

# Guidelines

## The Lakes Festival 2026 – Expression of Interest

### Important dates

The Lakes Festival Expression of Interest opens on Friday 6 February 2026 at 2pm and closes on Friday 20 March 2026 at 2pm.

Any questions relating to the Expression of Interest should be directed to the Events Officer at [events@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au](mailto:events@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au)

### Who Can Apply?

The Lakes Festival Expression of Interest is available to eligible sole traders, businesses, companies or organisations that propose an event or event concept that satisfies the requirements.

The Festival committee is also looking to fund a range of unique events that provide the community and visitors with a diverse Festival calendar of events from sporting events to arts, cultural and community events, as well as educational experiences and workshops.

Applying for funding is optional and if you do not wish to pursue this, please answer no in the relevant question within the application. Event Innovation funding is available to those who would like assistance funding their event.

*Maximum funding per application: \$5,000 exclusive of GST if applicable.*

**Please Note:** Applicants will be required to provide a full event management plan,

budget marketing plan and or project plan prior to final funding determination.

### Types of Events that will be considered:

Types of events that will be considered are events that add value to The Lakes Festival calendar. We are looking for bold, innovative and fun out of the box ideas, while still staying true to the theme of "Activate, Educate, and Celebrate" our waterways. Events are assessed by the committee on their potential to involve the local community, and to attract visitors to each event. Events must incorporate the waterways either via location of event or theme.

In addition to meeting the core criteria, events may also be assessed on their environmental sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity, depth of integration with waterways, level of community and local business collaboration, innovation, and the applicant's demonstrated capacity to safely deliver the proposed event. These factors help ensure a diverse and high-quality Festival program that reflects the values of Activate, Educate, and Celebrate.

**Please note:** By submitting an application, it does not mean your expression of interest or funding application will automatically be approved. Funding will only be available to approved

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applicants/events after an extensive criteria assessment.

### Events will be assessed against;

- Facilitating a vibrant and innovative events culture within the Central Coast.
- Encouraging the development of tourism in the Central Coast and increase economic development opportunities.
- Encouraging the involvement of local residents in events and Festivals that can facilitate positive interaction, cultural activity and a strong community identity among the citizens of our diverse community.

### Examples of events may include (but not limited to);

- Lanterns on the lake / light festival
- Sailing Regatta, raft races / inflatable boat races
- Outdoor cinema events
- Art events and workshops
- Installations including floating water sculptures
- Street and laneway Festivals
- Water activities such as SUP, dragon boats, sailing or swimming
- Obstacle course / Fun runs
- Comedy / magic / theatres shows
- Live music concerts or curated pop-up performances

- Waterside dining experiences, or seafood cooking classes

\*Preference will be given to events that can attract attendees from outside the region.

### Eligibility

- The organisation responsible for the initiative is a legal entity such as a Sole Trader, Trust, company or incorporated association and can provide evidence of this status.
- Events are to be held at one of the designated Event Hubs or Central Coast Waterway within the Festival timeframe. Event organizer is responsible for booking their event site with the correct Council team and applying for any DA that may be required.
- Applicants must be able to demonstrate an extensive community involvement.
- Applicants who have previously obtained funding from Council under any of Council's funding programs, will not be eligible to apply for assistance until that previous funding has been acceptably accounted for, by its agreed due date.
- Applications for partial funding of proposals must be supported by evidence that funding has been

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sought/obtained from other sources.

- Must have \$20mil Public Liability Insurance for the period of the event.
- Applicants must demonstrate to Council that their organisation is able to effectively manage and deliver the proposed event.

### Ineligible

- Applying for capital expenditure unless the applicant can demonstrate an exceptional need and show that the equipment applied for is vital to the event and cannot be procured from any other source. In such instances, Council will require two written quotes. Quotes must be attached to your application at the relevant section.
- Applying for personal travel.
- Applying late or incomplete applications.
- Events with a religious, political or sectarian purpose, where that purpose may exclude or offend members of the broader community.
- A proposal that duplicates an event already existing within the Festival program.
- A proposed allocation which contravenes the Local Government

Act 1993 or any Procedure of Council.

- Applicants who have an outstanding debt to Council.
- Individuals
- Events that are closed to the public, either as participants or spectators.
- Events held outside the Festival time frame.
- Events not held on a Central Coast Waterway.
- Paper Based Applications.

### Conditions of Funding

- Under no circumstances will additional funding be allocated to meet shortfalls.
- As a condition of funding Council and the Festival must be acknowledged in all promotional material and the Festival logo along with Council's logo must be included in all print and digital material in line with branding guidelines.
- All promotional material is to be approved by Council prior to publication.
- Any sponsors proposed to be sought for the event must be approved by Council to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest with the sponsors of The Lakes

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Festival. This includes any locations proposed for the events.

- In addition, Central Coast Council reserves the right to receive the following:
- Joint media release opportunities
- Opportunity for Council delegate to speak at one occasion e.g. (opening)
- Space at event (e.g. marquee)
- Council to be offered to be part of any monthly event planning meetings as requested
- Applicants must outline how Council funds will be used, and this information will be assessed as part of the application review. Council funds may only be used as agreed with Council and may not be diverted to another project or purpose.
- Unspent funds must be returned to Council.

### Accessibility

Please ensure that you have considered accessibility requirements as part of running your event, and refer to the following guidelines and checklist to assist in doing so: [Planning Accessible Events](#)

### Notification

- An acknowledgment email will be sent to the nominated contact on

the application form once application has been submitted

- Eligible applications will be evaluated by an internal panel. The assessment panel may seek further information or clarification on aspects of the application.
- Innovation Event funding recommendations will be presented to The Festival committee for approval by mid to late April 2026.
- Applicants will be notified by mid-May 2026 of the outcome of their application for funding. There is no appeals process.
- Successful applicants will be contacted by Council and emailed the funding agreement. The funding agreement is based on a standard funding template, of which the terms and conditions of the funding are negotiable.
- Payments of Innovation Event Funding will be available from November 2026 upon completion of the funding acquittal report. In some cases, part funding may be made available for deposits in August 2025. This decision will be determined on a case-by-case basis and must be requested at the time of reviewing the agreement.

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### Acquittal and Reporting

- A comprehensive event report is a condition of funding as it is a critical part in validating the event outcomes against the original proposal. Successful applicants will be required to undertake a suitable event research process to collect specific attendance data during the period of the event and calculate the economic and social impacts of the event. A report template will be provided.
- The deadline for the provision of an event report and financial acquittal report is no later than one (1) month following the conclusion of the event.
- Recipients must provide a financial acquittal identifying where profits have been spent and must align with the original event budget.

### Tax advice

The Australian Taxation Office considers funding and sponsorships as taxable income. The tax office can help with information on tax, including GST. Call 13 2866 or visit [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au) for further information.