

2026 Empowering Women & Girls Grant

Program Guidelines

About the Grant

The NRCF Empowering Women & Girls Grant is an annual program that offers funding to grassroots initiatives in the Northern Rivers that focus on empowering women and girls to overcome inequality and disadvantage. The objective of the grant is to provide seed funding to pilot new programs and services to empower women and girls, or enable existing programs and services to pivot, scale or build their evidence base.

The program is unique to other NRCF grants because the funds raised come from the NRCF [Women's Giving Circle](#). By bringing together passionate women from the Northern Rivers, the Circle aims to promote equality and human rights for women and girls through collective giving and participatory grant making.

Eligible Projects

Projects may support the delivery of activities for women more broadly, or focus on specific groups such as:

- First Nations women
- LGBTIQ+ women
- Young women and girls
- Women living with disability
- Refugee and migrant women
- Rural women
- Women experiencing homelessness and housing stress
- Single mothers
- Women experiencing income inequality, including those in low-paid professions (childcare workers, aged care workers etc.)
- Older women

Applications are encouraged for **new projects or existing projects looking to pivot, scale or build their evidence base**. Organisations may also apply for funding to enable existing projects operating elsewhere to expand into the Northern Rivers, where there is no existing alternative.

Examples of eligible projects include those that:

- Prevent and respond to men's violence against women and support survivors of violence (e.g. programs that seek to change attitudes and norms, crisis support)
- Recognise and celebrate women's achievements (e.g. events and awards programs, noting that the grant cannot be used to fund prizes)
- Address social isolation and expand social networks (e.g. women's support groups)
- Raise awareness about issues affecting women and girls (e.g. arts installations or productions)
- Developing the leadership capacity of women and girls so that they can play a bigger

role in their communities (e.g. leadership programs)

- Supporting women's financial independence by creating or promoting diverse and flexible job opportunities or better work conditions for women.
- Improving mental and physical health outcomes for women and their children (e.g. improving access to antenatal or postnatal care or raise awareness of conditions affecting women and girls).
- Promote gender diversity and inclusive communities, including addressing discrimination and stigma (e.g. projects that combat ageism, transphobia, racism).

Projects that have been funded in 2026 may apply for a second year of funding. In this instance, applicants will be expected to submit evidence of the project's success in Year 1.

Eligible Expenses

Examples of things that the grant *can* be used for:

- Delivering activities, events, programs and services
- Salaries, wages and stipends for staff, contractors and volunteers
- Purchasing equipment and materials
- The purchase of assets and infrastructure for the community
- Strengthening and building capacity of your organisation to deliver outcomes (e.g. conduct research or develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks)

Examples of things that the grant *cannot* be used for:

- One-off emergency relief assistance for individuals (unless part of a broader project)
- Prizes, trophies or other gifts
- Projects whose main objective is to fundraise for another organisation
- Projects that do not include a contribution (either cash or in-kind, e.g. volunteer hours)
- The promotion of a religion, political party or business
- Programs that exclude people based on their race, sex, gender, religious affiliation or for other reasons, unless justified (e.g. it is required to create a safe space)

Projects must be fully implemented by the end of 2027.

Eligible Organisations

There are three basic criteria for being eligible for the Empowering Women and Girls grant:

1. **Benefits Women and Girls:** The primary objective of the project should be to empower women and girls in the Northern Rivers.
2. **Locally based:** The grant supports organisations working within the 7 LGAs of the Northern Rivers (Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley, Ballina, Byron and Tweed). Organisations outside the Northern Rivers can apply, however they need to demonstrate local governance, such as a local partner or a board or committee based in the Northern Rivers.
3. **Not-for-Profit:** Organisations must either be an Incorporated Association under NSW Legislation or registered with the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission (or both). NRCF does not fund social enterprises, sole traders or people operating through a Company structure (e.g. Pty Ltd).

Applicants must also be available to send a representative to the Grant Giving Ceremony on 3rd September and deliver a 5-minute presentation to members of the Women's Giving Circle.

Grant Amount

These grants are for a fixed amount of \$20,000.

Evaluation Committee

A Committee (the Empowering Women and Girls Evaluation Committee) consisting of up to eight members of the Women's Giving Circle and at least 1 member of the NRCF Grants and Community Impact Committee will be convened through an Expression of Interest process.

The objective of the Evaluation Committee is to review all applications and agree on a shortlist that will proceed to Stage 2 (voting). Training in how to use Foundant (grant management software) to review and score applications will be provided by the NRCF Grants Team.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. Eligibility – To what extent is the project led by or informed by women?
2. Need – To what extent is there a demonstrated need for the project?
3. Outcomes – To what extent is the project likely to achieve the outcome of empowering women and girls in the Northern Rivers?
4. Viability – How likely is it that the project will be delivered as described, on time and within budget?
5. Capacity – To what extent does the applicant demonstrate the capacity to deliver the project?

Detailed guidance will be developed by the NRCF Grants Team to support the Evaluation Committee to apply these criteria to applications.

Application Process

1. Stage 1 – Written Application

Prospective applicants will complete an online application form, accessible through the NRCF website. Applications open on Monday 15th June, 2026.

2. Shortlisting

The Empowering Women and Girls Grant Evaluation Committee convenes to shortlist applications according to a pre-defined set of criteria. It is expected that a maximum of eight projects will be shortlisted.

3. Voting

A summary of shortlisted projects will be voted on by all members of the Women's Giving Circle.

Capacity Building for Successful Applicants

Successful applicants will be required to deliver a 5-minute main-stage presentation to a large group of women at the Grant Giving Ceremony. To support them in this endeavour, NRCF will match applicants with a pitch mentor, who is a member of the Women's Giving Circle. The objective of mentor is to support applicants to deliver a high-quality presentation.

Grant Giving Ceremony

Three successful applicants are invited to a grant-giving ceremony with Women's Giving Circle Members to receive their grant on 3rd September at the Brunswick Picture House.

Application Support

During the Call for Applications period, the Grants and Community Impact Team will host an online webinar to provide advice for prospective applicants on applying for a grant. Details of this session is below:

- Tuesday 23rd June at 12.00noon-1.30pm – [Register Here](#)

Voting Process

- Each Women's Giving Circle member, whose membership is current at the time of voting, will be circulated a link to vote via email (no paper voting will be accepted).
- Each member can vote once and must submit their vote within the time specified.
- Each member will be able to nominate a first, second and third preference.
- Scores will be weighted and the projects with the highest number of aggregate scores will be declared the winners.

2026 Program Dates

15 th June-2nd July 2026	Call for applications period
23rd June, 2026	Grant-writing Webinar
3rd-14 th July 2026	Evaluation Committee shortlists applications
14 th July 2026	Evaluation Committee convenes to confirm shortlist
17 th July 2026	Shortlisted applicants and unsuccessful applicants notified
3rd-9 th August 2026	Voting period opens and closes
12th August 2026	Successful and unsuccessful applicants are notified
3 rd September, 2026	Grant-giving ceremony and celebration
4th-14th September, 2026	Grant Agreements and Funding distributed
31 st March, 2027	Mid-way pulse check
31 st September, 2027	Final check-in and submission of financial acquittal