



# BREAKING NEW GROUND

Work with us to identify and unlock  
new grounds across school sites or  
other innovative locations.

2026



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.

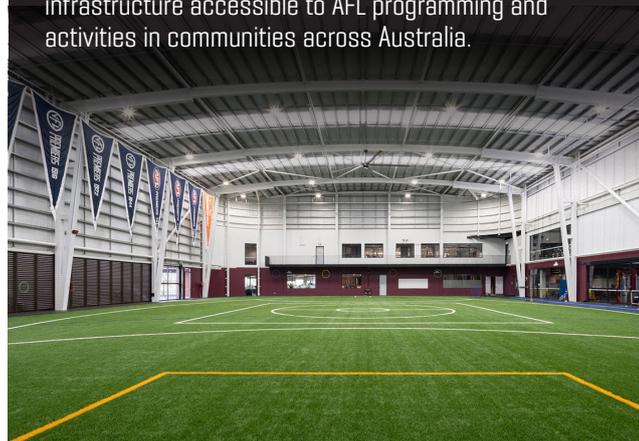
With this comes the challenge to provide well-positioned, welcoming, accessible, fit-for-purpose football facilities, in the right locations, that support the game's growth, with overall participation numbers rising and the popularity of football for women and girls surging.

To meet this demand and align with our participation projections, we need access to the equivalent of close to two new grounds per week over the next ten years.

Staged and shared investment will be a primary key to success, and we know that when we invest, significant projects and outcomes are delivered.

### **ABOUT BREAKING NEW GROUND**

The Breaking New Ground Program aims to assist schools, local governments, developers, community Australian football clubs, umpiring organisations and other landowners to better develop sporting infrastructure accessible to AFL programming and activities in communities across Australia.



The objectives of the program are to:

- » Develop increased supply through the construction of new ovals, especially in growing communities.
- » Increase the AFL facility network in areas of need, by maximising the carrying capacity and accessibility of new places to play and the quality/functionality of supporting infrastructure.
- » Provide inclusive and accessible facilities that cater for the diversity of participants, particularly females, who wish to participate in our 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.
- » Develop venues to support the sport's complete talent pathway, umpiring, staff and people working and volunteering within the game.

The **AFL's National Development Plan - Towards 2030**, 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. We do this by building the capacity of and meeting the needs of evolving communities. We aim to establish and enhance the infrastructure for the elite game. We continue to innovate the game's approach to venues to increase access for more people in more locations.

The Breaking New Ground Program aligns directly to the Towards 2030 goal in driving innovation and growth by generating new, bold and innovative approaches to providing venues that increase access to football for more people in more locations.



### WHO CAN APPLY?

Schools (private and public), Developers, Local Government Authorities, AFL affiliated leagues and community clubs, umpiring organisations, other sports bodies, State Government Authorities and private landowners.

If applicable, applicants must have written support of the landowners or land managers as part of their submission.

### WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS CAN BE FUNDED?

The Program will fund planning, design and delivery of facilities that support the provision of well positioned, welcoming, accessible, fit for purpose sporting facilities that support our game's growing participation base.

Projects should demonstrate how they will achieve some or all of the following strategic priorities:

- » Delivery of new facilities on school / strategic sites that support the local or regional football participation needs
- » Encourage participation by women and girls, juniors, people living in growth areas and communities
- » Provides improved infrastructure to support and enhance school football activities and competitions
- » Provide a minimum 10 year Right of Use arrangement with capacity for at least 1,000 hours access per year for training and/or competition use
- » Provide 12-month priority access to football facilities in strategic locations
- » Improve the health and wellbeing of the community
- » Fast track the implementation of project planning and/or delivery
- » Development of multi-use, shared and co-located facilities
- » Implementation of Environmentally Sustainable Design which applies or demonstrates principles of Universal Design

Examples of potential projects include but are not limited to:

- » Secure greenspace to manage growth challenges
- » Deliver Australian Standard Sports Lighting on more ovals or greenspace
- » Works to maximise the carrying capacity of ovals (irrigation, drainage, field renovations) to increase the availability and accessibility of greenspace for club or program use
- » Invest in more AFL approved hybrid/synthetic ovals to allow greater training capacity
- » Source new and less traditional locations to activate football

Other considerations:

- » Projects must meet relevant Australian Standards (e.g. lighting projects) and be consistent with the **AFL's Preferred Facilities Guidelines**
- » Applicants are encouraged to explore funding models that demonstrate stakeholder engagement and commitment to the project
- » Project works should be ready to commence within 6 months of a successful funding allocation
- » Facilities planned in functional, self-contained stages are eligible
- » Local governments willing to partner with schools or other landowners to undertake joint developments are encouraged to apply
- » Schools, Education providers and other peak sporting bodies are eligible to apply subject to a willingness to enter a right to occupy / lease arrangements with AFL community clubs

### PROGRAM FUNDING

For projects meeting the Breaking New Ground objectives and program criteria, interested applicants may apply for funding support for:

- » Project planning and scoping and / or
- » Infrastructure delivery

A Partnership Opportunity Plan, which explores the project scope, benefits and relationship between the applicant and AFL will be prepared for any site prior to seeking infrastructure funding.

Applicants are encouraged to explore funding models that demonstrate stakeholder engagement and commitment to the project. Co-contribution from applicants is not a mandatory requirement however this would be viewed favourably.

The AFL facilities team will provide direction and guidance on the appropriate funding level options and financial requests for applicants.

### CONDITIONS OF FUNDING

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement detailing funding obligations and conditions, including future tenancy arrangements.

Funding Agreements will outline the relevant parties and their commitments and obligations to each other, while setting out the general funding terms and conditions.

**HOW WILL APPLICATIONS BE ASSESSED?**

**Why is this project required?**

- » How does the project respond to strategic needs of Australian football planning, venue planning and/or local community planning?
- » Is the site located close to a community club with capacity issues?
- » What are the current football participation activities and how will participation increase through future activities, programs and activations resulting from the project?

**Project development?**

- » What level of planning has been undertaken to date?
- » What are the proposed delivery timeframes?
- » What is the budget / partner funding available?

**Does this proposal increase the football network capacity?**

- » Creation or access to new and accessible green space
- » Suitable right of use access arrangements
- » If a school site, will it enhance a school competition / club or program
- » Type of football programming opportunities available (i.e. competition, training, Superkick, Auskick, AFL 9s, umpires)
- » Increases the inclusive and accessible facilities available for diversity of participants, particularly female participants

**HOW TO APPLY?**

Interested applicants are required to liaise with their respective AFL state or territory body to discuss their proposal to ensure eligibility against specific funding program guidelines.

Initial project enquiries and questions are to be emailed to [bnground@afl.com.au](mailto:bnground@afl.com.au)

Subject to endorsement, applicants must then develop their proposal further for funding consideration, via the online application form.

The respective steering committees and assessment panels will consider all lodged applications that are endorsed/ supported by State and Territory contacts when they convene.

**CONTACT**

For further information go to the <https://play.afl/clubhelp/facility-management> or to discuss your potential project with our team please contact [bnground@afl.com.au](mailto:bnground@afl.com.au)

