2025 – 2027 Cultural Grants Program

Aboriginal Affairs NSW

1 October 2025



Image Credit: Luke Currie-Richardson (Kuku Yalanji, Djabugay, Munaldjali, Butchulla, Meriam)

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NSW GOVERNMENT

Aboriginal Affairs

Grant Program Details	
Year 1 Key Dates (2025-2026)	CLOSED Project Delivery: 23 January 2026 – 31 December 2026
Year 2 Key Dates (2026-2027)	Open Period: 30 November 2026 – 22 January 2027 Project Delivery: 12 April 2027 – 31 December 2027 Project activities **must not commence** before 12 April 2027 or until the funding agreement has been executed and payment received, whichever is later.
Year 3 Key Dates (2027-2028)	TO BE CONFIRMED
Application outcome date	2/04/2027
Evaluation timeframe (for successful applications)	August - September of each project delivery year
Decision-maker	Deputy Secretary Aboriginal Affairs NSW
NSW Government Agency	Aboriginal Affairs NSW (Premiers Department)
Type of grant opportunity	Open, non-competitive
Grant value (total available funding for the grant and the available individual grant amounts, excluding GST)	Up to $1.5 million per year is allocated to the Cultural Grants Program Applicants can apply for between $1000 - $20,000
Enquiries:	For enquiries, contact your nearest regional office (please see section 3.3) or the AANSW Community Investments Team on 1800 019 998 or email grants@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au



Image credit: Marley Morgan (Wiradjuri, Ualaroi and Gamilaraay)

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Overview of 2025-2027 Cultural Grants program

1 Overview of 2025-2027 Cultural Grants Program

Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) 2025-2027 Cultural Grants is a rolling program:

- Applicants can apply at any time during the opening period via the online SmartyGrants platform.
- The Program will open be open for up to 6 months each year, **unless funding is exhausted sooner.**
- Organisations can receive one grant, per year.
- An organisation may additionally act as an auspice for a maximum of two projects per year.

This is a non-competitive program where **applications will be assessed against the criteria, in the order they are received on a first come, first served basis.**

Applications will be accepted at any time during the open period and the assessment panel will assess the eligible applications **unless allocated funding is exhausted.**

Please note that grant funding may be reviewed by the government from time to time, including following the State election on 13 March 2027. Grant funding is subject to availability and is not confirmed until a funding agreement has been signed by both the successful applicant and the Government

1.1 Purpose and objectives

The Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) 2025-2027 Cultural Grants Program aims to support Aboriginal community organisations and groups across NSW to celebrate Aboriginal culture and hold key cultural events and activities.

Program Objectives

The AANSW Cultural Grants program objectives are to:

- Support Aboriginal communities to strengthen, protect and maintain traditional and contemporary expressions of Aboriginal culture
- Support key contemporary Aboriginal cultural events and activities
- Contribute to Aboriginal community wellbeing and healing through the use of Aboriginal culture and community connection
- Facilitate sharing of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and skills between generations.

1.2 Grant value

Detail:

- A total of $4,500,000 has been allocated to the AANSW 2025-2027 Cultural Grants Program over three years
- $1,500,000 is allocated to each year of the Program
- Applicants can apply for between $1000 and $20,000.

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Selection criteria



2 Selection criteria

2.1 Eligibility Criteria

Who can apply

To be eligible for funding, applicants must be one of the following:

1. A not-for-profit organisation, and one of the following:
    a. An Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO)
    b. An Aboriginal not-for-profit organisation
2. An unincorporated Aboriginal community group with an eligible ACCO as Auspice partner
3. An Aboriginal Sole Trader or Business whose primary business activity relates to cultural expression or revitalisation

Applicants, or their Auspice partner, must also:

1. Be a legal entity located in NSW or in a bordering community that delivers services to Aboriginal communities in NSW
2. Propose a project to be delivered in NSW
3. Have public liability of at least $10 million per claim (or be willing to purchase as part of the application to support the project)
4. Have no outstanding obligations relating to previous funding from AANSW

For more detailed information on eligible applicant definitions, please refer to section 6.4

Who can't apply

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- An individual
- Non-Aboriginal groups or organisations
- Incorporated not-for-profit organisations not owned, controlled and operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Federal and State Government agencies and bodies, including local councils, NSW public schools, other education entities and hospitals
- Unincorporated Aboriginal organisations or groups without an eligible auspice organisation (ACCO)
- Organisations that have not met project obligations, including acquitting and reporting for any grant funding received from Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) in the previous two years.
- Organisations with redress sanctions as described in the National Redress Scheme.

2.2 Project costs

Funding can be used for:

- Consumables – such as catering, equipment items and materials for activities (excluding alcohol) – for the purposes of the project or event
- Hiring equipment to be used for the period of the project or event
- The paid engagement of contractors such as Elders, facilitators, trainers and teachers

- Eligible costs associated with holding key state-wide and/or regional Aboriginal sporting and cultural events. Refer to the Sporting Events section and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for more information.
- Purchasing minor equipment for event activities up to the value of $5000 (please refer to the FAQ for guidance on minor equipment)
- Administering the project, with up to 10 percent of the requested AANSW funding amount being able to be used for this task or as auspice fees where there is an auspicing arrangement
- Purchasing merchandise such hats, t-shirts, trophies, medals etc up to 10% of the requested AANSW funding amount.

Funding cannot be used for:

- Costs for sports teams or cultural groups to attend competitions or events E.G entry fees, travel and/or accommodation to attend sports and dance competitions
- Capital costs – any type of building, construction, major equipment, or capital works including renovations to a building, housing related costs or the purchase of land
- Purchase of vehicles
- Remuneration, wages, salaries or contractor costs that are not directly related to the delivery of the funded project or event.
- Staff wages, salaries and associated on-costs that would be incurred regardless of whether the project proceeds.
- Sitting fees, travel allowance or costs associated with membership of boards/councils
- Activities that may create an ongoing dependency on cultural grant funding, such as funding that is required over multiple years
- Costs that are not directly associated with the delivery of the project
- Funding intended to replace existing organisational income or funding.
- Activities that duplicate existing services or programs, unless the applicant can demonstrate an identified community need, barrier to access, or a clear enhancement to existing service delivery.
- Activities related to NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout or NAIDOC week events
- Retrospective funding for activities and events that have already been held
- Activities, services, positions or operating costs that are already funded through another grant, contract, service agreement or other income source.
- International travel costs (proposals for domestic travel costs need to demonstrate the benefits of travel to the project, organisation, and community)
- Gift cards and vouchers or petrol cards and vouchers etc.

Ticketed Events:

Projected income from the sale of tickets to events must be spent on the same event. The information on income expected to be generated from the sale of tickets and spent on budget items must be included in the program budget table in the application form.

Sporting Events:

Eligible costs associated with holding key state-wide and/or regional Aboriginal sporting and cultural events must align with at least one of the objectives of the Cultural Grants program and contribute to Aboriginal community wellbeing and healing.

Projects with a sporting component may be eligible where the primary purpose is to celebrate, strengthen or share Aboriginal culture, community connection and cultural knowledge. Sporting activities should support, rather than be the primary focus of the project.

Grant funding cannot be used to cover the costs of teams or groups to attend/participate in competitions, including entry fees, sponsorships and similar participation costs.

Annual/Recurring Events:

Applications for annual or recurring events must meet all assessment criteria, there is no guarantee of funding based on a previous year's successful grant application.

2.3 Assessment criteria

This is a non-competitive program where **applications will be assessed in the order they are received on a first come, first served basis.** Applications are assessed against the assessment criteria without reference to the comparative merits of other applications.

Applications will be accepted at any time during the opening period and the assessment panel will assess the eligible applications **unless allocated funding is exhausted.**

Criteria	What we are looking for:
Alignment with Cultural Grants Program Objectives The proposed application is clearly aligned with the objectives of the Cultural Grant Program	The application should clearly detail how your project will support any one of the Cultural Grants objectives: • Support Aboriginal communities to strengthen, protect and maintain traditional and contemporary expressions of Aboriginal culture • Support key contemporary Aboriginal cultural events and activities • Contribute to Aboriginal community wellbeing and healing through the use of Aboriginal culture and community connection • Facilitate sharing of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and skills between generations.
Community Impact The benefit of the project to Aboriginal people and community, including community engagement and positive contributions to the cultural health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people.	The application: • Clearly detail the positive impacts and/or benefits your project will have for Aboriginal people and community • Details community engagement and involvement in the project
Organisation's capacity to deliver the project The ability of the organisation to deliver the project objectives based on experience and resources, community supports such as partnerships with other organisations and participation in other community projects	The application should clearly detail how your project will support any one of the Cultural Grants objectives: • Support Aboriginal communities to strengthen, protect and maintain traditional and contemporary expressions of Aboriginal culture • Support key contemporary Aboriginal cultural events and activities • Contribute to Aboriginal community wellbeing and healing through the use of Aboriginal culture and community connection • Facilitate sharing of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and skills between generations.
Value for money How the implementation of the project/event/activity will achieve high quality outcomes for Aboriginal communities in a cost-effective way	You can show this by: • Explaining how the project represents good value for money • Clearly demonstrating how budget items contribute to the project outcomes. • Building a budget that is reasonable and realistic • Including any quotes to support budget line items • Submitting a detailed budget aligned with the project activities and plan • Showing a plan with an explanation of what the funding will do and how it will be spent

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Application process

3 Application process

3.1 How to apply

- Log on to AANSW Smarty Grants Platform to submit your application - https://aboriginalaffairs.smartygrants.com.au/
- Review the below Application Timeline and ensure your application is submitted by the required date, in order to receive funding on time to deliver your project should you be successful
- Review the Supporting Documents list provided below before submitting your application
- Visit the AANSW website to access our Applicant Toolkit, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Contact your nearest AANSW Regional Office to discuss your project.
- Note, AANSW staff can be contacted at any time by applicants to seek clarity or further information

Video Response to Application questions

Applicants can choose to submit a video response to application questions on project objectives and outcomes. AANSW regional staff are available to support applicants with recording and preparing a file for upload if required.

3.2 Application Timeline

Decisions to award grants are subject to the availability of relevant funding from time to time. Funding for grants programs may be reviewed by an incoming government following a State election (either in the case where a government is returned, or when there is a change of government). The award of a grant is always conditional upon (and no obligation to pay the grant arises until) the execution of a non-negotiable funding agreement by the successful applicant and the State.

Project Year	Applications must be submitted by:	For project delivery from:
2027	22 January 2027	12 April 2027 Project activities **must not commence** before 12 April 2027 or until the funding agreement has been executed and payment received, whichever is later.

Project Year	Applications must be submitted by:	For project delivery from:
2028	To be confirmed	To be confirmed

3.3 Supporting documents

Before you submit your application, please ensure you review the below supporting documents.

Requirement	Details	Documents (example)
Mandatory	Minimum $10million per claim Must be current at time of application	Supporting documents include one of the following: • Relevant Public Liability insurance (Certificate of Currency) • Inclusion of purchase of Public Liability in the grant application
Mandatory (unless you're a Local Aboriginal Land Council, Aboriginal Medical Service or Aboriginal Education Consultative Group)	Supporting evidence to confirm your eligibility as: • an Aboriginal Organisation Or • an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO)	Supporting documents include one of the following: • Certificate of ORIC Registration • ORIC registration number • Constitution or rule book indicating governance structure • Registration with NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce (NSWICC)
Mandatory	Evidence of costs of goods and services to support budget items such as venue hire, accommodation, catering, hiring and/or purchase of equipment. (*evidence of cultural components	Supporting documents include one of the following: • Quotes • Screenshots of options available online

Requirement	Details	Documents (example)
	/services is not required)	
Mandatory	Evidence of bank account	**Bank Statement Header** • Please remove **all** transaction details, including current balance of the bank account • The bank statement header must be on letterhead of the financial institution • It must clearly show the name of the account holder, the BSB and the account number • **A screenshot of banking apps and transactions is not able to be accepted**
Recommended	Evidence of local Aboriginal community support	Supporting documents include: • Letter(s) of support from local Aboriginal community members or organisations • Letter(s) of support from an Alliance or consortium, including the backing of its membership base Note: letters must be current and specific to the project

3.4 Support available to applicants

For questions regarding the Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) Cultural Grants Program, please contact your nearest AANSW Regional Office on the phone numbers below or email the Community Investments team at grants@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au

Region/Office	Phone Number
Binaal Billa - Dubbo	0448 316 126
Greater Northern - Coffs Harbour	02 9566 8318
Greater Sydney – Mascot	02 8229 2389
Hunter Central Coast – Newcastle	02 9228 3465

Region/Office	Phone Number
Illawarra Southern – Batemans Bay	02 9228 5575
Murdi Paaki – Broken Hill	02 9372 8675
New England North-West – Tamworth	02 8575 1172

While AANSW regional staff will be pleased to answer questions about the application process, they cannot comment on the content of the application

Late Applications

Late submissions will not be accepted or considered under any circumstances. Any complaints about the application process can be made by email to grants@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au

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Assessment process



Image Credit: Luke Currie-Richardson (Kuku Yalanji, Djabugay, Munaldjali, Butchulla, Meriam)

4 Assessment process

4.1 Assessment of grant applications

Applications will be assessed in the order they are received, on **a first come first served basis**, and only applicants meeting all four assessment criteria will be recommended for funding.

All applications will be screened for eligibility by AANSW staff. Eligible applications will be further reviewed by regional teams and assessed by AANSW Staff Assessors and the Grant Assessment Panel against the assessment criteria.

The Deputy Secretary is the final decision maker who will consider the recommendations of the Grant Assessment Panel (GAP).

AANSW may request additional information and/or clarification from applicants at any time during the assessment process.

Some applicants may be offered partial funding where budget includes ineligible items.

Independent probity advisors will provide guidance on issues concerning integrity, fairness, and accountability that may arise throughout grant administration processes.

4.2 Notification of application outcome

Decisions to award grants are subject to the availability of relevant funding from time to time. Funding for grants programs may be reviewed by an incoming government following a State election (either in the case where a government is returned, or when there is a change of government). The award of a grant is always conditional upon (and no obligation to pay the grant arises until) the execution of a non-negotiable funding agreement by the successful applicant and the State.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email, through the AANSW online grant portal, SmartyGrants.

Unsuccessful Applicants

Unsuccessful applicants can request a feedback session and are welcome to reapply under the program at any time during the open period.

If an applicant wishes to seek feedback about an unsuccessful application, they should contact the Community Investments team at grants@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au within 2 months of the application outcome date.

*There is no appeal process under the 2025-2027 Cultural Grants Program.

4.3 Publication of grants information

The Grants Administration Guide (Guide) requires that certain information is published in relation to grants awarded no later than 45 calendar days after the grant agreement takes effect (see section 6.5 of the Guide and Appendix A to the Guide). This information is also open access information under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) (GIPA Act), which must be made publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information.

In accordance with these requirements, relevant information about the grants awarded will be made available on the NSW Government Grants and Funding Finder as soon as possible after the grant funding is approved or declined.

All records in relation to this decision will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the State Records Act 1998 (NSW).

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Successful grant applications



Image credit: Marley Morgan (Wiradjuri, Ualaroi and Gamilaraay)

5 Successful grant applications

5.1 Grant agreement

Funding arrangements and reporting

Successful applicants will be required to:

- Enter into a Funding Agreement with AANSW within four weeks of the offer being made.
- Start and complete funded activities and events by the dates specified in the Funding Agreement.
- Notify AANSW of any proposed changes to your funded activity and submit a variation request in writing or online using SmartyGrants.
- Complete reporting requirements, including final reports, as detailed in the Funding Agreement
- Acknowledge the support of AANSW in accordance with the Funding Acknowledgement Guidelines

5.2 Grant payment

- All payments will be made after executing the Funding Agreement.
- Some applicants may be offered partial funding where budget includes ineligible items, and as recommended by the grant assessment panel.
- A signed and witnessed Funding Agreement and Tax Invoice must be submitted via the acceptance of offer form in SmartyGrants before payment will be made.

5.3 Variations

Any variations to the project including, activity dates, funded items, location or scope of the project, must be requested in writing or submitted online using the Smarty Grants platform.

You may request a variation to change the project delivery date, provided the date is eligible under the Program Guidelines and aligns with the scope of the approved project.

Variations must be requested and approved before any changes are implemented.

For more information on Variations, please see section 6.4 and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

5.4 Unspent funds

If a grant recipient's project is completed and there are unspent funds remaining, these must be returned to Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW), Premier's Department within one (1) month of completion of the funded event/activity.

Unspent funds can be returned via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).

Contact your regional office or the Community Investments team to obtain the bank details.

5.5 Indicative reporting and acquittal requirements

The recipient will provide AANSW with a "Final Report and Acquittal" by submitting a form in Smarty Grants within one (1) month of the Project unless otherwise agreed to by AANSW.

The Final Report and Acquittal form will be reviewed and evaluated by AANSW. Applicants are required to provide invoices, receipts, financial statements and other supporting evidence demonstrating that expenditure aligns with the approved budget, grant funds were used for approved purposes, and the project was delivered and achieved the outcomes outlined in the application.

AANSW will email the recipient details on how to access the Final Report and Acquittal form on SmartyGrants at least 1 month before the Project completion date.

All acquittals will be reviewed by AANSW in line with the original funding agreement.

AANSW reserves the right to ask for additional information to support the Final Report and Acquittal.

Supporting evidence can be uploaded in SmartyGrants and must include itemised project budget expenditure with supporting invoices, receipts and/or bank statements. Additional inclusions such as photos, social media coverage and links to relevant video clips may be accepted as part of the supporting evidence

Where the recipient does not satisfactorily acquit their project, this may affect eligibility for future AANSW grant funding.

5.6 Evaluation

AANSW will undertake a Process and Outcomes evaluation for each year of the 2025-2027 Cultural Grants Program.

The process evaluation will include a detailed review on the grant administration processes to determine the success of providing the grants and any improvements for future grant programs.

The outcomes evaluation will include a review of original applications and final reports provided by recipients as well as optional case studies, to determine how projects are contributing the overall Cultural Grants Program objectives.

Evaluations will be undertaken by Aboriginal Affairs NSW and an independent probity review will be sought at the same time evaluations occur.

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Additional information and resources

6 Additional information and resources

6.1 Complaint handling

Any complaints should be sent in writing to grants@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au

6.2 Access to information

The GIPA Act provides for the proactive release of government information by agencies and gives members of the public an enforceable right to access government information held by an agency (which includes Ministerial offices). Access to government information is only to be restricted if there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

The NSW Legislative Council has the power to order the production of State papers by the Executive Government. Standing Order 52 provides that the House may order documents to be tabled by the Government in the House. The Cabinet Office coordinates the preparation of the papers – that is, the return to order. The return to order may contain privileged and public documents. Privileged documents are available only to members of the Legislative Council.

Note that documents submitted as part of a grant application may be subject to an application under the GIPA Act or an order for papers under Standing Order 52.

6.3 Ethical conduct

Conflict of interest management

The following procedures are put in place to manage any conflicts of interest between AANSW and applicants:

- Conflict of Interest declarations are to be signed by all persons involved in performing functions related to the assessment process.
- Regional project officers who assist an applicant with an application will not be involved in assessment for that grant program.

Confidentiality

Information relating to the successful applications will be included in:

- public media releases
- an announcement on the Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) website
- NSW Grants finder website
- Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) social media.

This information may include the name of the applicant and their business, a description of the funded project and the funding amount.

Applicants should be aware that information provided to AANSW may be made publicly available under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW).

Information may also be made publicly available as a result of an order for papers made by the NSW Legislative Council under Standing Order 52. Before information is released in response to an application under the GIPA Act, there will be an assessment of the public interest

considerations in favour of and against disclosure of that information and there may be consultation requirements that apply.

Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property (ACIP)

Aboriginal Affairs NSW has developed an Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property (ACIP) Protocol that aims to build awareness and respect for Aboriginal culture. The Protocol sets a standard for how Aboriginal Affairs NSW engages with Aboriginal people and communities regarding their cultural and intellectual property and what we expect from the organisations we fund.

Any Aboriginal Cultural or Intellectual Property submitted in a grant application to Aboriginal Affairs NSW remains the property of the relevant community organisation or Aboriginal person. Aboriginal Affairs NSW will not distribute or communicate any ACIP contained in SmartyGrants and agrees to respect the cultural protocols of Aboriginal people which it may apply to.

6.4 Definitions

Aboriginal Organisation

For the purpose of this grant, an Aboriginal Organisation is considered to be a not-for-profit organisation, incorporated under Commonwealth, state or territory legislation, that has at least 51% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ownership and/or directorship and is operated for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO)

For the purpose of this grant, an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation working with Aboriginal communities in NSW delivers services that build the strength and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people is:

- Incorporated under relevant legislation
- Not-for-profit
- Owned, controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Connected to the community or communities in which they deliver the services and
- Governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body.

Applicants are encouraged to provide documentation with the application to support the status of the organisation. Where this information isn't provided, the eligibility check conducted by AANSW staff will be based on the publicly available information and deemed as final.

Please see Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for more information.

Aboriginal Sole Trader or Business

For the purpose of this Program, an Aboriginal Sole Trader or Business is a business entity whose primary business activity relates to cultural expression or revitalisation and which is owned and operated by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person or persons and has been actively operating for a minimum period of 12 months.

Applicants are encouraged to provide documentation with their application to support their status and eligibility. This may include a current Australian Business Register (ABR) record and other information requested by Aboriginal Affairs NSW. Where supporting information is not provided, Aboriginal Affairs NSW may determine eligibility based on publicly available information and any other information reasonably available to the assessment team.

Unincorporated Aboriginal Groups

Unincorporated Aboriginal Groups must be Aboriginal community groups – that is, they must be led by Aboriginal people for the benefit of Aboriginal people.

If an unincorporated Aboriginal group wishes to apply under the 2025-2027 Cultural Grants Program, they will need to partner with an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation as an auspice to receive and administer the funding.

An eligible auspice organisation (ACCO) may only act as an auspice for two applicants in addition to their own application.

Eligible Auspice Organisations

An auspice organisation must be an eligible Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.

Variations

A variation is a change to the project activity, event, location and/or budget per executed Funding Agreement. Project variations may be accepted where the requested change aligns with the Program Guidelines and the original intent of the approved project.

Examples of Minor Variations	Examples of Major Variations
• Reallocation of approved line item costs within the budget table due to increase/decrease in price • Change to the project delivery date (within the Guidelines)	• The addition of budget line items that were not in the Funding Agreement The removal of approved line item costs from the budget table • Changes to approved project activities must be within scope of the Program Guidelines objectives • Change in the project delivery location

Please note: Project delivery/end dates after 31 December 2027 will not be approved.

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that this publication is free from error and/or omission at the date of publication. None of those involved in the preparation of this publication are responsible for the outcome of applications that are based on the information contained in these guidelines.