tactic is meet with your local MP.

It is a good investment of your time to develop relationships with departmental or local MP and ministerial staff all year round. Even if you are not putting in a statement this year, start cultivating that relationship for the future. Seek out opportunities to brief government agencies and decision-makers about your service and your clients. If you can, take clients with you to these meetings so those with influence within government hear about people's lived experience.

It will be a great result if you can get the department to include your recommendations in their own budget submission to Treasury.



Step 7: Put the submission together

Here is a suggested structure for your submission:

A front page with contact details for your organisation and a representative to contact regarding the submission. Make sure it is clearly marked as '[year, eg 2020-21] Queensland/Australian Government Budget submission'.

An introduction to your organisation.

Give a brief outline of the role of your organisation. If relevant, you can provide a short description of your organisation's membership, size, and funding, including existing Government funding.

A brief summary of your key points and recommendations.

This only needs to be a few sentences to summarise the key issues you are concerned about and the actions that you suggest the government takes to address those issues.

A more detailed discussion of your concerns with specific recommendations.

In this section explain in more detail your key issues and what you believe the government can do in response to them:

- Why they should spend money on that issue
- What specific services, programs or initiatives you think the government should fund to help address that issue
- How much it will cost.

Step 8: Send it in!

Forward your submission to both the relevant government Department and Queensland Treasury

Queensland Treasury contact details:

Email address: info@treasury.qld.gov.au

Postal Address: **GPO Box 611 BRISBANE QLD 4001**

