

## Finance and Accounting Support Team – Stream One

Stream One of the Finance and Accounting Support Team (FAST) provides specialist accounting and finance advice and support to rural councils on a project by project basis.

This facility is supported by members of the FAST Expert Panel, a selected group of consultants or DELWP officers. Stream One is not a competitive grant program but responds to identified needs as requested.

Activities are co-designed by the recipient council and the FAST Program team. They aim to ensure the rural council recipient receives support and advice to allow them to improve their long term financial sustainability.

Local government capacity development, skills transfer and organisational improvement is central to achieving this aim.

### What can be funded?

FAST Stream One provides support to a discrete and specific project to support the long term financial sustainability of a rural council. This may include activities such as:

- Long term financial planning.
- Asset management assistance including condition assessments, system configuration and longer-term planning.
- Modernising Chart of Accounts.
- Procurement reform.
- Service planning and service review processes.
- Specific staff training packages related to the above activities.

FAST Stream One does not fund ongoing costs such as software licences or equipment, or activities that a council may be reasonably expected to fund and undertake itself.

### How is a project delivered?

Projects are subject to an initial application, including a discussion with the FAST Program team about the proposal. This process may include a site visit by members of the FAST Program team and further refinement of the proposal.

Following any refinement, the project, if considered appropriate for support by the FAST Governing Board, is progressed to a scoping stage. The FAST Governing Board will, at their discretion, select an appropriate member of the FAST Expert Panel to work with the council to plan and cost the project.

Once all parties are happy to proceed, project implementation can be approved. It is expected that projects be completed within 6-12 months, depending on complexity.

Regular reporting back to the FAST Program team by the council and the FAST Expert Panel member during the project further supports the alignment of tasks and activities within the agreed aims.

The FAST Program is an important learning opportunity for the Victorian Government and local governments.

Projects are subject to evaluation and post completion follow up to identify benefits and issues. This is key to ensuring the FAST Program can better support the long term financial sustainability of rural councils.



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## Expectations and obligations

Fast Stream One funding supports the identified needs of a rural council that they may not be able to address themselves without funding support and external expertise.

It is important to note that the key part of a Stream One project is capability development of the local government organisation.

Support provided is orientated towards the recipient local government being able to learn and develop from the project through skills transfer from the consultant.

It is an expectation of the program that participating councils commit to this requirement to ensure local capability is enhanced and sustained. This commitment may include:

- Allocation or commitment of staff time or resources to the project.
- Alignment with current or proposed council plans or strategies.



Recipient councils of FAST Stream One support are obliged to ensure:

- Their active participation in workshops, project meetings and discussions.
- Contribution to key project outputs.
- Consideration and planning as to how the benefits of the project will be sustained into the future.

It is important that a council consider the above when developing their application for support.

Costs of deploying the FAST Expert Panel member are entirely borne by the FAST program, with costs agreed to in the scoping stage.

The FAST program team will always ensure it is responsive to the needs of an applicant council, and, where appropriate, include site visits during scoping and implementation.

The FAST program team also provides advice and guidance to the FAST Expert Panel members to align their work with the aims of the Program.

## Contact

The FAST Program team can work with you to develop a proposal. For more information, or to discuss a potential idea, please contact the Program Coordinator:

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