

Regional Job Creation Fund Round Two

Program Guidelines

2 February 2022



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Message from the Deputy Premier

Businesses in Regional NSW are the backbone of our state's economy. Despite the cumulative adversities of the COVID-19 pandemic, mouse plague, drought, bushfires and floods over the past few years, regional businesses have shown incredible strength and resilience.

The NSW Government is committed to supporting the regions recovery by providing opportunities for growth, investment and prosperity. That's why in 2022, we are launching Round Two of the successful Regional Job Creation Fund.

Round One of the Regional Job Creation Fund, provided \$100 million to help businesses expand, attract new investment and relocate to regional NSW. This funding also leveraged over \$280 million in private investment, supporting more than 100 regional projects and creating almost 5,000 new jobs in a range of key engine industries. This investment has seen Regional NSW become more competitive and strengthen local economies.

Round Two of the Regional Job Creation Fund will see an additional \$40 million in funding available. This Round aims to entice new investment from Australian and international businesses and create 2,000 new jobs. This continued support from the NSW Government will enable economic recovery across our thriving agriculture, manufacturing, energy, tourism and resource industries.



The Hon. Paul Toole, MP

Grants will range from \$100,000 to \$5 million to help resource projects such as replacing plant equipment, upgrading technology and developing new regionally iconic tourism experiences.

Through the Regional Job Creation Fund, we will continue building robust regional economies, giving businesses, employees and their families confidence in the future growth of Regional NSW.

I am excited to see what opportunities this funding creates and look forward to seeing our regional communities grow stronger than ever.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Toole". The signature is fluid and cursive.

The Hon. Paul Toole, MP

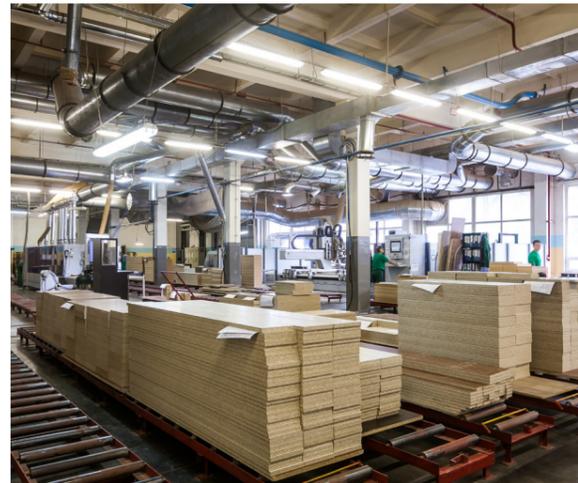
Deputy Premier
Minister for Regional New South Wales
Minister for Police

Overview

The NSW Government's *20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW* sets out a clear pathway for regional NSW to continue growing while supporting people's decision to live, work and invest in regional areas.

While COVID-19 has impacted regional economies, it also presents opportunities for business and communities to adapt, build on their strengths and prosper. NSW needs to plan for the long term and give regional businesses and those seeking to locate in regional NSW incentives to seize these opportunities.

The \$40 million Regional Job Creation Fund Round Two (RJCF) will help businesses in key industries to withstand the impact of events such as COVID-19 by co-funding projects that initiate or accelerate investment, create jobs and support economic recovery and resilience in regional NSW.



Objective

The Regional Job Creation Fund aims to support economic recovery and resilience in regional NSW by activating, bringing forward or attracting investment through co-funded business projects that create at least five sustainable new jobs.

Targets

The Regional Job Creation Fund Round Two aims to create at least 2,000 new direct jobs (full-time equivalent) in regional NSW over a three-year period.

Key Dates and Timelines

Applications open:

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Expression of Interest close:

5pm (AEDT), Friday 18 February 2022

Applications close:

9am (AEDT), Monday 14 March 2022

Notification / project announcement:

Successful applicants will be notified confidentially from late June 2022 or as soon as possible after a grant is approved, at the NSW Government's discretion.

Public announcement by the NSW Government may occur at any time after an applicant has been notified of a successful outcome.

Contracting:

Contracting will commence once an applicant has signed and returned their Letter of Offer and Confidentiality Document.

Project completion:

Capital works must be able to be completed by May 2023 and successful applicants must have all committed full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs in place for at least six months within three years of signing a funding deed.

Project evaluation:

Successful applicants will be required to participate in a program evaluation after the project has commenced. The evaluation will require applicants to provide evidence of how projects have resulted in measurable benefits consistent with the fund's objectives, focusing on employment and benefits to regional economies and communities.

The application close date may be extended at the discretion of the Department of Regional NSW.

Eligibility Criteria



Eligible applicants

To be eligible to apply for funding, applicants must be a business or co-operative, and:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN) and be one of the following:
 - a company incorporated in Australia
 - a company incorporated by guarantee
 - an incorporated trustee on behalf of a trust
 - an incorporated association or co-operative
 - a partnership
 - a sole trader
 - an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Corporation registered under the Corporations (Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006.
- be registered for GST
- be financially viable and able to demonstrate that they are likely to remain so over the duration of the project
- have at least \$20 million public liability insurance
- or be able to secure before entering into a Funding Deed if successful.

Applicants can be based internationally, interstate or in either metropolitan or regional NSW. International businesses will need an ABN, be registered for GST, have at least \$20 million in public liability insurance and be an eligible entity type (as listed above), to enter into a funding deed if they are successful.

Applicants can submit a joint application, but a lead applicant will need to be nominated. If the application is successful, the lead applicant will enter into the funding deed and be ultimately responsible for delivering the project.

Applicants are requested to ensure they use the correct organisation name and details when applying as this generally cannot be changed once the project has been assessed.

Ineligible applicants include:

- Australian or NSW Government agencies, State Owned Corporations or statutory authorities
- Local Government Authorities or their Section 355 Committees
- organisations that do not have an ABN and are unable to obtain an ABN to enter a funding deed
- unincorporated associations
- businesses that are insolvent.

The Department of Regional NSW, at its sole discretion, may take other factors into account to determine that a business is ineligible for funding, including any personal or business issues that could cause reputational or other risk to the NSW Government, for example:

- poor past performance of the applicant or key project personnel
- the applicant or their business activity could cause reputational or other risk to the NSW Government

Competitive Impacts

The provision of financial assistance to businesses may require consideration of the impact on local competition. Competition issues will be reviewed as part of the assessment process to avoid advantaging or disadvantaging businesses legitimately competing in the same immediate market. Businesses whose primary operation is in the below industries will not be eligible for funding under this program:

- hospitality, except where a proposal is unique to the existing market and considered regionally significant and/or iconic or a small part of a larger project (e.g. brewery expansion focussed on production enabling out of state sales, with a small hospitality element such as a kitchen/bar)
- retail
- localised trades
- administrative services that serve only the local or regional community.



Nowchem manufacture a range of chemical products for industry, home and for specialised applications.

Eligible projects

Projects must:

- be based in regional NSW. Projects based in Greater Sydney, Newcastle or Wollongong Local Government Areas are not eligible
- create employment outcomes that generate at least five new direct full-FTE jobs in regional NSW that are sustainable without additional NSW Government investment beyond the agreed grant (jobs must be directly employed by the applicant or joint applicants and not through labour hire firms). One FTE position is equal to a 'standard working week' of 35 hours
- demonstrate the project would not occur in regional NSW at all or in the same timeframe without government investment
- be able to complete capital works by May 2023. It is recommended applicants have a COVID plan in place to mitigate any potential delays due to COVID-19.
- have all committed FTE positions in place for at least six continuous months within three years of signing a funding deed.

Examples of eligible projects include:

- replacement, upgrade or adaptation of existing plant and equipment including technology or energy efficiency upgrades
- establishment of an additional production line for an existing regional NSW business
- onshoring in a regional NSW location of activity currently done overseas
- development of new regionally significant and/or iconic tourism experiences and visitor attractions creating new inter-state or international demand in the region (without impacting other NSW tourism businesses)
- relocating a business operation from out-of-state or internationally to regional NSW.

Ineligible projects

Ineligible projects include:

- projects funding the day-to-day operations of business or focusing primarily on marketing and promotion
- projects requiring ongoing funding from the NSW Government
- projects not aligned to the objective of the Regional Job Creation Fund
- projects that would proceed and be delivered on the same timeline without government financial assistance
- projects that have already commenced for the scope requested in the application
- projects that have already received NSW Government or other funding for the same outputs and outcomes. A project is eligible if the project requires funding from both sources to enable the project to proceed (for example if both Australian Government assistance and assistance from RJCF is required to realise the total project outcomes). If the project can achieve the same outcomes through assistance already provided, then the project would not be eligible for RJCF funding.

Eligible grant amounts

The minimum grant amount per application is \$100,000. The maximum grant amount per application is \$5,000,000. All grants are GST exclusive. GST will be applied on top of the agreed grant value when payment is made. Co-contributions to the project must be at least 50 per cent of the total project cost (unless there are extenuating circumstances). Projects should request no more than \$20,000 per direct ongoing job to be created through the project.

Eligible costs

Grants may be used for:

- capital and other expenses directly related to the delivery of eligible projects, including:
 - purchase of plant and equipment that need additional workers to operate
 - expanding built infrastructure to enable job creation activities.

Ineligible grants costs include:

- repayment of existing debts or budget deficits
- administrative, operational and maintenance costs not related to the subject project
- ongoing staff wages and salaries
- ongoing rental expenses or non-fixed equipment, unless they form a small part of a larger project that anchors the applicant to the location
- costs already funded by insurance or other NSW or Australian Government programs
- costs that have been incurred prior to receiving a Letter of Offer of grant funding
- costs that require recurrent or ongoing funding from the NSW Government.

Assessment Criteria

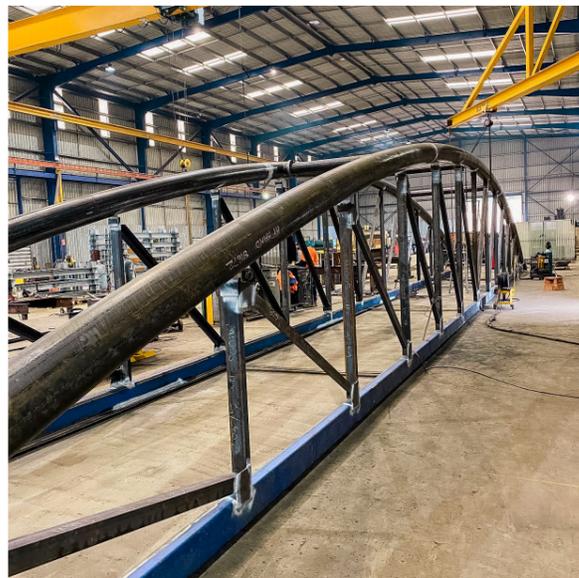
1. Strategic alignment	<p>How strongly the project aligns to relevant NSW Government policies or strategies, such as the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW https://www.nsw.gov.au/a-20-year-economic-vision-for-regional-nsw-refresh 2040 Economic Blueprint https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/nsw-economy/nsw-2040-economic-blueprint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant Regional Economic Development Strategy https://www.nsw.gov.au/regional-nsw/regional-economic-development-strategies#toc-engine-industries and the objectives of the RJCF. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>20 per cent</i></p>
2. Job creation	<p>How cost-effective the project is in creating at least 5 new jobs (FTE) directly within the organisation based in regional NSW. Positions must be directly employed with the applicant or joint applicants.</p>	<p>The NSW Government contribution will generally be no more than \$20,000 per direct job created through the project.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>20 per cent</i></p>
3. Expected return on government investment and economic benefits	<p>The value of the contribution of the project to the NSW economy as determined through a Cost-Benefit Analysis conducted or coordinated by the Department of Regional NSW based on the information provided by the applicant.</p> <p>Generally, projects must achieve a Benefit-to-Cost Ratio (BCR) greater than 1.0 to be considered. Projects with a BCR less than 1.0 will only be considered for funding by exception and will be required to meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> they are expected to produce agglomeration, spillover, or “wider economic benefits” through the development of industry clusters, precincts, or the development of new industries delivering a benefit that, while not quantifiable, is expected to be significant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they provide a clear improvement in productivity that is not able to be quantified as part of the analysis but is expected to be significant there is a clear and significant issue relating to the supply chain or sovereign risk there is a level of importance of the project to the maintenance of an industry sector, local economy or local community and there is a risk of clear and serious impacts (e.g. structural dislocation) if the project is not approved <p style="text-align: right;"><i>20 per cent</i></p>
4. Deliverability	<p>How strongly the applicant can demonstrate the project is deliverable by May 2023. Considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the applicant has demonstrated skills and capacity to deliver the project through past performance in delivering similar projects (for example, detailing managerial capability to carry out the project) the suitability of the staff or arrangements to deliver the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> readiness to commence the project, including status of required regulatory and/or development approvals the suitability of the detailed business plan, feasibility plan, budget, technical plans and/or cost estimates supporting the project <p style="text-align: right;"><i>15 per cent</i></p>
5. Affordability	<p>The share of the co-contribution from the applicant and other non-NSW Government sources as a percentage of the total project cost. Co-contributions to the project</p>	<p>should be at least 50 per cent of the total project cost (unless there are extenuating circumstances).</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>15 per cent</i></p>
6. Outcomes for young people, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals and people with disability	<p>How strongly the project will increase employment and training opportunities for young people, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals and people with disability.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>10 per cent</i></p>

Other factors that can be taken into account when determining if a project is suitable for funding and the final ranking of a project include:

- geographical and industry spread of projects across regional NSW
- amount of funding available
- suitability of projects for other government funding opportunities
- if there is strong evidence that the project may retain local jobs if a business is legitimately proposing to relocate and/or expand its operations in another jurisdiction.

Application process

The application process has two stages: expression of interest and detailed application.



Top: HF Hand Constructors provides professional steel fabrication and construction services. Bottom: Fletcher International Exports operates meat processing facilities in Dubbo.

Stage 1: Expression of Interest

Expressions of Interest (EOI) must include:

- the organisation details including ABN or other identifier and primary activities (e.g., for international businesses)
- a short description of the project scope and proposed use of the grant
- estimated grant request
- estimated total cost of the project
- an estimate of the number of new full-time equivalent jobs created by the project
- a short description of the project's expected benefits
- the expected location of the project.

Expressions of Interest must be submitted online through the SmartyGrants portal available at nsw.gov.au/RJCF.

Each EOI will be allocated to a Department of Regional NSW Business Development Manager or Officer (BDM) who will review the EOI for readiness and discuss the Regional Job Creation Fund Guidelines and application process with the applicant. If the applicant and project meet the eligibility criteria and the applicant chooses to proceed, an invitation and pack of supporting materials will be provided to the applicant. The BDM can also provide assistance in guiding applicants with the preparation of applications and supporting documents.

Stage 2: Application stage

Applications must be completed through the SmartyGrants portal. Applicants are strongly encouraged to work with their BDM to develop their application. Applicants will be required to provide the following documentation:

- financial statements (trading, profit and loss statements and balance sheets) for three continuous years starting from the latest available year or other evidence of financial viability if statements are not available, for example a signed statement from an external accountant
- evidence the project aligns with relevant NSW policies and strategies including the *20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW, 2040 Economic Blueprint* and relevant *Regional Economic Development Strategy*
- evidence of experience delivering projects similar in scope and scale to the project, or otherwise demonstrates capability and capacity to deliver the project
- a detailed project scope identifying all elements of the project
- a feasibility study and/or project plan for the project, including any supporting quotes and technical documents
- any evidence of readiness of the project, including status of development applications, landowner's consent and/or regulatory approvals where required or applicable
- a completed data sheet (template provided) for the project, a cash flow budget, explanation for the underlying assumptions for the project's lifecycle, and information on how many jobs and other quantifiable benefits the project will create over the first three years (at a minimum)

- how the project will contribute to employment and training outcomes for young people, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals and people with disability and how these will be measured
- other expected benefits of the project and how these will be measured
- confirmation of the co contribution to the project, including from the applicant and other sources
- evidence of at least \$20 million in public liability insurance
- a probity declaration form.

This is a competitive process. Applications with insufficient evidence or detail will be disadvantaged in the assessment. Applicants should ensure they provide as much information as possible in their application.

Examples of eligible project types, costs and information to be included in the application

Example of eligible project

Eligible costs include:

Examples of project-specific documentation include:

<p>1. Construction and fit-out of a new factory for an existing business operating in the metal fabrication industry to enable sales interstate.</p> <p>The new factory will increase production and create 30 new sustainable jobs for the business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of land (if necessary for the project and suitable alternatives to rent do not exist) • Purchase of materials required to construct and fit-out factory • Cost of contractors to construct the new factory • External project management costs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Status of any permissions or approvals relevant to the project, for example development approval, landowner's consent and any other regulatory approvals 2. Project plan which includes a detailed scope (including diagrams/drawings/plans), line-item level budget (including contingency), program detailing key project milestones, statement on project governance) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Cost of land purchase 4. Quotes for construction/fit-out of factory and other items required to implement scope
<p>2. Onshoring of manufacturing process currently performed overseas.</p> <p>This will secure Australia's sovereign capability and 100 sustainable jobs for the business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of equipment for new production line to be installed at an existing factory • Costs incurred in installation/commission of new equipment • External project management costs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Status of permissions/approvals as outlined above 2. Project plan in detail outlined above 3. Quotes for purchase and installation of equipment and other items required to implement scope 	
<p>3. Relocation and expansion of a new head office for an existing business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bespoke fit-out of office space including expenditure relating to installation of bespoke internet infrastructure and audio-visual equipment • Purchase of land (if necessary for the project and suitable alternatives to rent do not exist) • External project management costs 	<p><i>As above in example 2.</i></p>	
<p>4. Scaling up an existing software prototype to commercialise at industrial scale and take to market.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalised labour, technology, marketing and administration required to upscale and market the software for the period of the project only • Cost of any equipment or capital required as part of the project 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project plan which includes a clear project scope, software description, and methodology, and all phases of the delivery from development to implementation 2. Research documentation that describes the need for the project in the market, with supporting evidence from actual or potential investors/buyers 3. A detailed 'Go to Market/Go Live' strategy if not already in market 	

Note that this list is not exhaustive for project types, eligible costs or project information and is designed to give applicants an idea of the types of projects and supporting documentation required for their category of project.

Assessment process

The assessment of applications and projects will be coordinated by the Department of Regional NSW.



MET Recycling diverts construction materials being tipped at landfills and creates recycled products for use in construction.

Assessment of applications

Eligibility assessment

The Department of Regional NSW will assess applications against the eligibility criteria set out in these guidelines. Where there is uncertainty or unintended outcomes arising from the eligibility requirements, the Department will take the approach that, in its opinion, best achieves the fund's objectives.

Final eligibility determinations will be made at the discretion of the Assessment Panel, with advice and recommendations from the Department of Regional NSW.

Criteria assessment

The Department of Regional NSW will assess all projects deemed eligible against the assessment criteria set out in these guidelines. A cost-benefit analysis will be undertaken for all eligible projects.

During the assessment process, the Department of Regional NSW may ask applicants to provide additional information to assist in the assessment process. Advice may be sought from other NSW Government agencies or other sources to assist in the assessment of projects. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process.

Assessment panel review and recommendation

An Assessment Panel will be convened to assess submitted projects. The Assessment Panel will consist of:

- representatives from the Department of Regional NSW's Regional Development and Programs Group (including the Assessment Panel chairperson)
- a representative from Investment NSW
- a representative from Training Services NSW.

An independent probity advisor will be present during the Assessment Panel meetings.

Industry experts, either internal or external to the NSW Government, may advise the Assessment Panel during the assessment.

The Assessment Panel will consider the relative merits of each project against the assessment criteria, including if the project is suitable and recommended for funding.

Decision-making

The Assessment Panel will provide advice to the Department of Regional NSW on the suitability of each project for funding. The relevant Departmental delegate will approve the projects and funding amounts.

The Assessment Panel may recommend part-funding of projects if there is insufficient funding available for the whole project or where only a component of the project is considered suitable/eligible.

All projects may be referred to other NSW or Australian Government funding programs for consideration.

Probity Advice

Independent probity advisers will provide guidance to the Department of Regional NSW 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.

Assessment target timelines

Stage 1 Expression of interest

A BDM will be in contact within 5 business days of the submission of the EOI.

Stage 2 Application Assessment

Applications will be reviewed as a pool from application close date of 14 March 2022 to late June 2022.

NSW Government decision

From late June 2022, or as soon as possible after a grant is approved at the NSW Government's discretion.

Successful applicants

Notification

Successful applicants will be notified via email and/or letter. Applicants may be requested to keep the grant confidential for a period if an announcement is likely to be made by the NSW Government.

Funding deed

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding deed with the NSW Government. See example of funding deed template on the Department of Regional NSW website.

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

The funding deed will require the successful applicant to provide a copy of all relevant insurances, project approvals (e.g. development approvals, landowner's consent) and other supporting documentation relevant to the project or as requested by the Department of Regional NSW. The first grant payment will be made once all required documentation has been provided to the Department of Regional NSW.

Grants will be paid as set out in the funding deed. Timing and requirements will vary at NSW Government's discretion, depending on the scope and risk of the project.

Successful applicants will be required to submit project progress reports to the NSW Government as outlined in the funding deed. Examples of measures to be included in the report are completion of project activities and number of FTE positions created as a result of the project, construction jobs created through the delivery of the project and employment outcomes for young people, Aboriginal communities and people with disability.

Important terms and conditions

Applicants should note:

- the NSW Government may choose to publicly announce funding for individual applications, including the amount of funding and the expected jobs created by the funding. It may also use information provided in the application to develop case studies
- requests for variations or changes to the project will only be considered in limited circumstances
- successful applicants will be required to pay back unspent funds, or any funds not spent in accordance with the funding deed
- successful applicants will be required to participate in a program evaluation after the project has commenced. The evaluation will require applicants to provide evidence of how projects have resulted in measurable benefits consistent with the fund's objectives, focusing on employment and benefits to regional economies and communities
- all recipients of NSW Government funding should acknowledge this financial support as per the Sponsorship and funding acknowledgement website available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/branding/sponsorship-and-funding-acknowledgment-guidelines>
- all awarded grants will be GST exclusive. GST 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
- the Department of Regional NSW reserves the right to undertake an audit of grant funding within seven years.

Unsuccessful applicants

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



LAVO develops hydrogen, hybrid batteries for use in residential and business properties.

Getting support

Frequently Asked Questions and other resources to assist with applications may be updated regularly at nsw.gov.au/RJCF.

Department of Regional NSW staff are available to support applicants with their applications, even at the expression of interest stage. Email regionalnsw.business@regional.nsw.gov.au or call 1300 679 673 for assistance.

Applicants must discuss their preliminary application with the BDM allocated to their application. Applicants are strongly encouraged to work with the BDM in the development of the detailed application to ensure it meets the required standard.

Applicants should seek advice from their legal, business and financial advisers to determine the suitability of the funding before applying.

Complaints

Any concerns about the program or individual applications should be submitted in writing to regionalnsw.business@regional.nsw.gov.au. If you do not agree with the way the Department of Regional NSW handled the issue, you may wish to contact the NSW Ombudsman via ombo.nsw.gov.au.

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)

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.

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The Department 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.

The guidelines are subject to change at any time at the sole discretion of the Department.



Buildonix® Aus/NZ design and develop customised structural and non-structural components which can be assembled into fully adaptable buildings.

Regional NSW

Office hours:

Monday to Friday
9.00am – 5.00pm

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W nsw.gov.au/RJCF