

COMMUNITY HERITAGE GRANTS - 2024 ROUND

Guide to addressing significance criteria

All Community Heritage Grants applications must demonstrate how your collection holds national significance in order to progress through the assessment process and be considered for a grant. Please see the *National Significance of Your Collection* heading in the SmartyGrants application.

This guide:

- explains the criteria used for assessing the significance of heritage collections
- provides guidance on making a strong case for the national significance of your collection
- outlines the methodology used 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, industry-recognised 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

- Historic significance
- Artistic or aesthetic significance
- Scientific or research significance
- Social or spiritual significance

Comparative criteria

*These criteria are used to evaluate the **degree** of significance and interact with the primary criteria.*

- Provenance
- Rarity or representativeness
- Condition or completeness
- Interpretive capacity

Please refer to Part 5 of *Significance 2.0* (see pages 38 – 41) for an explanation of each criteria and prompt questions to help prepare your response. This publication also provides guidance on undertaking research, preparing a statement of significance and examples of statements for both single items and collections – *we strongly recommend you take time to read this document.*

CHG has also produced a series of webinars on significance, where experienced curators and museum consultants discuss significance as a concept, the assessment process and a significance assessment case study. The webinars are available on the Trove Partner Learning Hub:

[Community Heritage Grants webinar and tutorial pages](#) (if the link doesn't take you directly to the page, go to the Trove Partner Learning Hub, select the 'Login as a Guest' option at the bottom left corner and select CHG from the Browse Courses heading.)

Preparing a response to the National Significance of Your Collection heading

Write a summary of your collection (or part of the collection that is the subject of the application) with reference to the primary and comparative criteria. Only address those criteria that are relevant to your collection. Remember that you have a maximum of 500 words, so keep it high level and focussed on the significance criteria. You have already described the collection and how it is managed in previous headings, so avoid repeating this information.

Draw upon and/or attach any supporting documents, including previous assessments, exhibition publications, catalogue records, historical research and journal articles. Focus on the historical themes, narratives and storylines provided by your collection. You are also encouraged to attach images of highly significant or iconic items. Keep in mind the following questions:

- What has been the impact of this collection and individual items, on Australian history and culture?
- Why is this collection and the material important to Australians? 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.
- Does the collection provide exceptional examples of artefacts or collection material, via its provenance, condition, rarity or opportunities for interpretation?
- How can this collection be further investigated or researched to reveal new information?

How your application will be assessed and ranked for significance

The independent assessors follow several steps when assessing new applications for national significance:

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.

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 into 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.

The following ranking is used for grading the significance of collections:

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 state 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 public access.

Common mistakes in the significance section

1. Not providing sufficient information on the collection on which to base a significance assessment
2. Not addressing the significance criteria prompt questions in *Significance 2.0*.
3. Providing only a reference to a previous significance assessment or report without attempting your own assessment against the criteria.
4. Focussing on regional or state significance, rather than addressing how the collection is nationally significant.