



2023–24 Environmental Research Program Guidelines

NSW Environmental Trust
Environmental Research Grants Program

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How to use this guide

These program guidelines provide information on the NSW Environmental Trust's (Trust) Environmental Research grants program, including the types of organisations eligible to apply for funding, program priorities and the types of activities that may be funded under the program. The guidelines also outline how expressions of interest and invited applications are assessed and what to expect if awarded a grant.

Important dates

Opening date for expressions of interest	Closing date for expressions of interest	Opening date for full applications (by invitation only)	Closing date for full applications (by invitation only)
9 am Tuesday 11 April 2023	5 pm Monday 15 May 2023	9 am Monday 24 July 2023	5 pm Monday 4 September 2023

Funding available

Total funding available	Minimum grant amount	Maximum grant amount	Duration of funding
\$1,000,000	\$50,000	\$200,000	Up to 3 years

Getting started

Step 1

Download and read the program guidelines (this document).

Links to key resources to help develop and submit an expression of interest (EOI) are provided on the [**Environmental Research Program webpage**](#).

These include:

- Developing your EOI and Application guide
- Grants Management System (GMS) link to register and submit an EOI
- previously funded projects
- sample workplan (for invited applicants).

Step 2

Check the eligibility conditions.

- Is your organisation eligible? (Refer to **Part 2: Eligibility**).
- Is your research proposal suitable for this program? (Refer to **Part 3: What can be funded**).

Step 3

Access the GMS via the Environmental Research Program webpage to register and submit an EOI. The GMS will automatically assign each EOI a project reference number that will be used to identify the project if it is funded. This reference number should be used in any correspondence with the Trust.

Enquiries

NSW Environmental Trust

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Part 1: About the program

Who are we?

The NSW Environmental Trust (Trust) is an independent statutory body established by the NSW Government to fund a broad range of organisations to undertake projects that enhance and protect the state's environment. The Trust's main responsibility is to make and supervise the expenditure of grants.

The Trust is currently administered by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE).

What is the aim of the program?

The Environmental Research Program (the program) is a contestable grants program funded by the Trust. It provides funding to support applied research in priority themes to help address contemporary environmental problems in New South Wales.

Program objectives

The program is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Increase knowledge and advance techniques to solve priority environmental problems in New South Wales.
- Assess and test the application of innovative solutions to decrease environmental degradation in New South Wales.
- Discover new methods of operation for NSW industries that are less harmful to the environment and enhance the public good.

Important information for 2023–24

Priority themes

Since 2020, the Trust has been implementing its Strategic Plan 2020–24. To be considered for funding, proposals must focus on at least one of the following immediate funding priorities:

- addressing climate change impacts on the natural environment – both mitigation and adaptation
- supporting threatened species recovery.

Application limits

Organisations may lodge a maximum of 2 EOIs under each of the 2 priority themes (**maximum of 4 EOIs in total**).

Applicant resources

A full list of links to relevant program resources is provided in **Part 7: More information**, at the end of this guide.

Important timeframes for this round



Figure 1 Important program timeframes

Part 2: Eligibility

Eligible applicants

Lead applicant

Each proposal requires a lead applicant. The lead applicant should be either the research body or an identified end-user of the research (see **Part 3: What research can be funded?**).

Lead organisations must be based in New South Wales and/or be able to demonstrate the potential environmental benefits to New South Wales.

If successful in securing a grant, the lead applicant will hold primary responsibility for the delivery of the project. This includes administration and finance requirements, and the performance of collaborators.

The following organisations are eligible to apply as the lead applicant:

- universities
- state government agencies and/or statutory committees
- community organisations or groups
- incorporated associations/non-profit organisations
- non-commercial cooperatives
- councils
- regional organisation of councils
- other local government-controlled organisations
- companies limited by guarantee
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

Unincorporated not-for-profit organisations may apply but will need the support of another organisation who will perform the role of External Manager.

The role of the External Manager

If your organisation or group is not incorporated or needs assistance with the financial management of the project, you may nominate another organisation to manage the grant funds on your behalf – an External Manager. The nominated External Manager must be an incorporated or registered organisation (e.g., a university, NGO, or government organisation). Funding Agreements will include the name of the External Manager, who is required to sign the Funding Agreement together with the grantee.

The grantee remains the lead decision maker and will control the project's activities and direction. Grant payments are made to the External Manager, who is responsible for making all payments relating to the project on the grantee's behalf, and preparing all financial reports as required under the Funding Agreement. There should be an agreement in place between the grantee and the External Manager, particularly regarding the project's management and submission of milestone/final reports. (Refer to **Part 7 – More information** for a link to the *Role of the External Manager – tips and information*).

Collaborators and end-users

Collaboration is highly beneficial in applied research, particularly collaboration between researchers and end-users. Collaborators are essentially project partners who can help to deliver the project through coordination of efforts to leverage time, money, expertise, materials, resources and reduce duplication. Successful collaboration relies on establishing clarity around roles and responsibilities, and effective channels for open communication.

End-users are integral collaborators in applied research proposals. End-users can be defined as those who are affected by, or involved in, the issue being addressed through the research, and can implement (or 'use') the research findings in a meaningful way.

End-users may be any number of organisations or groups, such as: state government agencies, councils, non-government organisations, community groups, landholders, environment groups and practitioners, or industry groups.

If an EOI or application is not able to demonstrate end-user participation and intended uptake of the research findings, **it will not be assessed**.

Note: Confirmation of collaborator commitments as attachments in the GMS (e.g., letters of support) is optional at the EOI stage but is mandatory at the Invited Application stage.

Ineligible applicants

The Trust **will not** fund:

- research funding institutes
- individuals
- industry joint ventures
- for-profit organisations
- profit-distributing entities.

EOI prioritisation

Organisations may lodge a maximum of 2 EOIs under each priority theme (**maximum of 4 in total**). Each lead organisation is responsible for conducting their own prioritisation process to determine which EOIs are submitted for assessment. This should be coordinated through a single source within the organisation. Organisations that submit more than 4 EOIs will be contacted and asked to identify proposals to be withdrawn.

Conditions of eligibility

Status for tax purposes

All lead applicants must have an active Australian Business Number (ABN) that establishes the organisation as an eligible entity.

Applied research

Projects must involve applied research, meaning:

- broadly, the systematic gathering of data, information, and facts to advance knowledge and develop new techniques that can be practically applied
- specifically, scientific research where hypotheses are formulated and empirically tested to guide application over reasonable and practical timeframes.

This definition can apply to biophysical, social, or economic research.

Past performance

The Trust will take into consideration any record of past poor performance in respect of previous grants, or any history of non-compliance with statutory or regulatory obligations when assessing eligibility. If it is considered that past performance presents a sufficient risk to the timely and effective performance of the project, an applicant may be asked to respond to the determination, and this response will be considered alongside the overall merits of the proposed project. Special conditions may be included in the funding agreement to address any issues of concern.

Research integrity

The Trust is committed to fostering the highest ethical standards in research. Projects approved for funding by the Trust may not begin without appropriate ethics clearances from relevant committees and/or authorities.

Invited applicants will be required to outline any ethics clearances required and how they will be obtained prior to project commencement.

Research uptake

The Trust seeks to increase the visibility, accessibility, and impact of funded research. While the generation of research to address issues is important, the full value of research is realised through it being made accessible to relevant actors, including policymakers and practitioners, so that they can apply the insights generated to address the issues. It is therefore critical that end-users are identified during the proposal development stages and demonstrate commitment to uptake the research findings.

Lead applicants will be required to confirm that their findings will be promoted and made accessible. They will also need to describe possible impediments or reasons that will prevent this, such as ethics approvals with specific conditions.

Communicating outcomes

Successful applicants will be required to incorporate a communications strategy as part of the project. Engagement should encompass both information sharing and capacity building approaches amongst relevant target audiences (see Table 1 below). Grantees will be expected to evaluate the effectiveness of their communications strategy at the project's conclusion.

Table 1 **Examples of communication types**

Examples of information sharing	Examples of capacity building
Publication in scientific journals.	Issue-specific working groups.
Exposure in relevant media.	Industry or community workshops.
Conferences/networking events/presentations.	Development of procedures or work method statements.
	Assisting with integration of findings to policy or legislation updates.

Part 3: What can be funded

2023–24 Research priorities

Each year, the program funds applied research aligned to priority themes of the Environmental Trust Strategic Plan 2020–24.

The research priorities for 2023–24 are:

Theme 1:

- Addressing climate change impacts on the natural environment – both mitigation and adaptation.

Theme 2:

- Supporting threatened species recovery.

Grants are available for applied biophysical, social, or economic research relating to either or both priority themes.

Biophysical research

Investigating physical, chemical, and biological systems of the natural environment. It includes research on environments and systems modified by human activity but does not include research on human (social or economic) systems.

Economic research

Improving understanding of how individuals, businesses and communities allocate scarce resources between competing uses (where ‘resources’ means time, labour, knowledge, capital and other natural resources), and how resources could be reallocated (e.g., by government policies) to improve the community's economic welfare.

Social research

The study of social phenomena: people, societies, and their interrelationships. It is conducted in the social science disciplines, including sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, political science, and history. Social research uses quantitative and qualitative approaches to gathering and analysing data.

Eligible and ineligible activities

Eligible activities

Table 2 below provides examples of activities that may be funded through the program.

Further guidance and examples to assist applicants with linking practical activities with either or both the immediate funding priorities are available in the *Developing your EOI and Invited Application Guide* on the program webpage.

Table 2 Examples of activities eligible for grant funding

Item	Description
<p>Employment of project staff (either in-house through salary plus on-costs, or an externally appointed contractor)</p>	<p>Staff may be employed with the use of project funds under one of 2 options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1: a merit based, advertised, recruitment process for a new staff member • Option 2: Direct appointment of an existing staff member who has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ previously been appointed through a competitive and transparent recruitment process (i.e., merit based and advertised) when first engaged with the organisation and who now has additional capacity to be appointed to the project under a new contract, or is part-time and being employed for additional hours. <p>Alternatively, a contractor can be appointed to manage the project – see ‘Consultancies/Contractors’ below.</p>
<p>Administration and accounting</p>	<p>Capped at 10% of the total grant amount. These administration expenses are office-related overheads that are specifically associated with the delivery of a project. Examples of administration costs you can include are corporate support services, and the costs for obtaining appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards. You may include external licence fees needed for delivery of the project elsewhere in your budget, i.e., these are not included in the 10% cap.</p>
<p>Consultancies/Contractors</p>	<p>Appointment of external specialists to manage the project or deliver specific project components (e.g., workshop presenter, field event guest speakers, social researchers). Alignment with Grantee Guide to Procurement is expected to be followed when sourcing these services. A link to the guide is available in Part 7: More information.</p>
<p>Facilities hire</p>	<p>Rental of appropriate spaces to facilitate project delivery to its target audiences. This may also include licensing for digital platforms to deliver content (e.g., Teams, Zoom).</p>
<p>Transport and accommodation</p>	<p>Travel related logistics required for successful project delivery (e.g., field work logistics, overnight accommodation for guest speakers at events). This excludes international travel.</p>
<p>Internal capacity building</p>	<p>Training and/or up-skilling project staff in specialist areas required to successfully deliver project components (e.g., short-course related costs to attend seminars or training).</p>
<p>Educational resources</p>	<p>Materials and production costs to create project specific resources (e.g., booklets, signage, app and website development).</p> <p>Note: General organisational app and website development costs, including ongoing maintenance of these platforms, cannot be paid for using Trust funding.</p>
<p>Promotion and media</p>	<p>Costs associated with promotion of a project event or outcome (e.g., local media advertising to promote a workshop).</p>
<p>On-ground activity demonstrations</p>	<p>Production of demonstration materials associated with education outcomes (e.g., GPS trackers, cameras for monitoring wildlife). Where these materials can be hired or borrowed on a short-term basis, this approach is encouraged.</p>
<p>Other items</p>	<p>If uncertain whether a proposed item or activity is eligible for funding, please contact the Trust to discuss.</p>

Ineligible activities

Table 3 below describes examples of activities which cannot be funded through the program.

Table 3 **Examples of activities not eligible for grant funding**

Item	Description
Administration costs that exceed 10% of the total grant	See eligible activities for definition of eligible administration costs.
Core business	Projects that, in the normal course of events, are clearly the core business of local or state government authorities or educational institutions. 'Core business' can be difficult to define as it varies by organisation, but generally, it is considered as the essential business or legal responsibility of an organisation. The Trust will consider funding works that are related to core business but additional to the organisation's usual work or responsibilities.
Capital expenditure	Infrastructure and large capital item purchases (e.g., vehicles, construction, buildings, machinery, amenities). Small capital equipment purchases are allowed where it can be demonstrated to be more cost effective to purchase than to lease for the life of the project. Costs for capital items should generally not exceed 20% of the total project budget.
Devolved grants	Projects that fund devolved grants (i.e., projects offering grants to other organisations). Trust funds must be managed directly by the lead organisation, and all financial transactions must be managed in line with the approved budget and Grantee Guide to Procurement (see Part 7: More information).
Existing commitments	Ongoing research to which organisations have committed to as part of a previous grant or their core business operations.
Cost shifting	Reimbursement of salaries of existing staff who will be supervising or working on the project unless it can be demonstrated that salaries have not already been budgeted for (See examples in Developing your EOI and Invited Application Guide).
Cost recoupment	Funding cannot be used on any activities that have commenced before the grant is offered and accepted, including application development. Activities should commence in May–June 2024.
Data collection without application	Surveys to gather data or information on subject matter which is not used to develop research outcomes or tangible environmental outcomes.
Commercialisation of existing technologies	Proposals seeking to use funds to commercialise existing technologies.
Fundamental research	Proposals that do not involve applied research. Projects with no end-user identified.

Part 4: Program governance

Probity

The Trust places high importance on the integrity and transparency of program and project governance. All funded projects must be delivered in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements as specified in a funding agreement, as well as other accepted governance and project management standards. Project performance reviews are conducted annually by the Trust, which include an assessment of grantee compliance with their funding agreement.

Procurement

Value for money in project delivery is a priority for the Trust. To conform with relevant governance and probity standards, the Trust requires all grantees to follow the Grantee Guide to Procurement for Environmental Trust Projects, which is based on NSW Government Procurement Policy. This relates to all major budget items, such as purchase of materials or engagement of contractors. It also includes ensuring that goods and services are only paid for once they have been satisfactorily delivered.

All contractors (including consultants) must be chosen based on merit and ability to effectively deliver the work. Grantees will select contractors or consultants using a competitive process. The Grantee Guide to Procurement for Environmental Trust Projects is available in **Part 7: More information**.

Statement of business ethics

All providers of goods and services, including project managers and project partners, are required to observe the following principles when carrying out work on the funded project:

- help prevent unethical practices in business relationships
- declare actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

All contracted and sub-contracted staff, or associated staff, are expected to comply with the Department of Planning and Environment Statement of Business Ethics. If sub-contractors are employed as part of a project, they must be made aware of this statement and the Trust's expectation that they will abide by it. A link to the Statement of Business Ethics is available in **Part 7: More information**.

Conflicts of interest

All staff and contractors are required to disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest to the Trust relating to the project. This may be at the time of application development or during the implementation of a project, if funded. Conflicts of interest may relate to procurement, grants, direct negotiations, sponsorships, partnerships, third-party service provisions, and other project-related interactions. Examples of conflict of interest are provided in the Developing your EOI and Application guide.

Staff recruitment and employment

The Trust supports the employment of new or existing staff to manage and implement projects and will pay for their salaries where:

- a range of applicants can compete for Trust funded employment opportunities
- recruitment using Trust funds is transparent and accountable
- the Trust is not effectively reimbursing an organisation for salaries it has already budgeted for, or for work that is part of its core business.

Refer to Table 2 for further information on recruitment of project staff using Trust funds.

Reporting on the recruitment process

To demonstrate transparency of the recruitment process, grantees will be required to provide supporting information demonstrating how the selection was made. This information will need to be provided with either the first progress report or in subsequent progress reports if new staff are either recruited or replaced. Information required (where relevant) will include:

- evidence of advertisement (either external or internal)
- number of applicants interviewed, and date of the interview panel convened
- copy of the internal document used for recording and approving employment of the staff member at the conclusion of the recruitment process.

Third party assistance

Applicants are encouraged to collaborate with project partners during development and implementation of a project, however, careful consideration is required around establishment of any commercial relationships. Applicants are welcome to seek third party assistance to develop their project and complete their application, however, any costs associated with this service cannot be reimbursed using Trust funding.

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring transparent and equitable access to government-funded opportunities. Third parties who have assisted in the development of an application may bid for Trust funded work if the grant is awarded. However, grantees must clearly demonstrate that they have ruled out any potential or perceived conflicts of interest during the recruitment of any third-party contractors by implementing transparent processes and providing adequate justification for their selection. In particular, grantees must demonstrate that no competitive or commercial advantage was gained by third parties as a result of their involvement in project planning.

Privacy

The Trust uses the information supplied by applicants for processing and assessing applications. While we do not publicly release applications as a matter of policy, we may be required to do so under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* or other lawful requirement. A link to the Act is available in **Part 7: More information**.

The Trust may also disclose information supplied to us for the purpose of evaluating and/or auditing its grant programs. If strict commercial confidence and/or personal confidentiality is required, it should be noted in the application.

General obligations

Signing the Funding Agreement commits the grantee to the following general obligations:

- Comply with all conditions contained in the funding agreement.
- Provide evidence of appropriate insurance coverage on request.
- Start the project within a month of signing the funding agreement.
- Seek prior approval for budget changes greater than 10% (and noting that project administration costs should never be more than 10% of the project costs).
- Seek prior approval from the Trust to alter proposed outputs, outcomes or timeframes.
- Provide milestone reports in accordance with the Trust's reporting guidelines.
- Acknowledge the Trust's support in any promotional materials or public statements about a project, including use of the NSW Government Logo in published materials. A link to the logo is available in **Part 7: More information**.
- Be prepared for all knowledge gained as part of the grant to be made publicly available, whether that be publishing of the final report or promoting the project via other avenues available to the Trust.
- The standard conditions of the funding agreement will not be changed at the request of grantees.

Technical Review Committee

Selection for Environmental Trust Environmental Research grants is a statewide, merit-based process. The Trust establishes an independent Technical Review Committee (TRC) for each grant program to assess EOIs and applications against relevant assessment criteria. These committees are made up of people with knowledge and experience relevant to each grant program and include at least one representative of community groups and one representative of industry. All members of the Research Technical Review Committee have significant scientific research qualifications, experience, and expertise.

Part 5: Application and assessment

The program has a 2-stage application process.

Stage 1 – Expression of Interest

EOIs must be registered and submitted in the online Grants Management System (GMS), available on the program webpage and must meet the following conditions:

- Projects must aim to commence between 1 May and 30 June 2024.
- Projects must end no later than 30 June 2027.
- It is recommended that EOIs are developed in the online GMS environment (rather than downloading and working with it offline) to take advantage of ‘pop-up’ guidance and embedded drop-down menus. Collaboration on a proposal with project partners is possible by providing editing rights. Please refer to the **Grants Management System Online Portal User Manual – Section 4.2.6 Manage access to application**. See **Section 7: More information** for a link to the User Manual.

Timeline of EOI process

Step	Timeframe	Process
1	11 April – 15 May 2023	Expressions of Interest (EOIs) are submitted via the GMS and assigned individual project reference numbers.
2	June – July 2023	The Technical Review Committee review each EOI using the assessment criteria and recommend a shortlist of proposals that best fit the assessment criteria to proceed to a full application.
3	24 July – 4 September 2023	If an EOI is successful , the applicant will be invited to submit a full application via the GMS. Invited applicants may be asked to address any points of clarification requested by the Technical Review Committee. Unsuccessful applicants will be advised at the same time and are invited to request feedback to improve future EOIs.

Stage 1: EOI assessment criteria

Criterion 1 Significance for the NSW environment (scored out of 10 points)

- The need for the research is well defined, and the proposal clearly articulates the potential environmental benefits that it is expected to lead to.
- The research relates to the Trust’s Strategic Plan priorities of addressing climate change impacts on the natural environment – both mitigation and adaptation, and/or supporting threatened species recovery.

Criterion 2 Merit of the research (scored out of 10 points)

- The research is well considered and will employ sound methodology.
- The proposal’s outcomes and concepts are unique and do not duplicate completed or current work.
- The research will fill a strategically significant gap in knowledge.

Criterion 3 Collaboration (scored out of 10 points)

- Relevant collaborators including researchers in related fields of study, policy makers, and natural resource managers have been involved in scoping the proposal.
- Meaningful collaboration with the research end-users has been established.
- The research will involve an interdisciplinary approach.

Criterion 4 Potential for success (scored out of 10 points)

- Based on assessment against the above criterion (1–3), estimated funding range and timeframe, there is a high likelihood that the project will achieve successful outcomes.
- The EOI identifies key risks to successful project delivery.

Stage 2 – Full application (by invitation only)

Timeline of invited application process

Step	Timeframe	Process
1	24 July 2023	Invited applicants are given access to start working on a full application including development of a project workplan in the GMS.
2	4 September 2023	Applications close.
3	September – December 2023	The Technical Review Committee assess applications and recommend projects for funding to the Trust. The Trust, having considered the Committee’s recommendations, determines which applicants will receive grants. Decisions by the Trust are final. There is no appeal process.
4	January – February 2024	Successful applicants will be notified by the Trust. Successful applicants may not receive the full amount requested and funding may be subject to special conditions. Successful applicants work with Trust staff on finalising project workplans and executing their funding agreement. A summary of each successful project will be published on the Trust website. Unsuccessful applicants are advised of the outcome and encouraged to contact the Trust for feedback on their application.
5	March – April 2024	Project planning including review and refinement of the workplan to support the delivery, communication, and subsequent reporting for the project, issuing of funding agreements and first payments.
6	May – June 2024	Projects commence.

Stage 2: Full application assessment criteria (by invitation only)

Criterion 1 Significance for the NSW environment (scored out of 10 points)

- The need for the research is well defined and the proposal clearly articulates the potential environmental benefits that it is expected to lead to.
 - The research will fill a strategically significant gap in knowledge that would otherwise be likely to impede environmental decision-making in New South Wales within the foreseeable future.
 - The research findings will support changes in policy and management practice, or support legislative responsibilities, for addressing climate change and/or threatened species outcomes in New South Wales.
-

Criterion 2 Approach and methodology (scored out of 15 points)

- The detailed methodology is appropriate and sound (i.e., in terms of experimental design, hypothesis, statistics, allowance for variability, identification of uncertainty in data and responses).
 - The proposal indicates best practice methods will be used to achieve the project objectives, and implementation of these methods is clearly detailed in the Workplan.
 - The proposal's outcomes and concepts are unique and do not duplicate completed or current work.
 - The Workplan clearly demonstrates how the project will be implemented, monitored and evaluated.
-

Criterion 3 Lead Applicants and collaborators (scored out of 10 points)

- The research involves an interdisciplinary approach.
 - Relevant collaborators including researchers in related fields of study, policy makers, and natural resource managers have confirmed their involvement in the project.
 - Meaningful collaboration with the research end-users has been confirmed.
 - The people conducting the research are appropriately qualified and experienced, and the project team can effectively manage all aspects of the project.
-

Criterion 4 Potential for success (scored out of 10 points)

- Based on the assessment of the detailed application against the above criteria (1-3), there is a high likelihood that the project will achieve successful outcomes.
 - The application clearly indicates how the research findings will be adopted/applied by end-users.
 - An adequate communication strategy has been developed which will enable meaningful application/implementation of the research findings.
-

Criterion 5 Value for Money (scored out of 10 points)

- The criteria for monitoring and evaluating progress/success are appropriate.
 - All key risks to successful project delivery have been addressed.
 - The proposed budget is appropriate, supports the proposed activities and resources, and will ensure the viability of the project overall.
 - The applicant has proposed a project budget that clearly describes project costs, demonstrates how Trust funds will be spent. It also provides details about any funds from other sources where relevant, and describes what in-kind contributions can be expected.
-

Alignment of EOI and invited application

Ensure the invited application content builds on what was proposed in the EOI. Applications which significantly deviate from the EOI are unlikely to be funded.

Part 6: Managing a grant

Starting work

Successful Environmental Research grant recipients (grantees) will be notified by the end of February 2024. Grantees will then be required to undertake a project planning process from March to May 2024. This will involve formalisation of the grant via a funding agreement. Trust staff will also work with grantees to further develop their project workplan to guide delivery of the project. Project activities should commence between May to June 2024.

Funding Agreement

Before activities commence, lead organisations must sign a funding agreement that sets out the terms and conditions of the grant and outlines a schedule of milestones, including reporting and funding instalments. A draft copy of a standard funding agreement will be provided when project planning commences. Note that the standard conditions of this agreement will not be changed.

The Trust may also place additional conditions that are specific to the project. A Grants Administrator will discuss these conditions with the grantee. The final version of the funding agreement will be issued on completion of the project planning process once the workplan has been reviewed and approved.

Workplan (full application only)

Invited applicants are required to submit a draft workplan defining project outcomes, activities, measures, and budget as part of their full application. The workplan aims to:

- provide a tool to assist grantees plan and manage their projects over the duration of the grant
- provide a basis for annual reporting
- improve grantee and Trust understanding of whether projects are on track and have achieved their intended outcomes.

Workplans will be further developed through consultation between the successful grantee, Grants Administrator and the Trust's Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting officer.

During a project

Grantees are required to prepare and submit milestone reports after each milestone (typically every 12 months), through the online GMS. The timeframe for reporting and payments will be finalised in consultation with the Grants Administrator when the grant is awarded and will be included in the funding agreement. Milestone reports provide the grantee with the opportunity to review their own progress and provide the Trust with updates and supporting evidence on delivery of activities, achievements, and expenditure. They also provide an opportunity to reflect on the implementation of the project workplan and identify opportunities for adaptive management as required.

Each milestone report is reviewed by a peer reviewer with appropriate technical expertise relevant to the project who is engaged by the Trust. If a report demonstrates satisfactory progress, the next grant instalment will be authorised, and a Grant Administrator will provide the grantee with feedback from the reviewer. If the project is underperforming, funding instalments may be withheld while the grantee works with their Grants Administrator to identify and implement strategies to bring the project up to speed.

The Trust recognises that variations to projects are sometimes required, and these may be negotiated with a Grants Administrator at any time throughout a project. Requests for variations can be submitted through the GMS.

Invoicing

A tax invoice (subject to GST if applicable) is required for each milestone payment at the time the instalment is due.

Completing a project

When a project is complete, grantees are required to submit a final milestone report via the GMS, reporting on achievements against the project's expected outcomes. As with all milestone reports, the final report will be reviewed by a suitable reviewer engaged by the Trust.

Trust staff will provide the grantee with project feedback, and if the requirements of the grant agreement have been met, the grant will be formally acquitted.

Part 7: More information

About the Trust:

- [NSW Environmental Trust homepage](#)
- [NSW Environmental Trust's Strategic Plan 2020-24](#)
- [Environmental Research](#)

Governance related issues

- [Grantee Guide to Procurement for Environmental Trust Projects \(includes NSW Government Procurement Policy Framework\)](#)
- [Department of Planning and Environment Statement of Business Ethics](#)
- [Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009](#)
- [Tips on working with an External Manager](#)

Other resources

- [NSW Government logo](#)
- [Grants Management System Online Portal User Manual](#)