



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Strategic Fire Trails Funding Program

SUPPLEMENTARY APPLICATION GUIDE

FY 23

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Part 1. Introduction

This supplementary application guide specifically deals with funding for the construction of new fire trails, or upgrade and maintenance of fire trails identified as Strategic by a BFMC, and where works to be undertaken are aimed at ensuring a fire trails meets the requirements of the NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards.

Currently, Guardian is unable to record application for Fire Trail works. With the closure of the funding portal, Operational Business is providing you with the following guidance in respect to making any funding applications for Strategic Fire Trail Works for the Financial Year 23.

Due to the significant amounts of approved funded fire trail works impacted by the weather during the last financial year, there is an abundance of works that are still outstanding. For this reason, and with the constraints surrounding the allocation of funding, there will be **NO** applications for funding approved at least for the first quarter of FY23.

Applications can still be submitted through the guidelines described below, which will be registered by the Operational Business Team for possible consideration after Quarter 1.

Please familiarise yourself with these guidelines. Some of the information has been duplicated from the application guide, however it is specific to Strategic Fire Trail Works.

Part 2. Who can apply for funding?

Funding applications may be submitted by the following:

- Local Government Councils,
- State Government Agencies
- Forestry Corporation of NSW
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- Fire & Rescue NSW

Applications must be prepared by an authorised staff member of the NSW RFS or Government Agency / Corporation.

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 administration and management required for the works to be carried out. This may include contractor procurement, 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

Fire Trail Works

Eligible fire trails for funding are as follows:

Strategic Fire Trails

Strategic Fire trails that are identified in the Bush Fire Management Committees (BFMC) Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) Plan for upgrade to the NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards.

Consideration will be given to draft FAFT Plans. A draft plan is considered as a plan that has been agreed to by the BFMC and is awaiting approval of the BFCC.

Applications may be submitted for both the Planning and Design Phase and / or Delivery, Certification Phase of Strategic Fire Trail works as well as maintenance of certified fire trails. Details are outlined in Part 6 of this guide.

Tactical Fire Trails

Tactical Fire Trails that are identified in the BFMC's FAFT Plan, *however these will be considered on a case-by-case basis and subject to the availability of funds*. Priority will be for those trails identified to be upgraded to a Strategic Fire Trail.

Should there be a private tenure consideration applicable to your application, prior to submitting, please consult with the local NSW RFS District office.

Part 4. What will NOT be considered for funding?

Applications associated with the following circumstances will generally not be eligible for funding. Please note that some exemptions may apply:

- Fire trail work significantly beyond the requirements of the *NSW RFS Fire Trail*

Standards;

- 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 – see *Note below);
- Payment of agency personnel costs including overtime, penalty rates, allowances and the like;
- Purchase of equipment, tools or machinery, even if it will be used on the activity (e.g. chainsaws, leaf blowers etc.);
- Rehabilitation or restoration works;
- Removal and / or disposal of rubbish or hazardous material (e.g. asbestos, unexploded ordinance etc.). Some exemptions may apply.
- Reimbursement for works undertaken and / or costs incurred prior to funding approval;
- Works on Commonwealth Land;
- Manual and mechanical hazard reduction works on private tenure;
- Generally, maintenance of Strategic Fire Trails that have been certified as compliant with the *NSW RFS Fire Trails Standards*. These works are generally funded through internal Agency Programs.

*Note – As outlined above, program 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 utilize 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 demonstrating that this was 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

A template has been provided for you to complete the funding application information required for assessment. This template incorporates the information that was submitted in the portal and what will be required in Guardian when that system becomes available.

This completed template, and all supporting documentation, needs to be emailed to the Operational Business Team via bushfiregrantprogrammes@rfs.nsw.gov.au

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 a data set held by the 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 deal with such matters.

If you require any assistance preparing or submitted an application, please contact either the local RFS District or Operational Business or Fire Trails Team (see Part 8 of this guide for details).

Part 6. Assessment criteria

The application will be reviewed and registered with the Operational Business Team and then sent to the NSW RFS Fire Trails team for technical review. Once the Fire Trails Team completes their review, they will provide the Operational Business Team a submission with their support or non-support of the funding application.

The NSW RFS Commissioner or delegate 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 and will considered generally in accordance with BFMC Treatment Registers or BFMC stated priorities.

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

- BFCC Policy 1/2011 – Allocation Principles for Funding of Bush Fire Mitigation Works;
- The aim and intent of other State or Commonwealth funding programs;
- Bush Fire Risk Management Plans and advice on local priorities as identified by BFMC's;
- BFMC Fire Access and Fire Trail Plan.

The allocation of funding will take into account the Bush Fire Risk Management Plans (BFRMP), FAFT Plan and Treatment Register (where available) for an area, as these documents effectively identify works that are most important for the protection of the community and its assets.

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.

Fire Trails

The NSW Government is establishing a more integrated and strategic network of fire trails and access arrangements to improve accessibility for firefighters during bush fires and hazard reduction burns. Funding is available for work required to establish or bring up to standard these fire trails.

Works that bring Strategic Fire Trails identified in the BFMC's FAFT Plan to the NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards are eligible. The FAFT Plan Treatment Register, and / or agreements between local land management agencies and firefighting authorities will inform the local funding priorities for a BFMC area. Any works for Strategic Fire Trails must be consistent with the requirements of the NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards.

For these types of applications, the following criteria applies:

- Works are to bring the entire length of the fire trail to the NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards; exceptions to this may be granted subject to the operational benefit being sought in regards to the proposed works.
- An application must be for a single Strategic Fire Trail identified through a FAFT Plan, Applications for a complex of fire trails may be considered on a case by case basis – see #Note.
- The fire trail works have been identified in the FAFT Plan Treatment Register
- The fire trail is spatially identified in the FAFT Plan
- All costs must be eligible for funding as per Part 3 and 4 of this guide (costs should exclude GST)
- The costs are considered reasonable for the proposed scope of works, represent 'value for money' and support the operational capabilities required.

#Note – A complex is a series of fire trails that work together as part of any potential fire suppression or fire management operation. Applications may apply to more than one trail

where the upgrade results in an operational benefit and is part of the Strategic Fire Trail network identified in the FAFT plan. Small trail lengths that serve as access to the Strategic Fire Trail or complex can be included on a case by case basis. *Prior to submission of a complex fire trail application discussions should be undertaken with the RFS Fire Trails Team to ensure that the proposal is eligible.*

Funding for Tactical Fire Trails have a lower priority and will only be considered on a case by case basis. Approval will be subject to the availability of funds.

For larger / high cost Strategic Fire Trail works, funding applications are recommended to be done in two phases:

1. Planning and Design Phase – this phase covers the eligible costs associated with identifying and finalising the trail design and quote for works required to bring the trail to meet the NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards.
 - Costs may include the scoping and quoting, consideration will also be given to costs for environmental approvals and any specialists engineering design works (e.g. bridges, drainage)
 - Funding applications must include supporting documentation (i.e. quotes, FAFT data for the fire trail identification).

Once the planning and design phase has been undertaken and all constraints associated with private land and environmental impact assessment have been identified and resolved application for phase 2 can be submitted.

2. Delivery and Certification Phase – this phase is for the construction works associated with the upgrade or establishment of the Strategic fire trail.
 - Applications must include a detailed scoping document and quote for the completion of works to meet the NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards – evidence provided to show works are in accordance with the agreed design and environmental impact assessment
 - All necessary planning approval must be finalised prior to submission of the funding application

Note – Proposals that do not strictly comply with the above requirements can still be considered for funding on a case by case basis at the discretion of the NSW RFS.

Feedback

The NSW RFS will provide all agencies with advice as to the outcome of their application as soon as practical.

Informal monthly updates will be conducted in relation to how activities are tracking.

Half yearly updates will be requested on the progress of activities in relation to those that have not been completed and funding which has been spent to enable accurate forward planning of funding allocation.

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

Part 7. Approval Process

Terms and conditions for the funding will be provided with the approval advice and will include requirements for reporting, payment claims, record keeping, auditing and variation requests.

Fire Trail approvals that will be project managed by Agencies will be via Funding Agreements with all relevant reimbursement claims processed through Quarterly reporting. This will be done directly with the Agency.

Part 8. Procedures for Financial Management – RFS Project Managed Approvals

Strategic Fire Trails Purchase Order Procedures:

Purchase orders are to be generated by NSW RFS in accordance with the current procurement policy, P4.1.3. This policy can be accessed on the NSW RFS intranet site

The following details are provided in addition these requirements:

- Strategic Fire Trails purchase orders are to be raised by the relevant personnel managing the Fire Trail within each Area Command.
- Purchase orders can only be raised when works have been approved by Operational Business.
- All purchase orders need to be raised prior to the implementation of the approved activity.
- Costs are GST excluded.
- Delivery date MUST be the end of the Financial year (e.g.: 30/6/2023) unless the project is planned over multiple financial years. Funding is only guaranteed per financial year unless authorised to be carried forward. All works scheduled for the financial year need to be completed by 31/5/2023 (relevant Financial Year). This allows Operational Business time to work with the relevant Area Commands to ensure that all invoices have been goods receipted and works closed within the financial year.
- Attachments – Original Memo with valid quote. Check costs against the purchase order.
- Purchase orders for Strategic Fire Trails are to be raised against General Ledger is 560210 and Cost Centre is 70003.
- Header Text. Fund number and Name MUST be entered into this field.
- Fire Trail purchase orders are raised with individual lines for Milestones e.g. FUND123456782101112 10% completed, FUND123456782101112 25% completed, FUND123456782101112 50% completed works ETC. Invoices will be received via milestones and not the total approved amount.
- Purchase orders for Fire Trail construction works WILL be rejected if no milestones are on the purchase order.

Variations to Approved Works:

- Any variation to an approved Strategic Fire Trail **MUST** be approved prior to those works being undertaken and prior to advising any contractors/suppliers.
- The variation must include appropriate supporting documentation and show value for money and include details confirming that the expense could not have been reasonably anticipated.
- Operational Business will endeavour to meet that cost but it is dependent on budget and the type of variation. This may not be approved within the current financial year.
- Please seek advice from Operational Business.

Goods Receipting Procedures:

- Good receipting is the responsibility of the relevant personnel managing the Fire Trail within each Area Command.
- The invoice **MUST** meet the cost of the purchase order and indicate Milestones payments as per purchase order.
- Note to NSW RFS staff:
 - Goods receipting **MUST** be against the individual line item as indicated on the invoice. **DO NOT** goods receipt the whole purchase order (all the boxes) if further invoices are to be received against those milestones.
 - Prior to goods receipting, information must be attached to the purchase order in SAP from the Strategic Fire Trails Team advising:
 - FUND # and name of works
 - The works are completed or ongoing.
 - The works being invoiced have been undertaken
 - The works meet the standard and the invoice is supported for payment.
 - A template will be provided by Operational Business that can be used to capture this information and be saved to the purchase order
 - **DO NOT** goods receipt the purchase order unless the above email from the Strategic Fire Trails Team is attached.
 - The purchase order **MUST** be goods receipted by the relevant personnel managing the Fire Trail.
 - Any questions or concerns **MUST** be raised with Operational Business prior to the works being good receipted.

Closure of Purchase orders:

- Information from the Strategic Fire Trails team advising that the funding can be updated to be completed and forward to Operational Business – for our records & auditing purposes. The template provided by Operational Business can be used to capture this information and be saved to the purchase order
- If completed and there is still funding on the purchase order, please contact procurement to clear the amount remaining.

Part 9. Contacts

For any enquiries regarding the *processing of funds for fire trails*, please contact NSW RFS Operations Support – Operational Business on bushfiregrantprogrammes@rfs.nsw.gov.au or (02) 8741 5493.

For any enquiries regarding the *FAFT Funding Applications*, please contact the NSW RFS Fire Trails Team on firetrails@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

For any enquiries regarding accessing Guardian or system issues, please contact the NSW RFS on service.desk@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Acronyms

BFCC	Bush Fire Coordinating Committee
BFMC	Bush Fire Management Committee
BFRMP	Bush Fire Risk Management Plan
FAFT	Fire Access and Fire Trail
RFFF	Rural Fire Fighting Fund

Part 9. Attachments

1. Application template
2. Certification template