



LOOKING AFTER COUNTRY GRANT PROGRAM

2024 GUIDELINES

Prepared by: Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers Program, QPWS and Partnerships, Department of Environment Science and Innovation

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The Department of Environment Science and Innovation acknowledges Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land. We recognise their connection to land, sea and community, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

The department is committed to respecting, protecting, and promoting human rights, and our obligations under the Human Rights Act 2019.

May 2024

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Introduction

The Looking after Country Grant Program (LACGP) provides grant funding of up to \$75,000 (excluding GST) to First Nations managed organisations to conserve and manage the environmental and cultural heritage values of Country. A total of \$500,000 is available.

Projects funded will be those that engage First Nations communities to:

- Deliver, and prepare for, on-ground conservation work on Country; and
- Build their capacity to care for Country, including through the development of skills, knowledge, and collaborative partnerships.

The LACGP complements the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program, which provides longer-term funding to employ Indigenous rangers. The LACGP enables organisations that do not receive ranger funding to gain experience in delivering grant projects in land and sea management.

Details regarding eligible applicants, projects and expenditure are provided in these guidelines.

Applications close at 4pm on **Tuesday 20 August 2024**.

Grants are provided through a competitive application process and are awarded for applications assessed as eligible, and most strongly meeting the assessment criteria outlined in these guidelines.

For more information about the Looking after Country Grant Program please email landandsea@des.qld.gov.au or contact the program on phone 07 3330 5553.

Who can apply?

Organisations that operate in Queensland and meet the following requirements are eligible to apply for funding under the LACGP:

- Not-for-profit organisations incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*.
- Not-for-profit organisations with a majority membership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on their governance and incorporated under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1981*, *Corporations Act 2001*, *Aboriginal Land Act 1991*, *Torres Strait Islander 1991* or other legislation.
- Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) community councils or Aboriginal Shire Councils that are applying on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups.

Applicants will need to provide evidence demonstrating that they meet one of the above criteria.

Applicants can partner with other organisations in the management of project funds, but only eligible organisations can enter into a grant agreement for LACGP funds.

In addition, the following organisations are not eligible to apply for funding under the LACGP:

- Organisations that receive funding for the employment of Indigenous rangers under the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program, or the Indigenous Ranger Program funded through the National Indigenous Australians Agency, unless they can demonstrate that the application is made on behalf of Traditional Owner groups that are not engaged in the organisation's existing ranger program.
- Organisations that currently have overdue acquittals or reports in relation to any grant funding provided by the Department of Environment Science and Innovation (DESI).

Eligible organisations can submit a limit of one application each funding round.

What projects and activities are eligible for funding?

Projects that increase the capacity of First Nations communities to achieve environmental and cultural conservation outcomes will be considered for funding.

Projects can include a wide range of activities. These can include (but are not limited to):

- cultural heritage management, of sites or other values (including recording, protection and training).
- habitat restoration.

- fire management.
- threatened species monitoring and conservation.
- feral animal management (including exclusion fencing).
- erosion control.
- the development of country plans or management plans to guide future on-ground conservation.
- activities to support inter-generational cultural knowledge transfer.

How much can organisations apply for?

Project funding of up to \$75,000 (GST exclusive) is available.

The project expenditure can include:

- wages and on-costs
- materials and equipment
- training
- project administration (up to 15% of total project costs).
- contractor costs
- some infrastructure and assets costs (see also 'what will not be funded')
- domestic travel costs for project participants
- incidental expenses.

What will not be funded?

Project expenditure that will not be considered for funding includes:

- administration fees of more than 15 per cent of total project costs
- infrastructure costs of more than 20 per cent of the total project value (including contributions from other sources)
- infrastructure costs, where the infrastructure would require significant ongoing maintenance
- assets of more than \$15,000 in value
- long term lease or purchase of motor vehicles
- overseas travel
- conference or seminar attendance.

What is the application and assessment process?

There are some important steps to consider when applying for a Looking after Country grant.

Step 1 – Prepare

Read these guidelines carefully to see if your organisation and project are eligible.

Engage with the Traditional Owners and landholders relevant to the project location to ensure that you have their support. Talk with established partners and with other organisations that might be able to provide financial or in-kind support. Working alongside partner organisations can strengthen an application.

Step 2 – Apply (Stage 1)

If you decide to apply:

- Go to the [Looking after Country Grant Program](#) page at the Queensland Government website for a link to the application form on the Smarty Grants platform (you will need to create a log-in so you can save and submit an application).
- Read over the whole application form to know the information you will need to provide. You will need to describe your project and the support from key partners, identify key milestones and a budget, and provide other information. The application will ask you to indicate the supporting evidence you can provide when requested.

- Make sure you have provided all the requested information and submit your stage 1 application before the closing date of **Tuesday 20 August 2024**.

If you have any questions about your application, please contact the grants officer (phone 07 3330 5553 or email landandsea@des.qld.gov.au). They will be happy to talk about your project, discuss whether it is eligible for funding, and answer any other questions you may have.

Step 3 – Assessment by panel and short-listing

A limited number of stage 1 applications will be short-listed by an assessment panel, based on how strongly they meet the assessment criteria.

Step 4 – Apply (stage 2)

If your stage 1 application is shortlisted, you will be invited to submit a Stage 2 application, with supporting evidence from Traditional Owners and landholders for the project area, project partners, and with any further information requested.

Step 5 – Assessment (Stage 2)

Stage 2 applications will be assessed by the assessment panel and recommendations prepared.

The assessment panel will include members who are independent from the department, with appropriate experience in land and sea management and grants project delivery.

The Director-General of the Department of Environment Science and Innovation (DESI) will be the final decision-maker for all grants recommended for funding by the assessment panel.

All staff involved in the process will be required to operate under the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct.

Step 6 – Advice of outcome

All applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of their application. This is expected to occur towards the end of 2024. Applicants will be welcome to email the QILSRP office (landandsea@des.qld.gov.au) to seek feedback on their application.

Applicants should not commence a project until written approval has been obtained and a grant agreement has been signed. Funds shown to be expended before the date of the contract are not able to be acquitted against the grant.

What are the assessment criteria?

The LACGP grants are awarded through a competitive assessment process.

Stage 1 applications will be assessed against the following criteria.

- Delivers environment and cultural heritage conservation outcomes for Country.
 - The project aims and activities are clear.
 - The intended benefits to Country and/or culture are clear.
- Strengthens First Nations community capacity to look after Country.
 - The project is Traditional Owner/ First Nations community led.
 - The project provides experience, skills, and knowledge to First Nations community members in delivering grant projects to look after country.
- Clear governance arrangements and a sound project delivery plan.
 - The applicant has access to Country to deliver the project.
 - The applicant has appropriate governance arrangements to manage the project.
 - There is a project plan with clear and logical steps for project delivery.
- Represents value for money.
 - The project budget is clear, based on sound cost estimates and relevant to proposed activities.
 - Project partners and their contributions (financial or in-kind) are clear and add value to the project.

The application form includes guidance about how to address each of the assessment criteria.

Stage 2 (short-listed) applications will be assessed against the following criteria.

- Satisfactory evidence of Traditional Owner, landholder support and partner support.
- The project budget is sufficiently clear, including quotes provided for significant items (infrastructure, asset, contractors)
- Satisfactory response to requests for additional information from Stage 1 panel.
- Based on the entire project application (Stage 1 and 2) the extent to which the proposed project will deliver:
 - environment and cultural heritage outcomes for Country
 - strengthen First Nations community capacity to look after Country.

What is the reporting and project completion process?

Successful recipients will be required to submit periodic project reports based on the completion of project milestones, and a final report and acquittal documentation, using a template provided by DESI.

An Audited Financial Statement verifying project expenditure may be requested.

Payment of funding will be made in accordance with the payment schedule only once DESI is satisfied the organisation has met the obligations for each agreed milestone.

DESI staff may also monitor the project progress through on-ground visits, phone and email contact.

What are the conditions of funding?

1. Applicants must provide all the required information at the time of submitting their application and agree to provide other relevant information for their application reasonably requested by DESI.
2. Applicants will be asked to indicate any 'commercial-in-confidence' issues associated with the proposal.
3. Successful applicants will be required to be complete their funded projects within two years from execution of the grant agreement.
4. Successful applicants will be required to provide evidence of the following insurances prior to the grant being provided: (a) public liability insurance of a minimum of \$20 million; (b) workers' insurance as required under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.
5. Successful applicants will be required to accept the grant in accordance with the terms and conditions in the Grant Agreement, and legally comply with all requirements. A copy of the standard departmental Grant Agreement is available upon request. Successful applicants must return a signed grant agreement within six weeks of the date of being issued by the department or the funding offer may be withdrawn.
6. The specific Grant Agreement for each successful applicant will be developed using information provided in the relevant application form, and in negotiation with the approved applicant.
7. All promotional material for the project must acknowledge funding from the Queensland Government. The final draft of any promotional material using the Queensland Government logo must be approved by DESI before going to print.
8. DESI will not reveal to any person any confidential operations, dealings or affairs of the applicant that it becomes aware of through this agreement, but for publicity purposes, DESI reserves the right to disclose general information about the awarding of grants.
9. Intellectual property rights arising from the project material shall be owned by the applicant.
10. By entering a grant agreement, successful applicants will grant the Queensland Government the right to use, reproduce and adapt the project material for its own purposes with agreement from the applicant, and where culturally appropriate.
11. Grant funds must be spent for the purposes stated in the application form and the Grant Agreement.
12. Any approved applicant must remain the project host for the duration of the project or until a new host organisation is approved by DESI.
13. DESI abides by the Queensland Government's privacy policies regarding the management of personal information.