Protecting Our Places grants program guidelines 2025

NSW Environmental Trust
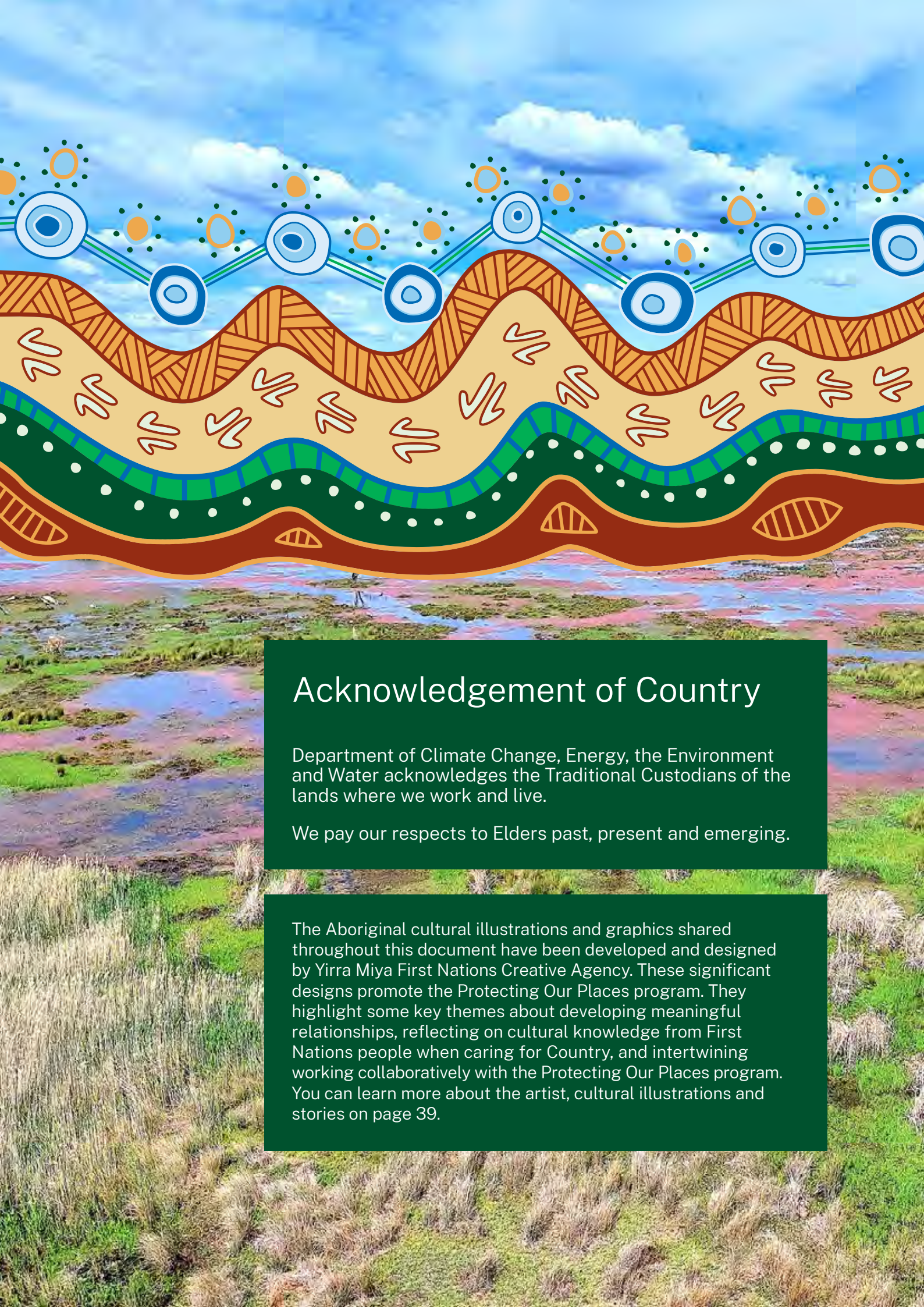
Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

The Aboriginal cultural illustrations and graphics shared throughout this document have been developed and designed by Yirra Miya First Nations Creative Agency. These significant designs promote the Protecting Our Places program. They highlight some key themes about developing meaningful relationships, reflecting on cultural knowledge from First Nations people when caring for Country, and intertwining working collaboratively with the Protecting Our Places program. You can learn more about the artist, cultural illustrations and stories on page 39.

Contents

How to use these guidelines

These program guidelines give you an overview of the NSW Environmental Trust's (Trust) Protecting Our Places grants program. They cover who can apply, what the money can be used for, how applications are reviewed and what happens if you get funding.

The Protecting Our Places program underwent an independent evaluation in 2024. We have considered and included recommendations from that process in this funding round.

We strongly encourage you to read these guidelines thoroughly.

If you plan to apply for a Protecting Our Places grant, the following resources will help you complete your application. These are available on the Protecting Our Places program webpage:

- Application form 2025
- Application guide 2025
- Sample letter of support and tips
- Sample letter of endorsement and tips

Go to the Protecting Our Places grants program webpage.

Opening date: 9 am Monday 16 June 2025

Closing date: 5 pm Thursday 31 July 2025

Enquiries or questions

Need help? If you have any questions, please contact us before the closing date of **31 July 2025**.

NSW Environmental Trust

Telephone: 02 8837 6093
Email: apply@environmentaltrust.nsw.gov.au

The NSW Environmental Trust

The Trust is an independent statutory body set up by the NSW Government. We fund projects that enhance and protect the state's environment. Our main responsibility is to provide and oversee the expenditure of grant funding.

The Trust Board is chaired by the NSW Minister for the Environment, and its members include representatives from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the department), local government, the Nature Conservation Council and NSW Treasury. An Aboriginal member is sought and will shortly join the Trust Board. The Trust is administered by the department.

Implementing the Trust's Strategic Plan

The NSW Environmental Trust Strategic Plan 2024 to 2029 centres on 3 strategic priorities:

- **Healthy Country –** enhancing Aboriginal people's role in environmental management by supporting traditional knowledge and practices.
- **Ecosystem and biodiversity restoration –** focusing on species resilience, climate adaptation and ecosystem health.
- **Enhanced environmental management –** strengthening data, connectivity and natural resource practices to improve holistic environmental outcomes.

These priorities reflect the most critical environmental challenges identified by the Trust. These priorities will guide our grant-funding decisions over the coming years.

The Protecting Our Places program

The Protecting Our Places program is a competitive grant program through which NSW Aboriginal organisations and groups can apply for funding to make positive, long-lasting changes to the environment in New South Wales. This program assists Aboriginal communities in restoring environments and care for Country. This includes the preservation and restoration of important sites that hold cultural significance within the landscape.

The program gives Aboriginal communities a chance to work on their local environmental and cultural priorities. It strengthens project management skills and promotes collaboration between Aboriginal organisations and other organisations, government agencies and community members.

What does the program do?

The program has 3 key objectives:

- Enabling Aboriginal communities to gain more autonomy over their projects, strengthening their ability to deliver favourable results for their cultural heritage, cultural practices and the environment.

- Promoting the sharing and safeguarding of cultural knowledge among Aboriginal groups, government agencies and the community. This enables Aboriginal people to influence the management and preservation of their cultural and environmental resources on their ancestral lands.

- Ensuring land that is culturally important to Aboriginal communities is protected, restored, improved and managed by local Aboriginal groups, land managers and other stakeholders in a way that fosters Healthy Country. This approach deepens the connection between Aboriginal people and their traditional lands and waterways.

Funding available

- A total of $500,000 is available for the 2025 round of the program.

- Grants of up to $120,000 can be awarded per project.

- Each project must be planned over 2 stages: Stage 1 – Planning, followed by Stage 2 – Implementation.

- **Important:** Projects are not automatically guaranteed to progress to Stage 2 unless we are satisfied that the full requirements of Stage 1 have been met.

- Specific time and funding limits are set for both stages of the project as outlined in the table below.

Table 1. Available funds and timeframes for 2025 projects

|	Maximum funding available	Duration of stage
Stage 1 – Planning	$20,000	6 to 12 months
Stage 2 – Implementation	$98,000	2 years
Financial certification	$2,000	End of project
Total	$120,000	3 years

Note:

- Financial certification is an essential budget item for all projects. $2,000 of Trust funds is quarantined to pay for an independent accountant to certify your expenditure and financial report and provide a Report on Factual Findings at the end of the project.

- A project manager or coordinator is also essential to ensure your project is adequately staffed. Funds for this role are capped at a maximum of 30% of the total project budget (including salary and salary on-costs).

- Although not a requirement, co-contributions by applicants and any project partners will improve the chances of success. There are 2 types of co-contributions:

  - **Financial –** an actual cash contribution by the applicant or project partners towards the costs of delivering the project.

  - **In-kind –** a donation of goods, services, time or expertise. These may include use of services and facilities, professional services or expertise in the form of staff time or provision of, or access to, equipment and/or materials.

Aboriginal procurement principles

We are committed to supporting the employment of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal-owned businesses through the Protecting Our Places program. Grantees are encouraged during their project planning to:

- employ Aboriginal people in the project (preferably within local communities)

- engage services from suitably experienced and qualified Aboriginal-owned businesses

- purchase supplies of materials or products from Aboriginal-owned businesses

- work with non-Aboriginal businesses/organisations that employ Aboriginal people.
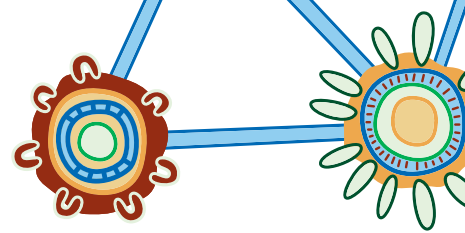
Endorsement of project by applicant organisation

If your organisation is overseen by either a management committee or a board, you will need to demonstrate that they are aware of the application and provide endorsement of the project, including their commitment to support the proposed activities.

Employing a project manager and involving community Elders

It is essential for grantees to employ a project manager or coordinator throughout both stages of the project who has the skills and capability to oversee the project. Leaders (such as CEOs or board members of your organisation) are ineligible to be employed to perform the designated project manager role.

We strongly advise involving at least one community Elder or leader to support the project from start to finish. Their involvement could provide essential advocacy and leadership within the community, while also offering rich cultural insights as a trusted source of cultural authority. The Elder or leader should be invited to participate in the capacity-building workshops and to support activity implementation. It would be expected that funds are allocated within the budget to compensate them for their role as a consultant to the project.
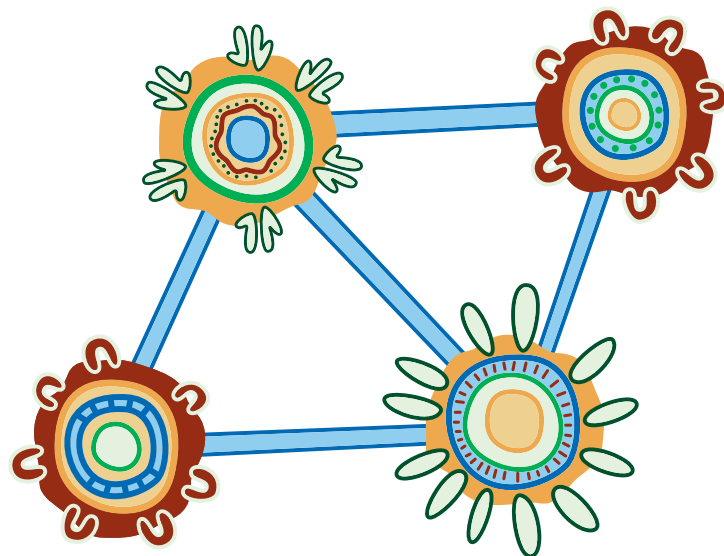
Grantee support

A key component of the program is to help you build the capacity of your organisation, staff and community members. This support includes improving skills in project planning, managing and reporting.

We provide capacity-building workshops in a culturally responsive environment led by Aboriginal people to support projects during Stage 1. Our staff manage the workshops, which are delivered by external facilitators with knowledge of Aboriginal culture and heritage and of project management.

If successful, you will be invited to attend 2 face-to-face workshops. Workshops will be held regionally, aiming to be as close as possible to where you are located.

The workshops provide:

- tailored project management training designed for Aboriginal organisations
- practical activities, discussions and guidance to refine the design of the project and set it up for success
- understanding of Trust requirements for monitoring and reporting
- assistance in developing your project implementation plan
- an opportunity to connect with us face-to-face
- Aboriginal-led mentoring and leadership training intended to build grantees' confidence in delivering important projects for their local communities
- possible opportunities to network with other successful Aboriginal grantees and learn about their project and delivery approaches.

Timing of workshops

The 2 face-to-face workshops are held soon after funding agreements are signed at the commencement of your project. Each workshop is held over 2 days. There will be a gap between Workshops 1 and 2 of approximately 2 to 4 weeks, which allows time for you to work on your project implementation plan and come back to the second workshop with questions or areas where you need support.

Who should attend

A minimum of 2 people who will be directly involved in the project are required to attend.

We strongly encourage you to invite additional participants who wish to engage with the project. Participants could include your community or project partners such as Elders, community leaders, board members, Aboriginal rangers/Green Team members, Local Land Services, National Parks and Wildlife Service staff or landowners.
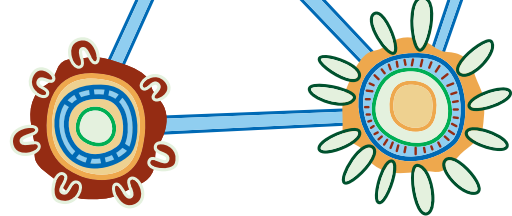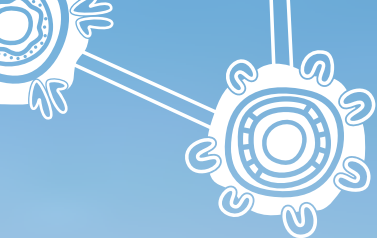
Our staff may recommend inviting agencies and other stakeholders who have local expertise and/or be relevant to certain areas and sites to attend the workshops.

We strongly encourage you to invite at least one community Elder or leader to join both workshops so your project can involve their insights.

Ongoing support

Funded projects will run for 3 years and we will provide ongoing support throughout the life of your project. including:

- guidance to complete your project implementation plan
- help with preparing project reports, which may include oral reporting options to complement written reporting where appropriate
- availability to talk online or via phone to yarn about any issues or questions you may have. Proactive communication between the Trust and grantees means the Aboriginal program officer can engage in problem-solving with grantees earlier rather than later to manage risks to project delivery (delays, weather, natural disaster, site access etc.).

What we want you to achieve

The Protecting Our Places program seeks to work with Aboriginal organisations and communities to achieve outcomes across the following areas.

Caring for Country

- Support Aboriginal communities to manage places of significance and intangible cultural values and resources on land and water.
- Acknowledge the vital cultural and spiritual connection Aboriginal people have with their traditional lands and waters.
- Provide greater opportunities for Aboriginal communities to take part in projects on Country that involve the protection and restoration of native flora and fauna.

Partnerships developed and maintained

- Aboriginal organisations develop partnerships and strengthen collaborations with other Aboriginal and/or non-Aboriginal organisations, land managers, local and state governments and local stakeholders.
- These partnerships and collaborations seek to protect and restore Aboriginal cultural values and develop a mutually beneficial working relationship.
- Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) are developed, where necessary, outlining terms and details, including each party's conditions and responsibilities.

Build capacity

- Enhance and support Aboriginal organisations and communities to conduct environmental activities that are ecologically sustainable and culturally appropriate.
- Aboriginal communities develop skills and experience to engage and recruit members of their local and broader communities to participate in cultural land management activities on Country.
- Improve the capability of Aboriginal community organisations and/or groups to resource the continued management of environmental projects on Country.

Awareness raising

- Recognition and promotion of cultural land and water management practices and the use of cultural knowledge resources.
- Community projects that practise contemporary and traditional land management styles that are carried out safely and in appropriate ways.
- Appropriate documentation and sharing of cultural connection pathways created between people, land/water and management practices.

Increased participation

- Private and public land managers work with Aboriginal people and their communities to improve cultural land management practices and protect cultural values, resources and places of importance.
- Targeted communities (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) are involved in management actions to care and connect with Country.

Use of cultural knowledge

- Appropriate cultural land and waters management practices are applied to protect and restore environmental and cultural values and ensure sustainable management of Country to address present and future issues.
- Cultural knowledge holders are engaged and consulted on all aspects of the project, and transfer of knowledge is passed on appropriately to community members.

Encourage and support employment of Aboriginal people and businesses

- Direct project funds to be expended on the employment of Aboriginal people and engagement of suitably experienced and qualified Aboriginal-owned businesses to provide services or supply materials or products.

Important dates and timeframes

The program has a single-stage application process, the dates for which are outlined below.

Table 2. Grant round timeframes

Timeframe	Process
16 June 2025	Applications open at 9 am.
31 July 2025	Applications close at 5 pm.
August–September 2025	The technical review committee assesses eligible applications and recommends projects for funding to the Trust.
October 2025	The Trust will review the recommendations from the committee and make the final decision on which applicants will receive funding. Please note, the Trust's decisions are final and there is no appeal process.
November–December 2025	Successful applicants will be notified by us. Please note that the amount granted may be less than the original request and the funding may be subject to specific conditions. We will then work with you to sign the funding agreement and submit an invoice for the first payment. A summary of successful projects will be published on our website. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the outcome and will be provided feedback on their application by the Aboriginal program officer.
January–March 2026	Stage 1–Planning commences. Capacity-building workshops with grantees will be scheduled.
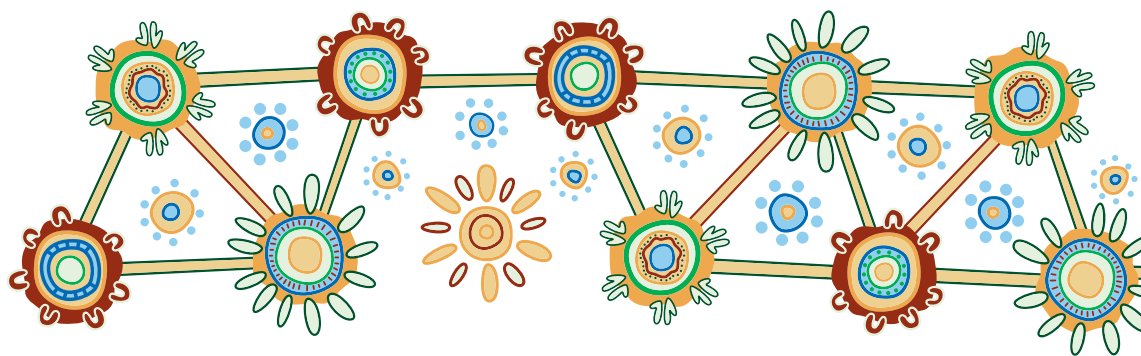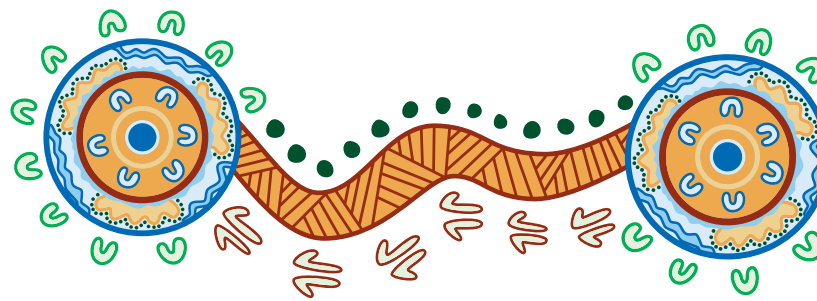
Who can apply?

The following NSW Aboriginal community organisations are eligible to apply:

- NSW Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALC)
- NSW Aboriginal corporations registered under the Corporations *(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*
- NSW incorporated associations registered under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009*
- Non-distributing NSW co-operatives registered under Co-operatives National Law and associated Acts
- NSW registered native title bodies corporate
- Australian public companies limited by guarantee operating as a registered charity under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. Refer to Section 6: More information for the links to eligible organisations.

Other Aboriginal organisations and groups are eligible to apply but will need the support of another organisation which will perform the role of **external manager** (see below).

The following entities are **not** eligible to apply under the program:

- non-Aboriginal groups or organisations
- individuals, industry joint ventures and profit-distributing corporations or co-operatives (limited by shares).

Associations, co-operatives and charities

Associations and co-operatives will undergo additional eligibility checks to confirm they are not-for-profit and non-distributing entities. These checks will also assess whether the organisation's objectives and activities are designed to benefit local Aboriginal people and communities and actively involve their participation. Charities registered under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission must provide a copy of their constitution to prove that their primary objective is to support Aboriginal people and, where possible, a letter of support from either the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, their LALC or another registered Aboriginal organisation listed above.

The role of the external manager

If your organisation or group is not incorporated or cannot manage the financial aspects of the project for other reasons, you may nominate another organisation to manage the grant funds on your behalf – an external manager. The nominated external manager must be an incorporated or registered organisation (LALC, NGO, local council etc.).
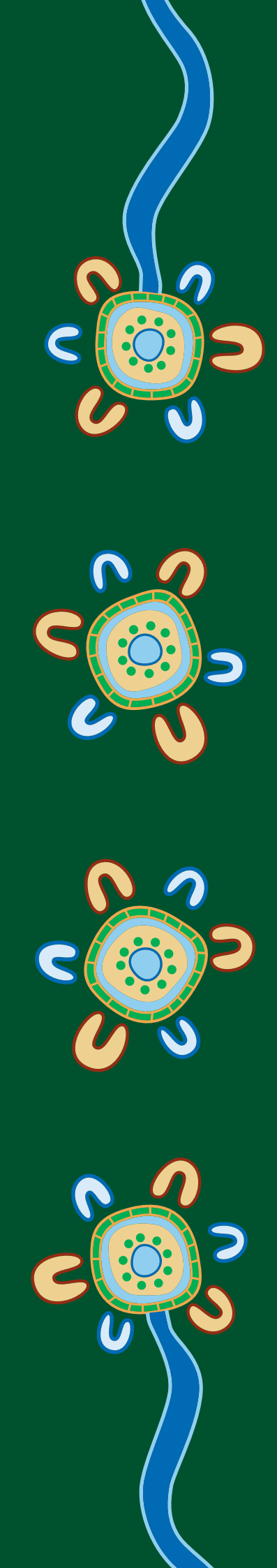
Funding agreements will include the name of the external manager, who is required to sign the funding agreement together with the grantee. The grantee remains the lead decision maker and the grantee's project coordinator will control the project's activities and direction.

Grant payments are made to the external manager, who is responsible for making all payments relating to the project on the grantee's behalf, as well as preparing all financial reports as required under the funding agreement. It is expected that there be an agreement in place between the grantee and the external manager, particularly regarding the project's management and submission of the progress/final reports (refer to Section 6: More information for the link to the *Role of the external manager tips and information).*

If you are unsure whether your organisation is eligible, please contact us on 02 8837 6093 or at info@environmentaltrust.nsw.gov.au.
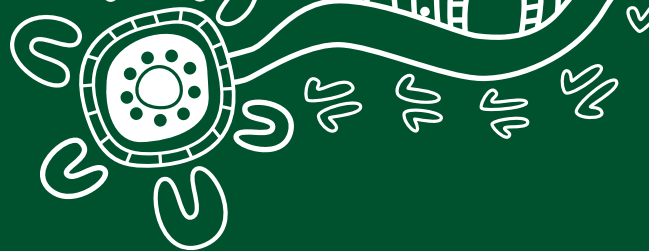
All Protecting Our Places projects are broken down into 2 stages: Stage 1 – Planning and Stage 2 – Implementation. Each stage receives targeted funding for different types of activities. Funds allocated for Stage 1 are to be used exclusively for planning and preparation activities. It is important to note that these funds must not be applied to any on-ground activities. If your project successfully completes Stage 1, then you will receive your next payment to proceed with on-ground activities in Stage 2.

We are dedicated to supporting proposals that provide meaningful benefits to the natural environment of New South Wales. Cultural projects are highly valued and will be considered, provided they clearly demonstrate a positive and measurable impact on environmental outcomes.

Stage 1 – Planning

The primary goal of this stage is to give you the opportunity to establish a solid foundation for your project and to plan and prepare for the implementation of on-ground activities in Stage 2.

Key activities in Stage 1 include:

- developing a project implementation plan
- preparing site action plans
- finalising a detailed project budget
- obtaining environmental assessment advice such as ecological studies or vegetation reports
- creating a clear measures and monitoring plan
- securing agreements with partners, such as memorandums of understanding or committee terms of reference
- gaining community agreement and support for the proposed project
- obtaining necessary permits, licences or approvals, or providing evidence that these processes are either completed or significantly advanced before Stage 2
- attending the required 2-day capacity-building workshops.

Stage 2 – Implementation

The focus of this stage is on implementing the activities outlined in the approved project implementation plan. Eligible activities include a wide range of on-ground land and cultural management activities.

You should select activities that will directly contribute to your project's goals and align with the Protecting Our Places program objectives. The proposed activities must address critical environmental issues and support the strategic priorities outlined in the Trust's Strategic Plan.

Table 3 below provides a summary of eligible project activities under Stage 1 and 2.

Table 4 outlines the activities that are **not** eligible for funding in either stage.

Table 3. Eligible project activities

Activity	Stage 1	Stage 2	Description
Activity preparation	Yes	No	**Core activity (especially for projects involving cultural burning)** Essential planning processes needed to ensure compliance with legislation must be completed. These include developing cultural burn plans, obtaining relevant licensing, permits and approvals (e.g. scientific licences, Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permits (AHIPs) or development applications). Identification of these requirements and preparation of official documentation must be done during Stage 1, as non-compliance may affect approval to progress to Stage 2.
Employment of project staff	Yes	Yes	**Core activity** Staff may be employed with the use of project funds. Employment and recruitment practices must be in line with your organisation's HR policies and procedures, and the person employed as project manager must have the skills and capability to perform the role. We will not fund staff already employed by your organisation who will be supervising, project-managing or working on the project as part of their usual duties. Note: CEOs and board members of your organisation are not eligible for the role of project manager.
Photo monitoring	Yes	Yes	**Core activity** To monitor the delivery of project activities, it is essential to take photos of the site(s) before work commences. This will clearly demonstrate the outcomes you have achieved during your project.
Project management and activity coordination	Yes	Yes	**Core activity** Costs associated with management and coordination of project activities are capped at 30% of the total grant value (including any salary and salary on-costs). Salary on-costs must not exceed 26.5% of the requested salary amount. Project management means planning and guiding all parts of a project to achieve its goals. This includes setting objectives, organising tasks, allocating resources and tracking progress to ensure everything stays on track. Effective project management helps ensure that the project is completed on time, within budget and meets the desired outcomes.
Project planning	Yes	No	**Core activity** Development of a project implementation plan. This includes identifying the key activities, the resources required, both human and capital, as well as any training requirements. Any project planning documents prepared should link to existing strategic, environmental assessment and planning documents that apply to the land.
Administration – project-related	Yes	Yes	Administration includes operational expenses to facilitate your project (e.g. room hire for training days, stationery, or software licences). Administration expenses cannot exceed 10% of your total budget.
Capacity building	Yes	Yes	Capacity building refers to activities that enhance the skills, knowledge and resources of individuals and organisations involved in delivering your project. Capacity building may involve: • **Training programs** – workshops, courses or online training modules designed to teach practical skills relevant to the project. • **Educational workshops** – training and information sessions to increase awareness of environmental issues, empowering community members and stakeholders to connect and contribute to your project's outcomes. • **Knowledge sharing** – platforms for exchanging information and best practices, such as seminars, webinars and online resources.

Activity	Stage 1	Stage 2	Description
Community engagement	Yes	Yes	Community engagement refers to the active involvement of local communities in project activities. It emphasises collaboration, fostering relationships and ensuring community input shapes project outcomes. Involvement of Elders and other Aboriginal community leaders is an important part of this to ensure projects are designed and delivered in a sensitive way with appropriate knowledge guiding what on-ground activities are implemented and where. Effective community engagement can include: • **Consultation processes** – engaging community members in discussions about project objectives and methods to incorporate their insights and preferences. This may be effectively undertaken as an on-Country event such as a community day or a walk across the project site. • **Volunteer opportunities** – providing hands-on activities such as weeding, planting and monitoring to encourage local participation and foster a sense of ownership over environmental outcomes. • **Feedback mechanisms** – establishing channels for community members to express concerns and suggestions throughout the project, ensuring ongoing dialogue and responsiveness. Engaging an Elder to be an advocate for the project may help maintain open communication throughout the community during the planning and implementation of the project.
Environmental and ecological assessment	Yes	Yes	Ecological survey and environmental assessment of the project site is essential to ensure project activities are not inadvertently degrading significant vegetation, ecosystems or habitats. An environmental consultant may be engaged to prepare a report that identifies ecological values and prioritises actions to protect and improve habitat for plants and animals, including threatened species. Often, engagement with local agencies such as Local Land Services, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Biodiversity Conservation Trust, Saving our Species program and/or Landcare will generate relevant local information. Other tools including online searches and mapping systems may be helpful to identify significant environmental values.
Research/ documentation of knowledge	Yes	Yes	Research activities must have a specific and direct link to delivering on-ground outcomes for the project. Examples of research activities that may be relevant include collection of cultural knowledge on the project site and land management practices so that it may be applied in Stage 2.
Aboriginal Heritage Information System (AHIMS) assessment	Yes	No	The AHIMS Aboriginal Site Recording database is used for reporting and recording Aboriginal objects and features that are likely to be of significance to Aboriginal people. You are required to undertake an AHIMS search before the commencement of on-ground works and activities to ensure that no accidental damage is done to identified Aboriginal sites. You are also encouraged to record known Aboriginal sites on AHIMS that are relevant to your project during this planning phase. For more information, please see the department's Environment and Heritage website (refer to Section 6: More information for the link).
Partnership negotiation	Yes	No	Activities that facilitate consultation with community, project partners and stakeholders to develop cooperative agreements and develop inclusive project work plans. Examples include holding meetings, development of a memorandum of understanding and/or development of site access agreements.
Site mapping	Yes	No	Development of a mapping resource (e.g. GIS, Google maps) of the site that assists in project planning, delivery and monitoring.

Activity	Stage 1	Stage 2	Description
Surveys	Yes	No	Survey actions (e.g. archaeological or ecological investigations or studies) may be eligible if they are essential to undertaking the project. The commissioning of these studies must be directly linked to the development of site action plans and delivery of on-ground project outcomes.
Bush regeneration assisted natural regeneration	No	Yes	Bush regeneration is the practice of restoring and enhancing native bushland by managing invasive plants, encouraging the growth of local species and improving the health of the ecosystem. The aim is to create self-sustaining environments that need little ongoing human help. This work often involves the community and uses different methods of ecological restoration. The ultimate goals are to improve biodiversity, improve habitats and strengthen the resilience of native vegetation. A key part of bush regeneration is **assisted natural regeneration**. This method helps native plants recover naturally in damaged areas. It works by removing barriers to growth, such as invasive plants and soil erosion, allowing native plants to thrive on their own. All bush regeneration or assisted natural regeneration project activities must: • follow best practice industry standards, as outlined in the National standards for ecological restoration • allow sufficient time for natural regeneration from the existing seed bank where possible. If you plan to undertake revegetation, you must justify the need to plant rather than allowing natural regeneration to occur • ensure that the grantee group's capacity (including any contractors) is sufficient for the scale of proposed works. Plan primary work only in areas where adequate follow-up will be provided within the scope of the same project • comply with existing regional/local plans of management, environmental studies or assessments • determine a strategy to ensure long-term maintenance of the sites after the funding period.
Canopy connection	No	Yes	To effectively restore and link fragmented habitats, planting canopy trees to create continuous habitat corridors is essential, especially in areas where natural regeneration is insufficient or heavily degraded. Habitat corridors enable wildlife movement and support genetic diversity, which are critical for the resilience of ecosystems and support of threatened species. To ensure that tree planting leads to meaningful restoration and connectivity, the following guidelines should be followed: • **Prioritise habitat corridors** – focus on establishing connected corridors that bridge fragmented habitats. This approach supports safe wildlife movement and ecosystem linkages rather than isolated patches of canopy. • **Use local provenance plants** – trees and plants used for canopy creation must be sourced locally to ensure they are well-suited to the regional climate, soil and ecosystem, enhancing the success of the project and benefiting native wildlife. • **Protect from livestock** – planted trees must be fenced off from livestock to prevent grazing and trampling, which can damage young trees and hinder their growth. Protecting young trees helps establish a stable, resilient canopy.

Activity	Stage 1	Stage 2	Description
Consultants	No	Yes	Environmental consultants can provide expert guidance and support. Their roles include: • **Assessment and planning** – conducting site assessments and environmental impact studies, developing management plans that meet regulatory requirements and project objectives. • **Technical expertise** – offering advice on best practices for ecological restoration, including habitat enhancement and species selection tailored to the specific environmental and cultural context. • **Monitoring** – designing and implementing monitoring programs to assess the effectiveness of project delivery, ensuring compliance with both project goals and environmental regulations. When procuring consultants, you should consider: • **Competitive tenders** – if available, invite multiple consultants to submit proposals. This helps assess skills and pricing options. • **Qualifications and experience** – evaluate the qualifications, experience and track record of consultants in similar projects to ensure they meet project needs. • **Contract management** – clearly define the scope of work, deliverables and timelines in the contract to manage expectations and performance effectively.
Contractors	No	Yes	Contractors can provide physical implementation of on-ground activities. Their roles include: • **On-ground implementation** – carrying out specific tasks such as site preparation, planting, invasive species control and habitat restoration activities. • **Collaboration with consultants** – working alongside environmental consultants to apply technical expertise in the field, ensuring adherence to established plans and protocols. Key considerations include: • **Local suppliers and rangers** – prioritise Aboriginal ranger groups or local contractors to support the community, reduce transport costs and build Aboriginal rangers' connection to Country. • **Performance metrics** – set clear performance metrics and monitoring procedures in the contract to assess contractor effectiveness and project success.
Ecological and cultural burns	No	Yes	Strategic burning may be used for ecological purposes, such as weed control or as part of a cultural burning practice. Cultural burns involve traditional Aboriginal methods to support ecological outcomes. Applications should show that relevant fire authorities (such as the Rural Fire Service or National Parks and Wildlife Service) are engaged in planning. An application involving burning is unlikely to be successful if there is not clear evidence of significant planning and engagement with relevant stakeholders. Clearly define the purpose of the burn – what ecological benefits are being sought? Burns should not be isolated, one-off activities but rather part of a broader fire management strategy. Include details on the burn plan, such as techniques, weed control (pre-and post-burn), target burn intensity, size, season, frequency and desired outcomes. Note: when designing projects that involve burning, you should identify known or potential post-fire risks and impacts (e.g. weed proliferation, erosion control). We will expect applications to include appropriate funded actions to manage these post-fire risk/impacts.

Activity	Stage 1	Stage 2	Description
Educational resources and signage	No	Yes	Educational resources and signage play a key role in informing and engaging the community. • **Educational resources** – this includes materials like brochures and online content that explain the project's goals and methods. These resources can help teach people about local ecosystems, native species and the importance of conservation. They support capacity-building efforts by sharing knowledge and skills with community members. • **Signage** – signs placed in project areas provide important information to the public. They can explain what the project is about, highlight native plants and animals, describe cultural values and connections and show why protection and restoration of the site is needed. Effective signage promotes community engagement by encouraging local involvement and helping people feel connected to the site and the project efforts. Educational resources and signage may include Aboriginal language to share cultural knowledge and help audiences understand the cultural significance of the project/site. The inclusion of Aboriginal language should be overseen by Elders/traditional knowledge holders.
Equipment hire	No	Yes	Grant funds may cover the reasonable hire costs of equipment essential to the project's implementation. Applicants must seek competitive quotes for hire items and select the most cost-effective option.
Erosion control	No	Yes	Work to stabilise soil and protect culturally important areas and sites can be included in your project. Erosion control must also include follow-up restoration activities. For example, if you are moving soil to change how water flows over the land, make sure to support assisted regeneration or include revegetation afterward. Installing 'off-stream' water sources for livestock is allowed, but these should not be located in areas with remnant vegetation.
Fencing and barriers	No	Yes	Fencing or other barriers are eligible activities to restrict access to significant ecosystems, restoration areas, cultural objects and resources, places of importance and lands of significance to Aboriginal people. Restricting access may be critical to reduce illegal rubbish dumping, control inappropriate vehicles or reduce erosion on informal tracks. This may include fences, gates, bollards or other barriers such as large rocks or concrete blocks. Install wildlife-friendly fencing to limit access to restoration sites and temporarily protect revegetation areas. Wildlife-friendly fencing helps prevent harm to native species and can be tailored to exclude specific animals. When excluding herbivores the installation of fencing must align with ongoing weed control or revegetation activities. This integrated approach helps maximise the effectiveness of restoration efforts by reducing plant competition and supporting native vegetation establishment. You can find a link to more information about wildlife friendly fencing in Section 6: More information.

Activity	Stage 1	Stage 2	Description
Habitat creation	No	Yes	Habitat creation involves the 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 or roost boxes) will only be funded when: • the target species are clearly defined. This may include culturally significant species • 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). This ensures 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) • nest box installation activities are accompanied by native plant community restoration activities. You can find links to more information about nest boxes in Section 6: More information.
Materials	No	Yes	All necessary materials directly tied to project activities are eligible for purchase using grant funds. We encourage you to consider bulk purchasing materials to achieve competitive pricing on materials.
Native seed collection and propagation	No	Yes	Eligible activities include the ethical collection of native seeds, ensuring genetic integrity and local provenance, and the propagation of these seeds for use in rehabilitation efforts. In NSW, seed collection often requires specific permits or licences, especially if activities involve threatened species or occur on protected land. Key licences include: • **Scientific licence** (Part 2 of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*) – required for activities such as collecting seeds from threatened species, ecological communities, or critical habitats. Applications are submitted to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), which is part of the department. The application process includes demonstrating minimal environmental impact and compliance with legislative requirements. • **Additional permissions:** Collecting on council-managed lands or other private/public reserves may require local council approvals or agreements with land managers. The NPWS has a specific licensing portal and detailed guidance to help you understand the requirements, which may include annual reporting and adherence to conservation principles. A link to more information about licensing on the NPWS website can be found in Section 6: More information.

Activity	Stage 1	Stage 2	Description
Pest animal management	No	Yes	Strategic, long-term control, exclusion and monitoring of feral pest animal species through non-lethal, physical interventions are eligible activities. These activities support the recovery of native animal and plant species and are intended to align with pest management plans and ongoing pest control efforts. Lethal control methods — including shooting, trapping or any measures that harm or kill animals — are strictly prohibited. To ensure effectiveness, pest animal management activities must: • **Align with Local Land Services (LLS) management plans** – projects should follow established guidelines and strategies outlined in LLS management plans specific to the target pest species, incorporating best practices for control methods and ecosystem recovery. • **Coordinate with neighbours** – management activities should be conducted collaboratively with neighbouring landholders to maximise impact, regardless of land tenure. Cooperative pest control strengthens habitat restoration and reduces the risk of pest reinvasion. • **Integrate with native plant community restoration** – all pest animal management activities must be paired with native plant restoration efforts. Restoring native vegetation helps reinforce the control of invasive species by enhancing habitat stability and resilience. Examples of eligible activities under this program include: • **monitoring and data collection** – tracking pest population numbers, distribution and behaviour to better inform management efforts and ensure they remain effective over time • **installation of pest exclusion fencing** – building and maintaining barriers, such as perimeter or exclusion fencing, to protect sensitive habitats and prevent feral animal incursion, particularly in areas with high conservation and/or cultural value • **dam removal or modification** – removing artificial water sources that encourage pest animals in certain areas, helping to discourage their presence and support natural ecosystem restoration • **habitat restoration adjacent to fenced areas** – planting native vegetation and restoring plant communities around fenced or managed areas to create self-sustaining habitats that are resilient against pest invasion
Preservation/ protection of cultural assets	No	Yes	Activities that apply specialised methods and employ skilled professionals to conduct on-ground preservation and protection of cultural assets (i.e. places, objects and features) – for example, rock art preservation, archaeological excavations and burial sites. These types of activities should be implemented as part of the broader project context to achieve the principal environmental outcome (e.g. protection of a cultural asset during weed control activities).

Activity	Stage 1	Stage 2	Description
Revegetation	No	Yes	Revegetation involves introducing local native plant species through methods such as tube stock (or more advanced plants) planting, direct seeding, brush matting or transplanting. These methods are typically used only when there is no viable native seed bank present on-site. For successful revegetation, careful species selection is essential, particularly considering the impacts of climate change. If revegetation is deemed necessary, the following principles must be followed: • **source plants and seeds responsibly** to preserve genetic diversity, ideally from local sources • **plant at appropriate spacing and diversity levels** that reflect those of the natural or reference ecosystem • **restore all vegetation layers**, including groundcover, shrubs and canopy, to recreate habitat and support a variety of species. More information about revegetation best practice can be found in Section 6: More information.
Seed production areas	No	Yes	Seed production areas (SPAs) are dedicated sites where native plants, including bush foods or other culturally significant species, are planted for use in future restoration activities. Once well established, these areas can be visited to collect seed for use in environmental and cultural projects. When establishing SPAs for restoration projects, the focus should be on enhancing climate change resilience. This can be achieved by selecting species and provenance carefully, maximising genetic diversity and ensuring the adaptive capacity of vegetation communities. Project designs should promote species diversity across different plant strata and connect to long-term regional restoration efforts.
Threatened species	No	Yes	Grant funds may be used for on-ground work that directly benefits threatened species by addressing key threats and improving habitat conditions. This includes activities such as habitat restoration, increasing knowledge of cultural values, implementing threat mitigation measures and supporting actions that align with conservation strategies for these species. Involvement of Aboriginal communities is crucial to integrate traditional knowledge and cultural needs into conservation activities. To ensure your project effectively addresses threatened species or ecological communities under NSW guidelines, you must refer to Saving our Species (SoS) strategies. The Biodiversity Conservation Program now integrates the SoS framework, which has replaced the need for standalone recovery plans. Use the SoS strategies as your primary resource to understand priority conservation actions for your target species or community. When completing your application, you must identify the threats that you are addressing and the actions that will be linked to activities in your project in your project implementation plan. You must also include, in your supplementary evidence, the SoS strategy that you used as your primary source. Some activities affecting threatened species and their habitats are regulated under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and require a biodiversity conservation licence. These licences, issued by the department, are required for the following activities: • **scientific licence** – for research, education, or conservation activities • **threatened species licence** – to remove or harm a threatened plant, animal or ecological community, or to damage their habitat

Activity	Stage 1	Stage 2	Description
Track management for conservation	No	Yes	Projects can include improving, repairing or rerouting existing tracks to reduce impact on environmental and cultural values and support conservation goals. These activities should aim to prevent erosion, control access and protect areas with high conservation and cultural value by enhancing track design and guiding traffic along safer routes. Track improvements should be planned to fit naturally with the landscape, reduce habitat disruption and improve visitor safety. They should also focus on protecting the surrounding native plants, animals, sensitive habitats and cultural sites for the future.
Transport	No	Yes	Transport costs may cover reasonable expenses related to freight, transportation of materials and equipment, and travel costs directly associated with project activities. Eligible transport expenses include fuel, vehicle hire and transport fares for project staff or contractors. All transport costs must be essential to the project's delivery, cost-effective and supported by clear budget estimates.
Waste management	No	Yes	Some waste management activities may be eligible for funding but should not be the only objective of your project. The clean-up of waste on Country should be a part of a broader project delivering strong environmental and cultural outcomes.
Weed management	No	Yes	Grant funding can support weed control activities that contribute to environmental outcomes, such as facilitating the recovery of native plant species, improving ecosystem function, protecting threatened species and ecological communities or reducing degradation of cultural values and sites. Projects must focus on addressing environmental issues, rather than economic ones (e.g. agricultural production). Projects should align with the Regional Strategic Weed Management Plans provided by Local Land Services, which outline both regional and statewide priorities under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. These plans provide guidance on managing priority weeds that threaten local ecosystems. To be eligible, projects must focus on the environmental benefits of weed control, such as reducing the impact of invasive species on native vegetation and wildlife. The program will not fund weed control that is considered a part of a land managers' statutory responsibility. For example, landholders are expected to manage certain weeds under the Biosecurity Act as part of their general biosecurity duty. For links to resources regarding weed management, please see Section 6: More information.

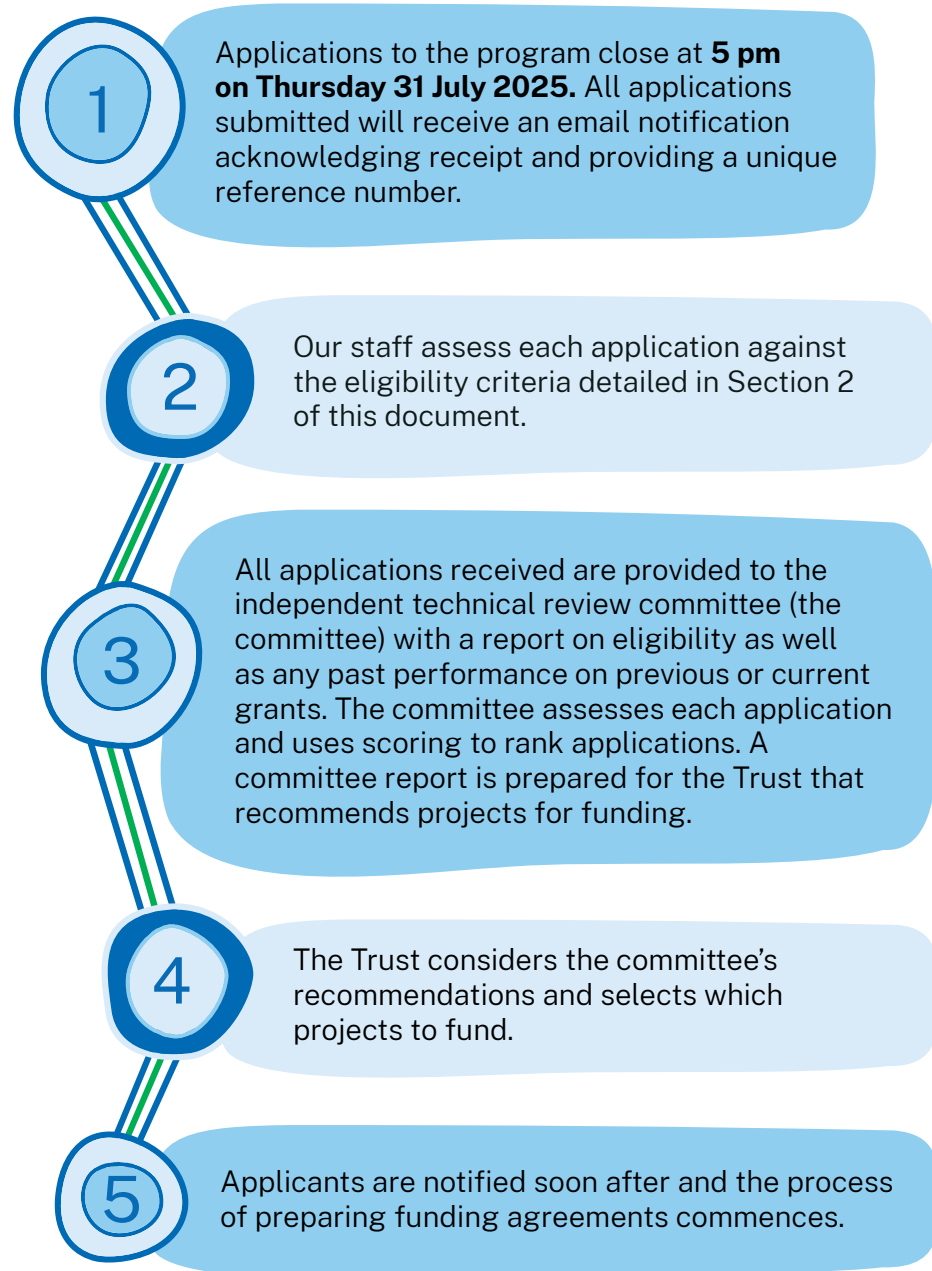**Table 4.** Ineligible project activities

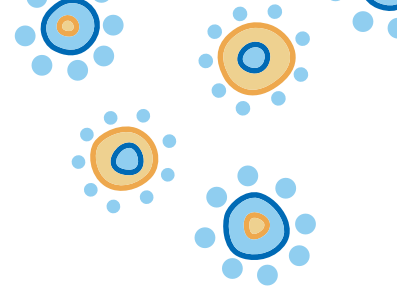| Activity	Description
Activities completed outside funding agreement	Activities carried out before the funding agreement is signed or after the funding agreement has ended are not eligible for funding under this program.
Administration – non-project related	Operational costs of organisations that are not project-specific and do not relate to other eligible project activities will not be funded.
Aesthetics, amenity and recreation	Activities focused solely on improving aesthetics, local amenity or recreational opportunities, such as gardening or grounds management are not eligible for funding under this program. The funding is intended to support projects that deliver positive environmental benefits for the ecosystems within your project site. This includes the upgrading or construction of tracks solely for amenity or recreation purposes.
Built environment	Construction, restoration or rehabilitation of buildings or facilities are not eligible for funding under this program.
Capital purchases	Grant funds cannot be used for capital purchases, which are defined as equipment or assets with a long-term useful life and substantial cost, typically retained beyond the duration of the project. This includes purchasing major equipment or assets that have value beyond the project period. However, small capital equipment purchases are allowed if it can be demonstrated that purchasing the equipment is more cost-effective than leasing it for the life of the project. The cost of capital items should not exceed 20% of the total project budget. Essential project equipment may still be eligible for funding if leased or rented, as outlined in the eligible activities table.
Changes of land tenure or resource licensing	Expenses associated with activities involving the transfer of land or resource licences (e.g. water extraction licences, whether private or public) between landholders are not eligible for funding under this program.
Core business	Activities that are typically the core responsibility of local or state government authorities or educational institutions are not eligible for funding under this program. The concept of 'core business' can vary between organisations but generally refers to the essential or legal responsibilities an organisation must fulfil. While we can fund projects that relate to an organisation's core business, Trust-funded project activities must go beyond your organisation's usual duties or day-to-day operations. In your application, you must demonstrate that the proposed activities are not part of your core business.
Devolved grants	Devolved grants are not eligible for funding under this program. Grantees are fully responsible for managing and spending all awarded funds. In cases where a project involves multiple landholders in a catchment or regional scale, with a coordinating grantee overseeing the project, it is considered a partnership project, not a devolved grant project. In this scenario, the coordinating grantee will be responsible for procurement, payment of contractors and purchase of materials for work carried out on landholders' properties, as well as managing the funds. Lump sum payments cannot be made directly to project partners or stakeholders for activities on their properties. If activities are to take place on stakeholder land, the grantee must organise, manage and pay for these activities (including contractor labour) directly, without providing funds to the stakeholders.

Activity	Description
Insurance	Insurance costs, including association liability insurance costs, are not eligible for funding under this program.
Lethal control methods of pest animal management	Lethal control methods – including shooting, trapping, or any measures that harm or kill animals – are strictly prohibited. Strategic, long-term control, exclusion and monitoring of feral pest animal species through non-lethal, physical interventions are eligible activities under this grant. See the eligible activities table above (Table 3) for pest management activities that are eligible for funding.
Maintenance	Continued maintenance of grant projects previously undertaken by the organisation, where maintenance activities were mandated under the grant agreement or formed part of the project plan, are not eligible for funding under this program.
Research activities	Project activities focused solely on research or data collection that do not directly contribute to on-ground outcomes are not eligible for funding under this program. 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.
Salaries for permanent staff	Salaries of staff who have a permanent employment relationship with your organisation (i.e. to whom your organisation is already contracted to pay a salary) are not eligible to be covered by Trust funds. The only exception is if the staff member is part-time but is now able to take on more hours to coordinate the project. In that case, Trust funds can be used to pay salary that covers the additional hours during which the staff member undertakes project-related work.
Stewardship, subsidy or incentive payments	Stewardship, subsidy or incentive payments, including monetary compensation to organisations or individuals for maintaining or improving the environmental values of their land, are not eligible for funding under this program. Payments made as incentives to landholders for environmental stewardship are not permitted under this program. Program funding must be managed directly by the organisation or their appointed administrator.
Weed management	Project activities that focus on implementing weed control activities covered by Biosecurity Directions or Biosecurity Undertakings under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* are ineligible for funding under this program. These weeds fall under the core responsibility of landowners and are enforceable by local control authorities. Weed control activities aimed at achieving economic outcomes, such as addressing issues that impact primary production, are also ineligible for funding under this program. For links to resources regarding weed management, please see Section 6: More information.

Figure 1. Application assessment process.

1 Applications to the program close at **5 pm on Thursday 31 July 2025.** All applications submitted will receive an email notification acknowledging receipt and providing a unique reference number.

2 Our staff assess each application against the eligibility criteria detailed in Section 2 of this document.

3 All applications received are provided to the independent technical review committee (the committee) with a report on eligibility as well as any past performance on previous or current grants. The committee assesses each application and uses scoring to rank applications. A committee report is prepared for the Trust that recommends projects for funding.

4 The Trust considers the committee's recommendations and selects which projects to fund.

5 Applicants are notified soon after and the process of preparing funding agreements commences.

Technical review committee

We have established an independent technical review committee for each grant program. Committee members are people with knowledge and experience relevant to each grant program. They include at least one community and one industry representative. The Protecting Our Places Technical Review Committee comprises majority Aboriginal members, including an Aboriginal chairperson.

Successful applicants may be announced by the Minister for the Environment. A summary of the project is published on the Environmental Trust's Protecting Our Places webpage.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by the Aboriginal program officer with feedback.

Assessment criteria

Grants are awarded through a merit-based selection process that spans the entire state. All projects will be evaluated based on specific program assessment criteria. The committee is responsible for assessing each application against the criteria detailed below.

You should prepare your application with these criteria in mind.

Tangible environmental outcome
- Clear explanation of the environmental issue to be addressed.
- Demonstrated need for the project and appropriateness of proposed actions.
- Makes a clear contribution toward the Protecting Our Places program objectives.
- Demonstrates knowledge of key environmental and cultural elements associated with the project.

Project activities and outcome
- Illustrates understanding of proposed activities that clearly target the expected outcomes.
- Demonstrates long-term benefits that will be maintained beyond the life of the grant.
- Demonstrates how it will prioritise the employment of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal-owned businesses.

Capacity to deliver
- Commitment to undertake the project in accordance with our requirements and expectations.
- Involvement of appropriate project partners.
- Community involvement and understanding of how this will be achieved.

Value for money

- Budget shows an understanding of project activities and the viability of the project overall.
- The likely environmental benefit of the proposal relative to the amount of grant funds.
- Budget items are reasonable and have considered current market rates.

Past performance

When assessing applications from returning grantees, the technical review committee may consider past performance. If you have successfully delivered a Trust grant project or are currently delivering a Trust grant project effectively, this may be favourable to your application. Similarly, the risks of funding an applicant that has struggled to deliver projects in the past may be considered, and these risks may be addressed by including specific conditions in the funding agreement to support applicants looking to improve this time around.

Requirements to advance to Stage 2

Projects are not guaranteed to progress to Stage 2 unless they satisfy the requirements and expectations of Stage 1 including:

- attendance and participation in both capacity-building workshops (2 days each)
- completion of a comprehensive project implementation plan.

Project implementation plan

The project implementation plan is a project management tool which will be your work plan to define and plan your project's activities, including:

- the desired outcomes to be achieved, including environmental and cultural aspects
- the specifics of each activity, including what will be done, when it will occur and who will be responsible
- the approach for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the activities.

The project implementation plan develops from your application to expand, refine and schedule all the project activities you will complete throughout the whole project.

We will collaborate with you at the capacity-building workshops to guide the development of your project implementation plan.
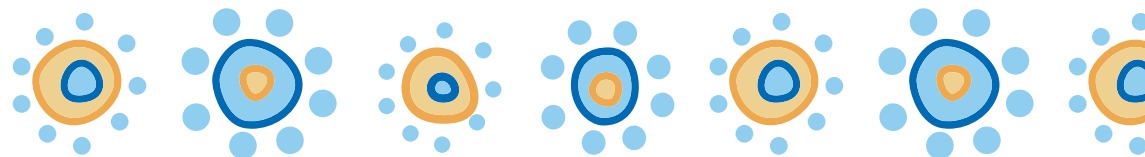
Project implementation plan review

At the end of Stage 1, we will review the project implementation plan to determine if you are ready to progress to Stage 2. We may involve independent reviewers to assist us. These reviewers are familiar with the Protecting Our Places program. Once your project implementation plan is approved, you will receive your next payment and can then proceed with your on-ground activities.

When reviewing the project implementation plan, reviewers are looking for:

- an appropriate budget within the requirements of the program
- well planned project activities with clear outcomes
- monitoring and evaluation activities
- broad engagement and community involvement
- a suitable team to deliver the project including a project manager, required staff and/or other resourcing such as contractors
- effective collaboration with project partners.

Partnerships

Each project is required to have an Aboriginal organisation as the grantee. If appropriate, you are encouraged to apply for a grant in partnership with other relevant stakeholders (i.e. local council, Local Land Service, the department) rather than as a single organisation. Careful consideration is advised when entering into any commercial agreements or arrangements. We cannot become involved in disputes or issues that might arise during the project.

All project partners must have a demonstrated, tangible role in the project's delivery with roles and responsibilities identified and agreed to, preferably under a memorandum of understanding or similar. This may be developed during the Stage 1 – Planning phase.

You can seek assistance from other parties to develop and complete your application; however, any costs associated with this assistance cannot be reimbursed using Trust funds. In addition, the provider who assisted with the project application should not expect to be automatically awarded contracts to complete project activities. They may not be the most experienced or cost-effective option and it is your responsibility as a grantee to ensure only the most suitable suppliers are contracted to complete project activities.

Program governance (probity)

We place high importance on the integrity and transparency of program and project governance. All funded projects must be delivered in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements, as well as other accepted governance and project management standards. Value for money in project delivery is also a significant priority for the Trust.

Monitoring and evaluation

It is important to incorporate monitoring and evaluation activities into your project implementation plan to measure and demonstrate environmental improvements. Regular monitoring and evaluation will provide the opportunity to make adjustments as needed, improving outcomes. A Monitoring directory for ecological restoration and social activities can be found in Section 6: More information.

We have minimum standards for monitoring projects depending on the nature of the work. For most projects, photographic monitoring is essential. This could occur before and after planting, fencing, cultural burns and regeneration activities. Site mapping, Aboriginal cultural assessments and environmental assessments can be used as a benchmark to monitor project progress.

Project evaluation should occur as part of your project's annual review and reporting process. This may involve your organisation and project partners/stakeholders examining the implementation of your plan over the previous year, assessing strengths and weaknesses and then integrating improvements/changes to both activities and timing in the following year's work plan. Relevant information generated during these sessions should be included in your annual report submitted to us.

Getting started

If you are successful in receiving a Protecting Our Places grant, we anticipate that you will be notified by December 2025.

The Aboriginal program officer will send you a funding agreement which we ask you to review, sign and return within 30 working days. This will allow time for you to check your capacity to deliver the project (as outlined in your application), prepare an invoice for your first payment and ask any questions you may have about the agreement.

Important things to note:

- You must not start Stage 1 – Planning activities until after the Aboriginal program officer has acknowledged receipt of your signed funding agreement and an invoice.

- You will need to identify at least 2 key project personnel who would be available to attend the capacity-building workshops in early 2026. You will be prompted to tell us who they are in your application form. These people need to be involved in the ongoing management of the project and understand the project objectives. At least one attendee should be comfortable using a computer.

During your project

At the end of the Stage 1 – Planning phase, you will be required to submit your completed project implementation plan. We will review and approve this before you can progress to Stage 2.

The project implementation plan contains the reports to be completed and submitted to us by the due dates outlined in the funding agreement. Progress reports allow you to provide updates to us on activities, achievements and expenditure, in line with approved project activities and measures. Each progress and final report, as well as your budget spreadsheet, is reviewed by an independent reviewer who has technical expertise and is familiar with the Protecting Our Places program.

It is important that you retain receipts for all project expenditure.

If your progress report demonstrates that your project is progressing well, the next instalment of your grant will be authorised by the Aboriginal program officer and you will be provided with feedback from the reviewer.

If it is considered that your project is underperforming, funding instalments may be withheld while you work with the Aboriginal program officer to identify and implement strategies to bring the project back on track.

We recognise that variations to your project are sometimes required, and we are available at any time throughout your project to discuss these. We are here to help you succeed.

Completing your project

When your project is complete, you are required to submit a final report reflecting on achievements.

The final report should include other supporting documentation to demonstrate your project's outcomes. You will also need to include the Report of Factual Findings from an independent accountant to certify your expenditure and financial report. $2,000 of the grant has been quarantined for this purpose. We may also ask that you submit receipts and invoices demonstrating your project expenditure with your final report.

We will provide you with feedback on your project based on the reviewer's findings, and formally acquit your grant.

Program evaluation

We coordinate an independent evaluation of all grant programs to assess their effectiveness in achieving outcomes, evaluate their efficiency and identify areas for improvement. Regular evaluations of the Protecting Our Places program are essential to maintaining a relevant and effective grant program. Feedback from past and current grantees is an essential part of this and there is an expectation that grantees will participate in the evaluation process.

Privacy

We use the information supplied to us 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* (refer to Section 6: More information for the link) or other lawful requirements.

We may also disclose information that you supply to us to evaluate our grant programs. If you require strict commercial and/or personal confidentiality, you should address this in your application.

We understand Protecting Our Places projects often involve culturally sensitive knowledge and sites. We do not ask or expect applicants or grantees to include culturally sensitive information in their submissions.

Protecting Our Places program resources

- Application form 2025
- Application guide 2025
- Sample letter of support and tips 2025
- Sample letter of endorsement and tips 2025
- NSW Environmental Trust – Protecting Our Places grants awarded and project summaries

Environmental Trust resources

- NSW Environmental Trust Strategic Plan 2024 to 2029
- Financial reporting to the NSW Environmental Trust – Final financial reporting
- Role of the external manager tips and information
- Guide to monitoring NSW Environmental Trust grants using mapping
- Monitoring directory for ecological restoration and social activities
- Good practices in riparian rehabilitation

Other government resources

- AHIMS Aboriginal Site Recording database
- Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
- NSW Government's Heritage website
- Licences for working or living with threatened species
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (PDF 1.25MB)
- Australian Government – Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations
- NSW Incorporated Associations
- NSW Registered Native Title Body Corporates
- Non-distributing NSW Co-operatives
- Regional Strategic Weed Management Plans – Local Land Services
- WeedWise webpage
- Native plant and animal licensing – NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Non-government resources

- Wildlife-friendly fencing and netting webpage
- Wingecarribee Shire Council nest box guide (PDF 737KB)
- Learning from nest boxes – monitoring and storing data (PDF 716KB)
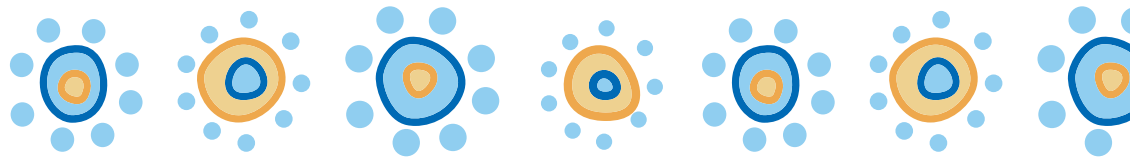- Climate-ready revegetation guide

Remember

Closing date: 5 pm Thursday 31 July 2025

If you have any questions, please contact the Trust:

Telephone: 02 8837 6093

Email: info@environmentaltrust.nsw.gov.au

About the cultural illustrations and stories

We valued the collaborative process to design this document alongside the team at Yirra Miya, a First Nations creative agency. The cultural illustrations were developed by First Nations Cultural Designer Lauren Henry, a Wodi Wodi and Walbunja person from the Yuin Nation of the south coast of New South Wales. We have shared the stories to support the understanding and recognition of their significance throughout this document.

When Country is well, so are we

This element represents the Protecting Our Places program, which is to restore healthy Country. Each component of this element contributes to represent the vast landscapes across New South Wales.

A mountain sits at the centre to represent land, but also the journey of the Protecting Our Places program, representing the program's strength and resilience, as well as its sheer determination to make a positive impact on the environment. Underneath the mountain lie connected watering holes to represent the different bodies of water throughout New South Wales, whether that be oceans, rivers, lakes and dams. The people surrounding these watering holes represent caring for Country. The kangaroo and emu tracks below the watering holes represent some of the different fauna living on our lands. The sun represents life and warmth, and the importance that the sun plays in our ecosystems and environments, with the stars representing our night skies.

Ripple of impact
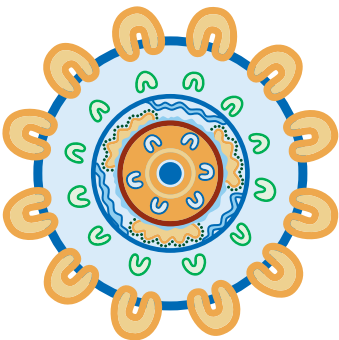
This element reflects the ripple effect of the impact of the Protecting Our Places program. At the centre of the yarning circle is a layer of people that represent the Protecting Our Places program and team. This is a place where the hard work, dedication of the team and their ability to listen, learn and reflect on knowledge to make the program more efficient is represented. The next layer (working its way outwards) is reflective of the different landscapes, with the Country lines representative of New South Wales (which is made up of many different Countries). The next layer of people represent the grantees that obtain funding through the program. These people are the experts of their Country and knowledge holders of cultural protocol. These are the people that are making a positive impact for their communities and are committing to care for their Countries in a way that is respectful and thoughtful. The outer layer of people represents the wider community and the impact of the program across New South Wales as a whole. This element is reflective of the Protecting Our Places program and the ripple effect from the immediate Protecting Our Places team through to the grantees and through to the wider community.

Cultural knowledge

This element represent the decades worth of cultural knowledge that is behind our people as they care for Country across New South Wales and highlights the Protecting Our Places program's understanding of how vital this information is to care for Country collaboratively. This element shows a person symbol reflective of how through our people, cultural knowledge, lore and protocols we can continue to care for Country and utilise traditional ways of healing.

Working from the bottom left side of the element are stars, to represent that throughout our time on this land, we are guided by our Ancestors. The different journey lines represent that by working collaboratively (whether that be government, stakeholders, grantees or community) we can care for and make a positive impact on our environment. The people symbols represent our communities' cultural connections to people, land and lore. The eucalyptus leaves represent growth, from planting the initial seed of the program, to the impact it is having currently and will have in the future as it continues to grow. The connected watering holes represent the sharing of knowledge, flowing from one space to another. Similarly this flow-on effect is shared through Protecting Our Places resources and information, then shared with grantees, and through the grantees to their communities to ensure environmental benefit.
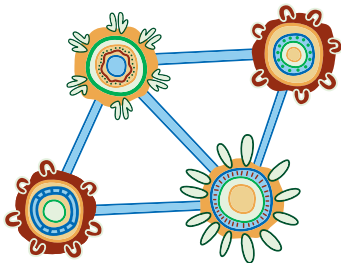
Partnerships for environmental benefit

This element highlights the importance and vitality of having meaningful relationships to create positive change, restore healthy Country and create a network of services, stakeholders and community that care for Country. These meeting places represent a place where connections can be made, not limited to government bodies, but to create a network reflective of one shared outcome: restore Country. These meeting places represent government, grantees, and community working collaboratively to learn information, reflect and action their learnings to contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of our lands. Although the partnerships may not physically be facilitated by the Protecting Our Places program, the program aims to connect like-minded grantees that service the same lands to learn more about their Country at an expert level to be able to culturally care for Country in a safe way. This network provides a safe environment for grantees to learn, be connected with professionals and provides an opportunity to share knowledge with community. Two meeting places are surrounded with people to represent that to have the biggest impact on our environment, we must work together. The yarning circle with the knowledge sticks represents the vitality of cultural practices and traditional methods of caring for Country. The meeting place with the kangaroo tracks represents that through every stage of moving forward, the Protecting Our Places program is providing culturally safe and expert information to grantees.
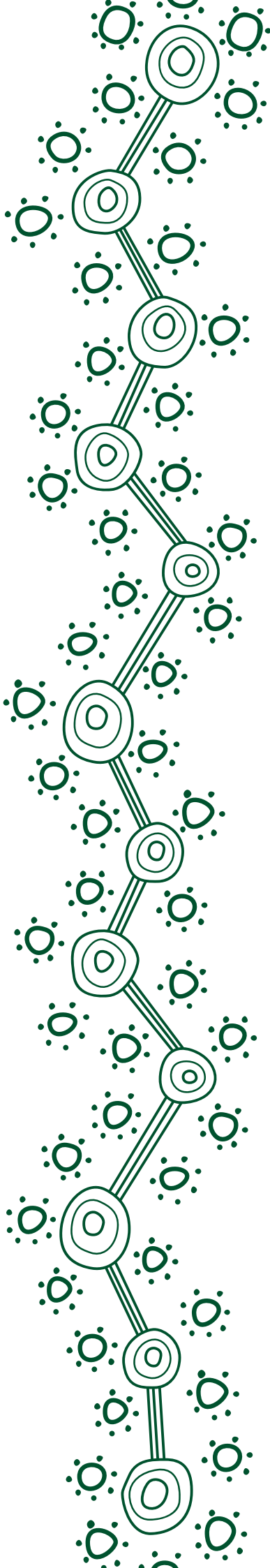
Country

This element represents the impact of the Protecting Our Places program and the vitality of the program in empowering our grantees to create positive change. There are different Country lines to represent that through connecting and collaborating with First Nations people, Protecting Our Places can provide care and guidance on best practice to care for land.

At the top of the element are stars to represent our skies and the importance of learning about Country, acknowledging that through cultural ways, each Country has different cultural lore and protocols to follow. The connected meeting places represent that across New South Wales there are many mobs that care for our land. By intertwining traditional and modern ways of caring for Country we can make the biggest impact for positive environmental change. The cross hatching represents our inland Countries, with the kangaroo tracks below moving forward. This represents forward momentum, that through working collaboratively grantees are provided the tools they need to move forward to care for Country.

The cross hatching in this element has been created by Wiradjuri artist Leticia Forbes in collaborative nature with Wodi Wodi & Walbunja artist Lauren Henry.

Aboriginal cultural illustrations:
The Aboriginal cultural illustrations and symbolism in this document have been developed by Yirra Miya and are protected by Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights. These Aboriginal cultural illustrations have been created for the department and are unique to the Protecting our Places program. Where appropriate, the individual illustrations displayed on page 39–41 may be used as a whole by the department. However, to maintain and respect the authenticity and cultural meaning behind the works, other graphic elements are not to be used, altered or changed without first consulting Yirra Miya. Before using these other graphic elements, please obtain approval from admin@yirramiya.com.au.

Photos:
Front and Back Cover: Flowering river red gum, Macquarie Marshes (Nicola Brookhouse/DCCEEW); **Page i:** Southern lagoons from helicopter, Macquarie Marshes (Nicola Brookhouse/DCCEEW); **Page ii and iii:** Dorrigo Rainforest Centre, Dorrigo National Park (John Spencer/DCCEEW); **Page 2 and Page 8:** *Pilotus obovatus* (silver tails), also known as smoke or cotton bush. Western Ridge walking track western plains view, Mutawintji National Park (John Spencer/DCCEEEW); **Page 3:** Kookaburra, *Dacelo novaeguineae*, Barrington Tops National Park (John Spencer/DCCEEW); **Page 4:** Fire regrowth, Kosciuszko National Park (John Spencer/DCCEEW); **Page 6:** *Eucalyptus pauciflora* (snow gum or white sally), Cabramurra, Kosciuszko National Park (Murray Vanderveer/DCCEEW); **Page 10:** Morton National Park (Cody Langley/DCCEEW); **Page 11 and Page 13:** Pinnacles Loop walking track, Beowa National Park (John Spencer/DCCEEW); **Page 14:** Yarrangobilly mountain gum regrowth after bushfire March 2020 (Adam Klumper/DCCEEW); **Page 27:** Glossy black-cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*) (Alex Pike/DCCEEW); **Page 29:** Aerial photo of Polblue Swamp, Barrington Tops National Park (John Spencer/DCCEEW); **Page 31 and Page 33:** Lichen, Barrington Tops National Park (John Spencer/DCCEEW); **Page 32:** Red kangaroo, JumpUp Loop Road drive, Sturt National Park (John Spencer/DCCEEW); **Page 35:** Ginghet Creek at Cresswell, Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserve (Nicola Brookhouse/DCCEEW); **Page 37:** Macquarie River in flood, Macquarie Marshes (Nicola Brookhouse/DCCEEW).

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