Department of Primary Industries
and Regional Development

NSW GOVERNMENT

Recreational Fishing Trusts Funding Guidelines 2026



dpird.nsw.gov.au

Recreational Fishing Trusts funding guidelines

Grant program details	
Opening date and time	9am on 29 August 2026
Closing date and time	**5pm on 9 October 2026**
Application outcome date The department will let applicants know the outcome of their applications by this date.	30 June 2027
Project delivery timeframe (estimated) (for successful applications)	2027 to 30 June 2028 (These timeframes are subject to the terms and conditions of an executed funding deed).
Decision-maker	Minister for Agriculture
NSW Government source agency	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development ("the department")
Type of grant opportunity	Open, competitive
Total program funding	$16 million
Grant amounts	**Small projects:** seeking less than $10,000 of funding **Large projects:** seeking more than $10,000
Enquiries / Getting Support Please use only these details. To maintain the integrity of the grant process, do not contact any other NSW Government staff.	Website: www.dpird.nsw.gov.au Position: Grants Officer Email: recreational.fishingtrust@dpird.nsw.gov.au Resources: www.dpird.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational/recreational-fishing-fee/licence-fees-at-work

Purpose and objectives

These guidelines provide essential information for all applicants seeking funding from the NSW Recreational Fishing Trusts (the program) in 2027 and beyond.

Background

When fishing in NSW waters, both freshwater and saltwater, recreational fishers are required to pay the NSW Recreational Fishing Fee. All revenue raised by the NSW Recreational Fishing Fee is placed into the Recreational Fishing Trusts. There are two Trusts - one for saltwater and one for freshwater. Funds from the Trusts are used to deliver a wide range of projects and programs to boost recreational fishing opportunities in NSW.

Applicants are encouraged to contact the Recreational Fishing Trust Management Team prior to preparing an application. Assistance can be provided to discuss your proposal and complete your application to ensure applications are consistent with funding priorities by emailing recreational.fishingtrust@dpird.nsw.gov.au or visiting the Apply for funds webpage.

Objective

Deliver projects using funds from the Trusts to boost recreational fishing opportunities in NSW. Projects in the current funding round are required to fall within the following grant platforms:

- fishing access and facilities
- recreational fishing enhancement
- recreational fishing education
- research on fish and recreational fishing
- aquatic habitat rehabilitation
- enforcement of fishing rules (NSW Government only)
- licence fee payment system and Trust management (NSW Government only)

Goals

- Implement innovative projects to boost recreational fishing opportunities.
- Promote recreational fishing as a healthy, outdoors activity for the whole family.
- Educate fishers to fish responsibly and safely.
- Promote the sustainable growth of recreational fishing.

The program is administered by the department.

General instructions

Recreational fishing facility projects

For fish cleaning station projects, standard plans with a number of design options are available here. Any lighting should be solar powered unless a power supply is readily available.

For fishing platform projects, there are no standardised plans as their design is dependent on site-specific factors. A summary of design principles and guidelines for accessible recreational fishing platforms is available here.

For advice and assistance on fishing infrastructure design, contact the Recreational Fishing Trust Management Team at recreational.fishingtrust@dpird.nsw.gov.au.

Education projects

Applicants should take account of existing Recreational Fishing Trusts funded and/or DPIRD educational resources such as fisheries education materials and programs to build on and not duplicate efforts, prior to applying for funding.

Visit Fishcare volunteers or email fish.care@dpird.nsw.gov.au for more information. For school-based education projects please visit Get hooked or email gethooked.fisheries@dpird.nsw.gov.au.

Fish stocking projects

Funding for community projects for re-stocking rivers or impoundments with freshwater native fish is available through the DPIRD Community Native Fish Stocking Program and requires a different funding application form. An Expression of Interest for this separate funding program is released in February each year. For further information email fish.stocking@dpird.nsw.gov.au.

Application process

Applicants are required to apply using an online application form (see 'How to apply' section below).

Eligibility criteria

All the following eligibility criteria must be addressed when applying for funding.

- Have an Australian Business Number (ABN).
  Note: Applicants without an ABN may be able to submit a Statement by supplier form in accordance with the law. However, applicants with an intent to submit a future Statement by supplier form must get approval from DPIRD prior to an application being submitted.
- Be a legal entity, such as one of the following:
  - a company incorporated in Australia
  - an incorporated association (including clubs) or co-operative
  - a partnership
  - a sole trader
  - a local council or joint organisation of councils
  - an educational institution or organisation
  - a government agency.
- Hold or commit to obtaining public liability insurance of not less than $10 million per occurrence or hold equivalent or better self-insurance to the satisfaction of the department, prior to executing a funding deed with the department.

Assessment criteria

All the following assessment criteria must be addressed when applying for funding.

General assessment criteria

The following assessment criteria apply to all applications.

- Funding applications **must relate to the improvement of recreational fishing** and provide a high level of recreational fishing benefit (including a high extent of benefit to recreational fishers against other user groups).
- Projects must include measures to enhance, maintain or protect recreational fishing (as outlined in Sections 234(2) and 235(2) of the Fisheries Management Act 1994).
- Applications must be completed in full, with sufficient detail to enable a sound assessment.
- Relative team expertise to deliver the project, including adequate track record of past project delivery (where relevant).
- Project methodology must be technically sound and utilise best practice.

- Applications must have an accurate, cost-effective budget which shows value for money. Contributing funding or 'in-kind' contributions by the applicant and other project partners should be included in the budget (where relevant).
- Applications must show evidence of or commitment to obtain landowner consent (where relevant).
- Project grant expenditure must be **directly** related to the project. The application must reflect that funding, activities and outputs are **not** for the purpose of running or promoting "the organisation" (the applicant) and that outputs and outcomes are for enhancing recreational fishing opportunities (either free of charge or at a price that ensures minimal barriers to recreational fishing).

  Project applications should not have deliverables with vague public outcomes, excessive private asset creation or high value non-arm's-length payments.
- Project activities and outcomes must be publicly available, free of charge or at a price that ensures lowest barriers to recreational fishing e.g. provide unimpeded general public access and should not be on private land (where relevant) or land with no free public access.
- Project activities must not include outcomes that are only available to organisation/club members.
- Contingency funding components of applications will not be supported for funding (any contingency funding components will be deducted from budgets during assessment).
- Applications must not include costs for purchase of vehicles or vessels for recreational or commercial purposes.
- Projects must not include dredging activities (this is usually the responsibility of local authorities).
- Where other suitable funding sources are available, applications must outline how these sources have been investigated and deemed to be unsuitable (where relevant), including Boating Infrastructure and Dredging Scheme and Aboriginal Fishing Trust Fund.

Platform specific assessment criteria

Recreational fishing access and facilities

- Project activities must not include building club premises or improving club facilities that are only available to organisation/club members.
- Applications must include a detailed description or design drawings of the infrastructure to be delivered, including materials to be used and the dimensions of proposed infrastructure.
- Projects should not include construction of general public amenities, such as toilet blocks, etc. (unless direct relevance to recreational fishing can be clearly demonstrated).

  However, general public amenities may be an important part of an overall project and could be included as part of the applicant's contribution to the project. For example, a local land manager

might apply for funding for a fishing platform and their contribution to the project could be to fund the adjoining car parking. • Fishing facilities should be accessible (where relevant). • Applications must include a commitment in the methodology for maintenance of project facilities for at least five years.
Recreational fishing education
• Projects must have measurable and direct benefits to recreational fishing. • Project activities must not include fishing competitions or tournaments. • Applications must demonstrate suitable recreational fishing expertise within the project team to deliver the project. • Expected participant numbers must be provided (where relevant).
Recreational fishing enhancement
Applications must demonstrate that relevant permits/licences etc., for the activity have been considered.
Research on fish and recreational fishing
• Applications must have sound scientific methodologies. • Project team must have scientific expertise.
Aquatic habitat rehabilitation
Projects must have measurable and direct benefits to enhancing recreational fishing.
Enforcement of fishing rules
Applications must be from a relevant regulatory NSW Government agency, authority or body.
Licence fee payment system and Trust management
Applications must be from a relevant regulatory NSW Government agency, authority or body.

Examples of projects funded

Over the years, the Trusts have provided funding for a wide range of projects, which have been implemented by various external organisations and DPIRD. Comprehensive angler surveys of the Trusts continue to show widespread support for the current range of programs that receive funding. Examples of the types of projects eligible in this funding round are provided below.

Platform	Project examples
Fishing access and facilities	Protection of fishing access, providing more fishing locations Fishing amenities such as fishing platforms, fish cleaning tables, kayak launching platforms, fishing access tracks, fishing safety infrastructure & other angler facilities
Recreational fishing education	Fishing workshops and events, schools' education, providing fishing information to fishers
Recreational fishing enhancement	Fish aggregating devices, artificial reefs, fish stocking [Note: there is a separate grant funding opportunity for the Community Native Fish Stocking Program – see general instructions section]
Research on fish and recreational fishing	Fishing surveys, angler catch projects, etc.
Aquatic habitat rehabilitation	Aquatic habitat rehabilitation projects with measurable and direct benefits to enhance recreational fishing
Enforcement of fishing rules	Fisheries officers
Licence fee payment system and Trust management	Fee payments system, RFT management

More information on previously funded projects is available here.

Tips

Some tips on ways to improve and maximise the benefit of a project include:

- asking yourself, what is the level of requested funding in relation to the extent of benefits to recreational fishers
- investigating all other potential sources of funding that could be relevant to the project. Provide any evidence of unsuccessful attempts to gain funding from other sources
- seeking quotes and estimates for project items to obtain best value for money. When developing the project costings, any quotes/estimates should be attached to the project application to assist in the assessment of the project's value for money. Project budgets must not include contingency funding.

Is matching funding a requirement?

Matching funding is not a requirement, however, other contributions towards the project will improve the value for money of the project. Include details of other contributions to the project,

including any voluntary labour and project management time as an ‘in-kind’ contribution (this includes hands on volunteer work, project management, administration, reporting, donations etc.).

Budget

In-kind contributions

Please ensure all aspects of the project are identified and costed in the budget table. This includes voluntary labour, donations of time or specialist expertise, project management and administration time, donation of plant and equipment to the project, the value of discounted rates given to the project, etc. All of these ‘in-kind’ contributions to projects should be costed. These contributions, when realistically costed, add value to the project and improve the project’s overall value for money.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

All applicants are required to quote GST-inclusive costings on all applicable items in the application budget table, regardless of whether applicants are registered for GST or not.

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by taxation law. Grant recipients should seek independent professional advice about taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). The NSW Government does not provide advice on individual taxation circumstances.

If you are registered for GST, the delivery of your project (with grant funds) may be treated as a taxable supply under GST law. This means you may need to add GST on top of the total approved grant amount when invoicing DPIRD and you are responsible for remitting this GST to the ATO in your business activity statements (BAS). You will be required to give the department a tax invoice for the grant funds.

The items in your budget table may include purchases of goods or services from other businesses, where GST is already included in the price. However, please note that GST applied to the grant (if applicable) for delivery of the project is treated separately from the GST already included in your project budget for goods and services expenses.

How to apply

Grant applicants are required to complete the online application form, which can be accessed via the NSW grant finder webpage. The ‘Apply now’ button will redirect you to the SmartyGrants platform, where you will be required to create a login with a username and password.

Only information that is considered essential for assessment should be submitted as attachments with your application. Please do not submit web links, videos, or excessive pages of attachments (e.g., detailed strategic reports).

When to apply

Applicants must submit their applications by the closing date and time listed in the **grant program details**.

The department retains discretion to extend the closing date and time, and to accept late applications in extenuating circumstances.

Applicants cannot amend applications (including providing letters of support) after the closing date and time.

Who can assist you?

Assistance can be provided to discuss your proposal and to ensure applications are consistent with the eligibility and assessment criteria by emailing recreational.fishingtrust@dpird.nsw.gov.au or visiting Apply for funds.

For assistance with the SmartyGrants platform

For how to register, log in and fill out the forms with SmartyGrants, download the Help Guide for Applicants.

Email: service@smartygrants.com.au

Phone: (03) 9320 6888.

False and misleading information

Applicants must not include false or misleading information in their applications. If an application contains false or misleading information, the department may deal with the application as the department determines in the circumstances and may, for example, determine that the application is ineligible.

Conflicts of interest

There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if NSW DPIRD staff, any member of a committee or advisor, and/or you or any of your project team personnel, including sub-contractors:

- have a professional, commercial, or personal relationship with a party who can influence the application selection process, such as a NSW Government officer or member of the grant program assessment panel
- have a relationship with or interest in an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict your project team from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently
- have a 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.

As part of your application, you will be asked to declare any perceived or existing conflicts of interest or that, to the best of your knowledge, there are no conflicts of interest. If you later identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform the NSW DPIRD Recreational Fishing Trust Management Team in writing immediately.

After submitting application

Applicants will receive a notification of receipt.

The department may contact applicants to verify information or seek further information.

Assessment of grant applications

Determining which applications are successful involves these stages:

- Eligibility check
- Assessment
- Decision-making

Staff from DPIRD will initially assess the applications against the eligibility criteria. Applications that have met the eligibility criteria will progress to the assessment stage.

Assessment of applications will be performed against the program's assessment criteria. Applications may be assessed against multiple platform-specific assessment criteria, where there is deemed to be an overlap in project activities across grant platforms. If an application partly meets an assessment criteria, approved funding may be reduced accordingly.

Applications will be reviewed by an assessment panel of recreational fishing experts. Assessment recommendations will be provided to the Minister for Agriculture.

The Minister for Agriculture, in their role as decision-maker, will make the final decision on applications suitable for funding. DPIRD will send applicants a notification of the outcome of their application.

Successful grant applicants

Successful applicants will be required to:

1. enter into a Recreational Fishing Trusts Funding Deed. Please contact DPIRD if you would like to view the funding deed content prior to preparing your application
2. keep funding decisions and assessment outcomes confidential if requested by DPIRD until they're announced by the NSW Government (for both successful and unsuccessful outcomes)
3. submit written reports on completed milestones as agreed to in the Funding Deed and submit invoices as a condition of receiving funding instalments
4. submit a final project and financial report on the project to DPIRD for evaluation within 60 days of completing the project
5. acknowledge the Recreational Fishing Trusts in project publications and signage

6. if a project is completed and there are unspent funds remaining from the grant allocation, the department may require the grant recipient to return the unspent funds. Alternatively, the grant recipient may request to use the unspent funds on extending the scope of the project if the request aligns with the objectives of the program.

All reporting must be uploaded via online submission forms accessed through SmartyGrants, using the applicant's original login details. The forms will include a file upload function for each required file (such as each milestone report and summary of expenses upon project completion).

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