

Ipswich City Council

Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary Guidelines

Applicant Guidelines

Eastern Yellow Robin by T Del Fabbro
Enviroplan Photo Comp



Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary Guidelines

Bursary program overview

The Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary (VCCB) aims to support tangible conservation outcomes on private land. The VCCB is funded by Ipswich City Council's (council) EnviroPlan levy to assist landowners who have a Voluntary Conservation Covenant registered on their property. The VCCB provides partnering landowners with an additional opportunity to undertake on-ground initiatives that support the rehabilitation of 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 must be lodged at least four (4) weeks before the proposed activity commences to allow sufficient time for the assessment of projects.

While an application may be made at any time during the year, funding will only be available while such funds set aside in council's annual budget for this purpose remain unexpended.

Recipients

This is a competitive funding program open to landowners who have a Voluntary Conservation Covenant on their property, whose initiative meets the eligibility criteria.

Funding range

Applicants are eligible to apply for a maximum of up to \$2,000 (excluding GST) per initiative per funding round.

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
- 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*
- have not received other funding from council for the same initiative
- can demonstrate sound workplace health and safety practices.

Funding must be linked to actions in Property Management Plans.

Two or more eligible landholders can work in partnership on a single initiative to deliver on-ground outcomes across two or more properties. Applications must be of a joint nature, where one lead applicant submits the application with a letter of commitment from all landholder's involved. Initiative submission must be linked to all landholders' Property Management Plans. There must be a demonstration of resources allocated to each property. All property owners must have a VCC on their property. The total sum allocated for his type of application will be \$2,000.

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 initiatives

The VCCB is:

- Open all year round
- Does not require in-kind contribution
- Supports minor purchases for events, activities (workshops and training) or equipment
- Provides access to quick-release funds for emerging or unexpected issues, opportunities, or concerns
- Provides landholders with the opportunity to be up-skilled with access to resources, information and networking opportunities
- Does not have to be associated with a large project.

Applicants must demonstrate how their PMP objective/s will be met. Other initiatives, which are not mentioned below, may also be considered during the assessment process.

Examples of some eligible events and activities:

- Open property tours
- Flora and/or fauna survey
- Planting

- Fauna monitoring
- Pest plant and animal management
- Natural disaster response (e.g. fire breaks)
- Fees to attend conferences, consortiums and other educational events relevant to conservation
- Engaging indigenous fire consultants to undertake mosaic burns.

Examples of some eligible equipment or materials purchase or upgrades to planting materials

- Mulch material
- Weed matting
- Plants
- Water crystals
- Herbicide
- Powered tools
- Hand tools
- Habitat creating resources and/or materials
- Textbooks and other educational equipment
- Wildlife monitoring equipment.

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

Bursary Funding Principles

Ipswich City Council applies the following principles when providing support through its Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary:

- encouraging 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
- 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
- upskilling landholders to assist them in developing ecological skills to facilitate land stewardship
- 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 Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary and transparency and accountability in decision making.

Bursary Funding Priorities

Ipswich City Council's Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary support initiatives 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.



Bursary Funding Assessment Process

Part A of the application addresses the objectives of this Bursary and the VCC registered on your property. The criteria below will be used by the panel of assessors to assess all applications.

PART A – ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Does the project:

- manage, enhance or protect ecosystems in order to conserve native flora and fauna, or
- protect intact areas of high biodiversity value in priority conservation areas, or;
- provide opportunities for the sharing and improving ecological knowledge and skills, or;
- encourage habitat enhancement and maintenance; and
- link to your Property Management Plan

Catchment Wide Benefits

- Does the project have catchment wide benefits or collaboration with other landholders or community groups?
-



Assessment Criteria – Part B

Part B of the application addresses value for money and best practice methods. 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
<p>Cost effectiveness</p>	<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 quotes
<p>Landholder commitment to delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project completion by end of the financial year
<p>Best practice methods</p> <p>SEQ Ecological Restoration Framework – Manual can be found here Hlw.org.au/resources/seqecologicalrestorationframework/</p>	<p>Some may not be applicable to the initiative</p> <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
<p>Link to Property Management Plan</p>	<p>Some may not be applicable to the project</p> <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.

Bursary 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 an Initiative as defined by these guidelines
- Initiative is directly linked to applicant's property management plan
- Initiative 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 Natural Environment and Land Management Section. The Program Officers (Natural Environment) will not assess applications as they will provide advice and assistance to 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 applicant's proposed project must be completed within 12 months of the funds being approved
- The applicant will be 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.

Conflict of interest

- A real or perceived conflict must be declared by bursary assessors. Where there is a real conflict of interest, disclosure and management 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 bursary applications are assessed using specific criteria, aligned with its governing documents as specified in these guidelines.

Quotes

A minimum of two (2) quotes are required for contracted works. Contractors cannot be a direct family member.

Quoted documents should include:

- business details
- total and the breakdown of costs
- detailed summary of works included within the quote
- variations and revisions
- payment terms and conditions
- preferred payment method
- schedule of work with a quote expiry date
- customer acceptance signature.

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.

Bursary acquittal

To ensure appropriate accountability by bursary 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/activity.

Landowners who have not satisfactorily acquitted council funds within the appropriate timeframe agreed by council will be deemed ineligible for council funding 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.

Extensions and scope changes

If you believe that you will not be able to achieve your funding objectives or not all funds were spent, any unspent funds must be returned to council. Contact your Program Officers (Natural Environment) for approval prior to doing this.

If initiative details change but the scope of the initiative remains the same, no council approval is necessary. Provide justification in your acquittal to reflect minor changes, and communicate with your Program Officers (Natural Environment) prior to submitting the acquittal.

If initiative details change and the scope of the initiative 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 funding objectives within the prescribed timeframe, 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.

Acceptable reasons for extension requests and scope changes:

- changes in Property Management Plans have occurred
- contractor falls through, and you are unable to hire an alternative contractor
- extreme weather conditions
 - flood drought
 - fire
 - cyclone or severe storm
 - local Disaster Declaration.
- illness to yourself or a dependent family member that requires hospitalisation and inhibits your ability to undertake your project.

Application process

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

Applicants will be notified via email 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 Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary.



Definitions

<p>Auspicing</p>	<p>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:</p> <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.
<p>Representative</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Bursary</p>	<p>As per the Community Funding and Support Policy a Bursary is any funding to an individual or Community Organisation to assist with the costs associated with undertaking a particular initiative.</p>
<p>Conflicts of Interest</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Council Officers</p>	<p>Council staff who has expertise in natural area management or similar, in the Natural Environment and Land Management Section.</p>
<p>On-ground initiative</p>	<p>As per this guideline, an initiative is defined as a, service, event, activity, equipment purchase or upgrade or other initiative aligned with the applicant's Property Management Plan and is not considered under the Nature Conservation Grant. Initiatives are considered to be of a minor nature and should not necessarily require a long term or ongoing commitment (refer to Nature Conservation Grant guidelines). On-ground refers 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 and riparian wetlands.</p>

