



Multicultural Community Water Safety Program

Saving lives, removing barriers
and building belonging.

FUNDING GUIDELINES



PLACE-BASED PARTNERSHIPS





Multicultural Community Water Safety Program



FUNDING GUIDELINES

Place-Based Partnerships

WE SWIM: Multicultural Community Water Safety Program is a national, evidence-informed initiative to reduce drowning risk, remove barriers to swimming and water safety education, and build belonging for refugees, recently arrived migrants and broader multicultural communities.

PROGRAM DETAILS AT A GLANCE

WE SWIM ALIGNMENT	WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships
APPLICATIONS CLOSE	24 September 2026
GRANT RANGE	Up to \$100,000 (excl. GST)
FUNDS AVAILABLE	Approximately \$1,500,000 (excl. GST)
APPLICATION TYPE	Open grant
DELIVERY TIMEFRAME	Grant outcomes must be delivered by 31 May 2027
FUNDED BY	Australian Government
LED BY	Royal Life Saving Society - Australia
PROGRAM CONTACT	weswim@rlssa.org.au

1. OVERVIEW OF THE FUNDING PROGRAM

1.1 About WE SWIM

WE SWIM: Multicultural Community Water Safety Program is a national, evidence-informed initiative to reduce drowning risk, remove barriers to swimming and water safety education, and build belonging for refugees, recently arrived migrants and broader multicultural communities. The Program is funded by the Australian Government and delivered by Royal Life Saving Society - Australia.

The Program responds to a clear national challenge. Multicultural communities experience higher drowning risk because of layered barriers that can include lower swimming and water safety skills, limited familiarity with local water hazards, and financial, language, cultural and access barriers to participation.

The Program is structured around three connected components: national coordination, multicultural community water safety partnerships and coordination, and reporting - monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships is the largest and most system-focused partnership stream within that model.

1.2 Program Objectives

The Program's objectives are framed around safety, access, equity, cohesion and opportunity. They are deliberately practical so they can guide decisions about funding, partnerships and delivery.

Over the life of the Program, WE SWIM will:

- Reduce drowning risk for refugees, recently arrived migrants, multicultural communities and international students by improving swimming and water safety skills, hazard awareness and safe behaviours around water.
- Increase access and equity in swimming and water safety education by removing financial, cultural, language, gender and geographic barriers to participation in priority areas.
- Strengthen social cohesion by creating new and deeper connections between multicultural communities and local aquatic centres, swim schools, clubs and councils.
- Grow a more diverse aquatic workforce by creating pathways into swimming instruction, lifeguarding and community water safety leadership for people from multicultural backgrounds.
- Build sustainable local capability so councils, aquatic providers and community organisations can continue culturally responsive water safety programs beyond the funding period.

1.2 Outcomes Framework

Progress against these objectives is tracked through four linked outcome domains. These are interpreted alongside Royal Life Saving's community prioritisation tool, so results are read in the context of migrant population profiles, settlement patterns and drowning risk — not raw participation numbers alone.

REACH AND PARTICIPATION

- Number and spread of funded partnerships by tier, geography, priority cohort(s), and cultural and language groups.
- Participant numbers by age, gender, cultural and linguistic background, and settlement stage.
- Retention and completion rates for lesson-based and program-based activities.

SKILLS AND SAFETY OUTCOMES

- Participants achieving agreed swimming and water safety benchmarks (for example, 25–50m swim, floating).
- Reported improvements in confidence, hazard awareness and supervision behaviours among participants and caregivers.

SOCIAL COHESION AND ACCESS OUTCOMES

- New or strengthened links between multicultural communities and pools, clubs, councils and other local services.
- Perceived cultural safety and welcome in aquatic settings, captured through feedback from participants and community partners.
- Co-investment and in-kind support secured from local partners, indicating shared ownership and sustainability.

WORKFORCE AND SUSTAINABILITY OUTCOMES

- Multicultural ambassadors, instructors, lifeguards, trainees and student leaders recruited, trained and, where relevant, employed.
- Evidence that water safety has been embedded into settlement services, local water safety plans, university programs or employer practices.

1.3 WE SWIM pillars

All funded activities under WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships must activate one or more of the four WE SWIM pillars.



WE CONNECT

Build and strengthen links between multicultural communities and local aquatic facilities, swim schools, swimming and lifesaving clubs, and councils.



WE WELCOME

Improve cultural safety, create welcoming aquatic environments, expand workforce and leadership pathways for people from multicultural backgrounds.



WE PROMOTE

Deliver targeted, multilingual water safety messages through trusted voices and channels.



WE LEARN

Remove barriers to participation in swimming and water safety education and build skills aligned to agreed benchmarks.

1.4 Purpose of WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships funding

WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships are large, multi-partner collaborations in high-need regions. They bring together settlement services, multicultural community organisations, councils and aquatic providers to reduce drowning risk, improve access and equity, and strengthen social cohesion for overseas-born Australians and multicultural communities.

WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships focuses on multi-LGA or regional corridors and hubs where overseas-born populations are concentrated and drowning risk is elevated. The purpose is to shift systems, coordinate delivery at scale, generate co-investment and build sustainable local capability so culturally responsive water safety activity continues beyond the funding period.

1.5 Policy alignment

All WE SWIM Partnerships align with the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030, the Commonwealth Multicultural Access and Equity Policy, and the Multicultural Framework Review: Towards Fairness. This program aligns with Royal Life Saving's strategic approach to eliminating drowning, empowering communities strengthening safety, and succeeding together.

2. WHO CAN APPLY

2.1 Eligibility criteria

WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships applications must be submitted by a lead organisation on behalf of a consortium.

To be eligible, the place-based consortium must:

- **Include at least two multicultural, settlement or community partner organisations** with a clear role in serving multicultural communities, refugee-background communities, settlement cohorts or other priority groups facing barriers to participation.
- **Include at least one council or council representative**
- **Include at least one water safety organisation and/or aquatic provider**, such as a public pool, aquatic facility, swim school or other appropriate aquatic delivery partner.
- Demonstrate co-designed planning with the community or communities the project is intended to serve.
- Commit to Royal Life Saving's safety, cultural safety and monitoring, evaluation and learning requirements.

The consortium must propose work in a multiculturally diverse LGA, across multiple LGAs, or in a defined regional corridor or hub. It must demonstrate strong co-designed planning with multicultural communities, and commit to Royal Life Saving's safety, cultural safety, and monitoring, evaluation and learning requirements.

The lead applicant must be an incorporated not-for-profit organisation or other incorporated body with the governance and financial capability to manage a partnership of this scale.

2.2 Priority communities and geographies

WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships should focus on places identified through Royal Life Saving's community prioritisation tool or community prioritisation matrix. Priority should go to outer-metropolitan growth areas and regional settlement hubs, where overseas-born populations are increasing and access barriers are pronounced. Priority communities include refugees, recently arrived migrants, broader multicultural communities facing ongoing access and equity barriers, and in some settings international students.

Priority life stages are school-aged youth and young people, with secondary emphasis on multicultural adults and caregivers whose choices shape family safety and participation around water.

WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships should adopt more inclusive approaches, working with multiple groups from across the priority communities.

2.3 Who is not eligible

The following are not eligible to be the lead applicant:

- State, Territory or Commonwealth Government agencies.
- Non-incorporated organisations.
- For-profit organisations.
- Single organisations that do not constitute a genuine consortium.
- Proposals operating only at community scale, which may be more suited to Tier 2 WE SWIM: Community Programs.
- Organisations with unresolved reporting obligations may also be deemed ineligible.

3. WHAT THIS FUNDING SUPPORTS

3.1 Eligible activities

WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships funding supports practical, place-based activity across one or more of the four WE SWIM pillars.

Illustrative eligible activities include:

- **WE CONNECT:** community co-design workshops; referral pathways from schools, settlement services and multicultural organisations into aquatic programs; pool familiarisation visits; family swim days; partnership forums linking councils, aquatic providers and community organisations.
- **WE WELCOME:** cultural responsiveness training for venue staff; community-informed scheduling; women-only or family-friendly participation settings; bilingual orientation support; improvements to front-of-house practice that help multicultural participants feel safe, respected and included.
- **WE PROMOTE:** multilingual water safety messaging; trusted-voice outreach through community leaders and organisations; seasonal campaigns focused on pools, beaches or inland waterways; school and family-facing communications that build awareness and confidence.
- **WE LEARN:** subsidised swimming and water safety lesson blocks; gender-sensitive and family programs; beach or inland water safety learning where relevant; Swim and Survive delivery; pre-vocational or lifesaving pathway activity with significant in-water content; practical supports such as transport or modest swimwear assistance where these directly enable participation.

Dry-side and enabling activity is eligible where it directly supports participation, access, cultural safety or delivery quality, but WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships must maintain a strong in-water focus across the overall activity mix.

3.2 Eligible costs

Eligible costs are costs that are necessary, reasonable and directly related to delivering the funded partnership. All costs must support the approved WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships activity mix and align with the WE SWIM pillars, partnership outcomes and delivery timeframe with no more than 20% of the grant being used for coordination costs.

Illustrative eligible costs include:

- Short-term staffing and project support costs directly related to partnership delivery, coordination, community engagement, reporting or implementation.
- Lane hire, pool entry, venue hire and other site-based delivery costs required for approved activities.
- Instructor, lifeguard, bilingual worker, interpreter, translator and cultural support costs required for safe and inclusive delivery.
- Multilingual communications materials, outreach resources and trusted-channel promotion directly linked to recruitment, participation or water safety messaging.
- Transport and practical access supports that help participants attend, such as bus hire, public transport assistance, modest swimwear support or similar enabling items.
- Training and accredited course costs relevant to delivery, cultural responsiveness, aquatic safety, workforce pathways or pre-vocational development.
- Modest catering for co-design, steering group or community engagement activities where this supports participation and engagement.
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning costs directly related to the funded partnership, including agreed data collection, feedback tools and case study development.

Costs must be proportionate to the scale of activity and clearly explained in the budget. Royal Life Saving may determine that a cost is ineligible where it is not sufficiently connected to delivery, community benefit or the approved partnership plan.

3.3 What will not be funded

Funding is not available for costs or activities that are not directly related to the approved WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships, do not advance the objectives of WE SWIM, or fall outside the approved funding period. This includes, but is not limited to:

- General recurrent organisational overheads, such as business-as-usual salaries, rent, utilities, core administration or standing operating costs.
- Capital works or capital purchases, including buildings, renovations, maintenance works, land purchase, vehicles or major equipment acquisition.
- Activities or expenditure incurred before the funding agreement is executed, including retrospective reimbursement.
- Projects or activities unrelated to drowning reduction, multicultural water safety, access, inclusion or approved partnership outcomes.
- Activities primarily of a political, party-political, religious proselytising or fundraising nature.
- Cash prizes, gifts, gift vouchers or participant incentives that are not approved as a direct participation support.
- Conference attendance, accommodation, or interstate or overseas travel unless specifically agreed in writing in advance by Royal Life Saving.
- Costs intended to cover existing debts, deficits, fines, penalties or liabilities of consortium members.
- Duplicate funding for the same activity or cost item from another grant source, where this has not been transparently declared and approved.

Where there is uncertainty about a proposed cost, applicants should seek written clarification from Royal Life Saving before submitting their application.

4. CO-INVESTMENT REQUIREMENTS

Co-investment is strongly expected for all WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships, with matched or higher cash and in-kind contributions anticipated across the consortium.

In-kind co-investment could include free pool entries or memberships, provision of lane space, staff time, transport, venue access, communications support and workforce / employment pathways provided by partners.

Direct financial contributions from partner organisations are encouraged.

Applicants must clearly quantify co-investment in the budget and identify which consortium member is contributing each item. Strong co-investment demonstrates shared ownership and supports the Program's focus on scale, sustainability and community-led change.

WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships that have identified and/or secured other sources of grant are asked to provide details in the application. Co-investment from other grant sources is encouraged; duplicated or undisclosed use of several grants is not.

5. GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS

Each funded WE SWIM Place-Based Partnership must establish a Local Community Coalition (Steering Group) to guide co-design, align activities, monitor implementation and plan for sustainability. Local Community Coalitions should bring together councils, aquatic providers, community organisations, settlement services, schools, clubs, universities and community representatives relevant to the corridor or hub.

Local Community Coalitions will:

- Guide local co-design and align activities across consortium members.
- Monitor implementation issues and facilitate problem-solving.
- Support transition and sustainability planning in the final phase of the partnership.
- Provide community voices at the heart of decision-making throughout delivery.

This requirement reflects the Program's governance model and supports local accountability, practical problem-solving and stronger community voice in implementation.

6. WE SWIM CODE OF CONDUCT - AQUATIC RISK MANAGEMENT, CHILD SAFEGUARDING AND CULTURAL SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Successful grantees must ensure that programs and activities funded under the WE SWIM Multicultural Community Water Safety Program adhere to the WE SWIM Code of Conduct and demonstrate how they will do this in their application.

The WE SWIM Code of Conduct covers off eligibility criteria across all programs, including ethics, aquatic risk management, child safeguarding, cultural safety, public liability, privacy, and incident reporting and notification protocols.

The WE SWIM Code of Conduct can be found at www.royallifesaving.com.au/WESWIM.

7. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

The Program's accountability framework is monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). Full participation in MEL is a condition of WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships funding.

Royal Life Saving will provide common indicators, templates, feedback tools and guidance on consent, privacy and data quality. WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships partners should use MEL not only for compliance, but to support reflection, adaptation and stronger long-term place-based practice.

8. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

All eligible applications are assessed against the WE SWIM Assessment Framework's five standardised criteria, weighted for this program as set out below.

#	Criterion	Weight	How this applies to Place-Based Partnerships
8.1	Community need and local fit	20%	The application identifies the corridor or hub, the priority multicultural communities, and the evidence of drowning risk or access and equity barriers that justify investment, and demonstrates that the consortium's reach, relationships and design are well matched to community need.
8.2	Partnership strength, delivery capability and sustainability	30%	The application includes a clear place-based plan covering activities, milestones, sites, roles and governance arrangements, and demonstrates meaningful community-led and co-designed practice, safe delivery, and the capability to manage risk across a multi-site partnership, including an explicit account of how the model builds workforce pathways and continues beyond the partnership period.
8.3	Alignment to WE SWIM pillars and outcome pathway	20%	The application clearly identifies which WE SWIM pillars are being activated and how the proposed activity contributes to all four outcomes-framework domains — reach and participation, skills and safety, social cohesion and access, and workforce and sustainability. (this is the strongest existing wording of any guideline — kept close to verbatim as the model for the other four documents; only the criterion label and weight change)
8.4	Value for money and co-investment	20%	The application shows a realistic budget, an appropriate balance between coordination and delivery, and clearly identified co-investment, considered against scale, intensity, communities reached and likely outcomes.
8.5	Monitoring, evaluation and learning readiness	10%	The application demonstrates readiness to participate fully in the Program's monitoring, evaluation and learning framework, including the minimum dataset, milestone reporting, feedback collection and shared learning processes.

9. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Applications will be checked for eligibility before merit assessment.

Eligible applications will be considered by a panel convened by Royal Life Saving with expertise in multicultural engagement, water safety, partnership management and program evaluation, with conflicts of interest managed in line with organisational procedure. The panel will make recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer, who will make final funding decisions within agreed delegations. Not all eligible applications will be funded, and in some cases partial funding or rescoping may be offered.

The assessment process will use the WE SWIM Program Balancing Thresholds to help guide funding decisions. The thresholds set indicative ranges for geographic areas, participant groups and cultural communities across all WE SWIM funding programs. They help the panel achieve an appropriate mix of place-based programs, community programs and Pathfinders, while ensuring funding supports the overall objectives of the WE SWIM Multicultural Community Water Safety Program. The WE SWIM Program Balancing Thresholds are published at www.royallifesaving.com.au/WESWIM.

10. APPLICATION PROCESS

10.1 Before you apply

Prospective lead applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the Partnerships and Grants Coordinator before submitting a grant. Early conversations can help test program fit, confirm the proposed geography, discuss co-design and governance expectations, and clarify data, co-investment and assessment requirements.

10.2 How to apply

Applications must be submitted using the WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships grant application form and include consortium commitments, a project plan, budget, governance arrangements, evidence of need and a brief co-design plan. Supporting material such as letters of support, local data and evidence of community relationships is strongly encouraged.

10.3 Indicative timeline

Phase	Timing	Activity
Grant opens	18 August 2026	Grant documentation released
Grant closes	24 September 2026	Applications close
Outcomes notified	16 October 2026	Applicants advised in writing
Funding agreements executed	20 October 2026	Agreements finalised
Steering Group established	Within first 2 months	Local or Regional Steering Group convenes
Outcome delivery period	1 November 2026 to 31 May 2027	Partnerships commence and report against milestones
Final reporting and acquittal	30 June 2027	Final reports submitted

11. SUCCESSFUL FUNDED PARTNERS

Successful consortia will enter into a funding agreement with Royal Life Saving covering deliverables, milestones, payments, reporting, governance, compliance and acquittal requirements.

Payments may be staged against milestones, and all funded partners must use approved acknowledgement language and align public materials with WE SWIM brand and messaging standards.

Funded partners are also expected to collaborate with Royal Life Saving on co-design, communications, multimedia content and shared learning activity across the Program. This approach supports consistent national messaging and helps connect local activity to the broader WE SWIM story.

12. REPORTING AND ACQUITTAL

WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships funded partners will be required to provide short monthly progress reports, a mid-point report and a final report, alongside participation in the monitoring, evaluation and learning framework. Reporting should cover activity delivery, participant data, co-investment, risks, learnings, case studies and financial acquittal.

The minimum dataset should cover reach and participation, skills and safety outcomes, social cohesion and access outcomes, workforce and sustainability outcomes, co-investment, and systems change or sustainability indicators across the partnership. WE SWIM partners should also contribute at least four case studies to support learning briefs, stories of change and future program improvement.

13. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Royal Life Saving may publish information about successful partnerships, including lead organisation, partnership description, communities served and funding amount, in program communications and reporting.

Applicants must declare actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest at the time of application.

All funded activity must be delivered in accordance with applicable privacy, safeguarding and workplace obligations, as well as Royal Life Saving's values and culturally responsive practice expectations.

Royal Life Saving Society - Australia accepts no responsibility for funded projects irrespective of the funding provided, and irrespective of any project being listed on Royal Life Saving's website or other publications.

Appendix A: WE SWIM Place-Based Partnerships summary

Purpose	Build local coalitions that create momentum and influence systemic change in multicultural water safety across high-need corridors and hubs.
Alignment to WE SWIM pillars	Proposed activities must activate one or more WE SWIM delivery pillars (WE CONNECT, WE WELCOME, WE PROMOTE, WE LEARN) and contribute to program outcomes (reach, skills, cohesion, workforce/sustainability).
Geographic Scale	Activities must operate across multiple local government areas or a defined regional corridor/hub with significant overseas-born populations and elevated drowning risk, not just a single LGA or one community.
Grant range	Up to \$100,000 per partnership (excl. GST)
Funds available	Approximately \$1,500,000 (excl. GST)
Application type	Open grant
Lead applicant type	Incorporated not-for-profit or incorporated body with governance and financial systems able to administer a multi-partner regional partnership.
Consortium composition	at least two multicultural or settlement/community partner organisations focused on refugee, migrant or culturally and linguistically diverse communities, one local government council, and at least one aquatic provider (e.g. public pool, swim school, water safety organisation).
Who is not eligible to lead	State, Territory or Commonwealth agencies; organisations without incorporated status; commercial/for-profit organisations; organisations with unresolved reporting to government; single organisations proposing activity that does not constitute a genuine multi-partner consortium; proposals limited to a single LGA/community (better suited to WE SWIM Community Programs).
Co-investment	Matched or higher, clear co-investment (cash and/or in-kind such as lane space, staff time, transport, communications, workforce pathways) is strongly expected, demonstrating shared ownership and sustainability.
Use of funds	All costs must support the approved project activities, community focus and delivery timeframe, with no more than 20% of the grant being used for coordination costs.
Governance	Local or Regional Steering Group required.
Co-design with communities	Strong co-design with multicultural communities is required in shaping priorities, delivery and governance, reflecting community voice in both planning and implementation.
Community focus	Partnership must centre multicultural communities experiencing higher drowning risk and access barriers, with priority for refugee-background communities, recently arrived migrants, multicultural communities in growth corridors or settlement hubs, and (where relevant) international students.
Safety and cultural safety standards	Consortium must commit to meeting Royal Life Saving aquatic safety expectations (e.g. GSPO compliance), child-safe practices, and cultural safety requirements appropriate to a multi-site regional partnership.
Reporting	Monthly check-in, Mid-point and final reporting, plus MEL participation.
Funded by	Australian Government
Led by	Royal Life Saving Society - Australia

Appendix B: Key contacts

Role	Contact
Program Contact	weswim@rlssa.org.au
Royal Life Saving website	royallifesaving.com.au/WESWIM



Multicultural Community Water Safety Program

Saving lives, removing barriers
and building belonging.

royallifesaving.com.au/WESWIM



ROYAL LIFE SAVING
AUSTRALIA



Australian Government