

ROUND 2

STRONG & RESILIENT COMMUNITIES (SARC) *grant program*

APPLICATION GUIDELINES



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



Australian
Neighbourhood Houses
and Centres Association

PROGRAM AIM

This grant program provides **Neighbourhood and Community Houses and Centres** (NCHCs) with the opportunity to access up to \$15,000 (GST exclusive) to support the social and economic participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged people in their local communities within a 6-month period.

By enabling NCHCs to develop or expand locally tailored initiatives, the program supports pathways to self-reliance, wellbeing, and long-term engagement in education, employment, and community life.

THE FOCUS

Support **young people aged 12–18** who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging from school, employment or training.

1

Support **people with disability** to increase independence and participation in their community.

2

Support **unemployed individuals** to build skills, networks and pathways to employment or education.

3

Support **vulnerable and disadvantaged women**, including those experiencing social isolation or discrimination, to strengthen self-agency and engage in the community or economy.

4

This grant program is funded by the Department of Social Services and falls under the Australian Government's Strong and Resilient Communities – Inclusive Communities initiative and contributes to the objectives of Program 2.1 – Families and Communities.



FUNDING



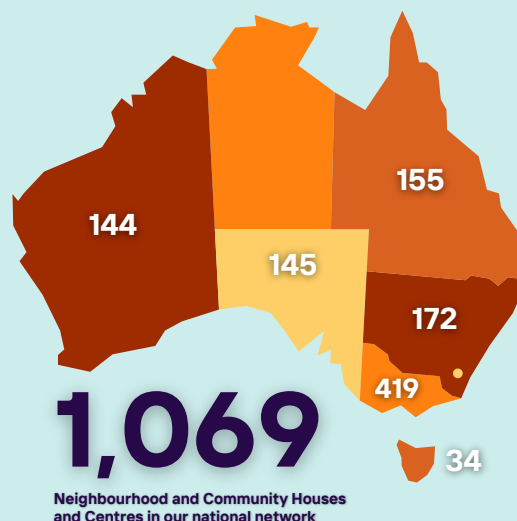
NCHCs can apply for

\$15,000 (GST Exclusive)

as a once-off payment for a project

All projects undertaken through this grant program will need to be completed within 6 months from the date they commenced.

This grant program will seek to achieve **national coverage** across the total grant pool. As such, targets are set for the proportion of funding that will be allocated in each state per round.



TIMELINE

There will be 2 rounds of the grant program in 2025/26 financial year. These rounds will be delivered within the following time-frames:

ROUND 2

Applications open:

Monday 3 November 2025

Applications close:

Monday 1 December 2025

Applicants notified of outcomes:

from Tuesday 7 January 2026

Progress Acquittal:

issued March 2026, *due 3 weeks later*

Final Acquittal:

issued June 2026, *due 3 weeks later*

WHO CAN APPLY

1

Neighbourhood and Community Houses and Centres need to be a member of their state peak body which is a member of the national peak body ANHCA. If you are unsure, contact the state peak body.

Community Centres South Australia (08) 8371 4622
communitycentressa.asn.au

Linkwest Western Australia
(08) 6164 9823
linkwest.asn.au

Local Community Services Association (NSW)
(02) 9660 2044
lcsansw.org.au

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania
(03) 6244 1615
nht.org.au

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria
(03) 9602 1228
nhvic.org.au

Neighbourhood Centres Queensland
info@ncq.org.au
ncq.org.au

2

Only one submission will be considered per Neighbourhood or Community House or Centre in each round.

In the case of organisations that manage multiple Centres, one application will be accepted from each separate House or Centre.

3

There is **no population limit** for this grant - NCHCs in towns or communities of any size are eligible.

Applicants must be willing to collect participant data (refer to Data Collection, page 9). The aim is to demonstrate how your project will help participants become more connected, resilient, skilled, and independent. ANHCA will provide survey forms to help grantees meet this reporting requirement, but applicants must be committed to collecting this data as part of their project delivery.

ELIGIBILITY OF PROJECTS

Eligible projects will deliver group or individual services designed to improve participant wellbeing, social connection, resilience, independence, and life skills to the target cohorts outlined on page 2.

While funding for existing programs is out of scope, if you have demonstrated success with your program and wish to further develop or extend your program to meet the changing needs of the community, this may be considered if you address what is new or different about the program.

You can apply for funding to cover costs associated with delivering projects which can include (and is not limited to):

- Wages for the staff required to deliver the project
- Equipment hire or purchase costs
- Hall hire costs for off site facilities
- Community training costs

These costs should **relate to activities that support the social and economic participation of your target cohort**, such as:

- cultural workshops
- social engagement activities
- vocational training and skills development
- connecting with existing support services
- group workshops
- self-empowerment activities
- opportunities for social and economic participation
- activities that support independence and self-reliance
- work-readiness or educational tailored workshops
- support social and community engagement
- promote wellbeing
- community events
- one-on-one mentoring



If you are unsure whether something will be eligible for funding please call: Jarrah Kelly on 0428 964 817 or email jarrah@anhca.org

WHAT CAN'T BE FUNDED

The following are not eligible for funding under this grant program:

- Projects that do not align with the program's focus on supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable Australians.
- Ongoing projects with no changes.
- Capital works
- Activities that do not include a clear plan for measuring and reporting outcomes, or that rely heavily on anonymous or unidentified participation (where more than 30% of participants cannot be identified), will not be eligible.
- Funding for general organisational operating costs not directly related to the proposed project (e.g. rent, regular wages, utilities etc.) or capital works (building renovation or extension), large equipment purchases or refurbishment of buildings (e.g. painting new walls, fixing broken windows etc.).
- Duplication of services already delivered through other Commonwealth, state or territory programs. To be considered eligible, projects must complement or extend existing services, be locally designed, and demonstrate a clear point of difference or unmet need. Such as:
 - Running a job readiness program that mirrors activities already delivered locally through Workforce Australia, ParentsNext, or employment service providers, unless the project is filling a clear gap or targeting a specific cohort (e.g., women with disability in culturally diverse communities) with demonstrated unmet needs.
 - Delivering mental health counselling that is already offered through state-funded community health services, unless the activity clearly addresses a service gap (e.g., culturally appropriate support or peer-led sessions).
 - Offering English language classes where AMEP (Adult Migrant English Program) is already accessible in the community—unless your program specifically targets an excluded or disengaged group through tailored delivery methods.

Please note - If your application is for a project or program that will involve working with children and young people, you will need to make a declaration that you are compliant with National Child Safety Standards. Information about the different checks required in each state can be found at: [acic.gov.au/our-services/national-police-checking-service/find-out-more-information/working-children-checks](https://www.acic.gov.au/our-services/national-police-checking-service/find-out-more-information/working-children-checks)

PARTNERSHIPS

Neighbourhood or Community House or Centre can apply for this grant in partnership with other local Community groups, as long as the following criteria is met:

- The Neighbourhood or Community House or Centre will take the lead role. This will involve being the main contact for the project/program.
- They will also take on the financial and legal responsibility for the duration of the project/program.
- There will need to be evidence provided in the application form outlining the partnership arrangements. This will include clearly defining the roles of both partners and their contribution.
- There will need to be a letter of support provided by the community organisation outlining their commitment to the project/program.



CRITERIA

Applicants will be scored and ranked by the assessment panel based on the overall assessment against the following program criteria. Please refer to the assessment rubric as it outlines the key criteria that the assessment panel will use to evaluate all submissions, including what strong responses typically demonstrate.

Applications will be scored and ranked by the assessment panel based on the overall assessment against the following program criteria:

- Understanding the Needs of the Target Cohort
- Capacity to Deliver and Measure Outcomes
- Impact and Community Benefit

[DOWNLOAD THE ASSESSMENT RUBRIC](#)

1 Understanding the Needs of the Target Cohort

- Applicant demonstrates a strong understanding of the challenges faced by the program's priority cohorts (e.g. people with disability, young people, women experiencing disadvantage, or people experiencing unemployment).
- The application includes relevant anecdotal evidence, data, or community consultation outcomes to support the identified need.
- The project clearly responds to the social and economic participation barriers identified within the local community.

2 Capacity to Deliver and Measure Outcomes

- The application clearly outlines how the project will be implemented, including timelines, activities, and roles.
- The project demonstrates alignment with the objectives of the SARC Inclusive Communities program and includes strategies to engage target cohorts effectively.
- The applicant has the experience, partnerships and/or systems required to deliver the project and meet reporting requirements (including participation data collection).
- The budget is detailed, reasonable, and aligned with the project plan.

3 Impact and Community Benefit

- The project is likely to result in measurable improvements in social and/or economic participation for one or more priority cohorts.
- The benefits of the project are clearly defined and sustainable beyond the grant period where possible.
- The applicant outlines how they will capture participant data using the survey provided by ANHCA.
- The project builds community connection, inclusion, and resilience at a local level and the applicant is able to report on the impact.



DATA COLLECTION

Funded organisations under the SARC grant are required to collect basic participant data to help the DSS better understand who is accessing these programs and to inform broader policy development.

This data includes:

- Age range
- Gender
- Indigenous status
- Cultural and linguistic background
- Disability status
- Suburb, state/territory and postcode

*This information will be submitted through the **Department of Social Services' Data Exchange (DEX)** reporting system, that generates anonymous identifier numbers. All participant information is protected by the Privacy Act 1988 to protect participant privacy. No personal names or contact information are stored by ANHCA or DSS.*

How is data submitted?

- **ANHCA will provide an online data collection survey** to be completed for each participant when they first engage with the program.
- A PDF version of the form will also be provided to print for participants who cannot complete the form online.
- If a manual (PDF) form is used, the project manager or staff member must later enter the details into the online form. This should only take a few minutes per participant, as only basic demographic information is required (see sample form for reference).
- **Data should be collected and entered on an ongoing basis** throughout the project to avoid a backlog. Reminders will be sent by ANHCA when your progress and final acquittals are due, to ensure all participant data is up to date.
- ANHCA will collate and upload the participant data to the DSS Data Exchange (DEX) on your behalf.
- The DEX system **will automatically de-identify the data**, ensuring participants' personal information is protected and cannot be accessed.

ASSESSMENT

1 Eligibility Check

Once the applications are received, they will be checked for eligibility and all eligible applications will be referred to an Evaluation panel for assessment

2 Assessment

This panel will consist of 3 representatives from ANHCA and / or our State Peak Bodies (this may include Board Members, Member Representatives or staff). Once the grant round closes, there will be approximately 4 weeks for the panel to meet, evaluate the applications and finalise the allocations.

3 Notification

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their grant applications once the panel has concluded with their assessments. If successful, applicants will receive a funding agreement to be signed and returned to receive payment. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email as soon as possible following the assessment process.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS



All successful applicants will be required to complete an online progress acquittal at the halfway point of their project, and a final acquittal upon completion.

These reports are an important part of ANHCA's grant accountability process, helping us understand how your project is progressing, any challenges you've faced, and the overall outcomes achieved. They should only take 20 minutes to complete. Each acquittal will ask questions about your project delivery, how participants were engaged, and any key learnings or reflections.

HOW TO APPLY

- 1** Review the **Guidelines** – confirm your project aligns with the grant purpose and target cohort.
- 2** Attend the **Info Session** – Wed 12 Nov 1PM AEDT.
- 3** Consult Your **Community** – gather feedback from potential participants; get written support if possible.
- 4** Engage **Partners** (if relevant) – confirm their role and support.
- 5** **Preview the Application Form** – download and review.
- 6** Draft **Offline** First – although you can now save online, we recommend preparing answers in Word first.
- 7** Use the **Assessment Rubric** – tailor your responses to score highly.
- 8** Review the **Budget Template**.
- 9** **Proofread** and Seek **Feedback** – have someone else review before submitting.

[**Click here to apply!**](#)

SUPPORT

If you have any questions regarding a project idea or an application, Jarrah will be available throughout the year.

Call on 0428 964 817 or email jarrah@anhca.org

Round 2 information session held on **Wednesday, 12th November at 1PM AEST.**

[**Info Session | Register Here**](#)