



Multicultural Community Water Safety Program

Saving lives, removing barriers
and building belonging.

FUNDING GUIDELINES



PATHFINDER – Emerging Leaders





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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 \$10,000 per event
FUNDS AVAILABLE	Approximately \$100,000 (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 responds to a clear challenge. Multicultural communities can face layered barriers to swimming and water safety participation. Royal Life Saving uses WE SWIM to connect safety, access, inclusion and local belonging in one shared national story — and to build a sector whose leadership reflects the communities it serves.

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 - Emerging Leaders 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

WE SWIM Pathfinder - Emerging Leaders is a specific Pathfinder opportunity under WE SWIM. It creates opportunities for early-career professionals under 30 from multicultural backgrounds to participate in, network with and influence senior leadership across community aquatics, swimming and lifesaving — by funding event organisers to host and support these emerging leaders as scholars at sector conferences, symposia, forums, workshops, working groups and advisory committees, while scholars themselves apply directly to Royal Life Saving.

Senior leadership, advisory committees, working groups and conference programs across the sector do not yet reflect the diversity of the communities the sector serves. The cost of attending sector events is a real barrier for young, emerging professionals — and even when they attend, they are rarely given a meaningful voice in the program. This opportunity removes the cost barrier and, by asking event organisers to promote the opportunity and give scholars a genuine role, turns attendance into real influence.

This opportunity is aligned primarily to WE CONNECT, with supporting links to WE LEARN, WE PROMOTE and WE WELCOME. It is a leadership-pathway and networking stream — not an in-water delivery stream — that invests in the sector's next generation of multicultural leaders.

1.6 How the scholarships work

The program operates as an open, publicly advertised grant administered by Royal Life Saving, delivered through scholarship allocations worth up to \$10,000 per event. It works in two clear stages, so that responsibilities and funding are simple to administer and easy to communicate:

- **Stage 1: organisers apply for a scholarship allocation**
Event organisers apply to Royal Life Saving for up to \$10,000 to offer WE SWIM Pathfinder Emerging Leaders Scholarships to their event, held at any time between now and 30 June 2027. Organisers tell us about the event (which must meet the eligibility criteria in Section 2), how much they are applying for, and the event's ticket price. We expect value for money (e.g. a discount and/or a co-contribution). Royal Life Saving evaluates and shortlists the events, and enters into a partnership agreement with each approved organiser. As a condition of the partnership, Royal Life Saving is acknowledged as a WE SWIM partner to the event supporting emerging scholars;
- **Stage 2: organisers advertise, and scholars are selected and allocated**
Approved event organisers and Royal Life Saving advertise the availability of the WE SWIM Emerging Leaders scholarships using Royal Life Saving's communications materials, directing all interested applicants to the WE SWIM Emerging Leaders scholarship portal. Royal Life Saving then sets up a shortlisting process in partnership with the organiser and allocates the scholarships — a process that runs over two to four weeks. Once scholars are confirmed and their tickets arranged, the organiser issues Royal Life Saving with a single invoice for the scholarships disbursed, up to \$10,000.

Each partnership also involves active networking. Using the WE SWIM Workplan Template, event organisers set out a collaborative workplan that details how value-add activities will be delivered to actively engage and network scholars with one another, with senior sector leadership, and with Royal Life Saving (e.g. through networking events and scholar panel discussions). Royal Life Saving retains the ability to liaise with scholars and collect their contact details through the portal, to invite them into future national

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 Eligibility Criteria

Only event organisers apply. Eligible organisers must be incorporated associations or not-for-profits. Though the program also welcomes established organisers with a strong, demonstrated record of sector development and leadership. What matters most is that the organiser:

- convenes events that bring the aquatic, swimming, water safety or lifesaving sector together to share knowledge, build leadership and shape the direction of the sector; and
- has a demonstrated track record of, and genuine commitment to, the development and support of the aquatic and leisure industry, the swimming participation ecosystem and/or the lifesaving sector.

Scholars are the emerging leaders that the program supports: early-career professionals aged under 30 from multicultural backgrounds who work or volunteer in, or are seeking to build a career in, community aquatics, swimming or lifesaving.

Scholars apply directly to Royal Life Saving through the online portal for an approved event organiser's event, and are shortlisted and selected jointly by Royal Life Saving and the event organiser against intersectional eligibility criteria, recognising that people often hold overlapping inclusion and access needs across culture, disability, gender and neurodiversity.

2.2 Organiser obligations

Organisers that receive a package must:

- Promote and refer — advertise the opportunity openly and direct all interested scholars to the Royal Life Saving online application portal — organisers do not collect scholar applications themselves;
- Select jointly — take part in joint shortlisting and selection of scholars with Royal Life Saving in the Royal Life Saving system, applying intersectional eligibility criteria;
- Involve — meaningfully involve scholars in the event program — for example through a youth multicultural panel or as presenters;
- Support — in partnership with Royal Life Saving, welcome and support scholars before, during and after the event, ensuring each attends in full, contributes, and produces at least one publication crediting the support;
- Deliver culturally safely — deliver the event in a culturally aware and safe way, including cultural awareness and cultural safety training for event organisers and/or masters of ceremony (MCs), as set out in the application (see Section 5);
- Collaborate — deliver the collaborative workplan agreed with Royal Life Saving — the value-add activities that actively engage and network scholars with one another, with senior sector leadership and with Royal Life Saving, such as networking events and scholar panel discussions — and connect scholars to Royal Life Saving for MEL and for future national multicultural forums, as set out in the application (see Section 6);
- Attribute — attribute the scholarship when advertising, at appointment and through public communications — crediting the WE SWIM program, Royal Life Saving and the Australian Government (see Section 4);
- Report — take part in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) activities and keep scholars connected, so they may be invited to a future youth and/or multicultural national forum — scholar contact details are captured through the Royal Life Saving portal at application (see Section 6); and
- Comply — comply with Royal Life Saving's code of ethics, cultural safety and child safeguarding protocols throughout the event (see Section 5).

3. WHAT PROJECTS SHOULD DELIVER

The program provides scholarship allocations of up to \$10,000 per event.

Category	Application type	Maximum funding
Emerging leader scholarships (scholar tickets)	Event ticket costs for the selected multicultural scholars, at the value-for-money rate agreed with Royal Life Saving — for example, a discount and/or a co-contribution	Up to \$10,000

The allocation is paid by a single invoice, issued by the organiser once scholars are confirmed, for the scholarships actually disbursed (up to \$10,000).

3.1 Eligible costs

The program funds emerging leader scholarships only.

- Scholarships: the whole allocation (up to \$10,000) covers scholar event ticket costs at an eligible conference, symposium, forum, workshop, working group or advisory committee;
- Value for money: organisers must offer value for money — for example, a discount and/or a co-contribution.

3.2 Example events (illustrative only)

The events below are illustrative, non-binding examples only. They are the kinds of conferences, summits, forums and working groups delivered by leading aquatic industry, swimming and lifesaving bodies to bring sector leadership together and influence the direction of the sector.

3.3 What will not be funded

To keep the focus on sector leadership, networking, transferability and knowledge sharing, the program does not support:

- travel, accommodation, meals or bursaries or per diems of any kind;
- tickets to a business's own internal conferences, or attendance at internal committees convened to improve that business's own standing;
- activity whose primary purpose is to advance a single organisation rather than share knowledge across the sector; and
- activity or messaging that departs from approved WE SWIM language, uses deficit framing, or conflicts with Royal Life Saving's strategic framework and communications codebook.

4. CO-INVESTMENT REQUIREMENTS

All scholars and organisers must use approved WE SWIM naming, brand language and acknowledgement conventions. First reference should use WE SWIM: Multicultural Community Water Safety Program and Royal Life Saving Society – Australia (then Royal Life Saving). Materials should be culturally responsive, strengths-based and values-grounded, and avoid deficit framing.

4.1 Attribution requirement

As a condition of funding, organisers must attribute the scholarships at three points, and applications must detail how they will do so:

- At the point of advertising — promotional material naming the opportunity as a WE SWIM scholarship;
- At the point of appointment — announcing the appointed scholars and crediting the support; and
- Through public communications — at least one attribution post (social media and/or newsletter), and each scholar producing at least one publication — a blog, article or social media post — about their participation.

Each must clearly credit the WE SWIM: Multicultural Community Water Safety Program, Royal Life Saving and the Australian Government, acknowledge the event organisers, and tag or link to Royal Life Saving where possible. Royal Life Saving can provide brand assets and suggested wording on request, and may re-share attribution content across WE SWIM channels.

5. 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

The program is underpinned by a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) approach. Participation in MEL activities is a condition of funding for both scholars and organisers.

As part of MEL, scholars and organisers must:

- take part in reasonable MEL activities, which may include short surveys, interviews, feedback forms or case-study contributions before and/or after the event; and
- share stories of change and impact about participation, networking and influence, and provide the attribution content published under Section 4.

Scholars may also be invited into a future youth and/or multicultural national forum, which sustains engagement and provides a shared learning channel for the wider WE SWIM program.

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.

#	Standardised criterion	How this applies to Emerging Leaders
7.1	Community need and local fit	The application identifies the priority cohort, barriers, local context and why the selected event and scholars are a strong fit for this opportunity.
7.2	Partnership strength, delivery capability and sustainability	The application demonstrates the quality of its promotion, involvement, support, cultural safety and attribution plans, and the organiser's track record in delivering comparable events.
7.3	Alignment to WE SWIM pillars and outcome pathway	The application demonstrates alignment with the purpose — creating opportunities for early-career multicultural leaders to participate in, network with and influence senior sector leadership.
7.4	Value for money and co-investment	The application demonstrates value for money. The discount and/or co-contribution the organiser offers relative to the ticket price.
7.5	Monitoring, evaluation and learning readiness	The application demonstrates intersectional eligibility criteria and a strengths-based, non-tokenistic approach.

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

There are two application steps, both administered by Royal Life Saving through an open, publicly advertised process.

1. Event organisers apply to become approved and advertise the opportunity for scholars.
2. Scholars apply directly to Royal Life Saving through the online portal for organiser's event.

This section covers the organiser application; the scholar application is a short online form on the Royal Life Saving portal.

9.1 What your organiser application must include

Applications must be submitted using the WE SWIM Pathfinder – Emerging Leaders application form provided by

Royal Life Saving. Applications should include:

- A completed application form.
- Details of the event and track record — details of the event — its purpose, audience and reach, its date (between now and 31 May 2027), and the organiser's history of delivering comparable events;
- Amount, ticket price and value for money — the amount you are applying for (up to \$10,000), the event's ticket price, and the value for money you will offer — for example, a discount and/or a co-contribution;
- Promotion and referral — how the opportunity will be advertised and scholars directed to the Royal Life Saving portal, and how the organiser will support joint shortlisting against intersectional eligibility criteria;
- Involvement — how scholars will be meaningfully involved in the event programming — for example as panellists, presenters or contributors;
- Attribution — how the scholarship will be attributed when advertising, at appointment and through public communications (see Section 4);
- Cultural safety — how cultural safety will be delivered in the event — for example, event organisers and/or masters of ceremony (MCs) completing cultural awareness and cultural safety training (see Section 5); and
- Collaborative workplan — a collaborative workplan, using the WE SWIM Workplan Template, that details how value-add activities will be delivered to actively engage and network scholars — with one another, with senior sector leadership and with Royal Life Saving — during and around the event.

9.2 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
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

Scholars and organisers will enter into a scholarship or funding agreement with Royal Life Saving, covering the funded amount and eligible costs, attendance and contribution expectations, promotion and involvement obligations, brand and attribution requirements, reporting and MEL obligations, and code of ethics, cultural safety and child safeguarding requirements.

11. REPORTING AND ACQUITTAL

WE SWIM Pathfinder – Emerging Leaders will be required to provide a final report, alongside participation in monitoring, evaluation and learning processes. Reporting should cover activity delivery, participant data, access and inclusion outcomes, co-investment, learnings and financial acquittal.

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. 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	WE SWIM Pathfinder opportunity aligned primarily to WE CONNECT
Purpose	Create opportunities for early-career professionals from multicultural backgrounds to participate in, network with and influence senior leadership across community aquatics, swimming and lifesaving.
Delivery model	An open grant administered by Royal Life Saving that occurs in two stages: • organisers apply for a scholarship allocation and advertise it • Scholars then apply directly to Royal Life Saving through our online portal for the organiser's event
Grant range	Up to \$10,000 per event (excl. GST)
Funds available	\$100,000 (excl. GST)
What is funded	Emerging leader scholarships — scholar event ticket costs at eligible conferences, symposia, forums, workshops, working groups and advisory committees.
Co-investment	Organisers must offer value for money (for example, a discount and/or a co-contribution)
Acknowledgement	Royal Life Saving is acknowledged as a WE SWIM partner and retains scholar liaison for future forums and MEL.
Messaging requirement	Must use core WE SWIM messaging and approved brand language.
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



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