
Grant Guidelines

Joint Organisations Net Zero Acceleration

Applications close at 6pm on Wednesday 30 November 2022

November 2022

Pilot Round

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Background

The Sustainable Councils and Net Zero Implementation Programs, delivered by NSW Office of Energy and Climate Change (OECC), support local governments in regional NSW to save energy and money, reduce emissions, and set a path to net zero.

For local government to play its part in achieving the State's Net Zero targets of 50 per cent reduction by 2030 and net zero by 2050, councils will need to set targets for operational and community-wide emissions, have strategies and plans in place for how they will reduce them and implement actions to reduce emissions across their operations and communities.

Many smaller regional councils face chronic resourcing and capacity constraints that limit their ability to reduce operational emissions or play a role in leading emissions reductions in their LGA and community. To help overcome this resource constraint, \$1m has been allocated from the NSW Climate Change Fund (CCF) to help drive net zero outcomes within NSW regional councils.

To do this, the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) will be delivered via a grants program that will allow Joint Organisations (JOs) and non-metropolitan Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs) to employ an additional staff member in their organisation to drive net zero initiatives across their member councils. References to JOs in this document can be taken to include non-metropolitan ROCs.

JOs strengthen collaboration and engagement between State and local governments and improve infrastructure and service delivery to regional communities. By combining resources and focussing on the unique challenges and strengths of their region, JO members can drive better outcomes for local communities and deliver outcomes on a regional scale. JOs are at different stages regarding their ability to identify opportunities for future sustainability and deliver programs to, and projects for, their regional communities. This grant is designed to support JOs with their individual needs to progress towards net zero.

The JONZA grant has been established to address the resource constraints in councils to deliver emissions reductions outcomes. This is a pilot grant with a possibility for extension, which will depend on demonstrated effectiveness of the program.

Purpose of this grant

This capacity-building grant established by the NSW Government will support JOs to deliver net zero outcomes by employing a staff member who is dedicated to progressing the JO and member councils toward net zero. This employee will also act as a link to other NSW government support mechanisms.

The aim of this program is to build on the capability within JOs to assist councils and regions in developing net zero outcomes and to assist emerging JOs and their member Councils to build internal capability.

This grant program will:

- provide an opportunity for JOs to establish or progress a net zero pathway plan for their member councils;
- increase the capacity of JOs to identify and implement projects that directly reduce emissions for councils, or progress the region's net zero trajectory; and
- strengthen collaboration between State and local governments to improve delivery of net zero outcomes in line with community expectations.

Who can apply

The Grant is open to eligible NSW JOs and non-metropolitan ROCs. A representative council may apply for the grant funding on behalf of a JO or ROC.

To be eligible, the JO or ROC must:

1. Currently employ an Executive Officer or equivalent that leads the organisation;
2. Have processes in place to deliver projects (e.g. procurement, contract management); and
3. Be financially stable to host an in-house resource for 12 months to deliver outcomes.

In the interest of supporting the JO mechanism to deliver results for member councils, there may be preference given to JO applications over ROC applications during assessment process, if there is a large volume of eligible applications.

Available funding

The Grant provides funding up to a maximum of \$155,000 (including on-costs) to NSW JOs to employ a dedicated, in-house staff member for up to 12-months who will drive net zero outcomes for the region. Where a JO chooses to engage a staff member who is already employed by the JO, the JO must demonstrate an overall additionality of outcomes through this grant funding.

The amount received will be determined by the grant assessment panel based on the merit of each application, and the number of suitable applicants.

The awarded amount includes salary plus all on-costs such as superannuation, insurance and leave loading as well as office costs including computing up to a maximum of 26% of the salary.

In addition, up to 12% of the grant amount awarded can also be used for ancillary costs such as travel, training materials and expenses. These ancillary cost components will be up to discretion of the applicant and must be clearly accounted for and justified in mid and end-of-term reporting. There will be no additional funding for the resource once this grant is awarded.

Any unused funds must be returned to OECC before the end of the 12-month employment period.

What the funding can be used for

The additional internal employee funded through this program must be suitably qualified to deliver outcomes for the region towards net zero goals.

The activities undertaken by this resource will vary between each JO and will be dependent on the current progress and needs of the JO and member councils. The net zero resource can be used to develop project plans, which will include communications plans and risk assessments.

Some example activities include (but not limited to):

- Developing or progressing a regional energy plan;
- Developing or implementing emissions reduction plans, or net zero plans, both for individual councils and the region;
- Developing business cases and implementing energy efficiency projects;
- Developing business cases and implementing renewable energy projects;
- Developing or implementing a regional Electric Vehicle (EV) plan;
- Establishing Revolving Energy Funds (REFs) for local councils;

- Establishing a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) or Renewable Energy Supply Agreement (RESA) for renewable energy purchase for some or all member councils;
- Establishing processes for carbon offsetting;
- Data gathering and management relevant to progressing net zero outcomes;
- Research and analysis on emissions reductions activities;
- Organising meetings, seminars, training and events relevant to net zero outcomes; and
- Supporting member councils to apply for grants for related programs to progress the actions in the plans.

All activities should align to the JO Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities, JO Board amended regional statement, regional energy and/or emissions reductions plans, where applicable. JO's may consider a secondment to fill the net zero position with a suitable candidate.

What the funding cannot be used for

The resource engaged with this funding may not be used for activities that are considered "business as usual", such as everyday JO or council operations and reporting.

The work undertaken under this program is for climate change mitigation activities and does not include climate change risk assessment or adaptation projects.

The grant funding cannot be used for capital expenditure or ongoing operational costs (outside of 12% component attributed to ancillary costs, as outlined in Available Funding). Funding cannot be used towards consultancy costs.

Assessment criteria

Eligible submissions will be assessed against the following evaluation criteria to determine the successful applicants.

Table 1: Evaluation Criteria Weighting

#	Item	Weight
1	Demonstrated need for additional internal capacity resource to help drive net zero outcomes	30%
2	Demonstrated commitment and capability within the JO to achieve outcomes	30%
3	Proposed impact of net zero initiatives for JO member councils	40%

Each application will be assessed by the grant assessment panel against the assessment criteria above.

The assessment panel will make recommendations to the Director, Climate Change and Sustainability, who will make the final determination on grants to be awarded.

Required supporting documents

Please submit the following documents along with your application:

1. Letter of engagement or equivalent to show a currently employed Executive Officer or equivalent that leads the JO (personal or sensitive information can be redacted).
2. Document to demonstrate processes in place to deliver projects. This could include an example project.
3. A current audit report, P&L or equivalent to demonstrate a financially stable position to host an in-house resource for 12 months to deliver outcomes. This could include a long-term financial plan, if available.

Timelines and responsibilities

The key milestones for this grant program are outlined below, including approximate dates and the responsible party for each activity.

#	Item	Approximate date	Responsibility
1	Applications open	3 November 2022	JOs to submit applications
2	Grant closing date	30 November 2022	OECC
3	Grants awarded and funding agreements signed	December 2022	OECC to award grants and prepare funding agreements for JOs
4	Recruitment process	Jan – Feb 2023	JOs to manage the recruitment process. OECC will provide sample job ad wording in December 2022 and can provide input and oversight into the recruitment process.
5	Engage resource	March 2023	OECC to review and approve the preferred candidate. JO to formally engage the new resource. Note the resource must be engaged no later than 31 May or funding agreement may be terminated.

6	Develop project plan	March – April 2023	JOs to develop project plan based on desired outcomes and provide to OECC for review.
7	Ongoing management of resources	12 months from the start date of engagement of the net zero resource (<i>with potential of extension depending on pilot program effectiveness and available funding</i>).	JO for everyday management, with ongoing support from the OECC

Reporting requirements

The reporting requirements for this grant are designed for simplicity and to guide the JOs/ROCs for the most effective outcomes. Below outlines the three key reporting requirements for this grant.

#	Item	Purpose	Format
1	Regular informal meetings with the OECC project team	To ensure the resource is on track and supported to deliver outcomes. These meetings can be attended by JO representatives and interested councils, as needed.	60-minute fortnightly meeting hosted online, or as agreed.
2	Collaboration meetings	Meetings attended by JO staff, Sustainable Councils, and other key state department speakers as needed. Aim is to foster collaboration and share learnings between JOs and other key parties.	Monthly, or as determined by Sustainable Councils.
3	Mid-term report	A summary report at the halfway mark that outlines what has been achieved, what are the barriers to implementation (if any) and what are the next steps.	As per a template report provided by the Sustainable Councils team. This document will be provided by September 2023.
4	End-of-term report	A summary report at the end of the 12-month engagement	As per a template report provided by the Sustainable

		that outlines what was achieved, what were the barriers to implementation (if any) and what are the recommended next steps for the JO.	Councils team, which will include a certified financial statement. This document will be provided by March 2023.
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Milestone payments

The grant payments are broken down into three milestones, as detailed in the table below.

Item	Amount	Milestone
Payment 1	60%	On the engagement of the additional net zero employee.
Payment 2	30%	On the approval of the mid-term report by Sustainable Councils.
Payment 3	10%	On the approval of the end-of-term report by Sustainable Councils.

Sustainable Councils will endeavour to approve all progress reports within a four-week period.

Application process

Applications are submitted online through the SmartyGrants portal. To apply, go to netzeronsw.smartygrants.com.au/jonza and click on the 'Start a submission' button.

Attaching required documents

Supporting documents must be in an acceptable file type, such as Word, Excel, PDF, or JPEG.

You will receive an application number when you apply online. Please quote this number in all communications with the department relating to your application.

All supporting material must be received by the application deadline.

Make sure your application is submitted by 6 PM on Wednesday 30 November 2022.

Note: No hard copy applications will be accepted. Any application that is late, incomplete or ineligible will not be considered.

Notification process

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their applications in writing after the assessment process is completed, which will take place in December 2022.

Contacts and additional information

Additional information is available at the grant program web page netzeronsw.smartygrants.com.au

If you would like further information about your eligibility or require assistance submitting your application online, please email scc@environment.nsw.gov.au and a team member will be in contact.