

Faster Local Assessment Grant Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Faster Local Assessment Grant Program?

The development assessment process is a key part of the housing supply pipeline and impacts how efficiently new housing is delivered. As part of the NSW Government's initiative to improve the planning system, it has allocated funding to support councils to accelerate assessment of local Development Applications (DA) and Planning Proposals (PP) to bring forward housing supply.

Why are we running this program?

Several government reports have identified that providing incentives to councils to develop better administrative practices can assist in the delivery of more homes.

The NSW Housing Strategy Action Plan also identifies that the NSW Government needs to focus on continuing to implement reforms to the planning system to ensure transparent and faster planning assessments and to reduce rezoning timeframes (Housing 2041: 2021-22 Action Plan, NSW Housing Strategy).

It is the Department of Planning and Environment's (the department) aim to continue to improve the planning system by working with councils to shorten assessment timeframes, identifying blockages, and implementing improvements so communities can have access to more homes faster. A key aim of this program is to embed long term improvements across the system that ultimately contribute to faster assessment times.

What are the objectives of the program?

The objectives of this program are to:

- Provide support for councils to implement changes that accelerate local DA and PP processing times so that housing is supplied earlier than currently forecast.
- Assist councils in implementing best practice guidelines development assessment and planning proposals
- Measure the value of change by capturing baseline evidence data to quantify and measure cumulative benefit of change over time for housing supply and economic value.

Who has been selected to participate?

Metropolitan councils	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canada Bay Council 2. Inner West Council 3. Woollahra Municipal Council 4. Fairfield City Council 5. Hawkesbury City Council 6. Wollondilly Shire Council 7. Penrith City Council
Regional councils	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council 9. Shoalhaven City Council 10. Wollongong City Council 11. Singleton Council 12. Eurobodalla Shire Council 13. Cessnock City Council 14. Port Stephens Council

What criteria were used to select councils?

- Anticipated high volume of housing to be delivered through local DAs, subdivision DAs or PP
- Opportunities to improve assessment timeframes
- Had not received previous funding through the previous RSDA program (2021)

The criteria ensured funding is focused on those councils where timeframe improvements have the potential to bring forward much-needed housing supply.

What can the funding be spent on?

The funding can be used for a broad range of resources or process improvements which ultimately contribute to faster assessment times, including:

- Additional professional assessment staff, including the redeployment or realignment of staff resourcing within council
- Appointment of specialist technical consultants
- Dedicated coordination point within council for housing development applications
- Process mapping and improvement plans to operationalise and implement Local Housing Strategy actions (convert to a planning proposal)
- Technology improvements

Capability improvements may also be considered such as:

- Training for applicants and their consultants
- Professional development for council staff
- Facilitate peer to peer knowledge sharing between councils
- Reviewing and updating development guidelines or assessment policies

What timeframe improvement targets have been set?

Assessment timeframe targets have been established as part of this program. Funding from the program is to be used by councils to achieve timeframe improvements towards these targets.

The targets are:

- Development Assessments: A 10 to 20 % reduction from the median assessment timeframe for housing DAs and subdivision DAs. This will be benchmarked against evidence of each council's assessment performance over the past 3 years.
- Planning Proposals: Timeframe targets as set by the new 'Local Environmental Plan Making Guideline' (released December 2021).

Why have timeframe improvement targets been set?

The intent of the program is for the department to work closely with councils to achieve long-term systemic improvements. The targets give councils and the department a goal to aim for. The program provides financial assistance to entrench process improvements that support assessment timeframe improvements.

How will the results of the program be shared?

A community of practice will be established to create opportunities for councils to share best practice and lessons learnt through the program. There will also be ongoing evaluation of progress against the program objectives and targets. The feedback and results of the program will provide insights into issues impacting local development assessment processes and how practice changes can overcome these. The department will communicate this feedback and it may inform changes to policy and future programs.

What is the timeframe of this program?

The Grant Program will commence by 30 June 2022 and be finalised by 30 June 2023.