

Heritage NSW, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW DCCEEW)

# NSW Heritage Grants Program

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2025-27 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Grant Guidelines

November 2024



Grant Program Details	
Opening date and time	10:00 AM Monday 4 November 2024
Closing date and time	10:00 AM Thursday 30 January 2025
Application outcome date	May 2025
Project delivery timeframe (for successful applications)	1 July 2025 – 1 May 2027
Evaluation timeframe (for successful applications)	January 2025 – May 2025
Decision-maker	Director Customer Service, Heritage NSW
NSW Government Agency (the Agency)	Heritage NSW
Type of grant opportunity	Targeted, Competitive
Grant value (total available funding for the grant and the available individual grant amounts, excluding GST)	<p><b>Total funding amount:</b> \$500,000 (ex GST)</p> <p><b>Individual grant amounts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$30,000 (ex GST) for an Aboriginal Place management document, or</li> <li>• \$80,000 (ex GST) for works to a declared Aboriginal Place.</li> </ul>
Enquiries	<p>For more information or clarification, contact Heritage NSW between 9:00am and 5:00pm Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) at:</p> <p><b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au">heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au</a></p> <p><b>Phone:</b> (02) 9873 8500</p>

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Overview of the grant</b> .....	<b>2</b>
1.1	Purpose and objectives.....	2
1.2	Grant value.....	2
<b>2</b>	<b>Selection criteria</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.1	Eligibility criteria .....	5
2.1.1	Applicant type.....	5
2.1.2	Project type .....	6
2.1.3	Project costs .....	7
2.1.4	Additional requirements .....	8
2.2	Assessment criteria.....	9
<b>3</b>	<b>Application process</b> .....	<b>12</b>
3.1	How to apply .....	12
3.2	Application checklist .....	12
3.3	Support available to applicants .....	13
<b>4</b>	<b>Assessment process</b> .....	<b>15</b>
4.1	Assessment of grant applications .....	15
4.2	Notification of application outcome.....	16
4.3	Publication of grants information.....	16
<b>5</b>	<b>Successful grant applications</b> .....	<b>18</b>
5.1	Grant agreement and payment .....	18
5.2	Unspent funds .....	18
5.3	Indicative reporting requirements and evaluation.....	19
<b>6</b>	<b>Additional information and resources</b> .....	<b>21</b>
6.1	Complaint handling.....	21
6.2	Access to information.....	21
6.3	Ethical conduct.....	21
6.3.1	Conflict of interest management .....	22
6.3.2	Confidentiality.....	22
6.4	Agency rights.....	22
6.5	Intellectual property .....	23

6.6	No offer .....	23
6.7	Addenda .....	23
6.8	Disclaimer .....	23

# 1

Overview of the grant

# 1 Overview of the grant

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## 1.1 Purpose and objectives

### Purpose

The 2025-27 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Grants program funds projects that support better management, maintenance, conservation and activation of declared Aboriginal Places under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.

### Objectives

The NSW Government is continuing its responsibility in safeguarding Aboriginal heritage through the 2025-27 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Grants program. This program aligns with the Government's broader commitment to ensure Aboriginal cultural heritage is conserved and maintained.

This is a competitive funding round and eligible applicants can apply for up to:

- \$30,000 (ex GST) for an Aboriginal Place management document, or
- \$80,000 (ex GST) for works to a declared Aboriginal Place.

Successful projects must be delivered between July 2025 and May 2027.

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## 1.2 Grant value

### Total value of NSW Heritage Grants Program

\$8,500,000 (ex GST)

### Total value of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Grant category

\$500,000 (ex GST)

### Value of individual Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Grants

- \$30,000 (ex GST) for an Aboriginal Place management document, or
- \$80,000 (ex GST) for works to a declared Aboriginal Place.

## **Co-contributions**

**You do not need to contribute to the project financially unless you are a local council.**

Local councils must match any funding they apply for. They must contribute the same, or more than, the grant amount received. For example, if a council successfully applies for a \$30,000 (ex GST) grant then they must also contribute \$30,000 (ex GST) or more to the project. This means the total project cost will be \$60,000 (ex GST) or more.

Councils may include reasonable in-kind contributions, such as realistic hourly rates for relevant activities, but not in-house project management by salaried staff.

All other applicant types, who are not local government agencies, do not need to match funding for their project.

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# 2

Selection criteria

## 2 Selection criteria

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### 2.1 Eligibility criteria

#### 2.1.1 Applicant type

##### Eligible applicants

You are eligible to apply for the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Grants category if you:

- are the owner, manager, long-term lessee or custodian (or have written support from all custodians/owners) of an Aboriginal Place declared under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 in NSW
- are a Local Aboriginal Land Council, local council, business, non-government organisation, community group or individual, with your operations and headquarters in NSW (if you are a business or incorporated entity)
- have legal responsibility for maintenance and repair of the declared Aboriginal Place.

##### Ineligible applicants

You are not eligible to apply for the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Grants category if:

- you are a State or Federal government agency
- the Aboriginal Place is owned, managed or there is a responsibility for protecting Aboriginal Cultural Heritage on the site by a State or Federal government agency. This includes:
  - Travelling Stock Reserves, where NSW Local Land Services is responsible
  - National Parks and State Conservation Areas, where the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible.
- your business or entity is located or incorporated outside of NSW
- your application is incomplete or does not provide sufficient information to assess against the eligibility criteria.

We will also consider any whole-of-government policy or guidelines that restrict an applicant's access to grants programs.

## 2.1.2 Project type

### Eligible projects

You can apply for funding if:

- it is for a **heritage management document** or **works** within the boundary of a declared Aboriginal Place
- there are no active NSW Heritage Act 1977 or National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 compliance issues at the site
- you have the support of Aboriginal custodians
- the project will be delivered between July 2025 and May 2027.

### Example of eligible projects

Below are examples of projects that you can do as a part of this grants category.

**1. Develop a heritage management document for a declared Aboriginal Place.** Examples are listed below:

- Plan of Management
- Conservation Management Plan
- Conservation Management Strategy
- condition survey
- disaster recovery and preparedness plan.

**2. Works within the boundary of a declared Aboriginal Place.** Examples are listed below:

- physical conservation works, including restoration, reconstruction and preservation
- works to enable activation
- interpretation activities
- maintenance and repair
- works, including fire, services and access upgrades, to allow compliance with the Building Code Australia, Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- works for disaster recovery and preparedness.

## Ineligible projects

Below are examples of projects not allowed under this grants category:

- any project works and associated costs, not including pre-planning, that occurs **before 1 July 2025**
- activities or works that have high levels of negative impact to the Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the site
- keeping place: a place where artefacts or remains can be held in a culturally appropriate manner while awaiting repatriation
- ongoing employee positions or in-house project management by salaried officers as either voluntary or cash contributions
- construction of new buildings
- purchase or relocation of cultural items
- new commemorative monuments, works or headstones
- purchase of equipment, such as lawn mowers, etc
- business set-up or operating costs
- projects that will need to rely on ongoing grant funding
- routine maintenance, such as gardening, gutter cleaning, carpet cleaning, etc
- heritage management documents required for statutory or legal purposes. For example, Aboriginal cultural heritage assessments relating to environmental impact assessments
- projects that are exclusively:
  - to make safe immediately following a disaster that is led by NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) or other emergency services and agencies
  - for revegetation, erosion or land management
  - cultural burning.

### 2.1.3 Project costs

#### Eligible project costs

Below are examples of eligible project costs for this grants category:

- heritage consultant costs, including costs for a specialist to oversee the project for compliance purposes
- purchase of materials including delivery to the Aboriginal Place
- specialist tradespeople
- consultation with cultural knowledge holders, custodians and communities
- obtaining any permits or approvals required, such as an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP), including application fees.

A contingency amount should be included in the budget, noting that costs may change over time. The payment of any approved grant will be based on actual expenditure up to the approved amount only.

Funding caps include:

- administration costs are capped at 10%
- contingency capped at 10%.

### **Ineligible project costs**

Below are examples of project costs not allowed under this grants category:

- any project associated costs, purchases or commitments, not including pre-planning, that **occurs before 1 July 2025**
- ongoing employee positions or in-house project management by salaried officers as either voluntary or cash contributions
- purchase of or relocation costs of cultural items
- new commemorative monuments or headstones
- purchase of equipment, such as lawn mowers, tools, computers, touch screens, audio-visual equipment, etc
- routine maintenance, such as gardening, gutter cleaning, carpet cleaning, etc
- catering costs, except for an opening event and community consultation
- business set-up or operating costs
- insurance costs, other than public liability insurance
- programs, festivals or events to be run at the site
- projects that will rely on ongoing funding
- **funding from other NSW Government Grant programs cannot form part of your co-contribution if you are a local government/council.**

## **2.1.4 Additional requirements**

### **Expected outcomes for the funded activity**

The expected outcomes are projects that support better management, maintenance, conservation and activation of declared Aboriginal Places under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.

### **Delivery timing of the funded activity**

The funding for this grant category is committed to the 2025-26 and 2026-27 financial years. Therefore, the project must be delivered between 1 July 2025 and 1 May 2027. Extensions beyond this date will only be considered under exceptional and/or unforeseen circumstances.

**The project must commence within 3 months of executed funding agreement and be completed within 2 years.**

## Additional Eligibility Requirements

Before you start any work, you'll need to confirm if you need:

- a permit under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*
- approval by your local council.

If the Aboriginal Place is also listed on the State Heritage Register (SHR), or if there is an impact on non-Aboriginal archaeology, you must also consider other permits, approvals or exemptions under the *Heritage Act 1977*.

**You should avoid any harm done to declared Aboriginal Places.** If harm can't be avoided, you must minimise or mitigate the impact. If this is the case, you will need to apply for an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP). You must get your finalised AHIP before you start any project work.

If you do need an AHIP, then you will also need to do formal Aboriginal community consultation. There are guidelines available to help you understand your obligations under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* for work on Aboriginal heritage sites.

## 2.2 Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria outlined below is used to rank and decide which projects will be funded. Your application will only be assessed if it is considered eligible and complete.

Cultural sensitivities and conflicts of interest will be considered throughout the process.

Funding is limited, so you are not guaranteed a grant even if your application meets all the eligibility and assessment criteria.

### 1. Long-term quality heritage outcomes

- Impact of the project on the site's heritage significance, Aboriginal cultural heritage values, and the risks if the project does not happen.
- The Agency will prioritise projects with longer term and more significant quality heritage benefits.
- The Agency may consider how the project fits with any heritage management document for the site and if it uses best practices.

### 2. Level of enduring public benefit

- Use and public accessibility.
- Long-term benefit to the public, such as heritage tourism (if culturally appropriate) or ongoing cultural use.

### 3. Extent of involvement and support from Aboriginal communities

- Level of consultation and engagement with, and support of, relevant Aboriginal communities.

- Extent of collaboration and partnership arrangements to build capacity or economic growth for Aboriginal organisations.

#### **4. Value for money**

- The Agency will review the detailed project budget and scope, as well as supporting documents, to ensure good use of public funds by prioritising cost-effective projects.

#### **5. Quality of the project planning and proof of concept**

- How well you have planned the project, including planning for risk.
- The Agency will consider who has/will be consulted to ensure the quality of work and accuracy of heritage information.

#### **6. Capacity and commitment to deliver the project**

How likely is the project to be successfully completed and any potential risks. The Agency may also consider:

- previous delivery of any grants
- how realistic your project and budget is
- the degree of support, collaboration or partnerships that have relevant expertise and experience
- strategic management or planning documents that support the project
- your capacity to provide any additional funding required for the project.

#### **7. Availability of alternate funding**

- Whether other funding sources are available and the likelihood of the project proceeding without this grant funding.

The Agency reserves the right to consider any other relevant information that emerges following receipt of applications.

# 3

Application process

## 3 Application process

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### 3.1 How to apply

There is one application form which is required to be completed and submitted through SmartyGrants.

It is recommended that you "preview" the application form to see the questions you will be required to answer and the items you will be required to attach, including quotes, photographs and letters of support.

You can only submit one application per Aboriginal Place. This means that you can put in more than one application, but it must be for different projects and different Aboriginal Places.

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### 3.2 Application checklist

#### 1. Verify eligibility:

- Confirm that your site is on the State Heritage Inventory and/or Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System as a declared Aboriginal Place.
- Multiple applications under this grant category can be submitted if you own or manage more than one declared Aboriginal Place. Each application must be for a different project and must pertain to a separate site. **Only one application per declared Aboriginal Place is permitted.**

#### 2. Ownership approval:

- If there are multiple owners or managers of the declared Aboriginal Place, determine who will be the applicant.
- Secure and provide evidence of owner/manager approval to apply for the grant and to deliver the project if successful.

#### 3. Prepare supporting documents:

- Gather necessary documents such as quotes, photos, plans, evidence of support, permissions from owner(s), and any existing approvals.
- Gather documents demonstrating your consultation with and support from relevant Aboriginal custodians.
- Determine if there is an existing heritage management document and how this may support your project.

#### 4. Funding requirements for local councils:

- If you are a local council, ensure you can meet the matched funding requirement.

## 5. Application completeness:

- Incomplete applications or those lacking sufficient information to assess eligibility will be deemed ineligible.

## 6. Using SmartyGrants:

- If you are new to SmartyGrants, make sure you register.
- All applications must be submitted online through [SmartyGrants](#), including any supporting documents and materials.

Reach out via phone on 02 9873 8500 or email [heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au) if you have any questions about project eligibility, using SmartyGrants or heritage approvals.

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## 3.3 Support available to applicants

### Heritage NSW

To help applicants prepare their application, additional information including [frequently asked questions](#) are on the [Heritage NSW web page](#) (at the bottom of the page)

For more information or clarification, contact Heritage NSW between 9:00am and 5:00pm Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) on:

- Email: [heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au)
- Phone: (02) 9873 8500

### SmartyGrants

For help with technical issues on the portal, or for login and user issues, contact SmartyGrants on:

- Email: [service@smartygrants.com.au](mailto:service@smartygrants.com.au)
- Phone: (03) 9320 6888
- Download the [SmartyGrants Help Guide for Applicants](#) or check the [Applicant Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#).

# 4

Assessment process

## 4 Assessment process

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### 4.1 Assessment of grant applications

#### Eligibility check

- A completeness check of your application will be conducted, ensuring it meets all eligibility criteria. Only complete and eligible applications will proceed.
- All applications submitted through [SmartyGrants](#) by the deadline will undergo an eligibility review.
- Late applications will not be accepted. We recommend submitting well before the deadline to avoid technical issues.
- Supporting documents and material must be uploaded online with the application. Submissions via email or after the round closes will not be accepted.

#### Suitability check for eligible applications

- Eligible applications undergo a suitability review conducted by technical and heritage experts at Heritage NSW. This review ensures that the project methodology and proposed works are suitable for the Aboriginal Place.
- If your works are identified in an existing heritage management document, include this reference in your application. Supporting letters from your heritage specialist or tradespeople can also strengthen your submission.

#### Merit assessment

- Applications will be reviewed by an assessment panel convened by the Agency to ensure consistency in assessment. The assessment panel will consist of the Heritage Council's Grants and Sponsorship Advisory Committee (the panel). Each application will be assessed on its merit and compared to other eligible and suitable applications before a recommendation is made in writing by the panel to the decision maker.
- The decision maker is the Director Customer Service, Heritage NSW in accordance with Departmental delegations.
- The panel may also consider factors such as total funding available, suitability for other government funding, and alignment with NSW Government policies.
- Additional advice may be sought from NSW Government agencies or other sources such as probity advisors.

## Decision

The Director Customer Service, Heritage NSW will make the final decision based on the panel's recommendations. The Director will:

- decide which project to fund
- assign any special conditions
- determine if any projects will be placed on a reserve list.

There is no appeal process, and the decision is final.

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## 4.2 Notification of application outcome

### Notification

- You will be notified of the outcome of your application by 30 May 2025.
  - If unsuccessful, we can provide feedback on your application.
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## 4.3 Publication of grants information

You should be aware that the name of the organisation/applicant, details of the project and the amount of funding allocated will be published online.

You should also 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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Successful grant  
applications

## 5 Successful grant applications

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### 5.1 Grant agreement and payment

#### Funding agreements

- Successful applicants will receive a funding agreement to sign electronically via [DocuSign](#).

#### Project commencement

- Successful projects may commence from 1 July 2025, once the funding agreement is executed.
- The project must start within 3 months of signing the funding agreement and be completed by 1 May 2027.
- You will receive grant funding over a 2-year period which will be paid against the milestones as outlined in your funding agreement.
- By July 2025, you will receive 50% of the grant funding paid up-front once the funding agreement is executed. Another 40% will be split between progress reports.
- In May 2027, the Agency will review your outcomes achieved and expenditure to check all funding requirements were met, before paying the remaining 10% funding as a reimbursement. Full conditions for payment will be outlined in the funding agreement and its payment schedule.

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### 5.2 Unspent funds

The Agency may require the grant recipient to return any unspent funds when a project is completed. If the grant recipient requests to use the funds to extend the scope of the project, the Agency may assess that request if it aligns to the objectives of the grant program. The Agency may require the grant recipient to provide supporting information, such as revised economic or social impact data.

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## 5.3 Indicative reporting requirements and evaluation

### Reporting and acquittal

The successful project must submit progress reports as follows:

- **Milestone 1:** Funding agreement entered into (July 2025).
- **Milestone 2:** Project commencement update on progress (by September 2025). All necessary approvals or permits should be **applied** for by this time.
- **Milestone 3:** Progress update (March 2026).
- **Milestone 4:** Progress update (September 2026).
- **Milestone 5:** Final report due (1 May 2027). This must detail project outcomes and expenditure.

In May 2027, the Agency will review your outcomes achieved and expenditure to check all funding requirements were met, before paying the remaining 10% funding as a reimbursement. Full conditions for payment will be outlined in the funding agreement and its payment schedule.

The Agency or its representatives may visit the project at time to inspect progress, provide advice and support, or to promote the project's progress.

# 6

Additional information and  
resources

## 6 Additional information and resources

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### 6.1 Complaint handling

Any concerns about the Fund or individual applications should be submitted in writing to [heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au)

If you do not agree with the way the Agency handled the issue, you may wish to contact the NSW Ombudsman via [ombo.nsw.gov.au](http://ombo.nsw.gov.au)

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### 6.2 Access to information

#### ***Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009***

You 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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### 6.3 Ethical conduct

You must not participate in any anti-competitive conduct.

It is a condition of the grant program application process that no gifts, benefits or hospitality are to be made to any Agency employee at any time. Any inducement in contravention of this condition may result in your proposal not being considered.

### 6.3.1 Conflict of interest management

There may be a requirement for a conflict of interest declaration to be submitted with all proposals or in the application form.

Where a conflict of interest detrimental to the assessment process is identified, mitigation measures must be put in place, or an individual may be asked not to participate in the application, assessment, or delivery stage of the process.

### 6.3.2 Confidentiality

Funding decisions and assessment outcomes must be kept confidential until announced by the NSW Government. You will be required to provide a confidentiality undertaking. This means you must keep the outcome of the application process confidential until the NSW Government makes a public announcement.

Upon accepting a funding deed, details about the funding deed may be made publicly available (subject to information which the Agency deems to be commercial in confidence).

You must agree to not disclosing any confidential information pertaining to the grant program application, or funding deed, without prior written consent of the Agency.

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## 6.4 Agency rights

The Agency may, in its absolute discretion, and without limiting any other right which the Agency may have, do all or any of the following at any time without giving notice or reasons:

- require additional information from an applicant
- change any of the requirements of these Guidelines
- alter or vary any process, procedure or timing related to the grant opportunity, including any process, procedure or timing regarding the consideration or the evaluation of any proposal or all applications
- suspend or terminate the grant opportunity
- negotiate with one or more preferred applicants without prior notice to any other applicant
- terminate any negotiations being conducted with any applicant
- readvertise for new applicants
- consider any non-conforming application
- terminate further participation in the grant opportunity by any applicant for any reason (including if the Agency reasonably considers an application to contain any false or misleading claims or statements)
- not proceed with any funding deed
- proceed with a funding deed in ways not contemplated in these Guidelines.

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## 6.5 Intellectual property

All intellectual property rights in these Guidelines remain the property of the Agency. You are permitted to use these Guidelines for the purpose of preparing an application only. You must not use these Guidelines, or any information contained in these Guidelines for any other purpose.

Applications submitted in response to these Guidelines remain your property, unless otherwise agreed between you and the Agency. You agree that the Agency may make copies and reproduce applications for any purpose related to the grant opportunity. In addition, the Agency will retain (electronic and hard) copies of all applications.

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## 6.6 No offer

These Guidelines are not an offer, recommendation, or invitation by the Agency in respect of any contract or commitment and, subject to a funding deed being fully executed by the parties to it, nothing in these Guidelines will form the basis of any contract or commitment.

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## 6.7 Addenda

The Agency may, in its absolute discretion, issue an addendum to these Guidelines. In each case, an addendum becomes part of these Guidelines.

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## 6.8 Disclaimer

The Agency does not guarantee or warrant and accepts no legal liability whatsoever arising from or connected to, the accuracy, reliability, currency or completeness of any material contained in this publication. Information in this publication is provided as general information only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from a qualified professional.

The Agency recommends that you exercise care and use your own skill and judgment in using information from this publication and that you carefully evaluate the accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance of such information. You should take steps to independently verify the information in this publication and, where appropriate, seek professional advice.

These Guidelines are subject to change at any time at the sole discretion of the Agency.

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