



## Frequently Asked Questions

# Communities Environment Program

## Overview

### 1. What is the Communities Environment Program?

The Communities Environment Program is a grant program that supports the Australian Government's commitment to support small scale, community-led environment projects that address local environmental priorities across Australia.

The program will provide up to \$150,000 to each federal electorate for eligible projects led by local community and environment groups. A maximum of 20 projects will be funded in each federal electorate.

### 2. What grants are available?

For each project, the grant amount can cover all eligible project costs. However, additional cash and/or in-kind contributions towards the project costs are strongly encouraged.

- The minimum grant amount is \$2,500
- The maximum grant amount is \$20,000.

All activities and expenditure in a project must meet the program's eligibility requirements.

### 3. Who is responsible for administering the Communities Environment Program?

The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science (the department/we) is responsible for administering the program on behalf of the Department of the Environment and Energy, in accordance with the requirements of the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines<sup>1</sup>](#) (CGRGs).

### 4. What is the department's role in the assessment of applications?

All applications will be assessed against the Communities Environment Program 2019-20 [grant opportunity guidelines](#).

We will assess whether your application is complete and meets all the eligibility criteria. To be recommended for funding, your project must meet all eligibility criteria, provide value for money and be considered a proper use of public funding.

The Program Delegate (who is an AusIndustry Senior Responsible Officer with responsibility for the program) decides which grants to approve and takes into consideration the department's project eligibility assessment, any reputational risk to the Australian Government, information you provide, and the availability of grant funds.

When assessing whether your application represents value for money, the Program Delegate will consider the overall objectives of the grant opportunity, the evidence provided to demonstrate how your project contributes to meeting those objectives and the relative grant amount requested.

### 5. Will the department contact me with questions relating to my application?

If we find an error or information that is missing, we may ask for clarification or additional information from you that will not change the nature of your application. However, we can refuse to accept any additional information from you that would change your submitted application after the application closing time.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.finance.gov.au/resource-management/grants/>

## 6. What are the community consultation arrangements within my electorate?

Members of Parliament (MPs) will be encouraged to undertake community consultation and will have discretion in how they consult. This may include, for example, establishing a community consultation committee, or engaging with an existing community consultation committee, to help identify suitable projects and the organisations to deliver them.

The projects identified for nomination must be consistent with the program's objectives, intended outcomes and eligibility criteria.

## Eligibility

### 7. How is a not-for-profit organisation defined?

A not-for-profit organisation is an organisation that is not operating for the profit or gain of its individual members.

For the purposes of this program, not-for-profit organisations must also be an incorporated legal entity with a current Australian Business Number (ABN).

### 8. What types of not-for-profit organisations are eligible to apply?

Any incorporated not-for-profit organisation that is not owned by a Commonwealth, state or territory government, is eligible to apply.

In addition, certain State/Territory government agencies or bodies listed in the [grant opportunity guidelines](#) may apply, including government schools. Non-government schools may also apply.

Examples of legal entities that are not-for-profit organisations include:

- Incorporated organisations, including (but not limited to):
  - Parents and Citizens, Parents and Friends groups and equivalent bodies
  - Non-distributing co-operatives
- Companies limited by guarantee
- Indigenous not for profit corporations

### 9. Are unincorporated not-for-profit organisations eligible to apply for a grant?

If your organisation is not an incorporated entity, or is an organisation which is unable to incorporate (such as landcare, Bushcare and Coastcare groups and equivalent bodies), you are not able to apply. However, you may nominate a project sponsor (that is an incorporated not-for-profit entity) to apply on your behalf, provided they also meet the program's eligibility criteria.

Your project sponsor will need to meet all of the eligibility criteria and be nominated by your MP. The project sponsor will need to submit the application on behalf of your organisation, enter into a grant agreement and be responsible for any obligations under the agreement with the Commonwealth.

### 10. Are Parents and Citizens Associations (P&Cs) eligible to apply for a grant?

P&Cs and equivalent bodies are eligible to apply if they are incorporated bodies.

In areas where P&Cs are unable to incorporate, a registered school or other body may be able to act as a sponsor for their application in accordance with the [grant opportunity guidelines](#).

### 11. What is a project sponsor?

A project sponsor is an eligible organisation that can apply for grant funding on behalf of another organisation.

The project sponsor will need to meet all of the eligibility criteria and be nominated by the MP. The project sponsor will submit the application on behalf of the organisation, enter into a grant agreement and be responsible for any obligations under the agreement with the Commonwealth.

### 12. Can I apply for a project that has already started or is scheduled to start?

We will not fund projects that you have already started. However, you are able to apply for a grant to undertake a new project that may be part of a broader project that has already started, provided the new project will be completed by the 31 December 2020.

Projects should also be stand alone and not dependent upon securing funding from other sources before they can be undertaken.

### **13. When can I start my project?**

You may start your project from the date you submit your application online and receive an automated confirmation from the department. Alternatively, you may start your project at a later date (which you indicate in your application form).

If you choose to start your project before you enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth, any costs incurred are at your own risk. You must incur your project expenditure between the date of application submission and the project end date (by 31 December 2020 or earlier) for the costs to be considered eligible expenditure.

You will not receive any funding if your application is unsuccessful.

### **14. How do I determine my project period?**

When calculating the duration of the project, you should factor in additional time for obtaining approvals, scheduling volunteers, contracting tradespeople, consultants and advisors, possible weather and seasonal delays and any other unforeseen circumstances that may prevent you from completing your project on time.

When determining the length of your project you should be aware that your project expenditure must be incurred between the project start date (the date you submit your application online and receive an automated confirmation from the department, or a later date which you indicate in your application form) and the project end date (31 December 2020 or earlier) for the costs to be considered eligible expenditure.

## **How to apply**

### **15. How do I submit an application?**

The program is only open to organisations that have been nominated and invited to apply by their local federal MP.

MPs will invite selected organisations to apply and include a link to an online application form in their invitation. You must not forward this link to anyone else.

### **16. Can I submit my application as soon as I get an email from my MP?**

The online application form will be available from 9:00am Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) on 12 August 2019.

### **17. Can I submit separate projects from the same organisation in multiple electorates?**

Yes. However, each project must be nominated by the local MP in each electorate.

The majority of the project must be located in the same electorate as the MP submitting the nomination.

### **18. What happens if there are technical difficulties when I try to submit my application?**

If you experience technical difficulties when trying to submit your application you can contact us on 13 28 46 or by [web chat](#) or through our [online enquiry form](#) on [business.gov.au](http://business.gov.au).

### **19. When do applications close?**

All applications for Communities Environment Program must be submitted by 5:00pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time (AEDT) on 10 October 2019.

### **20. What are the eligibility requirements?**

Your projects must:

- be nominated by your MP
- be aimed at the program objectives outlined at section 2 of the [grant opportunity guidelines](#)
- direct the majority of grant funding to an on-ground eligible activity
- request a grant of between \$2,500 and \$20,000
- have at least \$2,500 in eligible expenditure
- include eligible activities and eligible expenditure, and
- be undertaken in an eligible location (see section 5.2 of the [grant opportunity guidelines](#)).

Other requirements apply. Please read the [grant opportunity guidelines](#) for full details.

## 21. What types of projects are suitable for funding?

The program funds small projects that meet the intended outcomes of the program, including to protect and restore local environmental assets, increase the community's knowledge and connection with their local natural environment, manage native habitats and species, and reduce threats and risks to the natural environment.

To be eligible, the majority of the grant funding must be directed to on-ground activities.

Projects must also be undertaken in an eligible location, which includes your MP's electorate and, where relevant, adjacent Coastal Waters (3 nautical mile limit). See section 5.2 of the [grant opportunity guidelines](#).

The following projects are a guide to the types of projects that may be suitable for a grant under the program:

- monitoring local flora, fauna, water quality or marine debris (including on land, in freshwater or in estuarine/marine areas)
- supporting recovery of threatened species (including terrestrial, aquatic and marine species) and ecological communities,
- seed collection, propagation and planting of trees and understorey to rehabilitate degraded habitats / riverbanks / wetlands; control erosion; or to increase suitable habitat, vegetation linkages and available food sources for native animals
- reducing the impact of invasive weeds, pest animals, and diseases on the environment
- fencing or installing infrastructure, such as boardwalks, to manage access to sensitive natural habitats or sites
- litter clean-up events, marine debris collection or litter management infrastructure
- workshops to increase community skills in monitoring, conserving, and/or protecting threatened species, ecological communities or other important environmental assets.

The above examples are not determinative. Even if your project fits within the above examples, there is no guarantee that it will be supported.

Other projects that align with the program's intended outcomes may be eligible. For more information refer to section 5 of the [grant opportunity guidelines](#).

## 22. What does “on-ground” activity mean?

'On-ground' refers to project activities that monitor, survey, or directly make a change to, the state of the natural biophysical environment, such as:

- land / soil
- plants / animals and their habitats, or
- coasts / wetlands / waterways (including estuaries and Coastal Waters).

Educational activities where participant learning / training is undertaken as part of an on-ground activity, such as learning about tree planting while undertaking tree planting, is considered on-ground.

Educational activities that involve participants visiting sites to learn how to appropriately address an environmental issue and where subsequent practice change forms part of the project may be considered on-ground.

All costs associated with planning, advertising and undertaking an on-ground activity may be considered an on-ground cost.

## 23. Can activities be undertaken in estuarine or marine areas?

Yes. Some federal electoral boundaries (such as in northern Queensland) extend significant distances offshore into estuarine and marine environments. Activities are permissible within these areas. For other electorates, the Program will permit activities to be undertaken in adjacent 'Coastal Waters', which is a defined term in the guidelines referring to an offshore boundary at the 3 nautical mile limit (See section 5.2 of the [grant opportunity guidelines](#)).

The following projects are a guide to the types of projects that may be suitable for a grant in these areas: mangrove planting, support of successful turtle hatching, monitoring and surveying of nearshore reefs, recovery actions for threatened marine species, removal of waste/litter and ghost nets, and seagrass planting.

Federal electorate boundaries can be located at <https://electorate.aec.gov.au/> by searching for the electorate name, clicking on 'more information' and opening the map for the electoral division.

A series of maps (1 500 000 Map Series) showing the *Limit of Coastal Waters* around Australia can be accessed at

<http://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/marine/jurisdiction/map-series>. [Note some of these files are large and will take some time to download.]

#### **24. My project will be delivered across a number of electorates, is that ok?**

A project may cross over into an adjoining electorate; however, you must undertake the majority of work in your nominating MP's electorate. Note for the purposes of the program your MP's electorate includes (where relevant), Coastal Waters (3 nautical mile limit). Refer to section 5.2 of the [grant opportunity guidelines](#) for more details.

The primary project address you include in your application must match your MP's electorate.

#### **25. My project will not be delivered at a street address (i.e. we will be undertaking work along a creek, beach, reserve)?**

You must include street addresses for each of your project locations. If you are undertaking work in an area that might have multiple street addresses or does not have a street address, select a street address that best matches the project location (i.e. the main part of a creek, the beginning of a trail, the entrance to a beach etc). Where activities are undertaken offshore, use the closest on land address (which should be in your MP's electorate).

#### **26. What is the Mapping Tool?**

The Department of the Environment and Energy requires accurate geo-spatial data about where your project is taking place. A link to their mapping tool is provided in the application form for this purpose.

You must provide the required geospatial information as part of the application process.

For troubleshooting, contact the Department of the Environment and Energy on 02 6274 1312.

#### **27. How do I withdraw my application?**

If you want to withdraw your application, contact your MP and notify the department by calling 13 28 46 or via the program's mailbox: [CEP2019@industry.gov.au](mailto:CEP2019@industry.gov.au)

If you have been nominated, but do not want to proceed with an application, you must inform your MP immediately.

#### **28. Are there any mandatory documents that I need to provide?**

Section 6.1 of the guidelines lists the attachments we may require if they are applicable. The application form will include instructions on the required supporting documentation. These may include:

- evidence of your not-for-profit status
- trust documents if applicable
- letters of support from project partners for joint applications.

You should only attach requested documents. We will not consider information in attachments that we do not request.

#### **29. Do I need to provide quotes?**

You are not required to provide quotes for each expenditure item; however, we require you to keep evidence of all expenditure for two years after the completion of the project and provide this evidence if we request it.

We will carry out project audits through a representative sample. Occasionally, we may need to re-examine claims, request further information or conduct an independent audit of claims and payments.

#### **30. If my project involves activities that require approvals, do I need to provide evidence of relevant approvals or licences?**

You do not need to provide evidence of approvals or licences. However, you must have, or be able to obtain during the project, all relevant and required permissions, approvals, licences, and/or permits required to undertake the project within the project period.

This includes, for example, the support of the relevant site owner(s) where works are proposed, approvals for any structures to be erected, and permits related to undertaking burns or threatened species related interventions.

Where statutory or other approvals are required for your project you must maintain records of the approvals.

#### **31. How do I account for GST in my project costs?**

The application will ask you to provide your eligible project cost over the life of the project.

When calculating the total project cost:

- if you **are** registered for GST, you should remove the GST components of the project costs and provide the GST exclusive amount. Where applicable, we will add GST to your grant payment and provide you with a recipient created tax invoice.
- if you **are not** registered for GST you should provide the cost of your project including the GST components (i.e. the GST inclusive amount).

GST does not apply to grant payments to government related entities. If you are a government related entity, you should provide a GST exclusive amount.

### **32. Can I provide extra information to the department once my application has been submitted?**

No. However, during our assessment of your application, we may contact you if we require additional information or clarification.

### **33. Do I need to have insurance?**

You must have insurance coverage as appropriate for the type of project you undertake. This may include:

- Public Liability (usually a minimum value of \$10 million)
- Workers' Compensation (minimum value as required by State/Territory legislation)
- Comprehensive Motor Vehicle Insurance
- Personal Accident Insurance
- Professional Indemnity Insurance (usually a minimum value of \$2 million).

We do not require evidence, but you will be required to have adequate insurance as part of your grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

### **34. Can the project involve children?**

You must comply with all relevant legislation relating to the employment or engagement of anyone working on the project that may interact with children, including all necessary working with children checks.

You must implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations endorsed by the Commonwealth and available at: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles-child-safe-organisations>

You must complete a risk assessment to identify the level of responsibility for children. You must also establish a training and

compliance regime to ensure personnel are aware of the requirements.

### **35. What in-kind contributions can be included as part of my project funding?**

'In-kind' refers to goods, services and volunteer labour provided to deliver your project that have a monetary value, but do not involve a payment.

For example, if you are applying for a grant to erect a fence, your in-kind contribution could be volunteer labour for erection of the fence.

Other examples of in-kind contributions for your project can include the following activities that are provided free of charge:

- any person undertaking work on the project
- professional services specifically related to your project, including legal, architectural, engineering, expert advice and accounting services
- other project and related services, including site preparation, site related work, fabricating nesting boxes (or other), and collection of seeds, etc.
- items including, landscape or construction materials (such as trees, plants, fencing, equipment, etc.)
- the donated use of machinery and heavy equipment.

Expenditure items that are ineligible under section 5.4 of the [grant opportunity guidelines](#) cannot be included as in-kind contributions.

### **36. How can I calculate the value of in-kind contributions to the project?**

When calculating the dollar in-kind value of donated goods or materials, you should use the following formula:

- Goods or materials description x \$Value of goods / materials x Number of goods / materials = \$Total in-kind goods or materials.

You may calculate goods at the retail or market price that the goods would have been bought for.

To determine the value of volunteer labour, you should use the following formula:

- Number of hours x \$Hourly rate x Number of people = \$Total in-kind labour.

You should use an average hourly rate of:

- \$39 for volunteer labour, and
- \$45 for professional advice.

If you propose to use an alternative method of valuing volunteer labour, you should explain the method in your application and we may ask you to explain the basis of your calculations in your end of project report.

## Assessment

### 37. How will my application be assessed?

The department assesses all applications. We will consider whether:

- you are eligible to apply
- you are an eligible entity
- your project contributes to an improvement in knowledge, skills and resources to care for the environment and address local environmental issues
- your project delivers positive environmental and social outcomes
- you have a minimum of \$2,500 in eligible expenditure.

To be eligible, your project must also provide value for money and be considered a proper use of public resources.

## Funding decision

### 38. When will I be advised about the outcome of my application?

We will assess applications progressively. Funding decisions will be provided on a continuous basis throughout the duration of the program.

All assessments are expected to be completed, with all grants awarded, by the end of February 2020. However, the timeframe for finalisation of the assessment process will depend on the quality and quantity of the applications.

We will provide advice on the outcome of each application to your MP who will then notify successful and unsuccessful applicants.

### 39. What happens next if I am successful?

If you are successful, you must enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

The grant agreement may take two forms:

- an approval letter grant agreement, or
- an exchange of letters grant agreement.

In the case of an approval letter grant agreement, our approval letter, along with your application, forms the binding grant agreement.

We consider this agreement to be executed (take effect) from the date of our approval letter. We will tell you in this letter of any particular conditions that may apply to your grant funding.

If we need to clarify or amend any details in your application, we may use an exchange of letters grant agreement.

Details of your project will be listed on GrantConnect<sup>2</sup>.

This information may include:

- the name of your organisation
- the title of the project
- the description and aims of your project
- the amount of grant funding awarded
- your Australian Business Number
- your organisation's location
- your organisation's industry sector.

We publish this information to ensure open access to non-sensitive data within Australian Government agencies to enable greater innovation and productivity across all sectors of the Australian economy.

## Payment and reporting

### 40. Am I required to report on the progress of my project to the department?

You will not be required to provide progress reports but you must provide an end of project report on completion of your project. An end of project report template is included in the sample agreement on our website. We will provide an end of project report template with instructions on how to complete the form and the information required near the end of your project.

When you submit your end of project report you will need to be able to report on project achievements, identify the total eligible expenditure incurred for the project and include a declaration that the grant money was spent in accordance with the grant agreement. You

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.grants.gov.au/>

must report any underspends of the grant money.

You will need to provide photographic evidence of the project site(s) before and after completion of project activities including:

- at least two, good quality, representative photos (from different perspectives at each site) taken before, and two after, activities are undertaken.

You are also required to keep records of your project for two years. You may be required to provide them to us for evaluation upon request (see section 11.5 of the [grant opportunity guidelines](#)).

#### **41. What will I need to provide to the department in order to receive my grant funding?**

Grant funding will be made in a single up-front payment.

Before we can pay you, you must provide your bank details in the application form and where applicable, evidence that any other conditions of funding requested by us have been met. You will be sent the necessary forms to complete this process.

Once you provide this information the grant will be paid into your nominated bank account.

### **Further information**

#### **42. What legislation do I need to comply with to complete my project?**

You must comply with all relevant laws and regulations in undertaking your project. You must also comply with the specific legislation/policies/industry standards that follow.

In particular, you will be required to comply with State/Territory legislation in relation to:

- workplace health and safety
- working with children
- working with vulnerable people
- weed management
- biosecurity
- activities around waterways
- animal welfare and ethics
- working with Aboriginal relics, and
- agricultural and veterinary chemicals use.

You will also be required to comply with Commonwealth/State/Territory legislation

dealing with native vegetation and environment protection.

#### **43. Need more information?**

For more information, visit [business.gov.au](http://business.gov.au) or call 13 28 46.

We may update this document from time to time to add further information, where required.