

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) Governance, Resilience, Opportunities and Workforce (GROW)

Grant Program Guidelines

January 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Communities and Justice acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that contributed to the development of this document.

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1 Key dates and Information

Grant Application Opens	4 February 2026
Grant Application Closes	19 March 2026 at 4:00pm
Assessment of submitted applications	April 2026
Notification of application outcomes	May 2026
Grant program results announced by Minister	May 2026
Grant program results published	June 2026
Projects commence	1 July 2026
Projects conclude	30 June 2027
Final report and Financial Acquittal due to DCJ	30 July 2027
Decision-maker	Minister or the Delegated decision maker
NSW Government Agency	NSW Department of Communities and Justice
Type of grant opportunity	Open, competitive
Grant value (total available funding for the grant and the available individual grant amounts, excluding GST)	Up to \$1 million (total funding) Category 1: From \$3,000 to \$15,000 (per applicant) Category 2: Up to \$50,000 (per applicant)
Enquiries	aboriginalsectorengagementpathways@dcj.nsw.gov.au

2 Overview

2.1 ACCOs GROW Grant Program Guidelines

The Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO) Governance, Resilience, Opportunities, Workforce (GROW) Grant Program Guidelines contain information to assist potential applicants to complete the application. It includes an overview of the ACCOs GROW Grant Program, information about the application process, eligibility, and assessment criteria, how the funds can and cannot be used, and reporting requirements.

Please read these guidelines before completing your application for the ACCOs GROW Grant Program.

2.1.1 Purpose of the ACCOs GROW Grant Program

The NSW Government is investing up to \$1 million (excl GST) to:

- encourage sustainable growth of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), particularly those supporting children and their families.
- fund organisational capability building activities that empower ACCOs to grow sustainably.
- support small and/or emerging ACCOs. Please note, the grant is not for the establishment of new ACCOs.

The initiative responds to feedback from the sector and contributes to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reform 2 by increasing support for building the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.

2.1.2 Objectives and outcomes

The objectives of the grant are to:

- **Strengthen workforce capability**
 - Support ACCOs to enhance workforce skills and capacity.
 - Build leadership capacity within Aboriginal organisations to support succession planning and career pathways.
- **Enhance governance and strategic partnerships**
 - Improve governance practices that reflect Aboriginal values and community accountability.
 - Foster strategic partnerships that support collaboration, shared learning, and sustainability.
- **Support business strategy and financial sustainability**
 - Enable ACCOs to strengthen business planning, financial management, and revenue diversification.
 - Build resilience and adaptability in response to changing funding environments and community needs.
- **Improve data capability and outcomes measurement**
 - Support ACCOs to collect, analyse, and use data to demonstrate outcomes, inform decision-making, and advocate for community needs.

2.1.3 Target group

The Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO) Governance, Resilience, Opportunities, Workforce (GROW) Grant Program will provide grants to support existing ACCOs in NSW delivering or wanting to deliver programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, including:

- early intervention, family support services and parenting programs
- early childhood education and care
- child and maternal health
- domestic and family violence
- other services supporting children and their families

2.2 Funding amounts

One-off funding for 12 months is available to recipients.

There will be two funding categories available to apply for:

- Category 1: grant amounts \$3,000 - \$15,000
- Category 2: grant amounts \$15,001 - \$50,000

Grant funding must be spent by 30 June 2027.

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

3 Eligibility Criteria

3.1 Eligible applicants

To be eligible to apply for the grant program you must be:

- a not-for-profit Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) in NSW as set out in the Clause 44 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control is an act of self-determination. Under this Agreement, an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation delivers services, including land and resource management that builds the strength and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people and is:

- incorporated under relevant legislation and not-for-profit
- controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- connected to the community, or communities, in which they deliver the services
- governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body.

Please see the link for further information on how DCJ defines and works with [Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations](#).

- delivering or wanting to deliver programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in NSW
- have an Australian Business Number and be registered for GST

3.2 Other mandatory criteria

Applicants must:

- address the NSW National Redress Scheme sanctions.
 - not have outstanding acquittals with DCJ.
 - be an organisation based in NSW for projects to be carried out in NSW.
 - maintain adequate and current insurance cover including but not limited to; Workers Compensation Insurance, Professional Indemnity Insurance, Personal Accident Insurance.
 - have public liability insurance of at least \$10 million per claim or be willing to purchase it.
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4 Assessment Criteria

4.1 Assessment of grant applications

This is an open and competitive grant program. All submitted applications will first be screened for eligibility. Eligible applications will then be assessed based on the following assessment criteria:

1. Relevance

- The proposed activity/ies clearly align with the objectives of the grant program.
- The applicant has a plan for how outcomes will be measured, and learnings will be applied beyond the grant period.

2. Impact

- The proposed activity/ies deliver positive results and strengthen the ACCO's capacity to deliver services that benefit Aboriginal children and their families in NSW.
- The applicant has appropriate community relationships and capability to engage with community in a culturally respectful manner.

3. Implementation

- The applicant has the necessary experience and resources to complete the project on time and within budget, ensuring good participation and value for money.
- The budget is clear, reasonable and realistic, and proportionate to expected outcomes.

4. Prioritisation

- Priority will be given to small and/or emerging ACCOs, including those looking to expand into other child and family program areas. This will be considered based on responses in your application form.
- Applications may also be prioritised geographically to support an equitable spread of funds and projects across NSW.

4.1.1 Decision making

- All submitted applications will be screened for eligibility and compliance with guidelines.
- DCJ Staff Assessors will assess and score all eligible applications against the assessment criteria.
- A Grant Assessment Panel, comprising of majority Aboriginal members, will review the scoring conducted by DCJ Staff Assessors and make recommendations to the final decision maker. The Minister or a Delegated decision maker is the final decision maker.

- Partial funding may be offered where an application includes ineligible activities or budget items.

5 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.

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) document for examples of projects and activities that could be supported by the grant.

5.1 Grant fund exclusions

Organisations must use the grant funds, including any interest earned, for the purposes of the grant.

Items or activities that funding cannot be used for include:

- Any activity of a commercial nature that is for profit
- Existing debt or budget deficits
- Capital works, including building work
- Permanent salaries/wages (costs for temporary tutors/instructors for your program or activity can be included)
- Permanent equipment purchases (unless considered Minor Equipment <\$5,000)
- Purchase of vehicles
- Business as usual costs or general operating expenses
- 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.

5.2 Unspent project funds

If a grant recipient's project is completed and there are unspent project funds remaining, these must be returned to NSW Department of Communities and Justice unless otherwise specified in the grant funding agreement if more than \$250.

6 Application process

One step application process:

- Before you start your application, please review the Grant Program Guidelines, the FAQs and consider attending the information session.
- One application form submitted per applicant will be assessed based on eligibility and assessment criteria. Smarty Grants will be used to support the application process.
- Applicants will be formally notified on whether their application has been successful. It is an applicant's responsibility to ensure all contact details are up to date.

Further support on the grant is available by emailing aboriginalsectorengagementpathways@dcj.nsw.gov.au

For queries regarding Smarty Grants, please contact the DCJ Grant Design and Support team by emailing grantdesignandsupport@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

Please quote your Application ID in all correspondence. If you are not familiar with the SmartyGrants management system, please refer to the SmartyGrants [Help Guide for Applicants](#) or check out [Applicant FAQs](#). You can also contact SmartyGrants directly if you are having technical difficulties with the application form or your SmartyGrants account/password, via email service@smartygrants.com.au.

6.1 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.

6.2 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 [DCJ Subcontracting policy](#).

6.3 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 a minimum of \$10 million Public Liability Insurance or a willingness to purchase it.

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

6.4 Banking details

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

7 Successful grant applications

7.1 Grant funding agreement

- The application, Grant Funding Agreement and acquittal for the grant will be managed using the SmartyGrants management system and Adobe Acrobat Sign.
- Successful applicants are required to return the signed Grant Funding Agreement within two weeks of receipt. If you do not return your signed grant agreement by this date your grant offer may be forfeited.

- All projects must be completed by 30 June 2027.
 - 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 via email.
 - Once we receive your signed Grant Funding Agreement via 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 timeframes 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 by email the DCJ Aboriginal Sector Engagement and Pathways Team team aboriginalsectorengagementpathways@dcj.nsw.gov.au
 - OR Grant Design and Support grantdesignandsupport@dcj.nsw.gov.au.
 - 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.
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7.2 Monitoring and reporting

- Recipients are required to submit the following:
 - o Mid-term report on activity/ies, milestones and challenges encountered.
 - o Final Report that includes a summary of outcomes achieved. The final report should also cover to what extent the grant funding has contributed to the intent of Priority Reform 2, including an assessment of impact, sustainability and community benefit. Recipients are encouraged to share stories or case studies that highlight community impact and lessons learned.
 - o Financial Acquittal showing how funds were spent to be submitted no later than 30 July 2027. DCJ will send you the final acquittal form prior the required date that you will need to complete in the SmartyGrants portal.
 - o Recipients may be invited to a Learnings Workshop with other successful applicants to reflect on the learnings and impact of the program.
 - Please note that any photographs or videos containing images of participants and/or staff submitted in the Final Report must be accompanied by a signed [DCJ still and moving images consent form](#).
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8 Feedback and appeals process

If your application is not successful, it does not mean your application is without merit. Funding is limited and not all applications are successful. Due to the high-volume applications, we are unable to provide individual feedback on each unsuccessful application.

9 Publication of grant information

The NSW Grant Administration 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 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).

10 Additional information

10.1 Complaint handling

Any complaints should be sent in writing to GrantDesignandSupport@dcj.nsw.gov.au

10.2 Access to information

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.

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.

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.

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.

10.3 Ethical conduct

Conflict of interest management

Conflicts of Interest between DCJ and applicants will be managed in accordance with the DCJ's code of conduct, and declarations are made and recorded by all persons involved in performing functions related to the assessment process.

Confidentiality

DCJ staff who assist an applicant with an application will not be involved in the assessment for that application.

Information relating to the successful applications, including the name of the applicant, description of the funded project and the funding amount, will be included in:

- Public media releases.
 - An announcement on the DCJ website.
 - The NSW Grants finder website.
 - DCJ social media.
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10.4 Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that this publication is free from error and/or omission at the date of publication. The authors, publisher and any person involved in the preparation of this publication take no responsibility for loss occurring to any person acting or refraining from action as a result of information contained herein.

10.5 Accessibility

Grant Design and Support team can provide grant information and application forms in accessible formats on request. Formats include word documents, audio disk and large print. We also accept applications in accessible formats.

10.6 Support available to applicants

For questions regarding the grant and related information, support is available by emailing the DCJ Aboriginal Sector Engagement and Pathways team at aboriginalsectorengagementpathways@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

While staff will be pleased to answer questions about the application process, they cannot comment on the content of the application. To maintain a fair and equitable process, staff are unable to edit or correct any applications.

For queries regarding Smarty Grants, please contact the DCJ Grant Design and Support team by emailing grantdesignandsupport@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

Communities and Justice

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