

Open Spaces Program

Places to Swim

Grant Program Guideline 2022/23

September 2022





Acknowledgement of country

The Department of Planning 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 (above) by Nikita Ridgeway

Cover photograph: Wagga Beach, Visit Wagga Wagga

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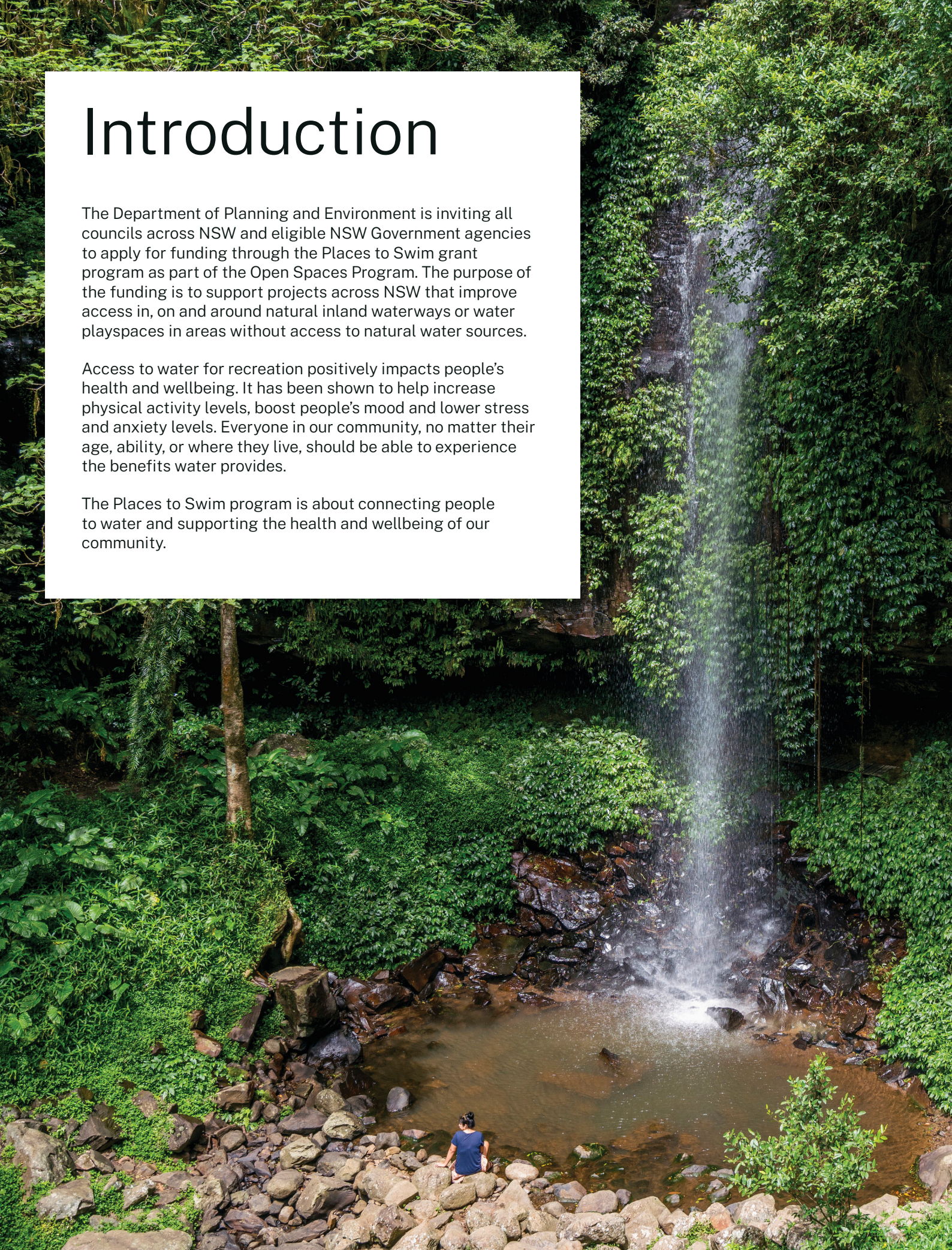
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Introduction

The Department of Planning and Environment is inviting all councils across NSW and eligible NSW Government agencies to apply for funding through the Places to Swim grant program as part of the Open Spaces Program. The purpose of the funding is to support projects across NSW that improve access in, on and around natural inland waterways or water playspaces in areas without access to natural water sources.

Access to water for recreation positively impacts people's health and wellbeing. It has been shown to help increase physical activity levels, boost people's mood and lower stress and anxiety levels. Everyone in our community, no matter their age, ability, or where they live, should be able to experience the benefits water provides.

The Places to Swim program is about connecting people to water and supporting the health and wellbeing of our community.



Photograph - Dorrigo National Park - Department of Planning and Environment

Water for recreation

Water plays an important role in our lifestyles – and not just for activities that directly involve waterways, such as swimming or fishing. People also enjoy walking along a river or creek, or simply relaxing in parks near bodies of water.

We know that access to water is a priority for the people of NSW as informed by the 2019 Greater Sydney Outdoor Survey and the draft 2022 Regional Outdoor Survey. More than 7,000 Sydneysiders responded to the Greater Sydney Outdoor Survey and told us that access to water plays an important role in their lives. Regional NSW residents have told us that they have a deep appreciation of waterways. Access to rivers, dams, pools and lakes are important for people living inland.

Creating access points to water where people can be in, on and around helps enable social interaction that fosters connectivity among neighbours, family and friends.

This need for outdoor recreation has been further expressed during COVID-19 restrictions as we also found that access to waterways for recreation varies significantly. The biggest barriers to people accessing water for recreation included travel distance and access to waterways.

The Places to Swim program addresses these issues with an investment of \$16.7 million for councils to deliver projects that enable more people to enjoy our waterways.

The latest round of grants now invites all councils in NSW to apply for funding.



Photograph - Barwon River - Quentin Jones

Getting in, on and around water

People are naturally drawn to water

Places to Swim is about more than just swimming. Being in, on and around water encourages people to think differently about their connection to water, and how they can access it.

Access to water offers different things to different people. Some love being in the water, swimming and diving under the surface. Others like to be on the water in a kayak or stand-up paddle board, and some people enjoy sitting around the water and watching the ripples.

Getting in, on and around is an invitation to people of all ages, abilities and cultures to come together and enjoy the diversity of places right across NSW.

Some examples of activities that could be supported through the creation of Places to Swim are listed below:

in

Can I get in ?

Activities where people can immerse in water

- Swimming
- Diving and jumping
- Scuba and snorkelling
- Wading and playing

on

Can I get on ?

Activities where there is secondary contact and only the limbs regularly get wet

- Paddling a kayak or a canoe
- Stand up paddle-boarding
- Liloing and rafting
- Model craft use

around

Can I get around ?

Activities where there is mainly aesthetic uses for water

- Walking
- Sitting
- Looking and listening
- Cooling off
- Fishing
- Community and competition events

Program objectives

The objectives of the Places to Swim program include:

- Creating new Places to Swim and places that support recreation in our natural waterways.
 - Improving access to and recreational engagement with waterways across NSW for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.
 - Supporting community health and wellbeing in rapidly growing communities.
 - Supporting investment in the creation of high-quality, inclusive public and open spaces to create a lasting community benefit.
 - Addressing critical shortfalls in freely accessible public places for water recreation and swimming.
- 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 Premier'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.



Photograph - Kosciuszko National Park - John Spencer

Funding and Eligibility

There is a total of \$10 million available in the 2022/2023 funding pool for the Places to Swim program.

The Department invites all NSW councils and eligible NSW Government agencies to submit an application for projects that improve access to and recreational engagement with water.

Places to Swim is a competitive grant program, and while matched funding is not a requirement, projects that include a financial contribution from council and/or from other grant programs will be prioritised.

Eligible NSW Government agencies include infrastructure agencies who own and manage the publicly accessible land on which the public spaces improvements would be built.

Eligible applicants can submit an application for one or more projects under the following categories, outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Funding Breakdown

Project Categories		
Category	Funding	Details
IN	Up to \$1M	Improvements to open spaces that will directly support swimming in natural bodies of water. Amenities and facilities that directly support the recreational use of the waterways.
ON	Up to \$750K	Improvements for water-based recreation such as launching small non-powered watercraft (such as kayaks, canoes and paddle boards). Amenities and facilities that directly support the recreational use of the waterways.
AROUND	Up to \$500K	Walking tracks/trails and infrastructure that directly connect to and support access to water for recreation (not including boat ramps, fishing infrastructure and boating infrastructure). Water playspaces that offer a place to enjoy water-based recreation for those local government areas that do not have direct access to lakes, rivers or harbours. Amenities and facilities that directly support the recreational use of the waterways

Projects can include:

- Harbour, lakes, dams and riverfront precincts, including improvements for water-based recreation such as launching small non-powered watercraft (such as kayaks, canoes and paddle boards) and access to waterways for swimming.
- Walking tracks/trails and infrastructure that directly connect to and support access to water for recreation (not including boat ramps, fishing infrastructure and boating infrastructure).
- Water playspaces that offer a place to enjoy water-based recreation for those local government areas that do not have direct access to lakes, rivers or harbours.
- Amenities and facilities that directly support the recreational use of the waterways (change rooms, toilet facilities, picnic and BBQ facilities, foreshore works, netting, pontoons, signage).

Projects funded through the 2022/23 grant program must be delivered within the terms of the funding agreements being executed and must be freely and publicly accessible to the community when complete.

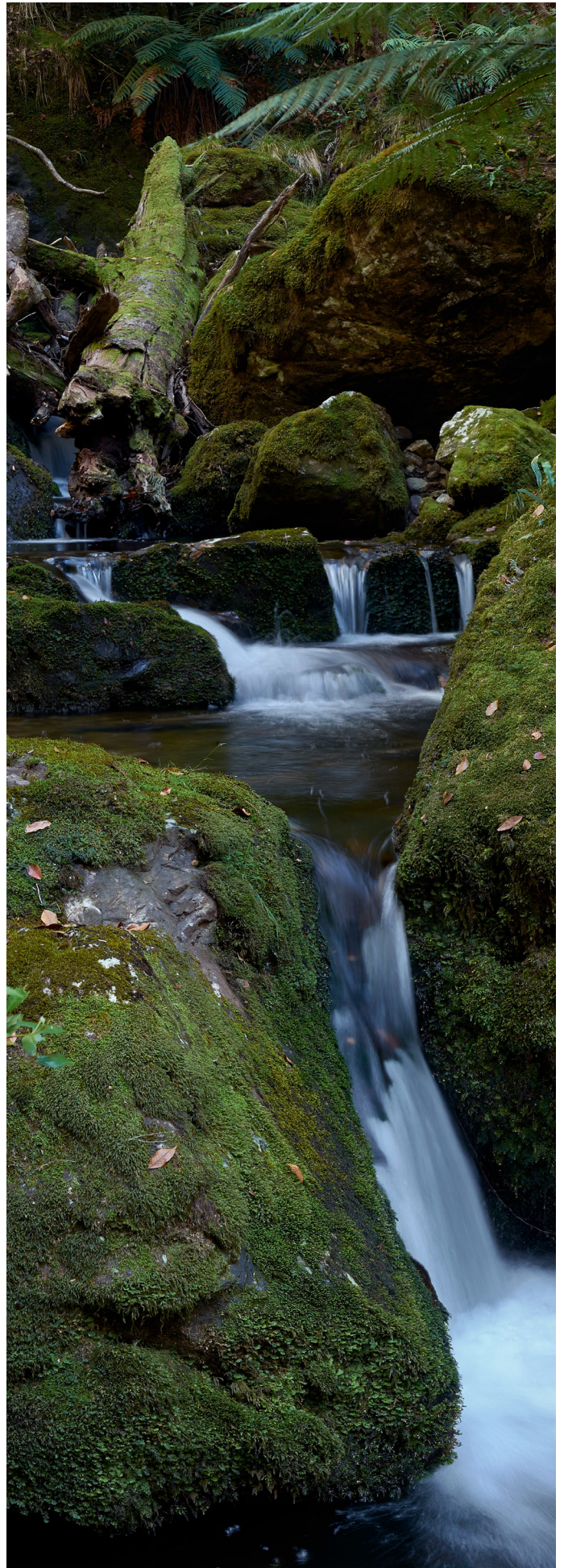
All projects must be located on land that applicants own or are responsible for managing. If the applicant is not the landowner, submissions must include a letter of support from the landowner.

For more resources to support your application, visit the [Open Spaces Program website](#). Refer to Appendix A - Application Checklist for more information on preparing your grant application.

Ineligible projects

The following projects and works are not eligible for funding:

- Projects located in sensitive cultural sites or in environmentally restricted areas.
- Remediation projects that do not achieve the program objectives of improving access to water for recreation.
- Projects to support motorised watercraft – such as boat ramps, jetties and wharfs.
- Boat ramps, roadworks, carparks, fishing infrastructure and boating infrastructure.
- Purchase or lease of land for purposes other than open space creation.
- Funding of personnel or staff positions, unless a labour cost exemption request is completed by council and approved by the department.
- 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.
- 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.
- Projects that are considered to be part of council's usual ongoing maintenance and management of a site.



Photograph - Gloucester Top Falls - Greg West

Assessment criteria and process for the grant program



Photograph - South West Rocks - Jaime Plaza van Roon

Assessment process

An independent assessment panel (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.

The Panel will review and assess all applications against the Places to Swim program objectives and assessment criteria (see criteria and weighting below).

The Panel will make recommendations to the department for endorsement. The department will notify successful applicants, and release funding once funding agreements have been signed and executed.

Assessment criteria

Table 2 outlines the assessment criteria. Projects will be assessed against key components including project merit (50%) and project deliverability (50%).

Table 2. 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, demonstrating in, on or around objectives.
Inclusion	The project will be designed and delivered to enable all community members to get in, on or around water.
Innovation	The project clearly demonstrates best practice methodologies and outcomes that offer learnings that can be shared across government and industry in the creation of water recreation spaces. The project does not revert to a 'business as usual' approach. The project clearly demonstrates at least one of the three objectives of the Places to Swim program - Can I get in, on or around water.
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. Approach to engaging the community in the project is clearly articulated including ensuring engagement is inclusive.
Environmental sustainability	The project demonstrates how the health and safety of the community and the local environment will be sustained and enhanced during construction and in 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 demonstrates commitment to roll out project quickly. Project schedule and project plan is clear and identifies 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.

Application process and timeframes

Table 3 outlines the application and assessment process and timeframes for the program.

Table 3. Timeframes for program

Date	Milestone
30 September 2022	2022/23 Grant applications open
21 November 2022	2022/23 Grant applications close and assessment begins
February 2023	2022/23 Successful grants announced
June 2024	2022/23 Grant projects to be completed



How to apply

- Visit the [Open Spaces website](#) to access resources to support your application.
- For 2022/23 Grant applications, complete and submit your application in SmartyGrants by 4pm, 21 November 2022. Successful applications will be announced in February 2023.
- 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
- **When you attach files to support the application, we strongly recommend you keep files under 5 megabytes and use concise and descriptive file names.**

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, Monday – Friday
- Visit www.help.smartygrants.com.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 openspace@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.

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

Funding recipients will be responsible for delivering and meeting the project milestones and delivering the project within the terms of the funding agreement.

Funding 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.

Funding 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 grant application.

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

The recipient will be required to demonstrate that it has undertaken community and stakeholder engagement on the project or that it intends to do so before finalising concept plans. Evidence of the consultation will be required.

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

Grant recipients must:

1. provide 'before' and 'after' reporting on core indicators requested by the department
2. provide high-quality 'before' and 'after' images.
3. provide milestone reports and a final acquittal report via SmartyGrants when the project is complete

Project opening event and promotion

The department 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 the Minister for Homes, and a departmental representative on the Minister's behalf to attend any formal launch event (including commencement 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 the Minister for Homes, and departmental 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 when the project is completed.

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.

Appendix A:

Grant application checklist

Council is required to submit the following documentation at application stages.

- Concept plan and imagery to communicate the design of 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)
- Details of water quality management that details the water is safe for access by people and the program for ongoing water quality checks
- Letter/s of support from local businesses or local business associations, community groups, institutions (e.g. schools, universities or cultural institutions) (optional)



Photograph - Wentworth Falls - Stephen Townsend