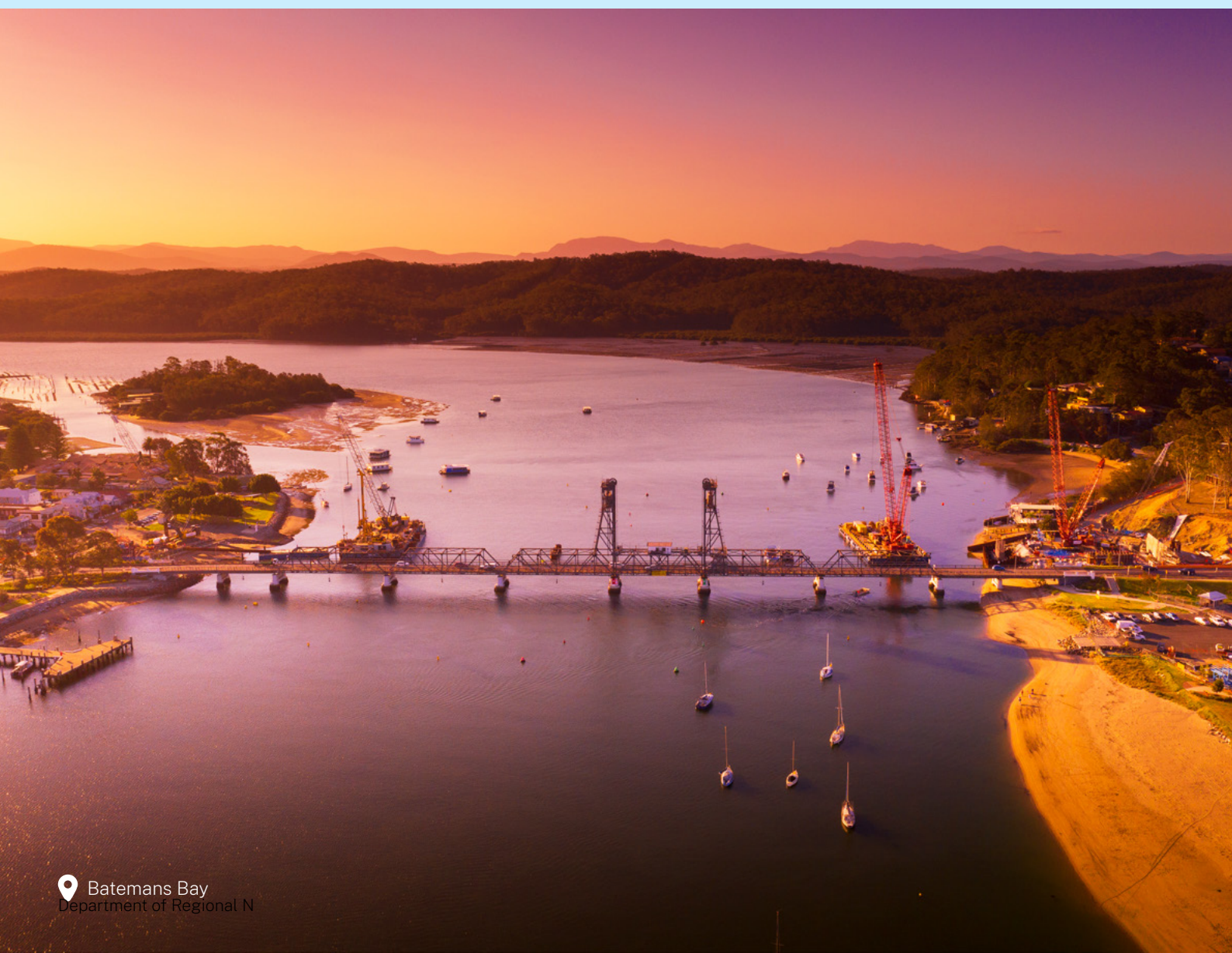


Regional NSW - Business Case and Strategy Development Fund

Program Guidelines

June 2022



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Message from the Deputy Premier



Our regional NSW communities are always developing exciting and innovative ideas with the potential to change our state for the better.

To help bring these ideas to life, the NSW Government is launching the Regional NSW - Business Case and Strategy Development Fund. The first of its kind, it has been created to support local councils, not-for-profit, industry and Aboriginal community groups to develop a pipeline of investment-ready projects.

It will fund organisations to develop business cases or strategies for projects that will deliver economic and social benefits to our regions. These organisations will be better placed to plan for the future and to take up grant opportunities when they arise.

The Regional NSW - Business Case and Strategy Development Fund comes under the \$3.3 billion Regional Growth Fund. It's part of the NSW Government's ongoing commitment to supporting our regions in practical and effective ways by allowing local organisations to step up and deliver exactly what their communities need.

Regional NSW has been through a lot in recent years. We've faced many natural disasters and we are still recovering from the impacts of COVID-19. This fund will support communities prepare for initiatives offered by the NSW Government that help Regional NSW recover, both economically and socially.

I encourage all potential applicants from our regions to see if this fund could help your organisation. We want you to make the most of the incredible investment opportunities the NSW Government has on offer. Together we can plan for investment-ready projects that will benefit our vibrant and resilient local communities for many generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Toole". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'P'.

The Hon. Paul Toole, MP

Deputy Premier
Minister for Regional New South Wales
Minister for Police

Overview

The NSW Government has committed \$24 million for a new program to support local councils, joint organisations of councils, not-for-profit, industry and Aboriginal community groups develop business cases or strategies for projects delivering significant economic or social benefits to regional communities, with a focus on infrastructure.

The Regional NSW -Business Case and Strategy Development Fund under the \$3.3 billion Regional Growth Fund will help organisations build their capacity to plan for and deliver projects and regional development initiatives. The program will also help to build a pipeline of investment-ready projects for future funding opportunities.



 Tumberumba Rail Trail

The Regional NSW - Business Case and Strategy Development Fund is administered by the Department of Regional NSW through two funding streams:

Stream One: Regional Significance \$19 million

up to \$19 million available funding. Regional significance is defined as improving outcomes at a regional scale (i.e. at a minimum, in two or more local government areas).

Stream Two: Aboriginal Prosperity \$5 million

up to \$5 million available funding.

Objectives

The objectives of the program are to:

- encourage regional collaboration to identify projects and strategies with regional scale and impact
- increase alignment of regional projects and strategies with Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) and other relevant regional or NSW Government plans and policies
- build a pipeline of investment-ready economic and priority community projects in regional NSW.

These objectives are aligned to the 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW – focussing on each region’s strengths and endowments, coordinating to attract industries to targeted locations, and developing more resilient regional economies. The funding is also aligned to the Regional Development Framework by further building the evidence-base for investment in regional development and identifying and activating economic potential.



Key Dates

Applications open	Wednesday 29 June 2022
Applications close	5pm, Wednesday 24 August 2022
Assessment and approvals process	August-October 2022
Successful applications announced	From October 2022
Establishment of funding deeds	October 2022
Funded business cases and strategies completed	November 2022 - June 2023

Applications received outside of the application period may be accepted at the sole discretion of the Department of Regional NSW.

Funding available

Under both streams, applicants are required to submit a quote with their application to develop the business case or strategy from a suitably qualified third party provider. This information will be considered to determine the grant amount for successful applicants.



Funding streams

Stream One: Regional Significance

To support the development of business cases for regionally significant economic or community infrastructure projects, or strategies for significant economic or community development initiatives in regional NSW.

Stream One aims to support planning for projects and development of strategies that reflect a collaborative approach to regional development, will benefit multiple organisations or businesses and that align with NSW Government strategies and plans.

The subject of the business case or strategy must have the potential to deliver significant economic or community benefits to residents and businesses in **two or more local government areas** in regional NSW.

The subject of the business case or strategy must align with the relevant [Regional Economic Development Strategy \(REDS\)](#) and the [20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW - Refresh](#), with a focus on supporting the growth of engine or emerging industries, or other relevant NSW Government strategies and plans.

Stream Two: Aboriginal Prosperity

To support Aboriginal organisations develop business cases or strategies that create opportunities for economic and community empowerment of Aboriginal people.

This stream aims to support Aboriginal people to drive initiatives and local solutions by supporting planning for projects and the development of strategies with a collaborative approach to delivering economic or social outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

The subject of the business case or strategy should benefit a community or multiple organisations or businesses and align with the [NSW Closing the Gap Priority Reform 5 on Employment, Business Growth and Economic Prosperity](#).

It should also demonstrate the potential to support more Aboriginal people, especially young people, to get fulfilling and sustainable jobs.

Eligibility criteria

Applications are required to meet the program eligibility and assessment criteria to be considered for funding.

Stream One: Regional Significance

Applicants must be an incorporated entity and hold an Australian Business Number (ABN), Australian Company Number (ACN) or be registered with NSW Fair Trading under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009* or another Act. Unincorporated organisations are ineligible to apply.

Eligible applicants include:

- local councils
- Joint Organisations of Councils
- infrastructure providers such as telecommunication, energy, or water companies
- peak bodies such as business, industry, and community associations
- cooperatives
- tertiary educational institutions
- incorporated not-for-profit organisations

Stream Two: Aboriginal Prosperity

Eligible organisations are not-for-profit, incorporated Aboriginal community organisations (i.e. initiated by, controlled and operated by Aboriginal people and/or governed by a board or committee of Aboriginal people).

Eligible applicants include:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Corporations registered under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (Cth)*
- companies incorporated in Australia under the *Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)*
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (NSW)*
- Incorporated Associations (incorporated under state legislation, and commonly have 'Association' or 'Incorporated' or 'Inc' in their legal name)
- Incorporated Cooperatives (incorporated under state legislation, and commonly have 'Cooperative' in their legal name)

Public/private partnerships are eligible where the application lead is an eligible entity and the subject of the business case or strategy has a clear public benefit, or a clear benefit for multiple users, organisations or businesses.

Ineligible applicants include:

- businesses, except where specifically noted as eligible or as part of a public/private partnership
- unincorporated organisations
- trusts
- partnerships
- pre-school, primary and secondary schools
- individuals and sole traders
- Australian or NSW Government agencies. State Owned Corporations or statutory authorities



Project location

Applications for business case or strategy development must relate to projects and activities located in or centred on one of the 93 regional NSW local government areas, the Unincorporated Far West or Lord Howe Island. Applications relating to projects and activities located in or centred on the Greater Sydney metropolitan area and the Newcastle and Wollongong local government areas are ineligible.

Applications relating to projects and activities located in or centred on a cross-border region of NSW can be considered, where there is a clear benefit for regional NSW.

Applications can be for the development of business cases or strategies for projects and activities involving publicly owned land, land owned or managed by a Local Aboriginal Land Council or the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, land owned or managed by a Registered Native Title Body Corporate, or private land where there is a clear public benefit, or a clear benefit for multiple users, organisations or businesses. Where an application relates to use of land, evidence of the landowner's support for the project will be required.



Eligible subject matter

Under both streams, applications for development of the following material will be accepted:

- business cases, feasibility studies and other investment analysis for economic or significant community infrastructure projects
- regional industry development plans, workforce strategies and sector specific analysis
- land use planning studies, constraints analysis, technical studies and master plans.

	Stream One: Regional Significance	Stream Two: Aboriginal Prosperity
<p>Applications for development of a business case or strategy must be for an economic or community infrastructure project, or an economic or community development strategy that:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is of regional or whole-of-state significance and likely to result in regionally significant economic or social benefits • has the potential to deliver a net economic benefit to residents and businesses located in NSW or addresses a demonstrated high-priority community need • will benefit multiple users, organisations or businesses • will enable or bring forward investment or productivity improvements for new or existing industry, or enable or bring forward investment which addresses a demonstrated high-priority community need • strongly aligns with the relevant REDS or other relevant NSW Government plans and strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has the potential to deliver economic and/or social benefits and sustainable jobs for Aboriginal people in regional NSW • is aligned with the NSW Closing the Gap Priority Reform 5 on Employment, Business Growth and Economic Prosperity or other relevant NSW Government plans or strategies • will be for the benefit of a community, or multiple users, organisations or businesses • will enable or bring forward investment or productivity improvements for new or existing industry, or enable or bring forward investment which addresses a demonstrated high-priority community need • strongly aligns with NSW Government plans and strategies.
<p>Applications that demonstrate the below will be prioritised:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consultation and engagement with regional peak bodies such as Joint Organisations • collaboration between government, community and industry groups • likely delivery of local procurement, job creation and skills development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consultation with the local community, regional peak bodies such as Aboriginal Regional Alliances and NSW Government regional networks • collaboration between government, community, and industry groups • likely delivery of local procurement, job creation and skills development.

Examples

Stream One: Regional Significance

Examples of eligible subject matter under Stream One include:

- a business case for a regionally significant project that will activate new or expanded industry investment and job creation
- a feasibility study for the establishment of cultural infrastructure to service a region
- a land use planning study to facilitate community activation or future investment
- master planning of transport and logistics infrastructure to support industry growth
- a regional industry development strategy that leverages existing economic assets and government investments (e.g. Special Activation Precincts)
- a business case for shared infrastructure supporting the visitor economy in a region.

Stream Two: Aboriginal Prosperity

Examples of eligible subject matter under Stream Two include:

- a business case for an Aboriginal cultural tourism project or other economic development project
- a feasibility study for economic activation of native title land holdings
- a business case for a community-owned enterprise where there is a common ownership structure and local job creation
- a strategy to develop the cultural tourism sector in a region.

Ineligible subject matter

Applications for the development of business cases or strategies are ineligible if they relate to projects or initiatives that:

- are located in, or centred on, ineligible locations
- are centred on private land unless there is a clear public benefit or benefit for multiple users, organisations or businesses
- have exclusive private benefits for a single business
- relate to buying or upgrading non-fixed equipment
- relate solely to marketing, advertising or product promotion
- duplicate existing business cases, strategies or programs
- are to meet the cost of reports that would usually be the accountability of local government entities as part of standard operating requirements
- require ongoing funding from the NSW Government or Commonwealth Government.

Eligible costs

Grants must be used to contract a suitably qualified service provider to produce the business case or strategy. Applicants may request up to 25 percent of the quoted cost for development of the business case or strategy as additional funding to cover contingency, project management and administration costs.

Assessment criteria

Business cases and feasibility studies

Applications for development of business cases and feasibility studies for economic or community infrastructure projects will be assessed against three criteria: strategic alignment, project rationale and project viability.

Criteria	Stream One: Regional Significance	Stream Two: Aboriginal Prosperity
Criteria One: Strategic alignment	<p>The material to be developed aligns with the eligible subject matter and objectives of the Regional NSW -Business Case and Strategy Development Fund.</p> <p>The proposed infrastructure project is clearly of regional or state significance.</p> <p>The proposed infrastructure project aligns with the relevant REDS, or with regional specialisations or endowments (<i>economic infrastructure projects</i>).</p> <p>AND/OR</p> <p>The proposed infrastructure project aligns with broader NSW Government strategies, plans or investments (<i>economic and community infrastructure projects</i>).</p>	<p>The material to be developed aligns with the eligible subject matter and objectives of the Regional NSW -Business Case and Strategy Development Fund.</p> <p>The proposed infrastructure project aligns with the skills, experience and aspirations of local Aboriginal communities.</p> <p>The proposed infrastructure project aligns with the NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan Priority Reform 5 on Employment, Business Growth and Economic Prosperity or other relevant regional or NSW Government plans or strategies.</p>
Criteria Two: Project rationale	<p>The proposed infrastructure project addresses an identified opportunity, barrier, gap or issue; will deliver benefits for multiple users and is likely to have a positive impact on productivity and economic growth in NSW (<i>economic development projects</i>).</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The proposed infrastructure project addresses a clearly stated and demonstrated community issue or need and will deliver benefits for multiple users.</p> <p>Evidence is provided that the proposed infrastructure project is a regional priority (<i>community development projects</i>).</p>	<p>The proposed infrastructure project addresses an identified opportunity, barrier, gap or issue; will deliver benefits for multiple users and is likely to have a positive impact on economic and/or social outcomes for Aboriginal people in regional NSW (<i>economic development projects</i>).</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The proposed infrastructure project addresses a clearly stated and demonstrated community issue or need and will deliver benefits for multiple users (<i>community development projects</i>).</p>
Criteria Three: Project viability	<p>The applicant has resources available to manage delivery of the business case or feasibility study, working with a suitably qualified service provider.</p> <p>The applicant identifies a potential viable ownership and operating model for the proposed infrastructure project.</p> <p>The applicant has appropriate expertise and resources available to deliver the proposed infrastructure project if future funding is secured, or can access experienced and qualified personnel to support the delivery of the infrastructure project.</p> <p>The applicant has identified any early stage risks associated with development of the infrastructure project and strategies to manage those risks.</p> <p>The applicant has provided evidence of support from partners of the proposed infrastructure project and local stakeholders.</p>	

Strategies and other eligible material

Applications for development of strategies and other eligible material (with the exception of business cases and feasibility studies for infrastructure projects), will be assessed against two criteria: strategic alignment and project rationale.

Criteria

Stream One: Regional Significance

Stream Two: Aboriginal Prosperity

Criteria One: Strategic alignment

The material to be developed aligns with the eligible subject matter and objectives of the Regional NSW - Business Case and Strategy Development Fund.

The subject matter is clearly of regional or state significance.

The subject matter aligns with the relevant [REDS](#), or with regional specialisations or endowments (*economic development projects*).

AND/OR

The subject matter aligns with broader NSW Government strategies, plans or investments (*economic and community development projects*).

The material to be developed aligns with the eligible subject matter and objectives of the Regional NSW - Business Case and Strategy Development Fund.

The subject matter aligns with the skills, experience and aspirations of the local Aboriginal community.

The subject matter aligns with the [NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan Priority Reform 5 on Employment, Business Growth and Economic Prosperity](#) or other relevant regional or NSW Government plans or strategies.

Criteria Two: Project rationale

The subject matter addresses an identified opportunity, barrier, gap or issue; will deliver benefits for multiple users and is likely to have a positive impact on productivity and economic growth in NSW (*economic development projects*).

OR

The subject matter addresses a clearly stated and demonstrated community issue or need and will deliver benefits for multiple users.

Evidence is provided that the subject matter is a regional priority (*community development projects*).

The subject matter is likely to have a positive impact on economic and/or social outcomes for Aboriginal people in regional NSW (*economic development projects*).

OR

The subject matter addresses a clearly stated and demonstrated community issue or need and will deliver benefits for multiple users (*community development projects*).



Assessment process

The Department of Regional NSW will review applications against program eligibility and facilitate assessment of applications against the assessment criteria.

Throughout the assessment process, the Department of Regional NSW may request additional information from applicants. Advice and information may also be sought from other NSW Government agencies or other third parties (such as probity advisors) to assist with the assessment of applications.

An Assessment Panel will be convened to provide advice on the suitability of applications for funding. An independent probity advisor will be present during Assessment Panel meetings.

The Assessment Panel will review project eligibility and assessment outcomes and shortlist applications that are deemed suitable/not suitable for funding.

Broader factors that may be considered in the assessment process include:

- total amount of funding available
- geographical distribution of applications across the eligible local government areas, Functional Economic Regions and Local Aboriginal Land Council regions in regional NSW
- potential importance of the project or subject matter to the regional community
- alignment of the project or subject matter with other NSW government investments through the Regional Growth Fund or other funding
- any person or activity connected with an application or project that could cause reputational or other risk to the NSW Government
- other factors deemed relevant or important in a regional or whole-of-state context.

Funding recommendations made by the Assessment Panel will be considered and approved by the Department of Regional NSW.



Application process

How to apply

Applicants are required to submit their application documents online via Smartygrants. Visit EAP.smartygrants.com.au/BCSD1

Resources for applicants

A list of service providers with expertise in the development of business cases and strategies is available as a resource for applicants, and can be viewed at nsw.gov.au/BusinessCaseFund

What needs to be included in an application?

All applications need to include:

- a clear scope for development of the business case or strategy
- for applications relating to planning for infrastructure projects, an estimated cost for development of the infrastructure
- information and evidence detailing how the application meets the program's eligibility and assessment criteria
- a timetable for development of the business case or strategy
- a quote for development of the business case or strategy
- for applications involving the use of land, a letter of support from the landowner
- letters of support from key stakeholders in the project (if applicable)
- evidence of consultation and industry or community support for the application/subject matter (if applicable).

The application form template can be viewed at EAP.smartygrants.com.au/BCSD1

Successful applicants

Notification

Successful applicants will be notified via email and/or letter. Applicants may be requested to keep the grant confidential for a period if an announcement is likely to be made by the NSW Government.

Funding deed

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding deed with the NSW Government. A sample funding deed can be viewed at nsw.gov.au/BusinessCaseFund

The NSW Government makes no binding funding commitment to an applicant unless and until both parties sign a funding deed.

The funding deed will require the successful applicant to provide a copy of all relevant insurances and other supporting documentation relevant to development of the business case or strategy or as requested by the Department of Regional NSW. The first grant payment will be made once all required documentation has been provided to the Department of Regional NSW and both parties have executed the funding deed.

Grants will be paid as set out in the funding deed. Timing and requirements will vary at the NSW Government's discretion.

Successful applicants may be required to submit progress reports to the NSW Government as outlined in the funding deed.

Business cases funded under the Regional NSW - Business Case and Strategy Development Fund must be delivered using the NSW Government business case template available at nsw.gov.au/BusinessCaseFund

Important terms and conditions

- An award of funding under the Regional NSW - Business Case and Strategy Development Fund does not represent formal NSW Government support for or an intent or commitment to fund any future stage of the subject project or activity.
- The NSW Government may choose to publicly announce funding for individual applications, it may also use information provided in the application to develop case studies.
- Requests for variations or changes to the material to be developed will only be considered in limited circumstances.
- Successful applicants will be required to pay back unspent funds, or any funds not spent in accordance with the funding deed.
- Successful applicants will be required to participate in a program evaluation. The evaluation will require applicants to provide evidence of how the funding has resulted in measurable benefits consistent with the fund's objectives, focusing on benefits to regional economies and communities.
- All recipients of NSW Government funding should acknowledge this financial support as per the sponsorship and funding acknowledgement website available at nsw.gov.au/branding/sponsorship-and-funding-acknowledgment-guidelines.
- All awarded grants will be GST exclusive. GST will be applied on top of the agreed grant value when payment is made. Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by taxation law. It is recommended applicants seek independent professional advice about taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. The NSW Government does not provide advice on individual taxation circumstances.
- The Department of Regional NSW reserves the right to undertake an audit of grant funding within seven years.

Unsuccessful applicants

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application and will be offered a feedback session.

Available support

Information and resources including relevant application templates and how to access help to prepare an application are available from nsw.gov.au/BusinessCaseFund

A webinar providing an overview of the program and application process will be held during the application open period.

The Department of Regional NSW Regional Development network can assist applicants to develop strong applications. Please contact regionalnsw.business@regional.nsw.gov.au or call 1300 679 673 to access support.

Complaints

Any concerns about the program or individual applications should be submitted in writing to regionalnsw.business@regional.nsw.gov.au

If applicants do not agree with the way the Department of Regional NSW handled the issue, they may wish to contact the NSW Ombudsman via ombo.nsw.gov.au

Government Information (Public Access) Act

Applicants should be aware that information submitted in applications and all related correspondence, attachments and other documents, may be made publicly available under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW).

Information that is deemed to be commercially sensitive will be withheld.

The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) makes government information accessible to the public by:

- requiring government agencies to make certain sorts of information freely available
- encouraging government agencies to release as much other information as possible
- giving the public an enforceable right to make access applications for government information
- restricting access to information only when there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.



Photo credit: Speaking in Colour



Waginta Trail and Yindyamarra Sculpture Walk, West Albury

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