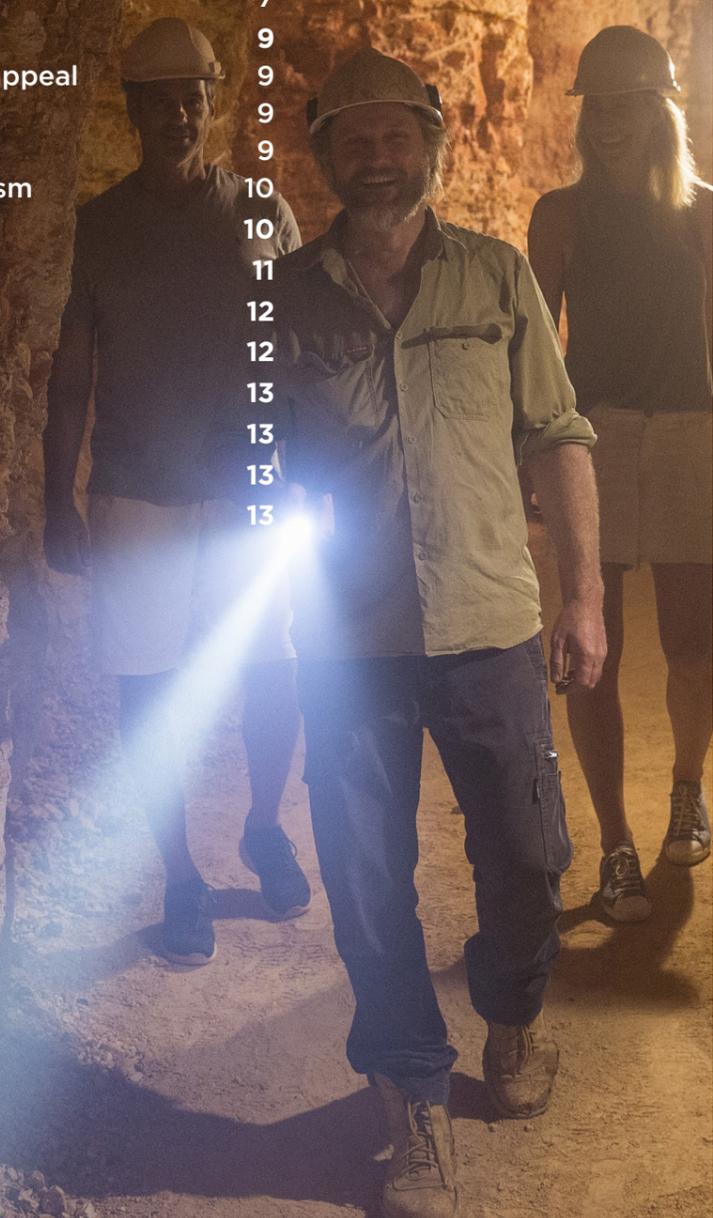


An aerial photograph of a sandy dune landscape. The sand is light beige, and there are several winding, parallel tracks made of darker sand, likely from off-road vehicles. Three red ATVs are visible, each with a rider, moving along the tracks. The ATVs are positioned at different points along the tracks, suggesting a race or a group ride. The overall scene is bright and open, with a clear sky in the background.

Regional Tourism Activation Fund Program Guidelines

Contents

Message from the Deputy Premier	1
Overview	3
Objective	3
Key dates	4
Funding streams	4
Stream One – Unique and high impact visitor experiences	4
Stream Two – Visitor accessibility and inclusion enhancements	4
Grant amounts	5
Co-contributions	5
Eligibility criteria	5
Applicants	5
Unique and high impact analysis	6
Eligible project types	6
Examples of eligible projects	6
Ineligible projects and project costs	7
Project location	7
Assessment criteria	9
CRITERIA 1: Strategic alignment and visitor appeal	9
CRITERIA 2: Economic analysis	9
CRITERIA 3: Deliverability and affordability	9
CRITERIA 4: Accessibility and inclusive tourism	10
How to apply	10
Assessment process	11
Available support	12
Successful projects	12
Unsuccessful projects	13
Important terms and conditions	13
Complaints	13
Government Information (Public Access) Act	13



Message from the Deputy Premier



The Hon. John Barilaro MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Regional New South Wales

Regional NSW is a visitor's paradise. With pristine beaches, snow-capped mountains, beautiful rainforests and the rugged outback, our regions offer countless sights to behold, places to explore and experiences to enjoy.

For many of our regional communities, the tourist dollars spent at cafes, shops, accommodation and visitor attractions underpin local economies. Regional tourism not only puts cash through the tills of many local businesses, it creates local jobs and supports local salaries.

The tourism industry and the many regional communities that rely on it have been hit hard by COVID-19 restrictions and border closures. The NSW Government's \$30 million Regional Tourism Activation Fund aims to support our regional visitor economy to recover from the impacts of the last year.

The Regional Tourism Activation Fund will accelerate the development of new and enhanced tourism infrastructure for unique and high impact visitor experiences in our regions. It will invest in new projects that deliver iconic tourism experiences to increase the number of regional visitors, the length of time they stay and repeat visitation.

The fund will also support accessible and inclusive tourism that enables people with disability or accessibility requirements to participate and experience regional attractions more independently.

Earlier this year, we launched the \$20 million Regional Events Acceleration Fund to attract new major events to regional NSW areas, and support existing regional events to grow bigger and better.

Our aim is to support and grow the visitor economy in regional NSW, and in doing so, to share with both Australian and international visitors the full scope of unforgettable, unbeatable and accessible visitor experiences across regional NSW.

If you are an eligible applicant, I encourage you to read these guidelines and get in touch with the Department of Regional NSW to submit a funding application to help attract more tourists to our wonderful regions.



Overview

The NSW Government has committed \$30 million to the Regional Tourism Activation Fund as part of the \$2 billion Regional Growth Fund.

The Regional Tourism Activation Fund will accelerate the development of new and existing tourism infrastructure providing visitors with unique and high impact experiences while visiting regional NSW.

The Fund will focus on projects that increase visitation, expenditure and length of stay in regional NSW. The funding will also provide support to projects that improve accessibility and inclusion and enhance the visitor experience for people with disability.

Objective

The objective of the Regional Tourism Activation Fund is to support the development of unique and high impact tourism and events infrastructure that helps to boost local economies, create jobs and ensure visitors to regional NSW have unforgettable experiences that encourage repeat visitation.

The key objectives of this fund are to:

- accelerate the development of unique and high impact tourism and events infrastructure
- boost the visitor economy in regional NSW by creating desirable experiences that encourage people to plan and book holidays to regional areas
- improve the visitor experience and accessibility and inclusion for people with disability and accessibility requirements
- increase expenditure and create new jobs in the tourism sector across regional NSW.

The objectives of the fund are aligned to strategic pillars three and five of the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030 by showcasing the strengths of regional NSW and facilitating growth and diversification of the visitor economy. The fund is also aligned to the 20-year Economic Vision for Regional NSW, the NSW Destination Management Plan, the NSW South Coast Marine Tourism Strategy and the NSW Cruise Development Plan.

Key dates

KEY PHASE	DATE
Applications open	16 June 2021
Applications close	11 August 2021
Assessment and approvals process	August – September 2021
Successful projects announced	From November 2021
Final project completion	By 30 June 2023

Funding streams

The \$30 million Regional Tourism Activation Fund will be available through two funding streams:

Stream One - Unique and high impact visitor experiences

Funding available: minimum \$200,000 up to a maximum of \$5 million

This funding stream aims to accelerate the delivery of new tourism infrastructure projects that will strengthen the local tourism industry and deliver economic benefits in regional NSW. The funding will invest in projects that create unique and high impact visitor experiences for people visiting regional NSW and encourage more people to plan and book holidays in regional areas.

Applicants must demonstrate that their project will create a unique and high-impact visitor experience that introduces a point of difference for visitors to regional NSW.

Projects identified in the relevant Destination Management Plans for regional NSW will be preferred and letters of support from the Destination Network and/or tourism organisation are encouraged.

Stream Two - Visitor accessibility and inclusion enhancements

Funding available: minimum \$50,000 up to a maximum of \$500,000

Funding under this stream aims to encourage inclusive tourism by improving accessibility and inclusion at destinations and visitor experiences for people with disability. The funding will have a specific focus on projects that improve accessibility and inclusion at unique and high impact tourism venues and destinations.

Inclusive tourism enables people with disability and accessibility requirements to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism precincts, services and environments.

Funding will support projects that enhance the visitor experience for people with disability such as improvements to access, installation of a lift, installation of changing places amenities, construction of wheelchair accessible toilets and creating additional accessible parking areas.

Projects that can demonstrate they are aligned to the relevant Disability Inclusion Action Plan will be preferred.



Grant amounts

STREAM ONE - UNIQUE AND HIGH IMPACT VISITOR EXPERIENCES		STREAM TWO - VISITOR ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION ENHANCEMENTS	
Aims to accelerate the development of high impact tourism and events infrastructure.		Aims to encourage inclusive and accessible visitor experiences at unique and high impact tourism and events infrastructure.	
Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
\$200,000	\$5,000,000	\$50,000	\$500,000

All applicants are encouraged to consider inclusive tourism and the visitor experience of people with disability.

Applicants can apply to both stream one and two if their project includes specific accessibility and inclusion enhancements as part of a broader visitor experience project.

Applications to both stream one and two will be considered and assessed as a project package.

Applications submitted after the closing date may be accepted at the sole discretion of the Department of Regional NSW.

Co-contributions

Applications for funding from stream one must have a minimum financial co-contribution of 25 per cent of the total grant amount. Co-contributions must be cash and cannot be made in-kind.

Applications for stream two do not need to meet the co-contribution requirement and can apply for 100 per cent of the project cost; however, applicants are strongly encouraged to make a financial co-contribution to their projects.

Applicants must provide evidence of secured financial co-contributions as part of their application, where relevant. The delivery or viability of projects should not be dependent on co-contributions that have not been secured. Co-contributions cannot be made using funding received from the NSW Government.

Projects that maximise investment from the applicant, Commonwealth Government and/or other industry contributions will be preferred.

Eligibility criteria

Projects will need to meet the program eligibility and assessment criteria to receive funding. All applications will be assessed for eligibility and only eligible applications will be considered for funding.

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:

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

Applicants are encouraged to work with private operators and industry organisations to identify potential projects. Public/private partnerships are eligible to apply where the lead applicant is an eligible public entity and clear public benefit can be demonstrated. The public entity will be solely responsible for the project's delivery and reporting through a funding deed.

Projects that are developed and delivered in partnership with a NSW Government agency such as NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service or Forestry Corporation of NSW are eligible where the lead applicant is one of the entities listed as an eligible applicant.

Unique and high impact analysis

Applicants will be required to demonstrate that their project is unique and high impact by providing:

- key visitation data including forecasted annual visitation and the forecasted expenditure per visitor to generate a **value per visitor analysis**
- a data sheet to inform a **benefit to cost ratio** assessment
- **letters of support** from the relevant Destination Network and/or local tourism organisations that support the claim of uniqueness and high impact.

Stream Two applicants will be required to demonstrate that their project is linked to a unique and high impact visitor experience. This could be demonstrated by including letters of support from the Destination Network and/or the local tourism organisation.

Eligible project types

Eligible project types include:

- construction of new tourism infrastructure and/or significant enhancements to existing infrastructure to create unique and high impact visitor experiences
- upgrades and extensions to existing infrastructure to improve accessibility and inclusion linked to unique and high impact visitor experiences.

Applications must demonstrate that the project can be operated and maintained without the need for additional funding from the NSW Government once construction is complete.

Applications must demonstrate the project will be completed by 30 June 2023 by providing a detailed scope of works, key milestones and previous project management records including the experience/credentials of key personnel.

Projects must demonstrate that they meet the assessment criteria and meet the program objectives.

Examples of eligible projects

	STREAM ONE - UNIQUE AND HIGH IMPACT VISITOR EXPERIENCES	STREAM TWO - VISITOR ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION ENHANCEMENTS
Project examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of a new cliff-top walk and viewing platform • Development of a new and unique major event space • Development of a new iconic and nationally recognised attraction • Construction of infrastructure required to provide new nature-based experiences, such as a pontoon for expedition cruising • Creating a mountain bike trail with international appeal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installing a lift in a multi-level venue • Construction to allow for clear access pathways from a public space into a venue or tourism business • Upgrades to accessible visitor amenity • Upgrades to information technology including the provision of captioning and audio description • Provision of hearing loops and beacon wayfinding technology

Ineligible projects and project costs

The list below is a guide to indicate the types of projects and expenses not supported:

- support for core local government activities or business operations and administrative running costs
- hosting an event
- projects associated with short-term accommodation providers such as Airbnb
- projects or activities already funded by/receiving NSW Government funding
- marketing, advertising, or product promotion including signage
- engaging or paying permanent employees
- activities, equipment or supplies that are already being supported through other sources
- financing costs, including interest and debt financing
- capital expenditure for the purchase of assets for everyday business activities such as office furniture and equipment, motor vehicles, computers, printers or photocopiers
- costs involved in the purchase or upgrade/hire of software (including user licences) and ICT hardware (unless it directly relates to the project)
- costs such as rent and utilities
- staff training and development costs
- insurance costs (applicants must hold and maintain adequate insurance coverage for any liability arising as a result of their participation in funded activities)
- costs related to obtaining resources used on the project, including job advertising and recruiting, and contract negotiations
- depreciation of plant and equipment beyond the life of the project
- opportunity costs relating to allocating resources to the agreed grant project
- projects that require ongoing funding from the NSW Government or Commonwealth Government
- buying or upgrading equipment that is not fixed to a particular site, with the exception of equipment that is essential to the projects viability or equipment required to improve accessibility and inclusion.

Project location

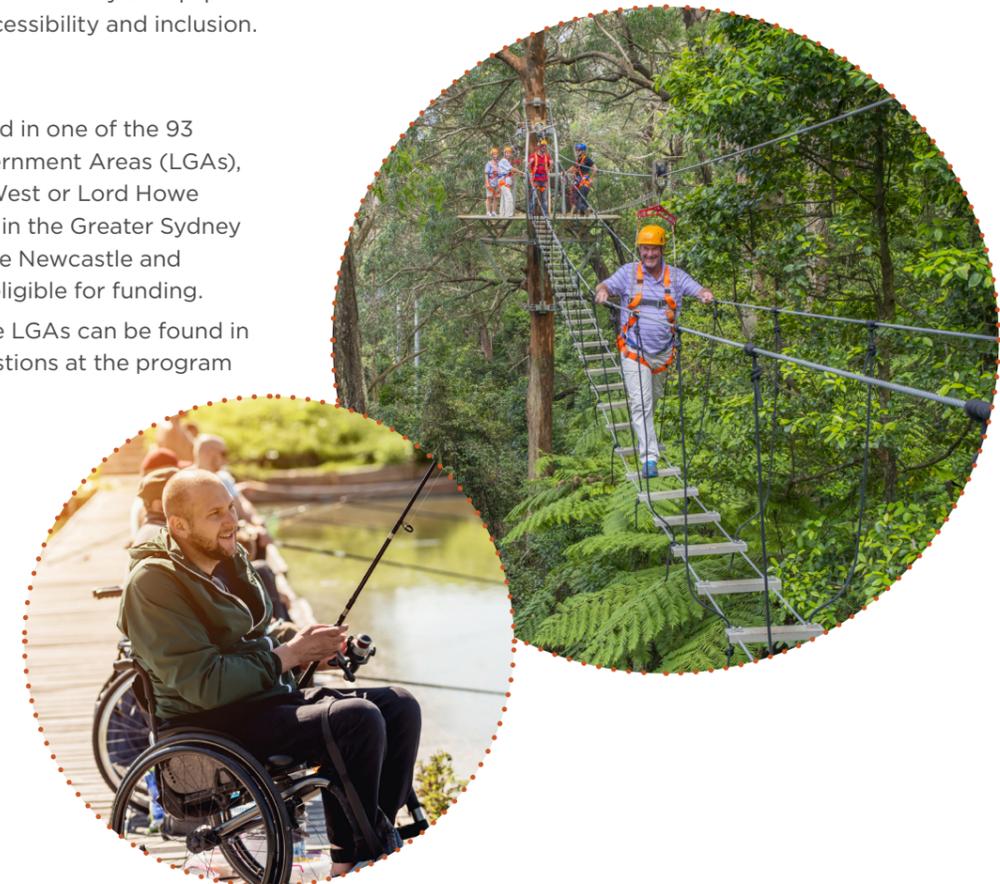
Projects must be delivered in one of the 93 regional NSW Local Government Areas (LGAs), the Unincorporated Far West or Lord Howe Island. Projects delivered in the Greater Sydney metropolitan area, and the Newcastle and Wollongong LGAs are ineligible for funding.

A full list of the 93 eligible LGAs can be found in the frequently asked questions at the program webpage:

nsw.gov.au/RTAFUND

Projects can be located on publicly owned land or on private land where there is a clear public benefit.

If the applicant is not the owner of the land where the project will be delivered, landowner's consent and access agreements will be required as part of the application.





Assessment criteria

Eligible applications will be assessed against four program criteria:

CRITERIA 1: Strategic alignment and visitor appeal

Applicants need to demonstrate that the project meets the objective of the fund by developing or enhancing unique and high impact tourism and events infrastructure that helps to boost local economies, create jobs and ensure visitors to regional NSW have unforgettable experiences that encourage repeat visitation.

Applications must demonstrate how:

- the project will create or enhance a unique and high impact visitor experience that introduces a point of difference for visitors to regional NSW
- the project will contribute to the advancement of the local government area and region
- the project's objectives align with NSW Government priorities, including the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030, Destination Management Plans relevant to the region, and other regional strategies and policies including the Regional Development Framework, Regional Economic Development Strategies and Regional Plans. Projects identified in Destination Management Plans will be preferred
- the project is supported by the Destination Network and/or the local tourism organisation
- the project does not disadvantage businesses operating in the private sector.

CRITERIA 2: Economic analysis

Applications must demonstrate how:

- the project has the capacity to create jobs and grow the visitor economy in regional NSW
- the project will generate a high value per visitor by increasing daytrip and/or overnight visitation when compared to the total project cost.

Applicants are required to submit a data sheet to assess the benefit-cost ratio for the project; however, it is not a requirement of the funding that the project receives a benefit to cost ratio greater than 1.0.

CRITERIA 3: Deliverability and affordability

Applicants will need to demonstrate that the project is financially viable and deliverable by providing:

- construction cost estimates supported by quotes, including all margins and overheads, project and construction management costs, and appropriate amount of contingency for the project stage and risks
- a detailed operating model including any ongoing governance arrangements for the infrastructure such as access agreements
- projected maintenance costs and evidence that the asset owner has the capability and resources to meet these costs over the life of the asset.

The affordability criteria will also consider whether the proposal meets the co-contribution threshold of at least 25 per cent of the funding request for stream one applications. Applications for stream two do not need to meet the co-contribution requirement and can apply for 100 per cent of the project cost.

Project cost estimates and the project budget should include any GST incurred to deliver the works, such as using tradespeople.

Applicants should seek to maximise the financial co-contributions towards their project.

Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have the capacity and capability to deliver the project by providing:

- robust strategies for procurement, project management and risk management
- previous project management record and experience/credentials of key personnel
- a detailed and realistic project management plan, including a risk assessment
- confirmation that all appropriate land consent, planning, construction, zoning, environmental and other approvals are in place
- evidence of appropriate insurance cover including at least \$20 million public liability insurance.

CRITERIA 4: Accessibility and inclusive tourism

Applications for both stream one and two are encouraged to consider alignment with the relevant Disability Inclusion Action Plan and the visitor experience of people with disability. Applications that demonstrate a commitment to accessibility and inclusion will be preferred.

Applications to stream two will be required to demonstrate that their project enhances and is linked to a unique and high impact visitor experience.

Applicants will need to demonstrate consideration of the following accessible tourism design principles:

- alignment with the relevant Disability Inclusion Action Plan
- the infrastructure utilises universal design principles and promotes accessibility and inclusion
- the design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and access requirements and minimises hazards
- the design can be used efficiently and comfortably
- appropriate size and space are provided for approach and use.

How to apply

Applications to the Regional Tourism Activation Fund must be submitted online. The application form can be accessed at rgf.smartygrants.com.au/RTAF

Applicants must submit the following documents as part of their application through the online portal:

- completed application form
- confirmation of the applicant's co-contribution to the project if required
- completed data sheet
- completed landowner's consent form if required
- development approval from the local council if required
- letters of support.

Assessment process

The Department of Regional NSW will lead the assessment process. Applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria and assessment criteria set out in these Program Guidelines.

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

An Assessment Panel will be convened to assess project eligibility and assessment outcomes and form a list of projects that are deemed suitable/not suitable for funding. An independent probity advisor will attend Panel meetings.

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

Applicants will be notified as soon as is practical following the assessment outcome. The Assessment Panel can recommend projects are approved for funding without the requirement for a co-contribution at its sole discretion.

Applications may be referred to other funding programs in the NSW or Commonwealth Government for consideration.

The Assessment Panel will consider the individual merits of each project against the program criteria. Broader factors that may be considered when assessing applications include the:

- total amount of funding available
- importance of a project to the local economy
- geographical distribution of projects across the eligible LGAs in regional NSW
- suitability of projects for other government funding opportunities
- alignment with existing NSW Government policies and strategies and Regional Economic Development Strategies.

Projects recommended for funding will be provided to the Deputy Premier for consideration and then submitted to the NSW Cabinet Committee on Expenditure Review for the final funding decision.

The Department of Regional NSW, at its sole discretion, can take other factors into account that may make an application ineligible for funding, such as any person or activity that could cause reputational or other risk to the NSW Government.



Available support

To help applicants prepare their application, additional information and resources will be available on the Regional Tourism Activation Fund webpage, including relevant application templates and frequently asked questions: nsw.gov.au/RTAFUND

An information webinar will be held during the application open period.

The Department can assist applicants to develop strong applications. Please contact regionalnsw.business@regional.nsw.gov.au or call 1300 679 673 for a referral to your local Business Development Manager. Please check with the Department prior to submitting if you are unclear about any part of the application.

Information and links to the relevant Disability Inclusion Action Plan can be found here:

facs.nsw.gov.au/inclusion/advisory-councils/disability/inclusion-plans

Research and documents including information on how to obtain Destination Management Plans for regional NSW can also be found on the destinationnsw.com.au/our-industry/contacts-and-associations/dns website.

Applicants are encouraged to consult with their Destination Network prior to submitting their application.

Before applying for funding under this program or making any decision, applicants should seek advice from their legal, business and financial advisers to determine their eligibility and the terms of the funding.

Successful projects

Successful applicants will be required to enter into and abide by the terms of a Funding Deed with the NSW Government. The Funding Deed details a range of deliverables required by the NSW Government.

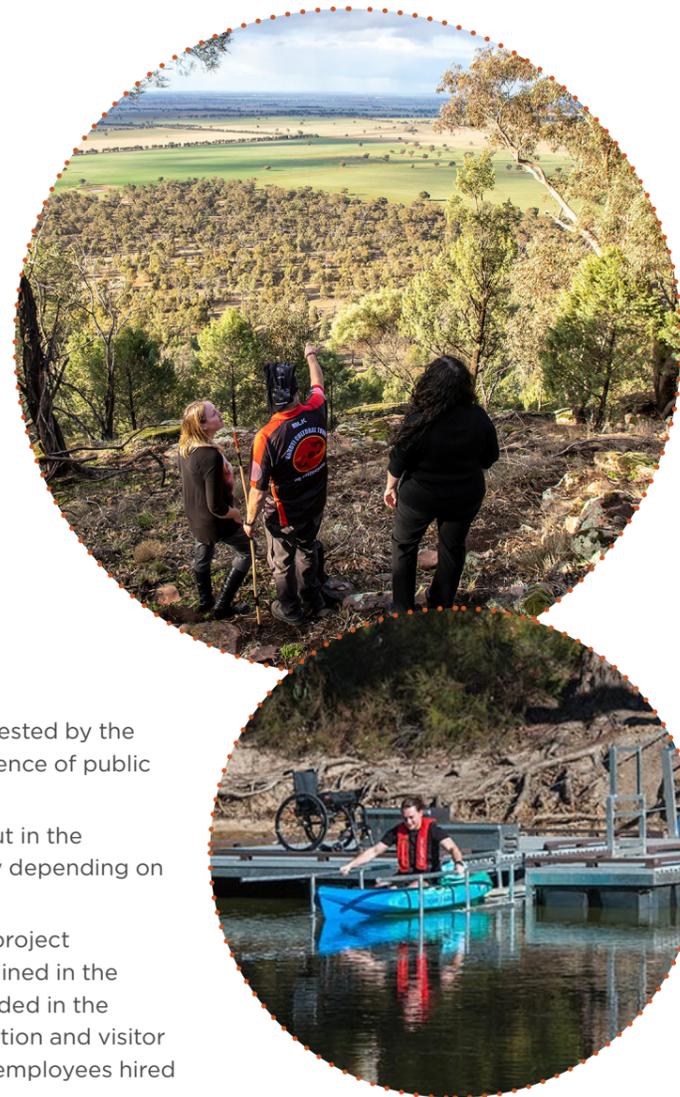
The NSW Government makes no binding funding commitment to an applicant unless and until both parties sign a Funding Deed.

The Funding Deed will require the successful applicant to provide a copy of all relevant insurances and other supporting documentation relevant to the project or as requested by the Department of Regional NSW. This includes evidence of public liability insurance of at least \$20 million.

Grants will be paid via milestone payments set out in the Funding Deed. Timing and requirements will vary depending on the scope and timelines of the project.

Successful applicants will be required to submit project progress reports to the NSW Government as outlined in the Funding Deed. Examples of measures to be included in the reports are completion of project activities, visitation and visitor expenditure, and number of full-time equivalent employees hired as a result of the project.

Applicants may be requested to keep the grant confidential for a period of time as part of a confidentiality agreement.



Unsuccessful projects

The NSW Government will notify applicants in writing the outcome of each application and will offer a feedback session to unsuccessful applicants.

Important terms and conditions

Applicants should note:

- the NSW Government may choose to publicly announce funding for individual applications and the expected visitation, visitor expenditure and jobs created by the funding. It may also use information provided in the grant to develop case studies and make public announcements during and on completion of the project
- requests for variations or changes to the project 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 after the project is complete. The evaluation will require applicants to provide evidence of how projects have resulted in measurable benefits consistent with the fund's objectives, focusing on employment and benefits to regional economies and communities
- 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 nsw.gov.au/nsw-government-communications/branding
- any information submitted by an applicant may be used for promotional material prepared by the NSW Government
- grant funding awarded is GST exclusive. If your organisation is registered for GST this will be paid in addition to your approved grant amount. Local councils although registered for GST must submit an invoice exclusive of GST
- grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a 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.

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 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.



©State of NSW 2021

Copyright

This publication is protected by copyright. With the exception of (a) any coat of arms, logo, trademark or other branding; (b) any third-party intellectual property; and (c) personal information such as photographs of people, this publication is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence. The licence terms are available at the Creative Commons website at: creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode. The Department of Regional NSW ('Department') requires that it be attributed as creator of the licensed material in the following manner: © State of New South Wales (Department of Regional NSW), (2021).

You may also use material in accordance with rights you may have under the *Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)*, for example under the fair dealing provisions or statutory licences.

The use of any material from this publication in a way not permitted by the above licence or otherwise allowed under the *Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)* may be an infringement of copyright. Infringing copyright may expose you to legal action by, and liability to, the copyright owner. Where you wish to use the material in a way that is not permitted, you must lodge a request for further authorisation with the Department.

Disclaimer

The Department of Regional NSW (the department) does not guarantee or warrant, and accepts no legal liability whatsoever arising from or connected to, the accuracy, reliability, currency or completeness of any material contained in this publication. Information in this publication is provided as general information only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from a qualified professional.

The Department recommends that users exercise care and use their own skill and judgment in using information from this publication and that users carefully evaluate the accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance of such information. Users should take steps to independently verify the information in this publication and, where appropriate, seek professional advice.

These Guidelines are subject to change at any time at the sole discretion of the Department.

Images: Destination NSW and NSW NPWS.