

20 November 2022

Hunter Local Land Services - Community Small Grants and Education Scholarships Program 2021-2024

Program guidelines

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Background

Since 2018 Hunter Local Land Services has delivered a small grants funding program for community groups, networks or associations and individuals with the aim of building knowledge, skills and participation in land management practices. We encourage Landcare groups, schools, industry associations, farmer networks, pest animal networks, Aboriginal organisations or other natural resource management or agricultural community organisations to apply.

The community small grants program aims to achieve:

- increased skills and knowledge of participants to assist with local networking, educational activities and land management and restoration events: and
- increased community participation within local networks, educational activities and land management and restoration events.

Maximum \$2,000 per community small grant.

The education scholarships program aims to provide opportunities for individuals aged 18 and over to build skills and knowledge in land management practices through informal or formal training opportunities, in particular individuals who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, individuals who are developing agricultural careers or involved in Industry groups or agricultural networks or are active Landcare network/group members.

Training can include, but is not limited to, conferences, formal training such as TAFE short courses, and other informal training or networking or mentoring opportunities. Scholarships can be considered for more than one individual (such as a small group) within one application.

Maximum \$1,000 per education scholarship.

This program is an ongoing open non-competitive grant program. All projects must be completed within the agreed contract date, or on or before 30 May of the financial year the grant was offered.

Applicants are encouraged to read all program guidelines before applying, and contact your regional community engagement officer:

Manning Great Lakes: Daniel Trudgeon 0419 436 185

Upper Hunter: Lori McKern 0419 186 271

Lower Hunter: Thomasen Knight 0487 547 690

Or email <mailto:admin.hunter@lls.nsw.gov.au> with your email subject line "Community Grants-Your Region" (e.g. Community Grants-Lower Hunter)

Program purpose and objectives

Hunter Local Land Services will be delivering a 3-year program to community groups, individuals, networks or associations, to support the following objectives:

The program will support community in building knowledge, skills and participation in land management and/or sustainable agricultural productivity practices*:

The community small grants program aims:

- 1) to build individual/groups skills and knowledge in land management and/or sustainable agricultural practices
- 2) to build community participation, knowledge and skills with community organisations, groups or local communities.

The education scholarships program aims:

To provide opportunities for individuals aged over 18 to build skills and knowledge in land management practices through informal or formal training opportunities, in particular individuals who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, individuals who are developing agricultural careers or involved in industry groups or agricultural networks or are active Landcare network/group members.

(Training can include, but is not limited to, conferences, formal training such as TAFE short courses, and other informal training or networking or mentoring opportunities-scholarships can be considered for more than one individual (such as a small group) within one application).

*Land management and/or sustainable agricultural productivity practices definition: can include, but is not limited to, activities that improves soil condition, pasture cover, stock health and welfare, herd or flock management, increasing property and farm production outcomes, threatened species/native fauna conservation, river health, water quality, cultural learning and assessment, weed or pest control practices, native vegetation enhancement e.g. planting, creating nesting or breeding sites for fauna, marine debris/waste management in sensitive areas (such as e.g. public reserves, National Parks or wetlands), property, farm through land restoration planning activities and emergency management planning.

Key dates

Stage	Details
Applications open	8:00 am, 1 July 2021.
Applications close	5:00 pm, 31 March 2024.
Assessment process	This program is ongoing. Applications will be assessed within 3 weeks after the end of each month during the program period.
Application outcome date	Application outcomes will be communicated within one month of application date.
Funding deeds executed with successful applicants:	Contracting processes will commence once an applicant has signed and returned their letter of offer.
Project completion:	Projects must be complete by 30 May each year within the financial year that the contract was established, as specified in the small grants funding letter.

In extenuating circumstances, applications submitted after the deadline may be accepted at the sole discretion of Hunter Local Land Services.

Program funding

This project is being delivered by Hunter Local Land Services with funding from Hunter Catchments Contributions and the NSW State Government, Local Land Services NSW Treasury. There will be approximately \$30,000 per financial year available for this program, with nominal allocations to the Upper Hunter, Lower Hunter and MidCoast districts to ensure fair access across the Hunter Local Land Services region.

Rounds will be postponed when funds for the financial year have been exhausted (and updated on the web site). In these circumstances, applications submitted will be carried over into next year's rounds.

Funding source	Funding amount
Hunter Catchments Contributions	\$20,000
NSW State Government, Local Land Services, NSW Treasury	\$10,000

Maximum \$2,000 per project (community grants)

Maximum \$1,000 per scholarship (education scholarships)

Unspent funds

If the situation arises where a grant recipient's project is completed and there are unspent funds remaining from the grant allocation, Hunter Local Land Services may require the grant recipient to return the unspent funds. If the grant recipient requests to use the funds to extend the scope of the project, Hunter Local Land Services may assess that request if it aligns to the objectives of the grant program. Hunter Local Land Services may require the grant recipient to provide supporting information such as revised economic or social impact data.

Eligibility criteria

Type	Details
General – applies to all	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximum of one application per group per financial year.• Maximum of 2 applications per individual for scholarships over the 3 years.• All applications should determine budgets based on quotes/actual costs. All projects should retain all receipts for project activities, as projects may be audited on completion.• All recipients must use Hunter Local Land Services evaluation forms (for projects and scholarships, and submit evaluation results to Hunter Local Land Services) within 2 weeks of end of contract date/project completion with final reports.• Applicants/groups must be residing in or registered in the Hunter Local Land Services region. <p>All projects must be completed within the agreed contract date, or on or before 30 May of the financial year the grant was offered.</p>

<p>Community small grants</p>	<p>All community group projects must submit a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • final report within 2 weeks of contract end date, which will include details of the event and number of participants/people engaged, overview of skills/knowledge and learnings • submit all evaluation forms completed at the event (Local Land Services evaluation forms will be provided) • and, at least 2 photos from the event/activity that can be used by Hunter Local Land Services for promotional purposes • the group/organisation must have been in operation for at least 6 months • your organisation/community group must either be incorporated OR auspiced by an organisation that is incorporated or has an ABN. • unincorporated groups can access financial assistance; however, a tax invoice from a supplier (e.g. caterer, guest speaker) must be issued for payment directly to Hunter Local Land Services • your project must aim to build community participation and knowledge and skills with community organisations or local communities. <p>Your project can seek funding of up to \$2,000 for community engagement and participation. Projects and or knowledge and skills building, field-based events such as field days, workshops or demonstration days are eligible.</p>
<p>Education scholarships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenses for individual scholarships may be paid direct to the accommodation or training provider on behalf of the individual. (as per the agreed amount), or as agreed, please note this in your application. • Individuals must report on the outcomes of their scholarship activity on completion (any time within the 3-year grants program) and demonstrate they completed their course/attended the event. • Individuals seeking scholarships must be able to demonstrate their involvement in a land management-based network, community group, association, organisation or club for eligibility (such as Landcare, LALC/traditional owner group, school or not for profit group). • Individual scholarships can apply to registration/course fees, direct domestic travel and accommodation costs up to \$1,000 only (no catering, meals or other related expenses).

Eligible applicants – this program is designed for, but is not limited to:

Type	Details
Community small grants program (skills knowledge and community participation projects):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community groups • Landcare groups • Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) • Schools • Industry/producer groups • Committees/Associations • Not for profit organisations
Education scholarships program:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals aged over 18 who are members of or who are actively involved with any of the groups listed above. • Priority will go to the following individuals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, OR ○ Who are developing Agricultural careers or involved in Industry groups, OR ○ Who are Landcare Network/Group members.

Eligible projects

The following are examples of projects funded under this program:

Type	Details
Community small grant (Skills and Knowledge, and Community Participation Projects that can be funded (group, network or associations)- up to \$2000 (per group/per year maximum 3 applications in total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public awareness raising events- such as involvement in festivals, public displays, static displays, or development of educational resources/kits, online resources (excluding website development). • Public/closed workshops- such as tailored workshops for your group members, or public workshops inviting local community, this includes development of resources or kits that facilitate workshop activities. • Public/closed field-based events- where activities will build local community knowledge in on ground activities and land management practices, this can include an example such as: community tree planting events, farm visits or demonstration site visits, or project plan development where community is involved in planning activities open to the public or specific to your group. • School programs- that build students/school communities knowledge of relevant environmental, agricultural or cultural land, and emergency management issues

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed group training events- where a training event is tailored/delivered to a community group to build relevant skills to local projects or initiatives - such as pest training for 1080/pindone use, chemical application training, weed ID and training, drone/app training, property planning etc.
<p>Education scholarship (Individuals who are involved in groups, networks or associations)- up to \$1000 (per individual, per year maximum 3 applications in total)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference attendance- individuals who can demonstrate the conference will build their knowledge skills to bring back to their community group, network or association (examples include Landcare conferences, firesticks conferences, weed conferences etc) (can be interstate but not international). • Formal training- subsidising course costs associated with an individual course such as TAFE Agricultural short courses (pest control, fencing, agricultural studies), university studies that provide an accreditation (can be interstate but not international). • Informal training- such as attendance to workshops/workshop series, field days or local training opportunities that are non-accredited (can be interstate but not international).

Inclusion and accessibility

The NSW Government is seeking to support regional communities to future-proof programs by funding universally designed projects. These projects should move beyond current day compliance standards and provide dignified and equitable inclusion to social and community programs for people with disability.

Funding will support projects that improve community participation, liveable communities and accessibility and inclusion outcomes. These will assist people with disability and accessibility requirements to participate independently with equity and dignity.

Projects which demonstrate the provision of fit-for-purpose, accessible and safe facilities, and increased participation opportunities by increasing accessibility and inclusion/universal design are encouraged. This applies to both infrastructure projects and community or social programs aiming to improve existing accessibility and inclusion to encourage greater participation.

Improved outcomes for Aboriginal people

The NSW Government is committed to supporting Aboriginal people and communities to drive local and place-based initiatives and solutions through funded projects. It acknowledges regional communities are unique and therefore initiatives and solutions need to be bespoke, tailored and determined by the local community.

Projects that seek to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people must align with the skills, aspirations and experiences of local Aboriginal communities. Projects must address a demonstrated community issue and deliver positive impact on social outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities in regional NSW.

Ineligible projects

- Activities that have already been funded.
- Activities that have already been delivered.
- Activities that are of purely personal or private benefit.
- Applicants whose organisation/group is subject to an Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), Local Land Services (LLS), Department of Primary Industries (DPI) or other legal investigation.
- Activities that do not fit within land management activities*. (*See Definition on page 4)

Eligible project locations

The Hunter Local Land Services region extends across the local government areas of:

- Upper Hunter Shire Council
- Muswellbrook Shire Council
- Singleton Council
- Cessnock City Council
- Dungog Shire Council
- Midcoast Council
- Maitland City Council
- Lake Macquarie City Council
- City of Newcastle
- Port Stephens Council.

Assessment criteria

Type	Details
Community small grants	<p>Successful projects will be selected using the following criteria based on how well they meet each of the criteria, and the funding available (nominal allocation per funding round). All projects must meet all criteria below at a minimum to be considered for funds.</p> <p>An assessment panel will review all applications and score each of the criteria and rank projects based on total scores.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Community involvement: The extent to which the project is supported by the local community and/or will actively generate community support and participation.2. Skills and knowledge gained will provide public benefits: The extent to which the project will result in local land management benefits or engagement of local community, such as influencing best land management and/or sustainable agricultural productivity practices, improving decision making and linkages to other activities or local priority issues.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Evidence-based decisions: The extent to which the applicant has sought appropriate advice (including from LLS) and consulted with relevant stakeholders and is implementing/demonstrating best practice techniques or seeking professional advice in delivery. 4. Collaboration and Linkages: The extent to which the project engages partners, landholders and local communities, as appropriate, and builds into other local programs or priorities. 5. Risk management: The applicant has considered risks to project delivery, safety and the environment and identified appropriate controls to themselves, contracted parties and general public/other participants.
<p>Education scholarships</p>	<p>Successful projects will be selected using the following criteria based on how well they meet each of the criteria, and the funding available (nominal allocation per funding round). All projects must meet all criteria below at a minimum to be considered for funds. An assessment panel will review all applications and score each of the criteria and rank projects based on total scores.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Skills and knowledge gained will provide public benefits: The extent to which the training/course knowledge will be shared with others (such as newsletter stories/write ups, local presentations, implementing action plans or other on ground priorities that will support local action etc). 2. How skills will be utilised: The extent to which the knowledge gained will be implemented into future activities, within local community or groups. 3. Demonstrates linkages between knowledge learned and personal goals of the individual, and how these new skills will be applied within the community group/network they are involved with and complement career goals or pathways.

Application process

Stage one: how to apply

Applicants can be submitted in person at one of our offices, via post to Hunter Local Land Services Private Bag 2010, Paterson 2421, via email to admin.hunter@lls.nsw.gov.au or via our online application forms:

[Hunter LLS Community Small Grants Online Application Form](#)

[Hunter LLS Education Scholarships Online Application Form](#)

These can be accessed by clicking the relevant link above or by typing into your web browser:

<https://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter/grants-funding-scholarships>

Our offices can be found at:

816 Tocal Road Paterson NSW 2421

2 Flemington Drive Scone NSW 2337

26 Muldoon Street Taree NSW 2430

181 Bettington Street Merriwa NSW 2329

98 John Street Singleton NSW 2330.

What needs to be in your application

All applications need to include:

- a clear project scope,
- a project plan,
- a project budget based on quotes or detailed estimates, reasonable assumptions or previous experience with similar projects,
- landowner consent if the land is not owned by the Applicant,
- proof of incorporation for community groups,
- evidence of \$20 million Public Liability Insurance in the name of the Applicant,
- evidence of community consultation and strong community support for the project.

PDFs of our application forms can be found at: www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter/grants-funding-scholarships

Stage 2: assessment process

An initial eligibility assessment will be made by the fund administrator against the program guidelines.

Assessment panel

Applications will then be reviewed by an assessment panel convened by Hunter Local Land Services (assessment panel) using an eligibility scoring tool to ensure consistency in assessment. Each application will be assessed on its merit and compared to other eligible applications before a recommendation is made in writing to the decision maker.

Applicants may be contacted during this step to clarify information provided in their application. Hunter Local Land Services will notify applicants if additional information and supporting material is required and the timeframes in which it is required.

The assessment panel will consist of senior representatives from Hunter Local Land Services.

The assessment panel may take other factors into consideration when recommending an application for funding including but not limited to the total amount of funding available, geographical distribution of projects across regional NSW, suitability of a project for other government funding opportunities and alignment with existing NSW Government policies and strategies.

Advice may also be sought from other NSW Government agencies or other sources (such as probity advisors).

Decision making

The decision maker for the grant is the healthy landscapes manager, Hunter Local Land Services.

The decision maker will review the availability of grant funds and the assessment panel's recommendation before deciding which grant applications to approve. The decision maker may take other factors into account that may make an application ineligible for funding, including issues that could cause reputational or other risks to the NSW Government.

The decision maker's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of the grant
- the grant funding amount to be awarded, and
- the terms and conditions of the grant.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

Probity advice

Independent probity advisors will provide guidance to Hunter Local Land Services on any issues concerning integrity, fairness and accountability that may arise throughout the application, assessment, and decision-making process. This will ensure decisions are made with integrity, fairness and accountability, while delivering value for money for NSW.

Can ineligible projects be referred to a more appropriate funding program?

Yes. Projects that are more suitable for other NSW Government programs may be referred to those programs. Applications that are referred will be subject to the full assessment criteria of the other NSW Government program to which they are referred. Applicants may need to update their application to meet the criteria of the referred program.

Successful applications

Notification

Successful applicants will be notified in writing by letter and/or email.

Funding deed

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding deed with the NSW Government. A sample funding deed can be viewed at www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter/grants-funding-scholarships

Successful applicants will be required to provide all supporting documentation and approvals before Hunter Local Land Services can enter into a funding deed. This includes \$20 million public liability insurance, development approval (if applicable), letters of support from the landholder or project partners.

The NSW Government makes no binding funding commitment to an applicant unless and until both parties sign a funding deed.

Successful applicants must not make financial commitments for funded activities until funding deeds have been executed by both parties.

Grants will be paid via milestone payments set out in the funding deed. Timing and requirements will vary at NSW Government's discretion.

Successful applicants may be required to submit progress reports to the NSW Government as outlined in the funding deed.

Important terms and conditions

The NSW Government typically receives far more applications than it can support. Applicants are not guaranteed funding even if the application is of high merit. Further, even if an application is successful, it may not be funded to the full amount requested.

All projects must demonstrate they can commence within 3 months of the commencement of the funding deed and be completed within the financial year as outlined in the project plan.

Applicants must hold all relevant insurances, including a minimum \$20 million public liability insurance.

Requests for variations or changes to the project will only be considered in limited circumstances.

All awarded grants will be GST exclusive. If the applicant is registered for GST, this will be applied on top of the agreed grant value when payment is made. Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by taxation law. It is recommended Applicants seek independent professional advice about taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. The NSW Government does not provide advice on individual taxation circumstances.

Successful Applicants will be required to pay back unspent funds or those funds which have not been spent in accordance with the funding deed.

Successful applicants will be required to participate in a program evaluation to determine the extent to which their projects have contributed to the objective of the fund. The evaluation will require applicants to provide evidence of how projects have resulted in a measurable change to the lives of local residents that is consistent with the objective of the fund.

Any information submitted by an applicant may be used for promotional material prepared by the NSW Government.

The NSW Government may choose to publicly announce funding for individual applications. It may also use information provided in the grant to develop case studies.

All recipients of NSW Government funding should acknowledge this financial support as per the Funding Acknowledgement Guidelines for recipients of NSW Government grants available at nsw.gov.au/branding/sponsorship-and-funding-acknowledgment-guidelines.

Hunter Local Land Services reserves the right to undertake an audit of grant funding within a period 7 years from the signing of the funding deed.

Applicants must advise Hunter Local Land Services of any changes to their legal status or of changes or delays to their project.

Unsuccessful applications

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application and will be offered a feedback information session.

Additional information

Getting support

To help applicants prepare their application, additional information and resources will be available on the Hunter Local Land Services webpage, including relevant application templates and frequently asked questions: <https://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter/grants-funding-scholarships>

For assistance, please contact your Hunter Local Land Services community engagement officer:

- **Manning Great Lakes:** Daniel Trudgeon 0419 436 185
- **Upper Hunter:** Lori McKern 0419 186 271
- **Lower Hunter:** Thomasen Knight 0487 547 690

Or email <mailto:admin.hunter@lls.nsw.gov.au> with your email subject line "Community Grants-Your Region" (e.g. Community Grants-Lower Hunter)

Please check with Hunter Local Land Services prior to submitting if you are unclear about any part of the application.

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Applicants should be aware that information submitted in applications and all related correspondence, attachments and other documents may be made publicly available under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)*. Information that is deemed to be commercially sensitive will be withheld.

The *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)* makes government information accessible to the public by:

- requiring government agencies to make certain sorts of information freely available
- encouraging government agencies to release as much other information as possible
- giving the public an enforceable right to make access applications for government information
- restricting access to information only when there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Complaints

Any concerns about the fund or individual applications should be submitted in writing to <mailto:admin.hunter@lls.nsw.gov.au>. If you do not agree with the way Hunter Local Land Services handled the issue, you may wish to contact the NSW Ombudsman via ombo.nsw.gov.au.

Ethical conduct

Applicants must not participate in any anti-competitive conduct.

It is a condition of the grant program application process that no gifts, benefits or hospitality are to be made to any department/agency employee at any time. Any inducement in contravention of this condition may result in an applicant's proposal not being considered.

Conflicts of interest

There may be a requirement for a conflict of interest declaration to be submitted with all proposals or in the application form.

Where a conflict-of-interest detrimental to the assessment process is identified, mitigation measures must be put in place, or an individual may be asked not to participate in the application, assessment or delivery stage of the process.

Confidentiality

Funding decisions and assessment outcomes must be kept confidential until announced by the NSW Government. Successful applicants will be required to provide a confidentiality undertaking. This means they must keep the outcome of the application process confidential until the NSW Government makes a public announcement.

Upon entering into a funding deed, details about the funding deed may be made publicly available (subject to information which Hunter Local Land Services deems to be commercial in confidence)

The applicant agrees not to disclose any confidential information pertaining to the grant program application or funding deed without prior written consent of Hunter Local Land Services.

Department rights

Hunter Local Land Services may, in its absolute discretion, and without limiting any other right which Hunter Local Land Services may have, do all or any of the following at any time without giving notice or reasons:

- require additional information from an applicant
- change any of the requirements of these guidelines
- alter or vary any process, procedure or timing related to the grant opportunity, including any process, procedure or timing regarding the consideration or the evaluation of any proposal or all applications
- suspend or terminate the grant opportunity
- negotiate with one or more preferred applicants without prior notice to any other applicant
- terminate any negotiations being conducted with any applicant
- readvertise for new applicants
- consider any non-conforming application
- terminate further participation in the grant opportunity by any applicant for any reason (including if Hunter Local Land Services reasonably considers an application to contain any false or misleading claims or statements)
- not proceed with any funding deed, or
- proceed with a funding deed in ways not contemplated in these guidelines.

Intellectual property

All intellectual property rights in these guidelines remain the property of Hunter Local Land Services. Applicants are permitted to use these guidelines for the purpose of preparing an application only. Applicants must not use these guidelines, or any information contained in these guidelines for any other purpose.

Applications submitted in response to these guidelines remain the property of the applicant, unless otherwise agreed between the applicant and Hunter Local Land Services. The applicant agrees that Hunter Local Land Services may make copies and reproduce applications for any purpose related to the grant opportunity. In addition, Hunter Local Land Services will retain (electronic and hard) copies of all applications.

No offer

These guidelines are not an offer, recommendation or invitation by Hunter Local Land Services in respect of any contract or commitment and, subject to a funding deed being fully executed by the parties to it, nothing in these guidelines will form the basis of any contract or commitment.

Addenda

Hunter Local Land Services may, in its absolute discretion, issue an addendum to these guidelines. In each case, an addendum becomes part of these guidelines.

Disclaimer

Hunter Local Land Services does not guarantee or warrant and accepts no legal liability whatsoever arising from or connected to, the accuracy, reliability, currency or completeness of any material contained in this publication. Information in this publication is provided as general information only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from a qualified professional.

Hunter Local Land Services recommends that users exercise care and use their own skill and judgment in using information from this publication and that users carefully evaluate the accuracy, currency, completeness, and relevance of such information. Users should take steps to independently verify the information in this publication and, where appropriate, seek professional advice.

These Guidelines are subject to change at any time at the sole discretion of Hunter Local Land Services.
© State of New South Wales through Regional NSW 2022. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing November 2022. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Regional NSW or the user's independent adviser.