

Connecting Seniors Grant Program 2025

Grant Program Guidelines

September 2024

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Department of Communities and Justice

Grant Program Guidelines

Connecting Seniors Grant Program Guidelines

The Connecting Seniors Grant Program Guidelines contains information to assist applicants to apply for grant application. It includes an overview of the Connecting Seniors Grant Program, information about the application process, eligibility and assessment criteria, how the funds can and cannot be used, and reporting requirements.

Read these guidelines before completing the Connecting Seniors Grant Program application.

Overview of the Connecting Seniors Grant Program

The NSW Government is investing \$840,000 in projects and initiatives under the Connecting Seniors Grant Program (the Grant Program).

The Grant Program aims to support older people to connect with others and address the challenges that contribute to isolation for older people. The Grant Program is available for projects and initiatives that support people aged 65 years and over, and Aboriginal people aged 50 years and over.

The Grant Program is an action under [Priority Area 3: Participating in Inclusive Communities in the Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2031](#).

Key Changes to the Connecting Seniors Grant Program

Changes have been made to the Grant Program to better target harder to reach seniors. These changes reflect the priority groups outlined in the [Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2031](#).

Introduction of Aboriginal Grants

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) is committed to responding to the needs of Aboriginal people and communities and strengthening the Aboriginal Community-Controlled sector.

The Aboriginal Grants category targets projects led by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). Aboriginal-led and delivered initiatives benefit from firsthand knowledge of community needs and strengths.

The introduction of the Aboriginal Grants category supports the Closing the Gap Priority Reform 2: Building the community-controlled sector, and target to 'increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations'¹

¹[2022-2024 NSW Implementation Plan for Closing the Gap](#)

Introduction of Multicultural Grants

To improve support for older people who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), DCJ has introduced a multicultural grant category.

This category focuses on projects led by multicultural organisations that support people from CALD communities. These projects may assist older people who face challenges such as language barriers, racism, digital exclusion, financial hardship, elder abuse, and difficulties accessing community support and services, which can increase their risk of further isolation.

Only multicultural organisations whose primary focus is to support people from CALD communities are eligible to apply for this grant category.

Additional Program Objective: intergenerational focus

An additional objective has been added to the guidelines. The updated guidelines encourage projects in all five funding categories to adopt an intergenerational focus, to foster social connections between older and younger people. Intergenerational initiatives can reduce social isolation, provide a sense of purpose, improve mood and have a positive impact on health outcomes². Applications for intergenerational projects will be considered across all four funding categories.

Target group

The target group for the Connecting Seniors grant program is aligned with the [Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021 – 2031](#) and must include older people who are considered at higher risk of isolation.

Eligibility Criteria

Only organisations with the following legal status will be eligible to apply for funding:

- incorporated organisations registered and approved as a not-for-profit body by NSW Fair Trading
- NSW not-for-profit company limited by guarantee (it is preferred but not essential the organisation holds a valid ACNC registration and/or has DGR status)
- not-for-profit company limited by shares, registered in NSW (must be non-dividend distributing)
- association (registered under the Associations Incorporation Act 2009 with NSW Fair Trading)
- cooperative (registered under a relevant Act of Parliament)
- religious organisations operating in NSW (registered as one of the above or established under an Act of Parliament)
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
- NSW Indigenous Corporation (must be registered with Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations)

² [Australian Institute of Intergenerational Practice](#)

- NSW Local Aboriginal Land Council
- NSW local council operating under the Local Government Act 1993
- NSW non-government organisation established under its own Act of Parliament
- Other criteria may include whether the applicant organisation is based in NSW, the areas or types of clients it serves, whether the organisation has an ABN and any other considerations relevant to the objectives of your grants.

Note: For the purposes of this grant program, ‘**Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations**’ are defined in accordance with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap:

Clause 44 of the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) states that:

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.

Note: Applicants will be required to provide documentation to support their ACCO status.

Objectives

The 2025 Grant Program aims to build social connections and reduce isolation for older people, including those aged 65 years and over, or 50 years and over for Aboriginal people.

The objectives of the Connecting Seniors grant program are to:

- provide meaningful and lasting social connections that can be maintained beyond the program
- help older people connect with each other through small group activities held in person throughout the year to build and maintain social connections (rather than a one-off activity)
- enable older people to develop lasting quality relationships
- engage new people, particularly harder-to-reach older people
- help older people and young people connect through intergenerational projects.

Assessment Criteria

Eligible organisations must meet the following assessment criteria to be considered for funding:

1. **Relevance** – the project is relevant to the objectives of the grant program and the demonstrated needs of target groups in local communities; achieved through engaging older people, particularly new and harder-to-reach older people.

2. **Impact** – the project will deliver tangible, positive, and clearly articulated outcomes. Must provide evidence of previous and current impact delivering projects with lasting social connections.
3. **Implementation** –the applicant demonstrates the appropriate skills and expertise to deliver the project on time and on budget, to attract and sustain participation throughout the duration of the program, and project is value for money. For local councils, consideration will be given to how their proposal can be integrated into the existing council structure to ensure ongoing sustainability.

Prioritisation

A focus for this grant is on older people from the following priority groups due to these groups being considered at higher risk of isolation:

- Aboriginal people aged 50 years and over
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or asexual (LGBTIQ+)
- people living with disability, dementia, chronic disease, or mental illness
- carers
- people in rural, regional, and remote areas.

Applications may also be prioritised geographically to support an equitable spread of funds and projects across NSW.

Assessment

Applications will be assessed as a stage one Open Competitive grant as per the [NSW Grant Administration Guide](#) section 6.1.2 against eligibility, prioritisation, and assessment criteria. An Assessment Panel, including two government officers and one independent non-government member, will assess the applications and make recommendations to the designated decision - maker.

The delegated decision-maker will consider the recommendations.

Funding Categories

Category 1 - Aboriginal grants

Who can apply: Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations

Amount: \$30,000

Number of grants available: 4

Total funding: \$120,000

Aims:

- ✓ Create a new program or enhance an existing program for older Aboriginal people (aged 50 and over) that fosters social inclusion, builds social connections within their community and advances the focus areas in the Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2031.
- ✓ Improve opportunities for older Aboriginal people to engage and connect with their communities, through cultural projects led by Aboriginal community organisations.

Note:

- ACCO's may be required to provide documentation to confirm their ACCO status.
- Projects that are business as usual will not be funded.

Category 2 – Multicultural grants

Who can apply: Not-for-profit multicultural organisations

Amount: \$30,000

Number of grants available: 4

Total funding: \$120,000

Aims:

- ✓ Create a new or enhance an existing program for older people who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) that fosters social inclusion, strengthens social connections and advances the focus areas in the Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2031.
- ✓ Improve opportunities for older people from a CALD background to engage and connect with the community, through cultural projects led by multicultural organisations.

Note:

- Only multicultural organisations whose primary focus is to deliver initiatives, services or support people who are culturally and linguistically diverse are eligible to apply for the Multicultural Grant Category.
- Projects that are business as usual will not be funded.

Category 3 - Creation grants

Who can apply: Not-for-profit community organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Not-for-profit multicultural organisations

Amount: \$30,000

Number of grants available: 6

Total funding: \$180,000

Aims:

- ✓ Create a new innovative short-term program that fosters social inclusion, builds social connections and targets older people and advances the Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2031

- ✓ Improve opportunities for older people to engage and connect with their communities, through innovative projects.

Category 4 – Enhancement and/or Expansion grants

Who can apply: Not-for-profit community organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Not-for-profit multicultural organisations

Amount: \$30,000

Number of grants available: 6

Total funding: \$180,000

Aims:

- ✓ Enhance a successful program that fosters social inclusion, builds social connections to target older people aged 65 years and over, or 50 years and over for Aboriginal people.
- ✓ Expand a successful program that fosters social inclusion which is targeted to older people in a new geographical area or a new cohort (for example, rural and remote areas, CALD or LGBTIQIA+).
- ✓ Enhance or expand projects that can successfully start delivery as soon as the grant is provided, minimising long set up times and be delivered in full in 12 months.

Note:

- Projects that are business as usual will not be funded.

Category 5 – NSW Local Council grants only

Who can apply: NSW Local councils

Amount: \$30,000

Number of grants available: 8

Total funding: \$240,000

Aims:

- ✓ Support local councils who have the knowledge, skills, resources and capacity to work with older people.
- ✓ Generate positive outcomes for older people by delivering projects tailored to the needs of the local community.
- ✓ Projects should target new and harder to reach seniors Eg. older people who are carers, older people who are LGBTIQIA+ and older people residing in regional, rural and remote areas.

Note:

- To view examples of previous projects, visit [Connecting Seniors Grant Program](#)
- For more information and details about funding categories, please refer to the Connecting Seniors grant program [FAQ's](#) and [DCJ Grants](#).

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

The following will not be considered eligible for funding:

- One off events as the Grant Program seeks to build and maintain social connections through a series of activities or events
 - Project costs that are already the subject of another government grant, subsidy or financial assistance
 - 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, for example tables and computers. However, costs associated to specific cultural activities related directly to the project, for example, materials to build yarning circles for the purpose of the program 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
 - Interstate or overseas travel costs (**except:** costs to transport seniors to and from the program are included)
 - The same project twice. For example, two different organisations cannot apply for funds for the same program or activity.
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Application and Assessment process

- All applications must be submitted online via Smarty Grants portal.
 - Applications will open 16 September 2024; and close 5pm on 21 October 2024.
 - Applications will be initially assessed by DCJ for general program compliance, and then assessed by the Assessment team and Assessment Panel.
 - Applicants will be formally notified in December 2024 if their application has been successful or unsuccessful. Applicants must ensure their contact details are up to date.
 - The Minister for Seniors has delegated the Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Policy and Commissioning of DCJ as the final approver.
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Prepare to submit your application

Before you start your application, please review the [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

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 [Connecting Seniors Grant Program FAQ's](#) and the DCJ [subcontracting](#) policy.

Insurance

Grant recipients must maintain current and adequate insurance appropriate to the activities/services funded under this grant. The minimum insurance is \$10 million Public Liability Insurance.

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

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.

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.

Successful applicants – grant funding agreement.

The application, Grant Funding Agreement and acquittal for the grant will be managed using SmartyGrants portal 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 local council.

It is the applicants' responsibility to ensure availability of authorised officers to read the terms and conditions of the Grant Funding Agreement, and to sign the Grant Funding Agreement.

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

Successful applicants' obligations

- 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. If the variation is not agreed to prior, the grant offer may be withdrawn.
- To discuss a variation, please contact the Seniors team by email Seniors@dcj.nsw.gov.au
- All projects must be completed by 31 January 2026.
- 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 provided to the new committee.

Reporting

- Organisations will be expected to participants to complete a DCJ survey to assess the impact of the program. Survey responses need to be shared with DCJ, are anonymous and confidential.
- A mid-term report for each project needs to be submitted in the SmartyGrants portal.
- The Final Completion Report Acquittal needs to be submitted in the SmartyGrants portal no later than 28 February 2026.
- Photographs or videos of participants and/or staff in Final Completion Report must be accompanied by a signed [DCJ still and moving images consent form](#).

Timeframes

Date	Event/Action
16 September 2024	Grant applications open
21 October 2024	Grant applications close
October/November 2024	Assessment of grant applications
December 2024	Advice to all applicants
December 2024	Public announcement by Minister
December 2024	Grant Funding agreements with successful applicants and payment
January 2025	Projects commence
June 2025	Mid-term report due to DCJ in SmartyGrants Portal
31 January 2026	Projects end
28 February 2026	Final Report Acquittal due to DCJ

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.

Communities and Justice

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