



BUSH FIRE RISK MITIGATION AND

RESILIENCE FUNDING

APPLICATION GUIDE

FY19

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Part 1. Introduction

The NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) administers and manages funds to assist land managers to undertake mitigation works and resilience activities to protect the NSW community from bush fires. Funds are made available through the NSW RFS budget or State and Commonwealth government initiatives.

All land managers, public and private, are obliged under s63 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* to undertake certain actions to prevent the occurrence and minimise the spread of bush fires. Each public land manager is expected to commit its own resources to meeting these obligations. Funding provided through programmes administered by the NSW RFS is intended to resource extra mitigation activities that are additional to those supported by internal organisation budgets.

Part 2. Who Can Apply For Funding?

Funding applications may be submitted by the following agencies:

- Local Councils
- State Government Agencies
- Forestry Corporation of NSW
- NSW RFS
- Fire and Rescue NSW

Applications may be prepared by any staff member of a Local Council or State Government Agency / Corporation. For all State Government Agencies / Corporations, funding applications must be authorised and submitted by a nominated manager.

Where an activity crosses multiple tenures, one agency must 'sponsor' the entire work. If the application is successful, the sponsoring agency will be the grant recipient and will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement with the NSW RFS. The sponsoring agency must provide all the administration and management required for the works to be carried out. This includes obtaining permissions to enter, environmental and other necessary approvals. The sponsoring agency must be capable of and willing to provide engineering oversight of the works, where relevant.

Part 3. What Will Be Considered For Funding

Applications for funding will be accepted for the following:

- Hazard reduction activities
- Fire trail works
- Community resilience projects

Applications must be submitted online through the NSW RFS Grant Funding Portal (<https://funding.rfs.nsw.gov.au>). Hazard reduction, strategic fire breaks and fire trail applications must be for a single, identifiable discrete activity. Proposals seeking funds for suites of works (e.g. funding for fire trail, fire break and asset protection zone maintenance across a Council area) do not qualify for funding.

In addition, activities on Commonwealth land are generally excluded even if these works are sponsored by an eligible agency.

HAZARD REDUCTION (HR)

Reduction of bush fire fuel by burning or mechanical methods are eligible for funding. This includes:

- burning
- hand clearing
- brush cutting / mowing
- slashing / trittering
- ploughing / grading
- tree pruning / removal

Strategic fire breaks will also be considered and the criteria for this type of works is outlined in Part 6.

Hazard reduction activities must be correctly registered in BRIMS and scheduled for the applicable financial year. Burning work that extends onto private land is permitted, however, other method types (e.g. mechanical) are excluded. NSW RFS Districts (DTZs) may only seek hazard reduction funding assistance to cover the costs of burning works conducted by NSW RFS brigades.

FIRE TRAILS

The fire trail must be correctly registered in the relevant Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) Fire Trail Register, in accordance with the definitions and requirements of *Bush Fire Coordinating Committee Policy 2/2007 Fire Trails*. Trails that have been incorrectly classified are not eligible.

Strategic and tactical trails identified in the BFMCs Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) Plan are eligible. The FAFT Plan treatment register will inform the funding priorities for a BFMC area. Any works for strategic trails should be consistent with the requirements of the NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards. Please note that the requirements of BFCC Policy 2/2007 will apply until a FAFT Plan has been produced for the BFMC area.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECTS (OTHER)

This type of application is typically reserved for projects other than hazard reduction activities or fire trail works. In order to qualify for funding, resilience projects must be directly for the purpose of bush fire mitigation or resilience (e.g. upgrade of fire spotting tower, installation of strategic fire fighting water storage). They should be designed to achieve safer, sustainable communities better able to withstand the effects of bush fires and reduce the risk, damage and losses caused by them.

This funding is generally intended for physical works rather than studies and the like. Proposals should be lodged via the NSW RFS Grant Funding Portal as 'Other' applications.

Part 4. What Will Not Be Considered For Funding

Applications associated with the following circumstances will generally not be eligible for funding.

- Works required to comply with a condition of development consent imposed after 1 August 2002 on advice from the NSW RFS.
- Works required to comply with a Notice or Order issued by the NSW RFS.
- Work which is unnecessary for fire suppression and / or mitigation (e.g. undertaken for commercial, tourism or stock movement purposes).
- Works that involve routine maintenance of roads, sports fields, managed recreation areas or similar.
- Fire trail work significantly beyond the requirements of the NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards.
- Inspection or assessment reports, such as environmental assessment.
- Oversight, project management or other administrative costs (other than specialist input e.g. engineering certification of construction works).
- Payment of agency personnel costs that are part of normal business (e.g. normal salary cost for employees).
- Payment of agency personnel costs including overtime, penalty rates, allowances and the like.

- Fire fighting and other capital resources that are part of normal business (e.g. brigade stations, fire tankers, incendiary launchers, water pumps etc.).
- Purchase of equipment, tools or machinery, even if it will be used on the activity (e.g. weed spraying vehicles, chainsaws, leaf blowers etc.).
- Rehabilitation or restoration works.
- Removal and/or disposal of rubbish or hazardous materials (e.g. asbestos, unexploded ordinance etc.).
- Reimbursement for works undertaken and/or costs incurred prior to funding approval.
- Works on Commonwealth land.
- Mechanical works on private tenure.

Programme funds will not be allocated to pay normal staff costs for agencies. However, there may be instances where it would be more cost effective to utilise the agency's own staff, rather than engaging contractors to carry out certain work. For example, it may be cheaper to use the agency's staff to operate the agency's own plant, than to engage a contractor and plant to undertake the same work. If an agency wishes to use its own resources, it will need to retain documentation which demonstrates that this is the least expensive option. This documentation will need to be produced upon request from the NSW RFS or for auditing purposes.

Part 5. Making a Funding Application

Applications must be made via the NSW RFS Grant Funding Portal, which can be accessed via the following link - <https://funding.rfs.nsw.gov.au>. Community resilience projects should be entered as 'Other' applications. Please note that the Grant Funding Portal is optimised for Google Chrome browser and mobile devices.

An agency must not submit an application unless it realistically expects to complete the works by the end of the financial year. All details of the application and representations made are the responsibility of the applicant organisation. Your application will be assessed against datasets held by NSW RFS based on the information provided in the proposal.

Any application found to contain incorrect, misleading or untruthful information will not be considered for funding. If provision of false or misleading information is discovered, the matter may be referred for further investigation by the NSW RFS and / or external bodies established to investigate such matters.

For more information on preparing and submitting an application, please refer to the Grants Funding Portal User Guide.

Part 6. Assessment Criteria

The NSW RFS Commissioner will determine the allocation of funds to submitted applications. Any applications to be funded from other State or Commonwealth funding sources may require Ministerial approval. Funds will be allocated to maximise the outcomes and benefits for the community.

In determining funding approvals, the NSW RFS Commissioner has regard to:

- BFCC Policy 1/2011 - Allocation Principles for Funding of Bush Fire Mitigation Works
- The aims and intent of Commonwealth funding programmes and
- Advice on local priorities as identified by the BFMCs.

The allocation of funding will take into account the BFRMPs and FAFT Plan for an area, as these documents effectively identify works that are most significant for the protection of the community and its assets. Where funding is to be provided to support hazard reduction burning by NSW RFS brigades, the additional benefits to be gained from giving volunteers opportunity to be involved with live fire in a planned and controlled environment, is also considered.

Applications submitted by organisations external to the NSW RFS will be collated and forwarded to their associated BFMC for review and prioritisation prior to assessment. This occurs shortly after the advertised closing date for that round of funding.

In determining funding approvals, consideration will also be given to the past performance of applicants in complying with conditions of grant funding and completion of funded works.

The criteria for assessing hazard reduction, strategic fire breaks and fire trail applications is outlined below. Other applications will be evaluated on their merits and advice may be sought from the NSW Grants Advisory Panel. The assessment processes employed by the NSW RFS is contained in Appendix 1 of this Guide.

HAZARD REDUCTION (HR)

The following criteria applies to hazard reduction funding applications.

- Is it a single activity?
- Are all costs eligible for funding? (Costs should exclude GST)
- Are the costs considered reasonable? (Applications >\$50,000 require a scope of works)
- Is it bona fide hazard reduction works?
- Are the works spatially identified and scheduled for the relevant financial year in BRIMS?
- Is the proposal related to the BFRMP?

Linking hazard reduction applications to the BFRMP is important as it provides a risk rating which will assist in the prioritisation and allocation of funding. Preference will be given to applications that are directly related to assets and treatments identified in the BFRMP. Applications that do not link with the BFRMP will be given a lower priority and may not be funded.

A single hazard reduction activity involves methods that are located within a 5km diameter circle with individual treatment areas not separated by more than 1km. In addition, all methods within a hazard reduction application should protect assets with the same risk rating. Hazard reduction proposals that are widely dispersed are not eligible for funding (see example below).

Figure 1 – Example of a widely dispersed hazard reduction activity that is not eligible for funding



STRATEGIC FIRE BREAKS

Strategic fire breaks are linear fuel reduced features within a landscape that are designed to assist in the management of bush fires. The criteria for hazard reduction applications also applies to this type of activity.

Applications for strategic fire breaks must clearly demonstrate that the works provide protection to assets identified in the BFRMP. They should be placed in strategic locations that will assist in mitigating the impact of traditional or known fire paths in the area. In addition, the proposed works must extend well beyond routine maintenance of road sides / transport corridors and be of a sufficient width to reduce the risk of fire spread.

An application must involve only a single fire break. If you have multiple fire breaks in an area for which you wish to seek funding, a separate application must be submitted for each individual activity. Where multiple breaks have been recorded in a single BRIMS record, they are ineligible for funding.

FIRE TRAILS

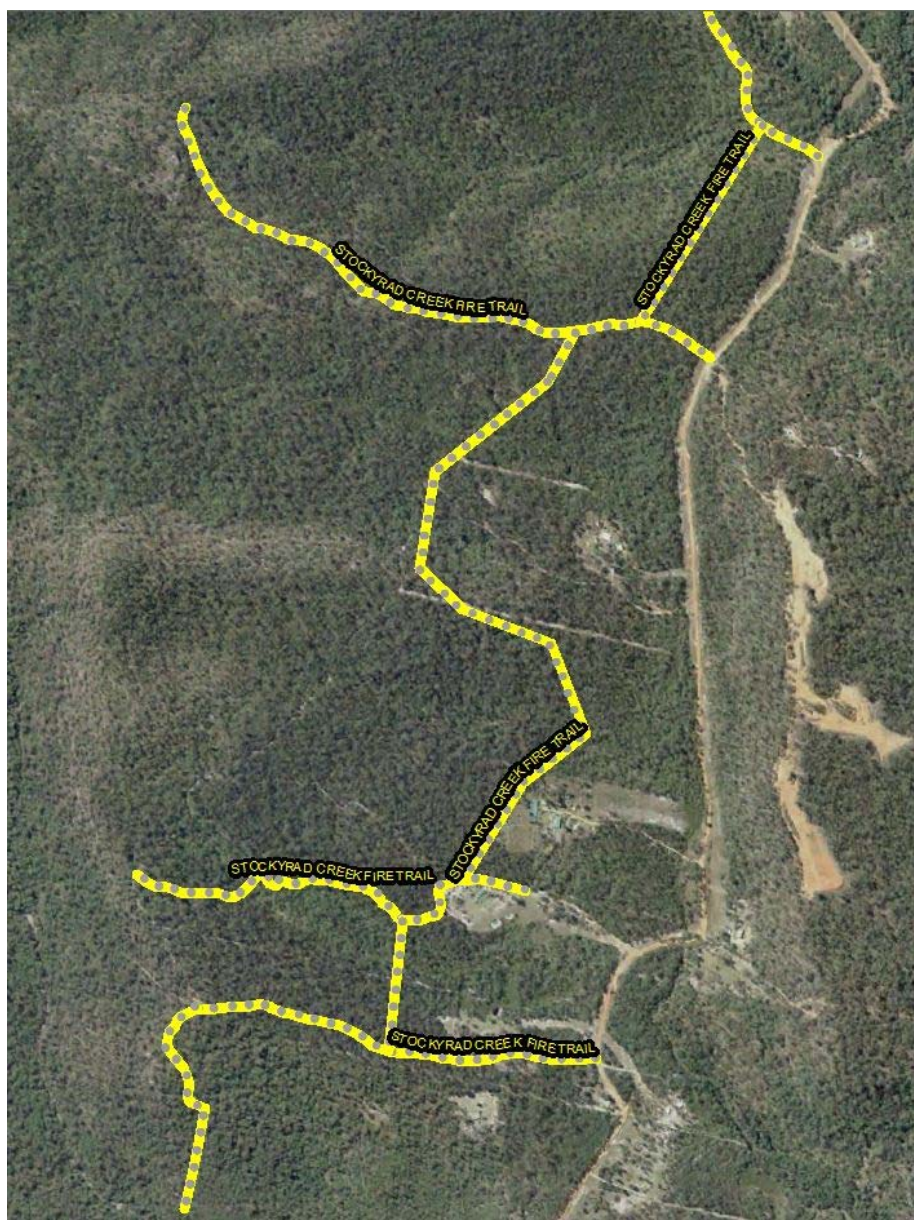
The following criteria applies to fire trail funding applications.

- Is it a single fire trail?
- Are the Segment IDs valid?
- Are all costs eligible for funding? (Costs should exclude GST)
- Are the costs considered reasonable? (Applications >\$50,000 require a scope of works)
- Is it a bona fide fire trail as per BFCC Policy 2/2007?
- Does the fire trail traverse private land?

Any applications that are located on private tenure will need to be accompanied with a landowner agreement as per Section 62M of the *Rural Fire Act 1997*. Until a FAFT Plan is in place for a BFMC area, fire trail works on private tenure will only be considered where it provides a critical link to the network on public land.

An application must involve only a single trail. If you have multiple fire trails in an area for which you wish to seek funding, a separate application must be submitted for each trail. Where multiple trails have been recorded in the BFMC Fire Trail Register with the same name, they are ineligible for funding (see example below).

Figure 2 – Example of a multiple fire trail that is not eligible for funding



For fire trails identified in the BFMCs FAFT Plan, a separate set of criteria will apply which is to be developed in consultation with the NSW Grants Advisory Panel.

FEEDBACK

The NSW RFS will provide all agencies with written advice as to the outcome of their application as soon as practically possible. In addition, each BFMC will be advised of the assessment results for proposals submitted for their area. This will occur via email correspondence to the Executive Officer. Feedback will generally indicate whether the application is approved, not supported or requires further information.

For applications that have not been approved, the applicant is able to submit additional information addressing the issues raised in the feedback. Where the NSW RFS is of the view that the relevant assessment criteria has been addressed in light of the additional information, the decision may be overturned with an approval issued for the works.

Part 7. Approval Process

Successful applications for each agency will be identified in a Works Approval Schedule. The Works Approval Schedule will provide details on the amount of funding that has been approved and the date in which the works are to be completed. Any conditions of the funding may also be issued by the NSW RFS with the Works Approval Schedule.

In order to claim funding, the organisation will be required to enter into a formal Funding Agreement with the NSW RFS. The Funding Agreement outlines the specific terms for the funding including requirements for reporting, payment claims, record keeping, auditing and the like.

Appendix 1 – NSW RFS Assessment Process

Hazard Reduction Funding Application Assessment Process



Fire Trail Funding Application Assessment Process

