



Australian Government

**Community
Grants Hub**
Improving your grant experience



Blue Carbon Ecosystem Restoration Grants

Questions and Answers

1. What is the closing time and date for applications?

The application form must be submitted by 9.00 pm AEDT on Tuesday, 15 February 2022. It is recommended that you submit your application well before the closing time and date.

2. If I am not able to submit my application by the due time and date, can I be granted an extension?

No, extensions will not be given.

If an application is late or the Community Grants Hub is requested by an applicant to approve a lodgement after the closing date the [late application policy](#) available on the Community Grants Hub website will apply.

3. How much funding is available for this Program?

This grant opportunity will provide a total of up to \$9.5 million (GST exclusive) over 4 years from 2021–22 to 2024–25.

It is anticipated that each grant will be between \$1 million and \$4 million (GST exclusive), depending on the scope of the grant activity and its complexity.

4. Is the funding on-going?

The funding is not on-going and all projects must be completed by 31 March 2025.

5. When will I know the outcome of my application?

You will be notified of the outcome of your application at the end of the selection process, consistent with the timeframes set out in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. For probity reasons, to treat all applicants fairly and equally, it is not possible to give you information about the status of individual applications during the assessment process.

6. How can I submit the application form?

The form is an online application form that you must submit electronically. The Community Grants Hub will not provide application forms or accept application forms for this grant opportunity by fax, email or through Australia Post unless otherwise stated in the grant opportunity documents



7. Do character limits apply to my application?

Yes, the application form includes character limits – up to 6000 characters (approximately 900 words) per assessment criterion. Please note spaces are included in the character limit. Character limits do not apply to the mandatory project activity and budget templates.

8. Why do I need to agree to work with a service provider to develop environmental economic accounts (EEA) for my restoration project?

These grants are part of the Blue Carbon Restoration, Conservation and Accounting Program. A key objective of the program is to help pave the way for scaling-up investment in coastal blue carbon ecosystems, support management decisions, and contribute to global goals for climate and the environment.

The restoration projects funded through these grants will serve as demonstration projects and together with project level EEA will improve our understanding of the biodiversity and financial benefits of restoration, including carbon and non-carbon outcomes.

9. What are my obligations (and associated costs) to work with the environmental economic accounting service provider?

Your obligations will be to provide the EEA service provider site access to collect data, share your monitoring and assessment data collected as part of the project, and participate in workshops and meetings to discuss EEA design and implementation needs.

These obligations are not expected to have a significant cost burden. The EEA service provider may establish a separate funding agreement with successful grantees if necessary (for example, to collect data for EEA over and above the monitoring and reporting requirements for the restoration projects). Successful grantees would not be expected to cover travel and accommodation costs to attend workshops or meetings in person.

10. Does my project need to restore more than one blue carbon ecosystem and deliver a range of ecosystem benefits (for example, tourism, fishing, cultural and coastal protection)?

No. Your project can be focused on just one ecosystem and the key ecosystem benefits for that ecosystem, or address a number of ecosystems and a broader number of ecosystem benefits. We will assess all projects on their merits and recommend projects that collectively address a range of blue carbon ecosystem types and ecosystem benefits so we can develop a broad set of environmental-economic accounts across the projects.



11. Are kelp forests included as an eligible blue carbon ecosystem type in the grant program?

No. The scope of eligible blue carbon ecosystems is in line with the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) definition of 'coastal' blue carbon, focusing on rooted vegetation in the coastal zone, and does not include kelp forests.

12. Does my project need to have additional financial or in-kind third party contributions?

No. It is not a requirement for your project to have third party financial or in-kind contributions. However, additional contributions will be taken into account as part of the assessment process (refer to criterion 4 of the assessment criteria in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines).

13. If successful, does my project need to be ready to commence as soon as we sign the Grant Agreement

No. You don't need to have all the planning and required approvals in place by the time you sign the project agreement. Readiness to commence and your delivery timeframes will be taken into account as part of the assessment process (refer to criterion 3 of the assessment criteria in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines).

14. Can I apply for a grant if I have registered or I'm planning to register my project under an Emissions Reduction Fund blue carbon method?

Projects registered or seeking to register under an Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) blue carbon method are eligible to apply for a grant. However, you are encouraged to contact the Clean Energy Regulator on 1300 553 542 prior to applying for the grant, if you also intend to register your project under the ERF, to ensure you meet the ERF eligibility requirements.

15. Where should I go for further information?

Please email your enquiries to support@communitygrants.gov.au

Question and Answer added 24 January 2022

16. Will the Blue Carbon Ecosystem Restoration Grants Program involve a carbon credit scheme?

No. However, you are able to apply for a grant if you have registered or are planning to register your project under an Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) blue carbon method.

Projects registered or seeking to register under an ERF blue carbon method are eligible to apply for a grant. However, you are encouraged to contact the Clean Energy Regulator on 1300 553 542 prior to applying for the grant, if you also intend to register your project under the ERF, to ensure you meet the ERF eligibility requirements.



Question and Answer added 27 January 2022

17. I am wondering if Blue Carbon Ecosystem Restoration grants would consider inland water bodies, such as wetlands, billabongs and Indigenous wells as areas needing restoration?

Inland water bodies will only be eligible if they are consistent with the ecosystem types and definition of blue carbon ecosystems as per the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. This will largely be determined by the extent to which they are 'inland' and whether they previously existed as a part of, or influenced by coastal tidal waters. As per the Grant Opportunity Guidelines, on-ground restoration must be undertaken to result in the restoration of one or more of these blue carbon ecosystem types: mangroves, seagrasses, tidal marshes and/or supratidal forests. Blue carbon ecosystems are referred to as "ecosystems that are influenced by tide water either regularly or irregularly (also known as coastal wetland ecosystems) – these ecosystems form a continuum on coastal land and floodplains and can include seagrass, mangroves, tidal marshes (saltmarsh), sparsely vegetated saltmarshes (salt flats), mudflats and supratidal swamp forests".

Question and Answer added 28 January 2022

18. Are you allowed to include extra attachments or supporting documentation to your application form in addition to the mandatory attachments requested in the application form?

In accordance with Section 7.1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines, additional attachments will not be considered. You must attach supporting documentation according to the instructions provided within the application form. You should only attach requested documents. We are unable to consider information in attachments we have not asked for and applications will not be considered compliant and will not proceed to assessment if the required attachments are not provided and/or the mandatory templates is not used.

Question and Answer added 31 January 2022

19. All projects will utilise Environmental-Economic Accounting (EEA) to measure the outcomes of restoration projects. However, will the landholder be remunerated for these measured improvements?

Any benefits from improvements resulting from the restoration activity or allocation of financial benefits received through the project, such as Australian Carbon Credit Units provided through the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) if available, are a matter between the landholder and project developer. These matters do not form part of the grant opportunity.



Questions and Answers added 31 January 2022 from Information Session

20. What is meant by ‘readiness’ to commence a project?

Applications will be assessed on a range of criteria, including how ready you are to commence the project. You will be required to provide information on this in the mandatory Project Activity Plan as part of your application. For example, you will need to advise the status of any approvals needed such as planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals required over the life of the project. Projects that have not yet received the required approvals will be eligible to apply, but there is an expectation that restoration activities will be completed before the 4-year program comes to an end.

The grant program has a defined funding allocation over its life and projects that have the capacity to undertake on-ground activities within this timeframe will assist the Commonwealth to make best use of the available funding.

Projects that have received the required approvals as an extension of existing or recently completed projects (or projects undertaking activities that are additional to existing activities) are also eligible to apply for a grant. These projects will be considered as ‘new’ projects; however, a key consideration will be that project-level Environmental-Economic Accounting can be applied, that is, the collection of baseline data will be required prior to the additional restoration activities being undertaken.

Applications will not necessarily be regarded highly because they have the required approvals in place. Readiness to commence a project is only one of several criteria.

21. Is planting seagrass seedlings an eligible activity for restoring seagrass?

Yes, it is an eligible activity under the grant program provided species known to be native to the site are used and where hydrology or other conditions to enable successful re-establishment of vegetation have been addressed.

22. What are some examples of socio-economic settings?

Socio-economic settings for the projects include indicators such as fishing, tourism, cultural or coastal protection benefits.

23. Given that collectively a full suite of blue carbon ecosystem types and socio-economic settings are desired, what will the assessment panel be looking for beyond the selection criteria?

All applications will be assessed against the selection criteria independent of other applications. However, the final selection will consider the extent to which the recommended projects collectively address the full suite of ecosystem benefits across all blue carbon ecosystem types – for example, if 3 highly suitable mangrove projects and one suitable seagrass project are received, we may consider the seagrass project ahead of one or more of the mangrove projects, to maximise the range of ecosystem benefits achieved by the program.



24. Is constructing a boardwalk (to facilitate ongoing monitoring of the site, or to facilitate education and training activities) an eligible activity?

If the primary purpose of the boardwalk is for monitoring, then it may be eligible if the expenditure requirements are met. It would be ineligible if the primary purpose of the boardwalk is to facilitate education and training or to beautify or improve amenity. The grant program is intended to fund on-ground restoration activities that serve as demonstration projects for the benefits of blue carbon restoration.

A boardwalk should not be a significant cost or component of the application. Application assessment will include consideration of all budget components and value for money.

25. What is the difference between data collection requirements for the monitoring and evaluation and the Environmental-Economic Accounting (EEA) work?

There is overlap between the types of data collected for each, but they are 2 distinct pieces of work. We expect that some of the data gained by proponents for monitoring and evaluation will be useful for the EEA service provider/s, however the EEA service provider/s will require different types of data and will request additional information as required. Proponents must agree to provide the EEA service provider/s access to the project site to collect data; share monitoring and assessment data that is collected as part of the restoration project; and participate in workshops or meetings with the EEA service provider/s, as needed, to discuss EEA project design and implementation needs.

26. Will proposals for restoration of many smaller demonstration sites within a single project be supported, or are you only looking for single-site demonstration projects?

Proposals for the restoration of multiple smaller sites within a single project are eligible. Applications need to successfully address the selection criteria, including the ability to demonstrate the application of Environmental-Economic Accounting across all sites within the project.

27. Would a project be eligible if was split across the remoteness boundary? That is, the project area falls within both regional and urban areas?

Land based projects

The project would be eligible if at least 80% of the project area occurs in regional areas as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Australian Statistical Geography Standard Remoteness Structure. This is to promote projects that are predominantly in regional areas but may include non-regional areas that are a part of a coherent or continuous ecosystem.

Sea-grass projects

A) Adjacent to urban areas

As per above - Seagrass projects are eligible adjacent to urban areas if at least 80% of your project area is adjacent to a regional area.



B) Adjacent to urban areas and in proximity to a 'regional' island

Using the regional areas as defined by the ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard Remoteness Structure, at least 50% of your project area (or project activities) must occur closer to the island, than to the adjacent urban mainland area.

Determining seagrass project boundaries using the ABS regional definition is not as clear as with land-based projects – the ABS map does not include regional or urban boundary lines in the marine environment, between the urban land and regional islands off the coast – 50% will allow us to draw a line between an urban and regional island area.

28. What proportion of on-ground restoration work is expected for proposals?

The focus of the grant program is to fund on-ground restoration rather than other activities. Value for money and activity eligibility (as per the Grant Opportunity Guidelines) will be important considerations of applications and should guide applicants when proportioning projects costs.

29. Can an applicant submit multiple applications?

Applicants are eligible to submit multiple applications if they are for different projects.

You can only submit one application form for each project. If you need to update or amend your application form, once it has been submitted, you may do so by re-submitting the amended application form for the same project before the closing time. In this case the latest application form for each project that is received by the department will be assessed.

30. Are riverine and more linear, upper estuary blue carbon ecosystems eligible?

Yes, so long as the ecosystems to be restored are those covered by the Program (supratidal swamp forest, mangroves, tidal marsh, seagrass) and the proposed activities are eligible.

31. What is the reasoning behind the remoteness criteria? Metropolitan coasts tend to be the most impacted and therefore are often the most in need of restoration.

When the program was being designed, a key consideration was that funding should go towards restoration projects that also support regional communities and economies by generating local direct and in-direct employment.

We also wanted to provide funding to regional areas that were less likely to have had similar funding opportunities.



**32. How critical is it to have site owner support prior to application submission?
Can we negotiate and secure consent as part of year 1 activities?**

As part of the eligibility criteria, it is mandatory that you provide evidence of legal title and/or a letter of consent or similar document from the site owners/managers for your project where you are not the site owners/managers (including adjacent site owners/managers who may be impacted), showing that they agree that you may conduct the project on their site.

33. Although seaweeds and microalgae are not in the criteria, is there scope to assess more novel projects that could lead to new carbon methods?

The grant program is not intended to fund novel restoration methods or research for the development of new carbon methods. Rather the grant program is seeking to fund the restoration of blue carbon ecosystems using established restoration techniques, to then showcase the application of project-level Environmental-Economic Accounts for evidencing the benefits of restoration activities.

34. All projects will utilise Environmental-Economic Accounting (EEA) to measure the outcomes of restoration projects. Will the landholder be remunerated for these measured improvements?

Any benefits from improvements resulting from the restoration activity or allocation of financial benefits received through the project, such as Australian Carbon Credit Units provided through the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) if available, are a matter between the landholder and project developer. These matters do not form part of the grant opportunity.

Questions and Answers added 02 February 2022

35. Are projects located in National Parks eligible?

Yes, assuming other eligibility requirements such as ecosystem type, regional area classification and eligible entity type are met.

Organisations should refer to eligible entity type requirements (see section 4.3 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines). Certain activities may be the responsibility of the National Parks manager (state/territory or Commonwealth Government) and would therefore not be an eligible activity for funding under the grant program.

Ideally, projects in state/territory managed land undertaken by eligible organisations will have matching or significant contributions from the relevant state/territory government. Additional contributions, including from state/territory governments, are not mandatory but will be considered as part of the assessment process (see Criterion 4 of the Assessment Criteria).



36. Would the removal of a barrier that was, or may have been, constructed illegally be considered as an eligible activity under the grant program?

Removal of an illegally constructed barrier, such as a bund wall or levee, would be an eligible activity if there is not a legislative or regulatory requirement for its removal. Activities that are required as part of legal compliance and that are the responsibility of the land holder will not be eligible. Where the landholder is under a legal obligation to remove an illegally constructed man-made barrier, that removal is considered a compliance activity and is not an eligible activity.

37. Would it be possible to get an extension on the mandatory letter of consent required from Traditional Owners if we are unable to obtain this before the due date for grant applications?

A letter of consent from the Traditional Owners (TO) demonstrating full, prior and informed consent is required if the grant activity directly affects Indigenous places, values or communities, and/or Indigenous rights and interests in the project site (see Section 4.2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines).

If you are unable to obtain TO consent in time to lodge the application before 15 February, you may lodge the grant application by 15 February and provide the completed TO consent attachment by 5.00 pm (AEDT) Wednesday 9 March. Only the TO consent attachment may be submitted after the closing date, and all other parts of the application must be received on time. TO consent submitted after the 15 February must be provided to blue.carbon@awe.gov.au.

To allow you to proceed with submitting your application on time, you need to indicate 'yes' to the Traditional Owner Consent question on the application form and instead of attaching the consent, attach a short letter advising why there is a delay in obtaining the consent and you expect to receive it.

If the TO consent is not received by 5.00 pm (AEDT) Wednesday 9 March, the application will be considered late and will not be further assessed. If the TO consent is not consistent with the remainder of the application, the department reserves the right to consider that the application has not met the TO consent requirements and will not be considered further.



Questions and Answers added 15 February 2022

38. Does the 10% limit on budget spending for monitoring, valuation and reporting include the assessment of ecosystems services, for example, fish surveys, carbon coring and analysis, evaluation of sediment trapping and so on, or is it just the monitoring and evaluation of the restoration success?

Collecting and utilising data for the assessment of ecosystem services, such as to capture changes in carbon or fish stocks, would be an eligible grant activity included in the 10% funding cap for MER, if its sole purpose is to provide information on the success of the restoration project rather than for other purposes such as for the development of environmental economic accounts. There is no expectation that applicants will undertake any assessment of ecosystem services outside of what they require to report against the restoration project.

