VOLUNTEER GRANTS: GUIDE FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Department of Social Services

volunteering@dss.gov.au

November 2024

Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 2
1.1. Funding information 2
1.2. Timing of the 2024-25 Volunteer Grants round 2
1.3. Contacting the department 2
2. Changes to the Volunteer Grants Program in 2024-25 3
2.1. Strengthening the volunteer sector 3
2.2. Eligibility requirements for grant funding 3
2.3. Examples of eligible expenditure 4
2.4. Questions and Answers regarding the changes 6
3 The role of MPs in the nomination process 9
4 The Role of Community Committees 11
4.1 MP considerations when selecting Community Committee members 11
4.2 What is the jurisdiction of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) 11
4.3 Community Committee Composition 12
4.4 Responsibilities of the Community Committee 12
4.5 Record keeping of the Community Committee and MP office 12
5 General Questions and Answers 12
5.1 General Questions 12
5.2 Grant Opportunity Guidelines and eligibility 15
5.3 Probity and Conflict of Interest 16
5.4 Expression of Interest (EOI) and Nomination Process 18

1. Introduction

The Volunteer Grants program is part of the Australian Government's commitment to assist volunteers and encourage volunteering. Volunteer Grants support the work of local community organisations by reducing barries for volunteers and increasing participation in volunteering.

1.1. Funding information

The 2024-25 Volunteer Grants round is an electorate-based, closed, non-competitive grant opportunity. $10 million will be allocated nationally across 151 electorates, with funding of up to **$66,225 (GST exclusive)** available in each electorate.

Grants of between **$1,000 and $5,000** will be available to eligible not-for-profit community organisations to support the efforts of their volunteers.

Federal Members of Parliament (MPs), and their respective Community Committees, will draw on their knowledge of the needs of eligible organisations in their local communities to develop a nomination list of organisations to be invited by the Department of Social Services (the department) to apply for a grant.

Any potential applicants should be made aware that assessments and **funding decisions** will be undertaken by **the department** and that a nomination by their local MP does not guarantee their grant application will be successful.

1.2. Timing of the 2024-25 Volunteer Grants round

Milestone	Timing
Expression of Interest (EOI) period opens	**From 25 November 2024**
MP nominations due to the department*	**31 January 2025**
Application period opens	26 February 2025
Application period closes	12 March 2025 (5PM AEDT)
Assessment of applications by the department	March to June 2025
The department notifies unsuccessful applicants**	June 2025
MPs notify successful applicants	June 2025
Letter of Agreement issued to successful applicants	July 2025
Activity start date	July 2025
Grants executed and payments made	July - August 2025

** MPs are responsible for notifying organisations of the outcomes of the EOI process.*
*** MPs are not required to issue unsuccessful outcomes to applicants.*

1.3. Contacting the department

MPs and their staff can contact a dedicated MP hotline as per the details below:

Email: volunteering@dss.gov.au
Phone: 1800 183 374
Operational Hours: 9:00am to 5:00pm AEST/AEDT

Nominated organisations will be able to contact the department to enquire about the application process on the contact details below:

Email: support@communitygrants.gov.au
Phone: 1800 020 283
Operational Hours: 9:00am to 5:00pm AEST/AEDT

2. Changes to the Volunteer Grants Program in 2024-25

2.1. Strengthening the volunteer sector

The Government has made changes to the Volunteer Grants Program for the first time since 2001, to better align the program with the National Strategy for Volunteering 2023-2033, its vision for children and young people, and to support some key costs facing all volunteering organisations.

The changes to the Volunteer Grants program in 2024-25 will strengthen the volunteer sector and encourage volunteering by:

- enabling organisations to utilise funds for items and services that support online communication, in recognition that this can reduce the administrative burden associated with many forms of volunteering;
- focusing on young volunteers and activities that support children's wellbeing and development; and
- specifying new items and services on which grant funds can be used, including covering the costs of insurance, internet usage and phone bills for volunteer organisations.

2.2. Eligibility requirements for grant funding

The previous entity eligibility requirements for community organisations applying for a grant remain the same, including not-for-profit status, organisation type and a minimum of 40 per cent of volunteers in the organisation, however the way grant funds can be used is now more targeted.

Community organisations will need to apply under one or more of the following categories to be eligible for funding in the 2024-25 Volunteer Grants round.

Category 1

Purchase communication or insurance items as listed below that will benefit any of the community organisations' volunteers:

- Mobile phones, phone bills and radio communication devices
- Computers, laptops, and tablets, where those items are primarily used for online communications and activity
- Software, where the software is primarily used for or to facilitate online communications and activity (e.g. email or videoconferencing software)
- Electronic audio and visual equipment, where the equipment is primarily used for or to facilitate online communications and activity (e.g. video-communication equipment)
- Electronic payment devices where the device is primarily used for or to facilitate online communication and activity
- Internet service fees incurred by the community organisation
- Insurance premiums incurred by the community organisation

Category 2

(A) Purchase items or services **for the main purpose** of supporting a community organisation's volunteers from the following cohorts:

- Children (under 18) as a means of supporting their development, or
- Adults whose volunteering activities support children's development and wellbeing

(B) Fund volunteer-run activities within the community organisation, **for the main purpose** of supporting:

- Children's (under 18) development and wellbeing, or
- Parents/carers to develop the skills necessary to ensure a child's development

2.3. Examples of eligible expenditure

To assist with understanding the changes to the program and how they might affect organisations in your electorate, below are some examples of eligible expenditure by community organisations.

Category 1 – Communication/insurance items

- A University of the Third Age (U3A) branch applies for funding to purchase electronic audio and visual equipment and software to enable volunteers to deliver online events and courses. This helps volunteer tutors to run programs that benefit older people in the community.

- A pickleball club applies for funding to purchase an electronic tablet and payment device to collect registration fees and raise funds for the club. This helps the volunteers to administer online payments and keep the club operational.

- A Rural Fire Service applies for funding to purchase radio communication devices to enable volunteers to communicate with each other while volunteering for the service. This helps volunteers to remain safe and responsive during emergencies.

- New items and services that can be purchased: A community organisation can now apply for funding to purchase insurance premiums to cover their volunteers, freeing up administration funds to purchase other items that support the organisation deliver services to the community.

Category 2 (A) – Items or services for the main purpose of supporting children volunteers or adult volunteers that are supporting children's development and wellbeing

- A State Emergency Service runs a cadet program for young volunteers aged 13 to 17 to learn how to assist their community in an emergency. The organisation applies for funding to purchase personal protective equipment and tools for the volunteers. This activity helps the young volunteers to develop skills in emergency response, teamwork and leadership which supports their development.

- A community organisation engages student volunteers from the local primary school to run a breakfast club. The organisation applies for funding to purchase aprons and cooking equipment for the student volunteers. This activity helps the student volunteers to develop skills in safe food preparation and social connections.

- A community organisation offers after-school writing workshops run by adult volunteer educators for children under the age of 18. The organisation applies for funding to purchase books and writing materials to enable the volunteers to deliver the workshops. This activity supports children's development and wellbeing through improved writing skills and literacy.

- A Surf Lifesaving Club runs a Little Nippers program with adult volunteer instructors for children aged 5 to 14. The Club purchases first aid training and background screening checks for the instructors. This equips the volunteers with necessary skills to ensure the wellbeing of the children by providing a safe environment.

Category 2 (B) – Volunteer run activities that support children's development and wellbeing or parents/carers to develop skills necessary to ensure a child's development

- A branch of the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) has volunteer breastfeeding educators. The ABA applies for funding to purchase breastfeeding pumps to enable the educators to run demonstrative classes for new mothers learning how to express milk. This activity helps parents to support their children's development and wellbeing.

- A Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) facilitates parenting programs with volunteer mentors. The P&C applies for funding to hire audiovisual equipment to run parenting sessions on key issues impacting children, for example, social media. The audiovisual equipment is an essential tool for volunteers to educate parents on key issues to support the wellbeing of the children.

- A riding club transports children and horses to competitions during the year. The transport vehicles are driven by volunteers. The club can use the grant funds to pay for fuel to transport the children. This enables all children in the riding club to enter the competitions which supports their development and wellbeing through participation and skill building.

- A Scout Group runs a leadership camp for children under the age of 18 with volunteer leaders. The organisation applies for funding to purchase outdoor equipment for the children to use at the camps. The use of grant funds to purchase outdoor equipment provides the volunteer with the resources needed to deliver the leadership camp. The camp activity supports children's development and wellbeing, with leadership and problem-solving skills.

- A football club with volunteer coaches has 10 teams in the junior under 18s competition. The football club applies for funding to purchase balls and portable goals so the coaches can deliver training sessions to the children. The use of grant funds to purchase sporting equipment provides the volunteer with the resources needed to deliver the training sessions and supports children's development by building physical and social skills.

2.4. Questions and Answers regarding the changes

2.4.1 Will all organisations who have previously applied remain eligible?

All organisations that have previously been eligible to apply for a Volunteer Grant are expected to remain eligible as no change has been made to organisational eligibility requirements. However, organisations may need change the way funding is spent under the modified program.

2.4.2 What happens if an organisation we have supported in the past submits an EOI but does not have volunteers or activities that support the development and wellbeing of children?

Category 1 is available to all community organisations to apply for grant funding as long as the organisation meets all other entity eligibility criteria such as not-for-profit status, organisation type and percentage of volunteers. Category 1 funds can be used to purchase communication or insurance items, which are applicable to all community organisations.

2.4.3 Will organisations be required to prove that their volunteers or their volunteer run activities fall under the specific categories?

During the application process organisations will be required to self-declare that they have volunteers in eligible cohorts or volunteer run activities that support eligible cohorts.

2.4.4 What does "supporting the development and wellbeing of children" mean?

Items or services purchased with the grant funds must be aimed at supporting volunteer run activities that provide opportunities for a child's development that the child would otherwise lack, and/or equip a child's parents (or carers) with the necessary skills to ensure the development of the child.

2.4.5 Why are young volunteers (under 18) and activities for children being prioritised?

A priority for the Australian Government is raising awareness, interest and consideration of volunteering among young people in an effort to address the decline in formal volunteering in Australia. Young people who engage in volunteering prior to entering the workforce are more likely to have a lifelong connection to volunteering.

The changes to the Volunteer Grants program to prioritise children complements other strategies the Government has developed over recent years that are focused on the development and wellbeing of children including:

- the Early Years Strategy 2024-2034 to support child-centred policy development; and
- Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 which sets out how we can work together to ensure that children and young people can reach their full potential by growing up free from harm and neglect.

2.4.6 What is considered a volunteer-run activity?

A volunteer-run activity is an event, program/activity, or service organised and operated primarily by volunteers rather than paid staff. In these activities, volunteers

take on key responsibilities, such as planning, organising, facilitating and managing the operations. These activities rely on the time, energy, and skills of the volunteers.

2.4.7 Can items or services purchased for particular volunteers or activity participants be used by others?

Items and services purchased must be used for the main purpose of supporting the intended volunteers or activity participants. Any use of these items or services by others must be incidental in nature.

2.4.8 Can organisations now use grant funds for ongoing operational costs such as leasing of premises and payment of utility bills (eg. water, electricity)?

No. Using grant funds for general ongoing operational costs for an organisation, such as leasing of premises or payment of utility bills (eg. water, electricity) is still not allowable under the program. However organisations can now direct the grant funds to insurance premiums, internet service costs, phone bills and software subscriptions.

2.4.9 Are community organisations limited to which category they can apply under?

A community organisation can apply for funding under one or more categories. For example, a community organisation can apply for funding under Category 1 to purchase a laptop for use by all their volunteers and under Category 2 to purchase equipment to be mainly used by volunteers under the age of 18 to assist with their development and wellbeing.

2.4.10 How does the eligibility criteria in this round differ from previous years?

The Government has made changes to the Volunteer Grants Program, to:

- better align the program
  - with the National Strategy for Volunteering 2023-33, and
  - its vision for children and young people.
- support some key costs facing all volunteering organisations.

These changes will see Volunteer Grants fund 2 priority areas: the cost of communication equipment/services or insurance items for any volunteers; and young people under the age of 18 for those organisations that have a focus on this cohort.

2.4.11 Are senior organisations excluded from this round of funding as they would not be able to apply for any of the items under category 2?

Support is available under Category 1 for any eligible organisation to support their volunteers, including senior organisations.

2.4.12 Will this round support volunteer organisations such as an RSL sub-branch hiring audio visual equipment for an event such as ANZAC day?

Yes, provided the equipment that is being hired is used for online communications and activity, then it would be considered eligible expenditure under Category 1.

2.4.13 Are the items listed under Category 2 in the EOI form and Appendix A of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines the only items/services that can be purchased with grant funds?

These lists are high level to capture a comprehensive number of eligible items/services. If there is an item/service that an organisation wants to purchase that does not appear to fit under the descriptions, please contact the MP Hotline or volunteering@dss.gov.au to confirm if the item would be eligible.

2.4.14 Can organisations still apply for fuel reimbursements?

Fuel reimbursements are still an eligible item under Category 2.

2.4.15 Are software subscriptions, especially those with an annual renewal eligible for grant funding?

Yes, provided the software is primarily used for or to facilitate online communications and activity it would be eligible under Category 1 (e.g. email).

2.4.16 Can grant funds be used to establish and maintain a website under Category 1?

Yes, the establishment and maintenance of a website would be considered eligible under Category 1, as it is used to facilitate online communications and activity.

3 The role of MPs in the nomination process

Stage	Description
1. Call for Expressions of Interest	MPs must conduct an Expression of Interest (EOI) process which calls on eligible community organisations located in their electorate to express an interest in being considered for funding. At a minimum the EOI **must** identify: • the name of the organisation expressing interest • the Australian Business Number (ABN) of the organisation, or a Statement by Supplier if there is no ABN • contact details of 2 representatives from the organisation: name, email address and phone number (ensuring the contact details are unique to the individual representative) • the amount of funding sought • a description of how the organisation supports the local community • what the organisation is seeking to purchase • confirmation that volunteers make up at least 40% of the organisation's staff A template for collecting the EOI information from organisations has been provided by the department to assist you.
2. Establish or use an existing Community Committee	MPs **must** use an existing or new Community Committee consisting of at least three members to review the EOIs received in their electorate. MPs may be part of the Committee however this is not compulsory.
3. Community Committee considerations	The Community Committee **must** develop a list of eligible organisations, which includes the funding amount recommended for each nomination. Committee considerations are detailed in 1.5.3 Considerations of the Community Committee below.
4. MPs review nominations and endorse the funding amount	MPs are required to declare that they have reviewed the nomination lists in accordance with Community Committee recommendations and endorse the level of funding of each nomination. MPs **must** consider the following when endorsing nominations: • their obligations under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024[1] • their obligations under the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC)[2] • any existing or perceived conflict of interest with each applicant

[1] https://www.finance.gov.au/government/commonwealth-grants/commonwealth-grants-rules-and-principles-2024

[2] Federal Register of Legislation - National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022

Stage	Description
	• how the project benefits the work of volunteers in their electorate • the extent to which the project meets the objectives of the Volunteer Grants Program • whether the project demonstrates value for money
5. Submit nominations	MPs submit their nomination list, using the template provided by the department. For an organisation to be eligible they **must** be nominated by an MP. Submitting a nomination involves: • providing contact details for each organisation • declaring all actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest, including that of electorate staff and Committee members, and include that all have been sufficiently mitigated • endorsing the level of funding for each nomination. Nominations are to be submitted via email to volunteering@dss.gov.au **by 31 January 2025.**
6. The department confirms nominations with the MP office	The department will check all nomination lists for potential issues, including organisations being nominated by multiple MPs. The department will contact the electorate office to confirm the nominations and provide a Nomination ID for each nominated organisation prior to inviting organisations to apply. Nomination IDs are required by organisations when submitting their application to enable the department to match the nomination to the application.
7. MPs finalise their EOI process	After the department has confirmed the nomination lists and provided MPs with the Nomination IDs, MPs are responsible for advising all EOI applicants of the outcomes of the EOI process. Organisations should be informed that being successful in the EOI process **does not guarantee they will be successful in their application**, and they should not spend grant funds until they are advised of the outcome by the department in July 2025. The department will send invitations to nominated organisations to apply for a 2024-25 Volunteer Grant. The department will provide regular updates during the grant open period to MPs on which organisations have/have not submitted an application.

4 The Role of Community Committees

To ensure that community needs are a key focus in the 2024-25 Volunteer Grants round, each MP will call for EOIs and must consult with a new or existing Community Committee, to identify local volunteer needs and consider potential applicants in their electorate. The Committee must develop a list of organisations that address those needs.

Each of the Community Committee members will be required to complete the provided declaration form that includes:

- full name, current occupation and contact telephone number
- any perceived or existing conflicts of interest and that they have been mitigated, or that, to the best of their knowledge, there is no conflict of interest
- they have not been convicted of a serious offence or any other offence that would disqualify them from participating in the community committee
- they are not prohibited by law from being engaged in a capacity where they may have contact with a vulnerable person
- acknowledgement that they may be subject to the jurisdiction of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC)[3] and understand their obligation to report any suspected corrupt conduct.
- that the information provided is true and correct and they acknowledge that providing false and misleading information is a serious offence which could result in charges and may be punishable by imprisonment.

4.1 MP considerations when selecting Community Committee members

When selecting Committee members, MPs must consider the following:

- the member has **never been convicted of a serious offence** – particularly (but not limited to) fraud, money laundering, insider dealing or any other financial offence or crime
- the member **does not have a criminal or court record** for any other offence within a prescribed period (for example 5 years) - such as an offence relating to and apprehended violence order against the person, consumption, dealing in, possession or handling of alcohol, a prohibited drug, narcotic or other prohibited substance; violence against another person
- the member is **not prohibited by any law from being engaged in a capacity where they may have contact with a vulnerable person**
- the member is **not currently subject to investigation or disqualification**, for example under legislation relating to companies, or professional bodies.

4.2 What is the jurisdiction of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC)

The NACC investigates issues of serious or systemic corrupt conduct in the Australian Government sector. Parliamentarians including Ministers, and the people who work for them, are public officials under section 10 of the *National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022.* The NACC can investigate any person, even if they are not a public official, if they do something that might cause a public official to carry out their official role other than honestly or impartially.

[3] Federal Register of Legislation - National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022

4.3 Community Committee Composition

There is no specific composition that is needed for the Committee other than a minimum of three people. The MP may choose to be on the Committee or not, and an existing Committee that understands local needs can be used. You may wish to consider the following options for members when establishing a new Committee:

- diverse backgrounds
- different sectors
- other community leaders
- representatives from different towns/areas of your electorate
- local council members.

4.4 Responsibilities of the Community Committee

When reviewing the EOIs the Committee will need to consider all submissions and make recommendations to the MP. In doing so they will be required to maintain records of their considerations.

When considering EOIs the Committee should give regard to the following:

- local volunteer needs and community priorities in the electorate
- the eligibility criteria listed at *Sections 4 and 5* of the 2024-25 Volunteer Grants Grant Opportunity Guidelines
- how grant funds will support the volunteers of the community organisation that is applying
- whether each project meets the objectives of the Volunteer Grants program
- whether each project demonstrates value for money
- the capacity of each organisation to manage the grant
- the proportion of volunteers in each organisation, noting at least 40% of the organisation must be volunteers

4.5 Record keeping of the Community Committee and MP office

The Committee **must** keep a record of their deliberations, including reasoning for decisions to approve or reject an EOI. This record does not need to be supplied to the department unless requested.

5 General Questions and Answers

5.1 General Questions

5.1.1 What can the 2024-25 Volunteer Grants be used for?

As per section 2.2 above, the eligibility and associated expenditure for this Volunteer Grants round is dependent on which category the organisation applies for funding under:

- Under Category 1, all eligible community organisations will be able to purchase any of the following items that will **benefit any of a community organisation's volunteers**:
  - Mobile phones, phone bills and radio communication devices
  - Computers, laptops, and tablets, where those items are primarily used for online communications and activity
  - Software, where the software is primarily used for or to facilitate online communications and activity (e.g. email or

videoconferencing software)
- Electronic audio and visual equipment used for or to facilitate online communications and activity (e.g. video-communication equipment)
- Electronic payment devices where the device is primarily used for or to facilitate online communication and activity
- Internet service fees incurred by the community organisation
- Insurance premiums incurred by the community organisation

- Under Category 2 (A) or 2 (B), community organisations will be able to purchase items or services **for the main purpose of supporting children's development and wellbeing**. Eligible types of items and services include the following:
  - Accessibility equipment
  - Background screening checks of volunteers
  - Computers, laptops, tablets, and relevant software
  - Educational equipment
  - Electronic audio and visual
  - Event costs including promotion of volunteering opportunities
  - First aid, safety and hygiene
  - Food preparation equipment and appliances
  - Furniture
  - Grounds maintenance
  - Heat/cooling (portable)
  - Office equipment
  - Promotion of volunteering opportunities
  - Sport and recreation equipment
  - Storage
  - Tools
  - Training
  - Travel/fuel costs
  - Whitegoods and appliances

5.1.2 What items or services cannot be purchased with grant funds?

- Items already paid for by other sources for example, state/territory governments, community
- Items that are for the organisation's paid staff
- Costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related document, including services of a grant writer
- Administration costs such as leasing, labour, utilities, and ongoing organisational costs
- Alcohol, accommodation or overseas travel
- Capital works such as buildings, renovations and permanent fixtures – plumbing, kitchens, hot water systems, permanent fencing

5.1.3 Will the funding be available to organisations immediately after the announcement of successful applicants?

The funding will be available to organisations 1 week after receipt of a Letter of Agreement (Grant Agreement) from the department, scheduled for late July/early August 2025.

5.1.4 When will organisations know if they are successful or unsuccessful?

MPs will be able to announce the successful applicants in late **June 2025**. Successful applicants will receive a Letter of Agreement (Grant Agreement) in **late July/ early August 2025**.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive an email from the department advising them of the outcome prior to any MP announcements. Individual feedback will not be provided to unsuccessful applicants.

5.1.5 How long do successful applicants have to spend their grant money?

Successful applicants will have until **30 September 2026** to spend all funds provided to them through this grant process.

5.1.6 Is a list of previous grant recipients in my electorate available?

Yes, the department can provide your office with a list of successful Volunteer Grant recipients for your electorate since the 2016 round. Please send any requests for information to volunteering@dss.gov.au.

5.1.7 Some electorates and electorate boundaries will change between the time MPs nominate organisations (by 31 January 2025) and when MPs announce the grant outcomes in their electorate in June 2025, due to redistributions of federal electoral divisions and the return of the House of Representatives to 150 members. How will the department manage this?

The intent of involving Federal MPs in the Volunteer Grants program is to draw on their knowledge of local needs and to use the electorates as a mechanism to distribute funds evenly across the country. The department will ensure that when MPs make announcements in 2025 organisations are mapped to the new or different electorates. This may mean there are variances in the total amounts of funding for each electorate due to the redistribution of federal electoral divisions.

5.1.8 How does eligibility work with respect to the 2024 electorate boundary redistribution?

The current electorate boundaries apply to the EOI and nomination process. In line with previous rounds, MPs are able to nominate organisations that are outside of their electorate.

5.1.9 If there are left over funds within the cap allocated to electorates as a result of assessment outcomes, is there an opportunity to fully exhaust funds by re-allocating to other groups or allowing a new group to apply at this point?

There will be no opportunity to reallocate funding during or following the assessment period.

5.1.10 Is there any opportunity to provide a limited supplementary list of nominations?

There will not be an opportunity to establish reserve lists for the round. During the department's application open period (26 February 2025 – 12 March 2025), the department will provide electorate offices regular updates on which organisations have submitted an application.

5.2 Grant Opportunity Guidelines and eligibility

5.2.1 How will applicants be able to view the grant opportunity documentation in full?

The 2024-25 Grant Opportunity Guidelines are available to the public on the GrantConnect website. Please send the link to the 2024-25 Grant Opportunity Guidelines to organisations in your electorate to assist with their EOI.

5.2.2 How much funding is available in the 2024-25 Volunteer Grants round?

The total funding available for the 2024-25 Volunteer Grant round is $10 million. As per previous rounds, each electorate will be able to nominate organisations for grants between $1,000 and $5,000 up to their cap of $66,225.

5.2.3 Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

To be eligible to apply for a grant, the applicant must be nominated by their local MP and:

- be eligible for funding under one of the eligible categories
- have a minimum of 40% of volunteers working for the organisation
- be a legal entity, or if an Unincorporated Association, be willing to supply details of an individual associated with the organisation who has agreed to enter into an agreement (taking on personal legal liability for the grant) on behalf of the organisation should the application be successful (refer to Section 4.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines)
- be a not-for-profit organisation
- have an ABN or be willing to provide a Statement by Supplier Form (reason for not quoting an ABN). Please refer to the Australian Tax Office website for further information
- have an account with an Australian financial institution in the name of the organisation applying, unless applying as an Unincorporated Association.

5.2.4 Who is not eligible to apply for a grant?

An organisation is not eligible to apply for a grant if the organisation is not nominated by their MP or are:

- an organisation included on the National Redress Scheme's website on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme' (www.nationalredress.gov.au)
- an organisation, or their project partner is an organisation, included on the Workplace Gender Equality Agency website on the non-compliant organisations list
- a for-profit organisation
- a Commonwealth Company
- a non-corporate Commonwealth Statutory Authority
- a Local Government Entity (including Local Government Entities applying on the behalf of the organisation)
- an International Entity
- a political party
- an individual.

5.2.5 Is the MP required to determine whether an applicant is a legal entity?

No. The applicant will be required to specify their legal entity status in their grant application form. The department will check the legal status of organisations as part of the eligibility and compliance process.

5.2.6 *What factors are considered when determining whether an organisation consists of local branches that operate in their own right and are therefore eligible in multiple electorates?*

The department considers the following factors when determining whether an organisation has branches under a larger umbrella organisation, including, but not limited to:

- organisation name
- legal entity name
- Australian Business Number
- bank account
- activity address
- organisation contact details
- whether the application is for a program under the organisation rather than a branch
- if the branch has evidence of its own internal system of management or administration.

If there is a clear distinction between the applicant organisation on some or all of the above factors, it may indicate that there are branches operating as separate entities who are eligible for a grant in their own right, as detailed in *Section 4.1* of the 2024-25 Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

5.3 Probity and Conflict of Interest

5.3.1 *What mechanisms are in place to minimise potential probity risks?*

The department will ensure the grant opportunity process is fair and undertaken in accordance with the published Grant Opportunity Guidelines and the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024 (CGRPs). The process will incorporate appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct.

The Grant Opportunity Guidelines may be amended by the department during the round. If this happens, the revised guidelines are published on GrantConnect to ensure that all applicants have access to updated information.

An external probity advisor will be utilised during the assessment process to ensure transparency and fairness of process.

5.3.2 *What activity/circumstances may constitute a conflict of interest?*

There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if the MP, their electorate staff or any member of a Community Committee or advisor and/or the applicant or any of its personnel has a:

- professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer or member of a Community Committee.
- relationship with, or interest in, an organisation which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently.
- relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives a grant under the grant program/ grant opportunity.

5.3.3 *What are the responsibilities of MPs in mitigating potential conflict of interest risks?*

MPs, their electorate staff and members of the Community Committee are required to declare any perceived or existing conflicts of interests in the Nomination Workbook provided. This will need to be undertaken for each nominated organisation. A risk matrix is provided to assist electorate staff in identifying risks and suitable mitigation strategies when filling out the Nomination Workbook.

As part of this process, MPs and electorate staff are required to ensure information provided is consistent with the Registry of Members' Interests. If a conflict of interest is identified, the declaration must include:

- the details of the conflict
- whether the conflict has been mitigated
- how the conflict has been mitigated.

If MPs later become aware of an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest that was not previously identified, they must inform the department immediately by emailing volunteering@dss.gov.au

The department publishes its conflict of interest policy on the Community Grants Hub website.

5.3.4 *Do all electorate staff need to declare conflicts of interest?*

Only electorate staff who are directly involved in the EOI and nomination process are required to declare any conflict of interest.

5.3.5 *Does the Declaration Form and conflicts of interest for each electorate need to be submitted to the department by 31 January 2025, along with the nominations?*

Yes, by 31 January 2025, electorates are required to submit the following to the department:

1. the Volunteer Grants Nomination Workbook, which contains a tab for nominations information and a tab for conflicts of interest; and
2. the Volunteer Grants Declaration form, which requires Community Committee and MP signatures.

5.3.6 *What are the responsibilities of the applicant in minimising potential conflict of interest risks?*

As part of their application, the applicant will be asked to declare any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or that, to the best of their knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If the applicant later thinks there is an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, they **must** inform the department's Community Grants Hub in writing **immediately** by emailing support@communitygrants.gov.au

Conflicts of Interest for Australian Government staff will be handled as set out in the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct (Section 13(7)) of the *Public Service Act 1999*. Committee members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

5.4 Expression of Interest (EOI) and Nomination Process

5.4.1 How much time should MPs allocate to the EOI process?

The timing in which MPs complete necessary activities during the EOI period, such as collecting and prioritising EOIs from community organisations, is to be managed individually by each electorate office. MPs and Community Committees are to consider EOI submissions and compile a list of nominated organisations by **31 January 2025.**

5.4.2 What information must MPs collect from organisations for their Expression of Interest? Is there a template for the EOIs?

An EOI form has been developed, and supplied as part of the MP information pack, which may be used by electorates. Refer to section 3 above.

5.4.3 What information must MPs provide on the nomination form? Is there a template for the nominations?

The nomination form, which is an excel spreadsheet, is supplied as part of the MP information pack. This **must** be used to submit your nominations.

5.4.4 Can Senators nominate organisations to apply for a grant?

Senators are not able to nominate organisations for a Volunteer Grant. Should a Senator become aware of a particular organisation in their state or territory that they would like to nominate for a grant, they can direct the organisation to their local MP. It will, however, be up to the MP in consultation with their Community Committee to determine if that organisation is nominated.

5.4.5 Can MPs nominate an organisation outside of their electorate?

Organisations can only be nominated by one MP. MPs may nominate organisations that operate or are registered outside of their electorate. The organisation will be included in the funding cap for the electorate they are nominated in. The **department** will contact relevant electorate offices if an organisation is nominated in more than one electorate.

5.4.6 Why are multiple contact details required for an organisation?

The nomination and application forms require a primary and secondary contact for the organisation being nominated as:

- two contacts ensure continuity of contact if one contact is away or uncontactable
- the department will send all outgoing correspondence to both contacts listed in the grant application form once the round has been finalised

the Letter of Agreement is issued to the contacts listed in the application form.

5.4.7 *What should the composition of the Community Committee be?*

There is no specific composition that is required for the committee other than a minimum of 3 people. The MP may choose to be on the committee (this is optional). An existing committee that understands local needs can be used. Members of the committee may include:

- Individuals from diverse backgrounds (CALD, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, disability, LGBTQI+)
- Individuals from different sectors
- Other community leaders
- Different town representatives
- Local council members

Further information on Community Committees can be found in section 2.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

5.4.8 *Is there a chance of applications being deemed ineligible if the Community Committees are not required to verify an organisation's eligibility during the Expression of Interest (EOI) process?*

There are a small number of organisations each round that are deemed as ineligible entity types through the compliance and assessment process. The Department of Social Services (the department) has provided an optional EOI template for use by interested community organisations in your electorate, which will help committees determine if an organisation would be eligible to apply.

Committees are not required to verify or provide evidence on the eligibility status of the organisation applying. Organisations will be required to make a declaration in their application that the funding will be spent on items and services eligible under Category 1 or 2 (refer to section 5.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines).