

Fixing Country Bridges

Frequently asked question

Q. Who can apply for funding under this program?

The aim of the Fixing Country Bridges program is to create a new legacy for our local road network, enabling councils to replace hundreds of timber bridges in poor condition, reducing councils' maintenance burden and better connecting regional and rural communities. The Fixing Country Bridges program is available to the local government bodies with eligible projects as outlined in the [Program Guidelines](#).

Q. What changes have been made in Round 2 of this program?

The outcomes and objectives of the Program are the same as previous rounds. Transport for NSW will continue to look for quality applications that meet the eligibility criteria and strongly align to the regional NSW outcomes within Future Transport 2056. Refinements have been made in this round based on feedback from councils and include enhancements to the application form and refinements to the payments made at project milestones. The revised program guidelines can be downloaded from the [Fixing Country Bridges website](#).

Q. If a project has already received funding under the Fixing Country Bridges program in Round 1 is it eligible to apply for additional funding in Round 2?

Projects deemed successful under Round 1 of the Fixing Country Bridges program are not eligible for additional funding in Round 2.

Councils that have projects funded under Round 1 can apply for funding for additional bridges in Round 2.

Q. Does the program fund an increased service level such as a bridge duplication or extensive approach works?

The purpose of the Fixing Country Bridges program is to replace poor condition timber bridges across regional NSW. If there is significant benefit demonstrated through an increased level of service such as upgraded bridge approach works or widening, this will be evaluated as part of the evaluation process and balanced against the increased cost of the project.

All applications and subsequent evaluation processes have been designed to ensure each successful project aligns with the program objectives. Each application will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria as outlined in the program guidelines.

We are encouraging co-contributions as a way to increase the scope of projects to include things like duplication or extensive road approach works. However, if a co-contribution is not possible and council believes upgrades will support the objectives of the program, we encourage applicants to provide details and evidence to support any upgrades.

Q. What level of assistance does the Department of Primary Industries (DPI Fisheries) provide in this program?

Transport for NSW and DPI Fisheries have streamlined the required approvals process for the program to ensure funded sites can be upgraded within the shortest time frame possible, while still meeting the statutory requirements of the Fisheries Management Act 1994 (FMA) and associated regulations to prevent obstruction to fish passage and damage to fish habitat. Transport for NSW will provide support to councils in obtaining the required fisheries permits.

Councils should access the DPI Fisheries' [Council and Developer Toolkit](#) for current permit application [forms](#). Up-to-date [policies](#) relating to general waterway crossings, crossing replacement and refurbishment, temporary crossings and bridges are summarised at the end of this document.

The [Fisheries Spatial Data Portal](#) provides online access to key fish habitat, threatened species distribution and other fisheries related information.

For further information on Fisheries process for the Fixing Country Bridges program, please submit enquiries to ahp.central@dpi.nsw.gov.au and cc scott.nichols@dpi.nsw.gov.au for guidance.

Q. Are bridges that have other material components eligible if they are mostly timber? i.e. Bailey bridges

Among the primary principles of the program is to reduce the maintenance burden and renewal backlog posed by timber bridges on rural and regional councils. The scope of the program is to replace timber bridges in poor condition. If bridges are predominantly timber and councils believe they fit this description, they are encouraged to put in an application for the program and include evidence to support the consideration of their projects.

Q. Does the Bridges Renewal program funding classify as co-contribution?

Alternative funding sources for the program are welcome, including directly from councils and other grant programs such as the Bridges Renewal program. Though it is important that any co-contribution meets the requirements of each program, councils are encouraged to consider how grant programs can complement each other for the benefit of the overall bridge project.

Q. Can councils apply for funding for design as well as construction?

Yes, under the Fixing Country Bridges program councils are able to apply for funding for all aspects of the bridge replacement project including design, construction and project management. However, design only will not be eligible for funding.

Q. How will funding be released to councils if the application is approved?

Project funding will be released in four stages:

Gate 1: 40 per cent at execution of project funding deed

Gate 2: 20 per cent at completion of project design

Gate 3: 30 per cent at commencement of construction

Gate 4: Balance of project actual costs – up to 10 per cent of total funding

Q. Is there a minimum co-contribution amount required for eligibility?

Co-contributions are not an eligibility requirement, however it does form part of the merit assessment. Projects that have a co-contribution amount will receive additional weighting over those that are seeking the full costs of the project.

Co-contributions enable Transport for NSW to deliver a greater number of projects across regional NSW and evaluation criteria has been developed to incentivise co-contributions.

Q. What if council has applied for funding under alternate programs?

In these instances councils should apply for the full funding amount and note that co-funding has been applied for. If successful in the alternate program, councils should notify Transport for NSW of the amount of co-funding received. Notifications relating to the program can be made through the Smarty Grants portal or the relevant Transport for NSW Local Government Manager.

Q. What if the project has already commenced?

Projects that have already commenced may be eligible for funding under the program. Applications will be assessed on a case by case basis, however funding can not be retrospectively applied.

Q. If a bridge is already partially funded under another program, can works commence prior to funding being announced under the Fixing Country Bridges program?

It is recommended that projects under this program are not started until 100% funded. If construction works do commence, funding can not be applied retrospectively.

Q. Will there be future rounds of funding?

This round of applications will inform the need for further rounds of funding. Following the application phase, a full prioritised list of bridges will be developed for the program to exhaust remaining program funding. Future rounds may be considered.

Q. What assistance is Transport for NSW offering during delivery?

Transport for NSW is engaging with councils to understand how we can best work together to deliver the program. Webinars will be held to assist councils in the application process and councils are encouraged to attend these to help inform their delivery options. Councils are also encouraged to contact the Transport for NSW Local Government Manager in your region to discuss any specific questions or suggestions for your council.

Transport for NSW will work directly with councils to assist with program delivery and assurance, identifying opportunities for skill sharing and development throughout the program. As a result of this councils may be requested to be part of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) group to enable synergies for procurement and/or delivery with other councils. This may include opportunities to procure contractors to deliver multiple projects on behalf of different councils to optimise value for money.

Q. Is there a cap on how much funding each application can request?

No cap applies for individual applications. Councils with any successful projects with an estimated total cost of over \$10 million will also be required to provide a final business case for approval and acceptance in line with the relevant Transport for NSW guidelines as part of the Gate 2 milestone.

See [Transport for NSW Business Case](#) for more information on the minimum requirements of the business case.

Q. Can councils apply for multiple projects?

Yes, councils can apply for multiple projects that meet the eligibility criteria. Transport for NSW requires individual applications for each project and may request additional information to gauge capacity to deliver in the context of existing delivery commitments.

Q. What are the delivery timeframes under Round 2?

Transport for NSW is looking for projects that are deliverable within the allocated program timeframe. i.e., construction to commence within 12 months and open to traffic within 24 months of executing the funding deed. Note there is a 30-day expiration to accept the offer and execute the funding deed. Councils will have up to 3 months from open to traffic to achieve project completion (Gate 4).

Extended delivery timelines will only be considered for successful projects where significant complexities in delivery exist and/or where councils may already have significant deliver commitments of other grant programs, including Fixing Country Bridges Round 1 and Fixing Local Roads projects. Transport for NSW will engage with councils that have an existing high volume of projects to determine the best approach to achieving an optimum delivery program.

Q. What happens if the total project cost is less than the funding that has been granted?

Upon completion of the project, council will be required to submit a Project Completion Report detailing the total project cost. Transport for NSW can only make final payment based on the actual cost of the project.

Any project savings will be deducted from the balance of final payment.

Q: What if a project cannot be delivered by council within the timeframe?

Transport for NSW is aware councils may be experiencing some capacity constraints to deliver the project either by its internal workforce or through a third party.

Councils are encouraged to submit application for these projects and identify within the application any risks they may have identified relative to delivering the project within the required timeframes of 24 months from the commencement of the funding deed.

Upon assessing each application, Transport for NSW will consider opportunities to provide support through procurement or assurance, including detailed discussions with councils to mitigate the risk of project delays.

More questions?

Questions about Fixing Country Bridges, including eligibility and the application process, can be emailed to fixingcountrybridges@transport.nsw.gov.au