



STRONGER COUNTRY COMMUNITIES FUND

**Round Four
Program Guidelines 2021**



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MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY PREMIER

Since we launched the Regional Growth Fund in 2017, the NSW Government has been hard at work delivering on its commitment to build more vibrant, liveable regional towns and cities.

The Stronger Country Communities Fund, now in Round Four, delivers on this commitment by funding local infrastructure and programs that provide everyday benefits to people living and working in regional communities in every corner of NSW.

Through the previous three rounds, we have invested \$400 million for 1,500 projects across every single regional Local Government Area across the state. Round Four will increase that total by a further \$100 million.

Each round of the Stronger Country Communities Fund has delivered vital community infrastructure to regional NSW. The fund helps local communities deliver facilities that are a part of our everyday lives, projects such as bike paths, sports fields, main streets, playgrounds and community centres. Previous rounds have focused on sports infrastructure and regional youth, while Round Four is aimed at supporting projects and programs to increase female participation in sport.

Women and girls participating in sport in rural and regional areas deserve access to high quality sporting facilities and programs. That is why we are committed to delivering projects that boost female participation in sport and support our future Australian athletes.

Australian women are renowned for their achievements on the international stage, and are incredible ambassadors for Australian sport. Many of these athletes come from regional communities, and their achievements are a source of strong community pride and inspiration. With NSW hosting the FIFA Women's Football World Cup in 2023, we hope the sporting infrastructure and programs delivered in Round Four will help to inspire the next generation of female athletes across regional NSW.

The Hon John Barilaro, MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Regional NSW, Industry and Trade



MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR WOMEN

The Stronger Country Communities Fund is helping to build a safer, stronger and healthier regional NSW by supporting the delivery of a range of projects and programs identified by regional communities, for regional communities.

As the NSW Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women, I am particularly proud of the projects and programs made possible by the Stronger Country Communities Fund. In every town I travel to, locals have an immense sense of pride in the projects that have been funded. Together with regional communities, the NSW Government is providing opportunities, enhancing access, and delivering healthy outcomes to enrich regional lives and boost community wellbeing every day.

The focus on young people for Round Three addressed a wide range of issues impacting regional young people by delivering almost 300 projects that reflected the needs and wants of youth in the regions. These projects – splash parks, indoor sports programs, creative arts and culture projects, and mentoring and skills training services – go to the heart of the Regional Youth Framework by improving outcomes and guiding meaningful and relevant change for regional youth. These are not just one-time projects or programs – they have real influence on people's lives.

I am delighted that Round Four will focus on empowering and encouraging girls and women to participate in sports. Up to \$50 million of funding will be made available for a broad range of grassroots, community-led initiatives that actively address fundamental barriers and promote female participation by delivering and enhancing female sporting facilities, including change rooms.

Round Four of the fund will also help drive outcomes for the NSW Women's Strategy Three Year Action Plan. By delivering against the key priority areas of health and wellbeing, and participation and empowerment, we are working hard to improve the lives of women and girls who live in regional areas.

Regional girls and women deserve to enjoy the immeasurable social and health benefits of an active lifestyle, and through the Stronger Country Communities Fund the NSW Government is working to boost local opportunities and safeguard equitable access.

The Hon Bronnie Taylor, MLC
Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

GET IN TOUCH WITH THE REGIONAL NSW TEAM

sccf.enquiries@regional.nsw.gov.au
1300 679 673

Fund overview

The Stronger Country Communities Fund was established in 2017 by the NSW Government to deliver local projects that enhance the lives and wellbeing of regional communities.

Round Four of the Stronger Country Communities Fund will see a further \$100 million made available for community projects that increase the liveability of regional NSW communities, including up to \$50 million for projects that enhance female sporting facilities and increase female participation in sport.

The Stronger Country Communities Fund is administered by the Department of Regional NSW (DRNSW).

Fund objectives

The objectives of the fund are:

1. to boost the liveability of communities in regional areas by providing new or upgraded social and sporting infrastructure or community programs that have strong local support
2. to deliver enhanced infrastructure and programs that remove barriers to female participation in sport across regional NSW.

Key dates

Applications open	1 May 2021
Applications close	12pm on Friday, 25 June 2021
Assessment and approval process	28 June 2021 - 20 August 2021
Announcement of successful projects	From September 2021
Funding deed contracted	From mid-September 2021
Program evaluation	To commence in January 2022

In extenuating circumstances, late applications may be accepted at the sole discretion of DRNSW.

Program funding

There is a total of \$100 million available in Round Four, including up to \$50 million for projects that enhance female sporting facilities and increase female participation in sport in regional NSW. The remaining funding is available for other local community and sporting infrastructure, street beautification, and community programs and local events.

Each eligible council will be notified in writing of the funding available for their Local Government Area.

If a council submits applications seeking funding above the nominated funding allocation for their Local Government Area, council is asked to rank projects, including joint projects (if applicable), in their order of local priority.

Where a Local Government Area's funding allocation is not fully exhausted, the option to utilise these funds in future will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Grant amounts

Project type	Minimum grant funding	Maximum funding
Infrastructure	\$50,000	Local Government Area allocation. For requests over \$1 million, a financial co-contribution of 25 percent is required.
Program	\$50,000	

Applicants requesting over \$1 million in grant funding for a sports project must obtain a letter of support from the relevant NSW sporting organisation.

Each Local Government Area is strongly encouraged to dedicate up to 50 percent of their funding allocation to projects relating to female sport either through enhanced infrastructure or relevant programs. The focus on female sports applies to both adult and youth sporting activities.

Co-contributions

Applicants requesting \$1 million or more in grant funding for an individual project are required to make at least a 25 percent financial co-contribution to their project. This is a mandatory eligibility requirement. Co-contributions can include leveraging applicant funds as well as funding from other sources including other NSW or Commonwealth Government programs.

The financial co-contribution source may be from the applicant or other funding sources but must be confirmed as part of the application process through the provision of supporting evidence.

Project delivery or viability should not be dependent on co-contributions that have not been secured.



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All applications submitted under Round Four of the Stronger Country Communities Fund will need to meet the program eligibility criteria and will be assessed against the assessment criteria.

Eligible applicants

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:

- regional councils and Joint Organisations
- non-government organisations
- community organisations registered as incorporated associations
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

Councils are encouraged to work with community groups to identify priority projects and should consider project partnerships where council is the landowner. The public entity will be solely responsible for the project's delivery and reporting through a funding deed. Applicants are encouraged to work with their local Members of Parliament to identify priority projects in their electorate to ensure projects with high community support are submitted.

Project location

Projects must be located in one of the 93 regional NSW Local Government Areas, Lord Howe Island or the Unincorporated Far West. Projects in Greater Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong are not eligible.

Projects located across Local Government Areas are not eligible. If an applicant wishes to apply for a project across more than one Local Government Area, the project should be split into multiple projects. These applications will be assessed independent from applications in other Local Government Areas.

What types of projects are eligible?

Each Local Government Area is strongly encouraged to dedicate up to 50 percent of their allocated funding to projects relating to female sport either through enhanced infrastructure or relevant programs. The focus on female sports applies to both adult and youth sporting activities.

Female participation in sport

Projects under this stream must directly improve and support participation and performance opportunities in female sports at all levels through enhanced infrastructure and programs.

Female sporting related projects must meet one of the areas below:

- **encouraging engagement:** The removal of barriers to female participation in sport through the delivery of new or enhanced sporting infrastructure and programs
- **fostering a sense of safety:** Improving safety at sporting facilities by ensuring that female change rooms, amenities and recreational programs are appropriately designed
- **improving accessibility:** Upgrading sporting facilities to ensure accessibility and inclusion as well as equitable access for female participants
- **boosting capability:** Development of programs and facilities which encourage regular female participation in sport and fosters inclusive environments.

Community amenity

General community amenity projects must be for either:

- **construction of new, or upgrades to existing, local community infrastructure**
- **capital works related to street beautification and other public places that promote the health, happiness and wellbeing of the community**
- **delivering programs that benefit the local community and provide public benefit**
- **infrastructure to assist the delivery of general community programs**
- **infrastructure or community projects or programs which improve and promote accessibility and inclusion.**

Projects must deliver benefits and outcomes that contribute to the program objectives. Applicants will be expected to establish monitoring procedures to demonstrate the delivery of the expected benefits.

Projects can demonstrate public benefit by showing how the project will benefit the public generally, or a sufficient section of the public. Similarly, while projects can be located on private land they must not be solely for private benefit. The applicant will need to show how the facility will be open to the community.

Inclusion and accessibility

The NSW Government is seeking to help regional communities future-proof infrastructure and programs by funding universally designed amenities that move beyond compliance and provide dignified inclusion in social and community programs.

Applicants must demonstrate consideration of inclusion and accessibility measures in their application. Projects which demonstrate the provision of fit-for-purpose, accessible and safe facilities, and participation opportunities with the aim of increasing access and inclusion are encouraged.

This applies to both infrastructure projects and community or social programs aiming to improve existing accessibility and inclusion to encourage greater participation.



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

What are eligible project costs?

Project costs may include those associated with:

- building new or upgrading existing local infrastructure
- delivering programs.

Applicants may include up to 20 percent of the total project cost for combined contingency, project management and administration costs.

TABLE ONE:

Examples of eligible female sporting infrastructure projects and programs

Area of focus	Programs/Events	Infrastructure
ENCOURAGING ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New or redesigned programs aimed at increasing female participation and engagement with sport, recreational or adventure activities • Sporting club “come & try” days and demonstrations to encourage new membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of facilities, such as change rooms and bathrooms which can accommodate female athletes, athletes and participants of all abilities • Development of childcare facilities to support female inclusion
FOSTERING A SENSE OF SAFETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving safety by scheduling programs at appropriate times at sporting and recreation facilities to encourage female participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved lighting at sporting facilities and static infrastructure such as playing fields, walking/ cycling paths and change rooms • Improved “line of sight” inside change rooms and toilet facilities
IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodating female participants of all abilities and ages through new or redesigned programs incorporating Accessibility and Inclusion principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of new or refurbishment of existing sporting facilities which are fully accessible and inclusive
BOOSTING CAPABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporting and recreational clubs/ organisations providing training and mentoring for female coaches, umpires and leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrades to meeting rooms to accommodate multiple uses, such as AGMs, training and education programs

TABLE TWO:

Examples of eligible community amenity projects and programs

Community Programs and Events	Community Amenity and Community Service Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community events • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community cultural education programs for Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants • Multicultural festivals • Intergenerational activities – sharing knowledge through activity-based experience • Environmental education and working bees • Short-term disability and/or carer support programs • Workshops to identify accessibility and inclusion needs in the community • Cultural and/or disability awareness training sessions • Community programs which seek to remove barriers to participation through promoting accessibility and inclusion • Community wellbeing programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community centres and halls • Libraries • Community amenities and barbecue/picnic areas • Recreation facilities • Club houses, change rooms, canteens • Murals or community art instalments • Memorials or statues • Emergency services infrastructure (e.g. aerodrome water refilling) • Surf Life Saving Club infrastructure • Aquatic facilities and pools • Amenities for participants and spectators • Playgrounds, parks, shared paths and fixed fitness stations • Seating, planting boxes, landscaping and paving • Street lighting to improve safety • Street/footpath reconfigurations • Shade cloth, awnings and pergolas • Public toilets • Infrastructure for health and community services facilities (e.g. domestic violence centres for women) • Homeless shelters • Men’s sheds • Children’s special needs premises • Community aged care facilities • Infrastructure upgrade to local community radio station facilities • Infrastructure to support and improve accessibility to community facilities • Town and tourism signage • Main street beautification projects

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Ineligible projects

Projects are not eligible for funding if they are:

- located outside an eligible regional Local Government Area
- not submitted by an eligible entity
- located across multiple Local Government Areas boundaries
- exclusively for planning activities (e.g. master planning or heritage studies)
- for the maintenance or construction of local roads or other ongoing core service infrastructure works that are the ordinary responsibility of council or other levels of government
- for the delivery of essential or core government services that should be funded from another source such as local government, the NSW Government or the Commonwealth Government
- seeking retrospective funding to cover any project component that is already complete before applicants are informed of the outcome or funding is announced
- seeking grant funding for ongoing staff or operational costs beyond two years from execution of funding deed for programs, or any ongoing staff or operational costs for infrastructure projects
- for a general works package without specific scope, costs and location (e.g. 'upgrading lighting at sports ovals' without identifying the work required, number of sites or the locations)
- exclusively for marketing, branding, advertising or product promotion, including tourism marketing
- providing direct commercial and/or exclusive private benefit to an individual or business
- not clearly providing benefits that will significantly contribute to the objectives of the Stronger Country Communities Fund.

What are ineligible project costs?

Ineligible project costs may include:

- costs related to buying or upgrading non-fixed equipment or supplies, unless considered essential to program delivery and are incidental costs to the overall project budget
- financing, including debt financing or rental costs
- costs relating to depreciation of plant and equipment beyond the life of the project
- non-project related staff training and development costs
- ongoing/recurrent funding that is required beyond the stated timeframe of the project
- for infrastructure projects, funding for any ongoing staff or operational costs
- for community programs, funding for ongoing staff or operational costs beyond the scope and timeframe of the funded project
- projects that seek to solely subsidise memberships for existing services.



ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

All applications that meet the eligibility criteria must also meet the relevant assessment criteria to receive funding. Eligible applications will be assessed against:

1. **viability**
2. **community support**
3. **alignment with the Stronger Country Communities Fund objectives.**

Viability

A project will be considered viable if it:

- has a realistic budget based on quotes or detailed estimates, reasonable assumptions or previous experience with similar projects
- is cost-effective and represents value for money
- can be delivered within two years from the execution of the funding deed
- has estimated costs for combined project management, administration and contingencies that do not exceed a maximum of 20 percent of the total project cost
- demonstrates access to the necessary expertise and support to deliver the project
- does not require ongoing funding from the NSW Government
- demonstrates how it will be operated and/or maintained when the project is completed (where applicable).

DRNSW may seek information from relevant NSW Government departments to verify the viability of a project. DRNSW retains the discretion to disclose information to these agencies where relevant.

Community support

The project must have demonstrated community support.

Consultation is an important part of the process to ensure that projects are supported by the community and help to make regional communities even better places to live. Consultation will be different depending on whether the application is for general community or female participation in sport.

Applicants will be required to provide evidence of consultation and support for the projects they submit, such as:

- **community infrastructure and programs** – engagement through council's Community Strategic Plan, online surveys, letters of support, or other documents demonstrating community support for the projects
- **enhancement of female sporting facilities or programs** – engagement with local, regional, state or national sporting organisations, local female sports teams or evidence of consultation in a council's Community Strategic Plan or relevant strategy.

Alignment with the Stronger Country Communities Fund objectives

- The project clearly demonstrates that anticipated community benefits will directly contribute to the objectives of the fund.
- For female sporting facilities and programs, the project clearly aligns with at least one of the areas of focus for female sports: Encouraging engagement, Fostering a sense of safety, Improving accessibility, and Boosting capability.

DRNSW may request additional information or clarification from applicants to assist in the assessment.

What is the assessment process?

Following receipt of applications, DRNSW staff will review projects against the program eligibility requirements and then facilitate the assessment of projects against the assessment criteria.

Through the assessment process, DRNSW may request additional information from the applicant/s. DRNSW may also seek advice from other NSW Government agencies or other third-party providers (such as probity advisors) to assist with the assessment of projects. The Stronger Country Communities Fund Assessment Panel will review project eligibility and assessment outcomes and form a list of projects that are deemed suitable/not suitable for government consideration.

The Assessment Panel may recommend part-funding of projects where there is insufficient funding available for the whole project or where only a component of the project is considered suitable for funding.

Broader factors that may be considered when assessing the overall package of projects suitable for funding include:

- **amount of funding available**
- **suitability of projects for other government funding opportunities**
- **other factors deemed relevant and important in a local or whole of NSW context.**

A package of suitable projects for each Local Government Area will be submitted to the Deputy Premier for consideration with an overall target of up to 50 percent of all funding to be for female sporting projects or programs. The Deputy Premier will consider the package of suitable projects in consultation with the Minister for Women. Project funding recommendations will then be submitted to the NSW Cabinet Committee on Expenditure Review for a final funding decision.



THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Round Four of the Stronger Country Communities Fund will be a single stage application process. To facilitate assessment of applications, applicants are required to submit the application documents via the program's online portal.

How to apply

Visit regionaldevelopment.smartygrants.com.au/SCCF4 to submit an application to the Stronger Country Communities Fund Round Four.

What needs to be included in an application?

All applications need to include:

- a clear project scope
- a project plan using the departmental template
- a project budget using the departmental template
- quotes or detailed estimates, reasonable assumptions or previous experience with similar projects
- landowner consent (if applicable)
- evidence of \$20 million Public Liability Insurance
- evidence of project co-contribution for projects requesting \$1 million or more in funding
- a letter of support from the relevant NSW sporting organisation if a sports-related project is seeking over \$1 million in grant funding
- evidence of community consultation and strong community support for the project.

Templates can be found at nsw.gov.au/SCCF

Can ineligible projects be referred to a more appropriate funding program?

Yes. Projects that are more suitable for other NSW Government programs may be referred to those programs. Applications that are referred will be subject to the full assessment criteria of the other NSW Government program to which they are referred. Applicants may need to update their application to meet the criteria of the referred program.



What happens if the project is successful?

- All projects must demonstrate they can commence within six months of the announcement of funding and be completed within two years as outlined in the project plan.
- Successful applicants must not make financial commitments for funded activities until funding deeds have been executed.
- Requests for variations or changes to the project will only be considered in limited circumstances.
- Grants will be paid via milestone payments set out in the funding deed. A sample funding deed is available at nsw.gov.au/SCCF.
- Successful applicants will be required to pay back unspent funds or those funds which have not been spent in accordance with the funding deed.
- Successful applicants will be required to submit project progress reports to the NSW Government as outlined in the funding deed.
- Successful applicants will be required to participate in a program evaluation to determine the extent to which their projects have contributed to the objectives of the fund. The evaluation will require applicants to provide evidence of how projects have resulted in a measurable change to the lives of local residents/ female sporting facilities that is consistent with the objectives of the fund.

- Applicants must hold all relevant insurances, including a minimum \$20 million Public Liability Insurance or other insurance depending on the project.
- Any information submitted by an applicant may be used for promotional material prepared by the NSW Government.
- All recipients of NSW Government funding should acknowledge this financial support as per the Funding Acknowledgement Guidelines for Recipients of NSW Government Grants available at www.nsw.gov.au/nsw-government-communications/branding.

Unsuccessful projects

Applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of each application and unsuccessful applicants will be provided with the opportunity to arrange a feedback information session.





Available support

For help preparing applications, information and resources including relevant application templates are available from nsw.gov.au/SCCF

A webinar will be held during the application open period.

The DRNSW can assist applicants to develop strong applications.

Please contact sccf.enquiries@regional.nsw.gov.au or call 1300 679 673 for a referral.

Important Terms and Conditions

Applicants should note:

- the NSW Government may choose to publicly announce funding for individual applications. It may also use information provided in the grant to develop case studies
- all awarded grants will be GST exclusive. If you are registered for GST, this will be applied on top of the agreed grant value when payment is made to you. 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
- DRNSW reserves the right to undertake an audit of grant funding within seven years.

Complaints

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

If applicants do not agree with the way the DRNSW 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.



FIND OUT MORE

Contact us

sccf.enquiries@regional.nsw.gov.au

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