NSW GOVERNMENT | Office of Local Government

Office of Local Government

RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP GRANTS PROGRAM

GUIDELINES

AUGUST 2014

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1. Introduction

In its response to the reports of the Companion Animals Taskforce, the NSW Government has committed $900,000 over three years to a new Responsible Pet Ownership Grants Program (commencing in 2014-15, through to 2016-17).

The grants program is seeking to fund responsible pet ownership projects with a focus on innovation and collaboration. Funded projects may include those which:

✓ target increased compliance with the microchipping and lifetime registration requirements of the *Companion Animals Act 1998*

✓ target desexing of animals to reduce pet overpopulation

✓ address dangerous dog issues in the community

✓ address roaming cats in the community

✓ provide opportunities for cross-council sharing of better practice

✓ are likely to bring about long-term benefits in the community and promote responsible pet ownership.

The grants program includes a focus on targeting areas with large numbers of unregistered dogs, dog attacks or dangerous dog issues.

The grants program encourages councils and other partner organisations to work collaboratively to avoid duplication of effort and gain maximum benefit from the available funds. Councils which have existing innovative responsible pet education programs in place may be considered for funding to enable programs to be rolled out in other councils or across the sector.

Applications which are unsuccessful in Round 1 may be considered for funding in future Rounds. Unsuccessful applicants should contact the Office of Local Government to discuss areas for further development before re-submitting an application in a subsequent Round.

Applicants must familiarise themselves with all aspects of these Guidelines, and address all requirements of these Guidelines in their application.

The Office of Local Government reserves the right to amend funding priorities and grant amounts over future Rounds of the Grants Program in response to evaluation and feedback throughout the life of the Grants Program.

2. Application process

The Office of Local Government will administer the Grants Program.

Applications must be sent to the **Responsible Pet Ownership Grants Program** email address: rpograntes@dlg.nsw.gov.au. Applications will not be considered if any of the required information has not been included.

Supporting documents may be included with applications where relevant.

The **closing date** for Round 1 applications is **Friday, 3 October 2014**. Applications must be received in the rpograntes@dlg.nsw.gov.au inbox by 5.00pm on that day. Late applications will not be considered.

All applications must be supported by at least one sponsor. The sponsor/s should be the General Manager/s of the relevant council/s. Where a collaboration with an external organisation is proposed in the application, the senior officer of the relevant external organisation may also be included as a co-sponsor.

The **written agreement of all relevant sponsors** for the project should be included in the application.

It is the responsibility of the project sponsor/s to ensure compliance with the conditions of the grant.

3. Project funding limits

A total of $300,000 is available for projects in each Round of the grants program. Individual projects will be funded up to a maximum of $15,000 per local government area (pro-rata for collaborative submissions, up to a maximum of $50,000).

Applications should identify the amount sought and provide some detail regarding how the figure was arrived at, and how it will be spent.

Consideration may be given to funding high-impact, high quality projects in three stages across each of the three Rounds, contingent on evidence of success after the initial Round.

The following examples illustrate how the grants may be applied.

Example 1: How the funding may be applied to a council program:

Program partners	Contribution to project
Council	$12,500
Animal welfare agency	$10,000
RPO grant amount	$12,500
Total available for program	**$35,000**

Example 2: How the funding may be applied to a collaborative program:

Collaboration partners	Contribution to project
Council 1	$30,000
Council 2	$20,000
Council 3	$20,000
Animal welfare agency	$10,000
RPO grant amount	$50,000
Total available for program	**$130,000**

4. Assessment Criteria for Grant Funding

Essential criteria

All project proposals must meet the following criteria to qualify for funding from this grants program:

1. Projects must promote innovative solutions to drive ongoing responsible pet ownership in the community.

2. Projects must target one or more of the following:
   - areas where microchipping and/or lifetime registration rates are low
   - areas with high levels of menacing and dangerous dogs
   - areas with high numbers of dog attacks
   - areas where there are high levels of non-desexed and roaming cats.

3. Where a project will provide services to individual pet owners, it should target people with socio-economic disadvantage. Evidence must be provided of an appropriate means testing system to identify suitable project participants.

4. Each project must be accompanied by a targeted promotional campaign/community education component to support its successful implementation - an overview of which must be provided in the application. The Office of Local Government reserves the right to use materials produced from the granted funds at its discretion.

5. Projects must align with the council's companion animals management policies, and companion animals management strategies where they exist.

6. Projects must demonstrate alignment with the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan. Any contribution to be made by the council to the project should be reflected in the Resourcing Strategy.

Priority projects

Priority will be given to projects which:

✓ promote innovative solutions to drive ongoing responsible pet ownership in the community

✓ provide opportunities to promote better practice in responsible pet ownership

✓ involve demonstrated collaboration between councils and/or with other government agencies (eg: Housing NSW), animal welfare organisations, veterinarians or other industry stakeholders (eg: pet shops).

✓ include an equal (or greater) co-contribution (in cash or in kind) from the applicant council/s and/or partners to the overall cost of the project.

Identifying target communities

Councils should utilise data available to them on the Companion Animals Register to identify target communities for project funding. This may include areas with high numbers of menacing and dangerous dog incidents, high numbers of roaming cats, or low rates of desexing, identification and registration.

Councils may also develop projects which target areas of high socio-economic disadvantage. These include areas with low levels of average income, high levels of unemployment or high levels of public housing accommodation.

Councils will be aware of such areas within their local government area. However, they may also wish to consider the Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to determine relevant target areas. More information about SEIFA can be found on the ABS website: http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2039.0Main%20Features12 006?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=2039.0&issue=2006&num=&view.

Determining the eligibility of participants

For those projects which include communities with low socio-economic status, councils should employ a mechanism to identify suitable applicants for assistance under targeted programs. While certain geographic areas may contain high numbers of people who would normally be discouraged from microchipping or desexing their animals due to financial constraints, not all members of the target area may require such assistance.

Factors for councils to consider in determining the eligibility of pet owners for relevant responsible pet ownership program services may include:

- the person is a pensioner or has a Health Care Card

- other ongoing extenuating financial circumstances exist which are preventing the person from microchipping or desexing their pet.

Note: pet owners who fall outside the low socio-economic status definition may still participate in Grants Program projects, but councils should consider how best to provide services to these participants on a fee-for-service basis.

The importance of community education

Councils applying for grant funding must also commit to including an education component in their project. Targeted programs are most effective when accompanied by education about responsible pet ownership. This supports a culture of responsible pet ownership in communities where the programs are run, rather than merely providing a free or cheap one-off service which is used and quickly forgotten.

As well as providing pet owners with responsible pet ownership information and engaging them in discussion about responsible pet ownership at the time of contact (eg when bringing their pet in to be desexed), programs should be supported with other education/promotion that reinforces the key responsible pet ownership messages. This may include (but is not limited to):

- use of local social media groups

- distribution of material (eg: brochures or fliers) by post or through other relevant channels (eg Centrelink, local pet stores)

- information at local parks and off-leash areas in the targeted area

- one-to-one engagement in areas where pet owners take their dogs (eg dog training and socialisation activities)

- promotions on local radio or in local newspapers.

5. Examples of Responsible Pet Ownership programs

Responsible pet ownership through shared better practice

Councils already undertaking innovative practice to promote responsible pet ownership may utilise this funding opportunity to enhance and expand the scope of the program. This might include, for example, partnering with neighbouring councils, developing materials that can be utilised across the State, or undertaking an education campaign in collaboration with an animal welfare agency.

Microchipping and registration programs

Projects may offer free or discounted microchipping to encourage animal owners to comply with their obligation to have their cat or dog identified. Microchipping also provides an opportunity to educate animal owners on responsible pet ownership practices and assists councils in ensuring compliance with the enforcement of the lifetime registration requirements of the Act.

Microchipping assists in reuniting lost animals with their owners. This reduces the number of unclaimed animals, and impacts on euthanasia rates.

Projects may also target specific communities where other social disadvantages may impact on microchipping, registration and/or desexing rates. This may include, for example, communities where English is a second language.

Desexing programs

Targeted desexing programs are recognised as being a highly effective way of addressing pet overpopulation. Targeted desexing programs refer primarily to one-off, short-term campaigns focussed on areas of identified need. They commonly involve subsidised or free desexing, depending on available resources. Targeted desexing has also been recognised as effective in reducing the number of unmicrochipped animals as the campaigns often involve simultaneous subsidised or free microchipping.

Targeted desexing programs appear to achieve especially positive results when focussed on areas of socio-economic disadvantage, by providing an incentive to pet owners who might normally struggle to meet the cost of desexing and therefore avoid registering their animal due to the higher cost for undesexed animals.

Other communities, for example those with a population from non-English speaking backgrounds, may also benefit from tailored education (for example in key community languages) that promotes responsible pet ownership messages.

Targeted responsible pet ownership education

Rates of dog attacks and dangerous dog declarations may be higher in some communities. Programs which promote effective control of dogs, appropriate dog training and other good practices related to responsible pet ownership in these communities may also be considered for funding.

Collaborations

Council responsible pet ownership programs delivered in partnership with animal welfare agencies and/or veterinarians and others can be effective ways of reaching target groups in the community. An example is the RSPCA NSW's Community Animal Welfare Scheme (CAWS) which has been delivered in partnership with some NSW councils.

Councils may also choose to partner with agencies such as Housing NSW to work with specific target groups in the community.

6. Assessment of Applications

Office of Local Government officers will assess applications against the criteria and priorities outlined in these guidelines, and make recommendations to the Chief Executive.

Councils will be advised in writing of the outcome of their application, and grant funds will be disbursed early in the second quarter of the 2014-15 financial year.

Councils that are unsuccessful in Round 1 of the Grants Program may re-submit for subsequent Rounds.

Councils may be eligible for funding across each Round of the program, contingent on evidence of success following the initial funding Round.

7. Grant Conditions

Successful grant applicants will be provided with 100%* of the grant funding following approval and submission of an agreement signed by the applicant council's General Manager.

> (* *Note*: in the event that an application is approved for funding over more than one Round of the grants program, an annual pro-rata amount will be forwarded to the successful council at the commencement of each Round year.)

Please note that:

1. The project should commence and all funding allocations for the project should be made by **31 March 2015**.

2. **All grants money should be expended by 30 June 2015***. If a one-year funded project has not been completed by this date, the Office of Local Government may require immediate repayment of the funding, at its discretion.

> (* *Note*: in the event that an application is approved for funding over more than one Round of the grants program, the applicant should be able to demonstrate that an equivalent of the pro-rata amount of the grant has been expended by this time.)

3. If the council is **unable to proceed** with the funded project for any reason, it must inform the Office of Local Government in writing as soon as possible, and immediately repay the funding.

4. Mechanisms should be in place to collect relevant data to inform the project report required for the grant acquittal at the conclusion of the program. This may include ensuring there is a system available to track participation in the project, or the number of animals treated etc.

5. In the event of any **variation to the project**, the council must notify the Office of Local Government in writing as soon as practicable.

6. Council should provide appropriate public **acknowledgement** of the NSW Government's Responsible Pet Ownership Grants Program's contribution to the project, for example in publicity about the project.

7. Any animals desexed under programs funded by the Responsible Pet Ownership Grants Program **must** also be microchipped and registered, as required under the *Companion Animals Act 1998* (ie above 12 weeks of age, unless otherwise exempt under the Act).

8. If an applicant **breaches** any of the conditions in these guidelines, the Office of Local Government reserves the right to withhold or reclaim, in part or in whole, the grant funding, at its sole discretion.

9. The Office of Local Government reserves the **right to use,** duplicate or replicate educational, promotional and other responsible pet ownership **materials produced** by councils from the granted funds at its discretion.

8. Project Reporting Requirements

Successful councils will be required to submit a project report to the Office of Local Government by **31 July 2015 ***.

> (***** *Note*: in the event that an application is approved for funding over more than one Round of the grants program, an interim progress report may be required.)

The project report will include:

- a detailed **statement of expenditure**

- a **report on the outcomes of the project**. The report should include information such as:

  ✓ what responsible pet ownership outcomes have been achieved

  ✓ any innovations or better practice achieved through the implementation of the project

  ✓ the success (or otherwise) of collaborative arrangements for the delivery of the program

  ✓ the number of animals treated under the program (microchipped, registered or desexed) as relevant

  ✓ an overview of feedback received about the program from participants or other stakeholders

  ✓ an overview of any significant challenges faced in the implementation of the program (and how these were overcome, if relevant)

  ✓ any other program outcomes of note.

9. Further Information

For further information please contact:

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10. Application checklist

Applicants should confirm that all items below have been addressed before submitting an application to the Responsible Pet Ownership Grants Program.

☐ The amount sought is accompanied by a rationale or budget detailing how the funding will be allocated to achieve project outcomes.

☐ The council has detailed what co-contribution it and/or partners to the project will make in cash or in kind.

☐ A project sponsor (or sponsors) has been identified.

☐ Written agreement of the project sponsor/s is attached to the application.

☐ Project partners have been identified.

☐ Written agreement of project partners to contribute to the project is attached to the application.

☐ The project proposal identifies how it targets one or more responsible pet ownership priority areas (as defined in sections 1 and 2 of the Guidelines).

☐ The proposal considers how it will means-test project recipients (where applicable) to ensure that the funds are expended in areas of highest need.

☐ An overview of the education component of the proposal is attached.

☐ The relationship of the project to the objectives of the council's existing companion animals policies, and Strategic Companion Animals Management Plan is demonstrated (where such a plan is in place).

☐ Alignment of the project with the objectives of the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan is demonstrated.

☐ Demonstration of how the council's contribution to the project has been considered in the Resourcing Strategy is included.

☐ The applicant agrees to commence the project and allocate all Grants Program funds by 31 March 2015, and expend funds by 30 June 2015.

☐ The applicant agrees to acquit the funds with a statement of expenditure and an outcomes report submitted by 31 July 2015.

☐ The applicant agrees to advise the Office of Local Government immediately of any variation in the project from what was proposed in the application.

☐ The applicant agrees to advise the Office of Local Government immediately if the proposed project is unable to proceed, and to return granted funds.

☐ The applicant agrees to acknowledge the Responsible Pet Ownership Grants fund in any publicity about the project.