



About the Program

The NSW Government is committed to improving accessibility to the state's waterways, and in February 2021 announced the allocation of \$2 million to the *Boating Access Dredging Program*. This grants program will replace the Rescuing our Waterways program which was previously administered by Crown Lands.

This funding has been made available from the \$205 million *Maritime Infrastructure Stimulus Program* announced in October 2020.

The new program is administered by Transport for NSW (TfNSW), with the Maritime Infrastructure Delivery Office (MIDO) now being responsible for coordinating the planning and delivery of maritime infrastructure, including dredging, in collaboration with our partners and stakeholders.

The MIDO brings NSW Government maritime infrastructure functions, programs and staff into a single unit following the transfer of a number of relevant functions from Crown Lands in July 2020.

The *Boating Access Dredging Program* allocates grant funding to councils for local dredging projects to ensure safe navigation of channels and entrances, particularly in regional waterways. This will ensure better access to local waterways for recreational and commercial boaters and other users. This also creates flow-on benefits for tourism, marine based businesses and local economies.

The application, assessment and project implementation processes are described in detail below.

Coastal Dredging Strategy

Coastal waterways are dynamic sedimentary systems. Periodic maintenance dredging is often required to help achieve the NSW Government's objectives of providing improved access and safety in our waterways and river entrances. The focus of the Coastal Dredging Strategy is the delivery of navigation dredging projects. The Coastal Dredging Strategy can be viewed at: https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/142744/NSW-coastal-dredging-strategy.pdf

The Coastal Dredging Strategy outlines waterway user benefits and other expected favourable outcomes, state-wide priority dredging preferences over a 5 year period, adopted sediment, environmental and statutory approvals management principles and funding need to maintain healthy and accessible waterways in NSW.

Under the Coastal Dredging Strategy, the state government is responsible for the dredging of navigational channels in key investment locations identified in the Maritime Infrastructure Plan (MIP) (refer Chapter 6 - Key Investment Locations) and in navigational channels providing access to state owned maritime infrastructure, while Councils maintain other navigational channels (i.e. local waterways).

Who can apply for grant funding?

Councils can apply for funding under the Program for minor dredging works and are expected to make a financial contribution of at least 25 per cent of the total project costs, with TfNSW contributing up to 75 per cent. In limited circumstances, exceptions to this funding contribution ratio may be considered if the project scores highly on other assessment criteria and/or the applicant is able to clearly demonstrate why it cannot make the minimum financial contribution.

Funding contributions from the applicant could include committed funds from other government agencies, donations and in-kind contributions such as materials, labour and use of machinery.

The level of financial and where applicable, in-kind contribution to be provided by an applicant must be detailed as part of their application. The internal administration and project management costs such as staff salaries are not considered labour and should not be included as part of the applicants funding contribution.

To assist early start of projects and encourage timely project completion, applicants will be able to request up to 25 per cent of the grant value to be available as soon as the grant funding deed is finalised.

Councils are responsible for managing and delivering their projects, which includes obtaining all necessary approvals and delivering the project in accordance with the requirements of all relevant legislation including WHS legislation.

What will be funded?

Eligible projects are expected to improve navigation and waterway access and thereby promote recreational and commercial boating opportunities, economic growth and productivity. Dredging projects which are eligible for funding under the program include:

- Dredging projects that will deliver navigational benefits and improved access to waterways for recreational and commercial vessels
- Dredging projects that will improve access to onwater public infrastructure such as boat ramps and wharves
- Pre-dredge activities for projects which are eligible and likely to proceed to dredging.
- Dredging strategies and/or their supporting studies (e.g. sediment hydrodynamics)

All projects funded under the program must be commenced within six months of execution of the conditions of grant document and completed within 18 months of securing funding.

How much is available?

Currently, \$2 million of the *Maritime Infrastructure Stimulus Program* has been allocated to the *Boating Access Dredging Program*. The Program will generally fund up to 75 per cent of the total project cost up to a maximum grant value of \$500,000.

Should demand for dredging funding exceed the level of funding that is available, priority will be given to those applications which best address the assessment criteria below.

The application process

To apply for funding under the program, applicants must complete and submit an application form, which is available at <https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/maritime/projects/nsw-boating-access-dredging-program/index.html>, to the MIDO at mido@transport.nsw.gov.au.

Applicants should ensure they:

- Contact the MIDO to discuss potential projects and any unanswered questions before submitting an application
- Provide sufficient and accurate information in the application form
- Address in sufficient detail each of the assessment criteria (see below)
- Address any regulatory requirements for the proposed activity (e.g. planning approval)
- Attach all relevant documentation.

Should a formal application be received after the deadline, TfNSW may or may not proceed with the application at its absolute discretion. Applicants should contact the MIDO to discuss their individual circumstances.

The assessment process

Each application received before the closing date will be assessed in accordance with the following steps:

1. All applications will be reviewed to ensure they are complete and eligible for consideration (refer to Assessment Criteria below).
2. The MIDO will liaise with relevant public authorities as required as part of an initial assessment of the applications.
3. Applications will then be reviewed and ranked by the Boating Access Dredging Program Assessment Committee consisting of senior representatives of TfNSW.
4. The highest ranked projects within the available program budget will be recommended for funding.

Assessment methodology

A set of assessment criteria (refer below) will be used throughout the assessment process to assist in determining:

- Whether the application is eligible for consideration in the process.
- The merits of the proposed activity e.g. the nature of the problems it will address and/or the benefits to the community it will deliver.
- The relative priority (ranking) of those applications deemed to have sufficient merit.

Mandatory criteria will be evaluated on a 'yes/no' basis, where an answer of 'no' to any of these will mean that the application is ineligible for funding consideration. Assessable criteria will be evaluated on a comparative, weighted basis.

Applicant criteria

The mandatory criteria are:

- The application is supported by the authorised senior officer of the organisation.
- The organisation has the capability and capacity to ensure the activity is effectively, efficiently and safely completed.
- The organisation agrees to enter into, and be bound by, the conditions in the Conditions of Grant document.

The assessable criterion is:

- Demonstrated performance in relation to the delivery of government supported projects and in meeting governance obligations e.g. post-activity project and expenditure reporting.

Activity criteria

The mandatory criterion is:

- The activity will provide navigational benefits and promote economic growth and productivity.

The assessable criteria are:

- The activity is supported by relevant user groups, the local community, and other relevant government authorities.
- The activity will deliver direct benefits to current and potential waterway users.
- The activity is technically feasible and represents value for money.
- Commitment by Council to obtain a longer term licence for dredging works to avoid the need for a new licence for future dredging works.

An application's final ranking will determine whether or not it can be supported from the available funds.

Summary of assessment criteria and weightings

Assessment Criteria	Weighting %
Demonstrated performance in relation to the delivery of government supported projects and in meeting governance obligations e.g. post-activity project and expenditure reporting	20%
The activity is supported by relevant user groups, the local community, and other relevant government authorities.	20%
The activity will deliver direct benefits to current and potential waterway users.	25%
The activity is technically feasible and represents value for money.	25%
Commitment by Council to obtain a longer term licence for dredging works to avoid the need for a new licence for future dredging works.	10%

The payments and reporting process

The following will occur subsequent to the approval of recommended projects under the Boating Access Dredging Program:

- The MIDO will write to successful applicants offering them a funding grant.
- The MIDO will write to unsuccessful applicants.
- Successful applicants will have two months to accept the offer and terms referred to in the “TfNSW Conditions of Grant for NSW Boating Access Dredging Program”, otherwise the offer will lapse.
- The successful applicant will also be required to submit a Work Plan (in the prescribed format) which details the Project’s planned activities, budget, timeline, output/outcomes and milestones.
- The successful applicant will complete the activity within 18 months of accepting the grant (unless otherwise agreed and specified in the letter of offer).
- The successful applicant will submit milestone and post activity reports.
- The successful applicant will submit an expenditure claim based on actual expenditure and milestone post activity reports.

Timetable

Timeline	Milestone
5 March 2021	Call for applications
30 April 2021	Applications close
May 2021	Evaluation Panel assesses applications
June 2021	Applicants notified and successful projects announced.
July – August 2021	Successful applicants sign condition of grant document and commence works.
July 2021 – December 2022	Dredging project delivery

