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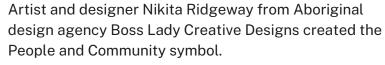
We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

Find out more at:

environment.nsw.gov.au

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Part 1: About the program

These guidelines provide information on the NSW Environmental Trust's Environmental Education Grants Program. The guidelines include descriptions of the types of organisations eligible for funding, program priorities and the types of activities the program funds. They also set out how the Trust assesses applications and what to expect if we award a grant for your project.

The NSW Environmental Trust

The Trust is an independent statutory body set up by the NSW Government under the *Environmental Trust Act 1988* to fund projects that enhance and protect the State's environment. The Trust's main responsibility is to provide and oversee grant funding.

The Trust 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; local government; the Nature Conservation Council of NSW; and NSW Treasury. The Trust is administered by the department.

Implementing the Trust's Strategic Plan

NSW Environmental Trust Strategic Plan 2024 to 2029 sets out 3 strategic priorities:

1. **Healthy Country** – enhancing Aboriginal peoples' role in environmental management by supporting traditional knowledge and practices
2. **Ecosystem and biodiversity restoration** – focusing on species resilience, climate adaptation and ecosystem health
3. **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. They aim to drive meaningful environmental progress. They will serve as a framework to guide the Trust's grant-funding decisions over the next 4 years.

The Environmental Education Grants Program

The Environmental Education Grants Program (the program) is a contestable grants program funded by the Trust. The program funds projects that build people's skills and capacity to adopt sustainable behaviours and contribute to protecting and improving the environment.

Program objectives

The program objectives are to:

- drive change in people's behaviour and practices to improve on-ground environmental outcomes
- build people's skills to deliver environmental outcomes.

The program funds projects that:

- work with the target audience to co-design and pilot engagement strategies
- create effective strategic partnerships that strengthen project outcomes
- measure and demonstrate the impact of their project activities.

Application process

Step 1: Review program guidelines

Download and read the program guidelines (this document).

The *Environmental Education* webpage provides links to key resources to help applicants develop and submit an application.

These resources include:

- *How to develop your project 2025*
- access to the Grant Management System (GMS), to register and submit your application
- information on previously funded projects
- a sample workplan
- online workshops (voluntary) to support applicants in developing project proposals.

Step 2: Confirm eligibility

- Check your organisation is eligible (refer to 'Part 3: Eligibility').
- Check your project is suitable for this program (refer to 'Part 6: Eligible and ineligible activities').

Step 3: Complete and submit your application

Access the Grant Management System (GMS) via the Environmental Education program webpage to register and complete your application.

If you wish to register for an online applicant workshop, see 'Part 10: Resources'.

For help, contact us

Telephone 02 8837 6093

Email   info@environmentaltrust.nsw.gov.au

Part 2: About this round

Important dates

- Applications open 22 September 2025
- Applications close 5 pm, 11 November 2025
- Successful grant projects announced April to May 2026
- Projects start from August to September 2026

Funding available

Two funding tiers are available to support projects with different levels of complexity and duration:

- Tier 1 – Up to $60,000 is available in funding for projects of between 2 and 3 years
- Tier 2 – $60,000 to $250,000 for projects of between 3 and 5 years.

Tier 1

Tier 1 provides grants of up to $60,000 for projects between 2 and 3 years. This stream is best suited to local projects that address small-scale issues.

Tier 1 projects are expected to:

- achieve environmental outcomes aligned with one of the themes of the Trust's strategic plan
- engage with the target audience, invite their feedback, and adapt delivery of the project based on the lessons learnt
- move beyond 'delivering workshops' and 'raising knowledge and awareness,' and instead deliver more engaging, hands-on activities that drive action, behaviour change, and achieve measurable environmental outcomes
- allow for innovative ideas
- measure and report on target audience participation, and what they do differently because of the project
- provide evidence of the differences the project has made in the environment.

Tier 2

Tier 2 provides grants of between $60,001 and $250,000 for projects between 3 and 5 years. These projects address more complex and enduring environmental problems at greater scale.

Tier 2 projects are expected to:

- achieve environmental outcomes aligned with one of the themes of the Trust's strategic plan
- use social research and co-design in projects to engage more deeply with the target audience, and ensure solutions are well targeted and fit people's real-life needs

- pilot ideas through small-scale field tests or prototypes
- make changes based what has been learnt though co-design and field testing, and then implement the tried-and-tested educational framework more broadly
- take risks and trial innovative ideas
- move beyond 'delivering workshops' and 'raising knowledge and awareness,' and instead deliver more dynamic, engaging, hands-on activities that drive action, behaviour change, systemic changes, and achieve measurable environmental outcomes
- leave a sustained legacy that achieves long-term shifts in behaviours and systems
- measure and report on the impact of the project on the environment and changes to organisational or human systems.

Grantees will work with us and with leading environmental education and behaviour change experts in planning before implementing projects.

All applicants should read and consider *Creating change through your environmental education project* before applying. See 'Part 10: Resources'.

Application limits

Organisations may lodge a maximum of 2 applications for Tier 1 funding and one application for Tier 2 funding.

Part 3: Eligibility

Applicant eligibility

Lead applicant

Each proposal requires a lead applicant organisation. Lead applicants must be based in New South Wales or be able to demonstrate environmental benefits for New South Wales.

If successful in securing a grant, the lead applicant will be responsible for project delivery, administration and finance requirements, and overseeing the performance of collaborators.

Eligible applicants

The following not-for-profit organisations are eligible to apply for funding:

- incorporated associations, community organisations, and non-profit organisations
- non-commercial cooperatives
- state government agencies and statutory committees
- councils
- universities
- regional organisations of councils
- NSW local Aboriginal land councils
- Registered NSW Aboriginal corporations
- other local government-controlled organisations
- companies limited by guarantee.

Ineligible applicants

The Trust will not fund:

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

Australian Business Number

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

Options for ineligible organisations

Unincorporated community organisations can apply for grant funding only if they partner with an eligible organisation, referred to as an 'external manager'. The external

manager must meet the eligibility criteria outlined above and will be responsible for managing the grant funds.

The external manager will sign the funding agreement together with the grantee.

The grantee remains the lead decision maker and will control the project's activities and outcomes.

Grant payments are made to the external manager, and they will manage all financial transactions on the grantee's behalf. They will also prepare financial reports in line with the funding agreement, oversee the use of the funds and help with reporting.

There should be an agreement in place between the grantee and the external manager. This will ensure a shared understanding of accountability for the project's management and reporting. (Refer to *Tips on working with an external manager* in 'Part 10: Resources'.)

Past performance

When assessing eligibility, we will review applicant past performance with previous grants and any history of non-compliance with legal or regulatory obligations. Positive past performance is also taken into consideration.

If past performance suggests there may be risks to the project's success, you may be asked to respond to these concerns. The response will be considered alongside the application. Special conditions may be added to the funding agreement to address any issues.

Part 4: Project requirements

Budget requirements

Budget structure

Funding for Milestone 1 must reflect the field testing and research needed to establish the framework for education that you will deliver more broadly later in the project. For more information, read *How to develop your project 2025* 'Part 3: Project rationale, Field testing your educational framework'.

The budget for Milestone 1 should not exceed 50% of the total grant amount to ensure that sufficient funds are available in later milestones for upscaling delivery of education.

Goods and services tax

If you are registered for goods and services tax (GST), the dollar amounts in your application budget should **not** include GST. We will pay GST in addition to your grant if your organisation is registered for GST (except for government bodies).

If you are not registered for GST and are administering your own grant, the amount requested from the Trust should include any GST which may be payable.

Consumer price index

Budget items must account for estimated increases in the consumer price index for each project year.

Salary on-costs

Salary on-costs may be included in salary costs. These include leave loading, workers compensation, payroll tax and superannuation. This should not exceed 26.5% of the salary.

Project administration

Project-related administration cannot exceed 10% of the total grant funds.

In-kind contributions

Include all in-kind contributions in your budget. This includes goods, use of services and facilities, volunteer time, professional services or expertise in the form of staff time, provision of or access to equipment, and special materials or material contributions pledged by project partner organisations (including your own) towards the project.

Salaries for existing staff can be factored into the project as an in-kind contribution.

End-of-project financial certification

Government and universities

Final financial reports must be certified by your chief financial officer or their delegate. The certifier must have authority to certify expenditure on behalf of your organisation.

Non-government organisations

All non-government organisations must allocate funds for their project expenditure to be certified by an independent certifier at the completion of the project, to be submitted with the final report. We encourage you to investigate the costs of financial certification and include it in your budget.

A member of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, Certified Practising Accountants Australia or the Institute of Public Accountants must certify your financial report and submit a Report on Factual Findings in accordance with Australian Auditing Standard ASRS 4400 *Agreed-upon procedures engagements to report factual findings*. The certifier should not be a member of your organisation.

The certifying accountant should also provide a Report on Factual Findings declaring that:

- the financial report accurately reflects income and expenditure for the project
- all payments were supported by adequate documentation to show that expenditure was for bona fide goods and services related to the project.

Part 5: Best practice environmental education

We fund projects that deliver lasting, environmentally sustainable systemic and behaviour change. Our projects create educational resources that continue to deliver environmental outcomes after the project ends.

An overview of the theoretical framework that underpins the Environmental Education Grants Program is provided in *Creating change through your environmental education project*. (See 'Part 10: Resources'.**)**

Guiding principles of environmental education projects

Successful environmental education projects use these guiding principles to deliver effective and impactful outcomes.

Environmental outcome

- Identify and understand the environmental problem being addressed. (Who/what is causing it? What needs to change?)
- Clearly demonstrate how the project will improve the environmental problem.

Needs of the target audience

- Identify the target audience (Who are they? Where are they located? Why target them?)
- Explore the target audience needs (What are their typical behaviours, characteristics and values? What influence do they have on the environmental problem you are addressing?)
- Consider appropriate ways to engage and educate the target audience. What is most likely to resonate with them?
- Test your assumptions about methods of engagement that will work with your target audience. Through a co-design process, work with them to design and test educational resources that will be more effective and more impactful.

Collaboration

- Engage with relevant collaborators (project partners) who can help you plan and deliver your project, and who can provide expertise.
- Establish how collaborators can add value to the scoping, implementation, evaluation and sharing of the project outcomes.
- Show how collaborators will actively help you to deliver the project.

Capacity building

- Design activities that will enhance the skills and capacity of the target audience and your collaborators.

- Consider what supports and systemic changes your target audience and collaborators will need to support sustained behaviour change.

Evaluation and sharing of project outcomes

- Identify evaluation techniques that measure changes in the behaviours and practices of the target audience and the impact that has on the environment.
- Ensure continuous improvement based on evaluation of your findings.
- Share education and engagement outcomes with others (for example, approaches, tools or resources that can help drive change elsewhere).
- Plan actions that will keep the project on track, for example, quarterly review with collaborators.

For tips and examples on designing a best practice environmental education project, read *Creating change through your environmental education project* (see 'Part 10: Resources').

Target audience

The target audience is the demographic that you will engage. Applicants should carefully consider a community's characteristics, including location, needs, values, motivations, culture and interests. Consider what will enable them to contribute towards the environmental outcome you want to achieve. Identify in your workplan the behaviours you want them to adopt. For examples, see *How to develop your project 2025* 'Part 3: Project rationale'.

Collaborators

Collaborators are project partners that are external to the lead applicant's organisation. They are a valuable source of expertise and skills to ensure the long-term success of a project. They can also help lead applicants reach their target audiences.

Lead applicants must engage collaborators as part of developing an application and, if awarded a grant, maintain their active involvement during delivery of the project. Consider how you will develop strong and lasting partnerships.

Part 6: Eligible and ineligible activities

2025 funding themes

Successful proposals will align with the priority themes in *NSW Environmental Trust Strategic Plan 2024 to 2029*. Your application should show how your project will help improve environmental outcomes in New South Wales in relation to the priority themes of the strategic plan.

Your proposal may align with more than one priority theme; however, you must identify the theme it most strongly relates to.

We encourage all applicants to partner with Aboriginal organisations and stakeholders. If your project will draw on Aboriginal knowledge or practices, it is mandatory to partner with relevant Aboriginal organisations or stakeholders, and your application should demonstrate this.

Table 1   Priority themes

1: Prioritise healthy Country and recognise and value Aboriginal peoples, their traditional knowledge and practices, and connection to Country			
Recognise and demonstrate the value of Aboriginal traditional knowledge and practices and the important role they play in creating healthy Country and supporting wellbeing.	Provide support, resources and opportunities to empower Aboriginal people to connect to and manage Country and enhance community wellbeing.	Create opportunities for Aboriginal people to effectively manage waterways, wetlands and groundwater on Country.	Recognise the value of culturally significant species and the role of Aboriginal peoples in their conservation.
2: Restore ecosystems and biodiversity			
Support native species adaptation, genetic diversity, and resilience to the impacts of climate change.	Mitigate the impacts of urbanisation on waterways and wetlands.	Improve the resilience of ecosystems to adapt to the impacts of climate change.	Support restoration of natural flow to improve ecological functions and riparian condition.
3: Strengthen environmental management			
Improve monitoring practices and data management for better environmental outcomes.	Improve cross-tenure connectivity to support holistic ecosystem restoration.	Increase land managers' capacity to improve environmental outcomes and natural resource management practices.	Improve knowledge and understanding of plant and animal diseases to inform management actions.

Eligible activities

Table 2 provides examples of activities that may be funded through the program.

Further guidance and examples to help applicants link practical activities to the immediate funding priorities are available in the *How to develop your project 2025* (see 'Part 10: Resources').

Table 2   Activities eligible for funding

Item	Description
Administration and accounting	Capped at 10% of the total grant amount. Administration expenses are office-related overheads specifically associated with the delivery of a project. For example, this could include end-of-project financial certification costs, purchase of consumables, postage costs, etc.
Consultancies and contractors	Appointment of external specialists (for example, videographers, website or app designers). Procurement of contractors should consider prioritising local contractors to support the community and reduce transport impacts. Include clear performance expectations and monitoring procedures in the contract to assess contractor effectiveness and project success.
Educational resources	Materials and production costs to create project-specific resources (for example, booklets, signage, app and website development). Note: Trust funding cannot be used for general organisational app and website development costs, including ongoing maintenance of these platforms.

Employment of project staff (either in-house through salary plus on-costs, or an externally appointed contractor)	Staff may be employed with the use of project funds either via:
	• a merit-based, advertised, recruitment process for a new staff member, or
	• direct appointment of an existing staff member who:
	  – now has additional capacity to be appointed to the project under a new contract, or
	  – is part-time and being employed for additional hours.
	Alternatively, a contractor can be appointed to manage the project – refer to 'Consultancies and contractors' above.

Facilities hire	Rental of appropriate spaces to facilitate project delivery to its target audiences. This may also include licensing for digital platforms to deliver content (for example, Microsoft Teams, Zoom).
Internal capacity building	Training and up-skilling of project staff in specialist areas required to successfully deliver project components (for example, costs related to short courses, seminars or training).
On-ground activity demonstrations	Production of demonstration materials associated with educational outcomes (for example, GPS trackers, cameras for monitoring wildlife). Where possible, the grantee is encouraged to hire or borrow these materials.

Item	Description
Promotion and media	Costs associated with promotion of a project, event or outcome (for example, advertising to promote participation in activities).
Project-related research and social research	Social research to understand the needs and behaviours of the target audience (for example, desktop research, surveys, focus groups), to gain knowledge and adapt project delivery accordingly. Research such as mapping, surveys and photo-point monitoring must be used to demonstrate project outcomes or contribute to demonstrating effectiveness of on-ground works and behaviour change.
Transport and accommodation	Domestic travel and related logistics required for successful project delivery (for example, overnight accommodation for guest speakers at events). To improve equity outcomes and better support research in remote locations, applicants are encouraged to include realistic travel costs for work in remote locations.

Ineligible activities

Table 3 sets out activities that will not be funded.

Table 3   Activities not eligible for grant funding

Item	Description
Administration costs that exceed 10% of the total grant, or are not project related	Organisational operating costs not directly related to the project. Project-related administration cannot exceed 10% of the total grant funds.
Aesthetics, amenity and recreation	Activities focused solely on improving aesthetics, local amenity, or recreational opportunities. The Trust's funding is intended to support projects that deliver positive environmental outcomes for New South Wales with a clear focus on conservation, restoration, rehabilitation and protection of natural ecosystems.
Capital expenditure	Infrastructure and large capital items (for example, vehicles, construction, buildings, machinery, amenities). Small capital equipment purchases are allowed if you can demonstrate this is more cost effective than leasing the equipment for the life of the project. Costs for capital items should generally not exceed 20% of the total project budget.

Item	Description
Core business	Activities that are the core responsibility of local or state government authorities or educational institutions. 'Core business' can be difficult to define as it varies between organisations but generally it is the essential or legal responsibility of an organisation. The Trust can fund work that relates to core business, but it must be additional to the organisation's usual work or responsibilities.
Cost recoupment	Activities that have begun before the grant is offered and accepted, and a funding agreement has been signed. This includes application development.
Cost shifting	Reimbursement of salaries of existing staff, unless it can be demonstrated that salaries have not already been budgeted for (see *How to develop your project 2025* in 'Part 8: Resources').
Data collection/non-project-related research without application	Surveys or research to gather data or information beyond the research needed to deliver and demonstrate the outcomes of your project. Data or information collected must directly contribute in a meaningful way to delivery of the project and evaluation of its outcomes.
Devolved grants	Projects that fund devolved grants (that is, projects offering grants to other organisations, or funds or grants administered by a third party that is not an approved external manager). The Trust's funds must be managed directly by the lead organisation or their external manager and must not be managed by third parties. Lump-sum payments cannot be made directly to project partners or stakeholders. The grantee or the external manager must organise, manage and pay for project activities directly. All financial transactions must be managed in line with the approved budget.
Lethal control of pest animal management	Lethal control methods, including shooting, trapping, or any measures that harm or kill animals. Strategic, long-term control, exclusion and monitoring of feral pest animal species through non-lethal, physical

Item	Description
	interventions are eligible activities under this grant.
Maintenance, existing commitments	Maintenance of projects previously undertaken. This includes existing commitments that organisations have agreed to be responsible for as part of previous grants.
International travel	Overseas travel including flights and accommodation expenses.
Salary on-costs that exceed 26.5%	Salary on-costs that exceed 26.5% of the salary. Salary on-costs include superannuation, leave loading, workers compensation and payroll tax.
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. Payments made as incentives to landholders for environmental stewardship are not permitted.

Part 7: Application and assessment

Applications must be submitted using the online Grant Management System (GMS).

- Projects must start between 1 August 2026 and 30 September 2026.
- Tier 1 projects must end no later than 31 January 2029.
- Tier 2 projects must end no later than 31 January 2031.

Table 4   **Grant round timeframes**

Step	Timeframe	Process
1	22 September 2025	Applications open.
2	11 November 2025	Applications close.
3	November 2025 to January 2026	The technical review committee reviews each application and recommends projects for funding.
4	February to March 2026	The Trust reviews the committee's recommendations and makes the final decision on which applications will receive funding. Decisions by the Trust are final. There is no appeal process.
5	April 2026 to May 2026	We notify successful applicants. The amount granted may be less than the original request, and funding may be subject to special conditions. A summary of each successful project is published on our website. Unsuccessful applicants are advised of the outcome and encouraged to contact us for feedback on their application.
6	June 2026 to July 2026	Project planning proceeds (including mandatory workshops for Tier 2 grantees) to support grantees in reviewing and refining their workplans. Funding agreements are issued and first payments made.
7	August 2026 to September 2026	Projects start.

Assessment criteria and process

We assess all applications against the criteria outlined in Table 5. After individual assessment, the technical review committee meets to discuss and agree on which projects will be recommended to the Trust for funding.

Table 5   Assessment criteria

	Criteria
Criterion 1: Environmental outcome (scored out of 10)	• Clear explanation of the environmental problem to be addressed (that is, the need is clearly demonstrated) • Likelihood the systemic and behaviour changes proposed will make a measurable difference and will contribute towards achieving the outcomes described • The project outcomes are specific and measurable and align with the Trust's 2024 to 2029 strategic plan priorities. Activities that will achieve these outcomes are clearly described in the workplan
Criterion 2: Target audience engagement (scored out of 10)	• Clear description and demonstrated understanding of a target audience that can achieve the environmental outcomes identified • Quality and likely impact of the engagement strategies on the target audience • Extent to which project activities build capacity of the target audience, as well as the applicant and collaborators • The application demonstrates co-design principles have been integrated into the design of the workplan, and there is a clear plan for how the applicant will work with and receive feedback from the target audience • The application clearly describes the changes in behaviours and systems the project will focus on, and the workplan identifies the activities for achieving them
Criterion 3: Project team and collaborators (scored out of 10)	• Relevance and strength of the collaborators' and project team's expertise and experience • Demonstrated engagement of collaborators in developing the proposal, and their participation in the project is evident in workplan activities • Demonstrated commitment of the applicant to continue to support the project's outcomes beyond the life of the grant
Criterion 4: Project planning (scored out of 10)	• The workplan integrates strategies for monitoring and evaluation into project activities. It clearly demonstrates how environmental outcomes, systemic and behaviour changes will be measured, either quantitatively or qualitatively, or both • All risks to successful delivery of the project have been considered, and contingencies to mitigate and manage risks have been put in place • Demonstrated evidence that similar or existing programs or projects are not duplicated (this does not include expansion of pilot projects or implementation of plans developed through previous programs or projects)
Criterion 5: Value for money (scored out of 10)	• Extent to which the budget supports the proposed activities and resources

Criteria
• The likely environmental and sustainability impact of the proposal relative to the amount of grant funds sought
• Project outcomes and resources can be replicated elsewhere
• The applicant has proposed a project budget that clearly describes project costs and demonstrates how Trust funds will be spent. It also provides details about any funds from other sources where relevant, and describes what in-kind contributions can be expected

Part 8: Program governance

Probity

We prioritise strong governance, transparency and integrity in both the program and individual projects.

All funded projects must comply with the legal and regulatory requirements outlined in the funding agreement between the grantee and the Trust. They must also adhere to recognised governance and project management standards.

To ensure this, we conduct regular performance reviews (usually annually). This includes an evaluation of the grantee's compliance with the terms set out in the funding agreement.

Procurement

The Trust prioritises delivering value for money in all projects. This includes ensuring major budget items, like the purchase of materials, recruitment of staff and engagement of contractors, are handled appropriately. Payments for goods and services should be made only after they have been successfully delivered. Grantees are frequently required to submit invoices for purchased materials and completed contract works to verify the achievement of project milestones. Expectations about procurement will be outlined in the funding agreement.

Statement of business ethics

All providers of goods and services, including project managers and project partners, are required to observe the following principles when carrying out work on the funded project:

- help prevent unethical practices in business relationships
- declare actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

All contracted and subcontracted staff, or associated staff, must comply with the *NSW Supplier Code of Conduct* (see 'Part 10: Resources'). Subcontractors must be made aware of this statement and the Trust's expectation that they will abide by it.

Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest occurs when personal, financial or professional interests may influence, or appear to influence, an individual's impartiality in decision-making related to a funded project. To ensure transparency and maintain the integrity of the project, all grantees, project partners, contractors and subcontractors must declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

Examples of conflicts of interest are provided in *How to develop your project 2025* (see 'Part 10: Resources').

Recruitment

The Trust supports the employment of new and existing staff with the appropriate skills and capabilities to manage and implement projects in line with merit selection principles. The Trust will fund salaries under the following conditions:

- additional hours or days for existing staff assigned to a new project are clearly justified
- funding is not used to cover salaries that are already accounted for in the organisation's budget or for tasks that fall under its core business (to avoid cost-shifting)
- the recruitment process is in line with the grantee's internal policies.

Staff recruitment should take place only after the grant has been awarded.

Contractors

All contractors (including consultants) must be chosen based on merit and ability to effectively deliver the work. Where appropriate, as outlined in the funding agreement, grantees will select contractors or consultants using a competitive process.

Third-party assistance

We encourage lead organisations and project partners to work together when developing and carrying out a project. However, you should carefully consider any commercial relationships you form. While organisations can get help from third parties to develop their project and complete their application, we will not cover any costs for this assistance.

Third parties who help develop an application may bid for Trust-funded work if the grant is awarded. However, as the lead organisation you must show you have avoided any potential or perceived conflicts of interest when hiring third-party contractors. It is your responsibility to impartially select the best personnel and organisations to contribute to your grant project.

Privacy

We use the information supplied by applicants to process and assess applications. While applications are not generally made public, they may be disclosed if required by the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (see 'Part 10: Resources') or another lawful requirement.

Additionally, the Trust may share this information for the purpose of evaluating or auditing its grant programs. If strict confidentiality is required due to commercial sensitivity or personal privacy, applicants should clearly indicate this in their submission.

Technical review committee

The Trust has a range of technical review committees (TRCs) that support the Trust's Board by recommending applications for approval. Selection for Environmental

Education grants is a statewide, merit-based process. To evaluate grant applications, the Trust sets up an independent TRC specific to each grant program.

The committee includes people with knowledge and experience relevant to each grant program. They include at least one representative of community groups and one representative of industry. All members of the Environmental Education TRC have environmental education qualifications, experience and expertise. The TRC makes recommendations for projects to be funded, and these recommendations are forwarded to the Trust's Board for consideration and approval.

Members of the TRC must operate transparently and ethically, maintaining confidentiality and disclosing any potential conflicts of interest. This ensures that grant selections are fair, evidence-based and aligned with the Trust's priorities for New South Wales.

Part 9: Managing an Environmental Education grant

Timeline

Successful Environmental Education Grant Program recipients (grantees) will be notified by the end of May 2026. Grantees will then undertake a project planning process from June 2026 to July 2026 before signing a funding agreement. Trust staff will work with grantees to further develop their project workplan to guide delivery of the project.

Project activities should start between August and September 2026.

Funding agreement

Grantees (and external managers, where nominated) must sign a funding agreement that sets out the terms and conditions of the grant. The agreement includes a payment and reporting schedule that sets out reporting timeframes and funding instalments. We will provide a draft copy of a standard funding agreement when project planning begins.

The Trust may place special conditions on a project. Trust staff will discuss these conditions with the grantee.

The final version of the funding agreement will be issued on completion of project planning. This will follow review and approval of the workplan.

Signing the funding agreement commits the grantee to the following obligations. You must:

- comply with all conditions contained in the funding agreement
- hold appropriate insurance coverage throughout the project and provide evidence of current policies on request
- start the project within a month of signing the funding agreement
- seek prior approval for budget changes greater than 10% (noting that project administration costs should never be more than 10% of the project costs).
- seek prior approval from the Trust to alter proposed outputs, outcomes or timeframes
- provide milestone reports in accordance with the Trust's reporting guidelines and the payment and reporting schedule in the funding agreement
- acknowledge the Trust's support in any promotional materials or public statements about a project, including use of the NSW Government logo in published materials (see 'Part 10: Resources')
- prepare for all knowledge gained as part of the grant to be made publicly available, in line with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement; this may be through publishing of the final report, promoting the project via promotional avenues

available to the Trust, or requests made to the Trust under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*

- understand the standard conditions of the funding agreement will not be changed at the request of grantees.

Workplan

You must develop a draft workplan as part of your application. This outlines the project outcomes, activities, measures and budget. The workplan:

- is a tool to help you plan and manage your project by defining what the project will deliver, how it will be delivered, and what it will cost
- provides a basis for annual reporting
- improves understanding of what the project will deliver and how to keep it on track.

Once a grant is awarded, we will work with you to further develop your workplan before signing the funding agreement.

Testing and research

You must trial your proposed education framework in Milestone 1 to base your project on co-design principles and test your assumptions about what works with the target audience.

We encourage you to include social research in Milestone 1 to better understand the needs of your target audience. This will provide an evidence base for your project and set benchmarks that will help you to evaluate and demonstrate the impact of your project.

If adequate existing evidence from social research is already available, you can opt out of conducting further research, but you must have recent clear data that establishes a baseline that you can compare your results with by the end of the project. You can provide this with your application as an attachment.

> Tier 2 grantees and their key collaborators must attend free workshops during project planning from June to July 2026 to work with us on developing your workplan, and your workplan should include research and testing early in the project.

During a project

Reporting

You must submit milestone reports after each milestone has been completed (typically every 12 months), through the online GMS. The timeframe for reporting and payments will be agreed with us when the grant is awarded and will be included in your funding agreement.

Milestone reports allow you to review and track your progress and provide us with information and evidence of the work completed.

Each milestone report is reviewed by an independent reviewer, engaged by us, with appropriate technical expertise.

If a report shows you have made satisfactory progress, the next grant instalment will be authorised, and feedback provided. If the project is not proceeding in line with the approved workplan, is or behind schedule, funding instalments may be deferred while we work with you to get back on track.

We understand that variations to projects are sometimes necessary, and these may be discussed with us at any point. Requests for variations can be submitted through the GMS.

Monitoring

We require you to monitor your project to ensure it is implemented in line with your workplan, and it stays on time and on budget. You must integrate monitoring techniques into your workplan to track progress and demonstrate project outcomes. Evaluation should take place regularly to assess the project's performance and identify areas where adjustments may be needed.

The methods you use will depend on what you want to achieve, but you will need to produce evidence showing the impact of your project on the behaviour of the target audience, and on the environment. Examples of evidence you produce may include results of surveys, feedback from stakeholders, website hits or number of views, landholder site plans, etc. You can use our ecological monitoring guide to help you demonstrate environmental outcomes (see 'Part 10: Resources').

Benchmark data must be established at the start of the project so you can measure and demonstrate improvements throughout the project.

Evaluation

Evaluation should take place at least annually to assess the project's performance and identify areas where adjustments may be needed.

Invoicing

A tax invoice (subject to GST if applicable) is required for each milestone payment at the time the instalment is due.

Completing a project

When a project is complete, grantees must submit a final milestone report through the GMS, which reports on achievements against the project's expected outcomes.

Trust staff will provide feedback, and if the requirements of the funding agreement have been met, the grant will be acquitted.

Part 10: Resources

About the Trust

- NSW Environmental Trust homepage
- NSW Environmental Trust Strategic Plan 2024 to 2029

Education program resources

- Environmental Education Grants Program homepage
- Creating change through your environmental education project
- How to develop your project 2025
- Register for a voluntary online workshop for applicants

Governance-related issues

- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
- Financial reporting to the NSW Environmental Trust
- NSW Government Supplier Code of Conduct
- Tips on working with an external manager

Other resources

- Grants Management System online portal user manual
- NSW Government logo
- Saving our Species program
- Ecological monitoring guide