

NSW Reconstruction Authority

# Community Resilience Grants Program Evaluation Report

---

Executive Summary

7 July 2025

*“The capacity-building funding ensured we could not only meet immediate community needs but also make significant strides toward sustainable operations, and navigating the development of stronger community engagement and partnerships that will support our organisations ongoing ability to serve the local community for years to come.” – Recipient*

Funded by: NSW Government



## Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Reconstruction Authority and For-Purpose Evaluations acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that contributed to the development of this evaluation.

We advise this resource may contain images, or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

### Community Resilience Grants Program Evaluation Report

Published by NSW Reconstruction Authority

First published: July, 2025

### Acknowledgements

For-Purpose Evaluations would like to thank the grant recipients who generously gave up their time to provide essential insights and perspectives to this report. We are grateful for their openness when discussing their experiences, challenges and successes with regards to the program. Without these people this project would not have been possible. We also extend our appreciation to the NSW Reconstruction Authority and Northern Rivers Community Foundation staff for their invaluable insights and the important work that they do for our community.

### Copyright and disclaimer

© State of New South Wales through NSW Reconstruction Authority, 2025. Information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing, May 2025, and is subject to change.

This document was commissioned by the NSW Reconstruction Authority. This material is made available by For-Purpose Evaluations on the understanding that users exercise their own skill and care with respect to its use. Any representation, statement, opinion or advice expressed or implied in this document is made in good faith. For-Purpose Evaluations is not liable to any person or entity taking or not taking action in respect of any representation, statement, opinion or advice referred to in this document. This document and all the information contained in it must not be used by any parties, other than the NSW Reconstruction Authority, without the prior written consent of For-Purpose Evaluations. Please make contact via the details below if you wish to reference this work.

For-Purpose Evaluations: [eleanor@for-purpose.org](mailto:eleanor@for-purpose.org)

NSW Reconstruction Authority: [futurebuildnr@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au](mailto:futurebuildnr@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au)

### About For-Purpose Evaluations

For-Purpose Evaluations is a social enterprise supporting for-purpose organisations and governments to create and implement social impact measurement and evaluation frameworks, and to evaluate existing programs and projects. We also provide interactive capacity building workshops on the topics of social impact measurement, theory of change, program logic models and communicating impact. We balance a robust academic approach with a pragmatic understanding of what it is really like to provide high quality supportive programs to people and communities with complex needs.

---

## Glossary

<b>Beneficiaries</b>	<p>Individuals or groups of people who experienced positive change or gain from the interventions, resources, or support provided as a part of the Community Resilience Grant Program (CRGP).</p> <p>The two primary beneficiaries of this program were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities in the Northern Rivers.</li> <li>• Community resilience grant recipients, or ‘recipients’ (the organisations who received funding through the CRGP).</li> </ul>
<b>CRGP</b>	<p>Community Resilience Grants Program. The CRGP aimed to support community-based recovery service delivery in the Northern Rivers region. The program was delivered by a third-party provider, the Northern Rivers Community Foundation (NRCF) and led by the NSW Reconstruction Authority.</p>
<b>FPE</b>	<p>For-Purpose Evaluations. FPE is the Monitoring and Evaluation partner for the CRGP. FPE worked alongside RA to support knowledge transfer whilst ensuring the evaluation approach met RA’s needs.</p>
<b>NRCF</b>	<p>Northern Rivers Community Foundation. The NRCF is a third-party provider engaged by the NSW Reconstruction Authority to deliver the CRGP.</p>
<b>Project Stakeholders</b>	<p>Internal and external project stakeholders, including the RA, the NRCF, and the subcontracted capacity building partner.</p>
<b>RA</b>	<p>The NSW Reconstruction Authority. RA is a state-wide organisation who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• drives and supports community-centred recovery, and</li> <li>• leads the changes required to reduce the impact of disasters.</li> </ul>
<b>Recipients</b>	<p>The organisations that received a grant through the CRGP.</p>

---

# Contents

<b>Glossary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>5</b>
About the Northern Rivers Community Resilience Grants Program (CRGP).....	5
About the Evaluation.....	5
Key Findings.....	6
Case Studies.....	10
Recommendations .....	14

---

## Executive Summary

The NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA) engaged For-Purpose Evaluations (FPE) to evaluate the Community Resilience Grants Program (CRGP). This evaluation was conducted between December 2024 – May 2025.

This evaluation assesses the extent to which the CRGP has achieved its intended outcomes and explores the factors which contributed to or detracted from the achievement of these outcomes. This evaluation also explores the effectiveness of the third-party grant making model in achieving program outcomes and assesses the cost-effectiveness of the program.

### About the Northern Rivers Community Resilience Grants Program (CRGP)

The Northern Rivers Community Resilience Grants Program (CRGP) supported local not-for-profit organisations to continue to provide critical services to individuals and families, and to connect communities to recovery services including community connection, housing, food, health and wellbeing and financial services, supporting the recovery of the region. The CRGP had two primary aims:

- support community-based recovery service delivery in the Northern Rivers region
- support place-based, community resilience organisations to develop their longer-term operating models.

The target group for projects funded under the CRGP were not-for-profit organisations that deliver flood recovery and/ or resilience services to support individuals, families and communities that reside in the seven Northern Rivers Local Government Areas (LGAs): Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed. The RA engaged the Northern Rivers Community Foundation (NRCF) to administer the CRGP on their behalf.

\$1,000,000 of total funding was awarded to 20 recipients to deliver projects over a 12-month period until end of 2024. The CRGP was structured to distribute the \$1,000,000 of funding evenly between small (\$20,000 - \$50,000) and large (up to \$100,000) grants. More applications were received for the large grant pool than the small grant pool. As a result, 93% (14/15) of the small grant applications were approved, while only 32% (6/19) of large grant applications were approved.

### About the Evaluation

The evaluation of the CRGP was conducted by For-Purpose Evaluations (FPE) towards the end of program between December 2024 and May 2025.

### Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)

This evaluation sought to understand:

1. How effective was the third-party grant making model in achieving program outcomes?
2. To what extent were the outcomes in the Program Logic Model achieved?
3. How cost-effective was the program in achieving improved organisational planning, preparedness and responsiveness for recipients?

The evaluation applied three complementary approaches to answer the KEQs: process, outcomes and economic evaluation.

## Data Collected

Data collection was conducted by FPE, RA, and NRCF using a mixed methods approach to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The table below outlines the number of responses collected for each data collection tool:

Data Collection Tool	Number of Respondents
Recipient Application Form	20
Recipient Progress Report	10
Recipient Acquittal Report <sup>1</sup>	20
Recipient Acquittal Survey	20 <sup>2</sup>
NRCF Progress and Acquittal Reports	5
Interviews with Recipients	8
Interviews with Project Stakeholders <sup>3</sup>	7

Table 1: Data collection responses

## Key Findings

This evaluation found that the CRGP successfully contributed to the enablement of local Northern Rivers organisations sustaining vital services and strengthening community resilience, connection and responsiveness post the 2022 floods. This was achieved despite additional disaster events occurring and ongoing challenges for the communities. The third-party grant making model was found to have enhanced program responsiveness, enabling recipient organisations to maintain core operations, reach vulnerable groups, and strengthen their strategic planning and operations.

### KEQ1: How effective was the third-party grant making model in achieving program outcomes?

The third-party grant making model was effective in delivering responsive, place-based support to communities impacted by the 2022 flood disaster. The NRCF's deep local knowledge, relative agility when compared to RA, and relational approach enabled timely allocation of funds and helped maximise the impact of a modest grant.

#### Enablers of program outcomes

A simpler and easier grant application and management process helped organisations spend more time helping their communities. This approach was particularly important for organisations with limited resources, and those managing their own disaster recovery while supporting their communities.

NRCF are embedded in their community and have a strong understanding of the local context and needs. For grant recipients, NRCF's community presence and relational approach made the process more locally driven, contextually relevant and accessible. Recipients consistently described the NRCF as friendly, approachable and easy to work with.

*“The NRCF are fabulous, they are always available to talk to. Because they are local, they are very much aware of the organisations they support. It always feels like we are dealing with someone in the community who understands what we are facing. It makes a real difference having it administered locally” – Recipient*

<sup>1</sup> Community member quotes were obtained via these reports.

<sup>2</sup> Responses were from 17 distinct recipients

<sup>3</sup> Includes staff from the RA, NRCF and the subcontracting partner to deliver the capacity building workshop

NRCF was able to move quickly, which helped make the program more effective and was seen as critical to CRGP’s success. Additionally, their previous experience in giving out grants fast also helped them deliver funds on time. This was seen as crucial in a disaster recovery context.

**Challenges of the model**

Challenges of the third-party grant making model included the perceived absence of state government in relation to administration of this grant, which was the responsibility of NRCF. There was a perceived absence of public announcements, recognition and celebration of the recipients’ efforts.

A third-party model can carry reputational risks, within the community, for the grant making partner. NRCF simultaneously navigated community need with government accountability and compliance processes. Balancing tension between community trust and government accountability presented some challenges. For example, the NRCF have historically supported community organisations with grant application processes. However, they were unable to offer this support for the CRGP due to their formal role as fund administrator.

Several interviewees identified a missed opportunity for grant makers to better utilise existing data in the grant application and assessment process. Interviewees suggested that the grant process could more effectively provide access to local and state-level data, such as recovery needs assessments, service gaps, infrastructure needs and disaster fatigue research conducted prior to the CRGP delivery. This would reduce the reliance on applicants to re-establish well-documented regional issues to demonstrate broader community need and allow applicants to focus their responses on providing more specific information about the service gaps or context for their project.

One interviewee highlighted the potential value of using existing data during the assessment process to help identify areas of greatest community vulnerability, and where projects could offer the most impact. Utilising these data to complement the evidence provided in grant applications could enable more targeted comparisons across applications and more robust funding decisions.

*“Some kind of needs assessment of those locations that were hardest hit, and overlaid with indicators of disadvantage, would have helped understand the spread of applications by geographic location - where were impacts were the greatest, where is the greatest community vulnerability, where could these proposals assist. And you would also want to understand what else is funded... it could help improve the robustness of the process.” - Project Stakeholder*

**KEQ2: To what extent were the outcomes in the Program Logic Model achieved?**

The CRGP achieved majority of the short-term and intermediate outcomes for both recipients and communities. Recipients reported increased short-term capacity to support their communities, enhanced strategic planning, improved operations and staffing, and more targeted and coordinated community engagement practices. Communities supported through the CRGP have demonstrated strengthened social connection, local responsiveness, and collective resilience; despite the challenges of ongoing disaster recovery in the region.

The tables below summarise the key findings for each outcome for recipients and communities and the extent to which they were achieved. Extent of achievement was assessed based on triangulating qualitative and quantitative data across stakeholders and data collection tools.

Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved
----------	--------------------	--------------

Recipient Outcomes	Key findings	Evidence
<b>Short-term outcomes</b>		
Recipients have increased funding security for 6-12 months	CRGP funding provided recipients with vital operational support, enabling them to continue service delivery at a time of increased demand.	Of the survey respondents, 89% said that the CRGP was important to maintain their operations for 6-12 months.
Recipients have increased capacity to support their communities	Recipients reported increased capacity to deliver services in the short-term (6-12 months).	Of the recipients surveyed, 100% reported increased capacity to support their communities as a result of the CRGP funding. However, interviewees expressed concern about the sustainability of this increased capacity without longer-term funding.  <i>“There are real concerns in terms of our sustainability, how we manage to be sustainable in an area of natural disasters. We are non-stop applying for additional funding.” – Recipient</i>
<b>Intermediate outcomes</b>		
Recipients have improved organisational and strategic planning	Achieved by majority of recipients, although not all recipients saw this as a priority for the funds.	Of the recipients surveyed, 78% reported improved organisational and strategic planning as a result of the CRGP.  Out of 20 recipients, 13 (65%) explicitly allocated funds to ‘organisational capacity building’. This is thought to be because operational and strategic planning was not seen as a priority for all recipients.
Recipients have improved ability to address unmet need in communities	Recipients provided tailored and inclusive recovery services to people most at risk of being excluded from mainstream supports.	<i>“This funding has supported [us] to continue providing regular services and to increase the capacity to reach more vulnerable persons.” – Recipient</i>
<b>Long-term outcomes</b>		
Recipients are better structured to meet the needs of the local community	Recipients enhanced their ability to be responsive to local needs through community engagement and consultation activities and collaboration with other local organisations.	Of recipients surveyed, 89% of recipients reported that the CRGP improved their ability to respond to the changing needs of their communities.

Table 2: Summary of intended outcomes for recipients and extent of achievement

Community Outcomes	Key findings	Evidence
<b>Short-term outcomes</b>		
Communities have continued access to recovery and support services	CRGP funded initiatives helped to ensure communities in the Northern Rivers had continued, in some cases strengthened, access to trusted, place-based recovery and support services.	<i>“Clients were able to continue receiving support when other services had ended. They would have been left high and dry.” – Recipient</i>
Communities have increased opportunities to come together, share knowledge and build connections	CRGP funded community events, workshops and gatherings provided community members with increased opportunities to come together, share knowledge and build skills.	<i>“Before the floods, I hardly knew anyone. Now I feel part of the community and participate in programs that have greatly improved my mental and physical health.”- Community member</i>
<b>Intermediate outcomes</b>		
Communities have improved capacity to recover after the 2022 flood disaster	CRGP funded initiatives strengthened community resilience across the Northern Rivers region. Recipients observed improvements in preparedness, self-reliance and emotional and practical recovery capacity among their communities.	Of the recipients surveyed, 100% reported improvement in the community’s capacity to recover from the 2022 flood disaster.
Communities have improved living situations	Although this was not a primary focus of majority of projects, there were examples of CRGP funded initiatives that contributed to improved living situations by meeting immediate needs and building practical skills for ongoing recovery and resilience.	<i>“Our strategic operations...created a one-stop hub for support. These essentials have been vital for flood-affected residents, particularly those who lost property or experienced reduced access to services.” - Recipient</i>
Communities have stronger connections with and between communities	CRGP funded events, workshops and gatherings strengthened community connection, supporting increased community engagement and ownership over recovery and resilience efforts.	<i>I think the long term [impact] is the community leaders knowing they can support community through [disaster] events, and they have developed partnerships that will last a lifetime to continue supports in that community.”- Recipient</i>
Communities feel supported in their recovery after 2022 flood disaster	While recipients reported strong appreciation for the support delivered through CRGP-funded initiatives and community efforts, the overall community sentiment about recovery was mixed.	<i>“It’s also the length of time that recovery takes - there’s not a strong enough correlation between the acknowledgement of how impactful the disaster was with the provision of ongoing support.” - Recipient</i>

Table 3: Summary of intended outcomes for communities and extent of achievement

**KEQ3: How cost-effective was the program in achieving improved organisational and strategic planning, preparedness, and responsiveness for recipients?**

Within the program guidelines up to 25% of the grant could be allocated to ‘organisational capacity building’. These funds could be used for strategic planning; development of longer-term operating models and/or governance supports; and/or, core operational costs and overheads directly related to service delivery, for example, vehicle hire. Out of 20 recipients, 13 (65%) explicitly allocated funds

to ‘organisational capacity building’. This is thought to be because operational and strategic planning was not seen as a priority for all recipients.

The Cost Effectiveness Analysis (CEA) found that the total absolute cost of ‘organisational capacity building’ which included improving organisational planning, preparedness and responsiveness was \$154,940.19. This equates to an absolute cost of \$11,918.48 per recipient who demonstrated improved capacity (n=13), or \$12,554.53 when averaged across all 20 recipients. Although no appropriate comparison case was available, the extent of achievement in this outcome suggests this was a worthwhile investment. This figure provides a benchmark for future economic evaluations of comparable programs.

On average, recipients allocated only 19% of their grant towards internal capacity building, below the 25% permitted. Further, only 13% of total program budget was used for this purpose, yet recipients achieved strong outcomes in this area. This indicates that a relatively modest investment (13%-19%) can yield substantial organisational improvement, particularly for emerging resilience organisations. This figure can inform future program design and budgeting for internal capacity-building allocations in similar grant making contexts.

Importantly, this CEA did not attempt to quantify the social or long-term organisational value of these outcomes. Nor does it include the unquantified outcomes of the program. These outcomes detailed in this evaluation are significant and indicate the CRGP was a worthwhile investment to support disaster-impacted communities.

## Case Studies

The following case studies were identified through the evaluation interviews as exemplar projects to demonstrate the impact of the CRGP.

### Context

Wardell Community Organised Resilience Effort Inc. (Wardell CORE) was formed in response to the 2022 Northern Rivers flood disaster, which severely impacted the town of Wardell. Filling the gap left by formal services, Wardell CORE emerged as a trusted local organisation, providing essential support including material aid, wellbeing programs, crisis case management, and a range of community events.

*“We were the place people came to. It wasn’t planned. It just became obvious that the community needed somewhere to land, and we became that... Everything was gone – no housing, no shops, no support. We didn’t set out to be a hub. We just stayed open when everything else shut.”*

### Why was the CRGP grant needed?

Post 2022 floods, Wardell CORE was operating in a challenging environment – many families were unable to meet their basic needs, community trauma and distress were widespread, and formal supports were limited. Wardell CORE was struggling to meet high levels of community need and relied heavily on volunteers and short-term project funding, with no access to sustainable resourcing for coordination or operations. The CRGP funds enabled Wardell CORE to retain key staff, who facilitated the delivery of responsive essential services, strengthened organisational systems, and laid the groundwork for becoming a formally recognised Neighbourhood Centre.

*“The primary [use of CRGP funds] was the two roles of Operations Manager and General Manager... Without those roles funded, we wouldn’t have had the operational capacity to complete all those activities we did. This grant is the only one out there with the ability to fund operational costs for wages... it was fundamental to our success.”*

### What changed as a result of the CRGP grant?

The CRGP enabled Wardell CORE to take a strategic leap towards long-term sustainability. They completed their Strategic Plan and Business Strategy, outlining both a clear organisational vision and direction and a targeted approach to diversify revenue streams through models of social enterprise, venue hire and workshops. They also strengthened their governance structure by expanding the Community Advisory Committee, implementing community consultation practices, and strengthening volunteer engagement.

*“This capacity-building funding ensured we could not only meet immediate community needs but also make significant strides toward sustainable operations and navigate the development of stronger community engagement and partnerships. These will support our organisation’s ongoing ability to serve the Wardell community for years to come.”*

This strategic foundation has allowed Wardell CORE to deliver and scale a range of vital services that directly meet community needs. One key impact area is mental health support, with consistent, trauma-informed care being provided 6 days a week. In 2024, Wardell CORE delivered 1,395 one-on-one mental health appointments and nearly 1,000 informal counselling sessions. Wardell’s Wellbeing Programs, which offer group-based healing activities, have become a vital element of recovery within the community.

*“Community connection has healed my mental health concerns better than any medications or therapies have. It gives a sense of purpose, and giving back to the others feels amazing.” - Participant quote, 2024 Annual Report*

Wardell CORE demonstrates how investment in strategic planning can support place-based organisations to sustainably meet community recovery needs. The CRGP funding enabled a shift towards a more sustainable service delivery model and helped position Wardell CORE as a critical piece social infrastructure for recovery and resilience.

*“The biggest change is that we’re seen as infrastructure now. We’re not just responding – we’re a central part of recovery planning and wellbeing in this town.”*



Photo 1: Wardell CORE team of volunteers

## Case Study: Resilient Uki (RUKI): Stronger Together

### Context

Resilient Uki (RUKI) is a grassroots, community-led organisation established in response to the 2022 Northern Rivers flood disaster. The 2022 events exposed both the physical and social vulnerabilities of the Uki area, disconnecting neighbours from one another and cutting the community off from critical support.

*"The floods hit us hard and for some of the time we were isolated, with no power, no mobile reception and a lot of road damage. It was people within our community who helped with the initial response – not the services – and this isn't the first time that's happened. That's what made us realise we needed something local, something embedded to be more coordinated in future disasters."*

During this time, RUKI identified two urgent needs in their community – access to practical recovery tools, and stronger local networks that could function independently in times of crisis.

*"The Uki Flood Group started a process of connecting isolated areas in and close to Uki Village back in 2014 and we decided to build that capacity to the 3,000 people in Uki and surrounding communities, to look after each other and themselves. There are times we are isolated so we need to enable our community with the knowledge, resources and power to do the work that needs to be done."*

### Why was the CRGP grant needed?

RUKI is comprised of local residents with no formal background in disaster resilience or emergency management. Accessing support to develop an organisational strategy was crucial to sustaining and strengthening their operations.

*"As regular humans who haven't been involved in resilience work, communications or resource management before this role, that was a big task... This grant helped us put systems in place – both physical and administrative – to manage recovery resources and share vital information."*

With enhanced organisational capacity and essential systems in place, RUKI established a central presence in Uki village. The team set up shipping containers, a resource loan system, a gathering trailer and analogue communication systems. These recovery assets were designed to provide neighbours with opportunities to connect and skill-share through informal gatherings and coordinated working bees.

*"The resources and gathering trailer allowed us to build social capital, and in disaster situations, they have allowed us to reach out for help when needed, and to stay connected and help each other."*

### What changed as a result of the CRGP grant?

RUKI's approach to recovery and resilience has transformed community dynamics in the region. Informal gatherings evolved into organised neighbourhood groups, and residents now feel a sense of collective identity as they prepare for future disasters together.

*"The biggest change is having a sense of community. We now have designated neighbourhoods. We have Christmas parties, get-togethers, education sessions, and a number of networks that allow us to be more connected. We never had this on this scale before, and [there wasn't] even the idea of a 'Greater Uki'; it was just disconnected areas. Now, we feel a sense of greater connection to one another."*

In early 2025, ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred tested RUKI's preparedness systems, which were successful in mobilising the community and coordinating local response. RUKI's community feedback survey shows that residents feel safer, more connected and better prepared.

*"We were able to run through our systems... The preparation and response scenarios which were put through their paces worked. We had resources for the community to access as needed, and to support the evacuation centre (and a basic system for registering what was being used where). We were ready to go with radio check-ins when power and internet went out. For the first time we had a sandbagging station in Uki to help local people prepare. We felt as ready for the cyclone as we could be."*

*"After Alfred, we did a survey, asking how people felt about what we (and they) had put in place for the event, and people reported that it certainly made them feel much safer and more prepared. That came from being more connected and having access to critical resources."*

RUKI demonstrates how place-based organisations can increase community resilience through strong social capital and collective preparedness. The CRGP funding enabled RUKI to strengthen connections across the village, increasing the community's capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from future disasters.



Photo 2: RUKI team



Photo 3: Community sharing a meal

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are informed by the findings in this summary evaluation report.

Relevant KEQ and Finding	Recommendation
<p>KEQ1</p> <p>The third-party grant making model was effective in delivering responsive, place-based support to communities impacted by the 2022 flood disaster. The NRCF's deep local knowledge, relative agility when compared to RA, and relational approach enabled timely allocation of funds and helped maximise the impact of a modest grant.</p>	<p>1. The third-party grant making model was effective in delivering responsive, place-based support to communities. This evaluation recommends this model be used in the future for grant programs with similar contextual factors to the CRGP. These factors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When local knowledge and recognition is an important factor for relationship building and subsequent grant management.</li> <li>• When responsiveness is essential, such as a disaster recovery event where timeliness important.</li> <li>• There is limited internal resourcing or capacity within RA.</li> <li>• When the majority of recipients are organisations with limited resources to dedicate to administration, acquittals and in-house evaluation capability.</li> </ul>
<p>KEQ1</p> <p>A third-party model can carry reputational risks, within the community, for the grant making partner.</p>	<p>2. When using a third-party grant making model, ensure the role of the third party is clearly defined and proactively communicated to the recipients. Particularly when that role requires an organisation to act, or not act, in ways it usually would. For example, if the third party is represented on the grant assessment panel, provide clarity to the applicants that the third party is not able to provide guidance during the grant application process. Communicating the responsibilities and partnership expectations would help support a shared understanding for community.</p>
<p>KEQ1</p> <p>The third-party grant making model contributed to the perceived absence of state government and limited engagement with disaster affected communities in the region.</p>	<p>3. Consider ways to increase visibility of the RA and NSW Government funding and support. This may help to inform community sentiment about disaster recovery support provided by NSW Government. For example, consider a joint media and communications strategy that celebrates and recognises the positive outcomes of the projects.</p>
<p>KEQ1</p> <p>Several interviewees identified a missed opportunity to better utilise existing data, such as needs assessments and research conducted prior to the CRGP delivery, in the grant application and assessment process.</p>	<p>4. Strengthen the use of existing data in the grant application and assessment process. For example, needs assessments, indicators of socio-economic disadvantage, and local service gaps. Prepopulate the application form with a needs assessment section with this contextual information and ask applicants to only describe how their program addresses unmet or community-specific needs not already captured in this research.</p> <p>This approach would also support the assessment process by enabling more targeted comparisons across</p>

Relevant KEQ and Finding	Recommendation
	<p>applications and more robust funding decisions. This approach would also promote greater equity by supporting applicants who may have less experience with grant writing.</p>
<p>KEQ3 Strong organisational capacity building outcomes were achieved with an average investment of 13–19% of grant funding (~\$12,000 per organisation), providing a useful benchmark for future program design and economic evaluation.</p>	<p>5. Allocate a defined proportion of grant funding to support organisational capacity building and use cost benchmarks to inform both program design and evaluation. Future grant programs should consider allocating approximately 13–19% of total grant funding to support internal organisational capacity building, such as improved planning, responsiveness, and preparedness. In the CRGP, recipients achieved strong outcomes with this level of investment.</p> <p>The absolute cost of approximately \$12,000 per organisation provides a benchmark for future economic evaluations of programs with similar objectives, scope, and context.</p>
<p>Evaluation limitations Limited data availability due to planning the evaluation towards the end of program delivery. For example, self-reported data from community beneficiaries.</p>	<p>6. Develop the Evaluation Plan at the same time as designing the project and program guidelines. Have a clear idea of the outcomes and the evaluation process prior to awarding the grants. An Evaluation Plan that aligns with the project timeline and supports data collection throughout the lifecycle of the project increases the likelihood that the data collected is reflective of the change and is fit-for-purpose. This process will help build a shared understanding of the priority objectives of the program. It would also reduce the administration burden on the grant provider, third party grant provider and grant recipients at the end of the project.</p>
<p>About the CRGP The CRGP was structured to distribute the \$1,000,000 of funding evenly between small (\$20,000 - \$50,000) and large (up to \$100,000) grants. More applications were received for the large grant pool than the small grant pool. As a result, 93% (14/15) of the small grant applications were approved, while only 32% (6/19) of large grant applications were approved.</p>	<p>7. Consider increasing flexibility in the allocation of grant pools so that funding is based on merit rather than fixed allocations, while still maintaining equity. For example, design the grant program to distribute funds in smaller or larger amounts depending on the strength of the application and the specific context.</p>

# NSW Reconstruction Authority

---

GPO Box 5434  
Sydney NSW 2011

T: 02 9212 9200  
E: [info@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au)  
W: [www.nsw.gov.au/reconstruction-authority](http://www.nsw.gov.au/reconstruction-authority)

---



OFFICIAL