

Aboriginal Engagement Support Coordinators Program Guidelines

AGRN 1212

July 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Reconstruction Authority acknowledges 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 and present and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that contributed to the development of this document.

We advise this resource may contain images, or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

Aboriginal Engagement Support Coordinators Program

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Program Details	
Australian Government Reference Number (AGRN)	AGRN 1212 NSW East Coast Severe Weather from 18 May 2025
DRFA Category of Assistance	Category C
Grant opening date and time	25 August 2026 1:00pm
Grant closing date and time	6 October 2026 5:00 pm
Application outcome date	26 October 2026
Aboriginal Engagement and Support Coordinator Program delivery timeframe (for successful applicants)	Up to 30 June 2028
Program end date	30 June 2028
Decision-maker	Director Partnerships and Program Delivery NSW Reconstruction Authority
NSW Government Agency	NSW Reconstruction Authority
Type of grant opportunity	Targeted, competitive
Grant value (excluding GST)	Total grant program value: \$3 million Maximum individual grant: \$750,000
Enquiries	Agency: NSW Reconstruction Authority Contact name: Natalie Meskauskas Position: Manager Community Programs Email: CRP@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au

Version history

Version	Change summary	Date approved
V1	Program guidelines approved by NEMA	15/07/2026
V2	V2 program guidelines approved by NEMA, noting: - Change to grant opening, closing and outcome dates - Inclusion of additional eligible activity: “Supporting Aboriginal organisations to develop program proposals to participate in the AESC”	19/08/2026

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1 About the Aboriginal Engagement Support Coordinators Program

The \$3 million Aboriginal Engagement Support Coordinators Program (the Program) is jointly funded on a 50:50 basis by the Australian and NSW Governments through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) 2018. This Program forms part of the broader \$7.2 million Community Recovery and Resilience Package to address identified recovery needs as a direct result of AGRN 1212.

The Program will be administered and delivered by the NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA) as the lead agency for disaster recovery in New South Wales.

The Program will fund up to 4 non-profit Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and/or not-for-profit Aboriginal Engagement Organisations to:

- a. Employ a temporary Aboriginal Engagement Support Coordinator (AESC)
- b. Provide culturally appropriate recovery information
- c. Develop a local 'Connecting with Country Framework'
- d. Deliver programs and activities that support the community's medium to long-term recovery
- e. Provide support to communities to better understand the Emergency Services delivery processes and responsibilities in NSW, to encourage engagement with services throughout recovery.

Funding distribution will be determined via a targeted, competitive grant process, and be delivered in accordance with the NSW Grants Administration Guide.

Prospective applicants are encouraged to read these guidelines in full before applying.

1.1 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the Program is to enable First Nations people to recover from AGRN 1212 through culturally appropriate and supported initiatives.

The objectives of the Program are to:

- a. **Share information:** Culturally accessible disaster recovery and resilience information specific to community recovery needs is developed, promoted and shared.
- b. **Strengthen relationships:** Ensure Cultural knowledge holders, Elders and community representatives are connected to disaster management decision makers.
- c. **Build networks:** Establish and/or strengthen working relationships between ACCOs, not-for-profit Aboriginal Engagement Organisations, key stakeholders and existing networks in disaster recovery.
- d. **Build capability:** Identify and respond to communities' needs and strengths, by offering opportunity, choice and resources to improve practice in recovery.
- e. **Engage community:** Deliver engaging and culturally appropriate activities and events in collaboration with partner organisations and stakeholders to facilitate community recovery.
- f. **Improve sector engagement and support development of local recovery plans:** Design localised frameworks to ensure First Nations communities are effectively supported and appropriately engaged in disaster recovery and management practices and processes.

Additionally, the AESC program responds to the Priority Reform Areas outlined in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan by:

- a. Supporting First Nations communities to define and decide their own recovery needs and priorities

- b. Funding First Nations community-controlled organisations to deliver bespoke disaster recovery initiatives
- c. Co-designing respectful and agreed methodologies for collecting, maintaining and incorporating Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property principles for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation
- d. Valuing and building relationships with First Nations representatives for improved recovery outcomes.
- e. Reviewing and strengthening local disaster recovery knowledge, plans and practice to support First Nations decision making, cultural safety and strengths.

1.2 Outcomes

The Program will support the following outcomes:

- a. First Nations communities identify and self-determine their own recovery needs, initiatives and priorities – the AESC position supports the resolution of these needs.
- b. First Nations people feel safe, socially connected and participate in their community after a disaster.
- c. Recovery information and support is culturally safe and accessible.
- d. First Nations communities can access and engage with local supports and services.
- e. The voices of First Nations people are included in disaster recovery planning.
- f. First Nations communities feel more capable of managing their own recovery.

1.3 Funding

A total of \$3 million is available through the Program, with an allocation of up to \$750,000 to each service provider.

The table below outlines funding allocation by budget item.

Budget item	TOTAL
Support to organisations for program proposal and application development (costs coordinated and incurred by the RA)	\$70,000
AESC's salary and on costs Salary and oncosts claimable – up to \$160,000/year	\$1,210,000
Operational costs including: - General operating costs – up to \$90,000/year - Administration costs – up to \$22,500/year - Recruitment costs – one off, and up to \$5,000	\$920,000
Vehicle hire allocation across the life of the program	\$240,000
Connecting with Country Framework - Scope and development across the life of the program - Remuneration for cultural knowledge sharing – up to \$40,000 (refer to Appendix 1)	\$560,000
TOTAL	\$3,000,000

Funding is approved as a capped amount and must only be used for activities directly associated with delivering the approved program.

1.4 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Reporting to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)	NSW Reconstruction Authority (as per sub section 5.4)
Program management	NSW Reconstruction Authority, Community Programs team with cultural guidance from the Aboriginal Outcomes Branch, Coordination and Engagement Division
Connecting with Country Framework	Aboriginal Outcomes Branch - Cultural advice and support
Program delivery	Funded organisations/consortia
Program reporting	Funded organisations as per sub section 5.4
Package reporting	NSW Reconstruction Authority, Community Recovery Programs team as per sub section 5.4
Program evaluation	Funded organisations to participate in as per sub section 5.8
Package/Program evaluation	NSW Reconstruction Authority, Recovery Programs Grants and Partnerships Division as per sub section 5.8

2 Selection criteria

2.1 Eligibility criteria

2.1.1 Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants must meet the following criteria:

- a. Is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) or not-for-profit Aboriginal Engagement Organisation, or consortia of such organisations that:
 - i. Holds a current Australian Business Number (ABN)
 - ii. Is an entity with the legal capacity to enter into an agreement with the RA
 - iii. Is incorporated under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006
 - iv. Is a not-for-profit registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission
 - v. Is controlled and operated by First Nations people
 - vi. Is governed by a majority First Nations governing body
 - vii. Has adequate and current broad-form public liability insurance and workers compensation insurance policies and will maintain these policies throughout the funding period
- b. Be located within, or provide services to, at least one the following LGAs:

- i. Bellingen
- ii. Coffs Harbour
- iii. Dungog
- iv. Kempsey
- v. MidCoast
- vi. Nambucca Valley
- vii. Port Macquarie
- viii. Port Stephens

2.1.2 Ineligible applicants

Applicants' ineligible under the Program include:

- a. Individuals
- b. Sole traders
- c. Unincorporated associations
- d. Australian or NSW Government agencies, State Owned Corporations or statutory authorities
- e. Businesses that are insolvent, including organisations
 - a. In administration
 - b. With debts owing to NSW Government entities
 - c. Subject to ongoing legal proceedings
- f. Non-government institutions included on the National Redress Scheme's website that have not joined, or have not signified their intent to join, the National Redress Scheme.
- g. Organisations who cannot demonstrate their eligibility against clause 2.1.1 of these guidelines.

2.1.3 Eligible program activities

Eligible activities may include but are not limited to:

- a. Supporting Aboriginal organisations to develop program proposals to participate in the AESC (to be coordinated by the RA)
- b. Employment of a temporary, fixed-term AESC for a period up to 30 June 2028
- c. Designing, documenting and implementing Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property principles throughout the life of the project, including the establishment of agreed data and information sharing agreements with the RA for monitoring and evaluation purposes
- d. Development and distribution of culturally appropriate, accessible and relevant recovery information
- e. Coordinating activities for First Nations communities that facilitate the sharing of recovery information
- f. Coordinating and hosting workshops and activities for local First Nations communities that support community's medium to long-term recovery, build community connection, and improve individual wellbeing and self-care
- g. Participating in and contributing to a Community of Practice to build and strengthen networks across the funded organisations
- h. Providing and/or supporting First Nations communities' understanding of Emergency Services responsibilities in NSW

- i. Coordinating initiatives that allow for First Nations knowledge and sentiment to be integrated into recovery planning in culturally appropriate ways
- j. Coordinating opportunities for local service providers, businesses, organisations and local governments to contribute to First Nations community recovery through improved community connections and network strength
- k. Building community capacity for First Nations communities to enable recovery to continue after the program ends
- l. Support communities to develop Recovery Action Plans which ensure learnings from AGRN 1212 are incorporated into future recovery strategies and plans.
- m. Development of the Connecting with Country Framework
- n. Identifying and connecting with First Nations groups and networks, both emerging and active, to establish a working group to co-design local Connecting with Country Frameworks
- o. Activities that contribute to the development of local Connecting with Country Frameworks
- p. Engagement with councils and emergency management stakeholders on the Connecting with Country Framework.

2.1.4 Eligible program costs

Eligible program costs are those that are directly incurred in relation to the delivery of eligible activities listed in clause 2.1.3 in response to AGRN 1212 and are within the budget limit outlined in sub section 1.3 of these guidelines.

Costs associated with eligible activity item 2.1.3(a) can only be incurred by the RA and are limited to engaging Aboriginal organisations for the sole purpose of assisting applicants to develop program proposals.

For any singular event, activity or purchase where expenses will total more than \$2,000 an Expenditure Request Form will need to be submitted to, and approved by, the RA's Community Programs team prior to any monies being committed or expended.

The table below provides guidance on eligible program costs.

Incurred cost	Examples
Support to organisations for program proposal and application development (costs coordinated and incurred by the RA)	
Application support	Support agency fees
Salary costs	
Salary and on costs for AESC	Wage costs for the AESC position, including associated on costs of the AESC position, up to a maximum of \$160,000/year
Operational costs	
Recruitment of AESC (host agency) (capped)	- Recruitment agency fees - Online and/or print advertising
IT and telecommunications	- Establishment of additional telephone or internet services specifically for use by the AESC - AESC data connection costs for telephone or internet services (personal use to be governed by funded organisation's policy) - Hire of a mobile phone, PC, laptop and/or tablet specifically for use by the AESC
Temporary office accommodation	- Rent of temporary office accommodation not owned by the funded organisation /consortia where: - The AESC cannot be accommodated in existing premises, or

	○ To locate the AESC in an area more accessible to the community and only for the period that the AESC is employed, and ○ Where such expenditure has been approved by the RA prior to the cost being incurred. ● Where temporary office accommodation is required, consumables not covered by lease arrangements are eligible including soap, toilet paper, paper towels, tissues, detergents, dishcloths etc.
Planning, coordinating and hosting community workshops, meetings or activities	● Engagement of facilitators noting that: ○ Facilitation fees up to \$5,000 per event/day for large audiences will be accepted on demonstration that local subject matter experts have been prioritised over out of area facilitators ○ Facilitator's costs/fees may include up to \$1,000 for travel and accommodation costs if out of area facilitator is required ○ The service delivered directly relates to an eligible activity identified in clause 2.1.3 of these guidelines ● Hire of suitable venues to host recovery activities such as workshops, meetings or community gatherings ● Catering for workshops, meetings or activities ● Consumable items such as milk, sugar, tea, coffee, biscuits, cups etc. ● Stationery specifically for program events or meetings including paper, pens, notepads, markers etc.
Printing, advertising, promotion and signage	● Advertising costs to promote the program and/or its activities e.g., newspaper advertising and social media ● Design and/or printing through a third-party provider of posters, flyers, community newsletters and temporary signage, noting that printing costs incurred in house are not eligible for reimbursement
Clinical supervision	● External clinical supervision for the person recruited to the AESC position with a cap of \$5,000 per annum
Cultural activities and Welcome to Country	● Smoking ceremony where required ● Welcome to Country ● Other cultural activities that denote respectful relationships with Country e.g. cultural dance and music
Vehicle expenses	
Temporary vehicle hire	● Where access to a vehicle owned or leased by the funded organisation is not possible, eligible expenses to a cap of \$60,000 include: ○ Short- or long-term vehicle hire to conduct AESC work related events and activities ○ Short- or long-term hire of a specialised vehicle to conduct work related activities e.g., 4WD vehicle required to access remote communities ○ Fuel for hire vehicle
Use of private vehicle	● Private car usage for AESC work purposes paid at the ATO approved rate where: ○ The funded organisation permits use of a private vehicle and is included as part of the AESC's contract of employment

	○ A complete and accurate logbook is maintained ○ The private vehicle is not claimed for work on the AESC's personal tax return
Connecting with Country Framework	
Framework development	• Costs associated with the development and publication of a Connecting with Country Framework and incurred by the funded organisation, and where relevant, partner agencies acting as part of a consortia in the development of the Connecting with Country Framework, including: ○ Wages and the associated on-costs, of existing staff to deliver specialised components of the Connecting with Country Framework. ○ Engagement of specialist facilitator(s) noting that: ▪ Facilitation fees up to \$5,000 per event/day for large audiences will be accepted on demonstration that local subject matter experts have been prioritised over out of area facilitators ▪ Facilitator's costs/fees may include up to \$1,000 for travel and accommodation where an out of area facilitator is required ▪ The service delivered directly relates to an eligible activity related to clause 2.1.3(m) of these guidelines ○ Community stakeholder workshops and/or focus groups including: ▪ Venue hire ▪ Catering. ▪ Consumable items such as milk, sugar, tea, coffee, biscuits, cups etc. ○ Administration support: ▪ The cost of a human resource to support yarning circles, minute larger meetings, logistical support for workshop planning, etc. related to eligibility activities ○ Engagement of knowledge holders: ▪ Extraordinary expenditure associated with the engagement of First Nations knowledge holders to provide cultural capabilities not available in the funded organisation with remuneration to be made in accordance with the Remuneration Guidelines at Appendix 1 ○ Transport for community members to attend workshops or events related to the development of the Connecting with Country Framework: ▪ Coach hire ▪ Temporary hire of suitable vehicle e.g., minibus, minivan etc. ▪ Fuel for hire vehicle ○ Purchase of images or artworks from First Nations artists for inclusion in the Connecting with Country Framework

2.1.5 Ineligible program activities

The following activities are **not eligible** for funding under the program:

- a. Activities that do not directly relate to the delivery of the Program
- b. Activities and events that were planned or existed prior to the creation of the AESC position, except in relation to sub clause 2.1.3(a)
- c. Activities that constitute core business practice that would be provided regardless of whether the disaster event occurred
- d. Activities that duplicate current initiatives and services provided to communities impacted by AGRN 1212 where existing capacity can meet the need in the community

Successful grantees are encouraged to seek funding from other sources for activities that are not eligible through the Program.

2.1.6 Ineligible program costs

The following costs are **not eligible** for funding under the program:

- a. Costs incurred by the successful applicant prior to the execution of the Funding Agreement
- b. Costs for ongoing program funding or business as usual costs
- c. Costs for existing, pre-planned or ongoing organisation activities
- d. Costs outside the agreed program timeframes without the prior written approval of the RA
- e. Salary costs of staff involved in managing or providing general support for the AESC and their activities
- f. Purchase or installation of telecommunications infrastructure
- g. Purchase of a mobile phone, PC, laptop and/or tablet for use by the AESC, noting that where such an asset is purchased, depreciation of the asset may be claimed via normal tax processes and not through this Program
- h. Gift cards and vouchers
- i. Expenses incurred by a third party
- j. Costs associated with the use of organisation-owned or managed facilities
- k. Loss of revenue on organisation-owned buildings
- l. Purchase of office furniture, IT equipment and other capital assets
- m. Existing debts and/or budget deficits
- n. Administrative and technological overheads
- o. Costs associated with the AESC using existing assets e.g. printers, office accommodation, organisation owned or long-term lease vehicle
- p. 'Management fees' such as the service provider's corporate services (e.g. Chief Executives or General Managers), human resources, finance, IT support, office amenities consumables, insurance, software and financial auditing not otherwise specified; and repairs and maintenance not otherwise specified
- q. Material aid and services
- r. Consultant fees, except in relation to sub clause 2.1.3(a)
- s. Interstate travel and accommodation costs
- t. Costs incurred outside the agreed program timeframes.

Successful grantees are encouraged to seek funding from other sources for costs that are not eligible through the Program.

2.2 Assessment criteria

Applications will be individually assessed against the criteria outlined in the table below.

Criteria	Specific information and evidence required	Weighting
Organisational capacity, capability and resources to carry out the project	Applicants must demonstrate: • They have a staff member in an appropriate role with the appropriate experience and knowledge to provide supervision and support to the AESC • How the organisation will support the AESC to: ○ Develop and execute work plans, identify community needs and strengths, submit regular reporting, maintain financial records, and manage transition and/or program close out ○ Participate in state-hosted forums with other AESCs and Community Recovery and Resilience Coordinators, both in person and online	30%
Project viability, sustainability and value for money	Applicants must complete the provided templates: • A risk management plan for the project that details identified risks and mitigation actions • A proposed program budget detailing reasonable categories of expenditure and robust budget assumptions that include eligible activities	30%
Ability to support the AESC position to achieve meaningful outcomes	Applicants must outline: • The organisational priorities for the position • How the organisation will assist the AESC to identify and support the disaster recovery needs of their community, network with key stakeholders, and plan and coordinate community events and activities • How the objectives and outcomes of this program will be achieved • How the work of the AESC will continue to support the community after the program has finished	40%

3 Application process

3.1 How to apply

The RA will invite all ACCOs and not-for-profit Aboriginal Engagement Organisations with registered addresses within the LGAs identified in subclause 2.1.1(c) of these guidelines, to make an application for funding through the Program. Correspondence to eligible organisations will include a link to the RA's SmartyGrants portal, a copy of these program guidelines and invitation to attend a Program briefing.

3.1.1 Completing the application form

Applications must be submitted via the SmartyGrants portal. The RA will not accept applications made via any other means.

To complete the application form, applicants will be required to:

- a. Demonstrate their eligibility against clause 2.1.1 of these guidelines
- b. Complete all required text fields which will include:
 - i. A project plan
 - ii. Risk management plan
 - iii. Proposed budget
- c. Upload the following documentation:
 - i. A Certificate of Currency for public liability insurance
 - ii. A Certificate of Currency for workers compensation insurance

Please note, individual files must be no larger than 5MB. Allow each file to successfully upload before attempting to attach another file.

3.1.2 Submitting the application form

Applications must be approved by the applying organisations authorised official or their delegate. This person's details must be provided in the Declaration and Authorisation field prior to submission.

Applications and all supporting documentation must be submitted by 6 October 2026 5:00 pm.

Applicants will receive an auto-notification from SmartyGrants to confirm receipt of the grant application. If you do not receive a notification, contact SmartyGrants via the contact details outlined in clause 3.2.2 of the guidelines.

The RA may extend the application closing date at its absolute discretion. Any extension to the application closing date will be communicated directly to all invited applicants. Amendments to the closing date will also be noted on the [NSW Government Grants and Funding webpage](#).

3.1.3 Late or incomplete applications

Once the submission closing date and time has passed applicants will not be able to access their application via the SmartyGrants portal. Should applicants find an error in their application once it has been submitted, they should contact the RA in writing to CRP@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au for advice.

The RA reserves the right to accept late applications on a case-by-case basis. Late applications may be considered where it can be satisfied that the integrity of the grant application process has not been compromised and is subject to probity advice.

3.1.4 False or misleading information

Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the Criminal Code 1995. The RA will investigate potential false or misleading information which may result in the exclusion of the application for further consideration.

3.2 Support available to applicants

3.2.1 Program support

Potential applicants will be invited to attend a program briefing hosted by the RA's Community Programs team. The briefing will provide an overview of the Program, the Program's purpose and

objectives, the application process, and an introduction to key documents including the project plan and budget proposal.

The RA will engage the services of a suitably qualified Aboriginal organisation to provide support to all applicants in the development of their proposals. Applicants should contact the Community Programs Manager via CRP@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au to be connected to this service.

Additionally, applicants can contact one of the Information Officers for the grant for further information and advice on program development via CRP@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au. All enquiries will be recorded by the RA and where required, enquiries may be referred to the probity advisor for additional advice.

3.2.2 SmartyGrants technical support

For technical support with the SmartyGrants platform contact SmartyGrants Technical Assistance via:

- Phone: 03 9320 6888
- Email: service@smartygrants.com.au

Or access support information at: <https://applicanthelp.smartygrants.com.au/>.

4 Assessment process

4.1 Review of grant applications

The RA's Community Programs team will assess all grant applications in collaboration with Aboriginal Outcomes Branch to determine:

- a. The applicant has satisfactorily demonstrated eligibility against sub section 2.1 of these guidelines
- b. The application is complete with all required attachments and supporting documentation.

Where the RA assesses an application as containing incomplete information, the RA reserves the right to:

- a. Provide the applicant with the opportunity to supply the required information within probity requirements
- b. Assess the application based on the information provided
- c. Deem the application to be non-conforming and set it aside from further consideration, i.e., deemed ineligible and not progressed for merit assessment

Applicants may be contacted during this assessment process to clarify information provided in their application. Any requests for additional information will be made in writing and will include timeframes in which a response will be required.

The RA reserves the right to conduct additional due diligence checks on the applicant as required.

4.2 Assessment of grant applications

Eligible and complete applications will be individually assessed by the Community Programs team against the assessment criteria outlined in sub section 2.2 of these guidelines.

The Manager Community Programs will provide a report, including recommendations to approve or not approve applications, to the decision-maker being the Director Partnerships and Program Delivery. The decision-maker will make determination on:

- a. The approval of the grant

- b. The total grant funding amount to be awarded
- c. Any terms and conditions of the grant.

Where the decision-maker deviates from the recommendation of the Manager Community Programs, supporting evidence must be provided and recorded in line with the RA's Record Management Policy 2024.

4.3 Notification of application outcome

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application via their supplied email address.

There is no appeal or review mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant. If your application is unsuccessful, your formal notification will include details on how you may seek feedback on your application.

4.4 Publication of grants information

In accordance with the NSW Grants Administration Guide, certain information in relation to grants awarded through the Program will be published on the NSW Government Grants and Funding webpage no later than 45 calendar days after the grant agreement takes effect.

5 Successful grant applications

5.1 Funding Agreement

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement with the RA. The Funding Agreement will detail:

- a. Eligible project term
- b. Eligible project activities and costs
- c. Ineligible project activities and costs
- d. Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property
- e. Insurances
- f. Reporting requirements
- g. Indicative payment arrangements
- h. Required supporting documentation
- i. Variations
- j. GST
- k. Program variation
- l. Funding acknowledgement
- m. State and Commonwealth audit
- n. Termination of contract
- o. Any other relevant conditions as per the DRFA.

The NSW Government makes no binding funding commitment to an applicant until both parties have signed the Funding Agreement.

5.2 Grant payment

Payments will be made in instalments across the life of the grant program. The first payment will be made upon signing of the Funding Agreement and provision of the funded organisations fee schedule for remuneration of cultural knowledge sharing or an existing policy/procedure on remuneration for cultural knowledge sharing (see Appendix 1). Subsequent payments will be made upon completion of agreed program milestones.

Milestone payments must be evidenced against actual and eligible expenditure incurred and supported by the required evidentiary documentation. If actual eligible expenditure for the period totals less than the milestone payment, instalment amounts will be adjusted accordingly. Where instalments paid in advance exceed the eligible and actual expenditure incurred for the program, the recipient will be required to reimburse the RA the difference at the end of the program.

Grant payments are GST inclusive.

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. It is recommended applicants seek independent professional advice on their taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. The RA does not provide advice on applicants' particular taxation circumstances.

5.3 Request to vary program

Funded organisations must submit a request to vary their approved program plan in writing to CRP@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au. Variations are limited only to the program and works and does not include requests for additional funding.

The RA will review all requests for program variation and where required, consult with NEMA to either approve or decline the variation request.

Each funded organisation is limited to 2 variations during the term of the Program.

Funded organisations must also advise the RA of any changes to their legal status or of any changes or delays to the delivery of their Work Plan.

5.4 Program reporting

Grantees are required to complete regular program delivery and financial reporting. These reports support broader reporting and compliance activities required by the NSW and Australian Governments under the DRFA.

The table below provides a summary of key reporting requirements.

Timeframe	Required reporting
Program establishment	Communications and Engagement plan Community needs and strengths summary Work Plan Fee schedule for the remuneration of cultural knowledge or existing relevant policy/procedure
Monthly	Update against the Work Plan
Quarterly	Financial claim with supporting evidence and documentation that demonstrates: Expenditure aligns to the endorsed Work Plan and eligible costs outlined in clause 2.1.4 of these guidelines

	• An accurate audit trail demonstrating services provided have a nexus to the disaster event • Work Plan review against milestones • Risk Management register review • All receipts and payments related to the program identified in your accounts are reported in accordance with the funding agreement • Evidence of receipts and payments such as invoices, timesheets, payroll records, etc. • balance sheet for the budget allocation for the remuneration of cultural knowledge sharing
Program close	Close out reporting containing: • A transition or exit plan • Program accomplishments • Key learnings • Draft Connecting with Country Framework

The RA is responsible for complying with all NSW and Australian government reporting requirements as outlined in section 3 of the overarching Community Recovery and Resilience Package guidelines.

5.5 Data and information management

The collection of data is an important component of program management. Data helps to monitor and track program progress, as well as contribute to broader evaluation of NSW led disaster recovery programs.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance (including Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property)

The RA acknowledges and supports Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) in this program through the application of Indigenous Data Sovereignty rights and Governance. RA's Community Programs team will work with individual service providers funded in this program to support the community identification of appropriate and meaningful data points for program reporting using the FPIC principles of Free, Prior, Informed, Consent. The AESC position and their funded organisation will be supported to negotiate with community the data and information to be included in reporting, monitoring and evaluation and other forms of data sharing and reuse, to ensure compliance with sub-sections 5.4 and 5.8 of these guidelines. Public acknowledgement

Grant recipients must acknowledge the funding contributions of the Australian and NSW Governments at any public events, in announcements, and any other promotional material or publicity relating to the Program and activities funded through the DRFA. To comply with this requirement, all public advice and media releases should refer to the relevant funding source, as being *"jointly funded by the Australian and NSW Governments under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements"*.

Prior agreement must be reached with all parties for approval of media events and associated materials. To comply with this requirement, grant recipients must provide the RA draft promotional and publicity material for consultation with NEMA. Please allow a minimum of 3-weeks for approval to be obtained.

5.6 Assurance and acquittal

The NSW Government must keep an accurate audit trail for seven (7) years from the end of each financial year in which state expenditure is claimed by the state, or until such time as the state

audited claim is acquitted by the Australian Government. The NSW Government must record and keep appropriate evidence/documentation to support Australian Government assurance activities to ensure amounts being claimed are eligible for reimbursement under the DRFA.

For assurance purposes, the RA and Australian Government may, at any time, request documentation from funding recipients and other state government agencies to evidence compliance with any aspect of the DRFA and other applicable laws, policies, guidelines and regulations. This may include, but not be limited to, access to program level information to confirm acquittal in accordance with the DRFA.

5.7 Unspent funds

Where a grantee's program is completed and there are unspent funds remaining from the funding allocation, the RA will require the grant recipient to return all unspent funds including GST.

5.8 Program evaluation

The Program will be evaluated as part of a broader package of recovery programs delivered in response to AGRN 1212. Grantees may be required to provide input into this evaluation up to 12 months post program conclusion and may include:

- a. Participation in focus groups or interviews
- b. Completing surveys or requests for information
- c. Providing program documentation

Further details regarding the Evaluation are available in section 6 of overarching Community Recovery and Resilience Package guidelines.

6 Additional information

6.1 Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Documents and all related correspondence, attachments and other information related to the Program 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:

- a. Requiring government agencies to make certain sorts of information freely available
- b. Encouraging government agencies to release as much other information as possible
- c. Giving the public an enforceable right to make access applications for government information
- d. Restricting access to information only when there is an overriding public interest against disclosure

6.2 Ethical conduct

It is a condition of the Program that no gifts, benefits, or hospitality are to be made to any NSW Government employee at any time. Any inducement in contravention of this condition may result in an applicant's proposal not being considered.

6.2.1 Conflicts of Interest

The NSW Government requires Conflicts of Interest to be declared where a conflict, or perceived conflict of interest, arises through this program. Staff must declare any conflicts of interest that may arise as a result of this program through the RA's Code of Conduct processes.

6.2.2 Confidentiality

Funding decisions and outcomes must be kept confidential until announced jointly by the Australian and NSW Governments.

Successful applicants may be required to provide a confidentiality undertaking, meaning they must keep the outcome of the application process confidential until a joint public announcement is made.

6.3 Intellectual property

All intellectual property rights in these guidelines remain the property of the RA, unless identified as Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property in accordance with Funding Agreement (clause 5.1.1), and as guided by the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance.

Where relevant, applicants are permitted to use these guidelines for the purpose of preparing an application and must not use these guidelines, or any information contained in these guidelines for any other purpose.

Applications submitted in response to these guidelines remain the property of the applicant, unless otherwise agreed between the applicant and the RA. The applicant agrees that the RA may make copies and reproduce applications for any purpose related to the grant opportunity. In addition, the RA will retain (electronic and hard) copies of all applications.

6.4 Complaint handling

Complaints in relation to the Program should be made in writing and addressed to the Director Partnerships and Program Delivery via CRP@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au. Complaints will be acknowledged within 3 business days, with a response in full provided within 14 business days.

Appendix 1: Remuneration Guidelines

Aboriginal Engagement and Support Coordinators Program

The Remuneration Guidelines: Aboriginal Engagement and Support Coordinators Program (Remuneration Guidelines) establishes the parameters around which First Nations people will be compensated for the time, knowledge and expertise they provide as part of the development of the Connecting with Country Framework. The RA recognises First Nations knowledge as professional and technical advice to be remunerated in alignment with other such professional services.

1. Available funding

Each funded organisation may apportion up to \$40,000 of their \$140,000 Connecting with Country Framework budget allocation to the remuneration of First Nations people who contribute their time and knowledge to the development of the Connecting with Country Framework.

Eligible costs that can be incurred within the funding envelope of up to \$40,000 for the remuneration of cultural knowledge sharing is limited to:

- a. Payment to an individual as per 2.2 of the Remuneration Guidelines

Costs associated with the processing, management or administration of the above listed eligible cost are not eligible under the \$40,000 funding envelope.

2. Distribution of funds

2.1 Fee schedule

In accordance with 5.2 of the Program Guidelines, funded organisations must develop a fee schedule for the remuneration of cultural knowledge sharing, or provide an equivalent existing policy/procedure, prior to the release of the initial grant funding payment. The fee schedule submitted to the RA should demonstrate:

- the fee bracket(s) and related hourly rate or hourly rate range; and
- a description of each fee bracket e.g., the skills, knowledge, contribution related to each fee bracket.

The National Association for the Visual Arts 'Code of Practice for Visual Arts, Craft and Design 2025' may provide guidance for organisations establishing a fee schedule.

Funded organisations must apply the approved fee schedule fairly and consistently throughout the program.

2.2 Payment to an individual

The distribution of grant funds for the remuneration of cultural knowledge must be done in accordance with the following criteria:

- a. Payment is made directly to an eligible participant where:
 - i. The participant has attended and contributed to an eligible activity as outlined in section 3 of the Remuneration Guidelines; and
 - ii. The participant has submitted an invoice with an ABN including date of activity, participant's name, postal address, phone number, bank account details, type of activity being invoiced for and unit (e.g., hours); **OR**
 - iii. Where the participant does not have an ABN they have submitted an ATO Statement by a supplier form and invoice¹ including date of activity, participant's name, postal

¹ Funded organisations may provide invoice templates for completion at the time of an eligible activity.

address, phone number, bank account details, type of activity being invoiced for and unit (e.g., hours)

- b. Payment is received by the eligible recipient within 30 days of attendance at an eligible activity.

2.3 Exclusions

Payments do not apply to Aboriginal community organisations, or businesses or people representing these organisations.

3. Eligible activities

Eligible activities are those conducted with First Nations people for the explicit purpose of contributing to the development of the Connecting with Country Framework via one or more of the following activities:

- a. Yarning circle
- b. Workshop
- c. Focus group
- d. One on one information and knowledge sharing

4. Governance, accounting and record management

In accordance with quarterly financial claims, satisfactory evidence must be provided to support expenditure made against the budget allocation for the remuneration of cultural knowledge sharing.

The funded organisation shall keep adequate records for each payment including the following details:

- a. Date, time and location of eligible activity
- b. Description of the related activity
- c. Total time contributed in hours (e.g., 0.5 hours = 30 minutes, 0.75 = 45 minutes)
- d. Payment amount to participant

The following documentation must also be submitted with each financial claim:

- a. Copies of invoices and Statement by a supplier forms;
- b. Payment approval records
- c. Payment ledgers

In addition, funded organisation must maintain and submit a balance sheet for the remuneration budget as part of quarterly reporting requirements as outlined in sub section 5.4 of the Program Guidelines and complete a full reconciliation at program end.

5. Audit and assurance

All expenditure and financial records may be audited in accordance with subsection 5.6 of the Program Guidelines.

6. Timeframes

Remuneration expenditure can be incurred from the date of execution of the Funding Agreement and up to the program funding end date.