

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Greener Neighbourhoods grant program

Grant guidelines

July 2026

Grant Program Details	
Opening date and time	24 July 2026
Closing date and time	21 August 2026 5:00 PM
Application outcome date	Within 10 weeks of submissions
Project delivery timeframe (for successful applications)	18 – 24 months from funding deed executed or by 30 November 2028.
Decision-maker	Minister for Planning and Public Spaces
NSW Government Agency	Resilience and Sustainability Division Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI)
Type of grant opportunity	Closed, non-competitive
Grant value (total available funding for the grant and the available individual grant amounts, excluding GST)	Total grant program value: \$2,580,000 Maximum value per council: \$60,000 (excluding GST)
Enquiries	Green and Sustainable Cities Team Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Email: gocgrants@planning.nsw.gov.au

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Message from the Minister



Urban greening delivers cooler cities, improved health and wellbeing, better environmental quality and enhanced biodiversity. Local councils are valued partners in delivering these benefits, as the NSW Government works towards its goal of 40 per cent canopy cover across Greater Sydney by 2036.

The Greener Neighbourhoods grant program supports councils with funding to plan for increased tree canopy and urban forests, creating shade, cooler suburbs and more liveable communities.

This year the program has been expanded, with 10 regional councils in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven and Hunter-Central Coast eligible to apply for round 2 funding, alongside 33 councils in Greater Sydney.

As the NSW Government works towards its target of delivering 377,000 new, well-located homes across the state by 2029, councils continue to play a key role in delivering amenity for their communities.

Strategic and coordinated planning from councils can help shape not only the built environment and public spaces, but also support the protection of existing trees, canopy growth, the creation of shared green spaces and the expansion of the Blue Green Grid.

The Greener Neighbourhoods grant program empowers councils in Greater Sydney, the Hunter-Central Coast and Illawarra-Shoalhaven to strategically plan for greener neighbourhoods and urban forests. Grants of up to \$60,000 (ex GST) are available for each council.

The funding can be used for initiatives such as updating urban forest strategies, developing street tree masterplans, canopy data analysis, identifying or designing blue green grid connecting corridor projects, and conducting community engagement.

I encourage all eligible councils to review the guidelines and submit an application.

Let's work together to create cooler, greener and more liveable communities.

The Hon. Paul Scully MP, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

1 Overview of grant program

The NSW Government is inviting local councils across Greater Sydney, the Hunter-Central Coast and Illawarra-Shoalhaven regions to apply for a grant to support strategic urban forest planning under a \$2.58 million Greener Neighbourhoods grant program. This funding is being made available to support councils to protect and enhance tree canopy.

The grant program offers non-competitive grants to all 33 councils in Greater Sydney and 10 councils in the Hunter-Central Coast and Illawarra-Shoalhaven regions. Funding is available to improve councils' ability to strategically plan for and manage their urban forests.

The program recognises councils are at different stages in their strategic urban forest planning and management. The Greener Neighbourhoods grant program provides all 43 councils with an equal opportunity to access funding support and enhance their capabilities.

The Greener Neighbourhoods program

The NSW Government has set a target to increase tree canopy cover across Greater Sydney to 40% by 2036, recognising urban greening as a critical mechanism to mitigate urban heat, enhance biodiversity, and improve community wellbeing.

Councils are important partners in working towards the 40% canopy cover target and supporting greening in their local area, including areas rezoned for housing. They manage local streets and open spaces, regulate trees on private land and work closely with the community to support and encourage urban greening projects.

The Greener Neighbourhoods program provides targeted support to councils to strengthen their strategic management of the urban forest and better contribute towards long-term canopy targets, including tree canopy and heat vulnerability index datasets available on the SEED portal for the Sydney region from 2019 through to the recently released 2024–25 data.

While canopy data is not available for the regional council areas, eligible regional councils can use any existing data to support their projects, however we cannot fund data collection through this grant.

In addition to the data, relevant resources to support the Greener Neighbourhoods program are:

- [Greener Neighbourhoods Guide](#)
- [Greener Places Framework](#)
- [Building Advocacy for Street Trees](#) – A guide for councils to encourage street tree planting and protection initiatives (video, playbook/report).
- [Cooler Places](#) – including [Greening for cooling](#) and [Take action with greening](#) webpages.
- [Tree Canopy Guide for Low and Mid-Rise Housing](#)
- [Pattern Book landscape guide](#)
- [Biodiversity in Place](#)
- [Connecting with Country Framework](#)

Councils are encouraged to use these resources to prepare project proposals for funding under the grant program.

Policy context

In the context of climate change, temperature increases are projected across Greater Sydney, Hunter-Central Coast and Illawarra-Shoalhaven – by 2090, these regions are likely to experience an increase in temperature of between 1.1 and 3.6 degrees¹ under modelling for three emissions scenarios^{2 3}. Western Sydney is projected to experience the greatest increase in the number of hot days⁴ in these regions with Penrith expected to experience increases in hot days per year of between 9.4 and 25.9 days by 2090, under modelling for three emissions scenarios.

The Department's draft *Urban Heat Policy for Land Use Planning* recognises that, in the context of the future climate, greening in urban areas helps to reduce urban heat and supports community adaptation to rising temperatures.

Increasing urban greening supports the amenity of new housing being built through the NSW Government's commitment to deliver 377,000 new well-located homes across the state by 2029.

Recent state-led precinct plans and housing policy changes are supporting increased greening across urban areas. Tree canopy and deep soil targets across a range of development types have been included in the *Tree Canopy Guide for Low and Mid-Rise Housing*, the *NSW Housing Pattern Book Landscape Design Guide*, as well as in the Accelerated Transport Oriented Development precincts.

1.1 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the grant is to support councils in one or more of the following:

- Planning for canopy and urban heat
- Maintaining canopy and green cover
- Collaborating on canopy and urban heat.

¹ Relative to a baseline average climate from 1990-2009.

² NARCLiM2.0 provides climate projections for 3 Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs) scenarios: low- (SSP1-2.6), medium- (SSP2-4.5) and high- (SSP3-7.0) emissions

³ NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW DCCEEW), *New South Wales: Climate Change Snapshot*, NSW Government, 2024

⁴ Hot days are where maximum daily temperatures are equal to or above 35°C

Table 1 details the objectives and outcomes of the grants against the priority areas.

Priority area	Theme	Objective (Grant intent)	Outcome (Measurable benefit)
Planning for canopy and urban heat <i>Build the strategic, data, and governance foundations needed to deliver urban greening and mitigate urban heat.</i>	Strategic planning instruments	Prepare or update strategic plans that include tree canopy and/or heat mitigation targets and actions (including urban forest strategies, street tree master plans and heat mitigation strategies).	Councils have clear, locally relevant and evidence-based actions to increase canopy cover, prevent canopy loss and create green cover. Urban heat risks are consistently identified and addressed across council plans, policies and development processes.
Planning for canopy and urban heat	Data and evidence capability	Improve access to, and capability in, analysing and applying tree canopy and urban heat data.	Councils are able to monitor canopy cover and urban heat over time and use data to prioritise actions and funding.
Planning for canopy and urban heat	Canopy target setting	Develop locally appropriate tree canopy targets informed by climate risk, land use and community context.	Tree canopy targets are embedded in council strategies, policies and plans, with defined actions to protect and enhance canopy cover.
Maintaining canopy and green cover <i>Strengthen the management of trees as green infrastructure assets that deliver long-term environmental and community benefits.</i>	Managing trees as assets	Develop, update or maintain a tree asset database or tree asset management plan aligned with council asset management systems.	Tree asset information is integrated into council asset management systems to support informed decision-making and maintenance.

Priority area	Theme	Objective (Grant intent)	Outcome (Measurable benefit)
Collaborating on canopy and urban heat <i>Engaging the community and stakeholders in decision-making and knowledge sharing.</i>	Community education and behaviour change	Deliver education and engagement programs that build understanding of the benefits of trees and urban greening for urban cooling and liveability.	Councils deliver targeted programs that inform and engage the community on the value of trees and urban greening, with a focus on tree retention and the creation of cooler places.

1.2 Grant value

Up to \$60,000 excluding GST is available to each eligible council.

The total grant program value is \$2,580,000 excluding GST across eligible councils with funding sourced through the Climate Change Fund (CCF) and administered by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

Each eligible council will be awarded grant funding if their application meets the program's eligibility and assessment criteria.

1.3 What the funding can be used for

The grant funding can be used to deliver the outcomes of the Greener Neighbourhoods program.

The activities will vary across councils depending on their needs.

Some example activities include (but are not limited to):

Urban forest and heat pathway	Planning for canopy and urban heat
Purpose of the funding:	To build the strategic, data, and governance foundations needed to deliver urban greening and mitigate urban heat.
Funding is available for these activities:	- To update or develop strategic plans with LGA canopy targets and/or actions including local urban forest strategies, street tree master plans etc. - To prepare street tree planting prioritisation frameworks using canopy, heat data and other metrics to identify planting locations.

Urban forest and heat pathway	Planning for canopy and urban heat
	• To develop internal technical planting guides and resources, including identifying priority planting locations. • To incorporate LGA canopy cover targets in Community Strategic Plans (CSPs). • To identify opportunities to link blue-green grid priorities across council's strategic planning and delivery to support canopy and urban greening uplift. • To update tree species lists to support climate-tolerant species. • To plan for enhancing green cover through understory biodiversity plantings, verge gardens etc. • To identify areas of high heat risk in strategic plans and develop place-based responses to heat impacts using urban greening.
Outcomes of funded activities	• Councils have clear, locally relevant and evidence-based actions to increase canopy cover, prevent canopy loss and create green cover. • Urban heat risks are consistently identified and addressed across council plans, policies and development processes. • Councils are able to monitor canopy cover and urban heat over time and use data to prioritise actions and funding. • Tree canopy targets are embedded in council strategies, policies and plans, with defined actions to protect and enhance canopy cover.

Urban forest and heat pathway	Maintaining canopy and green cover
Purpose of the funding:	To strengthen the management of trees as green infrastructure assets that deliver long-term environmental and community benefits.
Funding is available for these activities:	• To support councils to analyse and interpret tree canopy data and trends. • To develop or update a tree asset database or tree asset management plan. • To monitor changes to canopy cover using available data. • Programs or activities to encourage tree retention. • Significant tree registers and actions to protect these trees.

Urban forest and heat pathway	Maintaining canopy and green cover
Outcomes of funded activities	• Tree asset information is integrated into council asset management systems to support informed decision-making and maintenance. • Councils are able to monitor canopy cover and urban heat over time and use data to prioritise actions and funding.

Urban forest and heat pathway	Collaborating on canopy and urban heat
Purpose of the funding:	To engage the community and stakeholders in decision-making and knowledge sharing.
Funding is available for these activities:	• Community engagement strategies and actions delivering community workshops, planting days, volunteer programs, tree trails, 'adopt a tree' initiatives and local events. • To target engagement and communication initiatives to specific demographic groups. • To engage with local First Nations groups. • To communicate changes in canopy and the importance of maintaining canopy cover. • To engage with the community and industry on the links between canopy cover, heat and health. • To partner with other councils and industry to promote best practice urban greening. • To establish community programs to enhance local green spaces and biodiversity (e.g. verge gardening programs, nature in backyards). • To undertake community engagement for home and business owners to create awareness of urban cooling strategies with canopy and urban greening. • To prepare strategies or projects to address tree vandalism.
Outcomes of funded activities	Councils deliver targeted programs that inform and engage the community on the value of trees and urban greening, with a focus on tree retention and the creation of cooler places.

All activities must align to the grant program objectives in Table 1.

1.4 What the funding cannot be used for:

Grant funding cannot be used for:

- Direct funding of council personnel
- On-ground works, including tree planting, biodiversity plantings etc.
- Maintenance activities
- Plant giveaways
- Purchase of data products.

2 Selection criteria

This grant round is non-competitive and targeted to eligible councils.

To be successful, applicants must meet the eligibility criteria and pass the assessment stage.

2.1 Eligibility criteria

The grant round is only open to the following local councils:

Greater Sydney LGAs	
• Bayside Council	• Lane Cove Council
• Blacktown City Council	• Liverpool City Council
• Blue Mountains City Council	• Mosman Municipal Council
• Burwood Council	• North Sydney Council
• Camden Council	• Northern Beaches Council
• Campbelltown City Council	• City of Parramatta Council
• City of Canada Bay	• Penrith City Council
• Canterbury-Bankstown Council	• Randwick City Council
• Cumberland City Council	• City of Ryde Council
• Fairfield City Council	• Strathfield Council
• Georges River Council	• Sutherland Shire Council
• Hawkesbury City Council	• City of Sydney
• The Hills Shire Council	• Waverley Council
• Hornsby Shire Council	• Willoughby City Council
• Hunters Hill Council	• Wollondilly Shire Council
• Inner West Council	• Woollahra Municipal Council
• Ku-ring-gai Council	

Hunter-Central Coast and Illawarra-Shoalhaven LGAs

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Central Coast Council | • City of Newcastle |
| • Cessnock City Council | • Port Stephens Council |
| • Kiama Municipal Council | • Shellharbour City Council |
| • Lake Macquarie City Council | • Shoalhaven City Council |
| • Maitland City Council | • City of Wollongong |

An application is eligible if the following are met:

- The grant funding amount sought is up to \$60,000 (excl. GST) per council.
- The project meets one or more of the program objectives.
- Funding is sought for eligible project costs.
- Projects must be completed within 24 months of executing the funding deed or by 30 November 2028.
- Adequate insurances including public liability insurance cover of \$20 million.
- The application is approved by the General Manager or equivalent senior council delegate.

All questions must be completed in the application.

Councils can submit one application only.

2.2 Assessment criteria

The grant assessment panel will assess eligible applications against the following evaluation criteria to determine if they are successful:

Table 2: Assessment criteria for Greener Neighbourhoods grant applications

Assessment criteria	Scoring	Assessment
Merit	• Demonstrated need for the project • Realistic project scope and clear outputs for the project • Demonstrated alignment with the grant program objectives • Strategies for evaluating and measuring outcomes from the project.	Pass/fail
Viability	• Project is well planned with appropriate risk management in place	Pass/fail

Assessment criteria	Scoring	Assessment
	Project and budget are supported by council and stakeholders.	
Value for money	- Value for money and realistic budget relative to the scale and impact of the project - Appropriate use of public funds.	Pass/fail

3 Application process

3.1 How to apply

Applications are submitted online through the SmartyGrants portal. To apply, go to <https://greeningourcity.smartygrants.com.au/gn26> and click on the 'Start a submission' button.

Applications are open from **Friday 24 July 2026 to 5:00 pm, 21 August 2026**. All supporting material must be received by the application deadline.

Please note the following:

- Supporting documents must be in an acceptable file type, such as Word, Excel, PDF or JPEG.
- No hard copy applications will be accepted.

3.2 Support available to applicants

Additional information is available at the grant program web page:

<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/policy-and-legislation/urban-greening/greener-neighbourhoods>

For further information about eligibility, or if you require any assistance submitting your application, please email gocgrants@planning.nsw.gov.au

3.3 Extension requests

Late applications will not be considered unless an extension is granted.

Requests for extension must be submitted in writing to the Director, Green and Sustainable Cities, by 5:00 PM two days prior to the closing date.

Extensions are granted at the discretion of the Director based on extenuating circumstances. All requests are reviewed by the probity advisor for fairness and consistency.

Applicants granted extensions will be notified in writing that the assessment panel has final discretion to consider the late application.

3.4 Council endorsement

The council's General Manager (or equivalent) must approve the application before it will be considered. This is a mandatory step in the application process. This approval is required as the council will be the responsible entity to manage the funding agreement, budget and reporting.

If General Manager approval is not feasible before the grant application deadline, applications with approval from a director with an appropriate level of financial delegation to meet the grant submission deadline will be accepted as an interim measure.

The General Manager or equivalent must then approve the application by email to gocgrants@planning.nsw.gov.au or provide a signed letter of support within one week of applications closing. If General Manager approval is not provided within that timeframe, the application may be deemed ineligible.

3.5 Project timeframe

All projects must be completed within 18-24 months. Shorter project timeframes will be considered on a project basis.

Project plans submitted during the application process will confirm the project delivery timeframe.

4 Assessment process

4.1 Assessment of grant applications

A departmental assessment panel will assess each application against the assessment criteria. The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces will make the final decision on grant funding, taking into account the recommendations of the assessment panel.

Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be assessed.

Request for clarification

Occasionally information may need to be clarified with applicants. In these instances, the Department will contact an applicant and seek this information. All requests will be made and submitted through the grant management system, SmartyGrants. Applicants should only confirm or clarify information in their application and should not provide additional information that may give them an advantage over other applicants.

Applicants will have two working days to complete these requests.

4.2 Notification of application outcome

All applicants will be notified by email of the outcome of their application within 10 weeks of the closing date for the grant round.

4.3 Feedback on applications

If an applicant wishes to receive feedback on their application or appeal a decision, the Department can arrange a meeting with the applicant to share feedback from the assessment process.

4.4 Publication of grants information

The Grants Administration Guide (Guide) requires that certain information is published no later than 45 calendar days after a grant agreement takes effect (see section 6.5 of the Guide and Appendix A to the Guide). This information is also open access information under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW) (GIPA Act), which must be made publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information.

In accordance with these requirements, relevant information about the grants awarded will be published on the NSW Government Grants and Funding Finder as soon as possible after the grant funding is approved.

All records in relation to this decision will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998* (NSW).

5 Successful grant applications

5.1 Grant agreement

Successful applicants will enter into a funding agreement with the Department. The agreement will set out the obligations of the grant recipient and include further details on project implementation, milestone delivery and reporting, payments, variation processes and acquittals.

A copy of the template funding deed is available for review in the grant application portal at <https://greeningourcity.smartygrants.com.au/gn26>

5.2 Grant payment

The milestone payments for successful applicants are shown in the table below.

Payment	Due date	Requirements
70%	At commencement of project	Funding deed executed
30%	18 or 24 months after commencement	Final report with financial acquittal

5.3 Unspent funds

If a grant recipient's project is completed and there are unspent funds remaining from the grant, the Department requires the return of the unspent funds, unless an approved variation to the project exists and provides details otherwise.

5.4 Reporting and acquittal requirements

Grant recipients will be required to complete reports at the following indicative reporting milestones:

Table 3: Milestone reporting for Greener Neighbourhoods grants

Milestone	Due date	Requirements
Milestone 1	At commencement of project	Funding deed executed
Milestone 2	9 months after project commencement	Milestone 2 report, updated financial statement
Milestone 3 (final report for projects which are 18 months long)	18 months after commencement	Milestone 3 report with updated financial statement. OR Final report with financial acquittal.
Final report (for projects which are 24 months long)	24 months after project commencement	Final report with financial acquittal.

These may vary as the project is implemented, and if agreed through a project variation.

In addition to the formal reporting schedule, the program team will have a quarterly check in with grant recipients to confirm project progress. This will be a verbal meeting on Microsoft Teams.

5.5 Evaluation

The Greener Neighbourhoods program will be evaluated against the stated purpose and objectives of the grant program. Grant recipients may be asked to provide input for audit or evaluation purposes of the program. This may be in addition to the reporting outlined above.

6 Additional information and resources

6.1 Complaint handling

Complaints can be directed by email to gocgrants@planning.nsw.gov.au.

Complaints will be addressed directly or escalated, as needed.

If you do not agree with how we have handled your complaint, you may raise the issue with the NSW Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will not usually investigate a complaint unless you have already raised the matter directly with the relevant Department. Visit the NSW Ombudsman at <https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au>

6.2 Access to information

The *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act) provides for the proactive release of Government Information by agencies and gives members of the public an enforceable right to access Government Information held by an agency (which includes Ministerial offices).

The GIPA Act and the *Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018* may make certain grant-related information publicly available, unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information. The NSW Legislative Council has the power to order the production of State papers by the Executive Government. Standing Order 52 provides that the House may order documents to be tabled by the Government in the House. Privileged documents are available only to members of the Legislative Council.

Note that documents submitted as part of a grant application may be subject to an application under the GIPA Act or an order for papers under Standing Order 52.

Requests to access information on the Greener Neighbourhoods program can be submitted by email in the first instance to gocgrants@planning.nsw.gov.au.

6.3 Ethical conduct

Applicants must adhere to certain ethical conduct requirements concerning the submission of their grant application. Applicants will be asked to make the following declarations when lodging their application:

- All information, responses to assessment questions, and all other representations made in the grant application are true and correct to the best of the applicant's knowledge.
- The application has been lodged by an authorised person who has the authority to:
 - submit the grant application
 - represent and bind the applicant to the grant's assessment process, once the application is lodged.

- The applicant understands that any false declarations made may render the application ineligible/invalid in the grants assessment process.
 - The applicant has declared any relevant conflicts of interest.
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6.4 Conflict of interest management

All applicants must declare any conflict of interest in the preparation of the grant application.

If a conflict of interest exists, please contact gocgrants@planning.nsw.gov.au to declare it. The Department will review and register all conflicts of interest and advise on how to proceed with the application, given the declared conflict of interest.

6.5 Confidentiality

Applicants must follow advice from the Department on publicly sharing the outcomes of the application process. The Department or the Minister may wish to delay publication of grant results for a Ministerial announcement.

6.6 Privacy policy

The Department must comply with the *NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1988*. We collect the minimum personal information given voluntarily to allow us to contact the organisation and to assess the merits of an application.

Any information you give 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 in applications are aware that the Department is receiving this information and how the Department will use this information.

The Department may be required by law to disclose information provided by an applicant, including but not limited to under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)* or in response to a request by a House or a Committee of the Parliament of New South Wales or the Commonwealth of Australia.