



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry**

CARBON FARMING FUTURES - ACTION ON THE GROUND PROGRAM

Grant Guidelines – Round One November 2011

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Program information, guidelines and related forms are available at:
www.daff.gov.au/climatechange/carbonfarmingfutures/action-on-the-ground



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ACTION ON THE GROUND PROGRAM

1. INTRODUCTION

The Australian Government's *Securing a Clean Energy Future* plan, released in July 2011, contains four elements – carbon price, innovation in renewable energy, energy efficiency and action on the land (*Land Sector Package*). Further details on the plan can be found on the *Clean Energy Future* website at: www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au.

Direct emissions from agriculture are excluded indefinitely from liability under the carbon price mechanism. However, the agricultural sector currently accounts for approximately 15 per cent of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions. Agriculture's greenhouse gas emissions comprise; methane from enteric fermentation (approx. 65 per cent of agricultural emissions), nitrous oxide from agricultural soils (approx. 17 per cent), prescribed burning of savannas (approx. 14 per cent) and emissions from livestock manure (approx. 4 per cent). These emissions represent an opportunity for agriculture to play an important role in mitigating the impact of climate change as well as assisting Australia in achieving its long term emission reduction targets.

The \$1.7 billion *Land Sector Package* is about creating new opportunities for land managers to help the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Actions within the agricultural sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or increase carbon storage can also increase the land sector's resilience to climate change, protect Australia's natural environment and improve long term farm productivity.

The *Land Sector Package* will complement the *Carbon Farming Initiative*¹, and includes the *Carbon Farming Futures* fund and the *Biodiversity Fund*. A summary of the *Land Sector Package* is included as Attachment A.

The *Carbon Farming Futures* fund will ensure that advances in emissions reduction technologies and techniques will continue the evolution of management practices in the land sector towards emissions reduction and improved productivity. These advances will allow farmers and other landholders to benefit from the economic opportunities of the *Carbon Farming Initiative* while assisting Australia in achieving its long term emission reduction targets. The *Carbon Farming Futures* fund comprises five elements:

- *Filling the Research Gap*
- *Converting research into methodologies*
- *Action on the Ground*
- *Refundable tax offset for new conservation tillage equipment*
- *Extension and Outreach.*

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (department) is responsible for delivering all elements except for *Converting research into methodologies* which is delivered by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency (DCCEE) and the *Refundable tax offset for new tillage equipment* which is being delivered by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and the Department of the Treasury.

¹ Further information available at www.climatechange.gov.au/cfi

Refundable tax offset for new conservation tillage farming equipment

The refundable tax offset for new conservation tillage equipment will provide funding of up to \$44 million to encourage primary producers to adopt conservation tillage practices.

Primary producers will be able to claim a 15 per cent refundable tax offset for new eligible conservation equipment installed and ready for use between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2015. Eligible conservation tillage equipment includes:

- tine machines fitted with minimum tillage points (for example, narrow, knife or inverted ‘T’ points) to achieve minimum soil disturbance and less than full cut-out
- disc openers (single, double, or triple arrangements)
- disc/tine and disc/blade hybrid machines.

Further information on the refundable tax offset for new conservation tillage equipment will be available soon at www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au.

About the Action on the Ground program

These guidelines explain the *Action on the Ground* program and outline the process for submitting an application. *Action on the Ground* is an ongoing program that will invest \$99 million during the first six years (2011-12 to 2016-17) to assist landholders trial and demonstrate ways to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase carbon stored in soil.

These guidelines are for the first round (round one) of the *Action on the Ground* program covering 2011-12 to 2014-15. Round one will provide funding of up to \$25 million. Future funding rounds will be announced at a later stage and will build on the outcomes of research into ways to implement innovative management practises to achieve sustainable outcomes, reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and boost soil carbon stores. Projects will test the relationships between different management practices and emissions levels/carbon stores, which will enable knowledge transfer and promote broader uptake of land sector abatement activities.

Successful applicants under round one of *Action on the Ground* may also be eligible to apply for funding under future rounds of *Action on the Ground*. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that their application to either extend the term of and/or vary the scope of their project is consistent with future round guidelines and that they have complied with requirements of their existing *Funding Deed*.

2. PURPOSE OF THE ACTION ON THE GROUND PROGRAM

Action on the Ground is designed to assist the on-farm trial and demonstration of practices and technologies to reduce agricultural sector greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase carbon stored in soil. This will be achieved by supporting landholders, research, industry, non-government, government and farmer ‘care’ ‘grower’ groups/organisations to trial and demonstrate management practices and technologies that can reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase carbon stored in soil.

Action on the Ground is seeking applications from groups of landholders, research, industry sectors, non-government, government and farmer ‘care’ ‘grower’ group/organisations to undertake on-farm projects to:

- demonstrate that research outcomes, including, but not limited to, outcomes of research undertaken through the *Climate Change Research Program* (www.daff.gov.au/farmingfuture), can be practically applied on-farm to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase carbon stored in soil under a range of farming practices, geographic and climatic conditions
- trial and demonstrate innovative farming practices and/or abatement technologies that can be practically applied on-farm to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase carbon stored in soil.

Priorities for Action on the Ground are:

- **Reduced methane emissions**

Agriculture produces around 60 per cent of Australia’s methane emissions, the majority coming from livestock.

Through the *Climate Change Research Program*, researchers have been investigating a range of management practices and abatement technologies to reduce methane emissions from farmed animals.

Action on the Ground is seeking applications for on-farm projects to trial and demonstrate practices and/or abatement technologies that may be used to reduce methane emissions. Such practices may include, but are not limited to, biological controls, dietary supplements, improved feed management and use of alternative forage types and reduction of emissions from soils.

- **Reduced nitrous oxide emissions**

Nitrous oxide is a significant greenhouse gas as it is 310 times more potent than carbon dioxide in terms of its global warming effect.

Through the *Nitrous Oxide Research* program, which is part of the *Climate Change Research Program*, researchers have been investigating different management practices for reducing nitrous oxide emissions associated with the agricultural sector.

Action on the Ground is seeking applications for on-farm projects to trial and demonstrate practices and/or technologies that may be used to reduce nitrous oxide emissions. Such practices may include, but are not limited to, strategic irrigation management (timing and amount of water applied), using legume crops and pastures to build up soil nitrogen (rather than using nitrogenous fertiliser), better management of nitrogen fertiliser applications, including use of enhanced efficiency fertilisers, and/or using nitrification or urease inhibitors.

- **Increasing carbon stored in soil**

Through the *Soil Carbon Research program* (SCRIP), which is part of the *Climate Change Research program*, researchers have examined various management practices and their impact on soil carbon levels. The SCRIP has developed a national standard for measuring soil carbon and provided key data to improve the National Carbon Accounting System.

Action on the Ground is seeking applications for on-farm projects to trial and demonstrate practices that can be used to increase and maintain the amount of carbon stored in soil. Such practices may include, but are not limited to, crop rotation strategies to reduce or eliminate fallow periods, addition of pasture phase to crop practices and/or cropping pastures, soil amendments, offsite additions to soil (such as claying, addition of organic materials etc), increasing pasture cover and/or inclusion of perennial species, conversion from cropping to perennial pasture and restoration of degraded farm land.

Applications proposing to trial and demonstrate practices to increase the amount of carbon stored in soil must use sampling and analytical methods either developed by or consistent with those developed by the SCRP and take into account any associated nitrous oxide emissions where nitrogen is applied in any form. Information on the SCRP is available at: www.csiro.au/science/Soil-Carbon-Research-Program.html

- **Reduce greenhouse gas emission and/or store carbon in soil through the application of innovative practices and/or abatement technologies**

Action on the Ground is seeking applications for on-farm projects to trial and demonstrate innovative practices and/or abatement technologies that may lead to a reduction in agricultural greenhouse gas emission and/or store carbon in soil.

Such projects may include, but are not limited to, on-farm practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural wastes or other agricultural sources.

Communication of project outcomes

Applications must include details of how reported project outcomes will be communicated to Australia's landholders and broader agriculture sector researchers and stakeholders.

Where appropriate, the outcomes of a project may be published and applicants are encouraged to consider publication in peer-reviewed scientific literature.

3. HOW THE PROGRAM WILL OPERATE

Projects to be funded under the *Action on the Ground* program will be selected through an open competitive grants process.

Applicants will submit applications using the *Action on the Ground* application form. Details on how to access this form can be found in (Section 7 – *How to Apply*).

Applications may be for projects to be carried out over a period of up to three years provided project activities are completed by 30 June 2015. Program funds are available across four financial years (2011–12 to 2014–15), with the first payment initiated by the signing of the *Funding Deed* before mid June 2012. Subsequent project payments will be made in increments on the completion of milestone activities and may be made across one or more financial years from 2011-12 to 2014-15.

Program funding of between \$55 000 and up to \$385 000 (inclusive of GST) may be allowed in the first two financial years of a project (2011-12 and 2012-13) with a maximum of up to \$110 000 (GST inc.) in subsequent financial years (2013-14 and 2014-15). The maximum amount of funds that may be applied for in a single application is up to \$605 000 (GST inc.) over the four financial years to 30 June 2015.

Applicants are required to provide cash/in-kind contributions. Contributions must be directly related to the eligible costs of delivering the activities of the project and can include salaries

of staff for the time they are involved in the project. Contributions should be listed as part of the project budget in the application.

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a *Funding Deed* with the Commonwealth of Australia through the department before they receive any Australian Government funding. All activities associated with the project must be completed by the date specified in the *Funding Deed*, including the preparation and submission of a final project report evaluating the outcomes of the project.

4. KEY DATES - ROUND ONE

Table 1 below presents anticipated key dates for the first round of funding of the *Action on the Ground* program. Subsequent rounds will be announced in future years and information on these will be available on the department's website.

Table 1 Key dates for <i>Action on the Ground</i> 2011-12 grant round	
Milestone	Anticipated Dates
Action on the Ground guidelines released	29 November 2011
Application submission period opens	11 January 2012
Application submission period closes	8 February 2012
Assessment period	February/March 2012
Announcement of Action on the Ground projects	March/April 2012
Commencement of successful projects with first payment – on signing the <i>Funding Deed</i>	April/June 2012
Project milestones – project payments dependent on project activities as defined in the <i>Funding Deed</i> being achieved	To be defined in the <i>Funding Deed</i>
Final project payment – paid on submission of project final report	To be defined in the <i>Funding Deed</i>

5. WHO CAN APPLY?

Applications are sought from landholders, research, industry sectors, non-government, government and farmer 'care' 'grower' group/organisations and/or consortiums to undertake on-farm projects.

Action on the Ground grants are targeted towards the Australian agricultural sector. To be eligible, the applicant must be an Australian legal entity at the time the application is lodged, for example:

- an incorporated association
- a body corporate
- a company

- a cooperative society
- an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander corporation, council or incorporated association
- a duly constituted partnership or trust
- a sole trader.

An application being made by a legal entity on behalf of a consortium of organisations/group of landholders/farmers will be required to provide information identifying all member organisations/landholders/farmers that they will be representing during the project. The *Funding Deed* will be entered into with the applicant (single entity) - who will be wholly responsible for the performance of the *Funding Deed*.

6. WHAT QUALIFIES FOR FUNDING?

Applications for funding through the *Action on the Ground* program must meet the following requirements:

- Applicants must seek to trial or demonstrate agricultural greenhouse gas emission reductions or carbon sequestration as a result of specific management practices and/or technologies under one or more of the *Action on the Ground* priority areas (Section 2 – *Purpose of the Action on the Ground program*).
- Applicants must address all requirements of these guidelines and be submitted using the *Action on the Ground* application form in accordance with Section 7 - *How to apply*.
- Proposed works must be undertaken on-farm in Australia.
- The application must address the assessment criteria (Section 11 - *How are applications assessed?*).
- Applicants/consortium/partnership leader must have the agreement of the other consortium/partner organisations to submit the proposal e.g. CEO of company, agricultural sector organisation, chief executive of a government department.
- Proposed project activities must **not** duplicate activities for which the applicant is already receiving Commonwealth funding.

Eligible Activities

Examples of some activities that would be eligible for funding include practises and/or technologies that seek to address *Action on the Ground* priorities (Section 2 – *Purpose of the Action on the Ground program*) through on-farm projects' that trial and demonstrate:

- animal management and feed strategies that can reduce methane emissions
- management strategies to reduce soil nitrous oxide emissions including the use of chemical inhibitors
- planting, rotation, cropping or grazing practices to either reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions from soil and/or increase carbon stored in soil
- on-farm management practices and abatement technologies to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural wastes

- other practices and abatement technologies that can be demonstrated on-farm to have the potential to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase carbon stored in soil.

Ineligible Activities

Examples of project activities that would be ineligible to receive funding through *Action on the Ground* include activities that:

- do not address any of the identified *Action on the Ground* priorities (Section 2 - *Purpose of the Action on the Ground* program)
- are already being undertaken by the applicant and funded through other Commonwealth programs
- seek funding to undertake subsequent devolved funding of projects. All entities receiving funding to deliver on-farm activities as part of a project must be identified in the application.
- have costs associated with either the preparation and administration of a *Carbon Farming Initiative* methodology submission or implementation of a project under a *Carbon Farming Initiative* methodology
- focus on reduction of greenhouse gas emission associated with on-farm fuel use and/or power consumption
- aim to develop on-farm greenhouse gas emissions abatement plans without significant farm based activities that implement practices to reduce agricultural greenhouse emission and/or store carbon in soil.

Funding will only be paid for work outlined in the *Funding Deed* and undertaken as part of *Action on the Ground*. No payments will be made for works/research undertaken prior to the signing of the *Funding Deed*.

The following costs would be ineligible for payment through *Action on the Ground*. It is envisaged that provision of these activities would be part of an applicant's contribution to the project.

- Capital expenditure for the purchase of assets such as office furniture and equipment, motor vehicles, computers, printers, photocopiers, construction, renovations and utilities.
- Costs involved in the purchase/upgrade of software including licenses.
- Any cost incurred prior to signing the *Funding Deed* with the Commonwealth.
- Core business expenses such as:
 - staff relocation costs
 - administration/overhead and infrastructure costs
 - international travel
 - living expenses for project staff.
- Australian domestic travel and living allowance that is not directly related to the project.

- Hospitality/catering costs.
- Financial support for feasibility studies.
- Commercially based activities, such as costs associated with:
 - the protection or patenting of intellectual property
 - activities of a distinctly commercial or proprietary nature that are aimed at selling or attracting investment
 - product development and the building or production of commercial prototypes.

7. HOW TO APPLY

Applicants must use the following process to apply for funding under *Action on the Ground*:

1. Read these guidelines
2. Download and complete all sections of the on-line application form available at www.daff.gov.au/climatechange/carbonfarmingfutures/action-on-the-ground, as specified in these guidelines, following the instructions provided in the application form

OR

If you **do not** have access to the internet you can request a hard copy application pack by calling the *Action on the Ground* hotline on 1800 025 005.

The on-line application form and hard copy application form will be available from 11 January 2012.

A sample of the application form and details of the information that will be required to be submitted when the application process opens is available at www.daff.gov.au/climatechange/carbonfarmingfutures/action-on-the-ground

3. **Submit the application form by 5pm (AEST) 8 February 2012.**

The submission of an on-line application form will be deemed to be proof of authority and approval to submit an application by the authorising officer of the applicant. No changes are possible to an on-line application form once it has been submitted.

If you need to alter your application after it has been submitted but before the application period closes see Section 9 – *Discrepancies, ambiguities, inconsistencies or errors in an application*.

If you are submitting a hard copy application it must be received on or before 5pm (AEST) 8 February 2012. If you believe that your application may not arrive before this date you are to contact the department as per Section 8 - *What are the conditions?*

Hard copy applications are to be addressed and delivered to:

Post your applications to:

Action on the Ground Program
Sustainable Resource Management Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries
and Forestry
GPO Box 858

If courier delivery, send to:

Action on the Ground Program
Sustainable Resource Management Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries
and Forestry
Ground Floor, 18 Marcus Clarke Street

If you are submitting more than one project proposal you must submit separate applications for each of your proposals as each application form has a unique reference number to identify your application. **Modified or re-used application forms will not be accepted.**

The department may at its sole discretion extend the application period. Any such extension will be communicated to all registered applications by email only and published on the department's website.

8. WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS?

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they have examined these guidelines and all documents referred to in these guidelines. Applicants should ensure that their application meets the eligibility and other requirements (see Sections 3 to 8) and assessment criteria (see Section 11 – *How are applications assessed?*) and that they have satisfied themselves as to the correctness and sufficiency of their application (see Section 9 - *Discrepancies, ambiguities, inconsistencies or errors in an application*).

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all information required in the application form is submitted by the notified time on the specified closing date for the applications (see Section 7 – *How to apply*).

If planning, regulatory or other approvals will be required for project activities these will need to be obtained before commencement of the approved relevant activities.

If insufficient information is included in the application form the application will be assessed as incomplete and the application deemed ineligible for assessment.

The department may consider the submission of late applications under extenuating circumstances provided an alternative timeframe has been agreed to prior to the closing date. Any requests for an extension of time to lodge an application **MUST** be made in writing to the *Action on the Ground* team prior to 5pm (AEST) 8 February 2012 at aotg@daff.gov.au.

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a *Funding Deed* with the Commonwealth of Australia through the department before they receive any Australian Government funding.

By submitting an application, applicants are providing their express consent to enter into a *Funding Deed* in substantially similar terms to the *Funding Deed* template. The standard *Funding Deed* is available on the department's website at www.daff.gov.au.

The *Funding Deed* contains the terms and conditions of the grant. Applicants should read the *Funding Deed* before submitting their applications and should seek independent legal advice before entering into a *Funding Deed*. No legally binding relationship exists until the *Funding Deed* is signed by all parties.

Through the *Funding Deed* a successful applicant will be required to submit milestone reports, including but not limited to; progress and end of year reports, an annual financial report, a final project report and final audited financial statement.

Applicants are responsible for all costs incurred in the preparation and lodgement of an application and in respect of any discussions, negotiations, enquires or any work undertaken prior to signing the *Funding Deed*.

9. DISCREPANCIES, AMBIGUITIES, INCONSISTENCIES OR ERRORS IN AN APPLICATION

The Australian Government will not accept responsibility for any misunderstanding arising from the failure by an applicant to comply with the guidelines, or arising from any discrepancies, ambiguities, inconsistencies or errors in an application.

If an applicant discovers any material discrepancy, ambiguity, inconsistency or errors in their application, they must immediately bring it to the attention of the department by emailing aotg@daff.gov.au. The department may request further information from an applicant and allow an applicant to remedy any discrepancy, ambiguity, inconsistency or errors in an application. The department may also consider new information submitted by an applicant after the closing date for the purpose of resolving any material discrepancy, ambiguity, inconsistency or errors in an application provided that no new information has been added, which has not been referred to in the original application. The department's decision will be final and will be made at its absolute discretion.

Applicants should be aware that the giving of false or misleading information is a serious offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)*.

10. PUBLICATION OF GRANT INFORMATION

Applicants should be aware that if they are successful, Commonwealth policy requires the department to publish information on its website about the applicant, including but not limited to the:

- Name of the person or entity receiving the grant
- Title and purpose
- Amount of funding received
- Term of the grant
- Funding location.

By submitting an application for funding under this grant program, the applicant consents to publication of the above information by the department if they are awarded funding under this grant program.

11. HOW ARE APPLICATIONS ASSESSED?

All eligible applications will be assessed on a merit basis.

Applications that best address all the assessment criteria will have the greatest likelihood of being found suitable and recommended for funding.

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

Assessment Criteria

All selection criteria are weighted equally

- 1. The project proposal addresses one or more of the *Action on the Ground* priorities as described in Section 2- Purpose of the *Action on the Ground* program.**

Factors to address when responding to this criterion include:

- The outcomes to be achieved by the project and how these address one or more of these priorities
- Development of a timeline indicating when the key project activities will occur and how the results of your project will contribute to meeting one or more of the priorities.

2. Clearly defined project activities (what work will be undertaken, including where the work will be undertaken), outputs (what will be produced) and outcomes (what are the benefits) that can be delivered within the proposed timeframe.

Factors to address when responding to this criterion include:

- A description of the project methodology, proposed activities and outputs
- A description of how the outputs and outcomes will be measured/estimated and evaluated including reduction in agricultural greenhouse gas emissions achieved or increase carbon stored in soil

Note: Applications proposing to trial and demonstrate practices to increase the amount of carbon stored in soil must use sampling and analytical methods either developed by or consistent with those developed by the SCRP and take into account any associated nitrous oxide emissions where nitrogen is applied in any form. Information on the SCRP is available at: www.csiro.au/science/Soil-Carbon-Research-Program.html

- Level of direct on-farm participation by landholders in the project activities
- Whether or not an independent reviewer will be part of the project evaluation process, including the name of the independent reviewer and their qualifications or expertise in relation to proposed priorities being addressed by project
- A description of how and where project information will be stored
- Key milestones dates for when activities and outputs are to be achieved.

3. Scientific research/evidence and/or underlying assumptions on how the proposed project outcomes will address one or more of the *Action on the Ground* priorities.

Factors to address when responding to this criterion include:

- Previous published or unpublished work that supports practices/abatement technologies to be trialled and demonstrated on-farm can reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase carbon stored in soil; or
- Assumptions as to why practices/abatement technologies to be used may reduce on-farm agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase carbon stored in soil.

4. Identifies key risks that could prevent the project achieving its outcomes and mechanisms to treat these risks.

Factors to address when responding to this criterion include:

- Identification of key risks (what could delay or stop the project achieving its outcomes in the agreed timeframe)

- Proposed treatment (how the risk will be minimised).

5. Evidence of managerial and financial competency to manage the project and grant monies.

Factors to address when responding to this criterion include:

- Capacity of the applicant/organisation to project manage and report on a project of this nature, including examples of relevant experience
- Detail of the financial management systems and policies that are in place to manage and report on expenditure of grant monies.

6. Appropriate budget.

In assessing this criterion, the assessment panels will take into account the extent to which the proposal demonstrates value for money including:

- A budget showing how the grant funding will contribute directly to the achievement of *Action on the Ground* priorities
- The extent to which value for money of the proposed project is enhanced through applicant contributions.

7. Project communications.

Factors to consider when responding to this criterion include:

- How reported project outcomes will be communicated to Australia's landholders and broader agriculture sector researchers and stakeholders
- Potential avenues to publish project outcomes, including publication in peer-reviewed scientific literature
- Collaboration with researchers or organisations undertaking projects through either the *Filling the Research Gap* program or other research activities aimed at developing on-farm practices or abatement technologies that can reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions or increase carbon stored in soil.

Note: It is intended that this should be at no cost to the applicant.

Other considerations

Where projects are considered equal on merit on the basis of assessment against the above selection criteria the following criteria may be considered by the Review Panel:

- The number of landholders that will be direct on-farm participants in the project
- Size, extent and geographic distribution of the proposed project activity locations in relation to the *Action on the Ground* priorities being addressed.

12. WHO IS SELECTING THE SUITABLE APPLICANTS?

Assessment of applications will be undertaken by the department and up to four Technical Assessment Panel(s) (Technical Panel), one for each *Action on the Ground* priority (as required based on application numbers), and an Assessment Review Panel (Review Panel). The Technical and Review panels will be comprised of a number of independent external assessors with relevant technical knowledge and experience.

All applications will go through three levels of assessment:

- Level 1. The initial assessment for eligibility will be undertaken by the department to ensure that all application requirements have been met (*See Sections 3 to 8*) and to determine which applications will be assessed by each of the Technical Panels
- Level 2. Eligible applications will be assessed by the relevant Technical Panel and scored against the assessment criteria (Section 11 - *How are applications assessed?*)
- Level 3. The outcome of the Technical Panel(s) assessment processes will then be reviewed by the Review Panel.

The Review Panel will consider the assessment outcomes from the Technical Panel process and produce overall recommendations for funding. In making recommendations the Review Panel may also consider availability of funding and that a mix of applications are recommended so as to address each of the *Action on the Ground* priorities to test/demonstrate practices and/or abatement technologies that can either reduce on-farm agricultural greenhouse gas emissions or store and maintain carbon in soil.

The Review Panel will make recommendations to the department. An outline of the recommended projects (i.e. project title and a summary of the proposed work) may be submitted to the Land Sector Carbon and Biodiversity Board for information.

The department will submit the recommendations of the Review Panel to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, or the minister's delegate, for consideration and approval.

All applicants will be advised by letter of the outcome of their application. Letters to successful applicants will contain details of any specific conditions attached to the approval and these will form part of the *Funding Deed*.

A schematic of the application and assessment process is provided at Attachment A.

13. COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCESS

If an applicant is dissatisfied with the way in which their application has been handled by the department, the applicant can lodge a complaint by contacting the department via:

telephone – 1800 025 005

email: aotg@daff.gov.au

mail:

Action on the Ground Program
Sustainable Resource Management Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858, CANBERRA ACT 2601

The complaint may then be reviewed by one or more independent areas of the department. If no resolution is achieved, an applicant can apply to the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will usually not investigate a complaint unless the matter has first been raised with the department and the department has been provided with a reasonable opportunity to respond.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can be contacted by:

telephone – toll free: 1300 362 072

email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

or through the [Ombudsman website](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au) – www.ombudsman.gov.au.

14. PRIVACY STATEMENT

Information provided to the department is for the purposes of administration of the program and assessment of an application. In providing the information (personal or otherwise) applicants consent to the department using the information for the above mentioned purposes and any other incidental or related purpose. The department may disclose applicants personal information to any party that may be engaged for the purposes of assessment or program evaluation. The department will store the personal information collected by it in compliance with its obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*. Applicants may access or correct personal information by either emailing the department at: aotg@daff.gov.au or sending a letter to the postal address provided on the front of these guidelines.

15. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Tax Implications

Applicants are advised to seek tax advice before applying and/or entering into a *Funding Deed*. Applicants can contact the Australian Taxation Office call centre to discuss business tax issues on 13 28 66.

16. CONTACT DETAILS

For further information on *Action on the Ground* telephone 1800 025 005, email aotg@daff.gov.au or visit www.daff.gov.au/climatechange/carbonfarmingfutures/action-on-the-ground

ATTACHMENT A

LAND SECTOR MEASURES

The Government's plan for a clean energy future will transform the way Australians care for and manage our natural resources. Land sector measures will provide additional opportunities for stakeholders to engage in projects that reduce or store carbon in the landscape, as well as to improve biodiversity and other environmental outcomes in their regions.

Up to \$1.7 billion of carbon pricing revenues will be invested in the land sector in the next six years, through funding programs – many of which are ongoing.

The land sector measures are:

- **Carbon Farming Futures** (\$429 million over six years) – Funding measures to help farmers and other landholders to benefit from carbon farming. Comprises five elements:
 - **Filling the Research Gap** (\$201 million over six years) to fund research into new technologies and practices for land managers to reduce emissions and store soil carbon. National survey to identify common practice. Delivered by DAFF. Commences in 2011/12.
 - **Action on the Ground** (\$99 million over six years) to assist industry and farming groups test and apply research outcomes in real farming situations. Delivered by DAFF.
 - **Extension and Outreach** (\$64 million over six years) to provide information, support and an extension network to help farmers take action on the land. Delivered by DAFF.
 - **Converting research into methodologies** (\$20 million over six years) to convert research into estimation methodologies for use in the Carbon Farming Initiative. Delivered by Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Commences in 2012/13.
 - **Refundable Tax Offset (RTO)** (\$44 million over three years) to provide 15 per cent RTOs for new eligible conservation tillage equipment installed between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2015. Delivered by the Australian Taxation Office and the Department of the Treasury.
- **Biodiversity Fund** (\$946 million over six years) - Support for projects that establish, restore, protect or manage biodiverse carbon stores. Delivered by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities. Commences in 2011/12.
- **Indigenous Carbon Farming Fund** (\$22 million over five years) - support Indigenous participation in the Carbon Farming Initiative. Delivered by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities and the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Commences 1 July 2012.
- **Regional Natural Resource Management Planning for Climate Change Fund** (\$44 million over five years) - Support for regional natural resource management (NRM) organisations to incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation

components into existing regional NRM plans. Delivered by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities and the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Commences 1 July 2012.

- **Carbon Farming Skills** (\$4 million over five years) - Funding available for training and accreditation of carbon brokers and aggregators so landholders have access to credible, high quality advice and carbon services. Delivered by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Commences 1 July 2012.
- **Carbon Farming Initiative Non-Kyoto Carbon Fund** (\$250 million over six years) - Government purchase of land sector abatement that is not counted towards Australia's emissions targets under current accounting rules. Delivered by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Commences 1 July 2012.
- **Land Sector Carbon and Biodiversity Board** (\$4 million over six years) - Establishment of a permanent, expert board to provide advice on implementation of the measures.

Note: As part of the *Carbon Farming Initiative*, the department is also administering the \$2 million *Biochar Capacity Building Program* for on-farm biochar research and demonstration until June 2014. *Carbon Farming Futures* will enable the scaling up and continuation of extension services and biochar research beyond that time.

ATTACHMENT B

Grants Process for *Action on the Ground*

