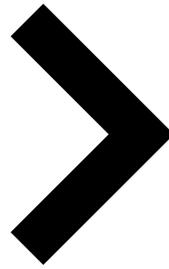# Frequently Asked Questions

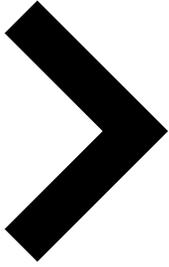**What Local Government Areas (LGAs) are eligible?**

Eligible LGAs include:

- Armidale Regional Council

- Ballina Shire Council

- Bega Valley Shire Council

- Bellingen Shire Council

- Blue Mountains City Council

- Byron Shire Council

- Central Coast Council

- Cessnock City Council

- Clarence Valley Council

- Coffs Harbour City Council

- Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council

- Dungog Shire Council

- Eurobodalla Shire Council

- Glen Innes Severn Council

- Goulburn Mulwaree Council

- Greater Hume Shire Council

- Gwydir Shire Council

- Hawkesbury City Council

- Inverell Shire Council

- Kempsey Shire Council
- Kyogle Council
- Lake Macquarie City Council
- Lismore City Council
- City of Lithgow Council
- MidCoast Council
- Mid-Western Regional Council
- Muswellbrook Shire Council
- Nambucca Shire Council
- Narrabri Shire Council
- Oberon Council
- Port Macquarie-Hastings Council
- Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council
- Richmond Valley Council
- Shoalhaven City Council
- Singleton Council
- Snowy Monaro Regional Council
- Snowy Valleys Council
- Tamworth Regional Council
- Tenterfield Shire Council
- Tweed Shire Council
- Upper Hunter Shire Council
- Upper Lachlan Shire Council
- Uralla Shire Council
- Wagga Wagga City Council
- Walcha Council
- Wingecarribee Shire Council
- Wollondilly Shire Council

This list is also available in Appendix A of the [Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund Program Guidelines.](#)

How were Local Government Area (LGA)s deemed eligible as bushfires impacted?

According to the level of impact experienced during the 2019-2020 bushfire season affected areas.
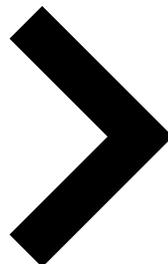
How much funding is available?

$250 million is available through the program to support the recovery and resilience building in bushfire affected communities.
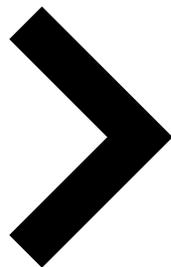
How much funding can I apply for?

Grant applications can seek between $200,000 and $20,000,000, depending on the project type. Information is available on page 5 of the Program Guidelines.

Should my grant request include GST?

Only organisations not registered for GST should incorporate the GST paid by them to third parties into their project budget and funding request. Organisations registered for GST will automatically receive a 10% addition to their grant request to cover GST.

Is a co-contribution required?

No. Applicants are strongly encouraged to make a financial co-contribution to their projects; however, this is not an eligibility requirement.
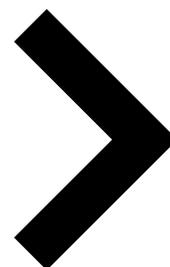
How do I prove in-kind co-contributions?

In kind contributions are not required but are encouraged. When calculating in-kind value, use the fair market value for a good or service. For example, if referring to a space, this can be calculated as current rental value.

Can I use other grants as co-contribution?

Yes, co-contribution from Government funding sources can be used as part of your overall projects co-contribution where the existing funding is for a single component, stage or aspect.
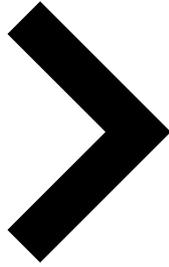
Is the purchase of land an eligible expense under the BLER Fund?

Yes, land purchases may be permitted as an eligible expense where an application clearly demonstrates that the project will have clear public benefit and that the community will continue to have, or gain access to, the site. It is recommended that applicants consult with the Department of Regional NSW staff if the purchase of land forms part of their project **before** an application is submitted.
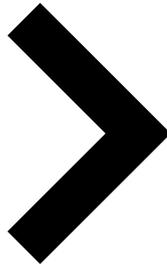
Can I apply for funds if my organisation is not based in the same Local Government Area (LGA) as the project?

Yes, however the project must clearly demonstrate that the primary benefits of the project will be delivered to an eligible LGA.

Can I submit multiple applications?

Yes. Applicants are permitted to submit more than one application.
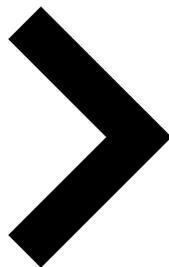
Why can private businesses apply?

For-profit organisations may be considered eligible applicants only where projects will deliver a clear public benefit. Projects that will support tourism, employment and the economic diversification of a region can be considered to provide public benefit, even where the funds will be used to support a commercial venture.

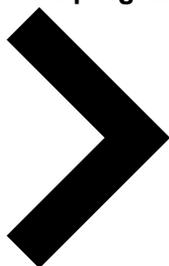**Do I need $20 million public liability insurance to be eligible?**

Applicants must have or be able and willing to purchase at least $20 million public liability insurance to be eligible for funding.

How is public benefit defined?

Public benefit is where a project has measurable benefits to the general community (or sufficient section of the community) that are sustained, ongoing and measurable. Public benefit may include facilities for community use, improved natural disaster resilience, sustained employment or provision of community services.

My project is for a program that may benefit many areas, how do I define its location?

Projects must be delivered in an Local Government Area (LGA) listed in Appendix A of the Guidelines to be eligible. Where a project may benefit multiple LGAs, applicants must identify which LGA will be the primary beneficiary and other LGAs that will benefit from the project.

What kinds of projects are eligible?

An example list of projects is available on page 6 of the Program Guidelines. Projects must align with one of the 5 project categories and support the recovery of the regions community, economy, environment or resilience to future natural disasters. If you are unsure if your project meets these requirements please contact regionalnsw.business@dpc.nsw.gov.au or call 1300 679 673 for assistance.

What are essential and core local government services?

Work such as street maintenance, local services and other activities covered by rates are considered to essential and core services and ineligible for funding. Betterment works, including road and infrastructure upgrades, improvements to parks and community services delivered in response to bushfires, are considered eligible provided they are not part of the council's forward planning.

I have already incurred costs for eligible activities. Can these be claimed against the grant?

No. Retrospective funding to cover any project component that is already complete before a funding deed is executed by the Department of Regional NSW is ineligible for funding.
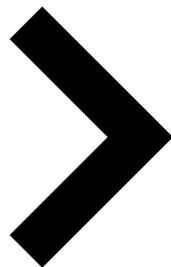
How does BLER define contingency?

Contingency is defined by BLER as funds for an event or action that may or may not occur but must be dealt with if it does. Should your project be successful and the contingency costs included in your budget not used, this amount will be deducted from the final grant payment.

Can I include project management costs?

Yes, a total of 20% of the funding request can be used to provide project management, administration, contingency and other on-costs, however please note that these costs can only be claimed for the period of the project's delivery.

Can I claim maintenance costs for my project?

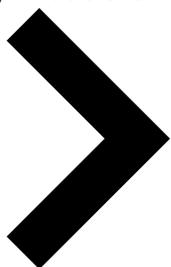No. It is a condition of funding that any project delivered through the BLER Fund must be able to be maintained without ongoing government funding.

Are costs related to preparing the application eligible for funding?

No. Any costs related to preparing an application are ineligible for funding.

If successful, what's the final date I can start my project before funding lapses?
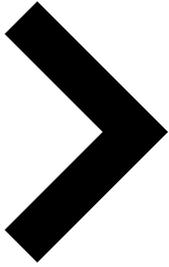
All applications need to demonstrate that the project will commence within six months of the funding deed being executed by the Department of Regional NSW.
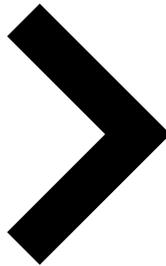
When do projects need to finish?

Projects need to be completed by June 2023.

What is the Australian Government's Construction WHS Accreditation Scheme?

The scheme is Commonwealth Government initiative to support a sustainable and safe culture on worksites being delivered with Government funding. All applicants must confirm they are willing to comply with the scheme as part of the application.
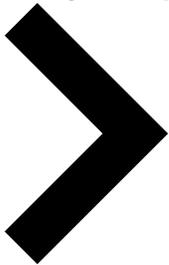
Further information on the scheme is available at www.fsc.gov.au/home.

How are applications submitted?

Applications must be submitted through the online portal to be considered for BLER funding. A link to the online portal will be available on this webpage when applications open.
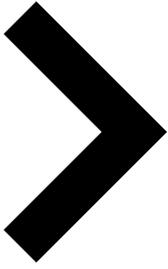
What are some ways an applicant can demonstrate local support and participation?
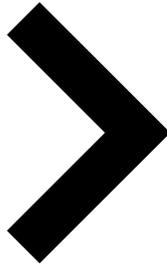
Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Letters of support

- Community surveys

- Local media reports

- Minutes or reports from community meetings; or

- Community led funding proposals.

Do infrastructure projects require development approval before applications can be submitted?
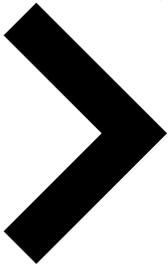
No, however assessors will take into account if these are in place or if they are likely to be required. It is important to consider and include any approval process in your project plan and delivery timeframe.

How will projects be assessed?

All BLER applications will be assessed by NSW Government staff with training and relevant qualifications. Where necessary independent advice will be sought on specific projects. The Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Assessment Panel will review project eligibility and assessment outcomes and form a list of projects that are deemed suitable/not suitable for funding. The Panel will submit their list of projects suitable for funding to the NSW Government and the National Bushfire Recovery Agency for review. The final decision for funding will be made by the NSW Government.

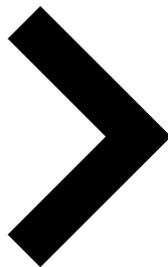**Am I able to review a copy of the funding deed before submitting an application?**

The funding deed is now available below:
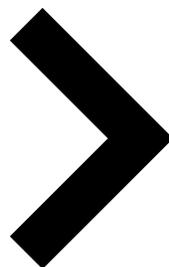Sample Funding Deed (PDF, 728.81 KB)

How long do I need to maintain an asset?

Any assets built or purchased as part of your BLER Fund project must be maintained and serviced for a period of at least five years from the end of the Funding Deed.

Do I need Professional Indemnity Insurance?

You are required to obtain at least $2 million in Professional Indemnity insurance and hold it for at least 7 years after the end of the Funding Deed if your project includes providing professional advice (e.g. legal services or financial counselling).

How information in the applications should be handled?

Any information submitted by an applicant may be provided to other organisations for the purposes of assessment and appraisal. The NSW Government may refer projects to other funding programs for consideration. Information may also be used by the NSW Government or Australian Government for promotional purposes, including publishing on Government websites. Applicants should identify any information submitted which they wish to be considered as confidential, supported by reasons for the request.

Is there any support available for completing an application?

The Department can provide advice to applicants on developing their project proposals. Please contact regionalnsw.business@dpc.nsw.gov.au or call 1300 679 673 for assistance.

Do I need to use an Office of the Federal Safety Comissioner (OFSC) accredited builder under the Work

Health and Safety Accreditation Scheme (the Scheme)?

If you receive infrastructure BLER funding, the head contractor must be accredited under the scheme if:

- The project includes building work of $4 million or more (including GST) AND

- the value of the Australian Government contribution to the project is at least $6 million (including GST) and represents at least 50 per cent of the total construction project;

OR

- the Australian Government contribution to a project is $10 million (including GST) or more, irrespective of the proportion of Australian Government funding.

If these conditions are met, the head contractor will need to have OFSC accreditation.

As part of the BLER funding, the Australian Government will commit 50% of a successful applicants grants funding.

For more information [visit the website](#).

If funded, what will be the reporting requirements?

Reporting requirements can be found in the
[Sample Funding Deed (PDF, 728.81 KB)](#)
Successful applicants are required to submit quarterly progress reports during the project period. After the project is completed you will be required to participate in the program evaluation, determining the extent to which the project has achieved its stated objectives. Any information submitted by an applicant may be used for promotional material prepared by the NSW Government or the Commonwealth Government.

I have my own Business Case. Can I use this in my application?

You must complete the BLER Fund Business Case template, however you are welcome to attach an existing Business Case. The BLER Fund business case can be found below:
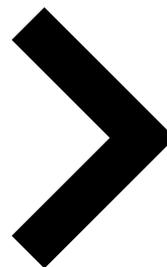[Business Case Template (DOCX, 3.56 MB)](#)

How are the results of a project measured?

As part of the application process you are required to identify how you will report on the delivery against the projects expected outcomes, this will be incorporated in to your Funding Deed. The information will also form part of the assessment process.

Please read the
[Outcomes Reporting Guidance Note (PDF, 119.6 KB)](#)
for assistance in developing your measures of success.

What are the conditions of funding if I am successful?

If successful you will be required to enter in to a funding deed with the NSW Government which will outline your reporting, work and legal requirements to receive your grant funding. An example funding deed is available on our website at the link below
[Sample Funding Deed (PDF, 728.81 KB)](#)
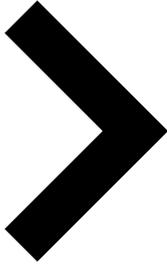and we recommend that all applicants should review the deed prior to submitting their application.

Do I need to provide Landowner consent?

Any project that must be delivered at a specific site (including events) must provide landowners consent as part of the application, even where the applicant is the owner or lessee of the property. The lease holder may provide consent where the activity is permitted as part of an existing tenancy agreement.

A template form is available at the link below
Landowner Consent Form (DOCX, 101.31 KB)
or other evidence may be provided in place of this form.

How do I complete the Project Budget table in the application form?

Enter each expense item for your project's budget in this table. Start by selecting the expense category (from the drop-down list in the first column), then briefly describe the item in the second column. In the third and fourth columns, please break down the amounts for this item that you would be requesting from the BLER funding and/or using other co-contribution (this amount can be zero in either columns). These two figures will add up to the "total item cost" column (this column is automatically calculated). On the GST column, please select if GST is included or excluded and finally, upload evidence of cost estimates (if any). By filling out this table, you will also have the "total project cost", "total project co-contribution" and "total BLER Funding Request" amounts automatically calculated.

Can I combine multiple small projects in a single application?

Yes, you are able to combine multiple small projects in a single application. The package of projects must meet the minimum grant request ($400,000 for infrastructure or $200,000 for environment or program activities) to be eligible and all project components must be located in eligible Local Government Areas.

Can I submit an application that includes both infrastructure and program components?

Yes, however the components must both reflect the minimum grant requests ($400,000 in infrastructure and $200,000 in program or environmental components). The program or environmental components of the project must not exceed $4,000,000 and the total grant request for any application cannot exceed $20,000,000.

What evidence should I provide to show local participation in my project?

An applicant can demonstrate local participation by providing a procurement plan that identifies how the project will deliver work for local contractors and training / employment outcomes for local young people and Aboriginal communities. Local participation can also be demonstrated by identifying how the project would be inclusive and accessible to a broad spectrum of the local community.

Can funding be used to continue an existing government service?

No, existing and core government activities cannot be funded through the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund.

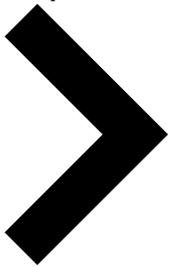**Can funding be used to introduce or expand a government service?**

Yes, where a new or expanded service that is not considered core government service, is proposed to support economic recovery, social recovery or build resilience the project can be considered for funding through the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund.

Can feasibility studies be funded under the BLER Fund?

Feasibility studies cannot be submitted as an individual project. Programs of work including a feasibility study as part of a larger project may be eligible, where the outcome of the work is shown to support the economic or social recovery of the community.

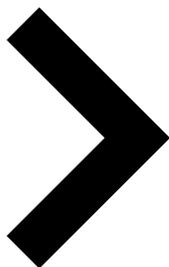**Do I need to complete the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund Datasheet?**

All applications seeking more than $5 million in funding are required to complete the datasheet. You are not required to complete the datasheet if you project is seeking $5million or less in BLER funding.

Why was the closing date extended to 28 January 2021?

Community feedback was that the original application closing date was too tight for many organisations. The extensions will now provide potential applicants with more time to develop and deliver meaningful projects for their communities.

How can I submit a PO Box for my postal address on SmartyGrants?

Click into the blank field under 'Organisation Postal Address' and select 'Can't find your address' from the drop-down menu. Type your address and save.

If financial statements are required as part of my application, what are the requirements?

Applicants must provide financial statements (trading, profit & loss statements and balance sheets) for the past three years and these must match the ABN (or other registration number) of the organisation applying for funding.

Can you package up projects of different types in the same project?

Yes, however the components must both reflect the minimum grant requests ($400,000 in infrastructure and $200,000 in program or environmental components) and the maximum grant requests (program or environmental components of the project must not exceed $4,000,000 and infrastructure projects must not exceed $20,000,000). The total grant request for any application cannot exceed $20,000,000.

Are social enterprises eligible to apply?

If an organisation is a registered Not For-Profit or Incorporated Entity they are eligible to apply. For profit organisations may be considered eligible applicants if they show that the project will deliver a clear public benefit.

Can the grant be used for housing projects?

All projects must demonstrate that they will provide outcomes that provide benefit to the community. Housing projects, where they relate to social infrastructure, may be eligible provided they can be shown to not relate to a core government service or be for private benefit.

Does "Final project completion" by 30 June 2023 mean that the construction needs to be completed by then or that the final reports and acquittal are required by then?
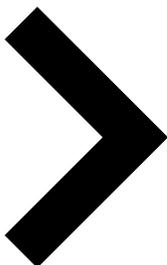
Construction must be completed, and the project acquitted by 30 June 2023.

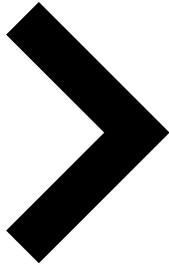**Can I use grant funding to support a whole of state program?**

No, funding is only available to support projects being delivered in the 47 eligible LGAs.

Are we required to have all the planning approvals before the application is submitted?

Infrastructure projects do not require development consent before applications are submitted, however showing that this has been considered or obtained will make your application stronger. It is important to consider and include any approval process in your project plan and delivery timeframe.
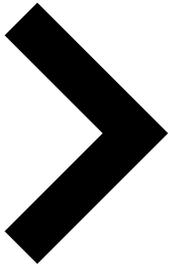
Are projects that strengthen biodiversity and habitat resilience to future bushfires eligible for this grant

>

funding?

Yes, biodiversity and habitat resilience projects can be considered in the environmental project category. Applicants must demonstrate that their project will support the resilience of an eligible Local Government Area and meet applicant eligibility criteria.

Could you provide more information and examples on how to evidence community support?

>

Evidence of support includes (but not limited to) letters of support, surveys conducted within the community, minutes or petitions from council or community meetings, or that a project is led by a group with a broad community-based membership.

>

What is a non-fixed equipment and are they all ineligible?

Non-fixed equipment is not attached to a building. Examples are vehicles, trailers, etc. Non-fixed equipment for BLER applications should only be included where they may be a component of a larger fixed-point project, such as a community hall upgrade including the purchase of a generator. Equipment and non-fixed assets cannot be the sole components of an application. Projects seeking funding for non-fixed infrastructure purchases, not associated with a specific site, such as vehicles, trailers, etc are not eligible under the BLER Fund.

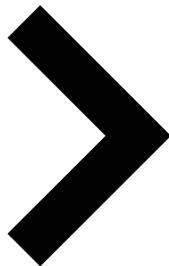**Can there be a joint application for two councils?**

A joint application for two councils in eligible Local Government Areas is possible. One council should be nominated as the lead applicant that will manage the delivery of the project.

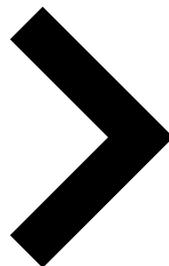**What happens if a project is not completed by 30 June 2023?**

Projects must be delivered by 30 June 2023. Requests for variations or changes to the project will only be considered by the Department in very limited circumstances.

Will an investment in firefighting infrastructure and other associated investments on private land that mitigates disaster risk and that benefits a suburb and neighbouring tourism facilities be considered a clear public benefit?
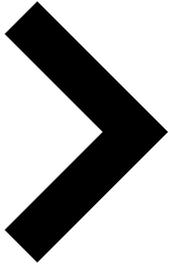
Yes, if this is not a core responsibility of the NSW Government. Applicants must specify details of how public benefit is met and if the project is to take place on private land, the application requires landholder consent.
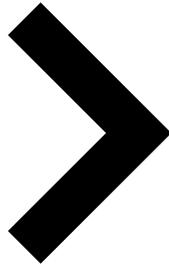
How do I complete the datasheet?

A pre-recorded webinar on the datasheet is available on the website. Only projects requesting $5 million or more require a datasheet.

Are professional fees, such as consultants and design costs, eligible for infrastructure projects?

Any project costs incurred before announcement are not eligible to be included in the project budget. Applicants seeking professional services to deliver a project after funding is announced, can include theses costs as part of the 20% of administration and contingency costs.

Are quotes required?

No, quotes are not mandatory however will make your application stronger. You will need to ensure your costs are reasonable and have some background in how they were determined. When provided, quotes should be sourced from suitable and relevant suppliers/contractors.

How can partner organisations show their support?

Where multiple organisations are supporting or involved in the project, they can show support by providing memorandums of understanding, letters of intent or letters of support regarding the project.

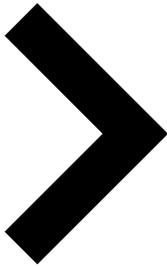**Can projects that generate income be considered eligible?**

Yes, where a project generates revenue it may still be eligible provided that the project can demonstrate its outcomes are generating a clear public benefit.

Are projects that create jobs considered to be public benefit?

Any project submitted by a for-profit business will need to demonstrate clear public benefit.
Public benefit is where a project has measurable benefits to the general community (or sufficient section of the community) that are sustained, ongoing and measurable. Public benefit may include sustained employment.

Can I include costs that were incurred in developing the application?

No, project costs incurred before funding is announced are not eligible.

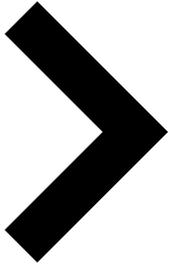**Could projects receive partial funding?**

Projects may be approved for partial funding where this is considered appropriate, or where costs included in an application were ineligible and the project as a whole was considered to be suitable for funding.

Is rent an eligible cost?

Rent is an eligible cost if it is required for the delivery of a program, however it cannot be included as an eligible infrastructure cost.

What is the difference between an infrastructure and an environmental project?

Infrastructure projects relate to projects proposing building, renovating or upgrading fixed structures such as buildings (community halls, emergency centres, etc.), roads or walkways. Environmental projects relate to works done towards rehabilitation, remediation and resilience improvements. Environment projects include, but are not limited to, the development/upgrade of walking or bike trails, bush regeneration, biodiversity and habitat resilience.

Contact us

- **Email**: regionalnsw.business@dpc.nsw.gov.au

- **Phone**: 1300 679 673

Additional bushfire help

Other bushfire support measures have been put in place by the Australian and NSW Governments. For a full list of all available bushfire support, visit the Service NSW website, your local Service NSW centre or call 13 77 88.