

Community Grants and Subsidies Program 2026/2027

INFORMATION GUIDE

2026/2027 COMMUNITY GRANTS AND SUBSIDIES PROGRAM INFORMATION GUIDE.

Applications open from Monday 9 February – Wednesday 11 March 2026.

In this guide you will find:

1. Overview
2. Criteria
3. Assessment Process
4. Funding
5. How to apply
6. Acquittal Process
7. Questions
8. Terms/Definitions

If you have any further questions, please contact Sutherland Shire Council's Community Connections unit at communities@ssc.nsw.gov.au or 9710 0892

1. OVERVIEW

Supporting the local community.

Sutherland Shire Council believes in a creative, caring and healthy community that celebrates culture and diversity. Our Community Grants and Subsidies Program aims to provide financial support to local not-for-profit organisations that contribute to a strong, healthy, and connected community with a cohesive local identity.

Council seeks to actively engage the community sector to develop and implement programs that promote health and wellbeing; and projects that celebrate our shared heritage and embrace diversity. Applicants applying for funding will need to demonstrate how their organisation and project align with [Councils Community Strategic Plan](#).

[Councils Community Strategic Plan](#) is integral in delivering Councils' planned actions to support the community as part of the operational and delivery plan. The Community Strategic Plan outlines how Council will develop and enhance programs that support and enable the safety and wellbeing of all in our community.

All Council officers involved in the administration of the Grants and Subsidies annual program, act in line with all requirements of the NSW Local Government Act 1993.

The following target groups are identified as priority areas for funding. These include seniors, young people, people living with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTQIA+, vulnerable communities, children, and family.

Who can apply?

Applicants must be an Australian incorporated not for profit organisation or charity or be auspiced by one.

Groups that do not meet the Programs eligibility criteria (outlined below) are encouraged to consider being auspiced by an organisation that does. The auspicing organisation must satisfy the eligibility criteria and take responsibility for the grant money and financial records. The auspicee runs the project and it's deliverables. Both parties sign the Funding Agreement. A letter from the auspicing organisation outlining the arrangement will need to be attached to the application by the unregistered group.

Applicants must provide services or an event for residents of the Sutherland Shire local government area. In addition, eligible organisations must have an Australian Business Number, Australian bank account, and documentation that support it's not for profit status.

How much are the grants?

The Community Grants and Subsidies Program is a three-tier program designed to support local not – for profit organisations seeking funding for local programs, events and initiatives that contribute to a creative, caring, and healthy community that celebrates culture and diversity by:

- Building community capacity.
- Empowering vulnerable members of our community.
- Promoting partnerships.
- Encouraging community participation.
- Delivering programs that are sustainable.

Tier One. A supported and enabled community – Grants of up to \$20,000 aim to fund Sutherland Shire programs that facilitate access to ongoing services and programs that support, strengthen, and enable all in our community and prioritise programs that contribute to:

- I. quality health services and community safety and wellbeing.
- II. community connections through cultural experiences and events that build a cohesive local identity.

Tier One funding best aligns with both:

Category 1 Outcomes - A Creative, Caring and Healthy Community and

Category 2 Outcomes -A Community that Celebrates Culture and Diversity.

Tier Two. An engaged and activated community - Grants of up to \$10,000 aim to fund local projects, annual concerts, festivals and events that demonstrate a high level of community participation through the organisation of events or activities that nurture creativity, celebrate our shared heritage, and embrace diversity.

Tier Two funding best aligns with:

Category 2 Outcomes - A Community that Celebrates Culture and Diversity

Tier Three. Venue Hire Subsidy. A subsidy provided for Council venue hire to community organisations offering social support and engagement to the community. Council venues that are eligible are bookable community venues including [Council community centres, halls and performance venues](#).

Tier Three funding best aligns with:

Category 1 Outcomes A Creative, Caring and Healthy Community.

Organisations can submit a total of two applications across all three tiers.

Organisations for the purpose of this program will be deemed as one entity, irrespective of how many outlets, or how many various ABNs are registered.

Funding Period

Funding is for activities and programs that must be delivered during the 2026/2027 financial year. Any organisation that cannot deliver the activity or program in its entirety within this time, will be required to return unspent funds to Council by 31 July 2027.

What will we fund?

Sutherland Shire Council will not fund core expenses (such as rent, insurance, phone rental, IT upgrades, policy updates, staffing costs, general business operations etc), retrospective funding or funding to direct individuals.

Grants are a competitive process and applications that meet the assessment criteria are not guaranteed funding. Successful applicants may receive a percentage of the total sought, rather than the full amount.

AI Use in Grant Applications

Applicants may use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to assist in preparing their grant applications. If AI is used, this must be clearly declared in the application.

Allowing AI can help create a fairer and more transparent process, as it supports consistent standards and equal treatment across all applications. However, applicants remain responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of all information submitted.

AI use will not influence the assessment outcome, but transparency ensures trust and accountability in the process.

Key dates

9 February 2026	Applications open.
11 March 2026	Applications close.
April/May 2026	Grants assessed.
June 2026	Council meeting.
June 2026	Applicants notified of outcome in writing.
July 2026	Funding made available.

Any changes to these dates will be updated on the Community Grants and Subsidies homepage on our website at <https://www.sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au/living-here/community-support/grants/community-grants-and-subsidies-program>

Successful applications

If your application is successful, you will be required to sign a legally binding funding agreement with Sutherland Shire Council which will stipulate terms and conditions of funding. It is imperative both parties sign this funding agreement.

Your funding agreement will be emailed for signing and must be returned within 14 days.

This funding agreement will also be dependent upon the submission of any outstanding acquittals and/ or return of unspent funds from the previous grant round outlining outcomes achieved.

2. CRITERIA

Funding Categories

There are two funding categories aimed at providing an equitable distribution of funding across the community sector and the arts and cultural community enhancing social wellbeing, participation, and inclusion locally. The program will fund projects that best align with the outcomes of either funding category. Funding categories are:

1. A Creative, Caring and Healthy Community

Each project must demonstrate how it meets one or more of the following outcomes:

- The community has access to quality services that enhance health and wellbeing.
- Delivery of essential support services to individuals experiencing homelessness and sleeping rough in our community.
- Foster opportunities to strengthen community connections.
- Develop programs that support and enable the safety and wellbeing of all in our community.
- Empower disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the community.
- Engage, support, and enable all in our community, including multicultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to participate in community life.

Priority will be given to programs that target demonstrated and emerging needs/issues within the community including, but not limited to:

- Programs that actively reduce social isolation across all age groups and sectors.

- Provide immediate and/or ongoing support to people sleeping rough by delivering essential services and/or connection to services that foster community collaboration to reduce homelessness.
- Services and programs that support mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- Activities and programs that strengthen community connections and sense of belonging.
- Proactive and preventative programs that target domestic and family violence.

2. A Community that Celebrates Culture and Diversity

Each project must demonstrate how it meets one or more of the following outcomes:

- Celebrates who we are through facilitation of cultural experiences and events that promote social wellbeing and health outcomes for the community.
- Recognises and respects our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage.
- Actively encourages participation in the arts and cultural experiences.
- Fosters artists and creative industries in Sutherland Shire
- Contributes to the delivery of a range of community events and cultural experiences for residents of Sutherland Shire

Priority will be given to projects which target demonstrated and emerging needs/issues within the community including, but not limited to:

- Activating places, spaces and stories that contribute to our Sutherland Shire identity.
- Opportunities and events that improve cultural awareness and connections.
- Develop and deliver opportunities that support and enhance our culture, identity, and sense of belonging.
- Contribute to artistic, cultural and heritage outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Public spaces activated with annual cultural and creative initiatives and connections.

3. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Applications will be assessed by the community service team. There are three stages to the assessment process.

- i. initial assessment performed by the community services team and assessed against the eligibility and selection criteria.
- ii. an independent senior assessment panel will review and evaluate the application rankings making final recommendations to the Grants and Subsidies Working Party
- iii. review and endorsement by the Grants and Subsidies Working Party for distribution.

At all stages there is opportunity for assessors to declare any conflicts of interest.

Please note, applicants may be called upon to present their project to Council for final decision making.

Process for Review and Approval.

Each stage is dependent on the previous one. There are opportunities to review and clarify information during each process and/or seek further information from the applicant.

The Grants and Subsidies Working Party has the responsibility for the final endorsement of all applications. This may occur during the meeting or during follow up consultation with Council officers.

Assessment Categories/Weightings:

Category 1 - A Creative, Caring and Healthy Community

Alignment to the Community Grants outcomes (30 per cent weighting)

- Will the program contribute towards the outcomes of the Community Grants program?
- Is the program well described with clear goals and outcomes?
- Is there a clear link between the activities that will be delivered and the outcomes and goals?
- How is the program evaluated – what measures are used to determine if the program has delivered on the planned outcomes?

Community need (20 per cent weighting)

- Is there a clearly identified and demonstrated local need for this program?
 - Does the program and identified activities effectively address this need?
 - Does the program target vulnerable or marginalised sectors of the community?
- Demonstrated evidence of consultation with local stakeholders.

Organisational capacity (20 per cent weighting)

- Are the milestones clear, logical, and achievable?
- Does the program identify appropriate partners that will work with them in a collaborative way?
- Does the organisation demonstrate the ability to execute the program successfully within the set timeframe?
- Is the program sustainable beyond the funded activities?

Access and inclusion (15 per cent weighting)

- Are the program beneficiaries / audience clearly identified?
- Is the program accessible and inclusive for the targeted beneficiaries to participate in the planned activities?
- Does the program remove barriers and create opportunities for people to attend, including people with a disability?

Budget (15 per cent weighting)

- Does the application include a budget estimate?
- Has the applicant demonstrated a need for financial support from Council?
- Does the budget accurately reflect the scope and scale of the application and have the resources that are required to deliver the program been clearly identified?
- Have other internal and external funding sources been identified?

Category 2 - A Community that Celebrates Culture and Diversity

Alignment to the Community Grants outcomes (30 per cent weighting)

- Will the project contribute towards the outcomes of the Community Grants program?
- Is the project well described with clear goals and outcomes?
- Is there a clear link between the activities that will be delivered and the project outcomes and goals?
- How is the project evaluated – what measures are used to determine if the project has delivered on the planned outcomes?

Community participation (20 per cent weighting)

- Has the project engaged local residents and / or artists?
- Does the project contribute to a range of community events and cultural activities for local residents?
- Does the project support the arts and cultural sector of the Sutherland Shire?
- Have local residents, service users and/or service providers been involved in the planning of the project?

Organisational capacity (20 per cent weighting)

- Are the milestones clear, logical, and achievable?
- Does the project identify appropriate partners that will work with them in a collaborative way?
- Does the organisation demonstrate the ability to execute the project successfully within the set timeframe?
- Is the project sustainable beyond the funded activities?

Access and inclusion (15 per cent weighting)

- Are the project beneficiaries / audiences clearly identified?
- Is the project accessible and inclusive for the targeted beneficiaries to participate in the planned activities?
- Does the project remove barriers and create opportunities for people to attend, including people with a disability?

Budget (15 per cent weighting)

- Does the application include a budget estimate?
- Has the applicant demonstrated a need for financial support from Council?
- Does the budget accurately reflect the scope and scale of the application and have the resources that are required to deliver the project been clearly identified?
- Have other internal and external funding sources been identified?

4. FUNDING

Applicants must agree to sign a funding agreement which will stipulate terms and conditions of funding. Funding agreements will need to be signed by both the recipient and Council. The purpose of this agreement is to establish a funding arrangement that correlates with the planned activities and outcomes as outlined in the grant application form and is an undertaking to deliver projects and events that align with Councils' Community Strategic Plan.

If a recipient needs to vary the planned activities and outcomes the recipient may apply in writing with a request to vary the original aims / deliverables and/or the budget allocation of the project.

Any requests for a project variation must align with the Community Grants and Subsidies Program Information Guide and may require the return of any unspent portion of grant funds.

The funding agreement will be emailed for signing and must be returned within 14 days.

In the funding agreement applicants agree to:

- Recognise the value of the community-based activities being undertaken in the Sutherland Shire utilising Council funding.
- Acknowledge that local community organisations have an important role in the health and well-being of the residents of the Sutherland Shire and should continue to maintain and develop a program of local projects and events that contribute to a connected, supportive, caring, inclusive and engaged community.
- The funding agreement will also be dependent upon the submission of any outstanding acquittals from the previous grant round outlining project outcomes achieved.

Financial Delegations:

Recipients of funds are required to meet the funding conditions, acquittal, agreement, and reporting requirements. Recipients enter into a written funding agreement with Council that outlines the use of funds.

Following endorsement by the Grants and Subsidies Working Group evidence of approved funding will be minuted and approved, outlining the total funding pool available and the distribution of funds per applicant.

Finance will make payments when evidence of endorsement has been received.

Sutherland Shire Council receives significantly more funding applications than can be supported. Therefore, successful applications are those that clearly meet the grant outcomes and best respond to the assessment criteria.

The criteria are weighted giving some more worth than others depending on which funding category the applicant applied under. The differences highlight applications received under the Community that Celebrates Culture and Diversity category, acknowledging that they need to be treated differently during the assessment process.

5. HOW TO APPLY

Please do not assume we know about your organisation or your project, even if your organisation has received a grant in the past. Throughout the application form Council have provided some tips as a guide on what to include in your answers. Please keep responses succinct and only include relevant information.

Applications must be submitted and managed online via Smarty Grants. Application forms can be accessed from the Sutherland Shire Council website once the grant round is open.

Late applications will not be accepted.

Hard copy applications will not be accepted.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for a Community Grant your organisation must:

- Be able to demonstrate not-for-profit status and /or documents which confirm your organisation's incorporation number or;
- Be able to demonstrate your organisation is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission and holds charitable status.
- Have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- Is located in (and/or the program/project will be delivered in) the Sutherland Shire.
- Is able to demonstrate financial viability through the provision of annual financial statements for review.
- Is able to demonstrate alignment between their program/project and the aims of this program and how it will benefit Sutherland Shire residents.
- Adhere to Work Health and Safety policy and practices as required under legislation
- Has the appropriate type and level of insurance for the activities that are the subject of this grant.
- Have appropriate current certificates where required (eg: police checks)
- Is not a political party or a national registered charity.
- Have acquitted all previous grant conditions (or submitted a progress report) and has no debt to Council.

Ineligibility Criteria

- Organisations that failed to acquit or return funds from previous funding rounds.
- Projects that do not provide a service to Sutherland Shire residents.
- For-profit organisations or political organisations.
- Organisation or groups with core business or infrastructure funded by NSW Government schools (including P&C activities that primarily benefit a particular school), tertiary institutions or other government organisations.
- Applications that seek support for supplementing the funding for core business expenses (e.g. rent, utilities, insurance, staff wages).
- Facility upgrades that include significant building works (applications for upgrades will be capped at \$20,000 for total project costs).
- National registered charities that actively source donations
Prize money, payment of debts, insurances, fund raising activities.

In-kind support

If your organisation is successful in receiving a grant under the Community Grants and Subsidies Program, you will NOT be eligible to receive any further in-kind support from Council for your project. Please ensure you include the value of any in-kind support in your project budget to ensure you have sufficient funds for your project. Examples of in-kind support include; event bond, site fees, waste fees, venue hire.

Lobbying

Canvassing or lobbying of Councillors and employees of Sutherland Shire Council in relation to any application is prohibited during the application process.

No further consideration will be given to an application submitted by an applicant that canvasses or lobbies a Councillor or employee of Sutherland Shire Council.

Sutherland Shire Council does not condone the practice of pork barrelling.

6.ACQUITTAL PROCESS

Process for obtaining progress reports and acquittals.

Organisations funded under the Sutherland Shire Council grants program are required to submit an acquittal form at the completion of their project. This is outlined in your signed Funding Agreement.

Progress and acquittal reports are used to confirm that the funding has been used for the purpose intended in the funding application and must accurately report on the funded activities and the expenditure of the funding.

A reminder will be sent via SmartyGrants before the next grant round opens. If you have not yet fully executed your project at that time, a progress report will be required in the interim.

Organisations that fail to submit to a grant acquittal prior to the next grant round opening date will not be eligible for future funding under the Community Grants and Subsidies Program.

If an applicant has not acquitted a previous grant, they are ineligible to apply. Applicants will also be required to detail previous funding when completing their application form.

The acquittal form will ask your organisation to:

report on the outcomes and achievements of your project.

- provide evidence of your expenditure and income.
- provide evidence of our support in your publicity materials.
- provide feedback from participants and partners.

If you do not satisfactorily acquit your grant/s by the due date you will not be eligible to apply for further Community Grant funding and action is likely to be taken to recover the grant.

7. QUESTIONS

Application Assistance

SmartyGrants provides video tutorials and help guides on their website. You can access these at: SmartyGrants <http://www.smartygrants.com.au>

If you require additional advice or assistance, contact Sutherland Shire Council's Community Connections Grants Advisor:

Ph: 9710 – 0892

Email: communities@ssc.nsw.gov.au

Grants information workshops and online training courses will also be provided. [Visit Councils website to find out more.](#)

Interpreter Services

Applicants requiring an interpreter to talk to Council staff regarding an application should first phone the

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450.

If you have any further questions, please contact Sutherland Shire Council Community Connections Team at communities@ssc.nsw.gov.au or 9710892.

8. TERMS/ DEFINITIONS

Acquittal - A report submitted after the project is complete outlining how the grant funds were spent and how they align with the project outcomes in the funding agreement.

AI - Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the field of computer science focused on creating systems that can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence.

Auspice: An organisation receives grant money, on behalf of another group,

This organisation is responsible for the administration of all money received, including acquittals.

Assessment Criteria: the main points that a grant application will be considered against.

Capacity building: ability for an organisation to develop and deliver projects, resources and outcomes that communities need to survive and adapt over time.

Capital expenditure: money for purchase of equipment or property development

Festival or event A public occasion for celebration and/or gathering in the community to commemorate a special occasion, local anniversary or organised performance

Funding Agreement – detailed outline of funding arrangement made

In- Kind contribution – non-financial support provided to an organisation

Milestones- when major tasks or objectives have been or will be successful achieved.

Objectives: what needs to be accomplished for the project to be successful

Outcomes: the aim of the project - What the project will achieve

Performance Measure: what is used to measure outcomes

Program: A collection of activities that are managed and reported on as a group

Project: represents a single focus or activity.

Pork Barrelling - the allocation of public funds and resources to targeted electors for partisan political purposes.

Recipient: A party who has successfully applied for a grant or sponsorship

Stakeholder: people or groups that have an interest in the project.

Sustainability: how the project will be maintained and operate into the future

Vulnerable communities: members of the community that are at higher risk of experiencing barriers to social activities, resources, services, and support.