
Department of Planning and Environment

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Open Spaces Program

Places to Roam

Grants Program Guidelines (round 2022-2023)

July 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.

Published by NSW Department of Planning and Environment

dpie.nsw.gov.au

Title: Places to Roam

Subtitle: Grants Program Guidelines (round 2022-2023)

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Cover photograph: Toongabbie Creek weir – Parramatta City

Artwork (above) by Nikita Ridgeway

Housing Supply and Infrastructure

Housing Supply and Infrastructure group within the Department of Planning and Environment improves people's lives by planning and designing places and public spaces that make NSW a great place to live and work. We enable places in which people love to live and connect, now and into the future, by influencing, designing and delivering great and sustainable places for the benefit of the people and natural environment of NSW. We do this by putting people, place and community at the centre of everything we do.

We help provide homes, services and infrastructure, build great communities, create jobs and protect the environment. We create great places and experiences for all. We plan for a changing and thriving NSW. We inspire strong and resilient communities and regions and ensure the responsible and sustainable use of NSW's resources.

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Introduction

The Places to Roam program provides grant funding for the upgrade and creation of regional trails, better active transport corridors, community gardens, and connective bushland, parks and waterways in Greater Sydney. A connected network of green spaces is a key part of building great places for people to live. It also contributes to more productive, sustainable and liveable local communities.

The program includes support to councils to establish or enhance community gardening and bushcare schemes.

The Places to Roam program will be delivered under 2 separate programs:

1. **Regional Trails program** provides funding to local councils to upgrade or create new walking and cycling links for transport, as well as leisure and recreational trips, while also improving local community wellbeing, sense of place and connection with nature.
2. **Community Gardens program** aims to support councils in establishing and embedding community garden schemes and bushcare in their local community, It also provides opportunities for community engagement, particularly for older and vulnerable people.



About the Regional Trails program

Walking and cycling are becoming increasingly important recreation and transport choices and have some of the highest participation levels out of all recreation types. Increased opportunities for physical activity have been shown to contribute significantly to greater health within the community and increased quality of life.

Regional trails help to support a healthier environment by providing access to recreation and exercise and encouraging people to get together. They also provide walking and cycling connections between the places people live and work and the places that people want to visit.

The Regional Trails program will seek to align to the Greater Sydney Green Grid. The program will do this by helping to realise the long-term vision for a network of high-quality green areas – from regional parks to local parks and playgrounds – that connect centres, public transport and public spaces to green infrastructure and landscape features.

Case Study: The Great West Walk

The Great West Walk is a 65-km walking route stretching from Parramatta to the foot of the Blue Mountains. Officially opened in October 2019, the new walk traverses the region's varied landscape of protected Cumberland Plain woodland, local river systems, public parklands, Australia's oldest architecture, and some of Western Sydney's most iconic urban landscapes.

The Great West Walk was mapped by The Walking Volunteers and delivered by local landholders including Blacktown City Council, City of Parramatta Council, Penrith City Council, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the Western Sydney Parklands Trust.

Other organisations who supported the route's development include the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment; Western Sydney Local Health District; Western Sydney Diabetes; Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils and NSW Office of Sport.

The route forms part of the Greater Sydney Green Grid – a network of interlinked walkways, cycleways and open spaces across Greater Sydney, creating green connections from people's homes to local centres, to their workplaces and to where they spend their leisure time.

Throughout 2021–22, more than 26,000 trees will be planted to provide shade, beauty and cooler temperatures. This will make the Great West Walk more comfortable, accessible and enjoyable for users, local communities and visitors to Western Sydney.





Objectives

- Provide new and upgraded regional trails that improve the quality of trail experiences and increase awareness and visitation to greater Sydney trails.
- Support community health and wellbeing, particularly in the 12 Local Government Areas (LGAs) identified as areas of concern during the COVID-19 lockdown.
- Contribute to the post-pandemic economic recovery of NSW through the creation of jobs, stimulating businesses and the recreation and visitor economy.
- Contribute to the delivery of the Premier's Priority for Greener Public Spaces by increasing the proportion of homes in urban areas within 10 minutes' walk of quality open, green and public space by 10% by 2023.

Funding

The Regional Trails program includes a \$13 million investment over 3 years.

In the FY22/23 funding round, a total of \$7.8 million is available for the Regional Trails Program.

This funding will be available to eligible councils through a competitive grant process.

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.

Priority councils

The councils of the 12 LGAs identified as areas of concern during the COVID-19 lockdown are strongly encouraged to apply.

The 12 LGAs are **Bayside; Blacktown; Burwood; Campbelltown; Canterbury-Bankstown; Cumberland; Fairfield; Georges River; Liverpool; Penrith; Parramatta and Strathfield**

Note that part funding is strongly encouraged. Project nominations that propose a funding component from the recipient council (including works in-kind contributions) will be prioritised.

Types of eligible projects

Funding will be available for the planning, design, and construction costs for:

- trails and strategic open space linkages including recreational improvements of riparian corridors and easements that contribute to the delivery of important corridors identified in the Greater Sydney Green Grid or endorsed local strategic planning statements
- green links that connect to parklands and open spaces
- interpretative signage and public art works associated with trails and greenspaces
- recreational trails feasibility studies and masterplans. 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.**
- new or upgraded shared paths that improve walking and cycling and connectivity between open spaces
- in-house project management or design services (subject to prior approval).

Project nominations should align to government strategies such as:

- long-term open space network outcomes, such as the Greater Sydney Green Grid, council open space and recreation strategies that demonstrate a long-term change and benefit for the community
- council strategies, such as local strategic planning statements or other strategic documents such as open space and recreation strategies, urban design plans, town centres or economic strategies, active travel and transport plans.

We encourage councils to put forward projects that, ideally:

- acknowledge and incorporate Aboriginal culture and heritage
- create a broad range of community benefit, including increasing the diversity of recreational experiences and opportunities for regional trail users
- build on existing masterplans or spatial frameworks in priority green grid corridors, as identified in the Greater Sydney Region Plan
- help to reduce the impact of urban heat island effect.





Ineligible projects

- Master planning or design services in isolation.
- Projects outside of NSW
- Funding of ongoing personnel or staff positions
- Events, marketing, branding, advertising or product promotion
- Projects requiring ongoing funding for maintenance from the NSW Government
- Retrospective funding to cover any project component that is already complete/ underway
- Projects that are considered to be part of council's usual ongoing maintenance and management of a site (including ongoing reserve management, asset maintenance or replacement of existing infrastructure)
- Public art pieces or signage as a singular project
- Projects that require the public to pay a fee to access the site.

Assessment criteria and process

Assessment process

An independent assessment panel will review and assess all applications against the Regional Trails program objectives and assessment criteria (see criteria and weighting below).

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

The assessment panel will be made up of external landscape and open space design experts. A probity adviser will oversee the assessment.

Assessment criteria

Table 1 outlines the assessment criteria. The panel will assess projects against key components including project merit and project deliverability.

Table 1. Assessment criteria

Project Merit 50%	
Criteria	Details
Program alignment and project clarity (15%)	The project scope is clearly stated and supports the objectives of the program. Note additional weighting will be given to a project within an LGA identified as an area of concern during the 2021 COVID-19 lockdown.
Inclusion (10%)	The project is designed and delivered to enable all community members to participate. This could be through increased amenity, improved accessibility or improved safety.
Collaboration (10%)	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.
Environmental sustainability (10%)	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.
Innovation (5%)	The project clearly demonstrates best-practice methodologies and outcomes that offer learnings that can be shared across government and industry. The project does not revert to a 'business as usual' approach.
Project deliverability 50%	
Criteria	Details
Financial viability (10%)	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 (10%)	Project methodology is clear and feasible within the parameters of the program.
Timeliness of delivery (10%)	Applicant demonstrates commitment to roll out project quickly. Project schedule and project plan are clear and identify key deliverable dates within program timeframes including a schedule showing that the project will be complete by 31 December 2024.
Risk mitigation (10%)	Risk assessment included with strategies to mitigate project risks.
Value for money (10%)	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 2 outlines the application and assessment process and timeframes for the 2022–23 funding round of the program:

Table 2. Application process and timeframes for 2022–23

Action	Date
Applications open	July 2022
Applications close	30 September 2022
Grant assessment	October 2022
Announcements/funding agreements issued to successful councils	November 2022
Projects start	December 2022
Projects completed	June 2024

Funding and payment milestones

Table 3. Funding and payment milestones

Stage	% of allocation*	Date
Project commencement	15%	On execution of funding agreement
Commence capital works	50%	Commencement of construction works
Project completion	35%	June 2024

* Indicative

About the Community Gardens program

The Community Gardens program provides funding to local councils for programs that help to deliver community gardens, as well as bushcare and restoration or enhancement of waterways.

Community gardens are an increasingly popular community-based activity for growing food collectively and locally. Community gardening also gives people an opportunity to come together and develop a greater understanding of their neighbours and community members.

Similarly, bushcare provides recreation and education opportunities for people of all ages and abilities in the local community. It's also a great way to stay fit, meet new people, and be part of something meaningful, all while making a difference to our local environment.

Case Study: Camdenville Paddock Community Garden

Community gardens are places where people come together to grow food, create habitat and connect with nature and their local community.

The site is part of Camdenville Public School located in Wells Street, Newtown and through a land-use agreement, local residents and the school community manage the site.

The site occupies a generous, almost half-acre parcel of north-facing land surrounded by beautiful trees.

Producing fresh, locally grown food, The Camdenville Paddock creates healthy recreational opportunities for residents of all ages to meet and work, to till the soil together and enjoy the harvest, to share information and experiences, and to build strong community relationships.





Objectives

Increase community resilience through the delivery of community garden and bushcare schemes for people of all ages to connect and collaborate on growing food, bushland restoration or local amenity.

Support community health and wellbeing, particularly in the 12 Local Government Areas identified as areas of concern during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Funding

The Community Gardens program includes a \$2.25-million investment over 3 years. Grants up to \$75,000 will be available.

The Community Gardens program will be offered on an annual basis, as shown in Table 4:

Table 4. Grant rounds and funding

Grant round	Total funding available
FY2021-22 grant round	\$650,000
FY2022-23 grant round	\$750,000
FY2023-24 grant round	\$850,000

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.

Priority councils

The councils of the 12 LGAs identified as areas of concern during the 2021 COVID-19 lockdown are strongly encouraged to apply and will be prioritised.

The 12 LGAs are Bayside; Blacktown; Burwood; Campbelltown; Canterbury-Bankstown; Cumberland; Fairfield; Georges River; Liverpool; Penrith; Parramatta and Strathfield.

Types of eligible projects

Funding will be available for:

- Council community garden programs. Council must provide evidence of a current community garden policy or similar framework with its application.
- Bush regeneration projects that protect, or improve natural assets such as native vegetation, native fauna, waterways, wetlands, and soils
- Restoration or enhancement of waterways and wetlands.
- Education, advertising, promotion and signage of eligible projects.
- 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.
- Applications made by councils in partnership with a State Agency or entities will be considered.

We encourage councils to put forward projects that, ideally:

- acknowledge and incorporate Aboriginal culture and heritage
- demonstrate inclusiveness and access and encourage participation of the wider community, in particular older and vulnerable people
- help to reduce the impact of urban heat island effect

Councils must provide evidence of landowner consent with their application.

Ineligible projects

- Projects outside of NSW
- Funding of ongoing personnel or staff positions
- Projects requiring ongoing maintenance funding from the NSW Government
- Projects that are considered to be part of council's usual ongoing maintenance and management of a site (including ongoing reserve management, asset maintenance or replacement of existing infrastructure)
- Public art pieces or signage as a singular project
- Projects that require the public to pay a fee to access the site.

Case Study: Toongabbie Creek Parkland

The site is located in the north western corner of the City of Parramatta LGA on the banks of Toongabbie Creek. The park has limited open space embellishments and recreation facilities.

The park contains a number of Endangered Ecological Communities; Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest, River Flat Eucalypt Forest and Cumberland Plain Woodland.

The Toongabbie Creek corridor has been identified as a priority bio-link through the Parramatta River Catchment Native Habitats and Fauna Study.

The bushland revegetation works were delivered as part of the improvements to accessibility including creek crossings funded under the NSW government Metropolitan Greenspace Program.

Images of revegetation areas along with new native flower re-growth and stage 1 tree planting: Approved for use by Paramatta Council



Assessment criteria and process

Assessment process

An independent assessment panel will review and assess all applications against the Community Gardens program objectives and assessment criteria (see criteria and weighting below).

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

The assessment panel will be made up of external landscape and open space design experts. A probity adviser will oversee the assessment.

Assessment criteria

Table 5 outlines the assessment criteria. The panel will assess projects against key components including project merit and project deliverability.

Table 5. Assessment criteria

Project Merit 50%	
Criteria	Details
Program alignment and project clarity (15%)	The project scope is clearly stated and supports the objectives of the program. Note additional weighting will be given to a project within an LGA identified as an area of concern during the 2021 COVID-19 lockdown
Inclusion (10%)	The project is designed and delivered to enable all community members to participate. This could be through increased amenity, improved accessibility or improved safety.
Innovation (5%)	The project clearly demonstrates best-practice methodologies and outcomes that offer learnings that can be shared across government and industry. The project does not revert to a 'business as usual' approach.
Collaboration (10%)	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.
Environmental sustainability (10%)	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 (10%)	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 (10%)	Project methodology is clear and feasible within the parameters of the program.
Timeliness of delivery (10%)	Applicant demonstrates commitment to roll out project quickly. Project schedule and project plan are clear and identify key deliverable dates within program timeframes, including a schedule showing that the project will be complete by December 2023.
Risk mitigation (10%)	Risk assessment included with strategies to mitigate project risks.
Value for money (10%)	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 6 outlines the application and assessment process and timeframes for the 2022–23 funding round of the program:

Table 6. Application process and timeframes for 2022–23

Action	Date
Applications open	July 2022
Applications close	September 2022
Grant assessment	October 2022
Announcement/funding agreements issued to successful councils	November 2022
Projects start	December 2022
Projects completed	December 2023

2022-23 funding and payment milestones

Table 7. Funding and payment milestones

Stage	% of allocation*	Date
Project commencement	80%	On execution of funding agreement
Project completion	20%	When project is well established and underway (no later than 12 months after approval)

* Indicative

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 timeframe as per 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 terms of the agreement.

Approvals

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

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 with the community and other key stakeholders

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.

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

Grant recipients must:

- Provide high quality 'before' and 'after' images.
- Provide 'before' and 'after' reporting on core indicators requested by the department.
- Provide milestone reports and a final acquittal report via [SmartyGrants](#) at the completion of project.

Project opening event and promotion

We 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 Minister for Homes or a departmental 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 recipient to decide if there is to be an opening event. Recipients should invite the Minister for Planning and Minister for Homes, the department 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 following completion of the project.

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.

How to apply

Familiarise yourself with the grant requirements set out in these guidelines and determine if you are eligible.

Visit the [Open Spaces website](#) to access resources to support your application and attend a webinar, with a registration link soon to be updated on the website.

Complete and submit your application in [SmartyGrants](#) by 4pm, 30 September 2022. Successful applications will be announced in late November 2022.



Advice

For more resources to support your application, visit the [Open Spaces Program website](#). This includes answers to frequently asked questions to help you to address the program guidelines.

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: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm AEST,
Mon – Fri
- Visit www.help.smartygrants.com.au

Please note, when attaching files to support the application, it is strongly recommended you keep files under 5 megabytes and use concise and descriptive file names.

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

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

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 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.

