

Homelessness Innovation Fund 2024-2025

Service Reform and Innovation Grant Programs Guidelines

September 2024



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Context

Homelessness in NSW

More than 68,000 people were assisted by specialist homelessness services (SHS) in 2022/23, which is almost double the official number of people experiencing homelessness from the most recent Census.

The Temporary Accommodation (TA) policy was changed in 2023/24 to address access and eligibility concerns so more people who could access accommodation to prevent or reduce the time spent in homelessness. In 2023/24, 29,799 households stayed in TA (a 14% increase from 2022/23). On average, each household stayed 27 nights (121% longer than in 2022/23). Around 10,000 of those households had been in TA at some point in the previous year as well.

This increasing demand is placing the NSW service system under significant strain. Homelessness services are continuing to operate above capacity. Staff are burning out and many people seeking support are unassisted. This unmet demand has grown sharply since COVID-19 began and has continued into 2023 at 88% higher than pre-COVID levels.

The NSW Homelessness Strategy

The NSW Homelessness Strategy will be released later in 2024. The Strategy will set out our vision to make NSW a place where homelessness is rare, brief and not repeated because people have a safe home and the support to keep it.

The development and design of responses to homelessness will build on what we know works, and be guided by the following principles:

- Housing is a human right.
- Informed by Aboriginal people and families, and people with lived experience of homelessness.
- A focus on prevention
- A person-centred, strengths-based, culturally appropriate, and trauma-informed system
- A joined-up service system
- Flexible, localised service design and delivery
- A Housing First philosophy – this means providing or maintaining access to safe, appropriate, and stable housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, without preconditions and with wrap around support to address their needs and maintain their accommodation.

New funding for more stable housing options

The NSW Government's 2024/25 Budget is providing \$527.6 million in extra funding over four years for frontline homelessness services as part of a record \$6.6 billion investment to reduce homelessness and increase and improve social housing, building 8,400 new social homes and repairing 33,500 mainstream and Aboriginal social homes.

This funding is an important first step in moving from a crisis-driven system to more preventative approaches, localised planning and expanding evidence-based practices.

Of this funding, \$100 million has been allocated to establish a Homelessness Innovation Fund.

Homelessness Innovation Fund

The Homelessness Innovation Fund (HIF) will initially target reducing the current demand and costs of temporary accommodation, and proposals for service reform and innovation.

From the 2024/25 NSW budget decision, Homes NSW received \$527.6 million in extra funding over four years for frontline homelessness services. Of this \$100 million has been allocated to establish the HIF.

\$30 million has been provisionally allocated for 2024/25 for the HIF.

Under the HIF, organisations can apply for a one-off grant. The HIF is intended to have a wide entry gate, so some proposals may be funded by the HIF, or, through any other appropriately suited path available to Homes NSW (eg direct dealing).

Funding priorities for the HIF for 2025/26 and beyond will be announced later in 2024/25.

There are two Grant Programs for the HIF in 2024/25:

- Reforming Temporary Accommodation.
- Service Reform and Innovation.

The Service Reform and Innovation Grant Program

Objectives

Solutions to addressing homelessness depend on partnerships and innovation between services, researchers, the homelessness and housing sectors, governments and the clients themselves.

Homes NSW is regularly approached by organisations with ideas to improve the homelessness service they deliver, or the system more generally.

Until now, there hasn't been a mechanism for these ideas to be considered in an open and transparent process. The Service Reform and Innovation Grant Program provides this mechanism.

The purpose of the Service Reform and Innovation Grant Program is to:

- support homelessness services to transform current accommodation and/or service responses to deliver more and/or better outcomes for clients.
- support homelessness services in action-research to test new service delivery approaches.
- increase the flexibility of assets and/or supports so they can adapt to changing need and demand for services and housing.

This grant program is deliberately open and flexible and provides an opportunity for services to be positioned for the future.

Below are some types of examples that could be considered. Services can propose others.

- Using meanwhile use properties to increase the supply of medium-term accommodation for people with less complex needs.
- Reconfiguring exiting crisis or transitional accommodation to accommodate more clients, or to improve outcomes for clients.
- Flexible outreach supports for clients with complex needs (including those staying in motels and those newly housed who require support to sustain their tenancy).
- More Aboriginal services.
- Mainstream / non-Aboriginal services improving the cultural safety of their services and accommodation.
- New or improved responses for specific cohorts – such as children and young people, families, or women and children leaving violence.
- Improved triaging and support co-ordination responses.
- Innovating responses to rapidly rehouse clients with lower support needs.

- An initial smaller grant to develop a prototype service model or transformation proposal that underpins a larger grant request in later rounds of the HIF.

Eligibility criteria

All applicants are required to meet the following eligibility criteria.

The grant program is open to all accredited Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) and registered Community Housing Providers (CHPs) and Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (ACHPs) both through National or Local Scheme.

Consideration will be given to organisations who agree to achieve SHS accreditation and housing providers who are in the process of registration.

Partnerships are welcome.

Applications led by, or in partnership with Aboriginal-led providers will be highly regarded.

The following are mandatory eligibility criteria. Further information is provided in sections below:

- all applicants **must** have appropriate insurance of \$10 million,
- all applicants **must** address the NSW National Redress Scheme sanctions,
- all applicants **must** adhere to NSW Government public health orders and advice in regard to COVID-19. Up-to-date information is available on the NSW Government COVID-19 website
- applications **will not** be accepted from organisations with outstanding acquittals with DCJ
- only open to organisations based in NSW for projects to be carried out in NSW.

Assessment criteria

The process of completing an application has been designed under the 7 principles of the NSW [Grants Administration Guide](#) (GAG) to support the widest range of proposals and participation.

Applications will be considered against the following assessment criteria:

- Value for money of the grant applied for, noting that Homes NSW is seeking to have a statewide impact.
- How the project proposal will provide accommodation for more clients within existing support resources. This includes crisis and medium-term accommodation.
- How the project proposal will support people out of crisis accommodation and into more stable and appropriate accommodation.
- How the project proposal will reach more clients and/or deliver better outcomes for clients.
- How the project proposal will improve the coordination of service delivery.
- How the model responds to particular cohorts, or regional factors.
- Evidence that the applicant has the capacity and capability to execute the proposal and within the proposed timeframes.
- How the model reshapes service delivery or contributes to system transformation.

Expected outcomes

Organisations will need to capture the expected outcomes and benefits of their project. This is to be included when submitting an application in SmartyGrants.

Funding amounts

Funding is limited and the intention is to achieve a statewide impact, rather than be absorbed through a limited number of larger grants but there is no specific limit on the value of the grant providers can apply for.

Funding through the HIF will need to be spent within 12 months therefore the applicant must have capacity and capability to deliver this project within the timeframe of the executed Grant Funding Agreement.

Homes NSW may vary the distribution of funds depending on the number of funding applications submitted.

Homes NSW may also offer successful applicants a package lower than the amount requested.

Grant funds expenditure

Funds can only be used for expenses/activities directly associated to the grant. Your application must clearly outline your proposed expenditure in relation to the funding amounts identified above and included in the budget you submit with your application.

Grant fund exclusions

Organisations must use the grant funds, including any interest earned, for the purposes of the grant. Items or activities that sit outside the eligibility criteria will not be funded.

Items or activities that funding cannot be used for include, for example:

- Any activity of a commercial nature that is for profit.
 - Existing debt or budget deficits.
 - Permanent salaries/wages (costs for temporary wages for your program or activity can be included).
 - Business as usual costs or general operating expenses.
 - Programs or activities that encourage gambling such as bingo, or the consumption of alcohol.
 - Programs and activities coordinated by NSW Government Departments and Statutory Authorities.
 - The same project twice. For example, two different organisations cannot apply for funds for the same program or activity. This includes refuge or other accommodation, or services already funded within SHS contracts.
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Application process

There will be a one-stage application process. All applications must be submitted online via SmartyGrants portal. Eligible organisations may submit more than one application.

Value in-kind materials and contributions by paid staff and volunteers of the organisation are allowed as part of a not-for-profit organisation's contributions towards their project costs.

Applications submitted by the applicant will be assessed based on eligibility and assessment criteria.

Applications will be reviewed by the eligibility team for eligibility and compliance with the guidelines and criteria. They will then be subject to the assessment process which will include assessment by the Assessment Team and Assessment Panel.

The Minister or delegated Homes NSW or DCJ officer will be the decision-maker.

Applicants will be formally notified on whether their application has been successful.

Note for all applicants:

- Applicants must ensure their contact details are up to date.
- Applicants must not have any outstanding acquittals for any other funding program with DCJ.

- All applications for grant funding are managed using the SmartyGrants portal.
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Subcontracting information

DCJ will only provide a grant to a single organisation. Organisations can work together through one lead organisation using subcontracting arrangements between them.

For more information about subcontracting please refer to the Service Reform and Innovation Grant FAQ and the [DCJ subcontracting policy and information](#).

NSW National Redress Scheme sanctions

The NSW Government will not award a Grant Funding Arrangement to a non-government organisation with Redress Obligation (or to any of its Related Entities) if that non-government organisation:

- has declined to join the Scheme, or
- at the expiry of six months after the time it is notified to join the Scheme, has failed to do so.

Visit the [website](#) for further information about the [NSW National Redress Scheme sanctions](#).

Covid-19

Projects must adhere to NSW Government public health orders and advice in regard to COVID-19. Up-to-date information is available on the [NSW Government COVID-19 website](#).

Insurance

Grant recipients must maintain current and adequate insurance appropriate to the activities/services funded under this grant to cover any liability of the grant recipient that might arise in connection with the performance of its obligations under a Grant Funding Agreement. This must include but is not limited to a minimum of \$10 million Public Liability Insurance.

Applicants will be asked to provide a copy of all relevant insurance policies and certificates in the application form.

You must provide evidence of the above insurance for an amount recommended by a professional insurance adviser, or any such other insurance policies as may reasonably be required by DCJ, and as required by law, for you and any of your employees or sub-contractors, in relation to the performance of the services.

If your organisation is not covered by the appropriate insurance, you will need to approach another organisation (such as your local council or an incorporated not-for-profit) to sponsor your application so that your project will be covered under their insurance.

Banking details

It is your responsibility as the applicant to provide correct banking details, including the authorised signature to verify your bank details in the application form. Funds transferred to an incorrect bank account may not be recoverable.

Successful applicants – grant funding agreement.

The application, Grant Funding Agreement and acquittal for the grant will be managed using the SmartyGrants management system and DocuSign or Adobe Acrobat Sign.

Successful applicants are required to return the signed Grant Funding Agreement within two weeks of receipt.

Agreements can only be signed by authorised officers of your organisation. This may be a member of the executive/committee as deemed under the Articles of Association or Constitution for a not-for-profit organisation, or the General Manager or delegated officer if you are a council.

Please note, all applicants must provide the contact details (email address, phone number, name and position) of the relevant authorised signatories, or their delegates, in their application form.

It is the applicants' responsibility to ensure staff availability to complete and sign documents, to carefully read the terms and conditions of the Grant Funding Agreement, and to sign the Grant Funding Agreement using the correct authorised signatories.

Once we receive your signed Grant Funding Agreement via DocuSign or Adobe Acrobat Sign, DCJ will countersign the agreement and return to you by email.

Any **variations** to the Grant Funding Agreement, including scope, location or time frames outlined in the application form and Grant Program Guidelines must be formally requested and approved in writing. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of the grant offer.

To discuss a variation, please contact Grant Design and Support by email on grantdesignandsupport@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

Successful applicants' obligations and reporting

- Any variations to the approved project scope, project location and completion timeframes outlined in the original application form must be formally requested and approved in writing before any related work takes place.
- To discuss a variation, please contact the Grant Design and Support by email grantdesignandsupport@dcj.nsw.gov.au.
- Based on the project scope, there will be reporting required to be submitted within the 12 month timeframe.
- All projects must be completed within 12 months of your executed Grant Funding Agreement. You are required to submit a Final Report and Acquittal in SmartyGrants no later than 30 days after your project end date. DCJ will send you the final acquittal form prior the required date that you will need to complete in the SmartyGrants portal.
- Please note that any photographs or videos containing images of participants and/or staff submitted in the Final Completion Report must be accompanied by a signed [DCJ still and moving images consent form](#).
- It is a requirement that all financial records related to grant expenditure and acquittal be retained by the committee of the organisation for seven years. If the committee changes, these documents must be forwarded to the new incoming committee.

Timeframes

HIF – Service Reform and Innovation Grant Program will remain open from 11 September until 30 April 2025.

Organisations can submit an application at any time.

Assessment processes will be completed as per the following schedule:

- Submitted applications received by 30 October 2024 will be comparatively assessed and announced in November 2024.
- Submitted applications received by 14 February 2025 will be comparatively assessed and announced in March 2025.

- Submitted applications received by 30 April 2025 will be comparatively assessed and announced in May 2025.
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Feedback

If your application is not successful, it does not mean your application is without merit.

Unsuccessful applicants may seek feedback by emailing the SHS mailbox at:
shsprogram@homes.nsw.gov.au

Homes NSW

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Parramatta 2124

Office hours:
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9.00am – 5.00pm

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