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Information about the Rural Financial Counselling Service in New South Wales



This fact sheet provides background information on the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) in New South Wales for entities interested in submitting an application for the 2016 to 2019 merit-based competitive grants round.

About the Rural Financial Counselling Service

Since 1986, the Department of Agriculture has been funding the RFCS to provide free, financial counselling services nationally to farmers, fishing enterprises and small, related businesses suffering financial hardship.

The main services offered by counsellors are to assist and support an eligible client to:

- understand his or her financial position and the viability of his or her enterprise
- identify options to improve their financial position
- develop and implement a business plan.

Under the RFCS 2016 to 2019 grants round, forest growers and harvesters will also be eligible for this service. From April 2016, the RFCS will operate in 12 regions across Australia.

The 2016 to 2019 grants round

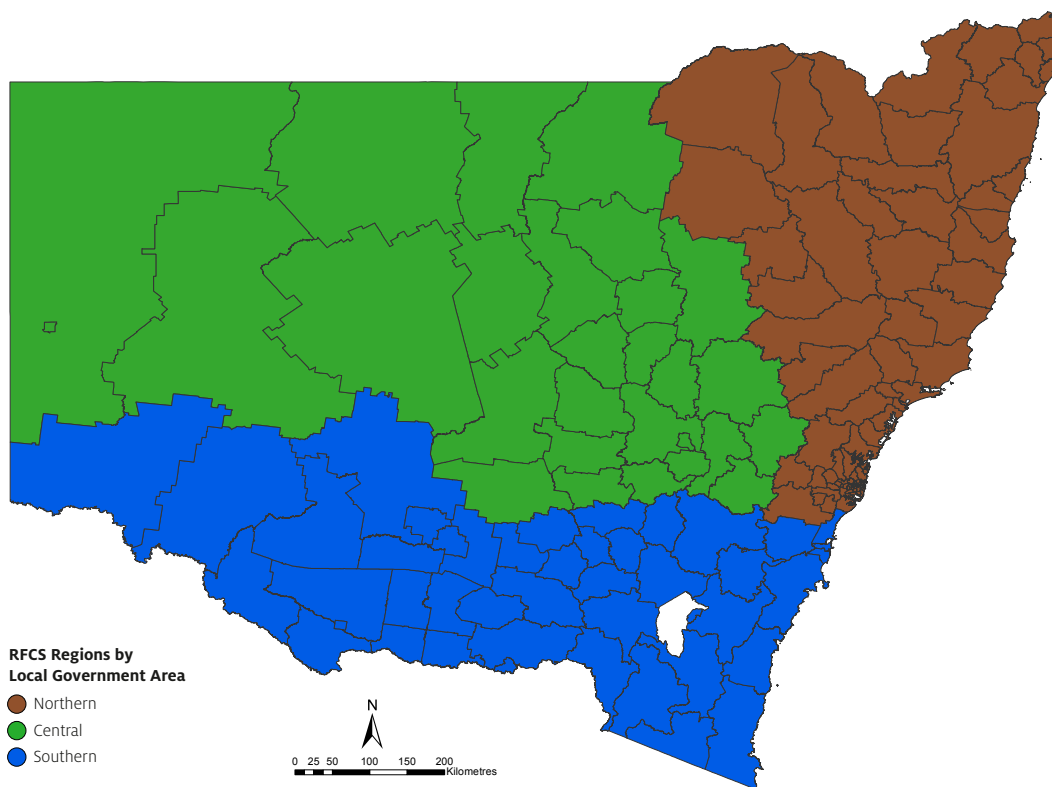
The RFCS 2016 to 2019 merit-based competitive grants round is open to entities wishing to deliver the RFCS on a not-for-profit basis. The grants round is open until midday (AEDT) 16 October 2015. An assessment panel, comprising federal and state government officials, will assess applications. The panel will recommend eligible applicants to the Australian Government Minister for Agriculture for final decision.

Current providers have had their contracts extended to 31 March 2016 to ensure a smooth transition between providers, if required. Any new providers will start in January 2016 but will not begin delivering the new RFCS programme until 1 April 2016. This will give them time to familiarise themselves with their regions and clients.

There will be no interruption to the RFCS clients during this transition and services will continue as usual.

Key points

- Rural financial counsellors support farmers, fishing enterprises, forest growers and harvesters, and small, related businesses suffering financial hardship.
- The new grants round is open to entities qualified to deliver the RFCS on a not-for-profit basis.
- The grants round is open until midday (AEDT) 16 October 2015.
- For further information on the RFCS grants round please visit agriculture.gov.au/rfcs or phone 1800 686 175.



*NSW Northern will also cover Norfolk Island and NSW Southern will cover the Australian Capital Territory.

Farming in New South Wales

From April 2016, New South Wales (NSW) will have three RFCS regions. A more detailed map of the NSW RFCS regions and associated local government areas can be found on the Department of Agriculture's website.

Region	Kilometres of rural productive land	Number of farm businesses
NSW Northern	137 756 km ²	8 900
NSW Central	327 730 km ²	6 500
NSW Southern	181 600 km ²	8 300

*NSW Northern will also cover Norfolk Island and NSW Southern will cover the Australian Capital Territory.

The main agriculture industries are:

- beef producers (13 600 enterprises)
- sheep producers (4 400 enterprises)
- mixed grain livestock (3 700 enterprises)
- grain growers (3 650 enterprises)
- mixed livestock (3 500 enterprises)
- fruits and nuts growers (2 600 enterprises)
- fisher enterprises (1 150 enterprises).

Approximate numbers from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, Farm Survey Results, 30 June 2014.

Forest enterprises are mainly located to the northern border and inland to west of Inverell, southwest to Dubbo and further west to Albury on the Victorian border.

Current client numbers in NSW

There are currently approximately 35 counsellors servicing 1 400 clients in NSW.

Region	Number of RFCS clients	Number of rural financial counsellors
NSW Northern	400	12
NSW Central	450	13
NSW Southern	550	10
NSW Total	1 400	35

RFCS regions will change in the new grants round; therefore, these numbers are indicative only.



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agriculture.gov.au/rfcs