



# LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANT SCHEME

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



FOR A SAFER STATE



<b>About the Local Government Grant Scheme .....</b>	<b>2</b>
What is the Local Government Grant Scheme? .....	2
What does the LGGGS fund?.....	2
Who determines the LGGGS funding level?.....	2
Who determines the LGGGS funding allocation to Local Government? .....	2
Who can apply for a grant? .....	3
How long does the grant process take? .....	3
What does the grant process involve? .....	3
What is the make-up of the Capital Grants Committees?.....	3
<b>Application Information .....</b>	<b>4</b>
When do I apply?.....	4
How do I apply? .....	4
What do I need to consider when reviewing the offers provided by DFES? .....	4
What do I need to consider when applying for grants? .....	4
Can I apply for more than one item?.....	5
Do I have to provide supporting documentation? .....	5
Can I contact the LGGGS team at DFES if I need further information or help with my application? .....	5
What if I miss the grant closing time? .....	5
Will I be contacted if there are problems/questions with an application? .....	6
How will I be notified of the decisions of the CGC? .....	6
What can I do if my grant is not successful? .....	6
Is feedback available for an unsuccessful request? .....	6
<b>General Information .....</b>	<b>6</b>
How are capital project applications for new facilities prioritised? .....	6
How are applications for additional fleet assets determined? .....	7
Why is there an eligible and ineligible items list? .....	7
Why are some items of personal protective equipment and clothing not eligible for BFB volunteers? .....	7
When will approved grant funding be received? .....	7
Expenditure on a capital grant is less than the approved funding. What is required? .....	8
The project scope that was approved has changed. What do I do? .....	8
How do I manage my grant?.....	8
What is required to acquit an approved capital project?.....	8
What is required to acquit an approved operating grant?.....	9

# **About the Local Government Grant Scheme**

## **What is the Local Government Grant Scheme?**

There are a great number of dedicated volunteers across the State who save lives and property by volunteering their time to support emergency response. The Local Government Grant Scheme (LGGS) is a funding process for Local Governments to provide support of these volunteers through funding the operations of their Bush Fire Brigades (BFB) and State Emergency Service (SES) Units (where applicable). The LGGS funding source is the Emergency Services Levy (ESL). The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) through legislation is responsible for the administration of the LGGS to Local Governments.

## **What does the LGGS fund?**

The LGGS funds the following two programs.



### **Capital Grants**

for new BFB firefighting appliances, SES Unit vehicles, trailers and boats, new buildings/facilities & modification to existing buildings/facilities and major items of equipment (>\$5,000 per item).



### **Operating Grants**

for BFB's and SES Units to purchase plant and equipment (<\$5,000 per item), BFB PPE/PPC, and other goods and services; and funding to maintain plant and equipment, vehicles, trailers, boats, and buildings and cover the costs of utilities rates and taxes and insurance. These categories are referred to as 'Line Items' with expenditure recorded against each item.

## **Who determines the LGGS funding level?**

The DFES determines the LGGS funding level (budget) which is part of the WA State Government Budget process and is included as part of the Fire and Emergency Services (FES) budget 'handed down' each year. The process provides the budget estimate for the corresponding year along with three forward estimate periods. The amounts are published under the 'Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies' in the WA State Budget Paper.

## **Who determines the LGGS funding allocation to Local Government?**

The amount of funding that is allocated to Local Governments is determined from the following process.

### **Capital Grants**

Capital allocations are considered by Capital Grants Committees (CGC) (one for each service) that meet annually to assess capital grant scheduled replacements (fleet) and Local Government submissions. Funding is approved according to priority and available funding.

### **Operating Grant**

Operating grant allocations to Local Governments are determined based on the average of the previous two years completed acquittals (past expenditure trends) and the current year's allocation, indexed with the prevailing cost escalation factor.

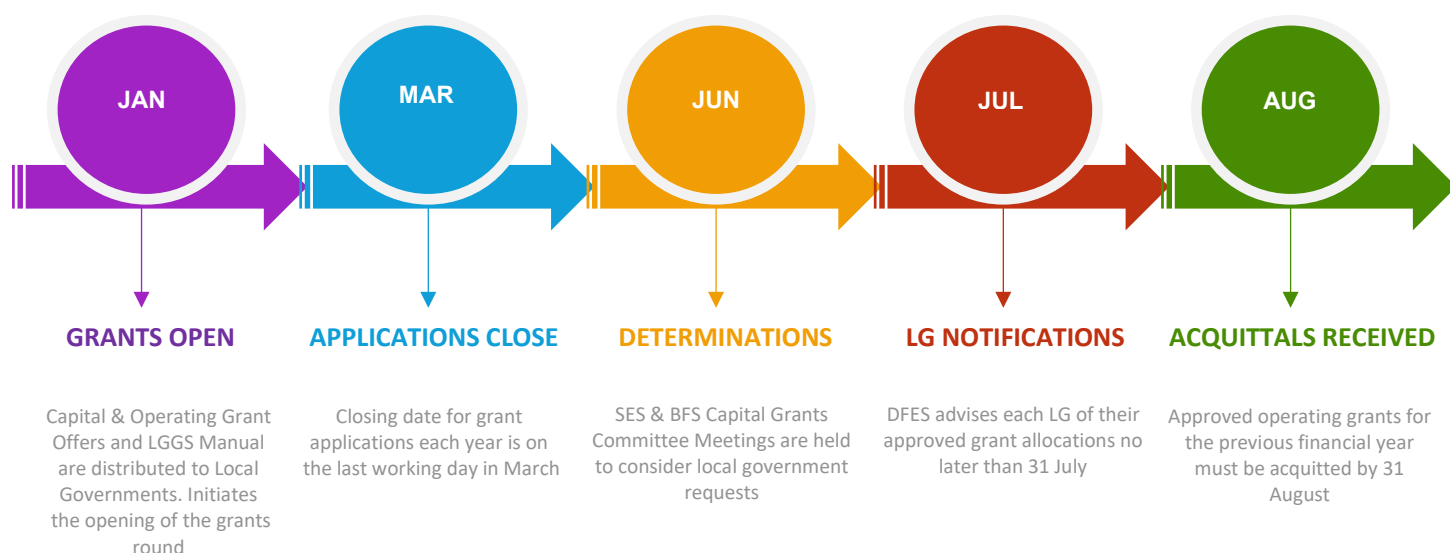
Alternate Operating Grant requests, including Line item 9's (Purchase of Plant and Equipment \$1,500 - \$5,000), are assessed by DFES Asset Planning and Services (LGGS team). Where required, DFES contacts Local Government to discuss and negotiate a suitable operating grant allocation that meets the operational requirements of the brigade/unit within that year and available funding.

## Who can apply for a grant?

Local Governments with registered BFB's and/or gazetted SES Units are eligible to participate in the LGGS and can apply for grant funding. The LGGS does not fund DFES volunteer services.

## How long does the grant process take?

The LGGS process extends over six months. The application period opens in January and closes in March each year. DFES assesses the applications and prepares Capital grant requests for the Capital Grants Committees to determine. The CGC meeting is held in June and Local Governments are usually informed of decisions in July each year.



## What does the grant process involve?

The LGGS process involves both DFES 'offer and acceptance' and Local Government 'request' functions. DFES will provide operating, and capital (vehicle) grant offers for Local Government consideration while Local Governments are invited to 'request' funding for additional or alternate equipment, fleet and facility assets. The 'offers' being made signal the commencement of the Grants process.

## What is the make-up of the Capital Grants Committees?

The Capital Grants Committees (BFS CGC and SES GCG) were established to oversee the capital funding allocations to Local Governments. The primary function of the Committees is to determine the priority of the allocation of capital grant to meet the needs of Local Governments and communities throughout the State. The Committees each comprise seven members, with the make-up as follows:

- Capital Grants Committee Chairperson (Appointed by the FES Commissioner).
- Two (2) Local Government Representatives (selected by the Minister for Emergency Services from nominations provided from a WALGA process).
- Three DFES Staff being two x Deputy Commissioners and the Executive Director Corporate Services.
- One (1) Volunteer representative selected by the Associations representing Bush Fire Brigade and State Emergency Service Volunteers (Appointed by the FES Commissioner).

Note: Chairperson and DFES representatives are the same for both CGC's.

# **Application Information**

## **When do I apply?**

In December of each year, Local Governments are sent the LGGs documentation which signals the commencement of the LGGs process. This includes the LGGs Manual together with vehicle offers that are due for replacement and operating grant offers.

Local Governments may accept DFES offers or request alternate allocations. The process also allows Local Governments to request funding for new items which includes fleet and equipment assets and facilities. Grant funding also extends to modifications to existing facilities.

## **How do I apply?**

The LGGs application process is described in the LGGs Manual for Capital and Operating Grants (the Manual) which is updated and published each year. The Manual sets out the guidelines for the operations of the LGGs for the coming year. The application process consists of a series of forms that need to be completed by the Local Government. Where new items are requested, the request needs to include justification and quotations.

## **What do I need to consider when reviewing the offers provided by DFES?**

Capital - Vehicle Offers – Local Governments are provided with a list (Form 3a) of their BFB and/or SES LGGs funded vehicles. The form identifies which vehicles are due for replacement in the next year together with what is due for replacement in the following 4 years (out years). Replacements are offered on a 'like for like' basis. Local Governments that request alternate/additional vehicles are required to provide justification in support.

Operating Grant Offers – Local Governments are provided with an operating grant offer for consideration. The offers are provided as a base line allocation and Local Governments may either accept or reject the assessed offer. If the offer is rejected, an alternate operating grant request (completed at a 'line item' level) including justification to support the revised amounts is required from the Local Government.

## **What do I need to consider when applying for grants?**

LGGs requests for funding need to consider the requirements of the brigade or unit in their support of the community. Local Governments should consult with their BFBs and/or SES Unit when assessing their capital and operating grant needs.

When requesting additional resources in the form of fire appliances and unit vehicles, there are some important considerations that should be at the forefront of planning.

- Availability of resources in the immediate and neighboring vicinity, including other services.
- Does the request contribute to over servicing the area?
- Is there garaging space immediately available?

With respect to new or replacement facility requests, LGGs facility guidelines and footprints have been developed to assist Local Governments. The footprints represent the operational service requirements of the facility based on brigade or unit profile. Where a Local Government decides on extra vehicle bays or other facility features outside of LGGs guidelines, costs associated with these features must be met by the Local Government.

Vehicle bays should accommodate current fleet asset numbers, designs should be such that they permit

expansion should future needs change. Site selection, proximity to services, positioning on the site and traffic management all form important grant funding considerations.

‘Project readiness’ must be addressed within the submission. Applicable questions include:

1. How soon can the project commence?
2. Is the land immediately available (with title)?
3. Is Council approval required?
4. Is a Council budget contribution required and has it been approved?

Items for consideration when assessing alternative operating grant requests include vehicle servicing requirements, BFB personal protective clothing/equipment (PPC/E) replacement, equipment servicing or replacement and insurance increases due to delivery of new vehicles / facilities.

## **Can I apply for more than one item?**

Yes, there are no restrictions placed on the number of items a Local Government can apply for in any one year. What will assist with the application assessment however is for the Local Government to prioritise their requests.

## **Do I have to provide supporting documentation?**

Yes, justification that supports your request is essential. An application is considered stronger if documentation is attached that provides evidence of need. This can include:

- Alternative replacement vehicle
  - Business Case / Justification
- Additional vehicle
  - Existing Risk to Resource (R2R)
  - Business Case
- New facility or modifications to an existing facility
  - Business Case / Justification
  - Plans/Drawings
  - Photos of existing facility (if there is one)
  - Project cost estimate
- Alternative Operating Grant Request
  - Justification
- Line Item 9 Requests (Purchase of Plant and Equipment \$1,500 - \$5,000)
  - Justification
  - Quotes

## **Can I contact the LGGS team at DFES if I need further information or help with my application?**

The LGGS team at DFES welcome application enquiries and can assist Local Governments with their application to ensure compliance within LGGS Guidelines. The LGGS team however cannot provide assurances regarding the application for funding being successful (refer to the DFES contact details at the last page).

## **What if I miss the grant closing time?**

Closing date and time is important and is clearly advised through the process. Should the application not be received by the advised closing time, the application will not be accepted. Application closing times should be approached with the same importance given to job applications and tender submissions –



normal practice is that late applications etc. are not accepted.

## **Will I be contacted if there are problems/questions with an application?**

Local Governments may be contacted for further information should this be required.

## **How will I be notified of the decisions of the CGC?**

Local governments are advised of the decisions of the CGC by formal correspondence. The notification provides Local Governments with a summary of the total of the LGGS budget and Operating Grant and Capital allocations for that year.

## **What can I do if my grant is not successful?**

Where a Local Government is advised their capital or operating grant request was not successful and has been unable to satisfactorily resolve the issue with DFES, the Local Government CEO may refer such a dispute to DFES for referral to the ESL Referral and Grants Advisory Committee (ERGAC). The appeal must be based on additional justification.

Local Governments will be advised of the timeframe and the requirements of the appeals process in conjunction with their capital and operational grant allocation assessment notification once the details and process are established. Late appeals will not be accepted.

## **Is feedback available for an unsuccessful request?**

Yes. Allocation advice is provided to Local Governments at the completion of the process, however, should more detailed information be required, please contact the LGGS team (refer to the DFES contact details at the last page).

# **General Information**

## **How are capital project applications for new facilities prioritised?**

To support the decision-making process, criterion weighting is applied against each of the facility requests that either encompass a new, replacement or extension to a facility. The weightings are based on two measures; Immediate Priority & Project Readiness to help assist in the prioritisation of projects. Each measure has a list of criteria applied with its respective weighting. Following this, a total overall rating is calculated for each request.

### **Immediate Priority**

1. Substantive LGGS fleet asset with no facility – garaged on private property.
2. Substantive LGGS fleet asset – replacement unable to be accommodated in current facility.
3. Current facility is not fit for purpose and not viable to refurbish.
4. Facility modification – scope and cost parameters enhance service life.
5. Request is dependent on fleet allocation – New capability requirement identified.

### **Project Readiness**

1. Can commence construction within 6 months.
2. Can commence construction within 7-12 months.
3. Can commence construction within 13-18 months.
4. Can commence construction within 19+ months.

The framework and matrix for the weighted scoring has been set by the LGGS team with oversight and approval by the CGC's to ensure that an accepted quantitative approach is consistently applied.

## How are applications for additional fleet assets determined?

Any expansion to capital fleet resources through the LGGs, including donated resources, will be assessed through needs identified through a Risk to Capability framework which includes resource allocation assessments in the immediate area. Additional fleet requests are also subject to the level of available funding following the priority allocations (i.e., Operating grants, Fleet replacement program, Facility requests etc.)

## Why is there an eligible and ineligible items list?

Local Governments have previously sought direction on what items of equipment or services provided are acceptable for LGGs funding. Eligible and ineligible item lists were developed as guidelines to assist Local Governments determine their funding needs and are reviewed annually. The lists are not intended to be exhaustive, and guidance should be sought through DFES Region or the LGGs team if the proposed expenditure item is not listed, prior to purchase or engagement.

## Why are some items of personal protective equipment and clothing not eligible for BFB volunteers?

PPE and PPC are important items. PPE and PPC for BFB volunteers include Level 1 clothing directly associated with bushfire fighting along with the necessary ancillary equipment such as helmets, safety glasses, goggles, hearing protection, full face respirators and footwear etc., to name a few.

DFES volunteer services (VFRS and VFES) provide different response capabilities to the community resulting in the need to be provided with the appropriate levels of PPE/PPC that that response capability requires.

Specifications and standards apply to each PPE/PPC classification level which results in PPE/PPC not being interoperable across capabilities.

The LGGs does not fund any equipment that is not aligned to the BFB response capability.

## When will approved grant funding be received?

LGGs funding is 'paid' to Local Governments under the following methods:

### Operating Grants

Funding is paid 'in advance' by way of four equal quarterly payments throughout the year (July, October, January and April).

### Capital Grants

- Fleet assets – provided as a 'physical asset' hence a funding transaction is not required.
- Facility and equipment assets – by one of the following methods:
  1. Cash payment (reimbursement) on completion/purchase of the project allocated the Grant funding.
  2. Grant Agreement (GA) established (between DFES and the LG) with payments as per the agreed payment schedule.
  3. Self-supporting loan arrangement where the LG takes out a loan with the WATC and is reimbursed the principal and interest annually by DFES, for the duration of the loan (max. 10 years).



## Expenditure on a capital grant is less than the approved funding. What is required?

Should the full value of the Grant allocation not be required, DFES must be notified. LGGs funding cannot be used by the Local Government for any purpose other than what was approved.

## The project scope that was approved has changed. What do I do?

The Local Government should contact DFES and obtain written approval prior to making any changes to the approved project scope. Where a project scope changes significantly, the changes will need to be resubmitted to the CGC for consideration.

## How do I manage my grant?

Local Governments are required to manage their grant allocations within the approved base line amounts.

Operating Grants relate to the annual operating expenses incurred by brigades and units in direct support of their activities and readiness for operational duties, including the cost of emergency responses (other than multi-agency bushfire or natural hazard incidents). It is not expected that the baseline costs of brigades and units would vary significantly from one year to the next, however it is acknowledged that unforeseen expenditure may result.

Where a significant operational cost variation is identified during the year, Local Governments must advise the LGGs Team, through their DFES Regional representative of the circumstances before incurring these costs. DFES will then consider reimbursing the Local Government for the identified overrun as part the year end acquittal process.

If the Local Government is unable to cash manage the additional cost, DFES may consider an immediate adjustment to the current year's allocation.

Likewise, any increase above the approved Capital funding must be advised to DFES prior to committing to such an increase as a funding adjustment cannot be guaranteed. Please contact the LGGs team for further guidance.

## What is required to acquit an approved capital project?

Capital grants are acquitted when the following occurs:

**Fleet assets:** Local Governments that receive a vehicle will be provided with the relevant vehicle transfer notification form together with a tax invoice and adjustment note. The tax invoice will detail the market value of the vehicle and GST. The Local Government is required to process the tax invoice through their accounts payable system by recognising an asset for the asset register and for insurance purposes. The Local Government is also required to process the adjustment note through their accounts payable system by recognising a 'revenue item'. The net impact of the tax invoice and adjustment note will be zero for payment purposes but will correctly account for the GST under the tax legislation.

**Facility projects:** When the facility project is complete, and practical completion has been reached, a Certificate of Practical Completion (CPC) is issued, the Local Government is required to submit the CPC and a tax invoice to DFES, together with a copy of the paid invoices and/or a transaction listing of the expenditure. Grant payment(s) will be arranged on receipt.

**Equipment purchases (>\$5,000):** When the equipment purchase has been undertaken and the goods received by the Local Government, the Local Government should submit a tax invoice to DFES together with a copy of the paid invoice to validate the purchase. Grant payment(s) will be arranged on receipt.

## What is required to acquit an approved operating grant?

Approved operating grants received for the 2021/22 period must be acquitted by 31 August 2022. The acquittal process is an important aspect of DFES accountability to government, ratepayers and stakeholders and provides transparency to the use of ESL funds. Extensions to the acquittal submission date must be negotiated with DFES (through the LGGS team).

Local Governments are required to complete the Form 8 and provide evidence to validate the expenditure across each expenditure category (line items 1- 8) in support of the annual acquittal. This evidence may be in the form of a system generated report, spreadsheet, transaction listing or other verifiable information. Local Governments should also include copies of maintenance records and insurance schedules against each prescribed appliance/vehicle with their operating grant acquittal.

Should the operating grant be underspent, the remaining cash balance is to be retained by the Local Government. The first quarterly payment for the next period will be adjusted to reflect the amount of the opening (retained) cash balance.

Where an overspend occurs DFES will consider reimbursing the Local Government for the identified overspend as part of the year end acquittal process. Accordingly, the Local Government must provide suitable justification and explanation of the overspend for the reimbursement to be considered by DFES.



## Where can I get further information on the LGGS?

**Website:** [www.dfes.wa.gov.au/esl](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/esl)

**Mail:** Asset Planning & Services  
Department of Fire and  
Emergency Services  
PO Box P1174  
PERTH WA 6844

**Email:** [lggs@dfes.wa.gov.au](mailto:lggs@dfes.wa.gov.au)