



**Australian Government**  

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**Department of Social Services**

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**Families and Communities Programme**

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**Strengthening Communities  
Volunteer Grants 2015  
Funding Round Summary**

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**October 2015**

## **Strengthening Communities**

The Strengthening Communities Activity aims to build socially cohesive and resilient communities and promote inclusion and participation of disadvantaged people in community life. Funding is provided to organisations to develop solutions and deliver responsive and integrated services that meet community needs.

## **Volunteer Grants**

These grants aim to support the efforts of Australia's volunteers. They provide small amounts of money which organisations can use to help their volunteers. They are part of the Government's work to support the volunteers who help disadvantaged Australian communities and encourage inclusion of vulnerable people in community life.

Applications for the 2015 Volunteer Grants are now open.

## **Selection type**

This selection is an open competitive process.

## **How much?**

Up to \$20 million is available to eligible organisations that can apply for funding amounts of between \$1,000 and \$5,000.

## **Closing Date and Time**

Applications should be submitted by **2.00pm AEDT Wednesday, 9 December 2015**.

## **Who to contact?**

Please email your enquiries to: [vg2015@dss.gov.au](mailto:vg2015@dss.gov.au)

## **Eligibility**

A key principle of the "Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines" July 2014 is that the grants administration processes should be proportional to the scale and risk profile of the granting activity.

It is a general rule that the DSS can only enter into a Grant Agreement with an organisation that is a legal entity. If an organisation is not a legal entity and, if it so chooses, an eligible sponsor organisation may apply for funding on its behalf (refer to '*Sponsoring community groups that are not legal entities*' below).

Eligible organisations must be Australian not-for-profit organisations whose volunteers' work supports families and/or communities in Australia and are legal entities, such as, but not limited to:

- a. Incorporated Associations (incorporated under state/territory legislation, commonly have 'Association' or 'Incorporated' or 'Inc.' in their legal name)
- b. Incorporated Cooperatives (also incorporated under state/territory legislation, commonly have 'Cooperative' in their legal name)
- c. Companies (incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001 – may be a proprietary company (limited by shares or by guarantee) or public companies)
- d. Aboriginal Corporations (incorporated under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006)

- e. Organisations established through a specific piece of Commonwealth or state/territory legislation (public benevolent institutions, churches, universities, unions etc
- f. Partnerships, and
- g. Trustees on behalf of a Trust

### **Ineligible Organisations**

Organisations that may not be eligible for funding include, but are not limited to:

- individuals/sole traders;
- for-profit organisations;
- professional associations or statutory authorities;
- Australian Government Departments and statutory authorities;
- state and territory government departments, except where a state/territory government education institution sponsors its parents & friends/citizens committee or school/council/board and these groups are not legal entities;
- local government entities, except where a local government entity sponsors a not-for-profit community group that is not a legal entity and where no other suitable sponsor is available;
- political organisations; or
- organisations outside Australia.

### **Sponsoring community groups that are not legal entities**

Unincorporated or community groups that are not legal entities, and do not have an appropriate person to enter into an agreement, may be sponsored by an eligible organisation.

The sponsor organisation must

- be an eligible not-for-profit organisation that has the necessary legal entity status to enter into a grant agreement with DSS and to administer the funding on your behalf (See *Eligibility*);
- be an Australian not-for-profit organisation whose work is aimed at supporting families and/or communities in Australia;
- only sponsor not-for-profit community groups that are not legal entities
- have a connection or relationship with the community group they are sponsoring;
- have obtained the full knowledge and agreement of the community group they are sponsoring;
- be located in the same State or Territory as the community group being sponsored;
- only sponsor a maximum of 20 Volunteer Grants 2015 applications. Should a sponsor eligible organisation sponsor in excess of 20 applications, only the first 20 sponsor applications will be assessed by DSS and this decision will be final;
- provide the funding to the community group for expenditure on the requested items to benefit the volunteers of the community group; and
- retain evidence/receipts which document appropriate expenditure of the funding (see *Acquittal of Funding*).

Failure to meet these requirements may result in the application/s not being considered.

A sponsor organisation can also apply for a grant in its own right if its application is aimed at supporting its volunteers who work with families and/or communities in Australia.

A typical community group that is sponsored is a branch/outlet that is geographically separated from the sponsor organisation, operates independently, with a formal governing structure that meets regularly and supports local community volunteers.

**Note: Clusters of outlets/branches, sub-groups, committees, camping sites, projects or activities of the organisation are not eligible to be sponsored.**

### **Statement of Requirement**

Single grants of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 are available to community not-for-profit organisations to support their volunteers. Individual volunteers cannot apply for funding, however, please refer to the sponsoring information above.

Applications will be assessed on how well they meet the priorities of Volunteer Grants 2015 (see *Priorities for Funding*). These priorities are very important, but meeting them does not guarantee that your application will succeed.

The grant funding can be used as a contribution towards buying small equipment which is used by volunteers. It can be used to pay for fuel for volunteers or for transport for volunteers with disability who cannot drive. It can also be used to pay for training courses or background screening checks for volunteers.

Grant funding can only be used to buy eligible items. [Attachment A](#) outlines the categories of items and a list of eligible items which are usually bought within that category. The examples are intended as a guide only to help you select the most appropriate category. If a specific item is not listed, select the category that most closely matches the item to be bought. In the Application Form, applicants should select the category that matches the items they want to buy. Some items that are not eligible are shown below.

If your application is successful, you must keep the receipts for items that you have purchased for five years. This provides evidence of proof of purchase if required by DSS.

### **Priorities for Funding**

This list includes the priorities for this funding round. Applications will be assessed on how strongly they meet one or more of these priorities:

- organisations that work with disadvantaged communities. This will be prioritised according to the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA);
- organisations that support individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage. This includes:
  - organisations/sponsored groups located in areas affected by recent major natural disasters (based on disasters listed on the [Disaster Assist](#) website): occurring within the last 12 months up to the closing date for applications, (from 10 December 2014 to 9 December 2015); and
  - organisations/sponsored groups which engage volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Organisations which help more than one disadvantaged group will be assessed more highly.
- organisations that have more volunteers than paid staff;
- a higher number of volunteers who will directly use the items being bought;
- organisations with high numbers of volunteers;
- organisations with smaller operating budget; and

- a lower total cost for the requested items.

Meeting these priorities does not guarantee success. Funding will ideally be spread across Australia, areas of high needs and people experiencing disadvantage.

### **Small equipment items**

Small equipment items make a volunteer's work easier, safer and more enjoyable. They can also ensure volunteers keep up with the rapidly changing pace of technology by ensuring volunteers have access to digital and electronic equipment.

The small equipment items must be **portable, tangible and bought to benefit the volunteers**. They may be low-cost and include installation, delivery/freight and set-up costs.

This list has some of the commonly requested items that are **not eligible**. This is not a complete list as there are other items which are not as commonly requested.

- advertising, logos, banners, display boards, uniforms, badging, or other things which advertise your organisation;
- administration costs such as leasing, rental, hiring, labour, utilities, insurance and travel;
- fees, charges, and subscriptions;
- service charges, extended warranties and other labour costs;
- conferences and functions;
- vehicles and powered boats;
- buildings, renovations and permanent fixtures - plumbing, kitchens, hot water systems, fencing, etc;
- window coverings (such as curtains and awnings) and floor coverings;
- Consumable supplies – food, books, paper, cleaning products, toners, soil, sunscreen, maps, refilling of gas bottles, etc;
- gym equipment, heart rate monitors;
- items that benefit the organisation, its members, clients, participants or players, but not the volunteer;
- items already purchased or are already funded from another source.

### **Fuel costs incurred by volunteers**

People who use their own cars for volunteering work can be reimbursed for the cost of the petrol or provided with pre-paid petrol cards, but only if the car is being used for volunteering work. This includes delivering food and helping people in need.

Fuel costs that are eligible:

- All motor vehicle fuels including petrol, diesel and gas

### **Fuel costs that are not eligible:**

- fuel already paid for by other sources;
- fuel to operate the organisation's equipment, vehicles or machinery; or
- fuel used by paid staff, members or participants of the organisation.

### **Transport costs of volunteers with disability**

Volunteers with disability who cannot drive can be reimbursed for the cost of transport or provided with pre-paid travel cards for use while undertaking their volunteering work.

#### **Transport costs that are eligible:**

- All transport costs incurred by volunteers with disability who cannot drive when doing volunteering work. This transport includes taxis and public transport (pre-paid travel cards are acceptable).

#### **Transport costs that are not eligible:**

- transport already paid for from other sources e.g. State/Territory governments, community groups;
- transport which is not reasonably costed;
- transport which is not for volunteering work;
- travel for an organisation's paid staff, members or participants of the organisation.

### **Training for Volunteers**

Training to help volunteers learn new skills or get qualifications for their volunteering work. Training courses may include mental health, first aid, leadership, communication, governance and/or working with vulnerable people. Courses which are recognised and lead to a Statement of Attainment, Certificate or Diploma are preferred.

Training costs that are **not eligible** include those already paid for by other sources or are already purchased. Training cannot be paid for if it is not reasonably costed or for paid staff, organisational members or participants/clients of the organisation. Training materials; travel to and from training; and venue hire also cannot be paid for with the grant.

### **Background screening checks of volunteers**

Funding is available to help with the cost of background screening checks of volunteers. These include criminal record checks, police checks and police certificates, working with children checks and working with vulnerable people checks. These checks are often mandatory and/or desirable when engaging volunteers, particularly when they are working with children and/or vulnerable people.

**Costs are not eligible** if they are already paid for from other sources or they are not reasonably costed.

### **Multicultural Access and Equity policy**

Australia's *Multicultural Access and Equity Policy: Respecting diversity. Improving responsiveness* obliges Australian government agencies to ensure that cultural and linguistic diversity is not a barrier for people engaging with government and accessing services to which they are entitled, for example, by providing access to language services where appropriate. Grant applicants should consider whether services, projects, activities or events may require the use of professional translating or interpreting services in order to communicate with non-English speakers. If your Application Form states that a budget is required, costs for translating and interpreting services should be included in your application.

## **Assessment**

The Assessment Team may be comprised of DSS officers from each state/territory and national offices. Teams will undertake training to ensure consistent assessment for all applications received. The Assessment Team will be bound by the APS Code of Conduct and the Secretary's Instructions.

## **Probity**

The selection of funding recipients must be fair, open and demonstrate the highest level of integrity, consistent with the public interest.

The following principles will be applied through all stages of the selection process:

- a. fairness and impartiality;
- b. consistency, accountability and transparency of process;
- c. security and confidentiality of information;
- d. identification and resolution of conflicts of interest;
- e. compliance with legislative obligations and government policy.

These principles are intended to achieve an equitable, justifiable and sound process.

Adherence to the probity principles means that everyone involved with the selection process will act:

- f. impartially;
- g. with integrity, including avoiding actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

A Probity Advisor may be appointed for the Activity. The role of the Probity Advisor is to assist DSS meet its probity obligations in relation to the Activity by ensuring that the selection processes are defensible and will withstand external and internal scrutiny.

The role of the Probity Advisor is to independently monitor procedural aspects of the selection process to ensure compliance with the published relevant Programme Guidelines and to advise DSS in relation to such matters. The Probity Advisor plays no part in the assessment of applications.

## **Programme Guidelines**

The Programme Guidelines Overview provides the key starting point for parties considering whether to participate in the activity and forms the basis for the business relationship between DSS and the funding recipient. Applicants are strongly advised to read the Programme Guidelines Overview prior to completing an Application Form.

## **Acquittal of Funding**

You do not have to report on how you spend the money for Volunteer Grants funding unless DSS asks you to. If you are asked to report, DSS will require you to provide proof of purchase and to allow the Australian Government's auditors to look at your records. The original receipts showing what you have purchased are required as proof and must be kept for five years. The funded organisation is responsible for keeping a complete set of records for this purpose. This includes receipts for fuel

and transport costs. It is not necessary to send receipts to DSS, unless requested to do so.

All funding must be spent by the Grant Agreement Completion Date, which is stated in the Letter of Offer. Unspent funds must be returned to DSS.

### **Fuel acquittal**

There are four different options for the record keeping requirements for reimbursement of fuel costs. You can use any one of these options:

- You can use a log book to record all car trips which a person makes while doing volunteer work. This book would be proof of costs and should include details of each trip (date, from/to, reason for trip) and record the kilometres travelled (meter readings).
- You can set up an account at a local service station and provide authority for volunteers to charge their approved fuel to the account. This would be paid direct by your organisation and account receipts would be sufficient proof.
- Copies of actual fuel expenditure receipts.
- Pre-paid petrol cards. Payment receipts would be sufficient proof of expenditure.

### **Transport costs for volunteers with disability who cannot drive**

There are four different options for the record keeping requirements for reimbursement of transport costs. You can use any one of these options:

- Pre-paid travel cards. Payment receipts would be enough proof of spending.
- Volunteers may use a log book to record all volunteer transport trips. This log book would be sufficient proof of travel costs. The book should include details of each trip (date, from/to, reason for trip, method of transport).
- Copies of public transport tickets.
- Copies of original receipts (such as taxi receipts).

### **How to Apply**

Please read and complete the application form ensuring all required fields are completed, including the declaration. Incomplete applications will be deemed not eligible and will not be assessed. Ensure all responses are true and accurate.

Click the **Submit Application** button and follow the instructions provided. All questions will be verified and any incorrect or unanswered responses will be displayed for your correction. The Application Form will not submit until all responses have been verified.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION for Mac Users:** You may experience difficulties using a Mac Product (including Mac computer, iPad and iPhone) to submit your application, please contact the Volunteer Grants Hotline for further support.

Upon successful submission you will be issued with a confirmation receipt and email. Submission may take several minutes. **Please be patient and do not close the Application Form before receiving confirmation. Do not attempt to submit the application more than once.** If you do not receive confirmation or you experience difficulties submitting the Application Form, please call 1800 183 374.

## **Questions and Answers (Q&As)**

Questions can be submitted via email to [vg2015@dss.gov.au](mailto:vg2015@dss.gov.au).

Responses to questions will be published on the funding round page within five working days of receipt, except where the answers are already available in the Application Pack. DSS will only respond to requests for information that seek clarification of issues to allow applicants a better understanding of the requirements of the Application Form and Programme Guidelines e.g. DSS will not provide advice on how to respond to specific Selection Criteria.

DSS will not respond to any questions, requests for information or correspondence about the status or progress of applications from **Wednesday, 2 December 2015** till the conclusion of the selection process.

## **Feedback**

Generic feedback on applications will be available on the DSS website following the announcement of the outcomes of the funding round.

Feedback on individual applications **will not** be provided for this round.