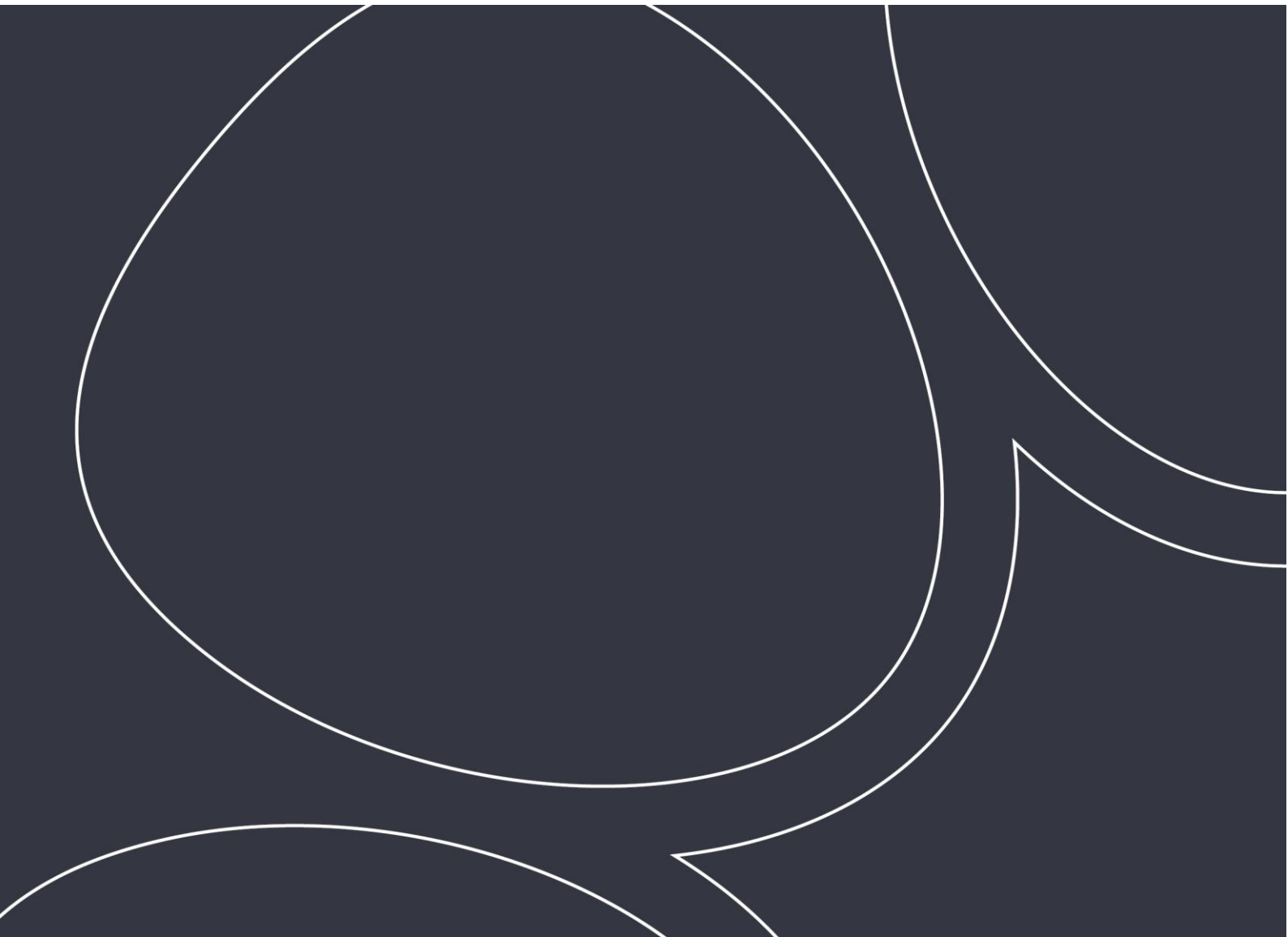


2026 Sea country partnerships program guidelines



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0.1	15 July 2026	Stacey Kopf	First version
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Acronyms	Full form
DAF	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
GST	Goods and Services Tax
EOI	Expression of Interest
NT	Northern Territory
S19 ILUA, Section 19 agreement	An agreement under section 19 of the <i>Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976</i> (Commonwealth) (Land Rights Act).

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Figure 1 Caring for sea country - NT GUNUMITJANDA-WA MADLA & DAMIBILA, by Rochelle Minberrignully Fejo-Tasker. Copyright Fisheries Division - Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

1. Background

The proposed fee-for-service funding model, to take effect 1 July 2026, will allow Fisheries to engage with all Aboriginal stakeholder groups, in a flexible, responsive arrangement, to better deliver on government priorities, in financially effective contracts that build relationships by addressing community level concerns. The program has a dual focus: to develop relationships between Aboriginal people working on Sea Country and NT Fisheries; and to build capacity for Sea Country management through involvement in fisheries related Research, Compliance, Biosecurity, management and education activities.

2. Overview

The below table gives an overview of funding available for the 2026/27 financial year funding round.

Sea Country Partnerships Funding	
Application period	Opens 8 am Saturday 1 August. Closes 5 pm Monday 31 August 2026
Total funding available	\$420,000
Type of funding	Project and activity-based work that aligns with the three identified priority areas: fisheries compliance, fisheries science and research, or fisheries education.
Time frames	Projects for one year.
Funding limit	Up to \$60K per year, although larger, exceptional projects may be considered, especially if they have a regional scope.
Applications	A separate application must be submitted for each EOI for which funding is sought. Regional projects with multiple groups, either: 1. Each group submits a separate application for their part of the project. Each group's application must clearly outline the governance structure for the overall project, and how the applications are connected; Or 2. A single Administering Body is nominated to be responsible for project management and governance. Funding is administered for services or outcomes provided.
Outcomes and targets directly link to Fisheries priorities:	Outcomes • Increased Aboriginal engagement in fisheries management, including community awareness and integration of Aboriginal knowledge into fisheries management • Improved partnerships between Aboriginal groups and NT Fisheries • Increased Aboriginal participation in fisheries related economic and social activities • Improved alignment with Government and Aboriginal organisation priorities

3. Scope of Funding

The key objectives of the Sea Country Partnership Program are to:

- Support the sustainable use of the Territories aquatic resources
- Foster stewardship and promotion of fairness, equity and access to aquatic resources; and
- Promote opportunities for Aboriginal people to benefit economically from aquatic resources

The Sea Country Partnership program is an annual program, with 2026-27 its first year of operation. The focus for the first year of the program will be on supporting Aboriginal groups to develop and deliver

successful projects, building confidence in the program, and demonstrating value to Aboriginal groups and NT Fisheries.

There are three priority areas identified for 2026-27 financial year. The following information are examples of the type of projects that Aboriginal groups could deliver under each theme, however NT Fisheries is open to receive proposals from interested groups that may better meet shared priorities.

3.1. Priority One: Fisheries Science and Research

Activity Purpose: To improve scientific understanding and/or data associated with aquatic resources, and/or the use of aquatic resources in remote areas of the Territory.

3.1.1. Example projects or activities

- Undertake recreational fishing surveys. Fisheries will provide training for this activity and work with Ranger Groups to capture data. Contact NT Fisheries if you are interested in applying to undertake a Recreational Fishing Survey to discuss project details.
- Develop a project with NT fisheries, for example, to understand the fish populations or important habitat for key species (or group of species)– e.g. breeding areas.

3.1.2. Example reporting measures

- Completion of agreed number of survey events
- Number of people involved in data collection
- Submission of data with sufficient detail and consistency

3.2. Priority Two: Fisheries Compliance

Activity Purpose: To undertake Fisheries compliance activities on Sea Country to gather intelligence and information. This can also support deterrence in illegal activities on Sea Country with visible patrols by Sea Ranger Groups.

3.2.1. Example projects or activities

- Undertake an agreed number of compliance patrols, within a specified period, during daylight hours. Patrols should include trained personnel and an appropriately surveyed vessel (Compliance patrol reporting templates will be provided by NT Fisheries).

3.2.2. Example reporting measures

- Completion of agreed number of patrols
- Timely submission of reports (within 72 hours)
- Reports completed with sufficient detail using provided templates

3.3. Priority Three: Education

Activity Purpose: To develop and deliver educational activities and resources that improve community understanding of fisheries management, sustainable fishing, and Sea Country values. The activities are intended to educate, inform, and engage community members.

3.3.1. Example projects or activities

- Deliver education sessions to build awareness of sustainable fishing practices, fisheries management, and the cultural, environmental, and social values of Sea Country
- Deliver public and/or community engagement events to address community knowledge gaps about fisheries management and increase awareness of Sea Country issues
- Produce communication materials

3.3.2. Example reporting measures

- Delivery of agreed number of education or engagement activities
- Submission of event evaluation reports, templates to be provided by NT Fisheries
- Materials produced, for example - signage, communication or information documents

Your application must demonstrate clear links to the outcomes and targets listed in the **Overview** section as well as key objectives listed in the **Scope of funding** section above.

4. Funding Process

The process for assessment, approval and reporting of Sea Country Partnerships Program funding is summarised in the flowchart (Figure 2).

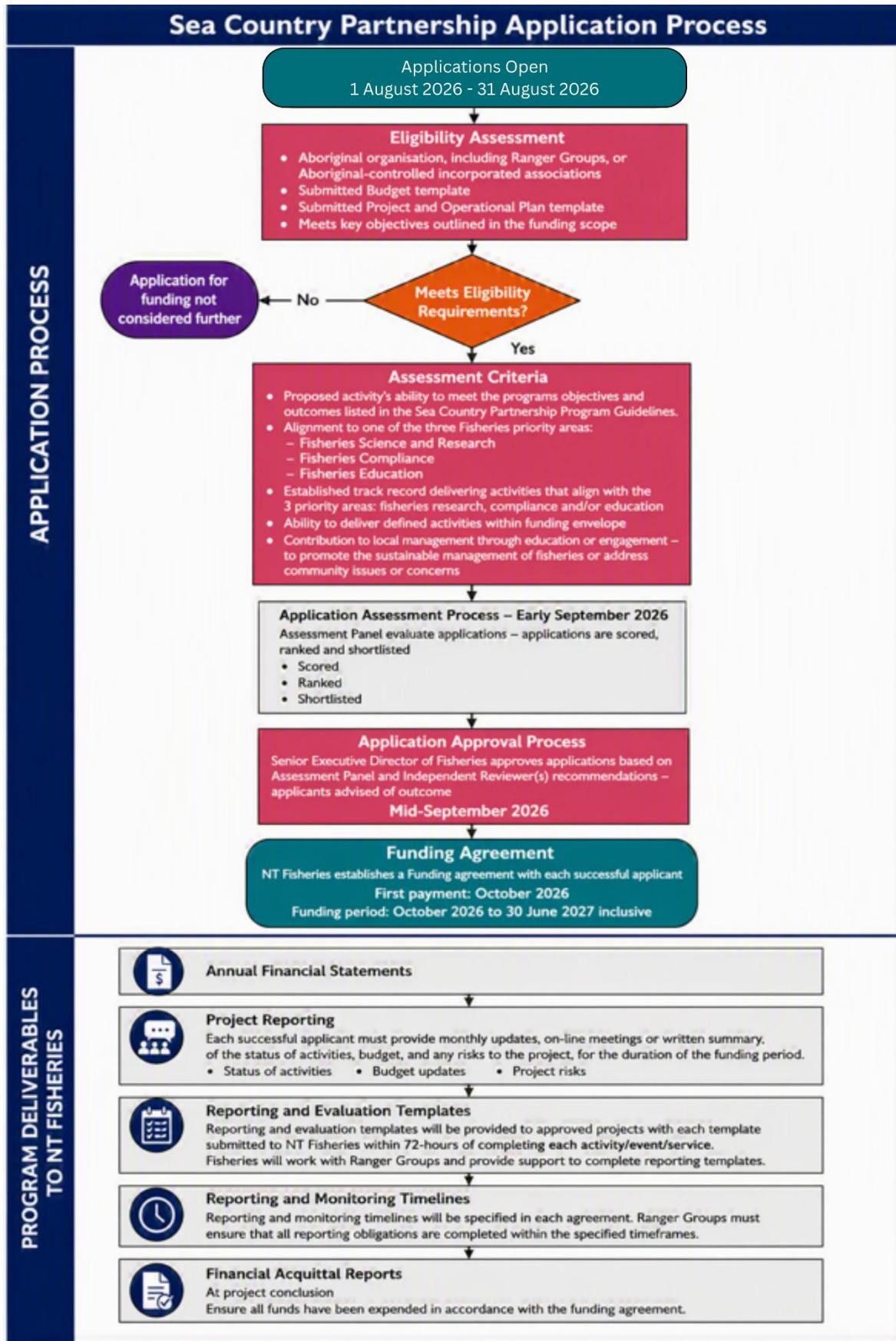


Figure 2 Assessment process Sea Country Partnerships Program funding

5. Eligibility for funding

5.1. Who can apply

The Sea Country Partnerships program is open to Aboriginal organisations, including Ranger Groups, and Aboriginal-controlled incorporated associations that are registered or incorporated within the NT, and which have a clearly identified role in Sea Country management on Aboriginal land and seas.

5.2. Completing applications

- For an application to be deemed eligible for the Sea Country Partnership Program, it must demonstrate that it will further the key objectives outlined in the **Scope of funding** section above.
- Organisational and contact details must be complete and current.
- All sections of the application must be completed.
- Budget template must be completed and attached as per instructions.
- Project and Operational Plan template must be completed and attached as per instructions.
- You must attach all supporting information when you lodge your application, including:
 - quotes for any items over \$10 000
 - an explanation of how costs (such as travel, fuel, meeting expenses) were derived
 - letters of support and relevant partnership agreements
 - governance arrangements for any multi-group regional projects
 - relevant management plans.
- You must demonstrate that you hold or are able to acquire any permissions necessary to undertake the proposed project
- You must hold appropriate insurance covering legal liability (including liability assumed under the contract).

Please refer to [Types of grant funding agreements | NT.GOV.AU](#) for all terms and conditions relating to capital grants and standard variable term funding agreements.

5.3. Joint applications and partnerships

Joint applications that bring together eligible parties to achieve regions outcomes are encouraged, particularly those which are improved or enabled by co-funding and in-kind support.

If you are submitting a joint or partnership application, you should detail the governance arrangements you will establish. Visit [Types of grant funding agreements | NT.GOV.AU](#) to ensure that you are aware of your responsibilities under the standard NTG grant conditions, particularly in regard to subcontracting or other arrangements that may apply to a joint project.

5.4. Traditional Owner and community priorities

Your proposal should consider caring for Sea Country priorities of Traditional Owners and provision of evidence supporting this is encouraged, including:

- Healthy Country Plans
- Sea Country Plans
- Joint Management Plans

6. How to apply

The application process is open for four weeks. Applications open at 8 am Saturday 1 August 2026. Applications close at 5 pm Monday 31 August 2026. Late applications will not be accepted, and no extensions will be granted.

Applications must be submitted using the NT Government's [GrantsNT](#) Portal with all necessary supporting documentation. Incomplete applications will not be assessed. If you are a first-time user of [GrantsNT](#) and you have never been awarded funding through [GrantsNT](#) you will need to setup an organisation profile and complete a vendor ID form. It is recommended new users refer to [GrantsNT](#) help, provided at [GrantsNT](#) Introduction. If you have used [GrantsNT](#), please ensure all organisation and contact details are update before you apply.

7. Assessment

Each application will be assessed against the following criteria:

Alignment with Government Priorities - 30% Proposed activity's ability to meet the Programs objectives and outcomes listed in the <i>Sea Country Partnership Program Guidelines</i>
• Application explains how the key objectives and outcomes of the Sea Country Partnership Program will be met. • Application is driven by a clearly identified need or demand to improve caring for Sea Country and sustainable fisheries management.
Capability and Experience - 20% Established track record delivering Sea Country activities that align with the 3 priority areas: Fisheries Science & Research, Fisheries Compliance or Fisheries Education
• History of completing fisheries related scopes of work.
Community Impact - 20% Contribution to local Sea Country management through education or engagement - to promote the sustainable management of fisheries and/or address community issues or concerns
• Maintains and increases the ability of Aboriginal people and organisations to understand and contribute to the sustainable management of fisheries. • Delivers environmental, economic, social and cultural benefits to Aboriginal people that will persist beyond the life of the funding agreement. • Improves community understanding of fisheries management, sustainable fishing, and Sea Country values.
Quality of Proposed Activities - 20% Alignment to one of the three Fisheries priority areas: Fisheries Science & Research, Fisheries Compliance or Fisheries Education

- Application identifies 1 of the 3 priority areas and describes activities to be undertaken in that priority area.
- Project Plan includes clearly defined and achievable milestones which demonstrate good planning, and effective use of resources, with associated reporting measures.
- Project governance is explained.

Value for Money - 10%

Ability to deliver defined activities within funding envelope

- Budget is detailed, viable, realistic and includes all relevant supporting information.
- Project constraints are identified and managed appropriately.

8. Terms and Conditions

If your application is successful, a funding agreement will be developed using standard NTG grant conditions. Details of grant terms and conditions are available at [Types of grant funding agreements | NT.GOV.AU](#) (capital grants and standard five year or variable term funding agreements).

9. Further Information

For further information, contact Sea Country Partnerships

NT Fisheries

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