

# Guide to addressing significance criteria in your application

## COMMUNITY HERITAGE GRANTS

*You need to demonstrate how your collection holds national significance for your application to progress through the assessment process to be considered for a grant.*

- This guide explains the criteria used for assessing the significance of heritage collections.
- It explains how to describe the national significance of your collection to make your application as strong as possible.
- It also outlines the methodology the panel will use to assess your application.

### **An explanation of significance criteria**

Significance is a way of defining, researching, and communicating the meaning and importance of whole collections or items within them using standard criteria. For instance, both individual objects and entire collections may hold significance that relates to its history, uses, and the aesthetic, scientific social and spiritual values it holds for past, present and future generations.

The assessment of national significance is based on the primary and comparative criteria described in [Significance 2.0: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Collections](#) (2009):

#### **Primary criteria**

Historical significance  
Artistic or aesthetic significance  
Scientific or research significance  
Social or spiritual significance

#### **Comparative criteria**

Provenance  
Rarity or representativeness  
Condition or completeness  
Interpretive capacity

### **Addressing primary criteria to explain your collection's significance value to Australia**

*In your application comment on one or more of the following significance criteria. Not all criteria will apply to your collection. Choose only those criteria that are relevant to your nomination.*

#### 1 Historic significance

*What does the collection and the items within it tell us about the history of Australia? Does it deal with, or was it associated with:*

- *political, economic, social or spiritual movements*
- *leading personalities in Australian history*
- *significant events*
- *specific places of significance*
- *traditional customs*
- *relations with other communities*
- *changing patterns of life and culture*
- *a turning point in history, or a critical innovation*
- *an example of excellence in the arts, literature, science, technology, or sport?*

#### 2 Artistic and aesthetic significance

*This refers to the physical nature of the collection. Much collection material is often unremarkable in this respect, for example, manuscript or typescript paper records. However, some items may hold innovative qualities or high levels of artistry, such as a handmade object or artwork, and it is to these that this applies.*

- *Is it original or innovative?*
- *Is it a particularly fine exemplar of its type?*
- *Does it have outstanding qualities of beauty and craftsmanship?*

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- *Is it a new or unusual type of carrier?*
- *Or is it an example of a type of item that has now disappeared?*

### 3 Social, community or spiritual significance

*This refers to the attachment a specific community or group in broader society may have to your collection. You must show how this attachment is demonstrated, for example, a community may be strongly attached to the heritage of a beloved leader, or to the documentary evidence of a specific incident or site. Or it may revere collection items associated with a spiritual leader or a saint. Provide information on how this attachment is expressed.*

### 4 Scientific and research significance

*Could this collection be further investigated to reveal new information?  
What researchers are interested, or might be interested in this material?*

### **Addressing comparative criteria in your application**

*Comment on one or more of the following criteria to compare your collection, or items within it, to other material in other collections:*

#### 1 Rarity

*Is the item or collection rare? Is it one of a kind (the only one ever created), or the last survivor of a form of documentary heritage that was once widespread?*

#### 2 Completeness, condition

*Is the documentary heritage complete, or are sections or pages missing? If so, give details.*

*What condition is it in?*

### **Writing a short statement of significance**

*Write a brief summary of the Summarise the overall significance in relation to the criteria above, making the case for authenticity based on the provenance of the documentary heritage.*

- *What has been the impact of this collection and the material in it on Australian history and culture?*
- *Why is this collection and the material within it important to the memory of Australia? What has been its impact on life and culture beyond the boundaries of a state or region? State why it is important to the memory of Australia, and why its loss would impoverish the nation's heritage.*
- *How can this collection be further investigated or researched to reveal new information?*

### **How your application will be assessed and ranked for significance**

The Assessors will follow several steps when assessing your application for national significance. These involve:

Carefully reading your application and all supporting material you provide. Supporting material may include previous significance assessments or statements of significance, catalogue descriptions and links to websites; and letters in support of the application from expert referees, or information from past exhibitions or valuations of the material.

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Researching collections and historical sources where information is available. This may include reviewing authoritative publications such as the [Australian Dictionary of Biography](#) to ascertain the potential national significance of individuals represented in collections.

Referencing comparative collections. Assessors will apply their knowledge of local, state and national collections across Australia to compare with your collection, to determine how it ranks in terms of their potential national significance.

Balancing primary and comparative criteria. They will then apply a consistent ranking, which takes in to consideration the claims you made in your application against both sets of criteria.

Reviewing all applications under consideration as a group. This ensures internal consistency and fairness for all applications.

This is the ranking used for grading the significance of collections during the process of assessing applications:

A ranking	clear national significance that meets the criteria in <i>Significance 2.0</i> .
B ranking	meets many of the criteria for national significance.
C ranking	it is possible that the collection has national significance but insufficient information has been provided in the application.
D ranking	has demonstrated local and/or regional significance but clearly does not meet the threshold of national significance. The collections could also be poorly documented and described, or have limited or no access.

### Common mistakes we've noticed in past CHG applications in relation to the significance section

1. Failing to adequately describe the national significance of the whole collection or material within it.
2. Not providing a sample of the collection records/catalogue to show the breadth and depth of the collection.
3. Not mentioning any important provenance, associations, or past exhibitions of the collection material.
4. Not providing descriptions or photographs of any highly important items within it.