



2023–24 Developing your EOI and Invited Application Guide

NSW Environmental Trust
Environmental Research Grants Program

Department of Planning and Environment



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Cover photo: Conducting a mycorrhizal inoculation experiment with ribbon gum seedlings in Snowy Monaro, an area impacted by extreme eucalypt dieback. Dr Ben Gooden/CSIRO

Published by:

Environment and Heritage Group
Department of Planning and Environment
Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124
Phone: +61 2 9995 5000 (switchboard)
Phone: 1300 361 967 (Environment and Heritage enquiries)
TTY users: phone 133 677, then ask for 1300 361 967
Speak and listen users: phone 1300 555 727, then ask for 1300 361 967
Email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.environment.nsw.gov.au

Report pollution and environmental incidents
Environment Line: 131 555 (NSW only) or info@environment.nsw.gov.au
See also www.environment.nsw.gov.au

ISBN 978-1-923018-05-1
EHG 2023/0115
April 2023

Find out more about your environment at:

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How to use this guide


Please read the **Environmental Research Grants Program Guidelines** for further information on eligibility and program priorities before proceeding with this guide.

Links to key resources are provided on the **Environmental Trust Research webpage**.


These include:

- Program Guidelines
- Grants Management System link to register and submit an EOI
- Previously funded projects
- Sample Workplan (for invited applicants).

This guide complements supporting text within the online Grants Management System (GMS) by providing additional guidance to help you complete and submit an expression of interest (EOI) and, if invited, a full application to the Environmental Research Grants Program (the program).



Stage 1
Expression of interest (EOI) open 11 April 2023
Closing date: 5 pm Monday, 15 May 2023



Stage 2 (by invitation only)
Invited Applications open 24 July 2023
Closing date: 5 pm Monday, 4 September 2023

This guide is separated into 3 sections reflected in the table of contents:

- Section 1: Questions you will see at the EOI stage.
- Section 2: Questions you will answer if selected to proceed to an Invited Application.
- Section 3: More information – find links to additional resources referenced in this guide.

Application structure

Figure 1 below provides a screenshot of the online Grants Management System (GMS) showing the components you will need to consider at the EOI stage and at the Invited Application stage.

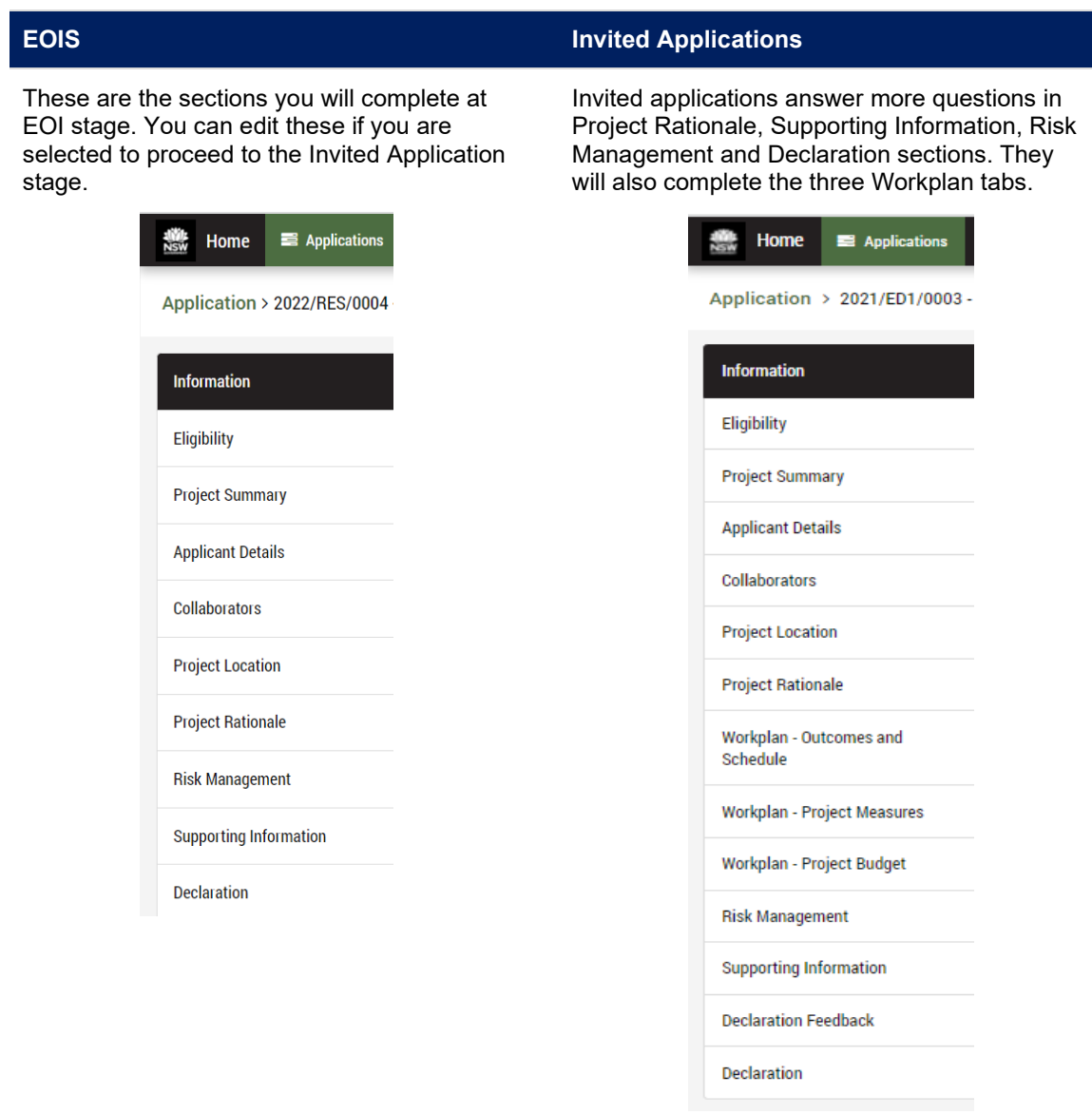


Figure 1 Application form structure for EOIs and Invited Applications

If you are selected to proceed to the Invited Application stage, you can revise the information you entered in your EOI, in line with **Program Guidelines, Part 5: Application and Assessment, Alignment of EOI and Invited Application**.

Enquiries

NSW Environmental Trust Telephone: 02 8837 6093

Email: info@environmentaltrust.nsw.gov.au

Section 1: Expressions of Interest

A maximum of 2 EOIs per organisation are permitted for each of the 2 program priorities. An organisation may, therefore, submit a maximum of 4 EOIs in total.

Project summary

Provide a concise, comprehensive overview of the entire project and its key details.

Project start and end dates

Here you need to approximate the commencement and completion dates of your proposal. Note that:

- projects should start between 1 May 2024 and 30 June 2024
- projects must be completed (including submission of your final report) within 3 years of the commencement date.
- Project timeframes may be re-negotiated as part of the project planning process described in the **Program Guidelines Part 6: Managing a grant**.

What range of funding are you seeking?

Indicate the funding range you are seeking from the NSW Environmental Trust. The funding ranges provided are for the total funding requested for the full duration of the project (up to 3 years).

At the EOI stage, high-level estimates only are required. If you are selected to proceed to the Invited Application, you will need to develop a detailed Workplan, including project timeframes and budget, in the GMS. More information about the Workplan is found in **Section 2: Invited Application**.

If your organisation is registered for GST, please estimate the funding range excluding GST (GST will be added to payments if the project is approved). If your organisation is not registered for GST, please include GST in your funding range estimate.

Collaborators

Project team

Your application should demonstrate partnerships that will improve the delivery of your research and uptake of research outcomes. It is essential that you identify at least one collaborator. Provide a list of your collaborators, and a brief outline of the roles they will play in the project.

- Collaborators are external to your organisation. They will have varying degrees of involvement in your project. Ideally, some will also be on your project team, while others will make smaller contributions. Your answers need to clearly describe how external partners will be supporting project delivery.
- EOIs that do not demonstrate a collaborative approach will not be selected to proceed to the Invited Application stage.
- Letters of support from collaborators are not necessary at the EOI stage, but you may include them if you think it helps to strengthen your case for funding. See **Section 2: Invited Application** for more guidance and tips on submitting letters of support.

For more information on collaboration, see **Program Guidelines, Part 2: Eligibility – Collaborators and End Users**.

End users

Your end users may be any number of organisations or groups, including environmental practitioners, state government agencies, councils, non-government organisations, community groups, landholders, environment groups or industry groups. It will not be sufficient to state that potential end users have been consulted in developing the proposal. They must be involved with and agree to practical application of the research outcomes, and ideally be given an opportunity to participate in project activities.

For more information on end users, see **Program Guidelines, Part 2: Eligibility – Collaborators and End Users**.

If your EOI is successful, you will be required to upload evidence of support for the project and intended involvement from end-users in your Invited Application.

EOIs that do not demonstrate collaboration with end-users will not be assessed.

Program priorities

Please select the program priority that your proposal addresses. Refer to **Program Guidelines, Part 3: What can be funded, 2023–24 Research priorities** for more information.

Up to 4 EOIs for any combination of the 2 priorities will be accepted, but where a single theme only is put forward, it can only be proposed on a maximum of 2 EOIs. A clear focus on either theme is the preference to ensure clarity of outcomes, although there may be some overlap given the broadness of these themes.

Examples:

- You may submit 4 EOIs covering both themes
- You may submit 2 EOIs covering both themes, and an additional EOI for each of the 2 themes. (i.e., total of 4)

Project rationale

At the EOI stage, only some questions about the project rationale will be asked. Additional questions will be prompted in the GMS if you are invited to submit a full application. More information about these additional questions is provided in **Section 2: Invited Application**.

Describe what your project will achieve

Outline the purpose of your project and what it will deliver. For example, ‘Determine the extent and rate of spread of snow-gum dieback and identify the most successful restoration interventions to improve tree health and reverse tree decline’.

Consider what you can achieve within the duration of grant funding of up to 3 years.

Tip

In the Invited Application you will more clearly define specific, measurable outcomes in your Workplan (see **Section 2: Invited Application**).

Supporting information

Attachments to your application can help the Technical Review Committee to determine the strength of your proposal. However, only attachments directly relevant to the project, and those that are clear and concise should be provided. Table 1 below provides examples of supporting information.

Please do not include copies of all relevant literature (e.g., journal articles). A list of citations is acceptable if available.

Table 1 **Examples of supporting attachments**

Letters of support, proof of collaboration (optional at EOI stage)	See Section 1: Collaborators and Section 2: Supporting Information for more guidance and tips on submitting letters of support
CVs, quotes	Demonstrates the credentials of people who you will consider inviting to submit an application to work on the project. This does not replace the merit selection process.
Excerpts of Strategic Plan (maximum of 3 pages)	Important sections from a relevant Strategic Plan or Site Assessment where research may be required to implement it.
Maps	Showing study locations or providing additional context for the Technical Review Committee relating to travel associated with the proposal.

Declaration

Conflicts of interest

When authorising your EOI in the Declaration section, you will be asked to declare any real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. This may include non-monetary personal gain. You should also outline how you will manage them.

All staff and contractors are required to disclose any potential conflicts of interest.

All contracted and sub-contracted staff, or associated staff, are expected to comply with a Statement of Business Ethics. (See **Section 3: More information** for a link to the statement). If you employ sub-contractors in your work, please make them aware of this statement and our expectation that they will abide by it.

Examples of perceived or actual conflicts of interest might include:

- project manager employing themselves or their own business to carry out project related work and using Trust funds to pay for it
- using project activities to promote products or businesses in which members of the applicant's organisation have an interest
- Trust funds being used to pay friends or family for project related work without a merit selection process
- substantial benefits for a researcher arising from collaborations and relationships with industry in the licensing and marketing of research discoveries

You must put systems in place to manage potential or actual conflict of interest that may occur during delivery of the project. Refer to **Program Guidelines, Part 4: Program Governance – Conflicts Of Interest** for more information.

Submitting your Expression of Interest

- To ensure that your organisation manages the requirements around the number of EOIs per program priority, the Trust recommends that:
 - universities submit their EOIs via their Research Grants Office
 - statewide organisations should submit their applications via their Head Office/Chief Executive Officer.
- Submit your EOI by the closing date: **5 pm Monday, 15 May 2023**.
- Any application that is late, incomplete or ineligible will not be considered.
- The GMS will not accept late applications.

Tip

You can share your EOI and Invited Application with others via the GMS. See **Section 3: More information** for a link to the **Grants Management System Online Portal User Manual**.

Section 2: Invited Application

This section will deal with new questions not already covered under the EOI. For help with EOI questions, see **Section 1: Expressions of Interest**.

If invited to submit a full application, you will be required to provide additional content to your EOI submission in the GMS. You will also be able to edit information submitted as your EOI where necessary.

Your proposal must not differ significantly in its intent between the EOI and Invited Application.

Overview of the Workplan

The workplan is split over 3 side bar categories (refer to Figure 1). Your Workplan will allow you to map out the work you will carry out by identifying:

- the outcomes your project will deliver, and the activities you will implement to achieve them
- your project measures. to provide information about the scope of your project and indicators of success
- your project budget identifying the resources you need for each milestone (stage of works).

The Workplan should build on the information you provided in your EOI. If your application is successful, you will submit milestone reports to demonstrate your progress towards implementation of your Workplan.

Workplan – Outcomes and schedule

Outcomes

Your outcomes should describe what success will look like by the end of your project.

It is recommended that you identify a maximum of 3 outcomes. You must have at least one outcome.

Clearly define your outcomes using the SMART principles.

SMART outcomes are:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**ime-bound (within the lifetime of the project)

You should incorporate a similar level of detail as provided in these ‘SMART’ examples:

- Test and evaluate the effects of 4 cultural burns on soil health by engaging Aboriginal communities living in different landscape types around New South Wales. Document the benefits and different cultural practices applicable to their location, carry out soil sampling before and after each burn, and work with practitioners to integrate research findings into practice.
- Assess the motivations and adaptability of 200 citizen scientists participating in volunteer data collection by surveying a minimum of 20 grey-headed flying-fox camps to inform camp management strategies across 5 local government areas.
- Conduct an integrated analysis of ecohydrological connectivity, vegetation community and water requirements on 3 inland river systems covering 30,000 hectares in western NSW to establish the impacts of reduced environmental water flows in drought conditions.

Milestone timeframes

Applying SMART principles, plan your project into a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 3 milestones (stages of work). Each milestone should be 12 months in duration. You may need to adjust the overall timeframes you entered in the Project Summary to match.

You should consider what you can reasonably expect to achieve within 24 to 36 months. Applications proposing works of less than 24 months will not be funded. You will be required to submit a milestone report at the end of each milestone.

Payment and reporting schedule

The milestone start and finish dates you enter in **Workplan – Outcomes and Schedule** (and the budget for each milestone in **Workplan – Budget**) will determine the payment and reporting schedule in your Funding Agreement if your application is successful. Table 2 provides an example of a payment and reporting schedule.

Payments are made at the beginning of each milestone, and reports will be required at the completion of each milestone.

Table 2 Project payment and reporting schedule example

Milestone	Start	Finish	Grant funds requested for each milestone
Milestone 1	1 June 2024	30 May 2025	\$76,495
Milestone 2	1 June 2025	30 May 2026	\$67,177
Milestone 3	1 June 2026	30 May 2027	\$35,378
Total grant			\$179,050

Note: Funding for Milestone 1 must not exceed 70% of the total grant amount

Activities

- A brief description for each activity should be provided, with sufficient detail to guide implementation and reporting on your project. Adding detail to your activity description also demonstrates to the Technical Review Committee how you propose to deliver your project, and that the activities will contribute towards achieving project outcomes.
- Build an evaluation framework into your project plan by describing activities you will undertake to monitor progress and take corrective action if needed.

Things to consider

- How will end users participate in the project?
- What community engagement is required to ensure the research is taken up at the end of the project? Have you integrated implementation of your Communications Plan into Workplan Activities?
- How will you measure and demonstrate the effectiveness of your work? What evidence will you gather to show that your project is achieving its outcomes? Build monitoring mechanisms into your project activities (e.g., surveys, population counts).
- What resourcing is required to carry out your activities? They will need to be budgeted for in the next section of the Workplan.
- Ensure your responses to the questions under the Project Rationale section are reflected in your Workplan. Is implementation of your methodology clearly described in your Workplan activities?
- Refer to the **Sample workplan** on the Research webpage for more examples.

Workplan – Measures

For each activity, select an activity description (from the drop-down menu). Each activity description will generate a different menu of measures. Choose the one that best fits your activity.

For Research grants there are some mandatory measures found under the following Activity Types:

- generating research outcomes to address the issues
- engaging end users to integrate their needs/perspectives/ideas
- sharing of research to address issues
- organisations collaborating (research and development collaboration/partnerships formed).

Suggested measures include:

- capturing end user uptake of research findings (e.g. changes in policies and practice) is strongly recommended where possible
- ‘project management and delivery’ is a good measure for recording the human resources needed to implement your project
- fostering Aboriginal Cultural Understanding e.g., do you have an opportunity to work with Traditional Owners to integrate Indigenous Ecological Knowledge into your research?

Workplan – Budget

The budget you outline will determine how grant funds will be paid if your application is successful. (See **Workplan – Outcomes and Schedule, Payment and Reporting Schedule**). Use the budget description text box to detail how grant funds have been calculated, in ways that clearly demonstrate strong value for money. High level budget descriptions that fail to clearly demonstrate an appropriate link between expenditure of Trust funds and the outcomes the Trust will receive in return for its investment are unlikely to be funded.

Round all figures off to the nearest dollar.

Tip: See the Sample Workplan for a model of how to present your budget.

GST

Government organisations, including universities and councils, must not include goods and services tax (GST) in their requested amounts. These organisations are not paid GST on grant funding transactions in line with Australian tax laws.

If you are a non-government organisation that is registered for GST, the dollar amounts in your application budget must not include GST. GST will be paid in addition to your grant instalments.

If you are not registered for GST and are administering your own grant, the amount requested from the Trust must include any GST which may be payable.

Presenting a strong budget

You will need to provide a detailed break-down of your anticipated project costs and identify how they will be funded (either from grant funds or other sources). Provide sufficient details for the Technical Review Committee to make an assessment on the value for money in relation to project outcomes.

Refer to **Program Guidelines, Part 3: What can be funded**, Eligible Activities for more information on what we will and won't fund.

If your application is successful, there will be further opportunities to make minor adjustments to your budget through development of your Workplan before signing a Funding Agreement.

All costing in your budget needs to be detailed, reasonable and justifiable, especially where individual items comprise a large proportion of the overall budget. Detailed costing ensures that your budget is well planned and is linked to the outcomes and outputs of your project.

Things to consider

- Refer to the **Sample Workplan** on the Research homepage as a model for presenting your budget.
- Does your proposed budget include costs that would be considered reasonable expenditure of public funds? Will it withstand public scrutiny?
- Have you provided enough detail to demonstrate to the Trust what it is being asked to fund? For example, include workings to show how costs have been calculated.

See below for comparison of a good quality budget (left) with a poor quality budget (right).

Table 3 Comparing a good quality budget with a poor quality budget

Good quality budget		Poor quality budget	
Budget Description	Cost	Budget Description	Cost
Nest box installation and monitoring, 4 days at \$1,000, per day	\$4,000	Ecologist	\$4,000
Research Assistant \$45 per hour (including on-costs) x 14hrs/week x 40 weeks to assist with preparation of journal article	\$25,200	Staff time	\$25,000
Tube-stock 10 species \$3.00 each x 5,000	\$15,000	Plants	\$15,000
Post grad student University of Western Australia for 5 field days to assist with guiding students conducting field work \$1,500 per day, plus \$500 per day travel and accommodation	\$10,000	Speaker	\$10,000

Engagement of staff

The Trust's overall aim in relation to funding human resources is to ensure that:

- merit selection processes allow a range of applicants to compete for Trust funded employment
- recruitment using Trust funds is transparent and accountable, in line with reasonable expectations for use of public funds
- the Trust is not effectively reimbursing an organisation for salaries of existing staff that it has already budgeted for.

If you are asking the Trust to fund an employee, please identify in your Workplan that you will undertake a recruitment or tender process.

Recruitment of contractors

All contractors (including consultants) should be chosen on their merits and ability to effectively deliver the work, in line with the **Grantee Guide to Procurement for Environmental Trust Projects** (which is based on the NSW Government Procurement Framework). See **Section 3: More information** for a link to the Grantee Guide to Procurement. Your budget should include hourly rates rather than lump sums to demonstrate that costs are in line with industry standards.

Staff salaries

Conduct your recruitment in line with merit selection principles. A position description should be developed for any new position to be employed under the project. Example position descriptions in jobs currently advertised by the Department of Planning and Environment on the internet can be used as a model. (See **Section 3: More information** for a link).

If, at time of submitting your Invited Application, you already have a specific person in mind for the position being funded by the Trust, you must include their CV (maximum 2-page summary) to allow Technical Review Committee members to determine if they have the correct skills and experience for the job. (Salaries for existing staff can be

reflected in your project budget as an 'in-kind' contribution. You do not need to include CVs for local/state government employees who are working on the project as part of their usual duties).

You will need to provide clear justification for the funding of any existing employees, including casual or part-time staff, and to demonstrate how the Trust funded work is additional to any work they have already been engaged to undertake. For example, a part-time staff member (who has been recruited through a merit selection process) who usually works 2 days a week could work an extra day each week on the project, and that day could be attributed to the Trust. You must be able to demonstrate how you will separately track their project-related work from their regular duties.

Salaries are expected to be in line with industry standards, and you need to show that you have calculated amounts based on reasonable pay rates. It is also expected that staff working conditions will be in accordance with all applicable laws. This includes meeting standard Work, Health and Safety requirements.

You may include up to 26.5% for salary on-costs (this covers leave loading, workers compensation, payroll tax, superannuation, etc.) in your application.

Administration and accounting costs

The Trust recognises that there is a cost for managing and administering projects. In most cases, grant recipients absorb these costs as an in-kind contribution to the project, however, Trust funds may be used to pay these costs when detailed and justified.

Administration and accounting costs must be project specific and cannot exceed 10% of the grant. Examples of administration costs you may include in your budget are itemised phone call charges, recruitment and contractor advertising costs, office supplies purchased specifically for the project, etc. You must quantify these costs in your budget, and not include any ongoing or regular administration costs of your organisation (e.g., office lease).

The cost of compiling Trust reports or conducting monitoring and evaluation activities is not considered an administration cost and may be claimed as salaries/contractor expenses.

The Trust periodically audits projects. You must be able to demonstrate that all administration costs **directly relate to the project**.

Please note that there are different final financial auditing requirements for different grantees.

- For community groups/non-government organisations:
On completion of the project you will need to have your final financial report independently certified by a suitably qualified accountant (this will be outlined in your funding agreement).
- For government agencies and universities:
You will need to have your final financial report certified by your Chief Financial Officer or equivalent, regardless of the budget amount.

Cash contributions

Provide details for all committed (and pending) funding contributions pledged by project partner organisations (including your own) against your project activities.

If partnership funding has been secured at the time of applying for the grant, provide written evidence of partnership funding with your application.

If you have pending applications for funding at the time of applying to the Trust, then written evidence of partnership funding needs to be provided once it has been secured. However, please include information in your budget on all grant organisations you have applied to, which may include federal, state and local government departments, other trusts and foundations, and corporate sponsorship options.

In-kind contributions

All in-kind contributions are to be included in your budget against the relevant project activities.

Include details within the budget description for all in-kind contributions including goods, use of services and facilities, volunteer time, professional services or expertise in the form of staff time, provision of or access to equipment, and/or special materials or material contributions pledged by project partner organisations (including your own) toward the project.

Values for each item should be calculated using current market rates for goods or materials, accurate hourly rates of pay for professional staff services and sensible volunteer valuation (i.e., at a reduced rate proportionate to current award rates for professional contractors). Hours estimated for volunteer contribution should also be realistic as they form part of your project measures which you will be required to report on if successful in obtaining a grant.

See the **Sample Workplan** for guidance on how to present in-kind contributions.

Supporting information

At the EOI stage, letters of support from collaborators and end users are optional. At the Invited Application stage, they are mandatory.

If you have not already done so at the EOI stage, you must now submit letters of support from all major collaborators and end users. Content should specifically include the type of participation or contribution being made, e.g., labour costs, mapping, plant, volunteer hours, cash, etc., within the project timeframe and either the committed (e.g., cash) and/or estimated value (e.g., labour hours, materials, volunteer hours, etc.) of the contribution.

Tips for letters of support and a sample is available on the Trust's website, and a link is available in **Section 3: More information**.

See **Section 1: Expressions of Interest** for more guidance on submitting other attachments such as CV's, maps, etc.

Risk management plan

Consider risks to successfully delivering your project on time and on budget, and options for their mitigation which reduce their likelihood and/or severity. See the Risk Rating Calculator in GMS for guidance on how to determine the risk level. Table 4 provides examples of risks to successful delivery of a project.

Table 4 Risk management plan example

Risk description	Likelihood	Severity	Risk level	Risk treatment action (How can you reduce the risk?)	Likelihood (has the treatment action you identified reduced the potential likelihood?)	Severity (has the treatment action you identified reduced the potential severity?)	Revised risk level
Failure to engage the community in project activities	Remote	Moderate	Acceptable	Engage a range of stakeholder organisations and include publicity and engagement strategies such as field days, citizen science, cultural activities, etc.	Improbable	Moderate	Desirable
Pilot program for new techniques being researched produce poor quality outcomes	Occasional	Significant	Undesirable	Meet with adjoining property owners and discuss objectives of the project and strategies for alternative management.	Remote	Moderate	Acceptable
Catastrophic event (e.g., COVID-19 outbreak, fire, vandalism)	Probable	Catastrophic	Catastrophic	Consider alternative means of delivering education, e.g., via online workshops.	Improbable	Significant	Acceptable
Loss of project records and photographs	Remote	Significant	Undesirable	Ensure survey results are presented to the committee electronically and in hard copy and kept in 2 places.	Improbable	Low	Desirable

Risk description	Likelihood	Severity	Risk level	Risk treatment action (How can you reduce the risk?)	Likelihood (has the treatment action you identified reduced the potential likelihood?)	Severity (has the treatment action you identified reduced the potential severity?)	Revised risk level
Change of project manager	Occasional	Significant	Undesirable	Have more than one person familiar with/responsible for the project's aims and objectives who is kept up to date on progress. Project manager provides updates as monthly committee meetings.	Improbable	Low	Desirable
Climatic conditions prevent landholder participation in the project (e.g., fires, drought, flood)	Probable	Significant	Catastrophic	Review and adjustment of project plan to accommodate changed tasks and timelines.	Probable	Moderate	Undesirable

Section 3: More information

About the Trust:

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

Governance issues:

- [NSW Government Procurement Policy](#)
- [Grantee Guide to Procurement for Environmental Trust Projects](#)
- [Department of Planning and Environment Statement of Business Ethics](#)
- [Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009](#)

Other resources:

- [I Work for NSW](#) (find examples of position descriptions)
- [NSW Government logo](#)
- [Grants Management System Online Portal User Manual](#)
- [Department of Planning and Environment Knowledge Strategy](#)
- [Letters of support: tips and sample](#)