

Application form - Connect IRL Grants

Form Preview

General Information

Applicant Information

Please ensure you have familiarised yourself with the Grant Guidelines before proceeding with your application. The Guidelines can be accessed by [clicking here.](#)

Applications that do not meet the eligibility requirements as outlined in the Guidelines will not be assessed.

No extensions to the application closing date will be granted.

General enquiries about this grant round can be directed to:
connectedcommunities@premiersdepartment.nsw.gov.au

We thank you for your interest in the Connect IRL Grants and encourage you to visit the [NSW Government's Grants and Funding](#) page which may contain other opportunities of interest.

Purpose of the Grant

Young people face increasing challenges in forming meaningful offline connections. A range of factors, including high digital engagement, limited access to safe spaces, and social and economic disadvantage, can contribute to isolation, loneliness and vulnerability. These issues are particularly pronounced for young people from marginalised or diverse backgrounds and identities.

Social media plays a complex role in this landscape. While it can offer vital support and connection it can also hinder offline identity development and increase feelings of disconnection. The NSW Social Media Summit (2024) highlighted the need to balance online engagement with opportunities for face-to-face interaction, noting links between high social media use and increased loneliness.

The Commonwealth's Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024, which delays the age of access for those under 16, aims to protect children from online harms. However, concerns have been raised that such restrictions may unintentionally reduce access to support networks for vulnerable young people.

It also drew attention to the rise in online misogyny and gender-based harassment, which can further alienate young people from safe and supportive online and offline spaces.

Beyond digital factors, broader systemic issues also impact youth connection. A NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Loneliness found that young people in disadvantaged communities experience persistent social isolation, with serious consequences for mental health, education and employment. Recommendation 5 of the Inquiry's report calls for expanded peer support and mentoring programs, both online and in local communities.

Youth crime prevention efforts similarly emphasise the importance of early intervention and trusted relationships. Recent inquiries recommend investment in youth hubs and mentoring to reduce offending and build resilience.

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The NSW Mental Health Commission's strategy development process also identifies loneliness and disconnection as key issues, calling for community-based responses that promote wellbeing through connection.

The Connect IRL Grants Program aims to support young people including those who may be highly vulnerable, and are from isolated, marginalised and/or diverse communities by:

- building resilience and providing opportunities to strengthen one's identity, self-efficacy and mental health in the offline world
- creating spaces for young people with different backgrounds and/or lived experiences to connect with others offline
- creating opportunities to improve critical thinking, engage in respectful dialogue and build leadership capacity
- establishing trusted mentoring partnerships to support development of personal resilience and sustain offline connections
- including parents, carers and other trusted adults in the support ecosystem around young people to support long term outcomes for young people.

Grant Program Objectives

There are four program objectives:

- 1. Strengthened offline connections by delivering inclusive, pro-social activities and safe discussion spaces that support mental health, foster mutual understanding, reduce isolation, and build peer networks — particularly for those from marginalised, diverse, or geographically isolated communities.**
- 2. Improved young people's interpersonal, civic, and leadership skills through structured mentoring programs that promote healthy relationships, empathy, mutual respect, and active civic participation.**
- 3. Enhanced mentor capabilities by increasing skills, including trauma-informed and lived experience approaches, to enable mentors to more effectively support vulnerable young people in building resilience and confidence within a safe and impactful environment.**
- 4. Strengthened long-term support systems for young people achieved by the inclusion of families/trusted adults leading to a sustainable and holistic support network available to participants beyond the span of the program.**

A grant obtained through this program is a one-off payment with no guarantee of further funding after the completion of the project.

Successful organisations will need to enter into a funding agreement.

Funded projects must be delivered in full within 24 months of execution of their funding agreement.

The Department is responsible for administering this grant opportunity in accordance with the NSW Grant Administration Guide. See: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/grants-administration-guide>.

Grant value

A total of \$2 million (exclusive of GST) will be available under the Connect IRL Grants Program.

Individual grants of \$10,000 up to \$250,000 (exclusive of GST) will be awarded.

Applicants please note: the above information is to provide applicants a general overview of the program only. Applicants should ensure they have familiarised themselves with the [Grant Guidelines](#) before proceeding with any application.

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Applicant Details

* indicates a required field

Name of Applicant Organisation *

Organisation Name

Please note that the organisation must be a not-for-profit with existing services in New South Wales.

Applicant Name: *

Address *

Address

Address Line 1, Suburb/Town, State/Province, and Postcode are required.

Email *

Must be an email address.

Phone Number *

Must be an Australian phone number.

ABN *

The ABN provided will be used to look up the following information. Click Lookup above to check that you have entered the ABN correctly.

Information from the Australian Business Register	
ABN	
Entity name	
ABN status	
Entity type	
Goods & Services Tax (GST)	
DGR Endorsed	
ATO Charity Type	More information
ACNC Registration	
Tax Concessions	

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Main business location

Must be an ABN.
Organisation must have a valid ABN to be eligible

Assessment Criteria

* indicates a required field

Please provide a description of your proposed project. *

Word count:

How does your proposal address the Grant Program Objectives? *

How does your proposal demonstrate the capacity to engage and support young people who may exhibit high risk factors, or who may be isolated, marginalised and/or from diverse communities? *

How is your organisation especially equipped to carry out the proposed project, based on previous experience in delivering similar projects? *

Please demonstrate how you will deliver the project on time and on budget, ensuring that the grant provision is consistent with the principle of value for money. *

You may wish to upload supporting documents (i.e. budget, project plan) at the end of this form.

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Please demonstrate your commitment to co-design and consultation with young people as part of the proposed project. *

File Upload

Attach a file:

Please upload any relevant project files, this could include a project plan or project budget. Please note that only files relevant to the application will be considered.

Thank you

Thank you for your application.

We hope to advise applicants of the outcome by mid to late March 2026.

Declaration

* indicates a required field

The Applicant represents and warrants that this application has been submitted by an authorised representative of the Applicant (e.g. CEO, Chief Financial Officer, General Manager, Director, Chair of the Board, President, authorised manager etc).

Where this Application is submitted in the course of employment by a representative of any kind (e.g. authorised representative or agent) of the Applicant, you: (i) acknowledge and agree that the Applicant is deemed to be jointly and separately bound by this application; and (ii) represent and warrant that you have the authority to represent and bind the Applicant as contemplated by this provision.

By submitting this application form I hereby declare that:

- I agree for my project to be automatically considered in other NSW funding programs;
- I have read and understood each of the acknowledgements, agreements, representations and warranties provided above, and that each of these are true and correct;
- All information provided including the responses to each question in the relevant sections of this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge;
- Any information contained in this application may be disclosed to other Government agencies, staff administering the program, and to external stakeholders (including consultants, lawyers and other advisers) as part of the assessment of this application;
- I am authorised to submit this application on behalf of, and have the authority to represent and bind the Applicant;

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- I understand that any false declaration may render this application ineligible/invalid; and
- All relevant conflicts of interest have been declared

Authorisation

I agree *

Yes

Name of Authorised Person *

Title First Name Last Name

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Position *

Position held in applicant organisation

Phone Number *

Must be an Australian phone number.

Email *