Department of Planning and Environment

Program Guidelines
Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation
2022–23

NSW Environmental Trust

environment.nsw.gov.au

Cover photo: Volunteers remove weeds from riverbank. Kosciuszko National Park. John Spencer/DPE

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www.environment.nsw.gov.au

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How to use this guide

These program guidelines provide an overview of the NSW Environmental Trust's (Trust) Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation 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 applications will be assessed and what to expect if awarded a grant.

Important dates

Opening date for applications	Closing date for applications
Monday 22 August 2022	5 pm, Monday 10 October 2022

Funding available

Two Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation funding streams are available in 2022–23, with a total available funding pool of $4 million.

Program stream	Total funding available in grant program	Project funds	Duration of funding
New organisations	$1,000,000	$50,000 to $125,000	2 – 3 years
Experienced organisations	$3,000,000	$125,000 to $200,000	3 – 4 years

Getting started

Step 1

Download and read the program guidelines (this document).

Links to key resources to help develop and submit an application are provided on the **Restoration and Rehabilitation Program webpage**.

These include:

- Developing your Application Guide
- Grants Management System (GMS) link to register and submit an application
- Previously funded projects
- Sample workplan

Step 2

Check the eligibility conditions.

- Is your organisation eligible? (refer to **Part 2: Eligibility**)
- Are your proposed activities suitable for this program? (refer to **Part 3: What can be funded**)

Step 3

Access the GMS via the Restoration and Rehabilitation Program webpage to register and complete an application. The GMS will automatically assign each application a project reference number. This reference number should be used in any correspondence with the Trust.

Enquiries

NSW Environmental Trust

Telephone: 02 8837 6093

Email: info@environmentaltrust.nsw.gov.au

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 protects 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 Restoration and Rehabilitation Program (the program) is a contestable grants program funded by the Trust.

It provides funding to achieve long-term beneficial outcomes for the NSW environment by encouraging and enabling community and government organisations to protect, conserve and restore our valuable natural environment.

Program objectives

The program is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- improve and protect the quality of ecosystems and environmental assets managed by community groups, land managers and stakeholders
- enhance the management of environmental assets by facilitating the development of environmental expertise and stronger partnerships between individuals, community groups, governments, and industry
- provide an appropriate, effective, and sustainable mechanism to deliver government policy, priorities, and outcomes.

Important information for 2022–23

Priority themes

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

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

Funding streams

Two funding streams are available in this round:

- Stream 1 – New organisations
- Stream 2 – Experienced organisations

Organisations may only apply for funds under one stream. Each stream is based on an organisation's project management experience and/or capacity. Each stream has different funding levels and delivery timeframes. Key features of the two streams are outlined below in Table 1.

Table 1   Overview of funding streams

	Stream 1: New organisations	Stream 2: Experienced organisations
Implementation timeframe	2–3 years	3–4 years
Available funding	$50,000 to $125,000	$125,000 to $200,000

Application limits

Organisations may lodge a **maximum of 2 applications.**

Only one project per organisation may be funded unless the organisation is in western NSW in which case 2 projects may be funded. See **Part 2 – Conditions of eligibility**.

Budget requirements

Salaries and salary on-costs may be included in the budget for project management (e.g., a Project Officer managing the grant project) but must not exceed 30% of the total grant amount.

Each project budget must allocate at least 10% of the overall project budget to monitoring and evaluation activities. This may include photo monitoring, mapping, ecological surveys, and other monitoring activities. Monitoring activities may be carried out by the grantee or a suitably qualified/experienced contractor or consultant.

Each project budget must allocate funds to project promotion through media and communications up to the amount of $5,000.

All non-government organisations must allocate at least $1,000 to conduct a financial audit at the completion of the project, to be submitted with the final report.

Budget items should be costed to allow for estimated increases in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for each year of the project.

Table 2 outlines the project budget requirements and restrictions.

Table 2   Breakdown of budget requirements

Budget items	Stream 1: New organisations	Stream 2: Experienced organisations
Salaries and on-costs (maximum of 30% of total grant funding)	Max. $37,500	Max. $60,000
Monitoring and evaluation (compulsory and must be at least 10% of the total project budget)	Min. $7,500	Min. $15,000
Media and communications (compulsory)	Max. $5,000	Max. $5,000
Financial audit (compulsory for non-government organisations only)	Min. $1,000	Min. $1,000
Total project funds available	**$50,000 to $125,000**	**$125,000 to $200,000**

Applications seeking more Trust funding than is available for individual projects in either stream will be deemed ineligible.

Applicant resources

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

Part 2: Eligibility

Eligible organisations

Two funding streams are available. Organisations must identify which stream they are eligible to apply for and only submit applications for that stream. If you are unsure of which stream to apply for, please contact the Trust for advice before starting an application.

Stream 1: New organisations

Restricted to non-government organisations (e.g., landcare groups, community groups or Aboriginal groups) which either:

- are newly formed (established in the last 12-18 months)
- have never been awarded funding from the Trust
- have limited experience in delivering natural resource management (NRM) projects or grants

Note: Any organisation that has previously been awarded Trust funding is considered an experienced organisation and can only apply under Stream 2. Any applications received under Stream 1 from such organisations will be deemed ineligible.

Stream 2: Experienced organisations

Restricted to organisations that either:

- are non-government organisations with demonstrated experience in successful NRM project delivery
- are government organisations (e.g., councils, state government agencies, universities).

Note: Experienced organisations will need to provide information on current/previous NRM projects or grants received to apply under Stream 2. All organisations must adhere to the definition of eligible community groups/organisations and government provided below in Table 3.

Table 3   Definition of eligible community groups/organisations and government

Community groups/organisations	Government
The following not-for-profit organisations may apply for Stream 1 or Stream 2 depending on experience (see above):	**The following government organisations may apply for Stream 2 only:**
- Community groups - Incorporated associations - Incorporated non-profit organisations - Non-commercial cooperatives - Companies limited by guarantee - Non-government organisations - Trusts	- State government agencies and/or statutory committees - Councils - Regional organisations of councils - Other local government-controlled organisations - Universities (only eligible to apply for funding for projects on their own land)

Ineligible organisations

The Trust will **not** fund:

- individuals
- industry joint ventures
- for-profit organisations
- profit-distributing entities.

Conditions of eligibility

Status for tax purposes

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

Unincorporated organisations

Community organisations that are unincorporated are only eligible to apply if they appoint an eligible organisation to act as administrator (i.e., an auspicing body). The administrator must meet the eligibility requirements for community or government organisations and will be responsible for managing Trust funds in line with NSW Government Procurement Policy. The administrator will be a signatory to the funding agreement and will assist with reporting requirements.

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 application. Special conditions may be included in the funding agreement to address any issues of concern.

Inland NSW applicants

To ensure distribution of funding within New South Wales and recognising the challenges of delivering projects in remote locations, an exception will be made for organisations seeking funding for projects located in western NSW. This includes organisations located in the areas of operation of Western Local Land Services, North West Local Land Services, Central West Local Land Services, Riverina Local Land Services and Murray Local Land Services. These organisations will be allowed to submit 2 applications, both of which may be funded.

Mapping

Organisations 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 and/or regional biodiversity corridors
- site maps – showing each project site and areas of proposed works (if sites are known before applying).

Part 3: What can be funded

2022–23 priority themes

Each year, the program funds restoration and rehabilitation activities aligned to priority themes of the Environmental Trust Strategic Plan 2020–24.

The priority themes for 2022–23 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 projects involving activities that address either or both priority themes.

Eligible and ineligible activities

Eligible activities

Table 4 below provides examples of activities that may be funded through the program. Grants are not limited to the examples provided.

Further guidance, and examples to assist applicants with linking practical activities with either or both of the immediate funding priorities are available in the Developing your application guide, on the program webpage.

The extent to which an application addresses these priorities will be considered when assessing applications.

Table 4   Examples of activities eligible for grant funding

Activity	Description
Bush regeneration (Assisted Natural Regeneration)	The practice of naturally restoring native plant communities and reinforcing an ecosystem's ongoing natural regeneration process. Many activities listed below contribute to bush regeneration.
Capacity building and community engagement	Training, up-skilling and/or educating volunteers, community members and landowners in natural resource management techniques, and/or Aboriginal cultural knowledge and practices, to improve the tangible environmental outcomes of a project. This could include community planting events, educational workshops, seminars and/or engagement with school/university students.

Activity	Description
Consultancies/contractors	Appointment of external specialists to manage the project or deliver specific project components (e.g., bush regeneration services, volunteer supervision, fencing installers). Alignment with NSW Government Procurement Policy is expected to be followed when sourcing these services. A link to the policy is available in **Part 7 – More information**.
Educational resources and signage	Educational or interpretive resources relating to the project outcomes that increase community awareness of the benefits to the environment associated with the project and influence positive behavioural change.
Employment of project management staff (either in-house through salary plus on-costs, or externally appointed contractor)	Staff may be employed with the use of project funds under one of 2 options. • Option 1: a merit-based, advertised, recruitment process for a new staff member • Option 2: Direct appointment of an existing staff member who has 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. Costs associated with the project management and coordination of project activities are capped at 30% of total grant funding, including on-costs. Alternatively, a contractor can be appointed to manage the project – see 'Consultancies/contractors' above.
Erosion control	Works to protect soil stability (e.g., preventing water quality degradation to adjacent waterways from stormwater run-off or wind-driven sediments). Organisations proposing erosion control works should clearly specify the methods they intend to use and provide detailed costs in the project budget.
Fencing	Installation of wildlife-friendly fencing to restrict access to restoration areas, including temporary protection of revegetation plots. A link to the wildlife-friendly fencing webpage is available in **Part 7 – More information.**
Fire	Strategic burning of an area for ecological purposes, including weed control and/or cultural burning. The application must demonstrate engagement with the relevant fire authority (i.e., Rural Fire Service and/or National Parks and Wildlife Service) and engagement with relevant Aboriginal group/s where cultural burning is proposed (i.e., using traditional Aboriginal burning techniques to achieve an ecological outcome). Organisations must identify the purpose of implementing burns to be either ecological or cultural burns to achieve ecological outcomes. Burns should not be conducted as individual, isolated activities but should be planned to be a part of the fire regime of the greater landscape. Details should be provided on the burn prescription, including the burning techniques to be used, associated weed control methods, planned burn intensity, size, season, frequency, and planned outcomes.
Formalisation of tracks	Upgrading or rationalisation of existing tracks that are causing degradation on sites of high conservation value.

Activity	Description
Habitat creation	Installation of natural and/or artificial structural habitat for fauna that incorporates features that mimic the characteristics of their nesting or shelter habitat.
	Habitat creation structures (e.g., nest boxes) will only be funded when:
	• the target species are clearly defined
	• the need for the structure and how it will assist the target species is clearly articulated, including an assessment of the requirement of the structure against the availability of appropriate naturally occurring habitat (e.g., hollows in trees) the proposed structures are appropriate for species' needs
	• appropriate technical advice has been sought on the design features for proposed structures
	• a monitoring regime that includes a monitoring and maintenance plan inclusive of triggers for removal/discontinuation (e.g., utilisation by a pest species).
	The Trust strongly recommends using the following to plan these project activities: 5 step Decision Flow chart included in Wingecarribee Shire Council's Nest Box Guide and Learning from nest boxes – monitoring and storing data. Links to these resources are provided in **Part 7 – More information**.
Pest animal management	Strategic long-term control of feral pest animal species through physical intervention to facilitate native animal and plant species recovery.
	For best effect, projects should be aligned with Local Land Services management plans for the target species and be conducted in concert with neighbours regardless of land tenure.
Revegetation	Introduction of local native plant species through the planting of tubestock direct seeding, brush matting or transplanting. Used typically only where a viable native seed bank does not already exist on a site. Species selected and, therefore, seed collected for revegetation activities need to consider how this selection will be impacted by climate change. Organisations are strongly encouraged to follow guidance provided in Climate-ready revegetation to ensure climate change resilience in considered when planning for future revegetation activities. Further information on Climate-ready revegetation and the department's Good practices in riparian rehabilitation guiding document are available in **Part 7 – More information.**
Seed production areas/orchards	These are locations specifically designed to cultivate native species intended to harvest seed for use in future restoration and rehabilitation projects.
	A key focus of these projects should be to prepare for climate change resilience, whereby the adaptive potential of species and vegetation communities is maintained, through careful species and provenance selections, and through maximising genetic diversity. Further, project design should aim to select and plant species diversity from multiple plant stratums and link to longer term restoration and rehabilitation initiatives across a geographic region. Organisations are encouraged to incorporate concepts outlined in both Climate-ready Revegetation and the standards and case studies found on the Seed Production Areas for Ecological Restoration webpages. Links to these resources are provided in **Part 7 – More information**.

Activity	Description
Threatened species	On-ground works that provide direct benefits for threatened species, such as planting of feed/shelter trees, or the mitigation of known threats.
	When planning a project where either a threatened species or ecological community is the focus of the project, the project should align to the principles of the *Saving our Species* (SoS) framework. The SoS framework provides an overview of threatened species management in New South Wales and includes a conservation strategy for each threatened species, ecological community, and threatened population. Alignment with the SoS conservation strategy - including a focus on priority management areas or sites, threats, and management actions – is preferred as this will assist determining the location of for a project and the actions that will benefit the species at that location.
	The SoS conservation strategies are published on the SoS website. A link is provided in **Part 7 – More information**.
	Before designing a project, it is strongly advised to contact the appointed Species Project Coordinator responsible for the statewide management of the proposed threatened species/ecological community. Please contact the Trust on 02 8837 6093 for details of the relevant coordinator.
	Note: Appropriate licences must be obtained before commencing a project where works impact threatened species or occur within defined threatened ecological communities. Contact the Department of Planning and Environment licensing team for further information on licensing.
Weed management	Weed control initiatives defined under Regional Strategic Weed Management Plans (covering both regional and statewide priorities) that guide the implementation of the *Biosecurity Act (2015)* General Biosecurity Duty.
	Trust funding will only be available to support projects that seek to achieve environmental outcomes rather than economic outcomes (e.g., primary production). Funds may be requested to:
	• implement weed control activities that address an environmental issue/problem (e.g., facilitate the recovery of a native plant species or community or ecosystem function)
	• protect an environmental asset (e.g., threatened species, population, or Endangered Ecological Community).
	Please refer to 'Core Business' and 'Weed Management' activities under the Ineligible Activities list to provide additional guidance on how to determine whether weed management activities are the statutory responsibility of land managers/holders. For further information refer to each Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan and the NSW Government's NSW WeedWise webpage. Links to these sites are provided in **Part 7 – More information**.

Ineligible activities

Table 5 below describes examples of activities that cannot be funded through the program. This list is not exhaustive. If you need further guidance, please contact Trust administration.

Table 5   Examples of activities not eligible for grant funding

Activity	Description
Non-project-related administration	Operational costs of organisations that are not project specific. Project related administration cannot exceed 10% of the total grant funds.
Aesthetics, amenity, and recreation	Activities primarily focussed on improving aesthetics, local amenity, or recreational opportunities. This includes gardening and grounds management. The focus of all projects must be on delivering positive environmental outcomes for New South Wales.
Capital expenditure	Construction and large capital item purchases (e.g., infrastructure building, facilities, vehicles, trailers, machinery). 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.
Core business	Activities 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.
Devolved grants and stewardship payments	Devolved grants or offering grant funds to other organisations or individuals to manage, is not permissible under this grant program.
	Stewardship payments or providing monetary compensation to organisations or individuals to maintain or improve the environmental values of their land (as opposed to providing fencing materials for example) are also ineligible.
	Trust funds must be managed directly by the organisation or their appointed administrator, and all financial transactions must be managed in line with the approved budget and NSW Government Procurement Policy. In addition, a grantee may not devolve purchasing decisions to a third party unless they can demonstrate a working understanding of NSW Government Procurement policy and procedures (e.g., works taking place on National Parks and Wildlife land, and they may require use of contractors from their preferred supplier list).
	Projects where multiple landholders are identified and engaged in a catchment or regional scale project that is run by a coordinating grantee, are considered to be partnership projects rather than devolved grant projects. In this situation, the coordinating grantee will be responsible for the management of Trust funds.
Employment of project staff	Salaries of staff not covered under either Options 1 or 2 as defined in the Eligible Activities section of these guidelines.
Facilitating changes of land tenure or resource licensing	Expenses associated with any activities resulting in the transfer of land, resource licensing (e.g., water extraction licences – either private or public) between landholders.
Formalisation of tracks	Upgrading of tracks or construction of new tracks solely for amenity or recreation purposes.

Activity	Description
Maintenance	Ongoing maintenance of projects to which organisations have previously committed.
Project planning	Development of overarching project plans will not receive funding. However, site management plans, which will be implemented as part of the project, may be considered.
Research	Projects that focus on research or data gathering which are not specifically linked to on-ground outcomes of the project. Surveys, data collection, mapping, etc., may be carried out to gather evidence required to demonstrate the effectiveness of on-ground works and approved project activities.
Retrospective activities	Activities carried out or committed to before accepting and signing the funding agreement.
Waste management	Projects with a primary focus on clean-up activities, litter collection or waste management. See information on Waste Programs on the Environmental Trust website.
Weed management	Projects that seek to implement weed control activities under Biosecurity Directions or Biosecurity Undertakings. These weeds are the core responsibility of landowners and are enforceable by Local Control Authorities. Control of weeds that seek to achieve an economic outcome (e.g., to address a problem/issue impacting primary production) are the core responsibility of the landowner and will not be funded.

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 according to 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, including 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 NSW Government Procurement Policy. This relates to all major budget items, such as the purchase of materials or the 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 (available in **Part 7 – More information**) provides a summary of the NSW Government policy requirements.

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 application guide.

Any works proposed to be conducted on land owned by a member or affiliate of the grantee project partner organisation must outline how this conflict has been, or will be, managed.

Recruitment

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

- additional hours/days can be clearly demonstrated for existing staff being appointed to a new project
- the Trust is not effectively reimbursing an organisation for salaries it has already budgeted for (cost shifting), or for work that is part of its core business
- a competitive process is run for new Trust funded employment opportunities
- recruitment using Trust funds is transparent and accountable.

To demonstrate a transparent 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 milestone report or in subsequent milestone 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.

Recruitment of staff should only occur once a grant has been awarded.

Third party assistance

Lead organisations 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. Lead organisations 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. 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% (while being aware 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)**
- prepare 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
- know the standard conditions of the funding agreement will not be changed at the request of grantees.

Technical Review Committee

Selection for the Trust's Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation grants is a statewide, merit-based process. The Trust establishes an independent Technical Review Committee (TRC) for each grant program to assess 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 from a community group and one representative of industry. All members of the Restoration and Rehabilitation TRC have significant natural resource management qualifications, experience, and expertise. It should be noted that the TRC is not the final decision maker. The TRC makes recommendations for projects to be funded, which are forwarded to the Trust Board for its consideration.

Part 5: Application and assessment

The estimated timeline for each stage of the application, assessment and decision-making process is outlined in Table 6 below.

Table 6   **Grant round timeframes**

Step	Timeframe	Process
1	22 August 2022	Applications open in the GMS
2	10 October 2022	Applications close
3	October – December 2022	The Technical Review Committee assess applications and recommends projects for funding to the Trust.
4	February – March 2023	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.
5	May 2023	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.
6	June – July 2023	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.
7	August 2023	Projects commence

Assessment criteria and process

All applications are assessed against the criteria outlined below by each member of the TRC. After individual assessment, the TRC meet to discuss and agree on project rankings and which projects will be recommended to the Trust for funding consideration.

Criterion 1   Tangible environmental outcome (scored out of 15 points)

- Clear explanation of the environmental issue to be addressed.
- Demonstrated need for the project, and appropriateness of proposed actions.
- The project will make a clear contribution toward the Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation Program.

Criterion 2   Project activities and outcomes (scored out of 15 points)

- Activities clearly targeted towards achieving proposed outcomes.
- Project demonstrates long-term benefits beyond the life of the grant.
- Activities have considered the two immediate funding priorities identified through the NSW Environmental Trust Strategic Plan 2020–24.

Criterion 3   Planning and method (scored out of 15 points)

- Project outcomes and activities contribute, at a practical level, to the delivery of threatened species recovery and/or climate change adaptation/mitigation, in line with the Trust's immediate funding priorities.
- Community involvement, engagement and/or capacity building is incorporated into the project to contribute to social outcomes.
- How well do the identified monitoring activities demonstrate the success of the project.
- How well the proposal addresses risk factors that have the potential to jeopardise the achievement of expected outcomes.
- Timeframe is realistic for achieving the proposed outcomes.
- Likelihood of project to build community capacity to protect the environment and strength of collaboration.

Criterion 4   Capacity to deliver (scored out of 10 points)

- Demonstrated knowledge, skills, and expertise in relevant fields of the organisation and/or project partners.
- Degree of community involvement and how this will be achieved.
- Capacity and commitment to undertake and complete the project.
- Demonstrated commitment to continuing support of the project outcomes beyond the life of the grant.

Criterion 5   Value for money (scored out of 15 points)

- Extent to which the budget supports the projected objectives and whether it will ensure the viability of the project overall.
- The likely environmental benefit of the proposal relative to the amount of grant funds.
- The reasonableness of the budget items.
- Demonstrated commitment to continuing support of the project outcomes beyond the life of the grant.
- Appropriateness of the mix in the total budget between:
  - materials and other direct project costs
  - professional expertise
  - in-kind support and/or cash contributions from the lead organisation and other organisations
  - in-kind support and/or cash contributions from the lead organisation and other organisations.

Part 6: Managing a grant

Starting work

Successful Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation grant recipients (grantees) will be notified by May 2023. Grantees will then be required to undertake a project planning process from May to July 2023. 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 August to September 2023.

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. Trust staff 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

Lead organisations are required to submit a draft workplan defining project outcomes, activities, measures, and budget as part of their application. The workplan aims to assist grantees to define project deliverables, including:

- the outcomes to be achieved (environmental, social and project management)
- what, and when, activities will be undertaken to achieve each outcome
- how activities will be implemented, monitored, and evaluated.

Workplans will be further developed through consultation between the successful grantee and Trust staff.

Effective workplans incorporate a clear monitoring and evaluation framework so that environmental improvements can be effectively measured and demonstrated. The implementation and evaluation of each activity will allow for ongoing adjustments to be made to improve outcomes (adaptive management). As previously indicated, the budget for monitoring and evaluation activities must be at least 10% of the total grant funding.

During a project

Reporting

Grantees are required to prepare and submit milestone reports after each stage of work (typically every 12 months), through the online GMS. The timeframe for reporting and payments will be finalised in consultation with Trust staff when the grant is awarded and will be included in the funding agreement. Milestone reports provide each grantee with the opportunity to review 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 Trust staff will provide the grantee with feedback from the reviewer. If the project is underperforming, funding instalments may be withheld while the grantee works with Trust staff 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 Trust staff at any time throughout a project. Requests for variations can be submitted through the GMS.

Monitoring

The Trust requires effective and consistent evidence-based monitoring of project activities. Grantees must demonstrate how project activities will be monitored by identifying and building appropriate monitoring techniques into the workplan. The use of monitoring methods will vary depending on the nature of the work being carried out, however, the minimum standards expected are:

- Consistent monitoring methods to measure activity implementation and progress. At a minimum, photo monitoring and mapping (i.e., project sites, works completed to date, photo points), should be provided at each milestone report to demonstrate progress.

- Benchmark/baseline data is established at the commencement of a project from which grantees will compare and demonstrate improvements over the life of a project. The Trust has developed a monitoring directory to help explain suitable monitoring methods for various activity types. A link to the monitoring directory is provided in **Part 7 – More information**.

Evaluation

Evaluation should be conducted each year to examine the project's performance and identify opportunities for adaptive management where required. Standardised evaluation questions will be asked in each milestone report to assist with this, and lessons learned from project delivery should be used to propose variations to the planning and delivery of the remaining project activities to ensure the project remains on track and meets its intended outcomes.

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

Governance related issues:

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

Other resources:

- Good practices in riparian rehabilitation guide
- Grants Management System Online Portal User Manual
- Guide to photo monitoring of ecological restoration projects funded by the NSW Environmental Trust
- Monitoring Directory for ecological restoration and social activities NSW Environmental Trust
- National Standards for Ecological Restoration
- NSW Government logo and funding acknowledgement requirements
- NSW WeedWise
- Regional Strategic Weed Management Plans
- Saving our Species conservation strategies
- Seed Production Areas for Ecological Restoration
- Wildlife friendly fencing
- Wingecarribee Shire Council's Nest Box Guide and Learning from nest boxes – monitoring and storing data

Appendix 1: Restoration and Rehabilitation Program Logic

Ultimate Goal: Contribute to the ongoing sustainable management and stewardship of significant environmental assets and services in New South Wales.

Program Objective: Enhance the management of environmental assets and services through the facilitation and creation of social capital between individuals, community groups, governments and industry.	**Program Objective:** Improve and protect the quality of a diverse range of ecosystems and environmental assets and services managed by community groups, land managers and stakeholders.	**Program Objective:** Provide an appropriate, effective and sustainable mechanism to deliver Government policy, priorities and outcomes through the Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation Program.
Intermediate Social Outcomes	**Intermediate Environmental Outcomes**	**Intermediate Governance Outcomes**

Capacity Building	The capacity of organisations and communities to conduct environmental activities, practices and projects is enhanced and supported.	Ecosystem assets and services and changing climate	Measurable improvement to ecosystem function and services at locations that hold important environmental assets/services and cultural significance.	Policy	The program contributes to the delivery of government priorities and/or value adds to the achievement of other on-ground government initiatives.
	Knowledge and skills on environmental asset and service practices are documented, shared and applied on-ground.		Best practice environmental management actions are applied to support measurable and sustainable environmental outcomes.		The program is consistent with all relevant government policy and legislation.
	Groups and organisations develop skills and experience to engage and recruit members of their local and broader communities to participate in environmental management activities.		Pilot innovative techniques and methodologies through on-ground activities that lead to broader community and industry adoption and improvement of on-ground good practice.	Cultural Respect	The program design and delivery acknowledge and respects Aboriginal culture and traditions and promotes consultation and engagement of the Aboriginal community and organisations where possible and relevant.
	Emerging groups develop skills and expertise in defining, measuring and improving ecological processes that lead to successful ecosystem rehabilitation.		Planning for revegetation/seed production and habitat restoration activities consider how a changing climate will impact the future adaptive capacity of selected species to be planted and how the adaptive potential of sites may be facilitated.	Governance	Projects are delivered in accordance with the approved project application/plan and stated objectives are met.
	Groups have improved capacity to source and secure funds and/or resources for the ongoing maintenance of projects.	Monitoring	Project outcomes are determined using effective, standardised monitoring methods which are applied on all projects.		Projects are managed by grantees following best practice project management principals and utilising adaptive management processes.
Community Engagement	Community awareness on the value and importance of healthy environments, and the issues affecting their local environment, are raised, and they are motivated to take action.		Short term monitoring established for each project to measure achievement of project objectives.		All projects are acquitted, and grant funds expended appropriately through grantees meeting their reporting and other obligations.
	Lessons and opportunities arising from projects are shared and used to generate interest and involvement in future projects and for adaptive management purposes.		Medium to longer term project outcomes are monitored to measure sustainability of investment and benefit to the environment.		Uncertainty and incomplete information associated with changing climate requires the application of adaptive management processes obtained through regular observation of project performance and outcomes.

Increased participation

An increase in the involvement of a broad cross section of the community in environmental management actions supported by the Restoration and Rehabilitation program.

Cultural land and water management perspectives are acknowledged to promote and engage Aboriginal community participation in the planning and implementation of on-ground activities.

Partnerships developed

Community, government and industry organisations engage in partnerships and strengthen collaborations.

Monitoring

Project outcomes are determined using effective, standardised monitoring methods which are applied on all projects.

Short term monitoring established for each project to measure achievement of project objectives.

Medium to longer term project outcomes are monitored to measure how social capital has influenced/benefitted delivery of on-ground activities and environmental stewardship.

Foundational activities and assumptions

| Development of program guidelines, application forms, budget and project planning and reporting templates. | Grant program advertised in appropriate communication channels (workshops, networks, news, Trust webpage etc). | Applications received and assessed by suitably qualified Technical Review Committee with recommendations going to Trust for approval. | Adaptive management based on effective application of the program evaluation framework. |