

First Nations Cultural Healing Program Grants 2025-2026

Guidelines

Opening date for applications	Closing date
Wednesday, 3 December 2025	Wednesday, 7 January 2026

Administering Entity: Queensland Mental Health Commission

Enquiries: contracts@qmhc.qld.gov.au

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1. Background

Under *The Queensland Trauma Strategy 2024-2029 (Trauma Strategy)*, the Queensland Government has committed to “grow and strengthen community led responses, awareness and education on the impacts of historical and intergenerational trauma on First Nations communities in Queensland” (action 33).

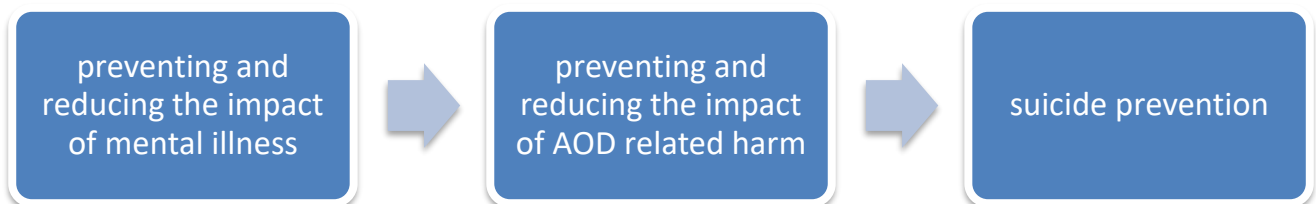
To progress this action, the Queensland Mental Health Commission (the Commission) is offering First Nations Cultural Healing Program grants (Grants) up to \$250,000 per grant, with \$750,000 in total funding available.

This funding provides an opportunity for First Nations organisations, community-controlled organisations, and/or community based not-for-profits to develop a locally led healing program initiative, that responds to community need while building on existing cultural strengths, resilience and knowledge to enhance social and emotional wellbeing.

See section 3.1 for information about healing programs.

2. About the Queensland Mental Health Commission

The Commission is a statutory body established in 2013 under the *Queensland Mental Health Commission Act 2013* to drive systemic reform of Queensland’s mental health, alcohol and other drugs (AOD), and suicide prevention systems. The Commission encourages and facilitates change to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders, with a focus on:



One of the Commission’s primary functions is to develop a whole-of-government strategic plan to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Queenslanders, particularly people living with mental illness, AOD use, and those affected by suicide. The current strategic plan is [*Shifting minds: The Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs, and Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan 2023-2028*](#), which is complemented by three sub-plans:

- [*Achieving balance: The Queensland Alcohol and Other Drugs Plan 2022-2027*](#)
- [*Every life: The Queensland Suicide Prevention Plan 2019-2029*](#)
- [*The Queensland Trauma Strategy 2024-2029*](#)

The *Trauma Strategy* puts into action Queensland’s commitment to addressing the impact of trauma on individuals and communities.

The four priorities areas identified are:

1. Prioritising prevention
2. Providing early supports
3. Fostering healing
4. Enabling reform

The Commission has been allocated non-recurrent funding to support implementation of the *Trauma Strategy*. This funding opportunity also supports actions under *Achieving balance*, *Every life* and *Leading Healing Our Way: The Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Strategy 2020-2040*.

3. About the First Nations Cultural Healing Program Grants

This grant program is suitable for First Nations community organisations, First Nations community-controlled organisations and/or First Nations community based not-for-profits. Non-mental health or AOD specific services are strongly encouraged to apply.

The Commission is seeking to engage First Nations non-government organisations with suitable experience, capability and skills to deliver a healing program that meets the objectives identified under these guidelines.

The funding provided will be non-recurrent. Successful recipients will demonstrate how the proposed programs contribute to fostering healing within First Nations communities and can be replicated and sustainable beyond the grant.

The purpose of the Grants is to focus on opportunities responsive to local needs with a focus on healing programs that build on traditional wisdom, knowledge and practice to enhance social and emotional wellbeing.

3.1. Healing Programs

Healing programs are supported as a way of First Nations people leading and addressing historical and intergenerational trauma (and its impacts) for First Nations communities and people. Healing programs are grounded in culture, cultural healing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, doing and being.

Culture is the foundation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity, spirituality and wellbeing. It is a living, dynamic system of knowledge, values, beliefs, languages, customs, kinship, law, land and ceremony passed down through generations.

Culture connects people to Country, family, community and ancestors and shapes how people understand the world, relate to others and maintain balance and harmony in life. It is holistic, collective and continuous and is central to healing and resilience.

Cultural healing means the process of strengthening the spiritual, emotional, social and physical wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through reconnection to culture, Country, kinship, language and identity. It acknowledges the ongoing impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma and system injustice and is led by community, grounded in cultural knowledge and guided by Elders and ancestors.

Examples of healing programs could include, but are not limited to:

Cultural authority and connection

- Programs led by Elders, Traditional Owners, or recognised cultural practitioners that restore connection to culture, language, lore, and kinship systems.
- Initiatives supporting women's and men's business, ceremonies, or cultural mentoring across generations.
- On Country activities, bush therapy, language reclaiming and cultural education that reconnects individuals and families to culture.

Collective and intergenerational healing

- Community-led group programs designed to address intergenerational trauma and its impacts and strengthen cultural identity and belonging.
- Family based approaches that create safe spaces for truth-telling, addressing sorry business, and collective healing.

Youth social and emotional wellbeing

- Culturally grounded programs for young people that strengthen identity and promote social and emotional wellbeing.
- Peer support and leadership programs that embed suicide prevention, AOD awareness and mental health promotion through a cultural lens.

Creative healing

- Arts and creative based programs (e.g. weaving, storytelling, painting, music, dance) that are used as ways to express culture and promote healing.

First Nations community organisations that don't deliver health services or have a specialist focus on mental health or AOD play an important role in delivering traditional healing practices and programs. They can reach communities that may not engage with health services, address broader determinants of health, strengthen protective factors, and deliver culturally appropriate, tailored approaches for their communities. Being embedded within their communities also positions these organisations to influence attitudes and reduce stigma in relation to mental ill-health, trauma, AOD and suicide prevention.

Benefits of healing programs for First Nations communities

Healing programs embed First Nations leadership and build community capacity. Healing programs foster stronger connections to culture and Country, supporting both individual and collective identity. As a result, they foster self-esteem, resilience and improved social and emotional wellbeing outcomes.

The Grants will contribute to the benefits of healing programs by:

- increasing access to resources that enhance social and emotional wellbeing including cultural participation, connection to land, spirituality and ancestry, and strong ties to family and community
- strengthening connection to culture and fostering pride in cultural identity and community
- responding to diverse needs, recognising that First Nations people have diverse histories, beliefs, experiences and preferences
- fostering shared understanding of trauma, healing and holistic approaches within communities
- building trust and enabling safe, respectful engagement that meets community expectations and needs.

3.2. Objectives of the Grants

The Grants should help to develop the evidence-base for healing programs. The Commission will engage an independent First Nations evaluator to work with the successful recipients to evaluate their approaches so they can be shared for broader use and adaption.

Applicants are required to deliver a healing program that contributes to two or more of the following objectives listed below:

- raise awareness and/or provide education on the impacts of historical and intergenerational trauma experienced by First Nations communities
- foster connection to culture, community and family to support social and emotional wellbeing

- promote mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and healing in culturally appropriate and community-led ways
- support suicide prevention and improve understanding of AOD concerns for First Nations people
- reduce harm related to AOD use through preventative, educational or community-led strategies
- support initiatives that address the social and structural determinants of health and wellbeing (i.e. racism, housing, education, justice)
- build leadership, self-determination and capacity within communities to lead their own healing journeys and/or
- foster culturally safe environments in schools, workplaces or community spaces that support social and emotional wellbeing.

The proposed program must:

- ✓ be a healing program for First Nations communities
- ✓ support and align with the strategic intent of the *Trauma Strategy*
- ✓ be informed by and build on evidence and/or support the development of new evidence
- ✓ include First Nations communities and leaders in the design, delivery of the program
- ✓ include a project timeline
- ✓ include a budget proposal using the Commission's Budget Proposal Template
- ✓ include a sustainability plan
- ✓ consider how outcomes will be measured to support evaluation.

The Commission has identified priority populations for the delivery of healing programs based on the findings from *Trauma Strategy* consultations. All applications will be considered; however programs that address these needs are encouraged.



3.3. Place-based approach

Place-based approaches focus on local needs, local solutions, and the unique attributes of a community or location. They emphasise shared responsibility, flexibility, and systems change driven by community priorities. Core features include:

- meaningful community engagement and ongoing relationships with local stakeholders building on community strengths
- evidence informed decision making using local data and knowledge (both cultural and contextual) to guide decisions
- local leadership and flexibility to allow for:
 - reviewing, shifting, strengthening and designing systems within a local context
 - collaborative governance at a local level
 - an underpinning value of creating greater equity
 - ongoing capacity and capability building amongst all stakeholders involved in the work
 - monitoring and measuring impacts and adapting approaches based on learning.

Applications should outline how the proposed program takes a place-based approach including the needs or gaps in relation to a specific place or community. Examples of a place-based need or gap may include but are not limited to:

- community experiencing high or increasing rates of AOD use and/or suicide or suicidal distress
- community experiencing intergenerational trauma from the stolen generations, such as areas with historical missions, reserves or stolen generation removal sites
- community recovering from a local, collective traumatic event
- regional, rural or remote community with limited access to culturally appropriate services
- community with high rates of domestic and family violence, incarceration and/or engagement with child safety system
- community working to rebuild language and identity with a focus on local cultural reconnection and storytelling

For more information on place-based approaches, Queensland Council Of Social Service (QCOSS) has developed a [‘Place-based approaches for community change toolkit’](#) which may be useful for applicants.

3.4. Partnership approach

The Commission recognises that driving reform requires both strong partnerships and meaningful engagement from a range of stakeholders. Partnerships may include new or ongoing collaborations, while engagement refers to broader activities that involve and connect stakeholders.

These stakeholders could include public, private and not-for-profit organisations that provide health and social services, businesses, industries, peak organisations, and/or Commonwealth, state, and local governments. **Applications should outline a commitment to working with key stakeholders, including community organisations, other key organisations, government agencies and existing partnerships.**

3.5. Lived Experience engagement

The Commission recognises the importance of lived and living expertise in informing, guiding and leading the reform of AOD systems. The Commission considers it critical that people with LLE are actively involved in the proposed program’s development, implementation and evaluation. For the purposes of this Grant, the Commission defines a person with a ‘lived and/or living experience’ as a First Nations person who:

- has a direct personal experience of current or past mental ill-health, trauma, suicide or AOD use; or
- is a family member, carer or support person for someone who has a personal experience of current or past mental ill-health, trauma, suicide or AOD use.

The approach must align with the values outlined in the Commission's [Commitment to partnering with people with lived-living experience in Queensland](#) and use non-stigmatising, trauma-informed language and approaches.

The Commission believes that providing financial remuneration is an important part of recognising the valuable contribution that people with LLE bring. As such, the Commission expects the successful recipients to manage the participation payments in accordance with the Commission's paid participation fees*, unless the applicant can demonstrate that its own paid participation policy offers better conditions. **Applications need to outline how people with LLE will be engaged in program design, implementation and evaluation including a budget for all paid participation expenses.**

*Paid participation time should be remunerated in accordance with fees below.

- Less than 2 hours: \$130
- Half a day (max of 4 hours): \$260
- Whole day (max of 7.25 hours): \$520

3.6. Evidence-based/informed and evidence generating programs

Proposed programs should be based on or informed by existing and/or emerging evidence and consider how they can generate additional evidence on healing programs in the Queensland context. Applicants are encouraged to develop innovative approaches, that have the potential to disrupt in positive ways and contribute to generating evidence.

Applications should outline how the proposed program is informed by evidence/emerging evidence, how it contributes to innovation, and how outcomes will be measured.

3.7. Sustainability

The Grants funding is non-recurrent. The Commission is unable to offer funding to successful applicants beyond the Grant funding period. **Applications should consider how a proposed program and its outputs and outcomes could benefit the community beyond the immediate funding period.**

3.8. Grant focus

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting and growing business opportunities for First Nations people and suppliers. In doing so it will contribute to the growth, development and sustainability of First Nations businesses throughout Queensland.

4. Program funding available

A total of up to \$750,000 is available for the Grants, with up to \$250,000 available per grant

The Applicants are invited to submit an application for up to \$250,000 per grant with program funding available to June 2027. Applications exceeding this amount or timeframe must identify other funding sources for the balance, or they will not be considered.

Applicants must include a proposed budget, using the template linked in Smartygrants and available on the Commission website <https://www.qmhc.qld.gov.au/documents/budgetproposaltemplate4xlsx>

Applicants may make more than one application, however each application must be for a separate program and different in approach.

5. Eligibility criteria

5.1. Who is eligible to apply?

To be eligible, the applicant must:

- be a First Nations organisation, community-controlled organisation, and/or community based not-for-profit
- have a registered Australian Business Number (ABN) and be registered for GST purposes, where relevant
- be Queensland based, meaning that the applicant:
 - has its main office, principal place of operations or registered business address located in Queensland and
 - delivers programs, services or activities that primarily benefit Queensland communities and
 - holds governance, decision-making responsibilities or operational oversight within Queensland.
- hold or will obtain the appropriate workers' compensation, public liability and professional indemnity insurance required to undertake this program and all related activities
- have no outstanding financial liability, service delivery or performance issues for funding previously and/or currently provided by the Queensland Government
- must not have received funding from another Queensland Government organisation for the same proposed program, within the same 18-month delivery timeframe (no double-ups permitted).

5.2. Who is not eligible to apply?

Applicants will not be eligible where they:

- are a Local, State or Commonwealth Government agency/statutory entity
- are an unincorporated association, a sole trader, or an individual
- declared bankrupt or subject to insolvency proceedings (as relevant to the entity type)
- accept any form of funding from tobacco and/or alcohol companies or their related foundations either directly or indirectly or promote the use of tobacco, alcohol or illicit drugs.

6. Funding exclusions

The Grants funding cannot be used for the following:

- activities that do not align with the Grants objectives
- activities delivered outside Queensland, or by a third-party or sub-contractor operating outside Queensland
- activities that are already funded through another source. For example, you cannot expend against two funding sources for the same activity (sometimes referred to as 'double dipping')
- activities that duplicate existing programs, initiatives, products or services in the same location
- recurrent or retrospective funds, including enhancements to existing work or initiatives; reimbursement of costs already incurred or expended; and any component of the initiative or related activities that have taken place prior to the application being approved
- salaries or wages for staff not engaged in direct delivery of the funded activity
- for-profit activities
- interstate or overseas travel
- general operational expenses or purchasing and repair of equipment not related to the initiative¹

¹ Note – any expenses related to operational expenses and/or overheads must be included in the budget submitted with your proposal. These expenses must be directly related to the funded activity and the Commission is entitled during contract negotiation to request a declaration from a grantee that existing funding does not cover operational

- purchasing or repair of equipment and depreciable items not related to the funded initiative
- recurring maintenance or operational costs of the organisation or their facilities
- activities that involve lobbying or commercial ventures for personal gain or fundraising activities, including the promotion of AOD use or product endorsement
- major capital works, capital purchases or upgrades to existing infrastructure
- cash prizes
- the purchase of vehicles or similar depreciable assets
- activities that cannot be covered by public liability insurance.

6.1 Applicant

An applicant is the organisation applying for the Grant. If an applicant's proposal is selected, the applicant will enter into a Contract with the Commission. The applicant will assume full responsibility for the development, implementation and evaluation of the program and meet all deliverables and reporting requirements, even if other parties undertake components of the program.

The applicant will be responsible for the governance of the program and will have the capacity to monitor and report on the progress and achievement of deliverables and manage risks.

Applicants must have no outstanding financial accountability, service delivery or performance issues for funding provided by the Queensland Government and must hold insurance which will cover the period during which activities are funded.

6.2 Timing

The grant will commence on the execution of a Contract between the successful applicant and the Commission and will be subject to the specific requirements of the program. The timeframe outlined in the application is expected to include appropriate time allocated for the development, implementation, and evaluation of the program up to 30 June 2027 from the execution of the Contract. Contracts are anticipated to be executed for project commencement in early 2026.

7. Selection criteria

The Commission is not evaluating offers on the sole criterion of price. Pricing is not a weighted criterion but will form part of a broader value for money assessment. The evaluation process will involve an assessment of applications received against the criteria listed below:

Selection Criteria	Response	Weighting
Selection criteria 1. The program meets the objectives of the Grant through its rationale and methodology (3.2).	Responses must demonstrate <u>all</u> of the following; • how the program will meet alignment with the Grants objectives as outlined in area 3.2 • how the proposed methodology, milestones and budget will achieve the program's intended outputs and outcomes.	25%

Selection criteria 2. The program uses a place-based approach (3.3).	Responses must demonstrate <u>all</u> of the following; • where (place) the program will be delivered • why the place has been chosen and evidence to support rationale • a community need or gap and why the identified community need or gap has been chosen with evidence to support rationale • how the program builds on existing community strengths.	20%
Selection criteria 3. The program is evidence based (3.6).	Responses must demonstrate all of the following; • an evidence-based or evidence-informed rationale for the program • how the program is innovative and will generate evidence • ability to participate in the evaluation of the program.	15%
Selection criteria 4: The program includes people with lived experience to inform program design, implementation and evaluation (3.5).	Responses must demonstrate; • how people with LLE will be engaged in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the program.	10%
Selection criteria 5: The applicant demonstrates the capability to successfully deliver the program, including through partnership (3.4).	Responses must demonstrate <u>all</u> of the following; • capability and demonstrated experience to undertake the program and produce outputs, outcomes and impact in terms of resources, expertise and past experiences • appropriate governance where applicable • demonstrated ability of developing and maintaining working relationship with key stakeholders, including other organisations and government agencies and the local community to achieve the best possible outcomes and maximise reach and efficiency.	15%

Selection criteria 6: The program represents value for money and impact.	Responses must demonstrate <u>all</u> of the following; • demonstrated ability to deliver high-quality outputs within identified timeframes and budget • demonstrated cost-effectiveness relative to expected outcomes • clear mechanism for measuring impact and continuous improvement • how the proposed program and its outputs and outcomes could benefit the community beyond the immediate program funding period, including plans for sustainability post-funding • a sustainability plan for the program beyond the Grant period	15%
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8. Additional contextual information

Applicants are encouraged to consider the following strategic plans for additional contextual information:

- *Shifting minds: The Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs and Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan 2023-2028*
- *The Queensland Trauma Strategy 2024-2029*
- *Every life: The Queensland Suicide Prevention Plan 2019-2029*
- *Achieving balance: The Queensland Alcohol and Other Drugs Plan 2022-2027*
- *Leading healing our way: The Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Strategy 2020-2040*

9. How to apply

9.1. Submitting an application

All applications must be submitted online via Smartygrants.

Visit the Commission's landing page (<https://qmhc.smartygrants.com.au/>) or access the direct link to the Grant application form (<https://qmhc.smartygrants.com.au/CHPG>)

Offline applications will not be accepted.

Shortlisted applicants may be required to provide further information and/or participate in an interview.

No extensions to application submissions will be permitted and no late submissions or amendments will be accepted.

9.2. Indicative Timetable (subject to change)

Activity	Timeline
Applications opened via SmartyGrants - Amendments permitted up to due date	Wednesday, 3 December 2025
Briefing Session	Wednesday, 10 December 2025
Closing date for SmartyGrant online applications	Wednesday, 7 January 2026, 2:00pm AEST
Further information requested and interviews (if required)	Monday 12 – Wednesday 14 January 2026
Intended completion date for evaluation of offers	January 2026
Successful applicants notified	February 2026
Intended Contract start date	Late February/ Early March 2026

Briefing Session

The Commission will hold an online briefing session via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday, 10 December 2025 at 10:00am AEST**. Attendance is encouraged, but it is not mandatory.

Please register your attendance [via the link here](#) by **Tuesday, 9 December 2025**.

10. Successful applicants

Successful applicants must enter into a legally binding contract with the Commission, on behalf of the State of Queensland. The contract must be executed before any payments can be made.

10.1. Contract

A copy of the fully executed Contract will be provided to successful recipients.

The Commission will only enter into a Contract with the applicant organisation (one party). The Contract sets out the terms and conditions that will apply to the grants, but some inclusions will be made based on information from successful applications. The Commission may choose to negotiate directly with a successful applicant in relation to some aspects of selected programs.

The Contract will outline payment instalments and the conditions for receiving each instalment. The final payment will be made on the acceptance of the final report, evaluation and financial statement by the Commission. Accordingly, applicants should consider the requirements outlined in the Contract prior to completing the application.

Prior to offering a Grant, the Commission reserves the right to undertake further Due Diligence checks of the applicant, including but not limited to the following:

- solvency checking
- Australian Business Number checking
- liaising with relevant Queensland Government agencies
- liaising with the proposed partner organisation
- checking references.

10.2. Promotion

The Commission is likely to promote selected programs through its various communication processes, at certain events, and/or at key stages in the life of the Grant. The Commission expects successful applicants to work in collaboration with Commission staff to provide relevant information in a timely manner to support these processes.

The Commission supports successful applicants promoting their program locally through their communication processes and networks, for instance, on the applicant's website and newsletters. The Commission may also be supportive of successful applicants promoting their programs through a formal external process or third-party publication, for example, at a national conference or peer-review publication. However, approval must first be obtained from the Commission.

In both instances, acknowledgement of the Commission's contribution will be required. Further information about the Commission's branding and acknowledgement requirements will be provided to successful applicants.

10.3. Reporting

In line with the Contract, it is expected that a successful applicant who enters a Contract with the Commission will provide regular (generally six-monthly) written updates on the funded program, and in addition will provide a detailed written report on the program at its conclusion.

Grant recipients will also be required to provide regular financial acquittal reporting, and an annual audited financial statement.

If the Commission is not satisfied with the progress of a program, further payment of funds will not be made until satisfactory progress has been made on the program. If satisfactory progress is not achieved within a reasonable time, the Contract may be terminated, and all unspent funds will be recovered by the Commission via invoice. Where there is significant underspend against the approved budget, the Commission may withhold further payments until the underspend is addressed or reallocated in agreement with the Commission.

10.4. Participation in the First Nations Cultural Healing Grant Project evaluation

The Commission will engage an independent organisation to conduct an evaluation of the Grants. Successful applicants will be expected to participate in this process. This may include facilitating data collection methods identified in partnership with the evaluator and the Commission.