



Grant funding – an art and science

Colin Steele reports, in the 2013 Christmas edition of *LG Manager*, Mark Ferguson very accurately stated “it is not always a good thing to be significantly reliant on central governments for funding”.

ROUND 5 OF RDAF IS ONE EXAMPLE of a grant that didn’t proceed post-election, although with a twist, a new grant program for stronger regions is on the way. So don’t be reliant on grants and instead be realistic and treat grants for what they are, which is an opportunity.

Regardless of a referendum that has ridden off into the sunset, there are a few givens. The Commonwealth collects most of the revenue

although the States have most of the power, and local government do most of the day-to-day work, it’s a complex situation, so it is a good thing academics will continue to have the essential ongoing constitutional debate.

Steele says, “We are happy for them to keep debating while we work with the practical side of grant applications. In reality it doesn’t matter how poor the Commonwealth cries, the funds

are there to be allocated to Councils with a well prepared application”.

During the next 12 months under the coalition government, grants for national stronger regions, bridges, proceeds of crime, natural disaster resilience and many more will be opened, as they have already been announced or are in the Government’s policy statements.

Another point Steele makes, the timing of grants will rarely suit the applicant, the grant guidelines appear to be written on another planet, and the application form requires everything except your grandmother’s birthday. If the application process isn’t already difficult enough, the engineers or other departments are already overworked so it is up to the grants officer to do their best, and that’s if your council has a grants officer!

There is an art to applying, and a science to delivery of a grant, Steele says “In most cases we’re talking about serious money, and as you would expect, when applying for serious funding, it’s more involved than just filling out a form”.

Applying for a grant and delivery is a challenging task, but if you support the staff preparing the application, accept grants as hard work, but rewarding, they will be a wonderful addition to your council’s bottom line. The great thing is, all the hard work pays off in the end when projects such as a new community centre opens, a swimming pool is completed, or a new bridge is constructed. ■



COLIN STEELE is Managing Director of Section 51 Pty Ltd, established in 2011. Prior to this, Colin was manager of the Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grants Program, and assessor for a wide range of grant programs for Local Government. He can be contacted at

Phone **(02) 6162 2092**

Email ↘ admin@section51.com.au

Web ↘ www.section51.com.au