



# AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL FACILITIES FUND

VENUES MOST IN NEED GUIDELINES

2026

## Footy is a game played, watched and loved by millions of Australians across the Country.

It is the AFL's responsibility to ensure that the game can be accessed by every single person in Australia.

Over 620,000 people are registered to participate in community football across junior, youth and senior club footy, AFL Nines, NAB AFL Auskick and the newly introduced, NAB AFL Superkick.

In 2025, registered participation has hit record levels, surpassing the previous high set in 2024. The game can only flourish at the elite level with a strong grassroots foundation and further growth means the game is on track to hit the stated aim of one million participants by 2033, which is backed by the AFL enshrining 10 per cent of the game's total revenue to go towards game development.

With this comes the challenge to provide well-positioned, welcoming, accessible, fit-for-purpose football facilities that support the game's growth, with overall participation numbers rising and the popularity of football for women and girls surging.

Nationally, over 3,000 ovals are being used for Australian football, with this number increasing annually as record numbers of players are attracted to our game. Increasing the usage capacity of ovals and pavilions and development of accessible and female friendly rooms that welcome participants and umpires from each gender has never been more important.

### SUPPORTING VENUES MOST IN NEED

The AFL's Towards 2030 Plan, is a national framework that enables the provision of well positioned, welcoming, accessible, fit-for-purpose football facilities that support the growth of our game.

Through the Australian Football Facilities Fund, 'Venues Most in Need' program, we aim to support the Towards 2030 national framework and our growing game's strategic priorities by building the capacity of and meeting the needs of evolving communities, establishing and enhancing the infrastructure for the elite game and continue to innovate the game's approach to venues to increase access for more people in more locations.

The objectives of the program are to:

- » Maximise the carrying capacity of existing venues and the quality/functionality of their supporting infrastructure.
- » Develop new and increased carrying capacity through construction of new ovals, especially in growing communities in a variety of traditional or innovative settings.
- » Provide inclusive and accessible facilities that cater for the diversity of participants, particularly female participants, who wish to participate in our game.
- » Develop venues to support the game's complete talent pathway, umpiring, landmark heritage sites and people working and volunteering within the game.
- » Enable planning and project partnerships to form with a range of government and non-government bodies to result in an improved quantity, quality and welcoming venue network for Australian Football.
- » Provide immediate support for those directly affected by natural disasters throughout Australia.





## WHO CAN APPLY?

The AFFF Venues Most in Need program is open to all affiliated Australian Football Clubs and other stakeholders invested in building the capacity of our facilities and growing the game, that do not have specific AFL State / Territory based funding programs to apply through.

To correctly support any queries, AFL State and Territory specialist staff are employed to assist clubs and landowners to plan for and develop the best possible environments across all facets of Australian football.



## HOW TO APPLY

- » Interested applicants need to liaise with their respective AFL State and Territory body to discuss their proposal to ensure eligibility against specific funding program guidelines.
- » Subject to endorsement, applicants must then develop their proposal further for funding consideration and State/Territory based assessment criteria, via the relevant online application form, provided following your initial discussion.
- » The respective steering committees and assessment panels will consider all lodged applications that are endorsed/ supported by State and Territory contacts when they convene.

## ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

### What will the Project Achieve? (50%)

Demonstrate the extent to which the project:

- » Increases (or in certain remote areas maintains) participation in football.
- » Improves access/participation opportunities for diverse groups including people with disabilities, females, young people, people from multicultural and Indigenous backgrounds.
- » Improves the terms of access to facilities for football clubs/leagues through a secure long-term agreement with the local government authority or other landowners.

### Why is this project required? (20%)

Demonstrate the extent to which the project:

- » Responds to identified needs and issues
- » Is supported strategically by Australian football club/league/regional/state body planning and/or local government sport and recreation planning.

### How will the Project be delivered? (20%)

Demonstrate the extent to which the project:

- » Clearly identifies the project scope, methodology and timelines.
- » Includes the provision of quotations/cost estimates and concept/schematic plans for the project (that are consistent with the current AFL Preferred Facility Guidelines).
- » Includes confirmation of all other funding contributions (both financial and in-kind).
- » Encourages innovative approaches to address items such as access, multiuse risk management, and environmental sustainability.

### Who will be involved? (10%)

Demonstrate the extent to which the project:

- » Will be appropriately managed to completion and collaborates with a variety of stakeholders including the council, other clubs, leagues and other community groups as appropriate.
- » An AFL representative will be included in project groups where an investment is forthcoming from this fund.

## HOW MUCH FUNDING COULD A PROJECT RECEIVE?

- » The amount requested from this fund should not exceed 10% of the anticipated total project cost however a maximum funding amount will be applied (up to \$50,000).
- » A request greater than 10% of the anticipated total project cost may be considered in exceptional circumstances, where a project is deemed to be of exceptional strategic importance and can demonstrate National or State significance.



## CONDITIONS OF FUNDING

- » Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement detailing funding obligations and conditions, including future tenancy arrangements.
- » Where a Council owns the land and will be the project manager, it is preferable that the Funding Agreement is entered into with Council but can be negotiated upon approval of funding, along with an announcement opportunity for any funding.
- » A senior representative must be designated by the League or Club to liaise with the AFL State and Territory specialist on the progress of the funded project.
- » At the completion of the project, applicants are required to return an online acquittal form, which includes photos of the completed project and confirmation of total project cost.
- » Funding will also be provided on the condition that the AFL are appropriately acknowledged in any formal publicity or events regarding the project both during construction and upon completion.
- » Co-contribution from applicants is not a mandatory requirement however this would be viewed favourably.

## ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects that focus on enhancing facility elements that are critical to growing and sustaining participation in football will be considered favourably.

Applicants are encouraged to explore funding models that demonstrate stakeholder engagement and commitment to the project.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS	INELIGIBLE PROJECTS
<p><b>Include, but are not limited to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Development of new football ovals and amenities, both in traditional and more innovative settings.</li><li>» Provision of all gender changerooms for all those that participate in football - players, officials and umpires.</li><li>» Identify projects where carrying capacity can be increased by upgrading playing surfaces through improved drainage, irrigation and turf management.</li><li>» Football lighting installations or upgrades that deliver greater participation opportunities.</li><li>» Projects that protect a football facility against the impact of climate change (i.e. warm season grass conversions, water re-use projects).</li><li>» The upgrade or development of multi-use facilities where football is a key user/beneficiary.</li><li>» Supporting clubs impacted by natural disasters.</li><li>» Projects that meet relevant Australian Standards as per the AFL's Preferred Facility Guidelines.</li><li>» Implementation of Environmentally Sustainable Design which applies or demonstrates principles of Universal Design.</li></ul>	<p><b>Include, but are not limited to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Projects that do not align with objectives of the Fund.</li><li>» Projects that do not meet relevant Australian standards (e.g. lighting projects) and do not closely adhere to <a href="#">AFL Preferred Community Facility Guidelines</a>.</li><li>» Projects that are deemed to have little positive impact on participation levels in Australian Football.</li><li>» Projects that require ongoing funding assistance or ongoing assistance with operational costs.</li><li>» Projects that will receive AFL related funding support through a separate program avenue that is co-funded via the Australian Football Facilities Fund or any other AFL affiliated funding program.</li><li>» Routine or cyclical maintenance works.</li><li>» Requests for equipment.</li><li>» Retrospective funding for a project that has already commenced or has been completed.</li><li>» Projects that support temporary facilities or the 'hire' of temporary infrastructure.</li></ul>