



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY

community action grants

Applicant Guidelines

2009-10



Applications close Thursday 22 October 2009



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY

COMMUNITY ACTION GRANTS 2009-10

Applicant Guidelines

Grants from \$5,000 to \$20,000 to help local community groups take action to conserve and protect their natural environment.

Application forms will be available early October 2009

Online Applications close at 5pm (AEDT*) Thursday 22 October 2009.

If you are unable to submit your application online, you may send a **hard copy application** post dated by **close of business Thursday 22 October 2009**.

Online applications are preferred.

LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

Further Information

For further information, please visit the Caring for our Country website at www.nrm.gov.au or call the Caring for our Country hotline on 1800 552 008.

*Australian Eastern Daylight Savings Time

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PART 1 - Community Action Grants Overview

1.1 What is Community Action?

Community Action is an element of the Australian Government's \$2 billion Caring for our Country initiative. It will provide small grants of \$5 000 to \$20 000 (GST exclusive) to help community groups involved in managing and protecting natural resources contribute to the achievement of Caring for our Country's ambitious outcomes.

The program aims to reach a broad range of community organisations across the country, including landcare, coastcare, 'friends-of', Indigenous and other environmental and sustainable land management groups.

Community Action projects will directly contribute to Caring for our Country by:

- enhancing community engagement and participation; and
- increasing the recruitment and retention of volunteers in community organisations involved in managing natural resources.

Projects need to align with one or more of the Caring for our Country national priority areas of Biodiversity and Natural Icons; Coastal Environments and Critical Aquatic Habitats; and Sustainable Farm Practices.

1.2 What are the objectives of Community Action Grants?

The Australian Government has introduced Caring for our Country Community Action Grants to:

1. Contribute to Caring for our Country's outcomes and targets to increase community group participation in natural resource management, including to increase the engagement and participation rates of urban and regional communities in activities to manage natural resources and to help protect the environment
2. Encourage community groups to engage in activities consistent with other Caring for our Country outcomes

1.3 Who can apply?

Caring for our Country Community Action Grants are targeted towards **established community-based organisations** which have sustainable farming and/or protecting and enhancing the natural environment as their principal objective. This includes landcare, coastcare, 'friends-of' and other groups, but does not include groups which have not been set up primarily for environment protection or sustainable farming, such as scout groups, schools and surf clubs.

Community Action Grants also has a specific funding stream accessible to both **established and emerging Indigenous organisations**.

Groups working across all geographic areas and land tenures are encouraged to apply. We strongly recommend that you check the eligibility and ineligibility criteria (Section 2.1) before applying to ensure your group is eligible for funding.

Community groups which are not a legal entity must be sponsored by a legal entity (such as a local government, peak industry body or regional natural resource management organisation) who can apply on their behalf. The legal entity will be legally responsible for meeting the contractual obligations of the grant. You should only seek a sponsor if your group is **not** a legal entity.

PART 2 - Eligibility

2.1 What groups are eligible to apply?

Caring for our Country Community Action Grants are targeted towards community organisations. To be **eligible**, an organisation must meet **all** of the following criteria:

1. Must be a legal entity*, for instance:
 - a. an incorporated association;
 - b. a body corporate;
 - c. a company;
 - d. a cooperative society;
 - e. an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander corporation, council or incorporated association; or
 - f. a trust duly constituted.

* If your group is not a legal entity, you may apply for funding via a sponsor that is a legal entity. The sponsor would be responsible for the administration, management and reporting of the grant. Only seek a sponsor if your group is not a legal entity.
2. Have either:
 - a. voting and/or financial membership of at least 5 individuals; or
 - b. in the case of a trust, demonstrated community support including information about the level of volunteer involvement (at least 5 volunteers).
3. Have been in existence for at least 12 months prior to 1 July 2009. Indigenous organisations are exempt from this eligibility requirement.
4. Have as a documented principal objective:
 - a. the protection and/or enhancement of the natural environment, and/or
 - b. sustainable farming and/or land management

Note: We may ask for a copy of supporting documentation (e.g. your constitution or mission statement) to verify this during the assessment process. Indigenous organisations are exempt from this eligibility requirement.
5. Have not been successful in receiving funding from the 2009-10 Caring for our Country business plan (including Reef Rescue). This would not preclude an organisation receiving funding for a different project under any Caring for our Country devolved grant program run by another organisation (such as a regional natural resource management organisation) in 2009-10.

Note: only one application may be submitted from each group. If multiple applications are submitted, only the first one received will be assessed and considered.

The following are **ineligible*** for Caring for our Country Community Action Grant funding:

1. Regional natural resource management organisations.
2. National NGOs and their state/territory branches; peak industry groups; and/or umbrella bodies.
3. All levels of government (Commonwealth, state/territory and local).
4. Organisations directly operating or appointed under state legislation, such as Livestock Health and Pest Authorities, and Committees of Management for crown land reserves.
5. Individuals.
6. Organisations that have overdue final reports and/or acquittals for previous Australian Government NRM funding, including the Natural Heritage Trust, Envirofund, National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the National Landcare Program.

* Legal entities, such as regional natural resource management organisations, national NGOs and their state/territory branches, peak industry groups, umbrella bodies and government organisations/agencies that are ineligible for funding for their own project can however sponsor application(s) on behalf of a community group which is not a legal entity. Individuals are not eligible to sponsor a Community Action Grant application (nor be sponsored by a legal entity).

2.2 What is an eligible project?

To be eligible, a project must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Project activities must align with one or more of the three Caring for our Country national priority areas of **Biodiversity and Natural Icons, Coastal Environments and Critical Aquatic Habitats, Sustainable Farm Practices**.
2. Grants must be between \$5 000 to \$20 000 (GST exclusive).
3. Only projects that are planned to be completed within **18 months or less** are eligible for funding.
4. Funding can only be used for eligible items as outlined in Table 1, Section 2.3.

We also strongly encourage you to develop your project in line with at least one of the Caring for our Country five year outcomes which are outlined in Caring for our Country Outcomes 2008-13 (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/publications/books/caring-outcomes.html>). Assessment of proposals will take into account the extent to which project activities are consistent with these five year outcomes.

Some **examples** of the types of eligible projects are provided below:

Projects relating to **Biodiversity and Natural icons outcomes**:

- Increasing the extent, condition, connectivity and resilience of native habitat:
 - o planting biodiversity corridors
 - o protecting remnant vegetation
 - o creating buffer zones around reserves
 - o improving habitat for threatened species
 - o revegetating riparian zones
- Reduce the impact of invasive species, particularly cane toads, tramps ants, camels, weeds of national significance, rabbits and rodents on small islands:
 - o Pest animal and weed control activities to protect native wildlife and plant communities (e.g. fencing, spraying, baiting)

Projects relating to **Sustainable Farm Practices outcomes**

- Increasing the uptake of sustainable farm and land management practices:
 - o undertaking workshops and field days to assist farmers to improve management to reduce the risk of soil acidification and soil loss
 - o demonstration projects and other awareness raising activities to encourage adoption of new practices or build skills in sustainable agriculture
- Increasing the number of farmers adopting activities that contribute to ongoing conservation and protection of biodiversity:
 - o covenanting
 - o fencing stock from sensitive environments
 - o developing cross-property plans incorporating the protection of biodiversity.

Projects relating to **Coastal Environments and Critical Aquatic Habitats outcomes**

- Protecting the values of Ramsar listed wetlands and other priority high conservation value aquatic ecosystems (HCVAE):
 - o managing weeds and improving habitat
 - o fencing to protect aquatic ecosystems and establishing off-stream watering points for stock
- Improving water quality in priority coastal hotspots:
 - o management of fertiliser and chemical use in adjacent areas
 - o managing erosion and addressing pollution sources
- Engaging the community in the rehabilitation, restoration and conservation of coastal ecosystems:
 - o rehabilitating dunes
 - o developing and implementing Indigenous land and sea country management plans
 - o constructing boardwalks and passageways to protect sensitive environments

A list of eligible budget activities and items is provided at Section 2.3.

2.3 What are the eligible budget activities and items?

Grants are between \$5 000 to \$20 000 (GST exclusive). Grants are subject to normal taxation treatment and no special arrangements will apply.

Funding can only be used for eligible items as outlined in Table 1. Please note that funds can not be used to purchase land or major capital items.

Activities that demonstrate good value for money (ie. demonstrate a reasonable return on investment) will be considered more favourably.

Table 1: Eligible activities, items and conditions

Eligible Activities	Eligible Items (you will need to specify in your budget)	Conditions
Invasive species control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials (ie. Physical, chemical and biological controls, including delivery costs) - Equipment hire (if necessary) - Labour (consultants/contractors) 	<p>Invasive species control needs to show a public benefit, such as reducing impacts on biodiversity or protecting the values of wetlands.</p> <p>Funds can not be used to undertake invasive species control where the primary benefit will be for production purposes.</p>
Fencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials (e.g. posts, wire including delivery costs) - Equipment hire (if necessary) - Labour (including contractors, clearing fence-lines and erecting fencing) 	<p>Fencing costs will be funded only where it provides high environmental benefits, for example the protection of a sensitive riparian area, remnant native vegetation, critical habitat areas or as a means to reduce soil erosion. Funds can not be used for standard boundary fencing or fencing for paddock subdivision (except where it is used to create a demonstration site or control soil erosion), or for replacing existing fencing. The type and quality of fencing proposed should reflect the issue being addressed.</p>

Eligible Activities	Eligible Items (you will need to specify in your budget)	Conditions
<p>Educational activities and raising community awareness Investigations, trials, workshops, field days, website development, demonstrations of techniques, community monitoring, surveys and other awareness raising activities to assist groups to adopt new ideas or build skills in sustainable agriculture and other NRM activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials (e.g. development of information manuals, information packs) - Advertising costs - Venue hire and associated costs (if required) - Labour (consultants/contractors) - Costs of expert advice 	<p>Funds can not be used for participant's travel associated with attending an education or community awareness activities (ie. travelling to a workshop or field day).</p>
<p>On-ground projects for improved Land Management Practices Group demonstration projects to address priority sustainable agricultural and other NRM issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials (e.g. mesh, wire, rock, native/introduced pasture, fertiliser, including delivery costs) - Equipment hire or modification costs - Labour (consultants, contractors, costs of expert advice, technical services etc.) 	<p>Applicants will need to demonstrate that the project is for on-ground demonstration purposes for group learnings.</p>
<p>Infrastructure construction for public access management, protection of Indigenous heritage and/or off-stream watering points only. May include earthworks for erosion control.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials (e.g. troughs, tanks, pipes, walkway materials, including delivery costs) - Equipment hire - Labour (contractors) 	<p>Where the project proposes to fence off a coastal area, wetland, estuary or other aquatic habitat for the purpose of protecting the sensitive ecosystem from stock access, the construction of water infrastructure in an adjacent paddock may be justified. However, this may be perceived to have some private benefit and the proponent must show the public benefit expected to be delivered.</p> <p>Infrastructure construction for public access management and the protection of environmental and indigenous heritage values should demonstrate that public access is currently impacting on the environment or Indigenous heritage values. Infrastructure should not be developed for the primary purpose of progressing tourism or for improving amenity.</p> <p>Proposals seeking to construct infrastructure for public access must meet all relevant public safety standards and planning requirements and explain how the asset will be maintained.</p> <p>Applications including earthwork activities must demonstrate that this will deliver sufficient outcomes to justify its cost against alternative options of erosion control, such as revegetation and fencing off stock.</p>

Eligible Activities	Eligible Items (you will need to specify in your budget)	Conditions
Revegetation e.g. for habitat, biodiversity corridors/linkages, erosion control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials – (e.g. tube stock, seedlings, stakes, tree guards, fertiliser, mulch including delivery costs) - Labour (consultants/contractors) 	<p>Revegetation activities should only use native species of plants which are found in your local area. You should seek advice from a Caring for our Country facilitator, your regional natural resource management organisation or a local nursery for advice on the best revegetation methods and species mix for your area. Volunteer labour is strongly encouraged for revegetation activities.</p> <p>Community Action Grants should not be used for revegetation where the primary purpose is to beautify or improve amenity. Funds should also not be used to plant agricultural plant species.</p>
Community group administration support (no more than 15% of total project costs – ie ceiling of \$3,000 based on a maximum grant of \$20,000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination - Phone/internet bills - Electricity bills - Printing/photocopying - Insurance costs - Costs associated with legally required documents such as cultural heritage site searches, permits, etc - Final certification or audit costs up to \$500 	<p>Administration funding is to be used only for the purposes of supporting the operations and activities of your community group to undertake and deliver your project.</p> <p>Evidence of administration costs should be provided to justify your budget.</p> <p>Phone bills and utility bills are only eligible if you can demonstrate that your community group has a permanent office location.</p>
Indigenous Land and Sea Country Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials (including delivery costs) - Venue hire (if required) - Labour (consultants) 	<p>Only Indigenous organisations are eligible to apply for funding for land and sea country planning. It is preferred that the plans complement and encourage collaboration with the regional planning and priorities identified by the relevant regional natural resource management organisation. Australian Government Indigenous Land Management Facilitators will be available to support the conduct of Land & Sea Country planning.</p> <p>Funding will not be provided to Indigenous organisations that have already received funding from the Australian Government for this purpose.</p>
Activities to record and use traditional ecological knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials (e.g. development of information manuals, information packs) - Labour (consultants/contractors/ costs of expert advice) - Media and recording equipment 	<p>Only Indigenous organisations are eligible to apply for funding for recording traditional ecological knowledge. Such recording projects must also demonstrate a reasonable future use for the knowledge to inform land or sea management, be consistent with best practice standards and align with other Caring for our Country Biodiversity and Natural Icons and Coastal Environments and Critical Aquatic Habitats outcomes. Media and recording equipment purchases must not exceed \$4,000.</p> <p>Funds cannot be used for participant’s travel associated with recording traditional ecological knowledge.</p>

2.4 What activities will not be funded?

The following activities and items are **ineligible** for funding:

- Activities required by law, such as managing or controlling certain weeds or pests.
- Activities which are considered an individual's, group's, or government's responsibility for sustainable management of resources under their control.
- Purchase of major capital items, including computer hardware and software, vehicle and media equipment, except where identified as eligible activities/items in Table 1 (ie. some infrastructure activities; up to \$4000 may be approved for media and recording equipment for the specific purpose of recording Indigenous ecological knowledge)
- Standard boundary fencing that would be considered a landholder's normal responsibility.
- Purchase of equipment or materials that are normally part of a landholder's responsibility for the management of their property.
- Activities that include the establishment of plants that are known to be, or could become, environmental or agricultural weeds.
- Subsidies for commercial operations.
- Purchase, lease or acquisition of land.
- Activities where the major purpose is to beautify or improve amenity.
- Labour supplied by the applicant, other than for project coordination, management and administration.
- Activities designed to raise revenue
- Time spent travelling to project activities or time spent attending field days or workshops
- Participant's travel or equipment hire for the purpose of participant travel
- Activities that are primarily for political advocacy (e.g. protesting against a development)
- Activities that indicate project outcomes adverse to Caring for our Country's national priorities and outcomes.
- Activities outside of Australia

Items that were not budgeted in the original application will not be funded. Applicants must consider all aspects of their project and ensure they include all relevant costs within their application.

Additional funds are not available to meet costs which may have increased after the application was submitted.

PART 3 – Conditions and Instructions for Applying

3.1 What are the conditions of receiving a grant?

If you are successful, you will be responsible for managing your project within agreed timelines, monitoring and reporting and acquitting your expenditure (see Section 3.1.1). For groups that are not legal entities, the organisation who has applied on your behalf (the sponsor) is legally responsible for ensuring all contractual requirements are met.

Applicants should be aware that if they are successful, Commonwealth policy requires Australian Government Land and Coasts to publish information about the applicant on the Caring for our Country website.

Published information includes but is not limited to:

- Name of the community group and/or sponsor receiving the grant;
- Amount of funding received;
- Term of the grant; and
- Summary of project and funding location.

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

All information in the application will be handled in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988*. However, information may also be provided to other Commonwealth departments, government organisations, assessors, regional natural resource management bodies, members of parliament, the media and other stakeholders for the purposes of assessment, education and/or publicising projects.

We expect that applicants will obtain all necessary planning approvals for their project, including the permission of the landowner or land manager for any project on private or public land.

Successful applicants will not be able to receive funding unless they have public liability insurance for the period of the grant.

3.1.1 What are the monitoring and reporting requirements?

The Australian Government places a high priority on monitoring and reporting for all Caring for our Country projects.

The requirements for Community Action Grants are:

- tracking of expenditure for acquittal;
- a process to record project achievements;
- a one-page progress report on your project at 6 months which outlines the activities that have been completed; and
- a final report on project outcomes and financial expenditure.

The Australian Government will provide proponents with the required reporting format for the progress and final reports.

3.1.2 How will projects be acquitted?

If you are successful, **one of your most important obligations as a recipient of public monies is to report on progress and acquit the funds you have received.** Following the completion of your project, you will be required to acquit the Caring for our Country Community Action Grant funding you have expended.

This will involve having a qualified accountant examine your records and sign a certified statement that all funds have been expended in accordance with your funding deed. You will also be required to sign a statutory declaration confirming that you have expended all funds in accordance with your funding deed. You will need to provide a final acquittal within eight weeks after the agreed completion date for your project.

3.1.3 Will I need to acknowledge Caring for our Country?

Successful applicants will be required to acknowledge the grant provided by the Australian Government's Caring for our Country Community Action Grants program in accordance with the *Recognition of Caring for our Country guidelines*. The guidelines can be found on the Caring for our Country website:

<http://www.nrm.gov.au/publications/guidelines/recognition-guidelines.html>.

3.2 Preparing your Application

To apply for a Community Action Grant, you will need to complete all sections of the application form and submit online by **5pm (AEDT) Thursday 22 October 2009**

The online application form can be found on the Caring for our Country website

www.nrm.gov.au.

However, if you do not have access to the internet or a computer, you may request an application package from the Caring for our Country hotline on Freecall 1800 552 008.

If you are completing a hard copy form it must be posted (date-stamped) by the closing date, close of business Thursday 22 October 2009.

Please **do not** send hard copies of applications that were also submitted on-line.

No extensions of time for lodgement will be considered.

Post your application to:

Caring for our Country Community Action
Grants
GPO Box 787
CANBERRA ACT 2601

If you are using courier delivery, send to:

Caring for our Country Community Action
Grants
Ground floor, 18 Marcus Clarke Street,
CANBERRA CITY ACT 260

The assessment of Community Action Grant proposals is a competitive process and assessors need all of the information in the application form to be completed to ensure proposals can be compared equally. To be competitive for funding, you will need to answer every question appropriately.

Only one application form may be submitted from each group. If multiple applications are submitted, only the first one received will be assessed and considered. However, organisations that are sponsoring applications on behalf of other groups may submit more than one application.

For assistance in completing the application form, please see the *How to complete the Community Action Grants application* guide, available from the Caring for our Country website at www.nrm.gov.au.

PART 4 – Next Steps

4.1 How will applications be assessed?

Assessment of applications will be undertaken by Australian Government and community representatives.

A determination of eligibility of the applicant and the project will be made, as well as an assessment which will take into consideration the following criteria:

1. Alignment of the project with Caring for our Country outcomes
2. Feasibility of the project
3. Organisation's level of community engagement
4. Value for money of the proposal
5. Demonstrated capacity of the organisation to deliver the project

Information you provide in your application will be used to assess your proposal. You are entirely responsible for the accuracy of all information submitted. If you knowingly provide inadequate, false or misleading information your proposal may be ruled ineligible.

Your application will be scored and ranked against all other applications received. The applications that best align with our assessment criteria will be funded. Given the program aims to reach community groups across the country, consideration will also be given to achieving a reasonable national distribution of projects.

Once applications have been assessed, the Ministers for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts and for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will consider proposals. The Ministers will make the final decision on which applications are successful and will receive funding.

4.2 What about contracting, payments and project commencement?

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will make funding decisions and announce successful projects. Details of successful projects will be placed on the Caring for our Country website at www.nrm.gov.au.

We will formally advise all successful applicants and sponsors in writing.

If you are successful, the Australian Government will send you a funding deed that will need to be signed and returned and any specified conditions of funding met before the full payment for the project can be processed and the project commence.

If the funding deed is not signed and returned by the date specified, the offer of funding **may be withdrawn**.

You are required to complete your project within an 18 month timeframe (by the end of June 2011). Your contact officer, assigned by Australian Government Land and Coasts, will be available to answer any questions or assist with any issues regarding your project.

4.3 Where do I go for more information?

If you have any questions regarding the application process for Community Action Grants, please direct them to the following:

By post:
Community Action Grants
Australian Government Land and Coasts
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: 1800 552 008
Email:
Communityactiongrants@nrm.gov.au
Website: www.nrm.gov.au