Indigenous Languages and Arts (ILA) Program 2026–27—Open Competitive Grant Opportunity

December 2025

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

We strongly recommend you read the FAQs in combination with the Program Guidelines.

What is the Open Competitive Grant Opportunity?

The Open Competitive Grant Opportunity is one of three funding streams available under the ILA program. This grant opportunity is undertaken annually and is open to all eligible organisations wanting to deliver discrete one-off Indigenous languages and/or arts activities for their community. Projects funded through the Open Competitive Grant Opportunity are for a specific purpose and period.

How do I access information about the Open Competitive Grant Opportunity?

All information about the 2026–27 ILA Open Competitive Grant Opportunity, including the program guidelines is available on the Australian Government's GrantConnect website at https://www.grants.gov.au/.

How do I apply to the Open Competitive Grant Opportunity?

You must complete an online application form through SmartyGrants (SmartyGrants | Home).

Who can I contact regarding my application?

Enquiries about the grant opportunity or the ILA program should be directed to the ILA Team on T: 1800 006 992 or E: ila@arts.gov.au.

Enquires about the SmartyGrants program should be directed to the SmartyGrants help desk (T: 03 9320 6888 or E: service@smartygrants.com.au).

Australian Government Language Policies and Initiatives

Target 16

The _National Agreement on Closing the Gap_ (Closing the Gap) has 19 national socio-economic targets across areas that have an impact on life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The socio-economic outcome of Target 16 states: '_Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing_'.

Target 16 states: '_By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken_'.

Language Policy Partnership

The First Nations Languages Policy Partnership (LPP) was established under Priority Reform One of Closing the Gap (formal partnership and shared decision making). After consultation across Australia, the LPP developed 7 national priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, six of which are directly supported through activities funded by the ILA program:

- Speaking and using languages
- Supporting the people, groups and organisations who work in languages
- Access to country
- More funding that goes where communities need it
- Bringing language home to the people and communities
- Help people understand the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages
- Languages Legislation.

Voices of Country

Voices of Country is Australia's action plan for the *International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032*.

Voices of Country is structured around five interconnected 'themes' which are supported through activities funded by the ILA program:

Theme 1 – Stopping the loss

Theme 2 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are centre

Theme 3 – Intergenerational knowledge transfer

Theme 4 – Caring for Country

Theme 5 – Truth-telling and celebration.

Important

If you are not sure your organisation meets the eligibility criteria, please contact the ILA Team on email ila@arts.gov.au or phone 1800 006 992 *before* starting your application.

Eligibility

I am an unincorporated association. Am I eligible to apply?

No—An unincorporated association is not a legal entity.

My organisation does not meet the eligibility criteria. Can I apply under an auspicing arrangement?

No – the ILA Program does not fund auspicing funding arrangements.

I am an individual/sole trader. Am I eligible to apply?

No—individuals/sole traders are not eligible.

We are a state government primary school. Are we eligible to apply?

No—State or Territory Governments, including portfolio agencies are not eligible to apply. This includes state departments of education (including primary schools).

Indigenous Organisation Structure

What are Tier 1 and Tier 2 Indigenous controlled and/or owned organisations?

Clause 55(a) of the _National Agreement on Closing the Gap_ commits all governments to increase the proportion of service delivery funding that is provided through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly community-controlled organisations. As such, the ILA program is required to capture the status of Indigenous controlled and/or owned organisations that apply for ILA grant funding.

These 'preferencing tiers' provide a framework for granting agencies to preference Indigenous organisations that can demonstrate 51% Indigenous ownership and control (Tier 1 organisations), followed by organisations that can demonstrate at least 50% Indigenous ownership or control (Tier 2 organisations).

Tier 1 organisations – Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisations incorporated under Commonwealth, State or Territory legislation which have at least 51% Indigenous ownership and at least 51% Indigenous control via its governing body.

Examples of Tier 1 organisations include:

- Community-controlled organisations, including organisations specifically established for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, where the above Indigenous ownership and control thresholds are mandated by their governing rules or legislation.
- All other organisations meeting the above 51% Indigenous ownership and 51% Indigenous control thresholds.
- Ownership of the organisations within this tier would be majority Indigenous and may include corporate members where the underlying membership base of the corporate entity is majority Indigenous. Controlling body (e.g. Board of Management) would be majority Indigenous and be elected by the members.
- Incorporated joint ventures may be included in this category, where they meet the Indigenous ownership and control thresholds and the deciding/casting vote is held by an Indigenous member.

Tier 2 organisations – Other entities, with at least 50% Indigenous ownership or 50% Indigenous control. Controlling body (e.g. Board of Management) would be majority Indigenous and be elected by the members.

- Incorporated joint ventures may be included in this category, where they meet the Indigenous ownership or control thresholds and the deciding/casting vote is held by an Indigenous member.

Important

If you are not sure your project meets the ILA program criteria, please contact the ILA Team on email ila@arts.gov.au or phone 1800 006 992 **before** starting your application.

Your project

What amount of funding can I apply for in the open competitive grant opportunity?

In 2026–27, the grant opportunity has the following categories of funding:

Project scale	Grant amount	Project duration
Micro	Up to $20,000	Up to 12 months
Minor	Up to $50,000	Up to 12 months
Intermediate	Up to $150,000 pa	12 months - 24 months
Major	Up to $200,000 pa	24 months - 36 months
Macro	To be negotiated	Up to 36 months

Micro

The maximum level of funding sought can be up to $20,000 pa for a project timeframe of up to a maximum of 12 months.

Example of a 'micro' language project — develop a story book of traditional stories in language as told by Elders and illustrated by young people (up to 12 months for whole project).

Example of a 'micro' arts project — create storyboards for display in a community that celebrate local Indigenous culture (up to 12 months for whole project).

Minor

The maximum level of funding sought can be up to $50,000 pa for a project timeframe of up to a maximum of 12 months.

Example of a 'minor' language project — developing a series of ten podcast episodes to be used as an audio resource for teaching, learning and promoting a traditional language (up to 12 months for whole project).

Example of a 'minor' art project —produce films that preserve, record and promote dreaming stories culminating in a series of community screening events (up to 12 months for whole project), in collaboration with Indigenous Elders and youth from regional communities.

Intermediate

The maximum level of funding sought can be up to $150,000 pa for a project timeframe, greater than 12 months and up to a maximum of 24 months.

Example of an 'intermediate' language project — facilitate language learning through fortnightly language lessons and two annual language camps and produce a range of resources such as language kits, lesson plans, flashcards, a book, audio recordings, video resources and phone app, to support language revitalisation (up to 24 months for whole project).

Example of an 'intermediate' arts project — facilitate cultural transmission and exchange through an extensive workshop program that will culminate in an exhibition to revive and celebrate traditional Aboriginal artisan practices (up to 24 months for whole project).

Major

The maximum level of funding sought can be up to $200,000 pa for a project timeframe, greater than 24 months and up to a maximum of 36 months.

Example of a 'major' language project — develop an Indigenous language dictionary and learning guide over 12 months and then use the newly developed resources to deliver training of an Indigenous language to 250 participants over an additional 12 to 24-month period (up to 36 months for whole project).

Example of a 'major' arts project — design and deliver an Indigenous-led development program for 20 Indigenous participants over 12-18 months to support intergenerational knowledge transmission, then develop, produce and perform contemporary or traditional First Nations dance at a number of regional venues over a 12-month period (up to 36 months for whole project).

Macro

The category of Macro activity only applies to organisations that currently receive ILA program funding for multi-year projects via the Targeted Non-Competitive funding stream. From 2026–27, these organisations are subject to the annual open competitive grant opportunity conditions and requirements. Funding amounts will be negotiated due to the nature of their activities.

Eligible activities and expenditure

Can I apply for ILA funding to support the career development of Indigenous language workers?

Yes—the ILA program objectives, under Section 2.1 of the ILA program guidelines, provides for language learning, teaching, skills development and career pathways.

Can I include salaries in my budget?

Yes — the salaries must be relevant to the delivery of the project. The need for the salaries should be demonstrated throughout the application. The salaries are only for the life of the project. There is no ongoing commitment to the salaries once the project is completed and funds are fully spent. If you are applying for multiple salaries, each salary should be listed separately.

Can I include administration expenses in my budget?

Yes – the open competitive grant opportunity will allow for up to 12% of the total ILA grant money to be used to meet administration costs. All expenses must directly relate to the project and may include items such as project management, data capture/evaluation, report-writing, book-keeping, audits and financial management.

Can I apply for capital items to assist in the delivery of the project?

Yes — the capital item must be relevant to the delivery of the project and Indigenous languages and/or arts and considered low value assets, up to $5,000 pa.

Can I apply for funding for training?

Yes – the training must be relevant to the delivery of the project and Indigenous languages and/or arts.

What other eligibility requirements for the ILA program?

- Section 4 of the ILA program guidelines outlines eligibility criteria for applicants.
- Section 5 of the ILA program guidelines outlines eligible expenditure.

Ineligible Activities and Expenditure

Does the ILA program support Kriol language activities?

No—the ILA program provides funding to revive and maintain Australia's traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Kriol is not classified as a traditional language and is therefore not eligible for funding through the ILA program.

Can I apply for operational funds for my organisation in the open competitive grant opportunity?

No—grant monies through the open competitive grant opportunity cannot be used for costs associated with the general operation of your organisation.

Can I apply for funding for artist professional development workshops?

No — if your project includes artist professional development workshops that is more related to industry development, you may wish to consider the following Australian Government programs:

- **Office for the Arts**
  - Visit the Office for the Arts website for other funding opportunities at Funding and support | Office for the Arts.
- **Creative Australia—Arts Projects for Individuals and Groups**
  - Grants available from $10,000 to $50,000. These grants support a broad range of activities that deliver benefits to the arts sector and wider public, including national and international audiences and communities.

Can I apply for funding specifically to deliver an Indigenous festival?

No –the ILA program does not provide funding to support projects for the delivery of activities specifically for festival, or a significant one-off community celebration. However, funded activities may be included as part of a festival, or a significant one-off community celebration.

If your primary activity is a single project at a festival, or significant one-off community celebration, throughout regional or remote Australia consider if Festivals Australia meets your project objectives.

Can I apply for media broadcasting project funding?

The ILA program does not provide funding support for activities that fall under the Indigenous Broadcasting support provided by National Indigenous Australian Agency.

Other competitive grant opportunities providing support include the Community Broadcasting Foundation Ltd.

Can I use ILA funding for NAIDOC Week celebrations?

No—the ILA program does not provide funding to support activities specifically created for the celebration of NAIDOC week. However, ILA funded activities may be included as part of NAIDOC week celebrations.

Assessment criteria

What should I do if my community's language project features a language already supported by an ILA funded Indigenous Language Centre?

A list of Indigenous Language centres can be found at www.arts.gov.au/funding-and-support/indigenous-languages-and-arts-program.

We encourage you to engage with the ILA funded Language Centre about your project. Your application should detail if you are/are not collaborating with the Language Centre on your project. It would be beneficial to your application to provide as much information as possible.

How can I demonstrate evidence of community support?

Your project must have the support of the local Indigenous community to undertake the proposed activity. You should consider how the local Indigenous community can be involved in the planning and delivery of the project, as well as participating in the project. We expect to see evidence of community support from community representatives. Support may be shown in the form of letters or videos and should:

- identify the role of the author and/or the organisation they represent in the community
- explain why the project is needed in the community
- outline how the author and/or the organisation they represent will participate in the project, including any contributions of funding or resources (if applicable—this is not a requirement)

If the applicant organisation is a non-Indigenous organisation, your evidence of support should also outline how the author and/or organisation they represent has been consulted in the planning and will continue to be consulted over the life of the project.

Note - If you choose to include video-based evidence of support, please ensure the file is small enough (25MB or under) to be successfully attached to your application. The department's IT system does not support access to file-sharing platforms, such as Dropbox.

When we assess the level of community support for your project, we will consider the scope and scale of the project (micro, minor, intermediate or major). If your project will be delivered in multiple communities, you should provide evidence that all participating communities support the project.

Some examples of organisations you might seek support from include:

- Language Centres
- RNTBC (native title bodies)
- Relevant local Aboriginal corporations, cultural arts centres, resource agencies, reference groups
- Empowered Communities Reference Groups
- Other non-government agencies such as those working with young people, employment, housing, substance abuse, justice issues
- Regional development organisations
- Local government organisations.

Specific legislation, policies and industry standards

Will the Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) of my activity material that contains private and/or secret and sacred Indigenous materials remain my property and/or the property of my community?

Yes—the ILA program does not, and will not, retain any intellectual property rights over any activity materials that applicants identify as private and/or secret and sacred Indigenous materials.

This material is and will remain the confidential information of the relevant Indigenous person or Indigenous community.

Grant selection process

How will my application be assessed?

Applications are assessed against criteria outlined in Section 10 of the 2026–27 ILA Program Guidelines.

Who decides if my application is successful or not?

The Minister for the Arts is the final decision maker on all ILA program funding decisions.

When will I know if my application has been successful?

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application at the time successful applicants are being publicly announced.

How can I find out why my application was not successful?

If your application is not successful you will be formally advised.

What happens if only part of our funding request is approved?

It is possible the Minister may approve partial funding under certain circumstances. If this happens, we will work with your organisation to revise the project objectives, deliverables and budget before finalising your funding agreement.

How to write a good grant application

Here are six essential tips to remember when you're applying for a grant. Writing a grant application can be hard, especially if you've never done it before. To help you write a good application, here are some tips to remember when you're applying for a grant.

Check the guidelines and requirements

Before you begin your grant application, it's important to learn and understand the grant program first. You can learn about the ILA program on the program website.

Check your organisation is eligible to apply as only certain types of organisations are eligible.

You will also have to show the value of your project against a set of criteria so make sure you understand what is required to prepare your application.

Prepare your application

Before you write your application, you should consider these questions:

1. Why is your project important?
2. How does your project align with the objectives of the ILA program?
3. Who will your project target?
4. What is the benefit of your project to your community?
5. What will your project achieve?
6. How will you deliver the project?
7. How will your project stand out?
8. How will you measure the success of your project?
9. What are the potential risks that could impact your project?

How will you deliver your project and achieve outcomes

A good grant application has a clear work plan.

Your workplan should outline the steps involved in delivering your project from beginning to end.

Research how much your project will cost

A good grant application has a clear budget.

Your budget plan should outline all the costs involved in completing your project. This includes:

- Funding from your organisation
- The ILA grant amount being sought
- In-kind contributions (i.e. volunteering, venue hire)
- Any other contributions from project partners
- Quotes from suppliers.

It is important that your budget clearly itemises costs to demonstrate planning, i.e. budget line items should be separated where possible, rather than consolidated. For example, separate budget line items can be used for:

- Staff salaries, if there is more than one staff member
- Activities such as workshops that have multiple components, e.g. accommodation, food, travel, etc.

Be detailed

Ensure all relevant information is provided in the application. A detailed application, workplan and budget goes along way to build confidence and trust in your organisation that you can deliver on the project.

- Ensure your application, workplan and budget consistently describe the project.
- The workplan should describe step by step the tasks and activities required to achieve the project.
- The budget should be realistic and self-explanatory whilst demonstrating value for money.
- The workplan and budget should clearly align, i.e. activities and key deliverables from the workplan should have a corresponding budget allocation.
- The workplan and budget should be realistic and achievable.

Before you submit, check you have included supporting documentation.

- Letters of support from relevant community organisations
- Video testimonials
- If available, attach your strategic plan, corporate plan, annual report or newsletter, for reference
- Quotes and invoices from partner suppliers
- Proof of your financial capacity.

Important

The quality of your application including the workplan and budget must be commensurate with the level of funding sought.

Review your application

Before you submit your application, you should:

- check your application against the assessment criteria again (section 6 of the program guidelines)
- review your workplan to ensure it accurately captures how your project will be delivered
- review your budget to make sure it's accurate

It's also important to check how the grant application has been written:

- Is it easy to read and informative for the reader?
- Are jargons or acronyms used? When using acronyms they should be spelt out first.
- Can it be understood by someone who is unfamiliar with your organisation?

Finally, it is important the application is honest and accurate. Your application is assessed and a funding decision is made on the information it provides and if you are successful, the project must be delivered in accordance with the application.