



Bush Fire Risk Mitigation and
Resilience Grants Program

APPLICATION GUIDE

FY22

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Part 1. Introduction

The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW 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 Section 63 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* to undertake certain actions to prevent the occurrence and minimise the spread of bush fires. Every public land manager is expected to commit its own resources to meeting these obligations. Funding provided through programs 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 Government Councils
- State Government Agencies
- Forestry Corporation of NSW
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- Fire and Rescue NSW

Applications may be prepared by any authorised 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 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

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 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 and asset protection zone maintenance across the whole of a Council area) do not qualify for funding under this program.

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

Hazard Reduction Activities (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 Trail Works

Eligible fire trails for funding are as follows:

Strategic Fire Trails that are identified in the Bush Fire Management Committees (BFMC) Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) Plan.

- 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 Delivery and Certification Phase of Strategic Fire Trail works. Details are outlined in Part 6.

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.*

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

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, community engagement initiatives). 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.

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 based on advice from the RFS;
- Works required to comply with a Notice or Order issued by the RFS;
- Work that is unnecessary for fire suppression / mitigation (eg. undertaken for commercial, tourism or stock movement purposes) or goes beyond that reasonably required to protect assets;
- 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 (some exceptions apply for Strategic Fire Trails identified through a FAFT Plan);
- Oversight, project management or other administrative costs (other than specialist input eg. engineering certification of construction works);
- Payment of agency personnel costs that are part of normal business (eg. normal salary cost for employees – see *Note);
- 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 (eg. fire stations, fire tankers, water pumps etc.);
- Purchase of equipment, tools or machinery, even if it will be used on the activity (eg. weed spraying vehicles, chainsaws, leaf blowers etc.);
- Rehabilitation or restoration works;
- Removal and/or disposal of rubbish or hazardous materials (eg. 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 & Mechanical Hazard Reduction works on private tenure;
- Generally, maintenance of Strategic Fire Trails that have been certified as compliant with the NSW RFS Fire Trail 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 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 RFS or for auditing purposes.

Part 5. Making a Funding Application

Applications must be made by authorised agency staff via the NSW RFS Grant Funding Portal, which can be accessed via the following link - <https://funding.rfs.nsw.gov.au>.

Council and State government staff who currently use NSW RFS systems such as BRIMS/Guardian and ICON will already have an account and username. If you do not have an account, you will need to request access: service.desk@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Hazard Reduction applications should be entered as 'Hazard Reduction' applications within the Funding Portal.

Fire Trail applications should be entered as 'Other' applications within the Funding Portal.

Community resilience projects should be entered as 'Other' applications within the Funding Portal.

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 the 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 submitting an application, please contact either the local RFS District or Operational Business (see Part 8 for details).

Part 6. Assessment Criteria

The 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.

In determining funding approvals, the 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 Management Plans and advice on local priorities as identified by BFMCs.
- 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 for an area, as these documents effectively identify works that are most important 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 of giving volunteers opportunities to be involved with live fire in a planned and controlled environment, is also considered.

Some 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 each round of funding.

Other applications will be evaluated on their merits and advice may be sought from the NSW Grants Advisory Panel.

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.

HAZARD REDUCTION (HR)

The following criteria applies to hazard reduction funding applications.

- The application must be for a single activity.
- All costs must be eligible for funding as per Part 3 and 4 (Costs should exclude GST).
- The costs are considered reasonable for the proposed scope of works (Applications >\$50,000 require a scope of works and photos).
- The works must be spatially identified and scheduled for the relevant financial year in BRIMS / Guardian.
- The proposed works must be bona fide hazard reduction.
- The proposal must relate 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).

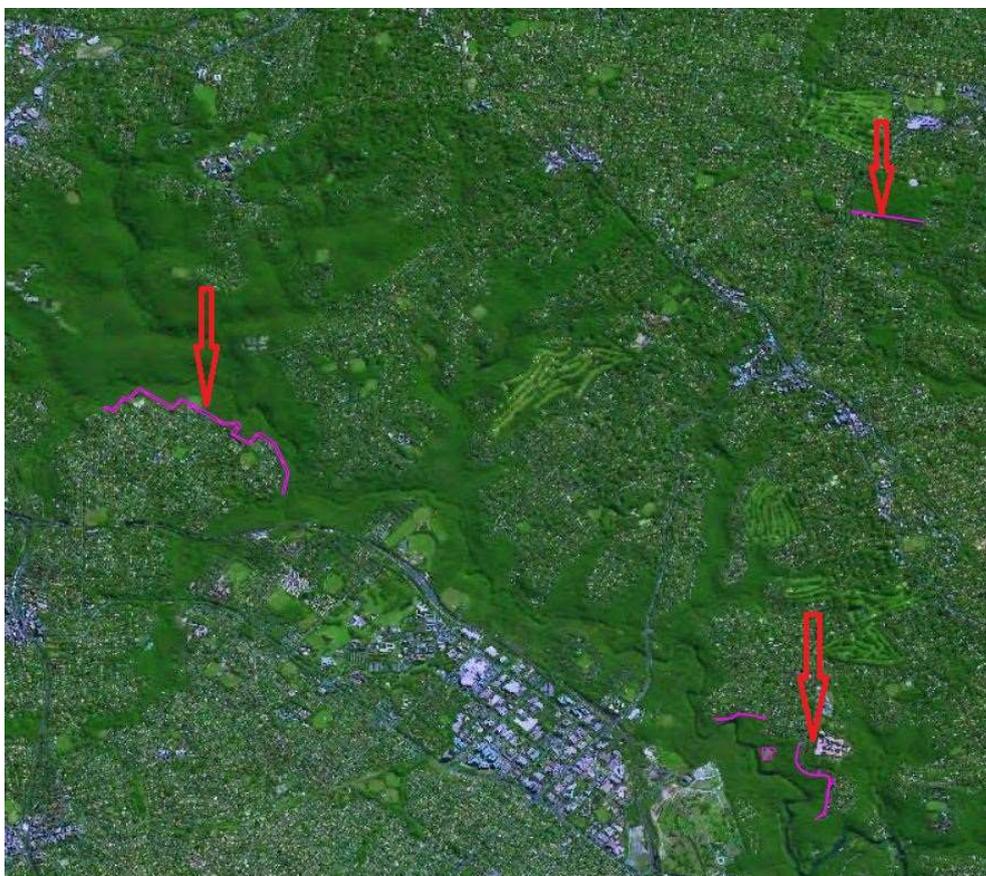
Mapping contained in BRIMS records must be a reasonably accurate representation of the proposed works. Overlapping or inaccurate spatial data may be referred back to the applicant for rectification, which will delay the assessment of the funding application.

Where an agency wishes to re-apply for recurring works funded in FY21 that comply with this Guide, BRIMS records should be treated as follows;

- Do not “close” the BRIMS proposal.
- Enter works to reflect actions completed in FY21.
- Create a new scheduled date for FY22.
- Unless the extent of the works has changed, DO NOT edit method, shapes or other mapping.
- Proceed to the application process in the funding portal.

Following this procedure will assist in providing prompt review of applications by the NSW RFS. Please note that there is no guarantee that a previously funded work will be funded in the upcoming financial year.

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. However, strategic fire breaks will be given a lower priority than hazard reduction activities located on the bushland / grassland interface.

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 and as a general rule, proposals should be limited to a length of no more than 50 kilometres. 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 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 fire fighting 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 sort in regards to the proposed works.
- An application must be for a single Strategic Fire Trail identified through a FAFT Plan, a complex of fire trails may be eligible*.
- 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 (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.

*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. *(it is recommended that prior to*

submission of a complex fire trail funding application that discussions are 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 (i.e. bridges, drainage)
 - Funding applications must include supporting documentation. (i.e. quotes, FAFT data for 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 a funding 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.
 - Where the application involves private tenure, evidence must be provided with the funding application demonstrating that all of the required Private Landholder Agreements are in place as per Section 62M of the Rural Fire Act 1997.

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. In some cases, the matter may be raised with the Grants Advisory Panel for advice.

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 variation requests and the like.

Local Councils with approvals through the RFFF HR Supplement process will be advised separately of their successful applications once the NSW RFS budget papers have been released by the Minister. The advice will include a list of works that have been approved as part of the consideration of the budget papers by the NSW government.

Part 8. Contacts

For any enquiries regarding the Bush Fire Risk Mitigation and Resilience Program, please contact the 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 RFS Fire Trails Team on firetrails@rfs.nsw.gov.au

For any enquiries regarding the process for the 'RFFF HR Supplement', please contact your NSW RFS District Office.

Acronyms

BFCC	Bush Fire Coordinating Committee
BFMC	Bush Fire Management Committee
BFRMP	Bush Fire Risk Management Plan
FAFT	Fire Access and Fire Trail