



Multicultural Community Water Safety Program

Saving lives, removing barriers
and building belonging.

FUNDING GUIDELINES



PATHFINDER – Refugee Settlement





Multicultural Community Water Safety Program



FUNDING GUIDELINES

Pathfinder – Refugee Settlement

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 Pathfinder
APPLICATIONS CLOSE	24 September 2026
GRANT RANGE	Up to \$100,000 (excl. GST)
FUNDS AVAILABLE	Approximately \$300,000 (excl. GST)
APPLICATION TYPE	Targeted Expression of Interest (EOI) to potential consortia
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). Within that broader architecture, a WE SWIM Pathfinder is a category for time-bound, test-and-learn initiatives. Individual Pathfinder opportunities can have different purposes, priority groups, delivery models and assessment settings.

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.

1.3 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.

1.4 WE SWIM pillars

All funded activities under WE SWIM Pathfinder - Refugee Settlement Program 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.

1.5 About this specific WE SWIM Pathfinder opportunity

These guidelines are the specific funding guidelines for Integrating Water Safety into Settlement Services (for refugees), a defined funding opportunity that sits under WE SWIM Pathfinder.

This opportunity focuses on one clear proposition: building swimming and water safety into early settlement so newly arrived refugees and migrants receive subsidised, culturally safe lessons and hazard awareness as a routine part of support. It is designed as a focused, place-based model that works through settlement pathways rather than as a broad community grants round.

1.6 Purpose of this opportunity

The purpose of this funding opportunity is to support 2-4 local pilots that integrate water safety activity into existing settlement pathways. Each pilot should demonstrate how settlement and humanitarian services, aquatic providers and community partners can work together so water safety becomes part of local settlement practice rather than a one-off add-on.

The opportunity aims to produce earlier gains in swimming and water safety skills, hazard awareness, confidence and belonging for refugees and new arrivals, while building stronger and more routine links between settlement services and aquatic centres. This is about moving from good intentions to practical local systems that save lives, remove barriers and build belonging through the settlement journey.

1.7 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 THIS OPPORTUNITY IS FOR

2.1 Primary beneficiaries

This opportunity is intended for refugees and humanitarian entrants in settlement programs, and recently arrived migrants and families, with emphasis on school-aged children, young people aged 15-24, and parents or caregivers.

2.2 Geographic focus

Projects should focus on two to three high-need settlement regions, metropolitan and/or regional, such as outer-suburban growth corridors and regional settlement hubs. Strong proposals will show why the selected localities are a priority and how the local settlement and aquatic ecosystem can support delivery.

2.3 Who can apply

Applications must be submitted by a lead organisation on behalf of a consortium.

To be eligible, the consortium must include:

- At least one settlement or humanitarian service provider, migrant resource centre, AMEP provider or community English provider with an established role in working with newly arrived refugees or humanitarian entrants.
- At least one water safety organisation and/or aquatic provider - a pool, aquatic facility, swim school or similar
- At least one council or council representative
- Other relevant local partners suited to the pilot design, which may include refugee and cultural associations, local councils, schools, family support services, youth services or community organisations.

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

2.4 Who is not eligible

The following are not eligible to be the lead applicant:

- State, Territory or Commonwealth Government agencies.
- Organisations without incorporated status.
- Commercial or for-profit organisations.
- Organisations with unresolved reporting obligations to Royal Life Saving from prior funding arrangements.
- Projects that do not include a genuine settlement-services integration model.
- Projects that are primarily broad community delivery rather than focused settlement pathway pilots.

3. WHAT PROJECTS SHOULD DELIVER

This opportunity will support 2-3 pilots that attach water safety activity to existing settlement pathways, with each site expected to reach several hundred participants through lessons, familiarisation and awareness activity.

3.1 Eligible activities

Eligible activities are activities that help embed swimming and water safety into existing settlement pathways for refugees, humanitarian entrants and recently arrived migrant families. Activities must be practical, culturally responsive, trauma-informed where relevant, and clearly connected to the pilot's settlement integration model.

Illustrative eligible activities include:

- **WE CONNECT:** referral pathways from case managers, schools, AMEP or community English programs, family support services and settlement workers into aquatic participation; orientation pool visits; family swim days; and practical partnership activity linking settlement services with local aquatic providers.
- **WE WELCOME:** family-centred pool familiarisation; bilingual orientation; gender-sensitive or culturally responsive participation models; and venue practices that make aquatic environments easier to understand, safer to navigate and more welcoming for newly arrived families.
- **WE PROMOTE:** multilingual water safety materials; settlement-based water safety orientation modules; trusted communication through settlement staff, bilingual workers and community leaders; and simple messaging on local hazards, participation pathways and family safety.
- **WE LEARN:** fully or heavily subsidised swimming and water safety lesson blocks; introductory in-water learning; family sessions; and progression toward practical benchmarks such as safe entry and exit, floating and a 25 to 50 metre swim.
- Enabling activity: co-design with refugee-background communities; briefings and tools for settlement workers; simple referral systems; transport help; swimwear assistance; bilingual support; and local coordination activity that helps water safety sit naturally within the settlement journey.

Projects may combine in-water and dry-side activity, but there should be a clear and credible line between the proposed activities, the settlement touchpoints being used, and the intended participation, safety and belonging outcomes.

3.2 Eligible costs

Eligible costs are costs that are necessary, reasonable and directly related to delivering the funded Pathfinder pilot. All costs must support the approved delivery model, settlement integration approach, pilot timeframe and agreed monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) requirements.

Illustrative eligible costs include:

- Short-term staffing and project support costs directly related to pilot delivery, local coordination, outreach, referral management or participant support.
- Pool entry, lane hire, venue hire and other local delivery costs required for approved in-water or orientation activity.
- Instructor, facilitator, bilingual worker, interpreter, translator and cultural support costs needed for safe, inclusive and culturally responsive delivery.
- Subsidies for swimming and water safety lessons delivered through the pilot model.
- Multilingual communications materials, settlement-based information resources and local outreach directly linked to recruitment, hazard awareness or participation.
- Practical access supports such as transport assistance, modest swimwear support and other enabling items that directly reduce first-entry barriers to participation.
- Briefings, induction tools or training relevant to settlement workers, aquatic staff or partners where this strengthens the pilot's integration, cultural responsiveness or safety.
- MEL costs directly related to the pilot, including simple data collection, feedback processes, case studies and cross-site learning activity.

Costs must be proportionate to the pilot design and clearly explained in the budget. Royal Life Saving may determine that a cost is ineligible where it is not sufficiently connected to settlement-pathway integration, participant access, safe delivery or pilot learning.

3.3 What will not be funded

Funding is not available for costs or activities that are not directly related to the approved Pathfinder pilot, do not advance the objectives of integrating water safety into settlement services, or fall outside the approved funding period.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Ongoing organisational overheads or business-as-usual costs, such as core salaries, rent, utilities or general administration.
- Capital works or capital purchases, including buildings, renovations, land, vehicles or major equipment.
- Activities or expenditure incurred before the funding agreement is executed, including retrospective reimbursement.
- Projects that are primarily broad community delivery rather than a focused settlement-pathway pilot.
- Projects that do not include a genuine settlement-services integration model or clear referral pathway from settlement settings into aquatic participation.
- Activities primarily of a political, fundraising or religious proselytising nature.
- Activities without a clear link to swimming and water safety, local hazard awareness, settlement integration, cultural responsiveness or family participation around water.
- Cash prizes, gifts, gift vouchers or unapproved incentives.
- Conference attendance, accommodation, interstate travel 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 activity or cost, applicants should seek clarification from Royal Life Saving before submitting an expression of interest.

4. CO-INVESTMENT REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Indicative funding

Around \$300,000 is expected to be made available across 3 sites for partnership development, subsidised lessons, transport and swimwear support, bilingual help, evaluation and coordination.

4.2 Co-investment

Local co-investment is expected. Co-investment may include cash and/or in-kind contributions such as lane space, staff time, outreach, venue access, transport support, bilingual assistance or local coordination.

Applicants should clearly identify all co-investment in the project budget and explain how it strengthens sustainability and local ownership.

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.

6. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Projects funded through this opportunity must collect core data on participants, attendance and skills. They must also gather feedback from participants, settlement workers and aquatic partners on access and cultural safety, and contribute to cross-site synthesis on feasibility, outcomes and conditions for scale.

This opportunity is not only about delivery. It is also about learning what it takes to make water safety a routine, trusted part of the settlement journey in ways that can be sustained and adapted elsewhere.

7. 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 Pathfinder – Refugee Settlement
7.1	Community need and local fit	20%	The application identifies the priority cohort, barriers, local context and why the selected sites are a strong fit for this opportunity.
7.2	Partnership strength, delivery capability and sustainability	30%	The application demonstrates that partners have the experience, relationships and governance arrangements needed to deliver safely, in a culturally responsive and trauma-informed way, and shows how the pilot could be embedded into settlement services or local water safety plans beyond the pilot period.
7.3	Alignment to WE SWIM pillars and outcome pathway	20%	The application clearly shows how water safety activity will be attached to existing settlement pathways, referral points and support systems, naming expected skills or safety benchmarks such as safe entry and exit, floating, or a 25 to 50 metre swim.
7.4	Value for money and co-investment	20%	The application demonstrates a realistic, proportionate budget clearly linked to access, participation and delivery quality, with local co-investment described.
7.5	Monitoring, evaluation and learning readiness	10%	The application demonstrates readiness to collect core data, gather feedback and contribute to cross-site learning on feasibility, outcomes and conditions for scale.

8. 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.

9. APPLICATION PROCESS

9.1 Funding process

This opportunity will be run as a targeted expression of interest to consortia led by settlement or migrant resource agencies in priority regions, managed through the central partnerships function and aligned with other settlement-focused rounds.

9.2 Before you apply

Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Royal Life Saving before submitting an application. Early discussion can help confirm program fit, eligibility, local partnership expectations, data requirements and cultural safety considerations.

9.3 How to apply

Applications must be submitted using the WE SWIM Community Programs application form provided by Royal Life Saving. Applications should include:

- A completed application form.
- Details of the lead organisation and project partners.
- A brief project plan covering activities, community focus, timelines and roles.
- A project budget, including co-investment.
- Evidence of incorporated status and appropriate insurance for the lead applicant.
- A short explanation of how the project has been shaped with community input.

9.4 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

10. SUCCESSFUL FUNDED PARTNERS

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with Royal Life Saving Society - Australia that sets out activities, milestones, reporting, payment arrangements and compliance obligations.

Funded projects will also be expected to collaborate with Royal Life Saving on mobilisation, learning, stories of impact and practical refinement of the model over the life of the pilots.

11. REPORTING AND ACQUITTAL

WE SWIM Pathfinder - Refugee Settlement 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.

12. KEY DEFINITIONS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY

For the purpose of these guidelines, Pathfinder refers to the broader WE SWIM category under which this funding opportunity sits, while Integrating Water Safety into Settlement Services (for refugees) refers to this specific opportunity, target group and delivery model.

This distinction matters. Not all Pathfinder opportunities are the same, and these guidelines should not be used as the default template for other Pathfinder streams.

Appendix A: WE SWIM Pathfinders – Refugee Settlement summary

WE SWIM alignment	Pathfinder
Purpose	Build swimming and water safety into early settlement so newly arrived refugees and migrants receive subsidised, culturally safe lessons and hazard awareness as a routine part of support.
Primary beneficiaries	Refugees and humanitarian entrants in settlement programs, plus recently arrived migrants and families, with emphasis on school-aged children, youth 15-24 and parents/caregivers.
Geographic focus	High-need settlement regions, metropolitan and/or regional
Core partnerships	Settlement and humanitarian services, migrant resource centres, AMEP/ community English providers, refugee and cultural associations, councils and water safety organisations and/or aquatic providers.
Grant range	Up to \$100,000 (excl. GST) targeting 2-4 priority projects
Funds available	Approximately \$300,000 (excl. GST)
Application type	Targeted Expression of Interest (EOI) to potential consortia
Delivery scale	2-4 pilots attached to existing settlement pathways.
Delivery timeframe	Grant outcomes must be delivered by 31 May 2027
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