

Ipswich City Council

Nature Conservation Grants

To support tangible conservation outcomes on private land

Applicant Guidelines

Galah Couple by J Cowell
Enviroplan Photo Comp



Nature Conservation Grant Guidelines

Grants program overview

The Nature Conservation Grants Program (NCG) aims to support tangible conservation outcomes on private land. The NCG is funded by Ipswich City Council's (council) EnviroPlan levy to assist landowners who have a Voluntary Conservation Agreement, a Voluntary Conservation Covenant or Land for Wildlife partnership registered on their property. The NCG provides partnering landowners with an opportunity to undertake on-ground activities to rehabilitate degraded landscapes, protect and improve habitat and biodiversity and improve the climate resilience of Ipswich's natural environment.

Objectives

- Build a resilient natural environment
- Improve and maintain biodiversity
- Invest in nature conservation
- Promote community participation and capacity building.

Timeframe

Applications will open on 1 April and close on 30 April each year. Applications must be received by close of business on the application closure date.

These dates may be subject to change each year, based on program requirements.

All applications received by the closure date will be evaluated. Applicants will not be given additional time to provide further information, or to make changes after applications close. The applicants are therefore required to ensure all relevant questions have been addressed in sufficient detail by the closure date

Recipients

This is a competitive grant category open to landowners who have a Voluntary Conservation Agreement (VCA), a Voluntary Conservation Covenant (VCC) or a Land for Wildlife Agreement (LFW) registered on their properties whose project meets the eligibility criteria and does not fall within any of the exclusions.

Funding range

VCA and VCC applicants are eligible to apply for a maximum of up to \$8,000 (excluding GST) per project per funding round. LfW applicants are eligible to apply for a maximum of up to \$6,000 (excluding GST) per project per funding round. Applicants must demonstrate an in-kind contribution of 50% or more.

Please refer to page 3 for details on in-kind contribution.

Eligibility criteria

General Eligibility Criteria:

- have no overdue debts with council and have satisfactorily accounted to council for the expenditure of any previous council funding
- have submitted the previous years' annual report
- give permission for council to publish the name of the recipient and the funding amount in accordance with council's requirements under the *Local Government Act 2009* and the *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- the same scope of works can only be funded once each financial year from council
- can demonstrate sound workplace health and safety practices.

To be eligible for funding under the NCG, landholders must:

- have a VCA which includes: Biodiversity Conservation Agreement (BCA) or a Corridor Conservation Agreement (CCA);
- have a VCC; or
- have a Land for Wildlife Full Registration or Working Towards (LFW) Agreement
- All registered landholders must have an approved (signed by both council and the landholder/s) Property Management Plan (PMP) to apply for this grant. Property Management Plans must be attached to the online application form.

Two or more eligible landholders can work in partnership on a single project to undertake on-ground activities across two or more properties. Partnership applications must be of a joint nature, where one applicant submits the application with a letter of commitment from all landholder's involved. Project submission must be linked to all Landholders' Property Management Plans. There must be a demonstration of resources allocated to each property.

A representative or Auspicing Organisation acting on behalf of an eligible applicant may submit an application with a letter of approval from the eligible applicant.

Eligible projects/activities examples

Applicants must demonstrate how all PMP objective/s will be met.

Other projects which are not mentioned below, may also be considered in consultation with council officers.

Examples of some eligible projects:

- control invasive plants
- control pest animals
- control of other noxious diseases or parasites such as Myrtle Rust
- install internal fauna-friendly fencing to restrict stock access to ecologically significant areas
- modify existing internal fencing to upgrade it to be more wildlife friendly
- increase the area and connectivity of native vegetation by planting native plant species (revegetation) and allowing plants to naturally grow with the removal of weeds (assisted natural regeneration)
- use of fire for ecological purposes
- native fauna monitoring
- install off-stream watering points to restrict stock access to significant waterways
- install nest boxes
- control erosion and minimise sediment runoff
- engage an arborist to create artificial hollows into mature non-hollow-bearing trees
- engage a consultant to undertake a botanical survey of the property
- improve soil quality for conservation purposes
- install contours for ecological purposes
- undertake an invertebrate study
- install coarse woody debris into a young revegetation site to increase structural diversity.

Projects must be within the boundary of the Agreement area, and aligned with Property Management Plan.

Ineligible items

- If a business is applying for a grant for the purpose of revegetating their property but also receiving monetary incentives, for example for the purpose of carbon offsets or similar.
- Receiving a resource and or accessing the grant for the purpose of profiteering.
- The Nature Conservation Grant program cannot fund items or materials already purchased.

- You cannot on sell items purchased through the Nature Conservation Grants.
- The grant assessment panel maintain the right to approve or reject specific ICC funded or in-kind items.

In-kind contribution

- You must provide at least a 50% in-kind contribution e.g. if you are applying for \$1,000 (excl. GST) in council support, you must supply a \$1,000 (excl. GST) in-kind contribution
- You must include two (2) valid quotes for for goods and services included as in-kind contributions

ELIGIBLE	INELIGIBLE
Justified Labour on the project by landowners	Labour performed prior to grant approval
Resources purchased for the project by the landowner after grant approval	Labour without justification
Services purchased for the project by the landowner after grant approval – valid quotes must be provided	Resources purchased prior to grant approval
Environmental assets/materials	Resources without evidence of cost
	Use of own small plant ie. chainsaw, brush cutter

Please note:

Applicants should consider discussing proposed projects with their Conservation Partnerships Officer prior to submission. A site visit may be arranged to discuss these activities with the landholder.

Please note:

In-kind contribution is your contribution to the project. This can either be your own financial or labour contribution. The current wage rate for volunteers in Australia is \$46.62. Your labour can be charged at this rate. Volunteeringqld.org.au/volunteers

Grant Funding Principles

Ipswich City Council applies the following principles when providing support through its Nature Conservation Grants Program:

- Ensuring best practice management in the conservation of natural resources on private land
- Improving and maintaining the condition and status of national, state and local matters of environmental significance
- Projects must comply with relevant legislation (state, federal and local laws), and must receive appropriate planning approvals prior to submission of the application
- Recognising nature conservation as a major feature of good governance for the city
- Providing continuous communication and engagement with the Ipswich community in regards to nature conservation and environmental values in Ipswich
- Valuing local collaborations and partnerships
- Valuing the social, economic and environmental sustainability of our city.

In addition, council is committed to the efficient and effective delivery of the Nature Conservation Grants Program and transparency and accountability in decision making.

Grant Funding Priorities

Ipswich City Council's Nature Conservation Grants Program support projects that:

Native vegetation

- Protect or enhance native vegetation cover
- Protect or enhance iconic species habitat
- Improve ecosystem resilience
- Enhance climate change refugia areas
- Reduce threats to biodiversity.

Ipswich Habitat Network – connectivity

- Improve and enhance ecological connectivity within identified corridors.

Waterway quality improvement

- Reduce the risks of sediment loss and improve waterway stability
- Improve the quality of stormwater run-off and reduce nutrient levels
- Improve the water quality of mapped streams and waterways.

Riparian corridor management

- Protect and/or enhance riparian buffers
- Protect and improve the quality of natural wetlands.

Grant Funding Priorities

Assessment Criteria – Part A

Part A of the application addresses the objectives of this Grant. The criteria below will be used by the panel of assessors to assess all applications.

PART A – ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

AGREEMENT TYPE	CONSIDERATION
Voluntary Conservation Covenant Biodiversity Conservation Agreement Land for Wildlife Full Registration	Does the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none">manage, enhance or protect ecosystems in order to conserve native flora and faunaprotect intact areas of high biodiversity value in priority conservation areas, or;encourage habitat enhancement and maintenance
Corridor Conservation Agreement Land for Wildlife Working Towards	Does the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none">manage, enhance and protect ecosystems in order to conserve native flora and faunaenhance existing biodiversity values to achieve intact habitat; orconnect corridors in priority rehabilitation areas
All Agreements	Does the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none">have catchment-wide benefits or collaboration with other landholders?connect with environmental groups in Ipswich, including Landcare, Catchment, bush care or environmental education group in the greater Ipswich region?link to your PMP



Assessment Criteria – Part B

Part B of the application addresses value for money, best practice methods and linkage to Property Management Plans. The criteria below will be used by the panel of assessors to assess all applications.

PART B – ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	
VALUE FOR MONEY AND LANDHOLDER COMMITMENT	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
Landholder contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project contribution in respect to project costs ▪ Landholder contribution of <50% (ineligible application); You must provide at least 50% in-kind contribution to be eligible for the grant
Cost effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective budget breakdown and total budget costs ▪ Effective use of funds across all expenditure items ▪ Appropriate use of contractors ▪ Appropriate submission of two valid quotes ▪ Quantities purchased must be reasonable for use in that financial year for the specified management zone/s ▪ If unable to use the purchased quantities of item/s (i.e. herbicide), applicants must apply for an extension to their program officers
Landholder commitment to delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstration that the project will be fully acquitted by the end of the financial year of the grant round.
Best practice methods SEQ Ecological Restoration Framework – Manual can be found here Hlw.org.au/resources/seqecologicalrestorationframework/	Some may not be applicable to the project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appropriate application/management techniques for weed control ▪ Appropriate application/management techniques for pest animal control ▪ Appropriate chemical use for weed control ▪ Approvals have been obtained from the relevant organisation, where necessary ▪ Use of fauna friendly fencing ▪ Appropriate fire management techniques ▪ Erosion-mitigation measures have been implemented for projects involving soil disturbance or weed removal ▪ Suitable plant species and technique for planting ▪ As close to Regional Ecosystems on property as possible ▪ Works undertaken demonstrate minimal negative environmental impact ▪ Nest box design and installation aligns with best-practice recommendations ▪ Fauna monitoring techniques have no ethical impacts, and permits have been obtained if required.
Link to Property Management Plan	Some may not be applicable to the project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Action/s supported or achieved as per the zone identified in the Property Management Plan ▪ Reduced environmental threats ▪ Managed, enhanced or protected native fauna or flora

Ethics Framework

Ipswich City Council will not support any activities, entities, or individuals associated with entities, that are considered to:

- Discriminate, or encourage discriminatory behaviour, including discrimination on the basis of age, disability, race, religion, sex and/or sexual orientation
- Contribute to, or advocate for, the infringement of human rights
- Demonstrate behaviour that does not align to council's strategic intent for the city and community of Ipswich
- Pollute land, air or water, or otherwise damage the natural environment
- Market, promote or advertise products or services in a misleading or deceitful manner
- Produce, promote or distribute products or services likely to be harmful to the community
- Entice people into financial over-commitment
- Exploit people through the payment of below-award wages or poor working conditions
- Represent a reputational risk for Ipswich City Council to partner with or support, or be seen to partner with or support.

Grant Funding Approval Process

Final decisions and approval of successful applications are made by council's Chief Executive Officer.

All applications will be assessed in two parts:

Part A

- Application for funding is for a project as defined by these guidelines
- Project is directly linked to applicant's PMP
- Project meets the funding principles and priorities as defined by these guidelines.

Part B assesses the value of the project.

Both Parts are assessed by an assessment panel made up of at least three (3) council officers with expertise in natural area management or similar, in the the Natural Environment and Land Management Branch. The Conservation Partnerships Officers will not assess grant applications as they will provide advice and assistance to grant applicants.

Terms and conditions that apply to successful applicants

Successful applicants will receive the approved funding from council subject to the following terms and conditions:

- The applicants' proposed project must be fully acquitted by the end of the financial year of the funded grant round. For example, recipient of 22/23 Nature Conservation Grant must acquit by 30 June 2023
- The applicant is required to enter into a funding agreement which details all funding conditions and agreed outcomes. This must be signed before funds are issued
- Applicants are required to complete an acquittal at the completion of the funding period. If council funds are not spent, all remaining funds must be returned to council
- Council may make funding conditional on other specific conditions not being met, as outlined in the funding agreement.
- You may be contacted by an elected official/ representative regarding your successful application.

Conflict of interest

- A real or perceived conflict must be declared by grant assessors. Where there is a real conflict of interest, disclosure and management will occur. This will occur either by removing the panel member, or, if their expertise is required to assess the grant (and they are unable to be replaced), an objective 3rd party will oversee the integrity of the decision-making process.
- All grant applications be assessed by specific criteria, aligned with its governing documents.

Businesses and Companies who are applicants

- Where its operation is directly related to conservation, Businesses (ABN) and Companies (ACN) must disclose how the Nature Conservation Grant may contribute to increasing its profit or benefit the organisation. This may include a co-benefit between conservation goals and the operation of its business.

Quotes

Minimum of two (2) quotes are required per service/ item. Quotes must be for services/items to be purchased following the approval of this grant application. Your quoted documents must include:

- business details, including ABN number
- total and the breakdown of costs
- detailed summary of works included in the quote
- schedule of work with a quote expiry date
- the two quotes must be like-for-like.

In exceptional circumstances or highly specialised works, one quote may be considered as eligible (as long as it meets the required criteria).

Approval from Ipswich City Council must be obtained in writing prior to the submission of the grant in order to be eligible.

Quotes and materials being purchased must be for new materials/services and cannot be for previously purchased items/services.

Goods and services tax (GST)

If the contractor is not registered for GST there is no reason to add GST to the total amount as council is paying the amount on the invoice.

If the supplier is registered for GST, please include the GST amount in the total amount of funding being applied for.

Grant acquittal

To ensure appropriate accountability by grant recipients, all funding provided by council will require a report and financial acquittal, outlining the use of the funds (including proof of expenditure through invoices, declarations, bank statements) and the achieved outcomes of the project.

Landowners who have not satisfactorily acquitted council funds within the appropriate timeframe agreed by council will be deemed ineligible for council funding or in-kind assistance until the acquittal is submitted.

All applicants must answer all application questions on the online SmartyGrants form clearly demonstrating how the project outcomes address the selection criteria.

See Pg 3 for definitions of eligible in-kind contributions.

All successful applicants must also report on the project outcomes from the Nature Conservation Grant in their annual report.

Project extensions and scope changes

- If you believe that you will not be able to achieve your grant objectives or not all funds were spent, any unspent funds must be returned to council. Contact your Conservation Partnerships Officers for approval prior to doing this. Provide justification in your acquittal.
- If project details change but the scope of the project remains the same, no council approval is necessary. Provide justification in your acquittal to reflect minor changes, and communicate with your Conservation Partnerships Officer prior to submitting the acquittal.
- If project details change and the scope of the project changes as a result, council approval is necessary and a refund could be requested if the reason for changes does not meet any of the reasons identified below. To seek council approval, submit a formal request to partnerships@ipswich.qld.gov.au.
- If you believe that you will not be able to achieve your grant objectives within the prescribed grant period, you can request an extension stating the reasons.
- Your extension will not be approved if the reason for extension does not meet any of the reasons identified below.
- If you do not provide sufficient time for the Conservation Partnerships Officers to assess your request for extension before the acquittal date, your request may be refused on the basis of insufficient planning, unless otherwise specified in the below acceptable reasons.
- If you apply for an extension, you will only be eligible to apply for the next grant round opening after your acquittal.
- If you are unable to fulfill the scope of your project, contact your conservation partnerships officer to discuss future project options.

Acceptable reasons for extension requests and scope changes:

- Contractor falls through, and you are unable to hire an alternative contractor
- Extreme weather conditions:
 - Flood
 - Drought
 - Fire
 - Cyclone
 - Severe storm
 - Local Disaster Declaration
- Illness to yourself or a dependent family member that inhibits your ability to undertake your project.

Application process

Applications must be made using the appropriate online application forms. Additional information can be attached as required.

Applicants will be notified through Smartygrants of the outcome of their application.

Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. This includes applications without essential documentation.

Please contact council on (07) 3810 6666 if you have any questions regarding the Nature Conservation Grants Program and ask to speak with your Conservation Partnerships Officer.

Funding applications must be submitted via the online application form.

Once submitted you will receive an electronic confirmation notice.

Definitions

Auspicing	Auspicing means that an organisation takes responsibility for ensuring the funds are used as specified in the funding allocation. An auspicing organisation will be responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ the receipt, banking and administration of all moneys▪ project monitoring and completion▪ ensuring the applicant acquits the funding on time▪ sign off on the acquittal form.
Representative	Anyone acting on behalf of the applicant with the evidence of permission to do so in the form of a signed letter from the applicant.
Conflicts of Interest	A conflict of interest exists when a reasonable person might perceive that a public official's personal interest could be favoured over their public duties, or where the personal interest may influence, or be seen to influence, their decisions or action in the performance of their public duties. Conflict of interest may be actual, potential or perceived.
Council Officers	Council staff who has expertise in natural area management or similar, in the Natural Environment and Land Management Branch.
On-ground project	As per this guideline, a project is defined as a project, service, event, activity or other action aligned with the applicant's Property Management Plan. Projects are considered to have a timeframe, objectives and actions associated with achieving the project, with the inclusion of ongoing maintenance. On-ground refers to activities that monitor, survey, or directly make a change to, the state of the natural biophysical environment such as land, habitats of plants and animals, waterways, wetlands and riparian areas.

Please remember to fill out the application form ensuring sufficient information is provided to justify and support all proposed activities. Upon the close of the grant applications, applicants will not have another opportunity to provide additional information. If insufficient information is provided your application may not be approved. If you need assistance please contact your conservation partnerships officer prior to submitting your application. All supporting documents and information must be provided through smarty grants prior to the close of the grant applications on 30 April.