



Bush Connect Supplementary Program 2017



Program Guidelines

Closing date: 3.00 pm Monday 21 August 2017

Using this guide

This guide provides information on the Environmental Trust's Supplementary Bush Connect program for 2017. It provides readers with an understanding of the intent of the program as well as outlining who can apply.

Contact Us

If you would like more information about this program or require assistance in submitting an application, please contact Stephen Hardy at the NSW Environmental Trust on (02) 8837 6061 or stephen.hardy@environment.nsw.gov.au

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OEH: 2017/0323

July 2017

Part 1: About the program

The Bush Connect Supplementary program is a contestable grants program seeking to extend the outcomes currently being achieved through the original funding allocation of the Bush Connect program.

Additional funding provided through this program will enable existing grantees to add to their current Bush Connect projects.

The Bush Connect program is funding community driven, consortia-based projects with an emphasis on direct on-ground activities to improve the condition of the natural environment within the New South Wales (NSW) portion of the GER corridor.

For further information on the Bush Connect program please refer to the program guidelines at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/grants/150215ProGdeBC.pdf>

Program objectives

The objectives of the Supplementary Program are the same as the original Bush Connect Program.

Objective 1

Improve the condition and connectivity of natural resources and ecosystems within the GER corridor.

Objective 2

Increase the area of land (public and private) suitable for long-term protection for its environmental value through appropriate conservation mechanisms.

Objective 3

Increase the number of partnerships and alignments of effort that protect the environmental values of the GER corridor.

Funding availability and priorities

The Bush Connect Supplementary program will provide an additional \$500,000 (in total) to existing Bush Connect grantees through a competitive grant process. Individual grants of between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will be available.

The NSW Environmental Trust is inviting applications from existing grantees only for proposals that expand their existing projects. All applicants must be able to clearly demonstrate:

- a strong first year of existing project delivery
- extension of existing project activities into new areas
- new activities that will enhance existing project activities
- expansion of the project outcomes

Applicants can apply for grants of between \$50,000 and \$100,000

The additional funding will be applied to years 3 to 6 of the current approved budgets of successful applicants. Funding will need to be spent within the existing Trust funded project period (i.e. by January 2022). Projects will still run until 2025, with the final four years to be funded by the grantee and their project partners.

Priority will be given to applications which:

1. clearly define outcomes and outputs which are additional to those within existing approved projects
2. maintain or expand existing effective consortium partnerships involving multiple stakeholders
3. maximise co-investment and cost effectiveness
4. link with existing approved conservation management plans, approaches, policies and procedures
5. maximise conservation connectivity opportunities in the Great Eastern Ranges corridor
6. demonstrate ongoing commitment beyond the 10-year project period

Important dates and milestones

Applications	Applications open Monday 24 July 2017 Applications close 3pm Monday 21 August 2017.
Assessment	Applications will be assessed by an independent technical committee assigned to the program throughout September and October 2017
Approval and Announcement	Successful projects will be approved and announced by the end of 2017.
Funding	All supplementary payments will be integrated into existing payment schedules. Approved budgets will be updated to reflect the additional funding over the remaining four years of Trust funding. Trust staff will also work with successful grantees to integrate additional activities and associated measures into existing approved monitoring and evaluation plans and project measures tables.

Who can apply?

Only existing Bush Connect grantees are eligible to apply. No new grantees will be added to the program. Established partnerships are expected to be maintained (or enhanced) to deliver the additional project outcomes.

Important conditions

- Applicants must already be implementing a Bush Connect project.
- Applications from individual groups or organisations to undertake side projects will not be accepted. All projects must maintain the active partnerships and expand on the existing project deliverables.
- Existing grantees may lodge **one application only** to this extension program.

Past performance

Please note that the Trust will take into consideration any record of past poor performance in respect to existing Bush Connect grants, as well as any other Environmental Trust funded projects. If it is considered that negative past performance presents a substantial risk to the timely and effective performance of the project, an applicant will be asked to respond to the negative determination and this response will be taken into consideration alongside the overall merits of the application. Special conditions may be included in the updated funding agreement to address any issues of concern.



Photos sourced from various grantee stage one progress reports.

What activities will be funded?

The table below provides examples of activities that may be funded under a Bush Connect Supplementary grant. It covers a wide range of on-ground restoration type activities; however grants are not limited to the examples provided. Activities must contribute toward meeting the objectives of the program.

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 of the activities listed below contribute to bush regeneration.
Weed management	Control, containment or eradication of environmental weeds through physical intervention (mechanical, chemical or biological) to facilitate the recovery of a native plant species or community. Invasive native species control may also be considered.
Revegetation	Introduction of local native plant species through the planting of tube-stock, direct seeding, brush matting or transplanting. This is typically only used where a viable native seed bank does not already exist on a site.
Pest animal management	Control of feral pest animal species through physical intervention to facilitate the recovery of native animal and plant species.
Fencing	Installation of wildlife friendly fencing to restrict access to restoration areas including temporary protection of revegetation plots.
Erosion control	Works to protect soil stability and prevent water quality degradation to adjacent waterways on a localised level.
Habitat creation	Installation of natural and artificial structural habitat for fauna.
Formalisation of tracks	Upgrading or rationalisation of existing tracks which are causing degradation on sites of high conservation value.
Signage and educational resources	Educational or interpretive resources relating to the project outcomes that increase community awareness of the benefits associated with the project, and influence positive behavioural change.
Capacity building	Training, up-skilling and/or educating volunteers, community members and landowners in Natural Resource Management techniques so as to improve the tangible environmental outcomes of a project.
Fire	Strategic burning of an area to control weeds and stimulate growth of fire dependent species. Engagement with relevant fire authority (i.e. Rural Fire Service and/or NPWS) is typically required if burning is proposed.
Land conservancy	Funding of expenses associated with the establishment of in-perpetuity conservation covenants on strategically located properties may be considered in certain circumstances. If you are intending to apply for funding for this activity, please contact the Trust
Project coordination	Costs associated with coordinating or facilitating projects. Please note: While this may be budgeted for, prioritisation will be given to projects which maximise on-ground activities.

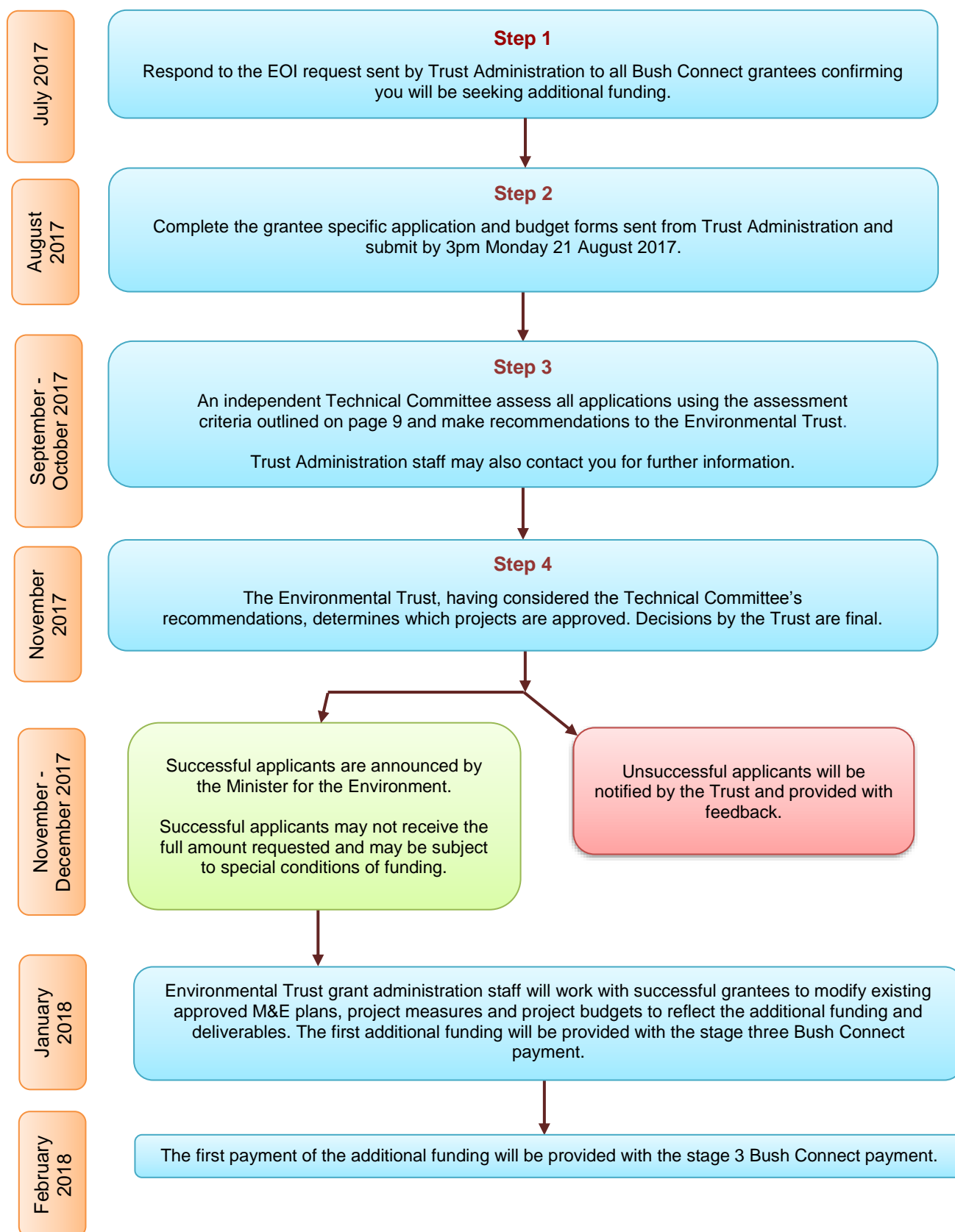
Ineligible activities

The table below gives examples of the kinds of activities that are ineligible for funding under a Bush Connect grant. If you require further clarification regarding proposed activities, please contact the Trust.

Activity	Description
Built environment	Construction, restoration or rehabilitation of buildings or facilities.
Administration	Existing day-to-day administration or operational costs of organisations.
Equipment	Capital equipment purchases, unless it is evidently more cost effective to purchase than lease equipment for the life of the project.
Core business	Activities where an existing organisation or individual can be held legally responsible for the task (eg. noxious weed control) or where funds obtained through a grant are used for cost-shifting purposes.
Devolved grants	Offering funding to other organisations or individuals through a grant program.
Maintenance	The ongoing maintenance of projects (or sites) to which organisations have previously committed to.
Existing employees	Salaries of existing employees working on the project as part of their usual duties (this is to be considered an in-kind contribution.) The Trust will, however, fund salaries of staff employed specifically to work on the project.
Retrospective activities	Activities carried out prior to accepting and signing the grant agreement. This includes activities that were previously committed to under the original grant.
Research	Project which focus on research which are not specifically linked to on-ground outcomes for the project.
Project planning	Development of overarching project plans will not be funded, however, site management plans which will be implemented as part of the project may be considered.

Application timeline

The flow chart below outlines the application and assessment process for the Bush Connect Supplementary program.



Application form

Individualised application forms containing approved existing project deliverables will be sent to all current Bush Connect grantees.

Assessment criteria

The program Technical Review Committee will evaluate applications based on the assessment criteria provided below, which focusses on how the proposed project expansion builds on the existing project.

1. Tangible environmental benefits

- clear explanation of how the existing environmental issue(s) being addressed through the project will be expanded upon or enhanced
- demonstrated need for the additional proposed activities
- the additional activities will extend the overall project contribution toward the three Bush Connect program objectives

2. Efficiency and effectiveness

- sound project planning methodology for all additional activities
- how well the identified monitoring methods for any additional activities will further demonstrate the success of the project
- feasible time frame for achieving the additional proposed objectives
- how well the proposal identifies and addresses any new risk factors that have the potential to jeopardise the project's success

3. Ability to deliver the project to a high standard

- demonstrated additional project partner collaboration and role identification
- demonstrated knowledge, skills and expertise within the consortium in relevant fields
- demonstrated commitment of the consortium to undertake and complete the project including all additional activities
- demonstrated commitment by the project partners to maintain outcomes beyond the life of the grant and extend of long-term benefits/flow-on effects resulting from the project

4. Value for money

- extent to which the additional budget supports the project objectives and whether it will retain the overall viability of the project
- the likely environmental benefit of the proposal relative to the amount of additional grants funds
- the reasonableness of the budget items
- appropriateness of the mix in the total budget between existing and additional:
 - direct project costs
 - administration costs
 - 'In-kind' support from applicant and other organisations
 - cash contributions from applicant and other organisations

Grant Agreements

Updated grant agreements containing revised payment schedules will be issued to successful applicants in 2017 for signing.

Monitoring and Evaluation Plans

Successful applicants will be required to work with Environmental Trust administration staff to incorporate approved additional project deliverables to the M&E plan and project measures table. This will need to be completed prior to the payment of stage three funds.

FAQs

- *Can the additional funding be used to contribute to existing approved project deliverables?*

No. Grantees are expected to complete the existing project deliverables within the existing approved Bush Connect budget. The supplementary funds can only be used to increase the outputs and outcomes of the original projects.

- *Can the additional funding be used to cover previously committed co-contributions (cash and in-kind)?*

No. Grantees are still required to honour their co-contribution commitments made in their original project proposals (application, M&E Plan, etc).

- *How much can our group apply for?*

Existing Bush Connect grantees can apply for additional funding of between \$50,000 and \$100,000.

- *How will the funding be distributed for successful grantees?*

The supplementary funding will be added to years 3 to 6 of the existing approved budget to create a new project budget. These funds will be allocated to meet the requirements of the additional project activities.

- *Will the existing project timeframes be extended?*

No. The additional funding needs to be spent in years 3 to 6 of the existing projects, and must be spent by January 2022.

- *Can additional project partners and/or contractors be brought in to the project?*

Yes. It is somewhat likely that additional project partners and/or service providers (contractors) will be required to deliver the additional project activities. Where the additional funding will be allocated to additional project partners or contractors, a competitive appointment process is expected to be run as standard.

- *What type of activities can the additional funding be used for?*

A list of eligible and ineligible activities is listed on pages 6-7. It is expected that the existing approved activities will be expanded on, either through addition of new properties, or expansion of project works to new areas within existing properties.

General obligations

Signing the revised Grant Agreement commits you to fulfilling the following obligations. Some key commitments are outlined below:

- ➔ Comply with all conditions contained in the Grant Agreement.
- ➔ Provide evidence of all land owner agreements (including council) to work on the project site(s) within six months from commencement of the project.
- ➔ Where relevant, provide evidence of licenses to work in Endangered Ecological Communities or with Threatened Species as per *NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* or subsequent iterations within six months from commencement of any relevant activities
- ➔ Ensure that all procurement (purchasing) and employment is undertaken in line standard government practices and legal requirements.
- ➔ Contractors or consultants appointed using Trust funds of greater than \$5000 require at least one written quote and those greater than \$30,000 require at least three written quotes. Evidence of these quotations will be required for any projects awarded a grant.
- ➔ All procurement and contractor/consultant appointment decision making should be fully documented and may be audited by the Trust or its Agents.
- ➔ Seek prior approval for budget changes greater than \$20,000 to any budget line item (this also applies accumulatively). Project administration costs are not to exceed 10 percent of the direct project costs (regardless of budget variations).
- ➔ Seek prior approval to alter proposed outputs, objectives or timeframes.
- ➔ Provide progress and final reports in accordance with the Trust's reporting guidelines. This should also include a report on project measures.
- ➔ Include the relevant financial reporting with all progress and/or final reports.
- ➔ Acknowledge the Trust's support in all promotional material or any public statements about your project. Your acknowledgement must include the Trust's logo in written material.
- ➔ Be prepared for all knowledge gained as part of the grant to be made publicly available whether that be publishing the final report or promoting the project via other avenues available to the Trust.

Project variations

It is expected that activities and a relevant timeline will be determined through the planning process and negotiation of your monitoring and evaluation plan. It is also expected that risks and appropriate strategies for their mitigation and management will be determined prior to the project commencing. The Trust recognises, however, that variations to your project are sometimes inevitable and these can be negotiated with your Grants Administrator as the project progresses. Please discuss all proposed variations before you implement them, as retrospective variations will not be approved.

Privacy

The Trust uses the information you supply for processing and assessing your application. While we do not publicly release your application as a matter of policy, we may be required to do so under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* or other lawful requirement.

The Trust may also disclose information you supply to us for the purpose of evaluating its grant programs. If you require strict commercial and/or personal confidentiality, you should address this in your application.