

# Metropolitan Greenspace Program

Program Guidelines  
2024–25 grants round

February 2025

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# Acknowledgement of Country

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

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

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Cover photograph: Elevated boardwalk at Gannons Park, Peakhurst, NSW.

Artwork (above) by Nikita Ridgeway

# Vision into delivery

The NSW Government's vision is to shape thriving communities, public spaces, places and economies.

The Metropolitan Greenspace Program is one way we are improving people's lives by planning and designing public open spaces that make NSW a great place to live and work.

- We enable places by influencing the design and planning of sustainable public open spaces that benefit the people and natural environment of NSW.
- We do this by putting people, place, culture and community at the centre of everything we do.
- We support housing supply by providing funding to deliver multi-functional open spaces and infrastructure that build great communities, create jobs and protect the environment.
- We inspire strong and resilient communities and regions, and enable the responsible and sustainable use of NSW's resources.

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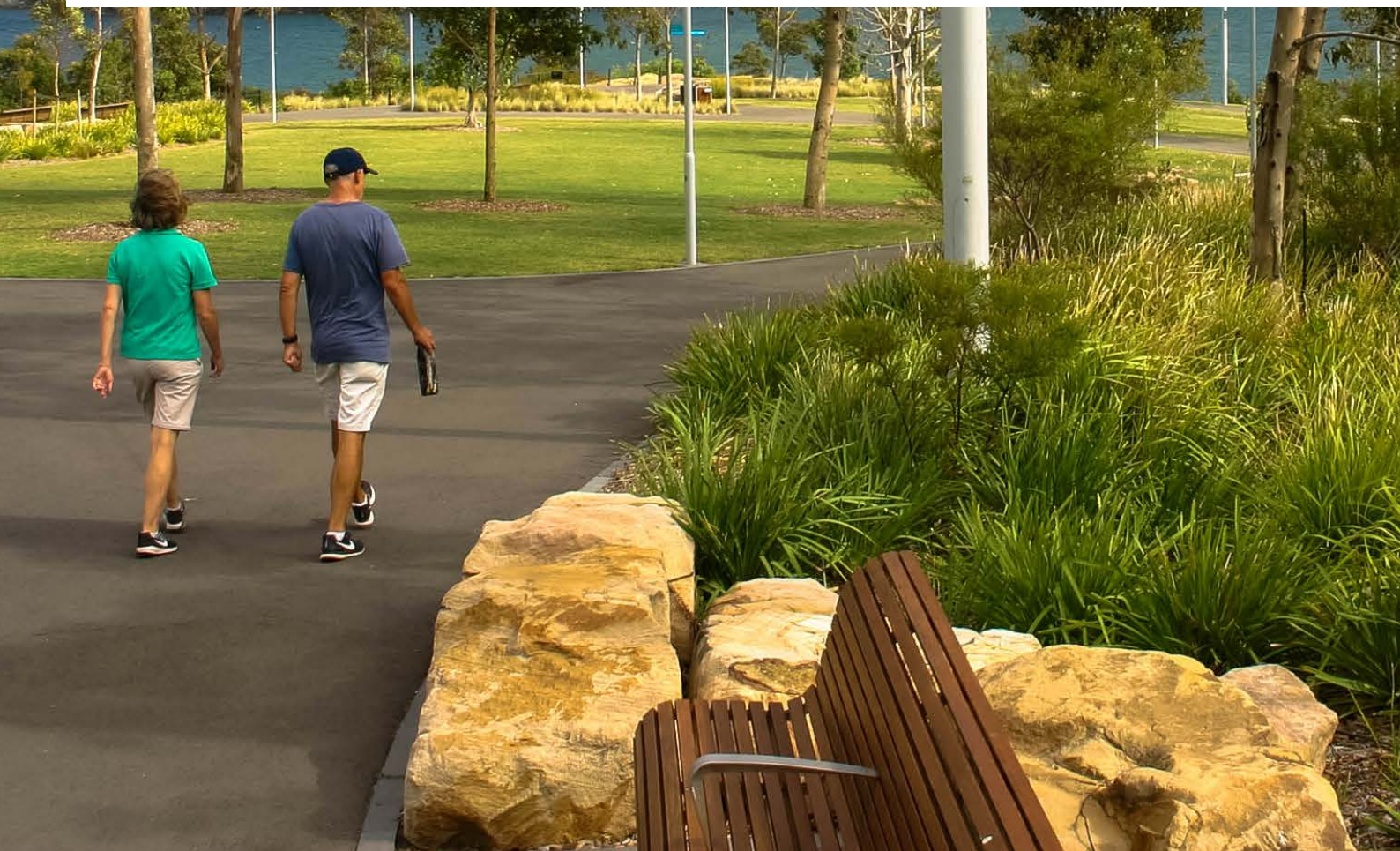
# Introduction

The Metropolitan Greenspace Program is a long-running annual grants program. It provides funding to assist councils in Greater Sydney and the Central Coast region to deliver projects that improve regional open space and community liveability.

The program was established in 1983 to invest in links between Sydney's bushland, parks, centres and waterways and to promote public use and enjoyment of these spaces. It has been adapted over time to meet current priorities. Funding is from the Sydney Region Development Fund, which the [Office of Strategic Lands](#) administers.

In Greater Sydney and the Central Coast, the Metropolitan Greenspace Program helps deliver the Department's vision to shape thriving communities, public spaces, places and economies. This includes delivery of the green grids that crisscross the regions, allowing residents to connect to a network of open space, natural areas and recreational facilities.

Increasing the connectivity of the green grids will promote a healthier urban environment, improve access to spaces for recreation and exercise, and support ecological communities.







# About the Metropolitan Greenspace Program

## 2024–25 Objectives

The key objectives for this grant round are to:

- improve regionally significant open space, including links between bushland, parks, centres and waterways
- improve the critical ecosystem by restoring habitat
- design and deliver projects that value and respect the cultural knowledge of the place
- enable multiple uses of regionally significant open space
- improve community access to a diverse mix of open space opportunities for Greater Sydney and the Central Coast
- encourage partnerships between state, local government and our Aboriginal communities through co-design
- support projects that demonstrate the principles of Connecting to Country.

## Funding

Funding of \$4 million will be available under this round of the Metropolitan Greenspace Program. Eligible councils can apply for funds through a competitive grant process where they must match the funding granted on dollar-for-dollar. Funds obtained through the program will only be eligible for use towards approved projects.

## Eligibility

All councils in the Greater Sydney Region are eligible to apply, including:

**Bayside Council, Blacktown City Council, Blue Mountains City Council, Burwood Council, Camden Council, Campbelltown City Council, City of Canada Bay, Canterbury–Bankstown Council, Cumberland Council, Fairfield City Council, Georges River Council, Hawkesbury City Council, Hills Shire Council, The Hornsby Shire Council, The Council of the Municipality of Hunters Hill, Inner West Council, Ku-ring-gai Council, Lane Cove Municipal Council, Liverpool City Council, Mosman Municipal Council, North Sydney Council, Northern Beaches Council, City of Parramatta Council, Penrith City Council, Randwick City Council, City of Ryde Council, Strathfield Municipal Council, Sutherland Shire Council, City of Sydney, Waverley Shire Council, City of Willoughby, Wollondilly Shire Council, Woollahra Municipal Council.**

**Central Coast Council is also eligible to apply.**

## Priorities

We will give priority to projects that increase and improve open space to support housing supply.

# Projects eligible for program funding

To be eligible, applications must demonstrate both of the following:

- **matched funding** – grant funding must be matched dollar-for-dollar with cash funding; in-kind contributions may be included
- **regional status of open space** – you must demonstrate the regional qualities of the open-space project for which you are seeking funding and its contribution to the Sydney Green Grid.

## Types of eligible projects

The types of projects eligible for funding can be either capital works or planning projects.

### Capital works

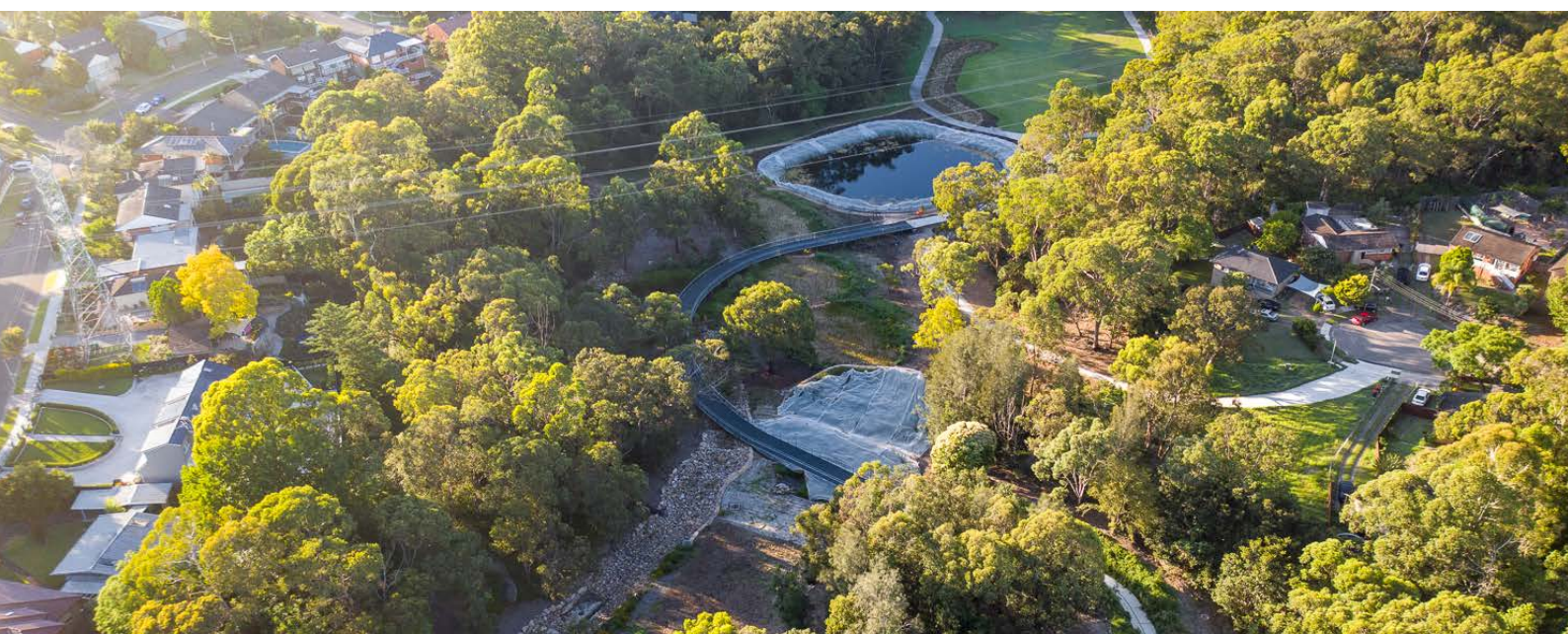
The types of capital works that the program will consider for both new and existing open space include:

- walking tracks and recreational or bicycle trails
- playgrounds
- bushland and environmental management or restoration
- interpretative signage and educational programs associated with trails and greenspaces
- conservation works guided by appropriate planning and assessment
- park and open-space development and upgrading
- recreation facilities
- soft-landscape works
- hard-landscape works.

### Planning projects

For planning projects, councils must demonstrate that projects will lead to capital works within 24 months. The types of planning works that are eligible include:

- local council open-space strategies
- regional open-space feasibility studies
- master plans or plans of management
- recreation trails planning, feasibility or master plans (no construction)
- natural or cultural heritage studies, interpretation, archaeological investigation, conservation management, bushland or vegetation management plans.





**We encourage councils to put forward projects that, ideally:**

- acknowledge and incorporate Aboriginal culture and heritage
- create a broad range of community benefits including increasing the diversity of recreational experiences and opportunities
- build on existing master plans or spatial frameworks in priority green grid corridors, as identified in the Greater Sydney and Central Coast Region Plans
- contribute to local habitat conservation and the creation of new habitats, as well as establishing connections between existing habitats and populations
- help to reduce the urban heat island effect.

## Ineligible projects

**The following works are not eligible for funding under this program:**

- projects outside NSW
- purchase or lease of land
- funding of personnel or staff positions
- civil works associated with car parks
- amenities blocks
- seawalls and jetties
- buying or upgrading non-fixed equipment
- 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.



# Assessment process and criteria

## Assessment process

The Department will assemble a panel of experts to assess of all eligible applications.

The eligible applications will be assessed against the Metropolitan Greenspace Program objectives and assessment criteria (see criteria and weighting below). The panel will make recommendations to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces for endorsement. The Department will notify successful councils and invite them to enter into a funding agreement. Funds will be released on completion of milestone payments, in accordance with the executed funding agreement.

## Assessment criteria

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

Successful projects must be completed within the timeframes set out in the guidelines and executed funding agreement. For example, councils must deliver capital projects within 18 months; construction for planning projects must begin within 24 months. Councils must get all the required project approvals before starting the project.

**Table 1. Assessment criteria**

Project merit 50%	
Criteria	Details
<b>Program alignment and project clarity (15%)</b>	The project scope is clearly stated and supports the objectives of the program.
<b>Inclusion (10%)</b>	The project is designed and delivered to enable all community members to participate. This could be through increased amenity, improved accessibility or improved safety.
<b>Innovation (5%)</b>	The project clearly demonstrates best-practice methods and outcomes that offer learnings that can be shared across government and industry. The project does not revert to a 'business as usual' approach.
<b>Collaboration (10%)</b>	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. Any approvals are clearly defined and timeframe stated.
<b>Environmental sustainability (10%)</b>	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. The panel will prioritise projects that are designed for the local climate.
Project deliverability 50%	
Criteria	Details
<b>Financial viability (10%)</b>	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). Council's financial risk mitigation measures to be clearly identified – for example, how councils will manage increasing material supply and costs
<b>Deliverability (10%)</b>	Project method is clear and feasible within the parameters of the program.
<b>Timeliness of delivery (10%)</b>	Applicant demonstrates commitment to roll out project quickly. Project schedule and project plan are clear and identify key deliverable dates and any approvals within program timeframes, including a schedule showing that the project will be completed in accordance with the guidelines. For example, councils must deliver capital projects within 18 months; capital works for planning projects must begin within 24 months.
<b>Risk mitigation (10%)</b>	Risk assessment included with strategies to mitigate project risks.
<b>Value for money (10%)</b>	Project uses funding effectively to maximise the scale and impact of the project. Projects that reduce ongoing maintenance and management costs will be assessed favorably.





## Application process and timeframes

**Table 2 outlines the application and assessment process and timeframes for the 2024–25 funding round of the program:**

Month	Milestone	Action
February 2025	Minister for Planning and Public Spaces announces opening of 2024–25 grants round	Councils notified. Online applications open.
31 March 2025	Applications close	Initial check of council information
April to May 2025	Assessment of projects scored against criteria	Recommendations to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces for approval of successful projects
June 2025	Minister for Planning and Public Spaces announces 2024–25 successful projects	Councils notified and funding agreements issued and executed
July 2025 to January 2027	Start of capital work projects. Projects due for completion within 18 months	Ongoing monitoring of project delivery, councils submit progress reports and final acquittal of grant funding
July 2025 to July 2027	Start of planning projects that will lead to capital projects.  Projects to be completed and construction started within 24 months	Ongoing monitoring of project delivery, councils submit progress reports and final acquittal of grant funding



The Metropolitan Greenspace Program is aligned to the Government Architect NSW objectives and frameworks for good design. These are fundamental to creating better places and servicing the needs of people and the community.

The Government Architect NSW frameworks support councils in the design and delivery of the Sydney Green Grid to connect communities to the landscape. The Sydney Green Grid is a long-term vision for a network of high-quality green areas — from regional parks to local parks and playgrounds — to connect centres, public transport and public spaces to green infrastructure and landscape features. The Department’s Metropolitan Greenspace Program is one way we are helping our communities to become healthier and vibrant. The funding from the Metropolitan Greenspace Program and councils is making the Sydney Green Grid even greener each year and improving our waterway corridors, transport routes, suburban streets, footpaths.

The Sydney Green Grid is far greater than the sum of its parts. It helps to keep the region cool, encourages healthy lifestyles, supports walking and cycling, provides better access to open spaces, enhances bushland and supports ecological resilience. The Sydney Green Grid influences the way we move through places in our region.

Delivery of the green grid through projects funded from the Metropolitan Greenspace Program builds on past investments in the Regional Tracks and Trails Framework. Additionally, Transport for NSW established the Strategic Cycleway Corridors Program, to plan for high-quality priority cycling routes across Greater Sydney. This creates opportunities to integrate the Strategic Cycleway Corridors Network with local bike networks and the Greater Sydney Green Grid to further link centres, precincts and places.

In 2024, the Government Architect NSW released the [Biodiversity in Place Framework](#) as a call to action to support nature recovery and enhance biodiversity. By supporting biodiversity, we can connect with Country and foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities to ensure sustainable and resilient outcomes. Biodiversity in Place supports the enhancement of the green and blue grid, by taking a nature-first approach.





# Program management

Successful councils must enter into a funding agreement with the Department. The funding agreement will set out the council's obligations, including, but not limited to, those for monitoring and reporting, project completion, milestones, and payment.

## Project management

Councils will be responsible for delivering and meeting the project milestones and delivering the project within the timeframe, as per the funding agreement.

Councils 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 terms of the agreement.

Councils must also provide a final concept plan before beginning construction.

## Approvals

Councils must ensure they are aware of all approvals required and consult with relevant authorities in preparing the grant applications.

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. Other sources of funding will not be considered as match funding.

## Consultation with the community and other key stakeholders

The council must show that it has engaged with the community and stakeholders on the project or that it intends to do so.

## Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

### Councils must:

1. Provide high-resolution 'before' and 'after' images.
2. Provide 'before' and 'after' reporting on core indicators requested by the Department.
3. Provide monthly reports and a final acquittal report via SmartyGrants at the completion of project.





## Project opening event and promotion

Successful councils must acknowledge the funding contribution from the NSW Government in all communications and media for the project in accordance with the [NSW Government Funding Acknowledgement Guidelines](#).

### **If holding a formal launch event, the council must:**

- invite the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces or a 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
- provide 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 council to decide if there will be an opening event. Councils 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 council 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 council 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

Councils 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.

# How to apply

1. Familiarise yourself with the grant requirements set out in these guidelines and determine if you are eligible.
2. Complete and submit your application in SmartyGrants by 5 pm 31 March 2025.

**We will announce successful councils in June 2025.**

## Advice

If you need help with your application on the SmartyGrants system, use the help guide at [www.applicanthelp.smartygrants.com.au](http://www.applicanthelp.smartygrants.com.au). If the problem continues, please contact SmartyGrants at:

- [service@smartygrants.com.au](mailto:service@smartygrants.com.au)
- Call **03 9320 6888**  
Support desk hours: 9 am to 5 pm  
AEST, Monday to Friday
- Visit [www.help.smartygrants.com.au](http://www.help.smartygrants.com.au)

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

The Department can give councils information on how to interpret these guidelines, including the types of projects that are eligible for funding. Please email the team at [greenspace@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:greenspace@planning.nsw.gov.au)

## Complaints procedure

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

If you have questions about grant decisions for this grant opportunity, please email [greenspace@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:greenspace@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 you have raised it directly with the relevant department first. Visit the NSW Ombudsman at [www.ombo.nsw.gov.au](http://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.

