How to develop your project 2025

Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation Grants Program

NSW Environmental Trust

Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.
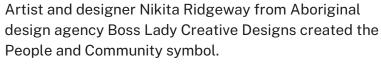
We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

Find out more at:

environment.nsw.gov.au

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How to use this guide

This guide is designed to support your application for the NSW Environmental Trust Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation Grants Program (the program) using the Grant Management System (GMS) application form.

Application process overview

Step 1: Review the program guidelines

- Refer to the grants program webpage: *Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation*. Resources to support your application include:
    - *Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation Grants Program guidelines 2025*
    - examples of previously funded projects
    - sample workplan.

Step 2: Confirm your eligibility

- Check your organisation is eligible (refer to the program guidelines Part 3: 'Organisation eligibility').
- Check your proposed activities meet the program requirements (refer to the program guidelines Part 5: 'Eligible and ineligible project activities').

Step 3: Complete and submit your application

- Access the GMS and register.
- Complete and submit your application.
- Record the project reference number assigned to you, and use this number in any communication with the Trust.

Program details

Important dates

Table 1   **Important dates**

Opening date for applications	Closing date for application
Monday 7 April 2025	Monday 19 May 2025

Funding available

The Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation Grants Program offers a total of $4 million in funding. Each project may receive between $150,000 and $350,000, with a project duration of 3 to 5 years.

Table 2   **Funding available**

Total grant program funding	Funding per project	Duration of project funding
$4,000,000	$150,000 to $350,000	3 to 5 years

Application limits

Organisations can submit up to **2 applications.**

Each organisation can receive funding for only one project, unless they are in western New South Wales, in which case they can receive funding for 2 projects (refer to the program guidelines Part 3: 'Organisation eligibility').

Enquiries

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Application structure

When you log into the GMS to create an application, you will see a side menu with a list of sections. Below is the full list of sections. The sections <u>underlined</u> are covered in this guide.

- Information
- <u>Eligibility</u>
- <u>Project Summary</u>
- <u>Applicant Details</u>
- Collaborators
- Project Location
- Project Rationale
- <u>Workplan – Outcomes and Schedule</u>
- <u>Workplan – Project Measures</u>
- <u>Workplan – Project Budget</u>
- <u>Risk Management</u>
- <u>Supporting Information</u>
- Declaration Feedback
- <u>Declaration</u>

Application sections

Eligibility

To apply for funding from the NSW Environmental Trust, your organisation must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the program guidelines Part 3: 'Organisation eligibility'.

If your organisation needs an external manager, nominate an eligible organisation in the 'Applicant Details' section.

Project summary

Write a concise summary of your project including:

- your objectives
- what you're going to do and how you're going to do it
- the intended benefits of your project.

Applicant details

External manager details (if nominated)

This information is applicable only if your organisation intends to use an external manager to support the implementation of your project.

Unincorporated organisations can apply for grant funding only if they partner with an eligible organisation, referred to as an 'external manager'.

The external manager must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the program guidelines and is responsible for managing the grant funds.

Responsibilities of the external manager:

- The funding agreement will be signed by the external manager on behalf of the applicant.
- Grant payments will be made to the external manager, who is responsible for distributing the funds to the grantee as needed.
- The external manager will assist with financial reporting and ensure that funds are used appropriately to achieve the project goals.

An agreement should be established between the grantee and the external manager regarding project management responsibilities. While the external manager oversees financial and administrative aspects, the organisation applying for the grant is expected to lead the project and deliver its outcomes.

For more information on working with an external manager refer to the webpage Tips on working with an External Manager.

Overview of the workplan

Overview

The information you enter as part of your application is automatically compiled by the GMS to create a workplan. The workplan is split into 3 sections: project outcomes and schedule, project measures and project budget. It is designed to help you map out the work you will implement by identifying:

- the outcomes your project will deliver
- the activities you will implement to achieve the outcomes
- your project measures (outputs)
- the budget you need for each milestone (stage of works)
- the expected timeframes for each milestone and activity.

Your workplan will be compiled by the GMS step by step. Each step will be based on the information you provided in the previous section of the application process (so it must be completed in that order).

For guidance on completing the following sections of your application refer to the sample workplan.

Workplan – outcomes and schedule

Project outcomes

Project management is a mandatory outcome in every stage of your project schedule. This outcome has been auto-populated to help you develop and maintain sound governance, a strong administrative framework, and effective monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management.

It is also mandatory to provide at least one environmental outcome. **Describe what success will look like** by the end of your project. Clearly outline what you want to achieve, based on SMART principles: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound (within the timeframes of this project). Refer to the workplan for examples.

Ensure your outcomes relate to the environmental priority you selected in 'Project Rationale'.

Keep in mind that grants will not be assessed based on how many outcomes the project intends to meet.

You will outline what you need to do to meet the outcomes in the 'Project Schedule' section, and how you will measure success in the 'Project Measures' section later in the application process.

Project schedule

Each project should be divided into milestones, typically one per year (for example, a 3-year project should have 3 milestones). Each milestone should be up to 12 months in duration, and include a set of activities that will be undertaken during that stage.

To ensure your milestones are well structured:

- **Begin with project planning:** develop a comprehensive plan for each milestone, considering the project's scale, scope, human resources and budget requirements. For the final milestone, allow sufficient time and resources for end-of-project financial certification (refer to the program guidelines Part 4: 'Project requirements').
- **Link activities to outcomes**: identify the activities you will implement during each milestone. Each activity must directly contribute to achieving at least one of your project outcomes. This helps demonstrate how your project will deliver measurable results.
- **Provide clear descriptions**: include enough detail to show how each activity is eligible for funding, supports your outcomes, and reflects your technical expertise. This will strengthen your application and help the technical review committee to evaluate your approach.
- **Use appropriate monitoring methods**: ensure your plan incorporates monitoring and evaluation to track progress and measure success. Clearly outline how you will measure progress and impact, using tools or techniques relevant to your project. This may include photo points, surveys, site assessments, or other evidence-based methods.

While it's important to have well-defined activities, including a large number of activities will not increase your chances of being funded. Instead, focus on selecting realistic, impactful activities that will ensure your project will achieve its intended outcomes. You may select up to 10 activities per milestone. Projects that are achievable and deliver meaningful results are more likely to be successful.

At the end of each milestone, you will be required to submit a milestone report to update the Trust on your progress. This report will include details of activities completed, and it will be independently reviewed. A satisfactory report will trigger the release of the next payment in your payment schedule.

By clearly defining milestones and activities that align with project outcomes and are focused on quality over quantity, you can create a robust, manageable workplan that showcases the feasibility and impact of your proposed work and how it will effectively deliver the intended project outcomes.

Workplan – project measures

Each activity should have specific, measurable and achievable outputs within the timeframe of the milestone.

- Select an activity type that best describes the type of activity you intend to implement. This will generate a list of relevant project measures.
- Enter the target for the applicable measure. For example, this might be 'Length of fencing installed – 1000 m' or 'Area revegetated – 1 hectare'. Complete this process for all activities under each milestone

- Enter '0' if the measure is not applicable.

When selecting your outputs, aim for realistic and achievable goals. Choosing a large number of outputs does not increase your chances of being funded.

Instead, focus on outputs that directly support your project's intended outcomes and demonstrate meaningful impact. The application assessment process prioritises well-planned, achievable projects that can deliver significant and measurable benefits, rather than those that overpromise on volume.

Keep your output goals aligned with the proposed duration and budget of your project to strengthen your application.

Workplan – project budget

Provide a detailed breakdown of your anticipated project costs for each milestone. Ensuring the activities outlined in your workplan are clearly reflected in your project budget to demonstrate alignment between your planned work and financial requirements. This will inform the Trust your budget is well planned and suitable for the scale and scope of your project.

Refer to the sample workplan as a model for presenting your budget. All budget items must be:

- **Detailed**: provide a clear breakdown of each cost category.
- **Reasonable**: ensure costs are realistic and reflect market rates.
- **Justifiable**: be prepared to explain how each cost contributes to achieving your project's outcomes. Pay extra attention to large-cost items, as they will be scrutinised more closely.

Specify how each cost will be funded – either through grant funds or other sources.

- Grant funds are those provided by the Trust through the grant.
- Cash is funding provided by your organisation, your partners or any third parties.
- In-kind is the value of contributions to the project which are not funded by the grant (for example, time, materials or equipment from your organisation or a project partner organisation).

When preparing your budget, keep the following points in mind to ensure clarity, accuracy, and compliance with funding requirements:

- **Round amounts**: use whole numbers when listing dollar amounts.
- **Align activity dates**: ensure the start and finish dates for each activity fall within the milestone timeframe.
- **Include monitoring costs**: allocate funds for monitoring activities like photo points, surveys, or weed mapping. At least 10% of the overall project budget must be allocated to monitoring activities.
- **Project-related administration**: this can be up to 10% of the total grant funds.

- **Salaries:** may be included for project management (for example, project officer). This must not exceed 30% of the total grant amount. On-costs should not exceed 26.5% of the salary.
- **Evaluate expenditure**: ensure all proposed costs represent a reasonable use of public funds and could withstand public scrutiny.
- **Account for CPI increases**: adjust costs to account for estimated consumer price index (CPI) increases for each year of the project.

You will need to provide evidence of spending in progress reports. For more information refer to the program guidelines Part 4: 'Project requirements'.

Payment schedule

If your application is successful, the milestone start and finish dates you enter in 'Workplan – Outcomes and Schedule' and the budget you enter for each milestone in 'Workplan – Budget' will determine the payment schedule in your funding agreement. Milestone dates do not need to align with the end of financial year. Payments are made at the beginning of each milestone, and reports will be required at the completion of each milestone. Table 3 provides an example of a payment and reporting schedule.

If your application is successful, you will have the opportunity to refine your budget during the project planning phase when you finalise your detailed workplan.

Table 3   Example payment and reporting schedule

Milestone	Start	Finish	Grant funds requested
Milestone 1	1 May 2026	30 April 2027	$60,000
Milestone 2	1 May 2027	30 April 2028	$40,000
Milestone 3	1 May 2028	30 April 2029	$40,000
Milestone 4	1 May 2029	30 April 2030	$35,000
Milestone 5	1 May 2030	30 April 2031	$25,000

Risk management

A risk management plan identifies potential risks, evaluates their likelihood and consequences, and outlines strategies to manage them. Proactively addressing risks helps reduce disruptions and improves the likelihood of meeting your project goals. The plan should be regularly updated to reflect any new and changing risks.

Using a risk assessment matrix

1. **Identify risks**: list potential risks that could affect your project (for example, extreme weather, budget overruns, environmental impacts, staff turnover).
2. **Initial risk rating**: use the risk assessment matrix (Table 4) to evaluate the likelihood and impact of each risk. Assign an initial risk rating based on this assessment.
   - **Likelihood**: how probable is the risk?

- **Impact**: what is the severity of the risk if it occurs?
3. **Develop control measures**: decide on actions to reduce the likelihood or minimise the impact of each risk. Examples include scheduling buffer time, budget contingencies, or additional training.
4. **Reassess the risk**: after implementing control measures, reassess the likelihood and impact of the risk and assign a new (reduced) risk rating.

By systematically identifying, assessing, and addressing risks, your risk management plan will prepare you to handle challenges and help to maintain project momentum. A strong plan reflects careful planning, commitment to success, and accountability for grant funds.

Table 4   Example risk management matrix

Risk rating = likelihood x severity

Severity							
	Catastrophic	5	5	10	15	20	25
	Significant	4	4	8	12	16	20
	Moderate	3	3	6	9	12	15
	Low	2	2	4	6	8	10
	Negligible	1	1	2	3	4	5
			1	2	3	4	5
			Improbable	Remote	Occasional	Probable	Frequent
			Likelihood				

Catastrophic	🟥	Stop
Unacceptable	🟧	Urgent action
Undesirable	🟨	Action
Acceptable	🟩	Monitor
Desirable	🟩	No action

Table 5   Example risk management plan

Risk description	Likelihood	Severity	Risk level	Risk treatment action	Likelihood	Severity	Risk level
Weather events such as drought, flood or unusual rain causing delays so that activities are not finished by the project completion date in the funding agreement.	Probable	Moderate	Undesirable	Include extra time in project workplan to buffer the project against weather events causing delays. If the time buffer is inadequate, contact the grant administrator to apply for a variation before delays become significant.	Occasional	Low	Acceptable
Off-target herbicide spraying impacts threatened species.	Remote	Significant	Undesirable	Locations of threatened species to be included in site inductions and daily toolbox talks. Works to be undertaken by qualified bush regenerators.	Improbable	Moderate	Desirable
Bushfire risk to staff.	Remote	Catastrophic	Undesirable	No work to occur on catastrophic fire danger days. Evacuation procedures in case of bushfire to be part of site induction.	Improbable	Significant	Acceptable
Price increases causing the budget to be inadequate to complete some activities.	Remote	Significant	Undesirable	Procurement procedures to include getting specific quotes from contractors according to the Trust's procurement standards. Project manager to maintain financial records, keeping track of project expenditure and remaining funds.	Improbable	Moderate	Desirable

Risk description	Likelihood	Severity	Risk level	Risk treatment action	Likelihood	Severity	Risk level
Low success rates of revegetation.	Occasional	Moderate	Undesirable	Planting to be done under the direct supervision of qualified bush regenerators. Follow best practice techniques for planting including species selection for each site, long-term weather forecast, and potential need for fencing or other protection.	Remote	Moderate	Acceptable
Staffing changes causing difficulties in delivering the project.	Occasional	Moderate	Undesirable	At least 2 staff should be familiar with the project and the Trust's reporting requirements. Undertake recruitment quickly if additional staff required.	Remote	Moderate	Acceptable
Difficulty in sourcing materials or contractors.	Occasional	Moderate	Undesirable	Source materials or contractors early in the project. Contact the grant administrator to apply for a variation before delays become significant.	Remote	Low	Acceptable
Failure to engage enough landholders in the project.	Remote	Significant	Undesirable	Accurately assess landholders' willingness to participate before applying for the grant. Set realistic goals in the project workplan.	Improbable	Low	Desirable

Supporting information

You can upload supporting information to strengthen and validate your application. This information can help the technical review committee to better understand the scope, feasibility, and potential impact of your project.

Essential items ensure your application meets program requirements, while optional items provide additional context and evidence to showcase the viability and importance of your proposal.

Essential items

These items help verify the project is well planned, feasible and compliant with program requirements, providing confidence about the proposal's viability.

Maps

You must provide relevant mapping information when applying for funding. Depending on the nature of the project, types of mapping include:

- overall project map – showing an overview of all project sites
- regional context map – demonstrating linkages with other conservation land or regional biodiversity corridors
- site maps – showing areas of proposed works (if sites are known before applying).

Staff information

You must provide staff information as part of your supporting information. This includes CVs and profiles for all staff who will play an active role in the project. These documents help establish the team's expertise and capacity to deliver the project successfully.

Management plans

Include management plans that your project aligns with or contributes to. Examples of such plans include regional strategic pest animal plans, which tackle invasive species; catchment action plans, which address sustainable land and water management; and biodiversity conservation strategies aimed at protecting local ecosystems. Projects may also contribute to Crown Land management plans, bushfire risk management plans, or sustainable farm management plans, depending on the project's scope and location.

Including these documents in your application demonstrates how your project aligns with broader conservation and land management priorities, ensuring its relevance and potential impact.

Optional items

Letters of support

Endorsements from community members, stakeholders, or local organisations beyond what is required.

Photos

Visual evidence of the site or problem area, such as degraded habitats or existing conditions.

Case studies

Provide examples of similar successful projects to demonstrate the feasibility of your project's approach, or to highlight how your project will contribute to broader initiatives or goals being achieved by other projects.

Stakeholder consultation evidence

Reports or summaries from consultations to show community engagement that will contribute to your project.

Promotional materials

Examples of promotional material that will be used to engage the community with your project or examples of how outcomes will be communicated or shared with the public.

Supplementary data

Further evidence that supports the project rationale, such as survey data and species monitoring reports.

Recovery plans and strategies

If your project is addressing threatened species or threatened ecological communities, your application must align the project to the relevant Saving our Species strategy, identify specific threats being addressed, and detail the actions required to mitigate them. This information should align with your project workplan.

Declaration

When authorising your application in the declaration section, you will be asked to declare any real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. You should also outline how you will manage conflicts of interest.

All staff and contractors are required to disclose any potential conflicts of interest at the beginning of the project and during the project as they arise.

Examples of actual and perceived conflicts of interest might include:

- project manager employing their own business to carry out project-related work and using Trust funds to pay for it
- members of the organisation using Trust funds to pay for works on their own properties
- Trust funds being used to pay friends or family for project-related work.

You must put systems in place to manage potential or actual conflicts of interest that may occur during delivery of the project.

Resources

[Grant Management System](#) (GMS) login page

[Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation Grants Program webpage](#)

[Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation Grants Program guidelines 2025](#)

[Sample workplan](#)

[Tips on working with an External Manager](#)