



# Winning the Grant

## Mastering Event and Grant Applications

Richard Everson  
General Manager  
Destination Southern  
Wednesday, 25 March 2026





# Let's Get Started





# Acknowledgement of Country

Destination Southern acknowledges the many Aboriginal Nations and Aboriginal People of the Southern NSW region as the traditional carers and custodians of the land that we all now live and work on.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present.



<https://dsnsw.com.au/about-us/>

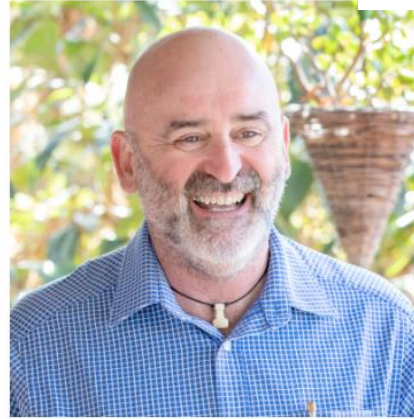
# Winning the Grant



Katina Koloff  
Chair



Sarah McDougall  
Director



Olivier Kapetanakos  
Director



Jenny Robb  
Industry Development Manager  
South Coast and Snowies



Tash Maguire  
Communications Manager



Ian Stazicker  
Director | Secretary



Yasmin Coe  
Director



Richard Everson  
General Manager



Jessica Bryden  
Industry Development Manager  
Southern Tablelands





# The Role of Destination Southern

## Strategy

VES2035

DMP > Regional VES2035

## Advocacy & Coordination

Advocate on behalf of industry

Share information and opportunities

## Capacity Building

Sector-wide projects – cruise, MTB, rail trails

## Capability Building

One-on-one and group engagement with operators



Southern New South Wales  
Destination Management Plan

2022-2030



# The Role of Destination Southern

## Myth Busting

***“Destination Southern NSW is a part of Destination NSW”***

We work closely with Destination NSW, but we are an independent organisation

***“Why don’t you promote the region?”***

We are funded to work with the tourism sector (B2B), we don’t promote the region (B2C). That’s the role of the LGAs, RTOs, and Destination NSW





# Your Presenter Richard Everson

## Applicant

- ATDP Country Guesthouse Schonegg
- ATDP Poachers Way
- Entrepreneurs Program Business Growth Grants

## Destination Southern NSW Projects

- Southern Tablelands Trails Project
- Southern Tablelands Signage Strategy
- Regional NSW Cruise Industry
- South Coast Centre of Excellence (with DSSS)

## Advocate

- Letters of Support for Applicants
- Review draft applications
- Assessment/feedback



# Regional Events Fund 2025

REF Stream	Successful Applicants	Grants Value	Total Applications	Strike Rate	Target
Flagship Event	8	160,000	31	29%	
Incubator Event	2	40,000	28	7%	
Event Development Stream	2	78,000	3	67%	
Total	12	278,000	62	19%	14%



# Outline of Content

Why do grants exist

When to apply

When to begin an application

What the ideal applicant looks like

How to answer the question

Types of question

Letters of support

Resources

REF 2026

Q & A



# Objectives

- Understand key concepts
- Answer your questions via Q & A
- Approach your next application with a fresh perspective

Copy of slides will be available

Recording of presentation will be available



# Why Do Grants Exist?



See the grant from the grant funder's point of view

They have a mission, and strategic objectives they are trying to achieve



# Why Do Grants Exist?

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The grant funding organisation isn't interested in how important your event or project is to you, just how well it meets the program objectives

It's a question of perspective



# Why Do Grants Exist?

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## Destination NSW

## Regional Event Fund

The Regional Event Fund provides grants to events in regional NSW that have demonstrated they are, or have the potential to become, tourism drivers for their region.



Image credit David Rogers Photography



# Why Do Grants Exist?

## Destination NSW

### Regional Event Fund

Directly contribute to achieving NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 targets, by aligning with the following Strategic Pillars:

- Drive Growth through Events – Supporting a robust calendar of cultural and sporting events that attract year-round visitation and drive regional dispersal of visitors.
- Focus on Experiences – Enhancing immersive and culturally rich offerings that showcase NSW's unique landscapes and produce.



Image credit David Rogers Photography

# Why Do Grants Exist?

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## Destination NSW

## Regional Event Fund

*Ultimately*, the funding program aims to increase visitation to regional events and increase economic benefit to destinations.



Image credit David Rogers Photography

# Why Do Grants Exist?

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To help an organisation fulfil its operational objectives

Recipients of the Regional Event Fund Flagship Event stream 2024/25

Event name	Organisation name
A Little Bit of Broke	Broke Fordwich Wine & Tourism Association Incorporated
Australian Alpine Ascent (Triple AAA)	Elite Energy Pty Ltd
Australian Surf Championships - Shortboard, Bodyboard & Para	Surfing Australia
Bathurst Heritage Trades Trail	Regional Council
Casino Truck Show	City Council
Cementa Festival	
EAT Festival	

Recipients of the Regional Event Fund Incubator Event stream 2024/25

Event name	Organisation name
Beatlesfest	Living Eyes Pty Ltd
Brews & Blues	Badlands Brewery Pty Ltd
Buangla Music & Arts Festival	ORDINARY GROUP PTY LTD
Bundanoon Folk Festival	Bundanoon Folk Festival Association Inc.
Clearly Presents 'Land of Milk & Honey'	KIAMA MUSIC & ARTS PTY LTD
Cobar Grey Mardi Gra	Cobar Shire Council
Dark Sky Festival - Lord Howe Island	Danielle Nicolson T/A Love Lord Howe
Dine in the Bines	Ryefield Enterprises Pty Ltd
Heartbeat of the Hunter	Total Field Days Association
Illuminate 2025	Port Stephens Council
International Women's Day Event Series	R Saunders Pty Ltd
Let's Surf Lake Mac Pro Junior	Vintcorp Pty Limited
MAKE GOOD Festival	Bundanon Trust
National Freestyle Mountain Bike Championships	Greenvalleys Mountain Bike Club
Naturellement	we are neighbourgood
OpenField Arts Festival	OpenField Arts Festival Inc.
Orange Rainbow Festival	Orange City Council
	For Wild Places Foundation Limited

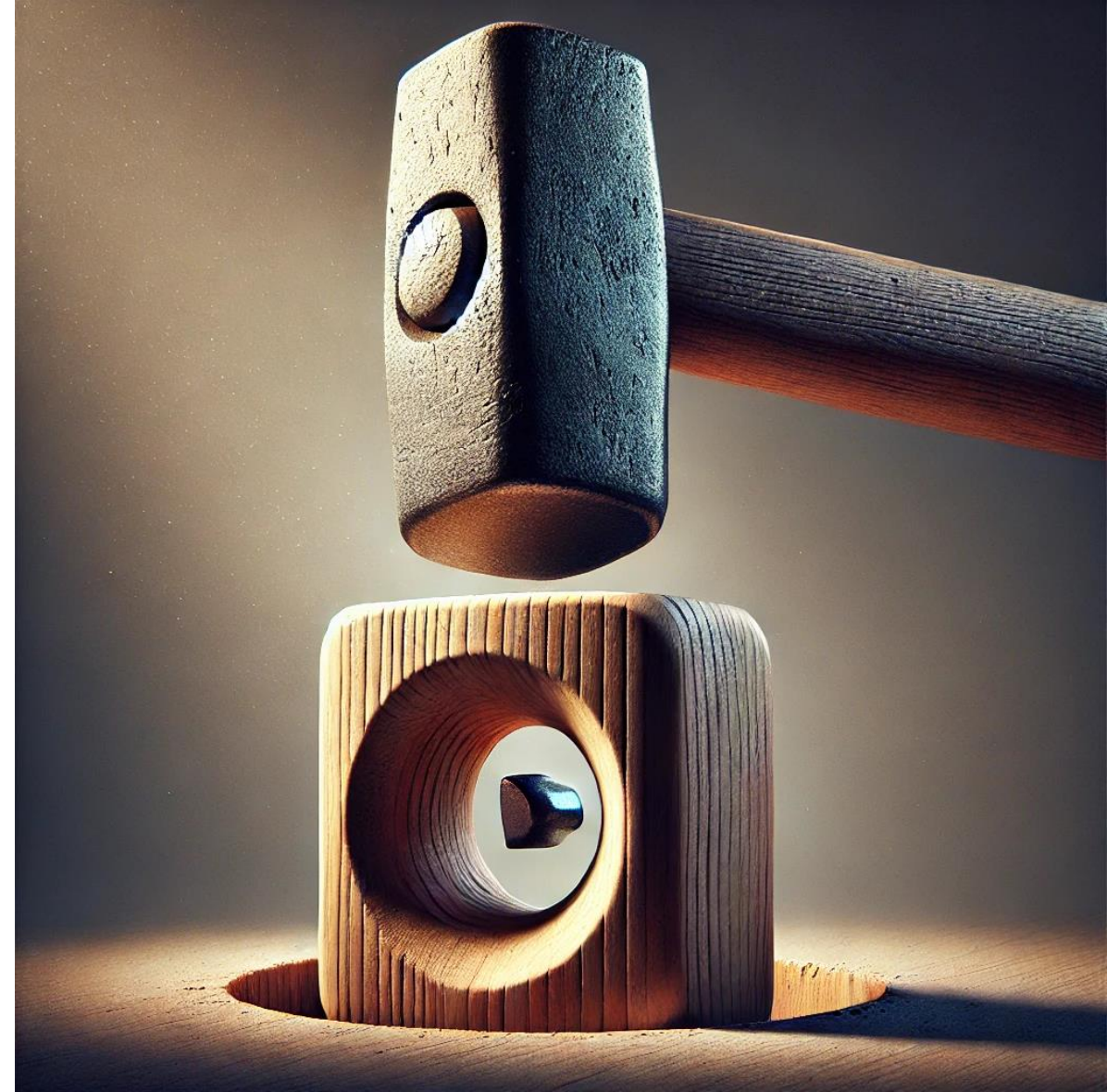
Image credit Hilltops Council

# When to Apply

## When your Project and the Grant Align

You have 0% chance of success if your project does not match the program guidelines > 95 %

There are no exceptions for mandatory criteria.



# When to Apply

## When An Opportunity Arises

If you are working on a project, an ‘opportunistic grant’ can help you along the way

In this situation, consider the grant a ‘bonus’



# When to Apply

## When the ROI calculation Adds Up

- Time / Opportunity cost



# When to Apply

## When the ROI calculation Adds Up

- Time / Opportunity cost
- Cost – wages, consultants



# When to Apply

## When the ROI calculation Adds Up

- Time / Opportunity cost
- Cost – wages, consultants
- Social capital – impact on:  
staff,  
relationships,  
reputation





# When to Apply

## When the Odds are in Your Favour

It's true that many recent grant rounds have been heavily over-subscribed.

It's also true some grants struggle to secure sufficient applications, including some smaller, lesser-known programs (hint, this may be why deadlines are extended).



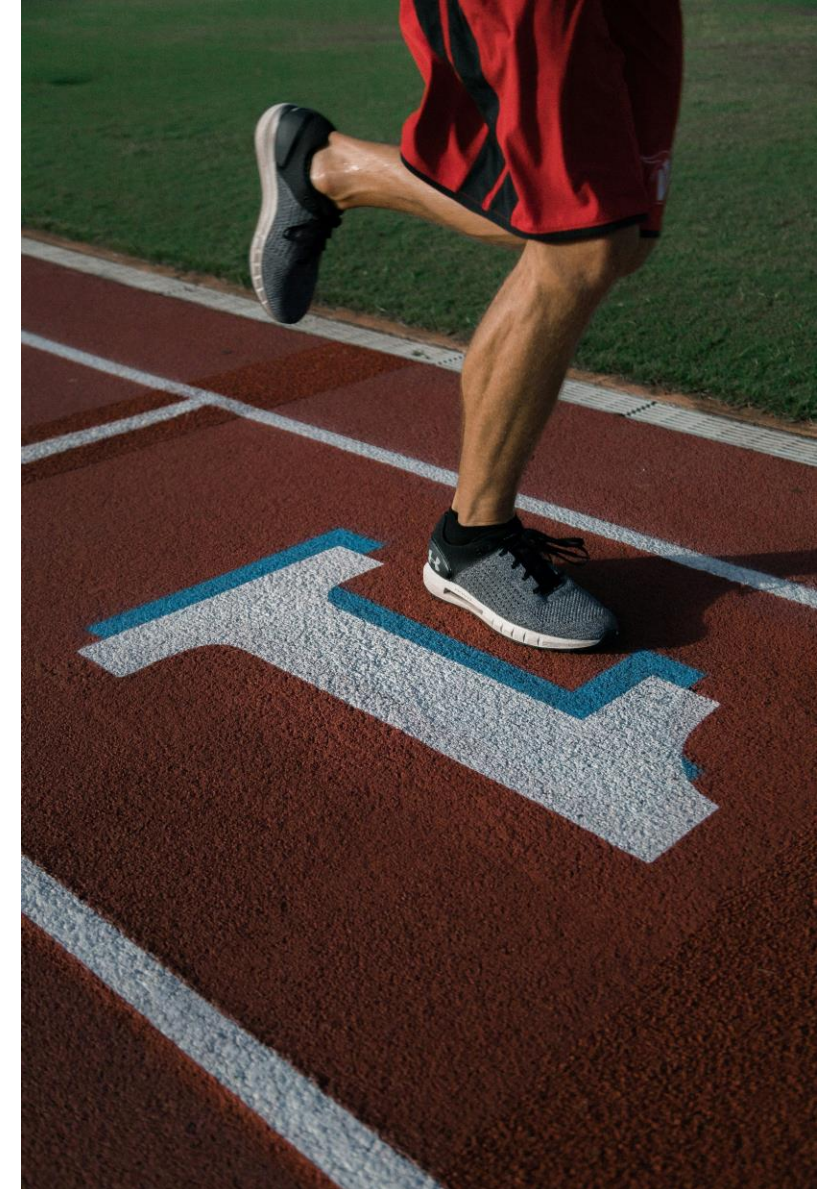
# When to Apply

## **Apply to Improve your Grant Writing Skills**

Treat the process like training for the Olympics.

You won't win if you don't enter.

You will probably need some experience before you have the skills to win.



# When to Apply

## Apply to Become a ‘Serial Winner’

Once you win, you could join the ranks of ‘serial winners’

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# When to Apply

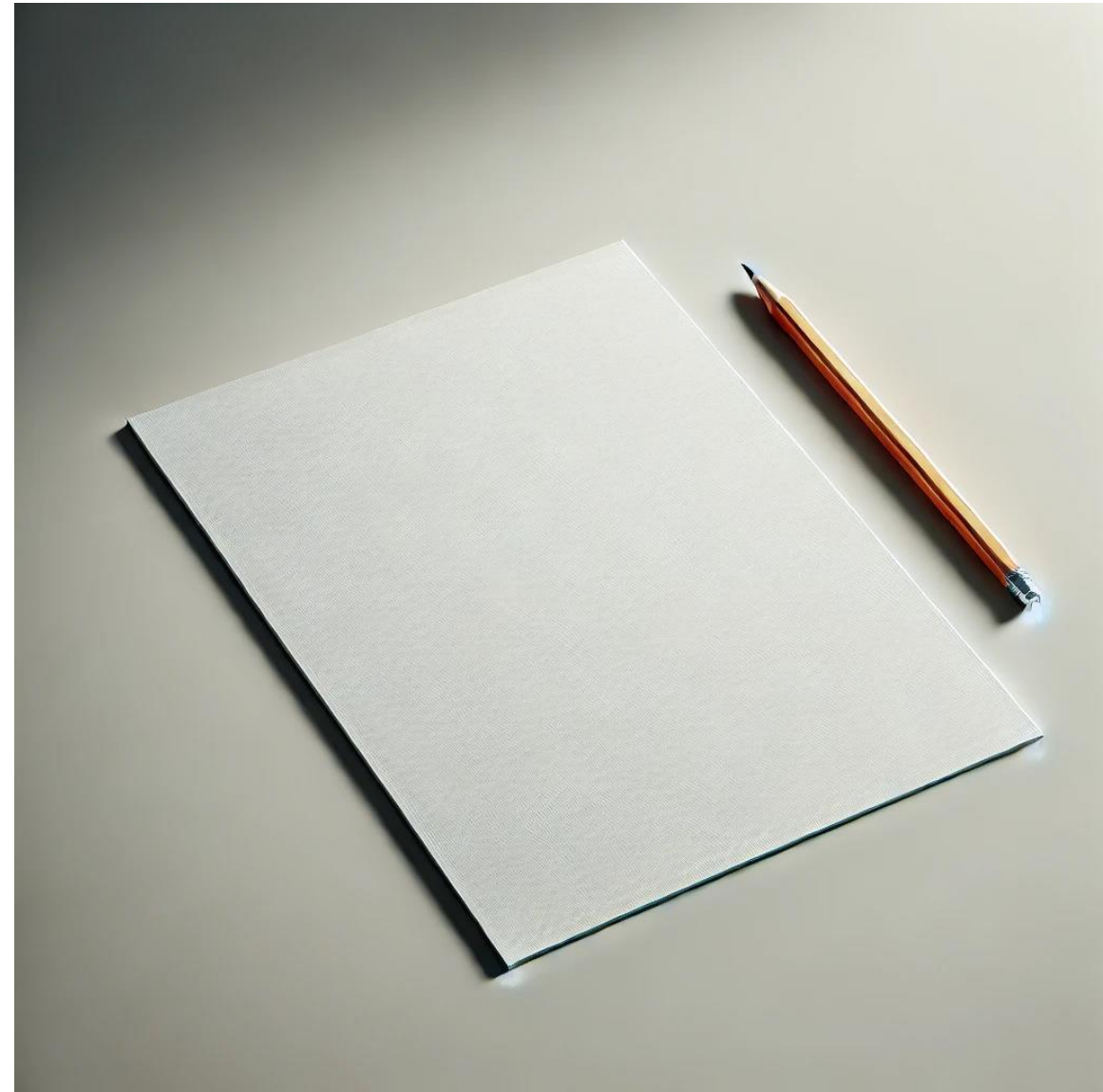
1. When you have > 95% alignment
2. When a grant aligns with an existing project
3. When you're ready to get 'match fit'

Image credit Annie Spratt, Upsplash



# When to Begin an Application

You won't succeed if you start with a blank sheet of paper on Day 1



# When to Begin an Application

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## Shovel Ready Projects

Successful applicants have shovel ready projects in their top drawer.



# When to Begin an Application

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## Start Today

Remember the Olympics analogy –  
start training today



# What the Ideal Applicant Looks Like

## Making the First Cut

Picture the stereotypical grey haired, grey suited, bureaucrat, sitting in their office with a huge checklist and a sharp pencil.

To be considered, you need them to tick every box.

With a pile of 80 applications, they are looking for the first chance to put your application in the 'non-compliant' pile and move on.



# What the Ideal Applicant Looks Like

## Making the First Cut

The 'grey haired bureaucrat' metaphor is grossly unfair. I have assessed plenty of applications, most assessors want you to succeed, but there are some go / no go gates that must be complied with.

It's a complete waste of time and effort to continue if you can't, or don't, meet a compliance threshold or answer a question properly. E.g. How many FTE? Have you contacted your DN? Know that any claims will be checked.



# What the Ideal Applicant Looks Like

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## Show them You Get It

The funding agency wants to be confident that:

- You understand what they're after,
- Your project aligns with their program objectives, and
- You have the capacity to deliver your project

Your success is their success.



# What the Ideal Applicant Looks Like

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A safe pair of hands



# How to Answer the Question

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## Engage with the Funder

Read the guidelines and all associated materials

Ask questions early

Attend info sessions

Establish a relationship



# How to Answer the Question

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## Answer from Their Perspective

Take time to understand the point of the question. Why are they asking it? What do **they** want to know? (Imagine you're answering a lecturer's exam question).

Avoid telling them what **you** want them to know.



# How to Answer the Question

How will your event attract overnight visitation, from outside the event's Local Government Area, and demonstrate that sufficient accommodation capacity exists?

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**Regional Economic Development and Community Investment Program REDCIP Application Form**  
Application No. REDCIP-0380 From Richard Everson - DRAFT

**Regional Economic Development and Community Investment Program REDCIP Application Form**  
Application No. REDCIP-0380 From Richard Everson - DRAFT

**Please confirm your organisation's entity type.**  
Company Limited by Guarantee  
If known, please describe the legal status of your organisation i.e. Company Limited by Guarantee;  
Company Limited by Shares; Incorporated Non-government; Registered Association under an Act of  
Parliament; Registered Co-operative under an Act of Parliament.

**Please enter your organisation's ACN, AIN, Association Number, or other identifying information here.**  
617 944 662

**Aboriginal owned business**  
An Aboriginal owned business under this program is defined as having a minimum of 50% Aboriginal ownership that can be demonstrated through recognition from an appropriate organisation, such as:

- NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce
- Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC)
- Supply Nation

Aboriginal owned businesses can also choose to provide a statutory declaration to demonstrate a minimum of 50% Aboriginal ownership. A statutory declaration template is available [here](#). Please note this must be signed by a Justice of the Peace, legal practitioner or notary public.

**Is your organisation an Aboriginal owned business? \***  
 Yes  No

**Co-contribution determination**  
Under the program a co-contribution is required:

- for profit entities - a minimum of 50% of the requested funding
- all other applicants - a minimum of 20% of the requested funding.

**organisation? \***

**Community Investment Program (the program) is development and support employment**  
at are aligned with the Regional  
be required to select which Key Focus

environmental change.

's shortage

encouraging  
nections.

ng an

y in

# How to Answer the Question

How will your event attract overnight visitation, from outside the event's Local Government Area, and demonstrate that sufficient accommodation capacity exists?

Your answer should be focussed on economic impact.

Overnight visitation is worth more than day visitation.

Visitation from outside the LGA is preferred, because this revenue is considered 'export income'.

You will need sufficient accommodation to achieve the economic impact anticipated.



Question relates to key objective of the REF

## **1. Economic Impact (30%)**

Destination NSW targets its investment in events that will deliver new expenditure into a region through visitation.

# How to Answer the Question



How will your event **attract overnight visitation**, from outside the event's Local Government Area, and **demonstrate** that sufficient **accommodation capacity** exists?

Use sub-headings

Repeat the question in the answer.

**Attracting overnight visitation**

**Demonstrating  
Accommodation Capacity**

# How to Answer the Question



How will your event attract overnight visitation, from outside the event's Local Government Area, and demonstrate that sufficient accommodation capacity exists?

Identify the key elements of your response

## Attracting overnight visitation

**Event programming:** Highlight any multi-day activities, evening events, or early morning starts that encourage attendees to stay overnight rather than making a day trip.

**Target audience:** Identify the specific regions or demographics you're targeting — e.g., neighbouring LGAs, major cities like Sydney, or even interstate visitors.

**Marketing strategy:** Mention how you'll use targeted marketing campaigns (social media, partnerships with travel agents, tourism websites) to attract people from outside the LGA.

## Demonstrating Accommodation Capacity

**Accommodation audit:** Reference the number of rooms available in local hotels, motels, B&Bs, or even campgrounds.

# How to Answer the Question



How will your event attract overnight visitation, from outside the event's Local Government Area, and demonstrate that sufficient accommodation capacity exists?

Include evidence / data

## Attracting overnight visitation

**Event programming:** Highlight any multi-day activities, evening events, or early morning starts that encourage attendees to stay overnight rather than making a day trip.

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## Demonstrating Accommodation Capacity

**Accommodation audit:** Reference the number of rooms available in local hotels, motels, B&Bs, or even campgrounds.

**Historical data:** If this is a recurring event, you can use past visitor numbers and accommodation data as evidence of capacity and demand.

# How to Answer the Question



How will your event attract overnight visitation, from outside the event's Local Government Area, and demonstrate that sufficient accommodation capacity exists?

Add some secret sauce

## Attracting overnight visitation

**Event programming:** Highlight any multi-day activities, evening events, or early morning starts that encourage attendees to stay overnight rather than making a day trip.

**Target audience:** Identify the specific regions or demographics you're targeting — e.g., neighbouring LGAs, major cities like Sydney, or even interstate visitors.

**Marketing strategy:** Mention how you'll use targeted marketing campaigns (social media, partnerships with travel agents, tourism websites) to attract people from outside the LGA.

## Demonstrating Accommodation Capacity

**Accommodation audit:** Reference data or insights about the number of rooms available in local hotels, motels, B&Bs, or even campgrounds.

**Historical data:** If this is a recurring event, you can use past visitor numbers and accommodation data as evidence of capacity and demand

**Partnerships:** Mention any collaborations with accommodation providers — for example, negotiated package deals or reserved room blocks.



# How to Answer the Question



How will your event attract overnight visitation, from outside the event's Local Government Area, and demonstrate that sufficient accommodation capacity exists?

## Attracting overnight visitation

**Event programming:** Our event begins on Friday and concludes on Sunday. Our 3-day VIP Pass encourages visitors to experience all 3 days, our headline acts will be performing on Sunday evening to encourage an extra night's stay.

**Target audience:** Our line-up features rising stars who are attracting national recognition within the folk music community. We aim to connect with folk music clubs and societies on the east coast of Australia who recognise and are keen to support new talent.

**Marketing strategy:** Our rising stars have strong social media followings. We will use paid and earned media to engage with fan groups. We will offer promo code discounts and direct from platform sales to encourage early ticket sales.

## Demonstrating Accommodation Capacity

**Accommodation audit:** There are 600 hotel and short-term accommodation beds available, plus 60 caravan and 60 camping sites within 50 km of the event venue.

**Partnerships:** We have blocked 80 rooms with local motel operators which will be bundled with our VIP Pass ticket sales.

# Types of Question

## **Confirmation that the applicant and project meet the guidelines**

Read the guidelines carefully

Contact the agency ASAP if you have any questions.

Upload appropriate evidence

Name files appropriately

Remember to leverage any ‘bonus points’

e.g. Preference is given to partnerships,  
Aboriginal owned business



# Types of Question



## Demonstration of capability

Provide proof that your organisation can deliver the project

- Capability statement
- Specified personnel CVs
- Business plan
- Financial statements



# Types of Question



## Project feasibility

As for 'Capability' above, provide evidence that your project will succeed.

Demonstrate that you have a solid project plan.

Get quotes. Be prepared to engage experts. Don't cut corners.

Respond like a project management professional.



# Types of Question



## Financials

Provide sufficient detail to demonstrate project feasibility

But don't tie yourself in knots by being too prescriptive...

Be aware that there may be limits to budget line variations e.g. no more than 10 % variance, give yourself some wriggle room.

Get quotes where possible, ensure your suppliers are aware what they are quoting for (i.e. not a firm commitment to purchase)



# Types of Question



## Financials

Consider all the costs associated with the project, ensure you will have sufficient funds to deliver and sustain the project

Very often, funds can't be used for ongoing operational costs.

Demonstrate that you have considered how to meet these costs.

There are many, many projects that are currently struggling to meet operational overheads.



# Types of Question



## Financials

Be aware of limits / constraints.

E.g. No more than 20% of total grant fees can be used for project administration, no more than 25% project contingencies.

Be very aware of permissible and prohibited expenditure

E.g. Sometimes funds **can** be used for admin, often funds cannot be used to purchase assets like laptops, or for insurance costs

Make sure your income and expenditure lines add up!

Some applications require a 'zero balance'



# Types of Question



## Co-Contributions

Be aware of how co-contributions are calculated. Sometimes in-kind contributions may be considered. Sometimes the co-contribution amount varies based on the type of entity applying.

You won't need to commit your co-contribution funds unless you are successful.

If you are successful, you will need to ensure you have access to the funds.

- Funds in the bank
- Confirmation of a line of credit (can be contingent on a successful application)

You will need to provide evidence that the funds are available, e.g. a letter from your organisation's Chair, bank statement etc.



# Types of Question

## Risk management

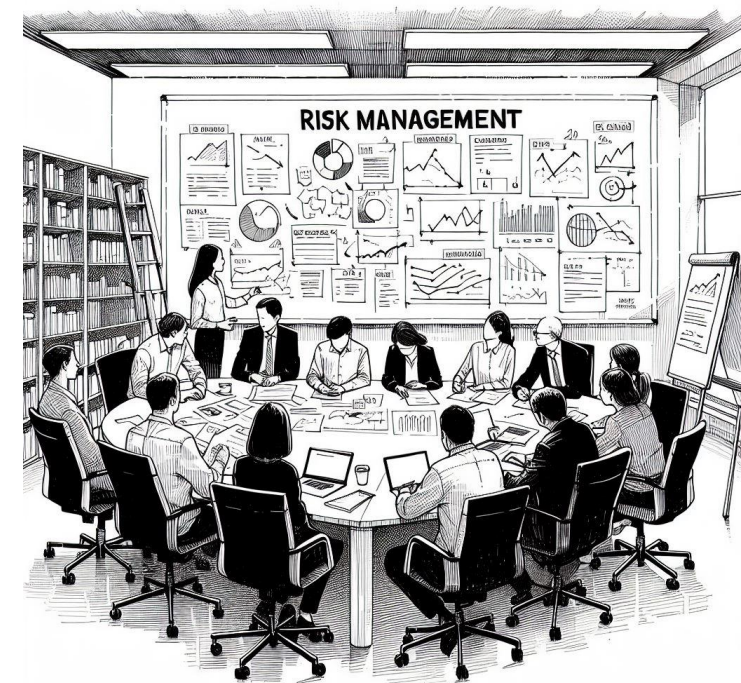
You don't need to be an expert, but you do need to demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles. Likelihood v impact = risk rating

Consider the top risks across the most common risk areas:

- Financial
- Reputational
- Operational
- Strategic
- Compliance & Legal
- Environmental & Sustainability

Identify the risk and an appropriate mitigation strategy

Remember, this is about demonstrating you're a safe pair of hands.



# Types of Question

## Marketing

As above, demonstrate you have a solid grasp of the basics, use appropriate language and respected methodologies.

- Identify target markets
- Develop compelling messages
- Identify comms channels appropriate to the target market, e.g. a young target market will use social media. An older target market may respond to an ad in a specialist travel magazine.

Identify marketing strategies that include an opportunity for evaluation and metrics (use promo codes, online platforms, collect data during the booking process)





# Types of Question

## Data collection/acquittal

This is an area that is of vital interest to the funding agency but often ignored or forgotten by the applicant.

### Data Collection

The agency has an obligation to demonstrate it has used its funds to achieve its objectives. It needs your data to do this. Demonstrate that you understand why this information is important and show how you plan to capture relevant data.

### Acquittal

You have an obligation to demonstrate you have used your funds appropriately, and done what you said you would do. You need evidence to support your acquittal, ensure data is captured and analysed.



# Letters of Support

## Why?

Demonstrate that your project

- has broad support and will be welcomed if successful
- aligns with regional economic and community priorities
- is deemed feasible by external agencies



# Letters of Support

## Who to Ask?

- Those with sectoral alignment – e.g. tourism sector, regional economic development agencies, arts and culture organisations
- Government - local, state, federal
- Those with geographic alignment – local chambers of commerce, clubs and associations, stakeholder groups, RDA SNA, DPIRD

Quality beats quantity

Quality and quantity is best



# Letters of Support

## How to Ask

Check with each agency, some have a specific process (e.g. our Letter of Support Request)

Best - provide an outline, let the agency draft their own letter, e.g.

- Para 1 - who you are,
- Para 2 - the project,
- Para 3 - alignment,
- Para 4 - endorsement

Easiest - provide a template, ask them to fill in the gaps, rephrase in their own words

Allow plenty of time, confirm receipt of your request, follow up



# Resources

Use AI

Ask for draft reviews

Pay for support



# Regional Event Fund 2026

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Show how your event supports the goals of the [NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 | Destination NSW](#)— particularly around:

Growing regional visitation

Showcasing distinctive regional experiences

Supports a balanced year-round NSW events calendar that supports local business and strengthens the resilience of the visitor economy

Promoting authentic and immersive experiences that are sustainable, inclusive and aligned with NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 visitor experience priorities, such as:

- Nature and adventure
- Culinary including local produce, food and wine
- Agritourism
- Arts, culture, and lifestyle including Aboriginal tourism
- Journeys and the promotion of road trips
- Wellness





# Q & A

Use the Q & A function



# Contact

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**Thank you, good luck**

## **Industry Development Managers**

Jenny Robb – South Coast & Snowies [jenny.robbs@dsnsw.com.au](mailto:jenny.robbs@dsnsw.com.au)

Jessica Bryden – Southern Tablelands [jessica.bryden@dsnsw.com.au](mailto:jessica.bryden@dsnsw.com.au)

## **General Manager**

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