

A photograph of children playing on a playground structure. A girl in a blue hoodie and shorts is on the left, and a boy in a yellow shirt and blue shorts is on the right, hanging from a bar. The ground is covered in wood chips. A large white circle with a dashed border is centered over the image, containing the title and subtitle. The background shows a green field and a fence.

# STRONGER COUNTRY COMMUNITIES FUND

Program guidelines





## MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY PREMIER



The NSW Government has put this state in the strongest economic position in Australia. This has led to more money being invested in our regions than ever before.

Our \$73 billion record infrastructure investment agenda is already having a real impact in regional communities. The upgrade of the Pacific Highway is well underway, while other highways are also being improved and bridges replaced. New and upgraded hospitals have opened in Parkes, Byron Bay and Bega and new and improved schools are being designed and built.

After six years of responsible budget management and sound policy decisions such as the leasing of poles and wires, the NSW Government is in a position to create opportunities that will make a real difference to regional communities.

The Stronger Country Communities Fund will see \$200 million made available for applications over the next two years, with \$100 million available through the first round of funding, to make regional communities even better places to live and work. Each local government area in regional and rural NSW will have access to the funds, and every community will have the opportunity to receive their fair share.

Public facilities such as schools, libraries, parks, walking and cycle pathways, health centres, country halls and showgrounds contribute to the social fabric of our wonderful towns and regional cities, and help foster connectedness and town pride.

This NSW Government has made a strong commitment to regional NSW, spreading the benefits of our economic success across the state; ensuring that every town and every community can share in this record investment.

Regional communities demonstrate the very best of NSW and we want to enhance the strong sense of community that makes each town, village and regional city unique.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for country communities to benefit from significant investment in our towns and regional cities.

I encourage communities to make the most of this opportunity, and I look forward to receiving proposals for projects that will make a real difference to our towns and regional centres.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Barilaro'.

**The Hon John Barilaro**  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Regional NSW  
Minister for Skills  
Minister for Small Business

# GUIDELINES

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## Stronger Country Communities Fund

The Stronger Country Communities Fund has been established by the NSW Government to help deliver local infrastructure projects to regional communities. The purpose of the fund is to provide the kind of infrastructure that improves the lives of local residents – from park-lands to health centres and community halls. This fund will also help regional communities across NSW continue to attract new residents and visitors.

The funds provided will allow residents, community groups and local and state government agencies to work together to deliver infrastructure that makes a real and lasting difference to the lives of people living in regional areas.

The NSW Government has committed \$200 million for applications over the next two years, with \$100 million available each year to regional local government areas.

To help support and create jobs in local areas, projects will be delivered using local providers wherever possible, based on competitive quotes.

### Eligible applicants

The Stronger Country Communities Fund is available to all 92 regional local government areas, Lord Howe Island and the Unincorporated Far West. Regional local councils are those outside Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong.

State government agencies and non-government organisations can submit eligible community infrastructure projects, in partnership with local councils.

## Available funding

To ensure projects make a significant contribution to improving local communities, the NSW Government is seeking projects of at least \$100,000 and typically in the range of \$250,000 to \$1 million per project. Larger projects will be considered where there is significant financial co-contribution.

Applications will be called for on an annual basis over the next two years. Councils will be assigned a time frame during which they can apply. Projects submitted should be able to commence within a 12-month time period and ideally be complete within two years of funding approval.

## Community consultation

Local governments are required to consult with their communities. It is recommended that each local government area submit projects that strongly reflect community preferences.



## Projects must improve local infrastructure

The Stronger Country Communities Fund supports projects which improve local infrastructure.

Examples include:

- building new community facilities to be shared by all within the community – such as parks, playgrounds, walking or cycle pathways
- refurbishing existing local facilities – such as schools and health centres, community centres, libraries
- enhancing local parks and the supporting facilities – such as kitchens and toilet blocks.

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# ELIGIBILITY

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## Eligible projects

The following information will be required.

- **Clear definition of project, purpose, scope, costs and who it shall benefit.**
- **Evidence or data** on how the project will help boost the livability of the local community. This might include consideration of how it will build more vibrant, sustainable and inclusive communities.
- **Supporting information** could include estimated take-up numbers, survey feedback or direct community feedback.
- Additional evidence could include how the proposal aligns with the **Council Community Strategic Plan**.
- **We are seeking projects of at least \$100,000 and typically in the range of \$250,000 to \$1 million.** Larger projects will be considered where there is significant financial co-contribution.
- **Deliverability.** Evidence that the project can commence within 12 months and ideally be complete and funds acquitted within two years of funding approval.
- **Evidence the project is cost effective** will be required including a clearly defined budget. At least two quotes should be provided. Projects must give consideration to the processes and procedures outlined in the capital expenditure review guidelines issued by the Office of Local Government.
- **Details about co-contribution.** Organisations will need to contribute if the project chosen is a planned upgrade of existing infrastructure in their forward program of capital works project proposals.
- **Details about the use of local suppliers.** Supporting data might include competitive quotes, how it will contribute to local employment and local skills development.
- **The capacity to maintain any new infrastructure funded.** Projects must be sustainable and be able to be operated and maintained beyond the funding period.

## Ineligible projects

The Stronger Country Communities Fund is not to be used for:

- projects in ineligible locations
- maintenance that local governments already propose to fund in their forward programs of capital works, unless a co-contribution is proposed
- retrospective funding for work undertaken (funding is for new projects)
- ongoing staff or operational costs
- implementation costs of new councils
- marketing, branding, advertising, or product promotion
- projects less than \$100,000
- projects with exclusive private benefits
- maintenance of roads and bridges, water or sewerage
- projects previously receiving funding under other government programs
- projects that do not meet the eligibility requirements above (for example, if they cannot be completed within the funding period or are not well defined with a clear budget, and so on).



# NEXT STEPS

## If you are successful

Organisations must not make financial commitments for funded activities until funding agreements have been executed.

The funds must be spent on items or costs directly related to the project as specified in the application and funding agreement.

Organisations are required to pay back unspent funds or those funds which have not been spent in accordance with the funding agreement.

Requests for variations or changes to the project may be considered in limited circumstances. Changes or variations may be rejected or accepted subject to certain conditions.

Recipients will be given a three-week period to review, accept and return the signed funding agreement to the NSW Department of Industry.

The information provided in the funding application will be used to create:

- a funding and reporting schedule based on key milestones
- key performance indicators.

Information about projects may be used for material prepared by the NSW Government.





## MORE INFORMATION

[www.nsw.gov.au/strongercountrycommunities](http://www.nsw.gov.au/strongercountrycommunities)

### Contact us

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