

Communities and Justice

NSW Seniors Festival Grant Program 2026 Guidelines

July 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Communities and Justice acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that contributed to the development of this document.

NSW Seniors Festival Grant Program 2026 Guidelines

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1 NSW Seniors Festival Grant Program 2026 Guidelines

The NSW Seniors Festival Grant Program is administered by the NSW Seniors Festival Events team within the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).

These guidelines should be read prior to completing your application for the grant, as they contain important information that will assist you in completing the application.

The guidelines include an overview of the program, information about the application process, eligibility and assessment criteria, how the funds can and cannot be used, and reporting requirements.

2 Overview of the NSW Seniors Festival Grant Program 2026

The NSW Seniors Festival Grant Program 2026 provides \$200,000 in funding for community events and activities during the two-week festival period in March, which enables older community members to remain active, healthy and engaged.

Every year the festival provides hundreds of free and discounted programs and activities, with the grant program aiming for the best use and a broad distribution of funds to maximise the benefit for seniors across NSW.

2.1 Program objectives and outcomes

The grant program encourages seniors in NSW to enjoy new experiences, continue learning, stay active and connected to their communities through:

- supporting a broad range of local community organisations
- supporting programs and activities in regional NSW
- fostering partnerships with community groups and services
- providing programs and activities for diverse communities in NSW
- supporting projects that empower older people to stay connected
- assisting organisations to increase capacity of current programs and activities

Applications can be for small scale, multiple and larger activities held during the festival period. Events should align with the objectives of the NSW Seniors Festival, which empower seniors to participating in their communities and stay safe, active and healthy.

2.2 Target audience

The NSW Seniors Festival, presented by the NSW Government, is an established state-wide festival for people aged over 60, or over 50 for Aboriginal people and people with a life-long disability.

There are 1,938,978 people aged over 60 in NSW, which is about 23 per cent of the total NSW population, according to June 2023 Australian Bureau of Statistics data.

The NSW Seniors Festival is the largest of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere and attracts more than 500,000 people at about 50 events across metropolitan and regional areas. The festival commenced in 1958 and in 2026 will mark its 68th year.

The festival promotes social inclusion and connection and encourages older people to attend events and become involved in art, sport, music, entertainment, technology, travel, health, wellbeing and recreation.

The festival aligns with the Department of Community and Justice's Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021 – 2031, meeting the priorities of focus area two, "participating in inclusive communities" and focus area three "staying safe, active and healthy".

2.3 Eligibility criteria

All grant applicants are required to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Applications must propose free or heavily discounted programs or activities for seniors in NSW.
- Projects must be located within NSW and conducted between 2-15 March 2026, during the NSW Seniors Festival.
- Projects must be open to all that identify as a senior in NSW.

Grant applicants must be from:

- Incorporated not-for-profit community organisations (see note below).
- NSW local council operating under the Local Government Act 1993.

Note: for the purposes of this grant, organisations deemed to be "incorporated not-for-profit community organisations" include:

- Incorporated organisations that are registered and approved as not-for-profit bodies by NSW Fair Trading.
- Not-for profit companies limited by guarantee, registered in NSW (must have ACNC registration and/or DGR status).
- Indigenous Corporations (must be registered with the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations).
- Associations (registered under the Associations Incorporation Act 2009 with NSW Fair Trading)
- NSW Local Aboriginal Land Councils.
- Religious organisations operating in NSW.
- NSW non-government organisations established under their own Act of Parliament.

The following are mandatory eligibility criteria:

- All applicants must have appropriate public liability insurance valued at a minimum of \$10 million (see 7.0).
- All applicants must address the NSW National Redress Scheme sanctions (see 6.0)
- Applications will not be accepted from organisations that have outstanding acquittals with DCJ.

Please note: Only one application for funding will be accepted per organisation, per project.

2.4 Ineligible applicants

The following are not eligible to apply for a grant in this program:

- An individual.
- Applicants who have outstanding acquittals for any other funding program with the Department of Communities and Justice.
- Federal and State Government agencies and bodies.
- NSW educational facilities (public schools, private schools, TAFE).
- For-profit organisations, including Aboriginal businesses.
- Unincorporated organisations or groups without an eligible subcontracting organisation.
- Organisations that have not met project requirements, including acquittal and reporting, for funding received from DCJ in the previous two years.
- Organisations with Redress Obligations under the National Redress Scheme that have not joined the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse.
- Do not have appropriate insurance; this must include but is not limited to a minimum of \$10 million public liability insurance.

2.5 Assessment criteria

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

- The application demonstrates how the event or activity meets the program objectives and outcomes (see 2.1).
- The application demonstrates how the event or activity meets the eligibility criteria and is aimed at the target group (see 2.2 and 2.3).
- The event or activity demonstrates value for money. A useful tool is to calculate the cost per head based on the number of expected participants and the funding requested. In addition is the value of the benefits in attending.
- The events or activities is accessible, wherever possible.
- The applicant has organisational capacity and capability, and the ability to collaborate and consult with relevant stakeholders.

2.6 Prioritisation

Events that are original, encourage participation, are educational, fun and foster connections between seniors will be prioritised for grant funding.

Priority for funding under the grants program will also be given to the following groups:

- Seniors, or people aged over 60.
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people aged over 50.
- Seniors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Senior lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or asexual (LGBTIQ+).
- Senior living with disability, dementia, chronic disease or mental illness.
- Senior carers.
- Seniors in rural, regional and remote areas.

3 Funding

The total allocated funding for the NSW Seniors Festival Grant 2026 Program is \$200,000.

There are two funding categories that can be applied for:

- \$1,500 to \$5,000: open to all eligible applicants to host local community programs and activities
- \$5,001 to \$10,000: open only to applications from local governments to host large-scale community and regional programs and activities

3.1 Grant funds expenditure

Funds can only be used for expenses/activities directly associated to the grant. Your application must clearly outline your proposed expenditure in relation to the funding amounts identified above and included in the budget you submit with your application.

3.2 Grant funds exclusions

Organisations must not use grant funds, including any interest earned, for the following:

- any activity of a commercial nature that is for-profit.
- existing debt or budget deficits.
- capital works, including building work.
- permanent salaries/wages (costs for temporary tutors/instructors for your program or activity can be included).
- permanent equipment purchases, for example tables and computers.
- business as usual costs or general operating expenses.
- programs or activities that encourage gambling such as bingo, or the consumption of alcohol.
- programs and activities coordinated by NSW Government departments and statutory authorities.
- an event that is already funded by this program. For example, two different organisations can not apply for funds for the same program or activity.
- prizes, competition or awards (e.g. cash giveaways, lucky door prizes, raffle prizes).
- business as usual activities such as morning tea, lunches or regular activities.

4 Application checklist and assessment process

Applicants should submit only one application form, which will be assessed based on eligibility and assessment criteria.

4.1 SmartyGrants website

All applications must be submitted on the SmartyGrants website, which is www.smartygrants.com.au

The SmartyGrants website is an online grants administration system, which is used by government departments across Australia. The SmartyGrants website has an online portal where applicants submit their application form.

4.2 Application checklist

- ✓ **Contact details.** It is an applicant's responsibility to ensure all contact details are up to date. In some cases, DCJ has contacted a successful grant recipient to learn they have since left the organisation. Ensure secondary contact details are included in the application. If DCJ can't contact you, we can't award you the grant. Group email addresses are not permitted. See also section 10.
- ✓ **Eligibility and ineligibility criteria.** Ensure you meet the criteria (see 2.3) and are not ineligible (see 2.4).
- ✓ **Grant program objectives.** Ensure you demonstrate in your application how the event or activity meets the objectives and target audience (see 2.1 and 2.2).
- ✓ **Assessment criteria.** Ensure your application addresses the assessment criteria (see 2.5).

4.3 Summary of assessment process

1. Applications are reviewed by the eligibility team for eligibility and compliance with grant guidelines and eligible criteria.
2. Applications are subject to the assessment process, by an assessment team.
3. The assessment team makes recommendations to an assessment panel.
4. A delegated DCJ officer on the assessment panel is the final decision-maker, as per the NSW Grants Administration Guide.
5. Applicants are formally notified on whether their application has been successful. DCJ is not responsible for providing applicants with any feedback for why they were unsuccessful.

5 NSW National Redress Scheme sanctions

The NSW Government will not award a Grant Funding Arrangement to a non-government organisation with Redress Obligation (or to any of its Related Entities) if that non-government organisation:

- has declined to join the scheme, or
- at the expiry of six months after the time it is notified to join the Scheme, has failed to do so.

[Visit the website](#) for further information about the [NSW National Redress Scheme](#) sanctions.

6 Insurance

Grant recipients must maintain current and adequate insurance appropriate to the activities/services funded under this grant, to cover any liability of the grant recipient that might arise in connection with the performance of its obligations under a Grant Funding Agreement. This must include, but is not limited to, a minimum of \$10 million Public Liability Insurance.

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

You must provide evidence of the above insurance for an amount recommended by a professional insurance adviser, or any such other insurance policies as may reasonably be required by DCJ, and as required by law, for you and any of your employees or sub-contractors, in relation to the performance of the services.

If your organisation is not covered by the appropriate insurance, you will need to approach another organisation (such as your local council or an incorporated not-for-profit) to sponsor your application so that your project will be covered under their insurance.

7 Banking details

It is your responsibility as the applicant to provide correct banking details, including the authorised signature to verify your bank details in the application form.

Funds transferred to an incorrect bank account may not be recoverable.

8 Unspent project funds

If a grant recipient's project is completed and there are unspent project funds of more than \$250, these funds must be returned to the Department of Communities and Justice unless otherwise specified in the grant funding agreement.

Alternatively, the recipient may request a project extension to deliver the approved project.

9 Successful applicants – Grant Funding Agreement and signatories

Successful applicants must return the signed Grant Funding Agreement within two weeks of receipt. Your grant offer will be withdrawn if the executed agreement is not returning within the 14 days.

- The application, Grant Funding Agreement and acquittal for the grant will be managed using the SmartyGrants management system. Payments will be made via the NSW Government Payment and Contracts System portal, known as PACS. Grant Funding Agreements will be sent via DocuSign for electronic signing.
- Agreements can only be signed by authorised officers of your organisation. This may be a member of the executive/committee as deemed under the Articles of Association or Constitution for a not-for-profit organisation, or the General Manager or delegated officer if you are a council.
- Please note, all applicants must provide the contact details (email address, phone number, name and position) of the relevant authorised signatories, or their delegates, in their application form.
- Email address must be an individual's email address, we cannot accept general or group email address for an authorised signatory. This means each name must have its own email address.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure staff availability to complete and sign documents, to carefully read the terms and conditions of the Grant Funding Agreement, and to sign the Grant Funding Agreement using the correct authorised signatories.
- Once we receive your signed Grant Funding Agreement, the funding payment will be scheduled via PACS. DCJ will also countersign the agreement and return to you by email.
- Any variations to the Grant Funding Agreement, including scope, location or time frames outlined in the application form and Grant Program Guidelines must be formally requested and approved in writing. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of the grant offer.
- To discuss a variation, please contact the NSW Seniors Festival team nswseniorsfestival@dcj.nsw.gov.au or Grant Design and Support by email: GrantDesignandSupport@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

10 Publication of grant information

The NSW Grants Administration Guide requires that certain information is published in relation to grants awarded, no later than 45 calendar days after the grant agreement takes effect (see section 6.5 of the guide and Appendix A to the guide at the link below).

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/grants-administration-guide>

This information is also open access under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (see 14.2 in this document), which must be made publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information.

11 Performance, monitoring and reporting

Recipients will be required to:

- Complete a Final Report on project outcomes and Financial Acquittal within four weeks of project completion.
- Allow DCJ to inspect the records you are required to keep under the Grant Funding Agreement.
- All projects must be completed by Sunday, 15 March, 2026. You are required to submit a Final Report and Financial Acquittal in SmartyGrants no later than Friday, 29 May, 2026. DCJ will send you the final acquittal form prior to this date so you can complete it in the SmartyGrants portal.
- Agree that DCJ staff may meet virtually or visit in-person, during or at the completion of your grant activity, to review your progress. We will seek your permission to visit and provide you with reasonable notice of any visit.
- It is a requirement that all financial records related to grant expenditure and acquittal be retained by the committee of the organisation for seven years. If the committee changes, these documents must be forwarded to the new incoming committee.

12 Promoting your event

The NSW Seniors Festival Events team is responsible for administering the grant program for DCJ and will supply successful applicants with a short guide on how to promote their event to encourage attendance.

This guide includes information and digital assets to assist with:

- How to get your event listed on websites and newsletters/newspapers in your area
- Social media promotion
- Taking photographs at your event
- Poster templates
- Other practical information

13 Key dates

Date	Description
July 2025	Grant applications open on the SmartyGrants website, www.smartygrants.com.au
August 2025	Grant applications close
September 2025	Assessment of grant applications
October 2025	Notice and feedback to all applicants and public announcement of grant recipients by Minister for Seniors (after which point successful applicants can make their own announcements)
December 2025	Grant Funding Agreements with successful applicants
2-15 March 2026	NSW Seniors Festival is held and successful grant recipients host their events during this period
29 May 2026	Final Report and Financial Acquittal due to DCJ

14 Additional information

14.1 Complaint handling

Any complaints should be sent in writing to nswseniorsfestival@dcj.nsw.gov.au

14.2 Access to information

The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, known as the GIPA Act, establishes a proactive, more open approach to gaining access to government information in NSW.

The objects of the GIPA Act are to maintain and advance a system of responsible and representative democratic Government that is open, accountable, fair and effective.

Documents submitted as part of your application may be subject to an application under the GIPA Act.

Access to government information is only to be restricted if there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Before information is released in response to an application under the GIPA Act, there will be an assessment of the public interest considerations in favour of and against disclosure of that information, and there may be consultation requirements that apply.

The NSW Legislative Council in NSW Parliament also has the power to order that government papers be provide under Standing Order 52.

14.3 Ethical conduct

Conflict of interest management

Conflicts of interest between DCJ and applicants are managed in accordance with the DCJ Code of Ethical Conduct. Declarations of any conflict of interests are made and recorded by all persons involved in performing functions related to the grant assessment process.

DCJ staff who assist an applicant with an application will not be involved in assessment for that application.

Confidentiality

Information relating to the successful applications, including the name of the applicant, description of the funded project and the funding amount, will be included in:

- Public media releases.
- An announcement on the DCJ website.
- The NSW Grants finder website.
- DCJ social media.

14.4 Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that this publication is free from error and/or omission at the date of publication. The authors, publisher and any person involved in the preparation of this publication take no responsibility for loss occurring to any person acting or refraining from action as a result of information contained herein.

15 Feedback and appeals process

If your application is not successful, it does not mean your application is without merit.

Funding is limited and not all applications are successful.

Due to the high-volume of applications, we are unable to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications.

Communities and Justice

NSW Seniors Festival Events team: nswseniorsfestival@dcj.nsw.gov.au

Grant Design and Support: grantdesignandsupport@dcj.nsw.gov.au

www.seniorsfestival.nsw.gov.au