Office for YOUTH

NSW GOVERNMENT

Connect In-Real-Life (IRL) Phase 2 Grant Program

20 October 2026

Office for Youth
DCJ Grants



Table of Contents

Slide title	Slides
Acknowledgement of Country	3
Housekeeping	4
About the Program	5-11
Eligibility & Assessment Criteria	12-15
Application Process	16-18
Assessment Process	19-20
Successful Applicants	21-22

Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the various lands on which we work today and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this meeting/webinar.

I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

- Please be advised that the use of AI bots is not permitted during DCJ meetings. They will be removed.
- Please turn your camera off and mute your microphone.
- There will be a Q&A at the end of the presentation.
- You can also post your questions in the chat or raise your hand.



2

About the Program



Overview of the Connect IRL Phase 2 program

- $3,025,000 funding allocation co-funded by the Office for Youth and the Premier's Department
- Grants between $50,000 up to $150,000 (excluding GST) available for eligible organisations
- Projects to support children and young people aged 8-24 from at least one of the **identified priority youth cohorts**
- Supports the delivery of safe, inclusive and youth-centred initiatives
- Focusses on addressing barriers to community connection and participation
- Applications close 6 November 2026 at 4pm

Please refer to Program Guidelines for details

The objectives of the program



Access safe, welcoming and inclusive spaces to connect with others and participate in community life and build meaningful relationships and social connections that foster a stronger sense of belonging and inclusion.



Receive enhanced and targeted mentoring including trauma-informed and lived experience approaches, and to enable mentors to more effectively support them to form meaningful connections in real life environments.



Respond to emerging and locally identified needs through initiatives that strengthen community engagement and create opportunities for input in decisions that affect them.



Develop skills, confidence and capabilities needed to navigate transitions, pursue education and employment opportunities and actively contribute to their communities through civic, leadership or through structured mentoring programs that promote healthy relationships, empathy, mutual respect, and active civic participation



Strengthen offline connections by delivering inclusive, pro-social activities and safe discussion spaces that support mental health, physical health, practical skill development and healthy relationships that foster mutual understanding, reduce isolation, and build peer networks — with a focus on those from marginalised, diverse, or geographically isolated communities.



The priority groups targeted by this program

Project design **MUST** target **at least one** of the following priority cohorts:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- Young people with a disability
- Rural and regional young people
- Young people experiencing poverty
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse young people
- LGBTQIA+ young people
- Young women and girls
- Young people with adverse childhood experiences (including youth justice, out of home care, homelessness, caring responsibilities)

What outcomes does my project need to meet?

Projects should align to and demonstrate delivery against at least one of the following outcomes



Young people from identified priority youth cohorts are more connected, confident, resilient, and engaged in their communities



Young people experience improved wellbeing, stronger support networks, and greater opportunities for positive development, social cohesion and healthy relationships



Communities are better equipped to support young people through inclusive, responsive, and youth-centred approaches



Stronger relationships are established between young people, mentors, community organisations, and local stakeholders



Increased participation of young people in community life. This maybe through leadership, education, employment, and civic activities

Guiding principles for Youth Grants

A partnership approach balances youth ownership with appropriate organisational support and resources and builds meaningful relationships between young people and their communities.

Applicants must ensure the input of young people is firmly embedded in each stage of their project:

- Identifying the need
- Planning and design
- Project delivery
- Final review and recognition

Organisations must consult with young people during the development of the project to ensure the project meets their needs.

Applicants must share power and decision-making with young people throughout the project, working collaboratively on issues and activities that matter to them.



Example project themes to support young people



- Life skills courses (cooking or financial literacy courses)
- Independent living courses
- Driver licencing support
- Youth hubs fit out
- Social clubs and creative clubs
- Peer leadership activities
- Healthy relationship courses
- Mentoring programs
- Entrepreneurship courses

3

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Eligibility and Assessment Criteria

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Are you eligible?

Eligible

- Be an incorporated not-for-profit organisation eg:
  - companies limited by guarantee, registered with the ACNC,
  - an NSW association or non-distributing co-operatives registered with NSW Fair Trading,
  - an entity incorporated under an Act of Parliament
  - Aboriginal Corp. Registered with ORIC
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils.
- NSW local councils operating under the Local Government Act 1993.

Not eligible

Ineligible applicants include (not an exhaustive list):

- Individuals or sole traders.
- Federal and State Government agencies and bodies.
- NSW educational facilities (public schools, private schools, TAFE).
- For-profit organisations, including Aboriginal organisations.
- Unincorporated organisations or groups.

DCJ Mandatory eligibility requirements for grants



$10 million Public Liability Insurance



All proposed activities or events must be delivered in NSW for young people living in NSW.



No outstanding DCJ acquittals



No National Redress Scheme sanctions.

Assessment Criteria

1. **Alignment with priority youth cohort(s) and community need**
2. **Strengthened offline connections for young people that promote social connection and community participation**
3. **Youth-Centred Design, Inclusion and Community Impact**
4. **Project Delivery, Organisational Capability and Risk Management**
5. **Value for Money**

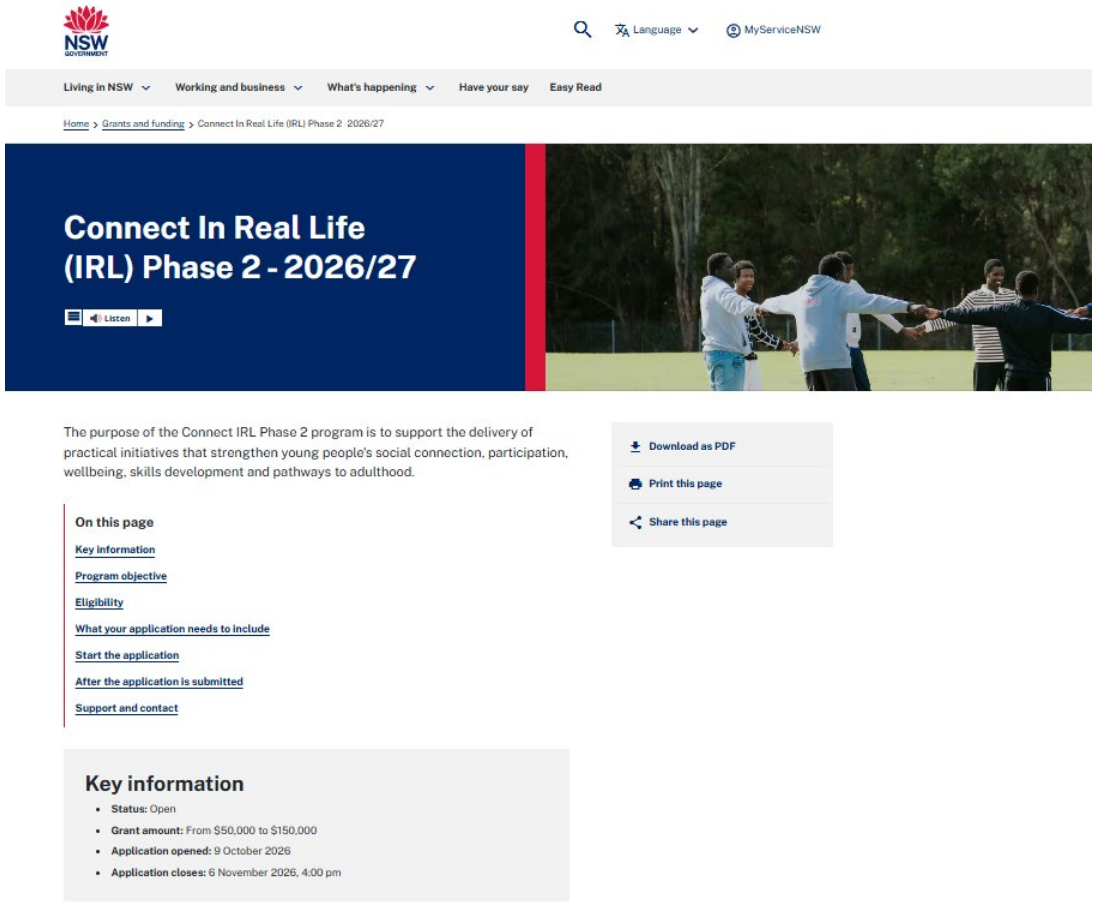
4

Application Process

SmartyGrants grants management software platform

NSW Grants and funding website

https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/connect-real-life-irl-phase-2-2026/27

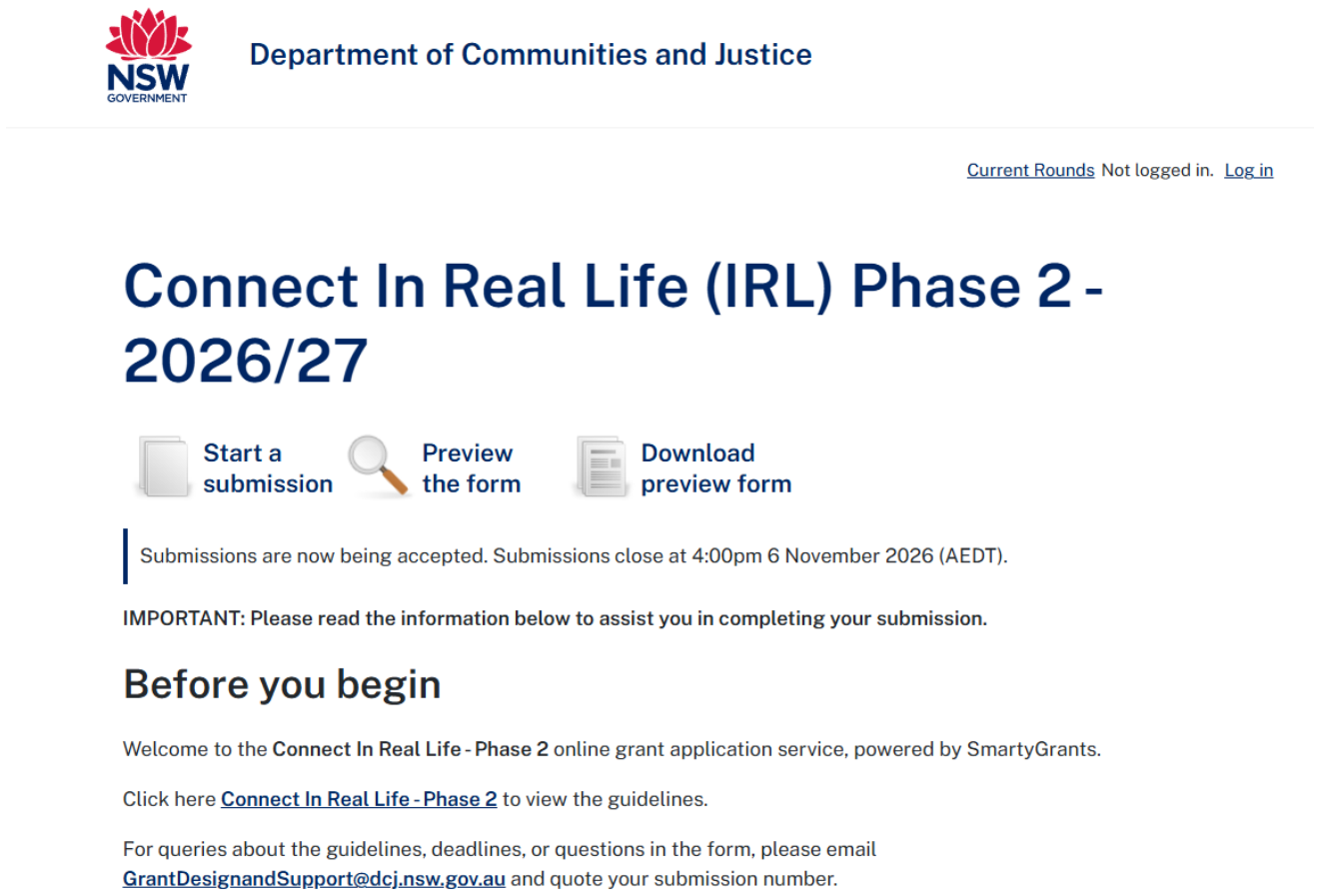


Visit the grants finder website and search for **Connect in Real Life Phase 2** grant.

- Thoroughly read all the information on this page
- Download and read the grant Guidelines and FAQs - keep for reference when you are filling out the application
- Read the Guiding Principles for Youth Grants
- Take note of the application closing date 6 November 2026, 4:00 pm
- The closing date and time is a strict deadline. No extensions will be permitted.
- The project should be started by 1 February 2027 and the project must be completed by 31 August 2028.
- Click **Apply now** to go to the SmartyGrants platform

SmartyGrants

https://dcj.smartygrants.com.au/ConnectInRealLife2026



SmartyGrants is the platform used to create, apply for, track, and administer grants by DCJ and the Office for Youth.

ttps://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/connect-real-life-irl-phase-2-2026/27

You will receive an auto-generated email with your Application ID, application (PDF) and contact details for queries, upon submission of your application.

Remember to click on ‘save as you go’ as you fill out the form.

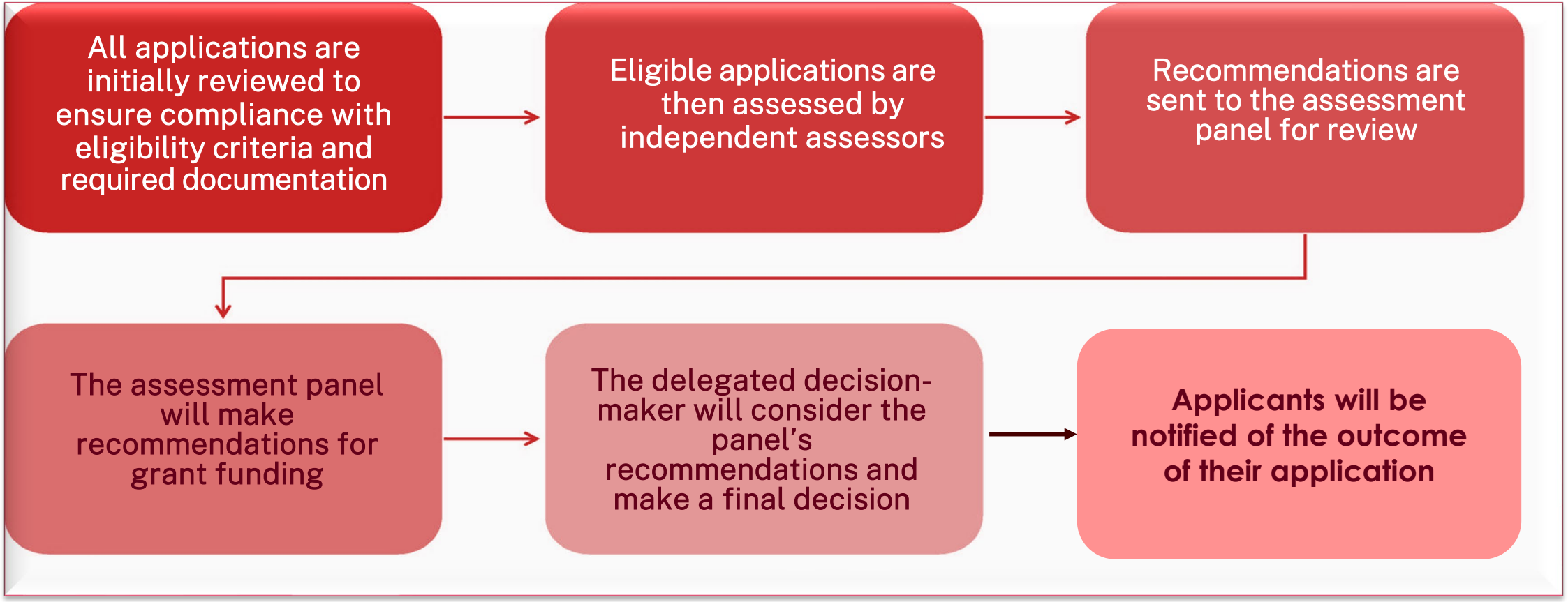
If you have already submitted your application, but wish to make changes/ amendments (**prior to closing date**), email Grant Design and Support @ GrantDesignandSupport@dcj.nsw.gov.au

5

Assessment Process

Assessment process?

Grant applications will be assessed against eligibility and assessment criteria, and program prioritisation.



6

Successful Applicants

Successful applicants–Grant Funding agreement

The application, Grant Funding Agreement and acquittal for the grant will be managed using SmartyGrants and PACS.

Successful applicants will receive electronically a grant funding agreement and are required to sign and return it within **two weeks.**

Agreements can only be signed by the two authorised officers of your organisation.

It's the applicants' responsibility to carefully read the terms and conditions of the Grant Funding Agreement, Program Guidelines, Grant Application, and sign the Agreement with two authorised signatories.

Once we receive your signed Grant Funding Agreement, DCJ will execute the agreement and send a copy for your records.

Any variation to the Grant Funding Agreement **must** be applied for your in submissions portal in Smarty Grants, this we be reviewed and you will be advised of the outcome.

To discuss a variation, please email Grant Design and Support at: GrantDesignandSupport@dcj.nsw.gov.au

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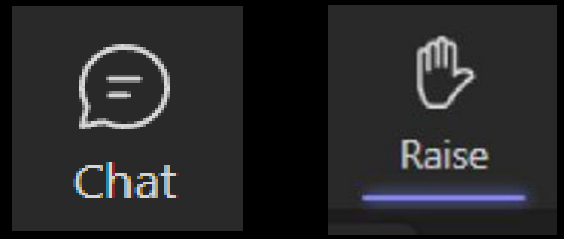
Questions?

Information session: Questions via the Chat or Raise your Hand functions



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Thank you

For further information and before you start your application, please review:

- Grant Program Guidelines
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Grant Program enquiries please email Grant Design and Support @ GrantDesignandSupport@dcj.nsw.gov.au
- Apply for the grant funding through SmartyGrants