



Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

Open Spaces Program

Places to Play

Program guideline

November 2021





Acknowledgement of country

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

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Artwork (left) by Nikita Ridgeway



Place, Design and Public Spaces

The Place, Design and Public Spaces group within the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (the Department) improves people’s lives by planning and designing places and public spaces that make NSW a great place to live and work. We enable places in which people love to live and connect, now and into the future, by influencing, designing and delivering great and sustainable places for the benefit of the people and natural environment of NSW. We do this by putting people, place and community at the centre of everything we do.

We help provide homes, services and infrastructure; build great communities; create jobs and protect the environment. We create great places and experiences for all. We plan for a changing and thriving NSW. We inspire strong and resilient communities and regions and ensure the responsible and sustainable use of NSW’s resources.

Place, Design and Public Spaces also includes the Government Architect NSW, Greater Sydney Parklands, Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust, Place Management NSW, Sydney Olympic Park Authority, and Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation.

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Introduction

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment is inviting councils and eligible NSW Government agencies and entities to apply for funding through the Places to Play program as part of the Open Spaces Program. The purpose of the funding is to create inclusive public open spaces for adventure, nature and water play.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how much communities value their public spaces. Results from the Public Spaces During COVID-19 survey showed that half of people surveyed were spending more time outdoors during the pandemic. The Places to Play program is about providing more inclusive public open spaces for adventure, nature and water play. This will support the health and wellbeing of the community as we re-emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program includes a \$16.7 million investment over 3 years to support the creation of innovative and inclusive play and recreation spaces. These spaces will be for people of all ages and abilities and have a focus on adventure, nature and water play. This investment will include:

- new and better public spaces that facilitate adventure sports and recreation (such as mountain biking, parkour, scooter and skate places and pump tracks)
- nature and water play for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, and promotion of recreation and connection with nature for families and children following lockdown

The program builds on the principles of the Everyone Can Play program, broadening its scope to include the creation of inclusive water, nature and adventure play. It will build on the Everyone Can Play message that play doesn't just mean playgrounds and it isn't just for children. Everyone in the community can come together and play.



Photograph – Sarah Rhodes

Adventure play

Adventure play is increasingly popular, and demand is growing for spaces that support activities such as mountain biking, BMX, parkour and skateboarding. The Greater Sydney Outdoors Survey highlights the increasing variety of recreation activities, reflecting the diverse population of the state.

Adventure play commonly involves complex and advanced skills, such as strength and control, quick reflexes, balance, and street-style technical tricks. This type of play has an inherent level of risk that appeals to those who seek a thrill and rush of adrenaline.

Adventure play, such as skateparks, has traditionally been targeted at adolescent boys and young men and have been built at the periphery of places. But it can be designed to attract a broader cross-section of users – such as adolescent girls, younger users and parents, and people with disability.

This program provides an opportunity to deliver adventure play for everyone. We encourage applicants to think about integrating adventure play in the heart of public and open spaces, where traditional users are not marginalised and where new users feel safe and welcome. We also encourage applicants to consider features that are not typically associated with these traditional types of play that might appeal to a broader user group.



Case study: Harrington Park Lake Youth Precinct

In 2018, Camden Council upgraded the 6,850 m² Harrington Park Lake Reserve into an inclusive youth precinct.

A major component of the upgrade involved transforming the old car park and road that cut through the centre of the park into a play area. Skating elements, such as jumps, steps, ramps and pyramids, were integrated into the old road. The pavement was also retained to provide inclusive connections between the different activity nooks located along the route.

The design includes play experiences that cater to a variety of interests, ages and abilities. Play experiences include scooter tracks and moguls for younger users, skate elements for older and more experienced users, and a giant net for those who want an extra challenge.

Quiet relaxation areas and seating options are scattered between these active nooks for those who want to rest between adrenaline-pumping activities and for those who prefer watching and supervising. These transition areas are also important in creating a vibrant park full of exciting activities diffused through the space without creating user conflict.



Photo: Guy Wilkson

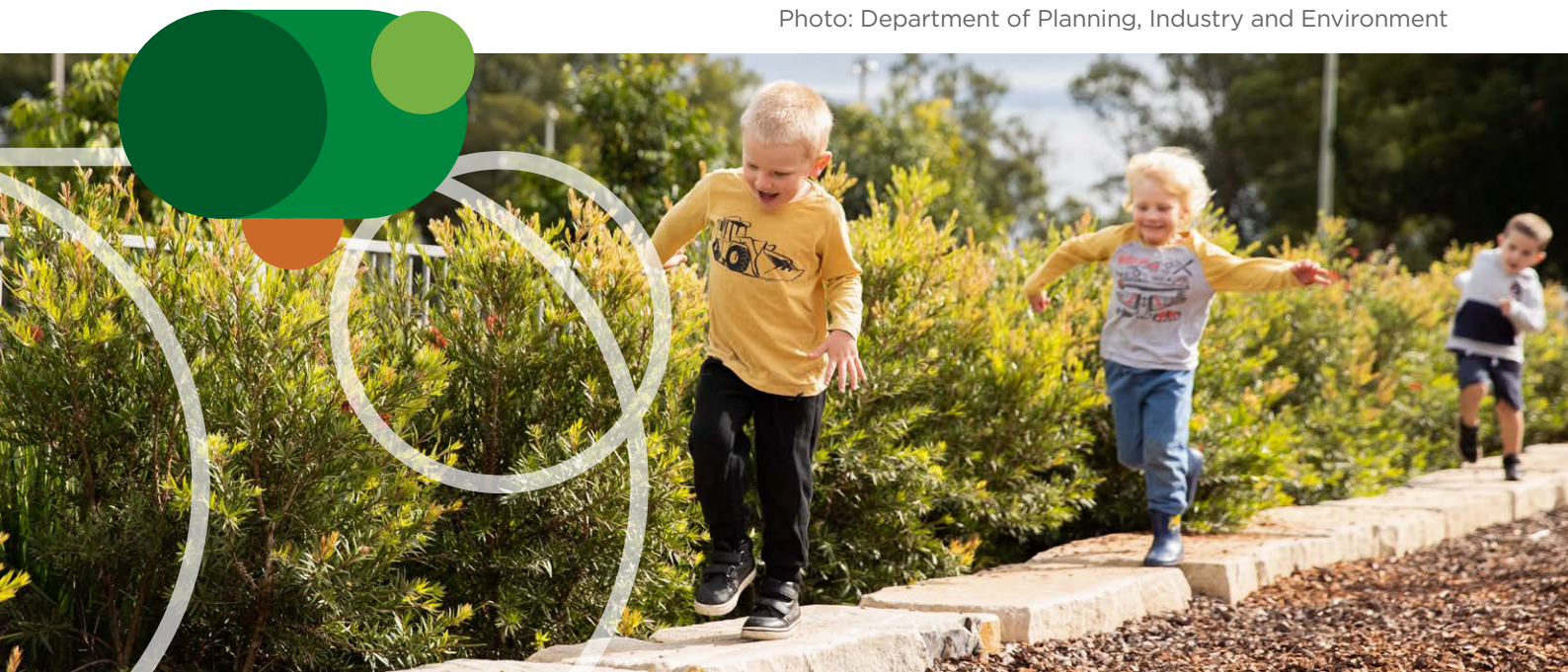
Nature and water play

Nature play has emerged over the last decade as a critical type of play experience for children, significantly improving their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. In the busy, tech-savvy, urban world we live in, society has become increasingly disconnected from the natural environment, which can have a negative impact on our mental and physical wellbeing.

Playing in natural environments regularly has been identified as critical in growing children's resilience, self-confidence, initiative, creativity and more. Connection with nature is also known for reducing stress and anxiety in people of all ages.

Nature playspaces are environments that include predominantly natural materials, such as plants, rocks, logs, sand, mulch and water, often combined with custom play equipment to provide a variety of experiences. Water is a particularly

Photo: Department of Planning, Industry and Environment



powerful element in nature play spaces, due to the myriad of ways in which it can be enjoyed and the soothing sensory effects it can have. Playing with water can be magical – watching it flow over surfaces is universally pleasing, as is feeling it run over your hands or feet. In warmer months, water play areas also become a way of cooling down and appreciating being outdoors, despite the heat.

Nature and water play can help make playspaces welcoming, comfortable, interesting and diverse. The Everyone Can Play principles should be applied to these types of playspaces to offer a range of social, environmental, and developmental benefits that are available to everyone.

Maintaining access and connection to nature and water is a great way to support inclusion through the incorporation of sensory play environments.

We're all aware of how good nature is for our mental health – this benefit is magnified for kids and adults with special needs who spend significant amounts of time in artificial environments. This program provides an opportunity for more people in our community to experience the benefits that nature and water play offer.



Case study: Lizard Log, Western Sydney Parklands

Western Sydney Parklands' Lizard Log is a nature-based playspace designed to reflect its surrounding natural environment. The playspace includes a climbing wall, slide, dual and single flying foxes, balancing beams, giant swings and a water play deck.

The water play deck includes a simple pump and rill water play system where water drains into a holding vessel and then further down a steep rill before draining into the soil, providing moisture for nearby plants. This demonstrates how water play doesn't have to be big, complicated or expensive to provide a fun, inclusive experience.

Lizard Log also includes tracks through and around the playspace that are perfect for scooters, bike riders and walkers to enjoy the bushland setting. The tracks have different lengths so people can choose based on their preferred level of challenge.

A distinctive feature of the playspace are the wood-carved animals made from salvaged timber from the area. Other timber elements include stepping blocks and organic logs of different sizes that can be used for balancing, sitting and climbing.

After a big day of playing, walking and cycling, everyone can enjoy a nice picnic together in one of the picnic shelters and use one of the public barbecues.



Photo: Greater Sydney Parklands



Photo: Michelle Gonsal

Funding

The Places to Play program includes a \$16.7 million investment over three years for projects across New South Wales that deliver inclusive public open spaces for adventure, nature and water play.

For the 2021/22 round of the Places to Play program, a total of \$9 million in funding is available: This includes:

- \$4 million for adventure play in the 2021/22 grant program
- \$4 million for nature and water play in the 2021/22 grant program
- \$1 million for pilot projects.

Eligible applicants can apply for up to \$500,000 for adventure play projects and up to \$250,000 for nature and water play projects. Places to Play is a competitive grant program and while matched funding is not a requirement, projects that include a financial contribution from council or eligible government agencies and/or from other grant programs will be prioritised.

Pilot project expression of interest

As part of the 2021/22 allocation, the Department invite councils and eligible NSW Government agencies and entities to submit expressions of interest (EOI) for up to \$500,000 in funding for an adventure play pilot project and up to \$250,000 in funding for a nature or water play pilot project.

The Department is looking to fund pilot projects that can demonstrate best-practice, inclusive adventure and/or nature and water play projects. Successful pilot projects will have earlier access to funding than the grant program, but must be projects that are advanced in their planning and design and ready to commence immediately. Construction must start no later than 28 February 2022.



Program objectives

The objectives of the Places to Play program include:

- creating innovative and inclusive open spaces that promote play
- demonstrating how to apply the Everyone Can Play principles to the creation of adventure, nature and water play areas
- supporting investment in the creation of high-quality, inclusive public and open spaces to create a lasting community benefit
- supporting community health and wellbeing
- addressing critical shortfalls in freely accessible places for adventure, nature and water play and recreation
- contributing to the post-pandemic economic recovery of NSW through the creation of jobs, stimulating businesses and the recreation and visitor economy
- contributing to the delivery of the NSW Government's Priority for Greener Public Spaces by increasing the proportion of homes in urban areas within 10 minutes' walk of quality green, open and public space by 10% by 2023.

Eligibility

Funding is available to all New South Wales councils and eligible NSW state government agencies and entities for projects that deliver new and better public spaces that facilitate adventure, play and recreation.

Eligible state government agencies include infrastructure agencies who own and manage the publicly accessible land on which the public spaces improvements would be built. The delivered facilities must be freely and publicly accessible.

Refer to Appendix A - Application Checklist for more information on preparing your grant or EOJ application.

Photo: Department of Planning, Industry and Environment



Photo: Cameron Murchison

Projects can include:

- inclusive water and nature playspaces
- inclusive mountain biking tracks and supporting infrastructure
- inclusive scooter and skate places and supporting infrastructure
- inclusive pump tracks and supporting infrastructure
- other spaces/facilities that offer inclusive adventure play in line with the program objectives and criteria.

Projects funded through the 2021/22 grant program must be delivered within an 18-month timeframe and must be freely accessible to the community upon completion. All projects selected as pilot projects must be advanced in their planning and design and ready to commence immediately. Construction must start no later than 28 February 2022.

Projects must be located on land that applicants own or are responsible for managing. If the applicant is not the land owner, submissions must include a letter of support from the land owner.

For more resources to support your application, visit the [Open Spaces Program website](#). This includes frequently asked questions, fact sheets and a webinar designed to help you address the program guidelines.

Ineligible projects

The following projects and works are not eligible for funding:

- projects outside of NSW
- projects located in sensitive cultural sites or in environmentally restricted areas
- remediation projects that do not achieve the program objectives of delivering inclusive, public open spaces for adventure and play
- funding of personnel or staff positions, unless a labour cost exemption request is completed by council and approved by the Department
- purchase or lease of land for purposes other than open space creation
- temporary infrastructure or buying/upgrading non-fixed equipment
- public art pieces as a singular project. Public art that is integrated into a wider public and open space project will be considered.
- projects that require the community to pay fees to access
- commercial buildings and clubhouses
- sports fields, full-sized courts, swimming pools, indoor facilities
- events, marketing, branding, advertising or product promotion
- projects requiring ongoing funding from the NSW Government
- retrospective funding to cover any project component that is already complete or underway (under the grant program)
- design services will only be funded as part of the delivery of a project. Master planning or design services will not be funded in isolation.
- maintenance works
- car parking, unless it directly supports improved access to public open space and an exemption is requested and approved by the Department.

Pilot project EOIs will not be considered unless they:

- are sufficiently detailed and specific to allow consideration against the program objectives
- are accompanied by a supporting letter from a general manager or council CEO
- are submitted by the deadline
- are accompanied by in-principle support of the landowner, where the land is not owned or managed by council
- identify all necessary approvals and include evidence of in-principle support from relevant authorities
- include detailed costing, tender or detailed design plans and planning approval documentation.



Photo: Brett Boardman

Assessment process and criteria

Assessment process

An independent assessment panel (the Panel) will review and assess all applications against the program objectives and assessment criteria (see criteria and weighting below).

The Panel will make recommendations to the Department for endorsement. We will notify successful applicants, and prepare funding agreements. Funding will be released once funding agreements have been signed and executed.

The Panel will be made up of NSW Government representatives from different agencies and external landscape and open space design experts. A probity adviser will oversee the assessment.

Assessment criteria

Table 1 outlines the assessment criteria. The panel will assess projects against key components including project merit and project deliverability.

Table 1. Assessment criteria

Project Merit 50%	
Criteria	Details
Program alignment and project clarity	The project scope is clearly stated and supports the objectives of the program.
Inclusion	The project will be designed and delivered to enable all community members to 'get there, play and stay'. This could be through increased amenity, improved accessibility, improved safety, and provision of more diverse opportunities.
Innovation	The project clearly demonstrates best practice methodologies and outcomes that offer lessons that can be shared across government and industry in the creation of adventure, water and nature play spaces in NSW. The project does not revert to a 'business as usual' approach.
Collaboration	The project drives collaboration and partnerships with community, businesses and institutions, taking a place-based approach. Plans for collaboration between individuals and/or institutions to develop the project are clearly articulated. The approach to engaging the community in the project is clearly articulated. This includes ensuring engagement is inclusive.
Environmental sustainability	Projects demonstrate how the health and safety of the community and the local environment will be sustained and enhanced during construction and operation of the facility.

Project deliverability 50%

Criteria

Details

Financial viability

Project budget clearly outlines the most significant cost line-items required for the development of the project, along with a reasonable timeline for the expenses (Direct and in-kind costs are identified).

Deliverability

Project methodology is clear and feasible within the parameters of the program.

Timeliness of delivery

Applicant commitment to roll out project quickly. Project schedule and project plan are clear and identify key deliverable dates within program timeframes.

Risk mitigation

Risk assessment included with strategies to mitigate project risks.

Value for money

Project uses funding effectively to maximise the scale and impact of the project. Projects that include applicant contributions will be considered favourably.



Photo: Adrian Taylor

Application process and timeframes

Table 2 outlines the application and assessment process and timeframes for the 2021/22 funding round of the program.

Table 2. Timeframes for the Program

Date	Milestone
16 November 2021	Pilot project EOI opens and the 2021/22 Grant round open to receive applications
1 December 2021	Pilot project expression of interest closes 4pm
December 2021	Pilot projects assessment. Announcement of successful pilot projects and funding offers made. Construction on pilot projects to commence no later than 28 February 2022
4 March 2022	2021/22 Grant applications close 4pm
March 2022	2021/22 Grant assessment
April 2022	2021/22 Grant announcement and notifications
April 2022	2021/22 Grant projects commence
October 2023	2021/22 Grant projects to be completed prior to October 2023

How to apply

1. Familiarise yourself with the grant requirements set out in these guidelines and determine if you are eligible.
2. Visit the [Open Spaces website](#) to access resources to support your application
3. Attend the Open Space Program [webinar](#) at 10am, 17 November 2021.
4. For pilot projects, complete and submit your EOI in [SmartyGrants](#) by 4pm, 1 December 2021. Successful pilot projects will be announced late 2022.
5. For 2021/22 grant applications, complete and submit your application in [SmartyGrants](#) by 4pm, 4 March 2021. Successful applications will be announced in April 2022.

Need advice?

If you are having difficulty with your application on the SmartyGrants system, check out the help guide for applicants at www.applicanthelp.smartygrants.com.au

If the problem continues, please contact SmartyGrants at:

- service@smartygrants.com.au
- Telephone support 03 9320 6888
- Support Desk Hours: 9:00am - 5:00pm AEST, Mon - Fri
- Visit www.help.smartygrants.com.au

When you attach files to support the application, we strongly recommend you keep files under 5 megabytes and use concise and descriptive file names.

The Department can provide information to potential applicants on how to interpret these guidelines, including the types of projects eligible for funding. Please contact the team at open.space@planning.nsw.gov.au

Complaints procedure

Any complaints about a grant process must be provided in writing.

If you have any questions about grant decisions for this grant opportunity, please send them to open.space@planning.nsw.gov.au.

If you do not agree with how the Department has handled your complaint, you may raise this with the NSW Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will not usually look into a complaint unless the matter has first been raised directly with the relevant department. Visit the NSW Ombudsman at www.ombo.nsw.gov.au.

Privacy policy

The Department is required to comply with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1988*. The Department collects the minimum personal information you voluntarily provide to enable it to contact an organisation and to assess the merits of an application.

Any information provided by you will be stored on a database that will only be accessed by authorised personnel and is subject to privacy restrictions. The information will only be used for the purpose for which it was collected. Applicants must ensure that people whose personal details are supplied with applications are aware that the Department is being supplied with this information and how this information will be used.

Disclaimer

Submission of an application does not guarantee funding. The costs of preparing an application are borne by the applicant.



Photo: Jamie Plaza van Roon



Photo: Jamie Plaza van Roon

Program management

Successful applicants must enter into a funding agreement with the Department. The funding agreement will set out the obligations of the recipient of the funding, including, but not limited to, in relation to monitoring and reporting, project completion, and milestones and payment.

Project management

Grant recipients will be responsible for delivering and meeting the project milestones and delivering the project within 18 months.

Grant recipients will need to supply a project plan to be included in the funding agreement that sets out the works and deliverables, costs and schedule, and must carry out the project in accordance with the project plan.

Grant recipients must also provide a final concept plan before beginning construction.

Approvals

Applicants must ensure they are aware of all approvals required and consult with relevant authorities in preparing the EOI and application.

EOI submissions and applications must be accompanied by a letter of support from the general manager or equivalent.

Other funding

Applicants must disclose whether any aspect of the proposal for this funding program has either:

- received funding through another NSW Government funding program, or
- applied for funding through another NSW Government funding program that may currently be in consideration.

We will review applications to ensure that the applicant is not seeking or receiving multiple sources of funding for the same works.

Consultation with the community and other key stakeholders

The recipient must demonstrate that it has consulted the community and stakeholders on the project or that it intends to do so before finalising concept plans.

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

Grant recipients are required to:

1. provide 'before' and 'after' reporting on core indicators requested by the Department.
2. collect data both before and after using the [Evaluation Tool for Public Space and Public Life, and analyse the results](#).
3. provide high quality 'before' and 'after' images.
4. provide milestone reports and a final acquittal report via SmartyGrants at the completion of project.

Project opening event and promotion

We will give grant recipients a communication pack with approved key messages, branding, logos and multimedia to help promote the project and acknowledge the funding contribution.

Grant recipients must acknowledge the funding contribution from the NSW Government in all communications and media for the project.

If holding a formal launch event, the recipient must:

- invite the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces or a Departmental representative on the minister's behalf to attend any formal launch event (including opening and completion ceremonies, consulting beforehand on available dates where practicable); and
- give no less than 30 business days' notice before any formal event.

To make the invitation, the recipient should access the minister's [web form](#). It is for the recipient to decide if there is to be an opening event. Recipients should invite the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Department and other dignitaries and consult on a preferred date. If the invitation is accepted, a Department media officer will work with the recipient on the arrangements and media protocols.

Payment of grants

Payment of funding will be conditional on the funding being used only for the project in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement. Payment of funding will be made in accordance with the milestones and payment schedule set out in the funding agreement and will be subject to compliance with the recipient's obligations. A final acquittal and project report will be required following completion of the project.

Project responsibility

The recipient must acknowledge and agree that it is solely responsible for delivering and completing the project in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement, and will not be relieved of that responsibility because of any involvement with a third party (for example, subcontracting, partnerships).

Insurance requirements

Recipients must maintain a minimum Public Liability Insurance cover of \$20 million, workers compensation insurance for people involved in delivery of the project and insurance over assets used in connection with the project.



Photograph - Jake Oats

Appendix A: Pilot project EOI and Grant application checklist

Council must submit the following documentation at EOI and application stages.

Table 3. Pilot project EOI and grant application checklist

Pilot Project EOI	Grant Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed design/tender plans • Planning approval documentation • Council (or land owner) endorsement • Concept reports and imagery • Evidence of detailed community engagement done to inform the design of the project • Project scope • Detailed costing • Project plan with timeframes and methodologies • Detailed risk assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept plan and imagery to communicate the design of the project. • General manager or equivalent letter of support for the project • Community engagement outcomes report or plan for community engagement • In-principle support from partners if needed • High quality images of project location • Aerial map showing project location • Risk assessment • Project budget breakdown • Project plan (maximum 10 pages) • Project schedule • Image/s of desired materials for implementation (optional) • Letter/s of support from local businesses or local business associations, community groups, institutions (e.g. schools, universities or cultural institutions) (optional)





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