

# Report on a page

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In 2020–21, Queensland Government entities distributed \$2.8 billion in grants – to community groups, local governments, businesses, and others – to support the objectives and priorities of the government. This report provides insights into where Queensland Government grants go.

It also analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the internal controls (people, systems, and processes) used by 5 departments in managing 8 grant programs. We selected the departments based on the size and risks of the grants they manage.

## Clearer information about grants is needed

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Each year, departments, and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, publish information on grant expenditure on the Queensland Government's Open Data website, including who received funding, where (geographically) it was spent and what it was for. This is partly for transparency and accountability, and partly so people can understand what funding is going to their local communities.

The government could do more to make grant information more user friendly and accessible, with an interactive dashboard. With the dashboard comes the opportunity to learn what is important to the public, so departments can focus on making that data complete and accurate. This will allow the information to be published more regularly in future, making it more timely and useful.

## The quality of grants management processes varies

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The departments in charge of the 8 grant programs have demonstrated at least basic competency in managing them. Some have improved their processes over time to reflect better practice. In these instances, departments have achieved improved efficiency by automating processes. We found that older grant programs (which have had longer to improve their internal controls) tend to have more efficient and effective systems and processes than those of more recent duration.

For all 8 of the programs, departments have developed and applied clear eligibility guidelines in considering applications for grants, and have consistently assessed applications against the published criteria.

Departments need to improve how they identify and manage the risks associated with specific grants. They must be able to demonstrate that their design of grant programs takes the risks into account. This will help them to be efficient and to deliver better outcomes for the community.

Some departments have collaborated on projects to share knowledge on grants management and build capability across the government. It is a good start, and if the initiative expands across the government to more departments, there are real opportunities to build greater consistency, workforce flexibility, and economies of scale.

## Departments need to measure grant programs better

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While all grant programs use a range of metrics (for example, applicant numbers, budget spent, or the number of jobs created), more needs to be done to objectively measure the performance of the recipients and the outcomes of the program. Measures also need to be in place to alert departments early in the process if grants are at risk of not achieving their targets until it is too late.

Departments need to implement strong performance measures when establishing grant programs. Without them, it is not easy to know how effective the grant is and what decisions need to be made about future funding allocations or whether programs should be discontinued or modified.

