



FAQs

Who is eligible for the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery grants?

This grants program is *not* available for individuals, partnerships or trusts.

To be eligible, you must have an **Australian Business Number (ABN)** and be one of the following:

- an entity incorporated in Australia
- an incorporated association
- an incorporated not for profit organisation
- an Aboriginal Land Council or indigenous corporation
- a local governing agency or body (such as a Council), or ACT governing agency.

The criteria we're using is broad, so as many groups can access support as possible. So please look at the guidelines, as you might be eligible even if you can't see yourself in the list above.

Check out the Guidelines on the [Business Grants Hub](#) page for more detail.

Where and when can I apply?

- Applications will open for submission on 22 July 2021.
- Applications close at 5:00pm AEDT on 2 September 2021.
- Please note that late applications will not be accepted, so please allow plenty of time to complete the application form and attach your supporting documents. There will be word limits and attachment size limits.
- To see the preview application form, start your application, or to find out more information, head to the Business Grants Hub at <https://business.gov.au/bsbr>.

What kind of projects are funded through the new grants program?

- Many different types of projects are eligible for support through the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery grants program – but they must be about recovery and/or resilience of communities impacted by the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires.
- You can apply for grants of between \$20,000 and \$10 million. There is approximately \$276 million available in grants funding.
- The project period can be short or medium-term, start immediately or later, but all projects funded under the grant program must be completed by 31 March 2024.
- Projects need to be directed towards helping communities recover from the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires. Project activities need to be in an eligible LGA and projects need to have the support of the community they are aimed at helping.
- Projects activities can be undertaken in more than one eligible LGA.
- Projects must help to support communities':
 - **social recovery and resilience needs**
For example, projects that support mental and physical wellbeing and recovery, improve community connections and social inclusion through community development activities, cultural events and workshops, protect

local heritage and address disadvantage within the community, preserve Aboriginal cultural heritage and support Indigenous communities through activities, workshops and events.

- **economic recovery and resilience needs**
For example, projects that help the community (not just an individual business or organisation) to recover from the immediate economic impact of the bushfires by boosting employment, regional development, business, tourism and other industries in bushfire affected areas.
- **recovery and resilience needs of the built environment**
For example, projects to rebuild infrastructure damaged by the bushfires, including rural, commercial, public, community and essential services. This might include access trails, bridge upgrades or replacements, digital signage, water main upgrades or multipurpose buildings.
- More than \$200 million has already been directed towards environmental bushfire recovery under the National Bushfire Recovery Fund. Consequently, the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery grants will be directed towards initiatives that support social, economic and built environment recovery and resilience.
- Projects that involve environmental work may be considered for funding if they can demonstrate that they contribute to the recovery/resilience needs of community in regards to social, economic or built environment.
- There are some other criteria to be satisfied – so it is important to read the grant guidelines so you can submit the best application for your project.
- Visit recovery.gov.au/black-summer-grants for more information.

Will help be available to apply for these grants?

- Yes.
- The National Recovery and Resilience Agency is working with Business Grants Hub to deliver these grants.
- The Business Grants Hub has a Contact Centre (open from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday across Australia) which can provide support for your application. Call **13 28 46**.
- These frequently asked questions will be updated as new questions come in.
- Applicant support services will be available for people who would like some help with the application process, including workshops (in person and online). To see the assistance available and to register visit recovery.gov.au/black-summer-grants.
- The National Recovery and Resilience Agency has asked ThinkPlace to help deliver the applicant support – including workshops and webinars.
- The workshops will cover what the grants are for, the application process and tips on how to write a good application.
- ThinkPlace staff are not Government officials, but are well placed to assist with this support.
- The workshops **will not** have available someone to write your application, and ThinkPlace staff can't comment on what a good or bad project might be. The workshops are aimed at helping you understand the grant guidelines and criteria to make sure you are putting forward the best version of your proposal – but attending the workshops does not mean that your application is guaranteed to be successful.

- The locations of the workshops are listed at recovery.gov.au/black-summer-grants. This website tells you how to register for an online workshop, and it provides lots of other useful information on the grants.

How can I access applicant support services?

- The Business Grants Hub has a contact centre that can answer questions on the grant guidelines and application process. The contact centre is open from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday, across Australia. The phone number is **13 28 46**.
- To make things as easy as possible for applicants, the Australian Government is also arranging workshops and webinars to assist with the application process.
- Locations, dates and times for the workshops may be subject to change due to COVID-19 restrictions, so please register your interest early.
- E-learning resources, such as short video presentations (15-20 minutes each) and other information will also be available, if you are unable to attend a face-to-face workshop or webinar.
- Information on the applicant support services available to applicants can be found on the National Recovery and Resilience Agency website here: recovery.gov.au/black-summer-grants.

How are the funding amounts chosen for each location?

- There is money allocated for projects in each eligible Local Government Area (LGA).
- There is a 'funding envelope' (or guide amount) for how much might be spent in each area, based on the impact of the bushfires on the LGA.
- This funding envelope ensures that all communities in each LGA have an opportunity to access grant funding.
 - The most heavily impacted LGAs have a guide amount of \$4.5 million per LGA.
 - Remaining LGAs have a guide amount of \$1.6 million per LGA.
- More or less funding may be provided in an LGA depending on the projects that are put forward.
- The allocation will help to ensure equity between applicants and eligible LGAs as well as geographical spread.
- The amount of money that is directed towards each LGA will depend on the project applications that are submitted – so get your ideas together, and make sure you book in for the workshops or webinars if you'd like help getting your project application together.
- The projects that best address community recovery from the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires, and meet the eligibility and assessment criteria, will be recommended for funding.
- Any money from a funding envelope that remains after eligible projects in an LGA are allocated will be available to other eligible projects in other LGAs until the grant funding is exhausted.
- Projects may not receive the full grant amount requested.
- To check whether your LGA is covered please look at Appendix A to the grant guidelines at <https://business.gov.au/bsbr>.

How did you determine the categories for each Local Government Area?

- To address community concerns about equitable access to funding, the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants program provides a 'funding envelope' (or guide amount) for all Local Government Areas (LGAs).
- All communities in each eligible LGA have the opportunity to access grants funding.
- The categorisation of LGAs is based on analysis of the extent of the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfire burn scar in each LGA and other impacts of the bushfires, together with advice from our regional engagement network and state and territory governments.
- The 'funding envelope' (or guide amount) for each LGA indicates how much might be provided in each area.
- More or less funding may be provided in an LGA depending on the projects that are put forward.

How will you make sure that these grants go to those who need this support?

- There is money allocated for projects in each eligible Local Government Area (LGA).
- There is a 'funding envelope' (or guide amount) for how much might be spent in each area, based on the impact of the bushfires on the LGA.
- This funding envelope ensures that all communities in each LGA have an opportunity to access grant funding.
- More or less funding may be provided in an LGA depending on the projects that are put forward.
- Project applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria for the grants program and how well the project supports recovery and resilience of communities impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires.
- These Black Summer Bushfire Recovery grants add to the bushfire recovery support that is already available to communities including Local Economic Recovery funding.
- The new grants are 100 per cent funded by the Commonwealth, and delivered directly to communities.
- To make things as easy as possible for applicants, the Australian Government is arranging workshops and webinars that will assist with the application process.
- To see the assistance available and to register visit recovery.gov.au/black-summer-grants.

How are these grants different to other bushfire recovery grants?

- There is a range of bushfire recovery support available to bushfire affected communities. This includes more than \$2 billion in Australian Government funding for bushfire recovery support.
- Some measures, such as disaster recovery payments and environment grants, are delivered directly by the Commonwealth.
- Other measures, such as small business grants, debris clean up and Local Economic Recovery funding, are delivered in collaboration with state government partners.
- These new Black Summer Bushfire Recovery grants will be delivered directly by the Commonwealth, to build on and complement many other bushfire programs that are already in place.
- The new grants will help to support remaining bushfire recovery and resilience needs.

What about Local Economic Recovery funding?

- That's well underway. \$350 million was allocated for Local Economic Recovery (LER) projects, with measures being delivered by state governments based on national criteria set by the Australian Government.
- LER funding has been fully delivered in Queensland and is nearing completion in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.
- For more information about LER funding and projects visit <https://recovery.gov.au/our-community/local-bushfire-recovery-projects>.

Can I re-use an application put forward under another bushfire grants program?

- Applicants who were unsuccessful under the Local Economic Recovery Fund (or any other program), may find that they are eligible to apply for a Black Summer Bushfire Recovery grant.
- It will be necessary for applicants to review the grant guidelines to see how their idea or project proposal may be amended to meet the eligibility and assessment criteria.
- You can apply for funding under other grant programs, whether Commonwealth, state, territory or local government, but if you are successful in more than one program, you will need to decide under which program you wish to be funded.
- We cannot fund your project if it has already received funding from another Commonwealth, state, territory or local government grant for the same activities.
- Find out more at recovery.gov.au/black-summer-grants and [Business Grants Hub](#)

Where is this funding coming from?

- The Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program is worth \$280 million, and comes from the National Bushfire Recovery Fund. The funding is made up of underspends from a number of demand driven programs that are now closed and money earmarked for Complementary Projects.
- This new funding program will help support communities continue to recover from the bushfires, making sure that every dollar from the National Bushfire Recovery Fund is being used where it is needed most.

What about the Complementary Projects funding?

- When Local Economic Recovery funding was announced, \$98.5 million was set aside as the Complementary Projects (CP) fund, to help meet remaining bushfire recovery needs.
- The new Black Summer Bushfire Recovery grants program is delivering on that aim, making sure that the funding set aside for the CP funding and remaining funds from the National Bushfire Recovery Fund are being directed to communities where support for bushfire recovery is needed.

How will project applications be assessed?

- The Business Grants Hub will do an initial assessment of all applications and determine which of them meet the eligibility and assessment criteria.
- The Business Grants Hub will provide the outcomes of this assessment to the Assessment Committee.
- The Assessment Committee will review all eligible applications and assess the merits of each application.
- The Committee will also consider the geographical spread of proposed projects across the eligible LGAs.

- The Committee may seek external experts and/or advisors to inform the assessment process.
- The Committee will then make recommendations to the decision-maker.
- The decision-maker for this grants program is the Minister for Emergency Management and National Recovery and Resilience.

Why do the Guidelines say that only \$276 million is available for funding (when the program is worth \$280 million)?

- The total cost of the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery grants program will be \$280 million.
- Some of this funding will be used to run the grants program, provide assistance to applicants, and assess the applications.
- Approximately \$276 million will remain and be available for grants to benefit communities in eligible Local Government Areas affected by the 2019-20 bushfires.

How do I access the application form?

- A preview application form is available on the Business Grants Hub website here: <https://business.gov.au/bsbr>. The website also provides information on how to apply for a Black Summer Bushfire Recovery grant.
- From 22 July, you will be able to submit grant applications.
- To apply for a grant, you will need to create an account on www.business.gov.au.
- Applications close at 5:00pm AEDT on 2 September 2021.
- Please note that late applications will not be accepted, so please allow plenty of time to complete the application form and attach your supporting documents. There will be word limits and attachment size limits.

What are the reporting requirements?

- If you are successful for a grant, you will receive an email informing you that your grant agreement is ready for you to view on the business.gov.au portal.
- We will use two types of grant agreements, depending on the size and complexity of your project. Each grant agreement has general terms and conditions that cannot be changed. Sample grant agreements are available on www.business.gov.au.
- Successful applicants will be required to report on progress against the agreed project milestones and project expenditure (including expenditure of grant funds).
- When you complete the project, you must submit an end of project report.
- We have tried to keep reporting requirements simple, while also ensuring that good information is available on how grant funding is being spent.
- Where required, progress reports must:
 - include details of your progress towards completion of agreed project activities
 - show the total eligible expenditure incurred to date
 - include evidence of expenditure, where requested
 - include before and after colour photographic evidence of the project sites (if applicable)
 - be submitted by the report due date (you can submit reports ahead of time if you have completed relevant project activities)

- End of project reports must:
 - include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
 - identify the total eligible expenditure incurred for the project
 - include a declaration that the grant money was spent in accordance with the grant agreement and to report on any underspends of the grant money
 - be submitted by the report due date
- Ad-hoc reports on the project may also be requested for an update on progress or if there have been any significant delays or difficulties in undertaking the project.
- These reports will need to be completed through the www.business.gov.au portal.

Can an application be made for a project over the funding envelope, say for \$10 million?

- There is a 'funding envelope' (or guide amount) for how much might be spent in each area, based on the impact of the bushfires on the Local Government Area (LGA).
- This funding envelope ensures that all communities in each LGA have an opportunity to access grant funding.
- More or less funding may be provided in an LGA depending on the projects that are put forward.
- A community in an eligible LGA could apply for a grant up to \$10 million.
- Grant applications seeking larger amounts up to \$10 million do not have to occur in multiple LGAs.
- The information provided in the application, the project plan and the project budget, should be 'commensurate' (proportionate) to the level of funding requested. For example, for higher value grants, it is expected that the project plan and budget would be more comprehensive.
- The projects that best address community recovery from the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires, and meet the eligibility and assessment criteria, will be recommended for funding.
- Any money from a funding envelope that remains after eligible projects in an LGA are allocated will be available to other eligible projects in other LGAs until the grant funding is exhausted.
- Projects may not receive the full grant amount requested.
- The amount of money that is directed towards each LGA will depend on the project applications that are submitted.

If a council submits a project for the full 'funding envelope' (or guide amount) does it stop community groups/organisations from accessing funding?

- No.
- There is a 'funding envelope' (or guide amount) for how much might be spent in each area, based on the impact of the bushfires on the LGA.
- This funding envelope ensures that all communities in each LGA have an opportunity to access grant funding.
- More or less funding may be provided in an LGA depending on the projects that are put forward.

- Project applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria for the grants program and how well the project supports recovery and resilience of communities impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires.
- Applications from councils or other local government bodies will be assessed the same as any other application.
- The amount of money that is directed towards each LGA will depend on the project applications that are submitted.

Does the 'funding envelope' (or guide amount) mean LGAs can only access that amount?

- No.
- There is a 'funding envelope' (or guide amount) for how much might be spent in each area, based on the impact of the bushfires on the LGA.
- This funding envelope ensures that all communities in each LGA have an opportunity to access grant funding.
- More or less funding may be provided in an LGA depending on the projects that are put forward.
- Project applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria for the grants program and how well the project supports recovery and resilience of communities impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires.
- The amount of money that is directed towards each LGA will depend on the project applications that are submitted.

Does the 'funding envelope' (or guide amount) mean LGAs can only access that amount?

- No.

CLASSIFICATION

Australian Government
**Department of Industry,
Science and Resources**

s.22

Director, Escalated Complaints
Commonwealth Ombudsman

Dear **s.22**

Response to report on complaints from **s.22**

Thank you for your correspondence of 18 November 2022 in relation to complaints received from **s.22**

who were assessed as ineligible under the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program.

In your response you make two comments and one suggestion.

In relation to your first comment, as part of the co-design process with the policy agency the Business Grants Hub within the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, considers the legislative authority and constitutional risks associated with each grant opportunity and the intended entities to benefit from the program. This assists to determine which eligible entities to include in the grant opportunity guidelines. We aim to ensure that eligible entities are clearly articulated to assist potential applicants. However, we note that in the case of the two complainants there has been confusion around their eligibility. This case highlights the importance of considering eligible entity types as part of the program design process.

Your second comment related to the FAQ document published on the National Emergency Management Agency website. We acknowledge that the publication date of the updated version would not have assisted the two complainants to determine their eligibility.

In your response you suggest that the Department should ensure that applicants have a clear understanding of the eligibility criteria in the future. As alluded to above, as part of the program design process we consider the intended recipients for each grant opportunity and align the program guidelines accordingly. While the experience of the two complainants is regrettable, the number of ineligible applications for this program was low (41 out of 1,180) and does not identify a systemic issue. Nonetheless, we will take the lessons learnt from these cases and apply them to future program design and delivery.

Further, we note the suggestion that if unintended discrepancies are observed that lead to a group of applicants becoming ineligible, the Department should consider whether additional steps should be taken to clarify eligibility requirements. Following the launch of a program we take into consideration feedback received. While rare, there are examples where grant opportunity guidelines have been updated post-launch, reapproved by the responsible Minister and republished to take account of a particular issue that has arisen.

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For the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program we did not have capacity to contact all ineligible applicants to discuss their particular circumstances. The onus is on the applicant to ensure they meet all the requirements of the program. It is noted that in the cases associated with your investigation the two complainants did not see any ambiguity in their interpretation of the guidelines so had no reason to reach out for clarification. We will learn from this case and try to make sure future guidelines are clearer for potential applicants.

It is regrettable that the two organisations referred to in this complaint had a bad experience in applying for this grant opportunity. However, we were pleased to learn that s.22

We appreciate you reviewing these complaints and providing constructive feedback which we will consider as part of our continuous improvement in program design and delivery.

Yours sincerely

s.22

General Manager
Business Grants Hub

1 December 2022