

Establish an all-of-government financial inclusion strategy for NSW



Financial exclusion is deepening across NSW, driven by climate crises, disaster recovery gaps and persistent cost of living pressures. It is a rising threat to community wellbeing, government service systems and expenditure. State government leadership is now critical to shift responses from reactive support to proactive resilience-

building. By aligning with practices set by UK, USA, Canada and the Australian Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee (EIAC), NSW must drive a coordinated response through an appropriate steward. This response must formulate a strategic plan, empower local actors and protect the state's most vulnerable people.

Key recommendations

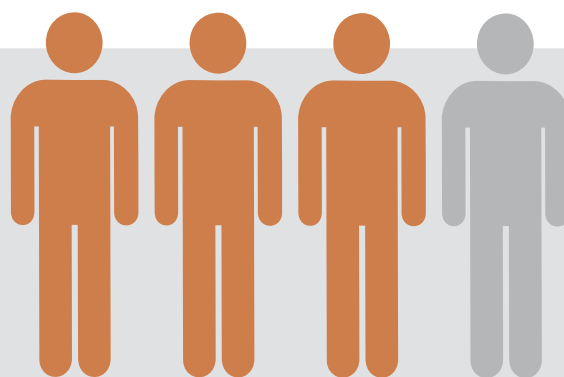
1 Develop a whole-of-government financial inclusion plan

Action

Co-design a strategic plan that builds on global practices and EIAC recommendations, sets measures, goals and guides investment across government.

Impact

A strategic plan enables NSW to move from piecemeal programs to coordinated action, reducing reliance on government services. It will align with the NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework, and the national campaign for an



3 out of 4 households have **gone without health-care essentials** because of costs.

NCOSS Impossible Choices: decisions NSW communities shouldn't have to make, September 2024

Australian Human Rights Act. Addressing key financial resilience drivers such as access to products, support, capability and resources, the plan will set measures and develop an evidence base to address known financial disadvantages faced by vulnerable cohorts. These include First Nations Australians; cultural and linguistic diversity; people with a disability; young adults; elders; victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence; older women; low levels of education; people living on a low income; living outside of metropolitan areas; and communities affected by climate-related natural disasters.

1,000,000

1 million people in NSW are **living in poverty**.

University of Canberra and NCOSS Mapping Economic Disadvantage in NSW, March 2023

2 Create a cross-government financial inclusion mechanism

Action

Form an interdepartmental group, taskforce or steward to drive financial inclusion planning and actions across portfolios.

Impact

Financial exclusion intersects multiple systems including health, housing, education, justice and social services. A dedicated government steward that aligns strategies and responsibilities across government, industry and community sectors will ensure that established plans and strategic responses stay on track. The EIAC 2023 report recommends Treasury as the most effective steward and intragovernmental agent.

3 Embed local insights and actions into state policy

Action

Establish structured delegations and information-sharing between plan stewards, state agencies, local councils and place-based services.

16%

women

8%

men

16% of women and 8% of men in NSW have **experienced partner economic abuse.**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/resources/fdsv-summary)



A third of NSW households spend **more than half of their income** on housing.

NCOSS Impossible Choices: decisions NSW communities shouldn't have to make, September 2024

Impact

Policy and planning that ignores local context risks failure. Councils and place-based services offer unmatched access and insight into financial stress in their communities. Embedding this intelligence and delegation structure ensures policies and plans are relevant, culturally appropriate, effective and responsive to changing needs.

4 Prioritise immediate support for at-risk groups

Action

Implement targeted interventions for cohorts facing acute financial harm.

Impact

Climate-affected communities; victim-survivors of elder economic abuse; uninsured and underinsured households; and excluded youth are bearing disproportionate burdens of financial harm. Immediate, tailored responses to protect these vulnerable cohorts will reduce long term government costs and help prevent deeper entrenchment of poverty.

About the NSW Financial Inclusion Network | financialinclusionnetwork.com.au

The NSW Financial Inclusion Network formed in 2015 as a policy think tank, engaging the community sector and government to build a more financially inclusive future for NSW. It is funded by NSW Fair Trading and facilitated by Northern Rivers Community Gateway.

Contact the network chairperson
Jenni Beetson-Mortimer, email
ceo@nrcg.org.au, mobile 0458 675 338

This document and its recommendations have been developed in consultation with NSW Financial Inclusion Network members, and are therefore based on the particular expertise of those organisations.