

Preliminary Local Litter Check – Guidelines

If you apply for funding under Stream 1 in Round 6 of the Community Litter Grant program, you will need to complete a Local Litter Check for each location where you intend to conduct a litter prevention project. This will be a **preliminary** Local Litter Check, which is a simplified version of a full Local Litter Check, which is explained in the sections below.

If your application for funding is successful you will also need to complete a **baseline** Local Litter Check as part of your project. This will be used to evaluate your project and will take more time to complete than the preliminary version.

When you apply for the grant funding, this means that you need to take into account the required time and resources to complete the full Local Litter Check as part of your project timeline and budget. The intention behind this approach is to reduce the administrative burden of applying for a Community Litter Grant, leaving the main bulk of work with the Local Litter Check to fall after funding has been secured when you have the resources to do it.

About the Local Litter Check

Background

The Local Litter Check was first developed by the NSW EPA in 2013 to be a standard for planning and evaluating litter prevention actions in local litter hotspots. It is based on the Clean Cities Assessment Tool that was developed in Victoria but adapted to be more useable by non-professionals, as a form of citizen science. At first it was a paper-based survey tool, then in 2018 it was redeveloped as an online tool. This allows all users to gather data digitally and have access to the information on the website.

Purpose

The Local Litter Check website takes the user on a guided investigation of a littered hotspot and a clean (i.e. relatively less littered) location. This helps the investigator to gather evidence about the local factors that influence litter and what can be done to prevent this. The underlying concept at work is that there is benefit in considering both what is *'going right'* locally to keep litter rates down (at the clean location) and what is *'going wrong'* to encourage higher rates of litter (at the hotspot). By considering both the problem and the opportunities, users of the Local Litter Check are more likely to develop initiatives that respond to local conditions, rather than fall into the trap of leaping in with solutions before the problem and the opportunities are properly understood.

How is it done?

At each location, the investigator uses three online forms to build a picture of what is happening with litter at the location. Each form has a tab at the top of the page, as follows:

1. **Location inspection:** The investigator records their observations about the location as a whole, i.e. its features and the uses that influence whether it is a littered hotspot or a clean location. True/false questions are asked about the factors that influence litter, which are then translated into scores and added up to rate each factor being investigated. High scores flag features that tend to influence cleanliness, low scores flag features that influence littering.

- Litter count:** The investigator records every item of litter in a 48 square meter area within the location that is selected to represent the whole location in its typical state. The website summarises the results in two parallel measures (a) the count of littered items and (b) the estimated total volume of littered items. Litter items are categorised by item size and material. The information is automatically summarised in two colour-coded tables, one for the litter count and the other for litter volume. The litter count table will highlight litter that is small and numerous, such as cigarette butts or bits of broken glass. The litter volume table highlights larger litter items that may be more visible, such as discarded drink bottles.
- User surveys:** The investigator records responses to simple guided interviews with users of the location. This uses true/false questions that cover the same factors as the location inspection and the same high/low score approach to indicate factors that influence cleanliness/ littering. The results can show what users think of the site compared to what the investigator thinks. Aim to talk to three or more people. As you talk to people pick up on common themes, as well as individual differences in viewpoints, to build a picture about what is important to the users of the location.

What is a results summary used for?

Once the three forms are completed, they are then summarised on the website, using the Submit tab.

1. Summarising your observations of a single location

A basic approach to using the results summary page is to use it to summarise your findings from one littered hotspot only, without comparing it to a clean location. While the conclusions drawn from this approach may be limited by not considering the factors of success at a clean location, it still provides an easily accessible report on the site that can be shared with others.

Completing this meets the requirements for the preliminary Local Litter Check for grantees applying for funding under Round 6, Stream 1 of the Community Litter Grants. This assumes that successful grantees will then proceed with a full *baseline* Local Litter Check (see Item 2 below) as an early part of the project delivery.

2. Comparing locations to help plan a litter prevention project

A full *baseline* investigation involves conducting the Local Litter Check at a littered hotspot and then again at a clean location (i.e. with lower levels of litter) that has a similar use to the hotspot. For instance, two local carparks might be studied, one that is usually heavily littered (hotspot) and one that is generally free of litter (clean location).

The website then provides an automatically formatted results summary page that lines up side-by-side the results of the investigations at the two sites. By comparing the location scores for different factors (e.g. infrastructure, cleanliness, education of users, whether litter fines are enforced, etc), the investigator can draw conclusions about (a) what influences cleanliness locally, and (b) what influences high levels of litter locally.

Each results summary page has free text fields that allow the investigators to note their conclusions about the littered hotspot and to make a case for the action that could be taken to reduce litter and littering at the location. There is capacity to upload photos and files to support this case.

3. Comparing final Local Litter Check to a baseline to evaluate a litter prevention project

The second key use of the results summary is for comparing the characteristics of a location from before a litter prevention initiative starts (the 'baseline Local Litter Check') to characteristics of a location after a litter prevention project (the 'final Local Litter Check') to see if there is any measurable difference in the location as a result of the project.

It is important when completing your baseline Local Litter Check that you consider the factors surrounding your preliminary investigation and whether you believe you have captured the location in its typical state (e.g. you did the preliminary investigation on a week day, but litter at the location is mostly influenced by weekend use). By ensuring that your baseline Local Litter Check is done at a time that best reflects the typical state of a location, when you complete your final Local Litter Check, the results summary will provide the most accurate reflection of whether litter reduction has happened.

Note: it is equally important to conduct your *final* Local Litter Check at a time that also best reflects a location's typical state (e.g. do not conduct baseline on a weekend and then final Local Litter Check on a quiet weekday). Final Local Litter Checks need to be completed at littered hotspots only.

Sharing your findings

The Share button, where it appears, provides options for connecting your Local Litter Check data with other people. In particular the results summary URL allows anyone who is logged on the website to explore all the data relating to the locations linked to that page. By clicking on the location name at the top of the results summary page, any user can click through to the detailed data for the location.

What help is available to do the Local Litter Check?

[Guidance and resources](#) are available on the EPA website. These include

- the detailed Local Litter Check Guidelines that can be downloaded
- some short introductory videos on how to do a Local Litter Check
- a portal for completing the [online Local Litter Check](#)

Guidance is available on the Local Litter Check website itself. This includes notes that can be hidden if not needed, and 'pop-up' notes that provide guidance on specific questions.

The NSW Environment Helpline is first point of call for technical assistance. Phone 131 555.

Tips

It's easier to do the Local Litter Check with a friend. The data will be better when two heads or more are involved.

Take as much time as possible – revisit locations at different times if you can and aim to become an expert on the place.

If you cannot find enough users of the location to conduct user surveys, it may help to do the survey with council staff who manage the site. Cleaning staff or contractors who directly manage the location are likely to be a rich source of information about the location and how it is used.

Connectivity may be slower than you expect when you are using 3/4G network. Slow down your data entry and be especially patient with the map function. You can complete work afterwards on a desktop or laptop.

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There is an upload function on most pages to let you add other records such as photos, sketch maps, pdf documents, etc. There is a limit of 20 uploads per Local Litter Check.

Access your record anywhere anytime with networked device – practice makes perfect.

For any assistance please contact the Litter Prevention Unit on 8837 6015 or via email at litter.prevention@epa.nsw.gov.au.