



Australian Bushland Program New Indigenous Protected Areas

Feedback for applicants

Thank you for your interest in the Australian Bushland Program New Indigenous Protected Areas grant opportunity. We appreciate the time and effort you put into your application.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (the Department) is providing the following general feedback for grant applicants to support future grant applications.

Summary of the Grant Opportunity

Application period: opened 13 January 2026 and closed 11 March 2026.

Applications received: 70

Summary of the round: This grant opportunity aims to strengthen the conservation and protection of Australia's environmental and cultural values through establishing and managing IPAs. The Program also contributes to social and economic benefits for First Nations people.

Conflict of Interest Management for Assessment Staff

All Community Grants Hub and Departmental staff were required to declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest before participating in the assessment process. Where a conflict was identified, appropriate steps were taken to manage it, which could include:

- Excluding the team member from undertaking assessment related to the affected application(s).
- Assigning the application(s) to an alternate assessor.
- Documenting the conflict and the management action in accordance with the Department's Conflict of Interest Policy.

Selection Process

The Community Grants Hub reviewed all applications to confirm they met the eligibility and compliance requirements for the grant opportunity. This information was provided to the Department's Grant Opportunity Delegate, who made the final decision on whether each identified grant application met those requirements. Grant Applicants whose applications were identified as ineligible or non-compliant were notified of the outcome in writing by the Community Grants Hub.

Following completion of these checks, the Department undertook the preliminary assessment of all eligible and compliant applications through a Targeted Competitive grant process. This involved assessing applications against the published selection criteria and any additional requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

Following the preliminary assessment, the Department convened a Moderation Panel to make final recommendations to the Financial Delegate. The Moderation Panel was made up of subject matter experts whose role was to review the assessed applications, provide advice, and make recommendations to the Grant Opportunity Delegate.

Before participating in the assessment process, all Moderation Panel members were required to declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest. In cases where a conflict was identified, appropriate management strategies were applied to ensure the integrity of the process. These strategies included:

- Excluding the panel member from discussions or decisions related to the affected application(s).
- Reassigning the application(s) to an alternate assessor.
- Documenting the conflict and the management action in accordance with the Department's Conflict of Interest Policy.

In undertaking their role on the Moderation Panel, panel members were required to consider:

- Whether applications met all eligibility and compliance requirements listed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.
- How well responses addressed the published assessment criteria.
- The overall quality of applications compared to others received.
- The completeness and relevance of supporting attachments.
- Whether the proposed project demonstrated value for money.
- How the proposed activities aligned with the objectives of the grant opportunity.
- Any risks identified and the strategies proposed to manage those risks.

Selection Results

There was strong interest in this grant opportunity, and applications were of a high standard. The preferred applicant(s) demonstrated their ability to meet the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines based on the strength of their responses to the published assessment criteria. Applicants were notified of the outcome of their application in writing at the end of the selection period.

The following feedback is provided to assist grant applicants in understanding what comprised a strong application and what quality responses looked like against the requirements of the grant opportunity.

General Feedback

Understand application form questions and evidence requirements:

Know what information is required. Some applications:

- selected the incorrect entity type and/or did not provide the correct documentation to support the entity type
- where required, did not provide evidence of Indigenous ownership/control and/or provided evidence in a format that was not a formal statutory declaration
- where required, did not provide evidence of not-for-profit status
- provided native title claims instead of letter/s of support.

Eligibility:

Strong applications provided Letters of Support that clearly demonstrated Traditional Owner support for the proposed IPA consultation area. These letters were specific to the grant opportunity timeframe and:

- demonstrated the entity's authority to provide endorsement, including any relevant statutory basis

- identified the Traditional Owners of the proposed consultation area
- included evidence that the decision to endorse the application was considered in accordance with the entity's governance framework (for example, a Board resolution or formal decision)
- supported the applicant's role in undertaking consultation and planning activities for the IPA consultation project, including that the applicant has a legal right and/or right to access and manage Country within the proposed IPA area.

Some applicants did not monitor requests from the Community Grants Hub and respond with the required information.

Compliance:

Some applicants did not use the online mapping tool to submit their URL project location.

Some duplicate applications were received. We recommend preparing your application well before the due date and only upload on GrantConnect when you are ready to submit. The FAQs provided a link to a practice page on GrantConnect.

Attachments and evidence:

Good documentation used the correct templates, kept to character and page limits, and followed the eligibility requirements in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

Criterion 1 – Geospatial and environmental analysis of values (30%)

This criterion assessed the potential of the proposed IPA project to protect, conserve and improve the condition of Australia's terrestrial and marine environment, with a strong focus on biodiversity.

Applicants needed to submit a URL project location/s through a mapping tool for the proposed IPA consultation area in response to this criterion.

DCCEEW undertook geospatial and environmental analyses of the proposed IPA consultation area based on the map provided by the applicant, considering:

- condition of habitat
- contribution to the conservation and recovery of:
 - nationally listed threatened species, ecological communities and migratory species
 - [World Heritage Areas](https://www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/heritage/about/world-heritage)¹ and [National Heritage Listed places](https://www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/heritage/about/national)², [Ramsar wetlands](https://www.dcceew.gov.au/water/wetlands/australian-ramsar-wetlands)³ and the Commonwealth marine environment.
- contribution to the [Threatened Species Action Plan 2022-2032](https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/publications/action-plan-2022-2032)⁴
- for terrestrial areas, how the proposed area contributed towards the target to protect and conserve 30% of Australia's landmass by 2030⁵, including:
 - protecting areas of particular importance for biodiversity
 - increasing protection in under-represented bioregions and sub-bioregions and helping to achieve a comprehensive, adequate, representative and resilient national reserve system⁶.

¹ <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/heritage/about/world-heritage>

² <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/heritage/about/national>

³ <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/water/wetlands/australian-ramsar-wetlands>

⁴ <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/publications/action-plan-2022-2032>

⁵ See the Australian Government's <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/land/nrs/publications/strategy-national-reserve-system>

⁶ For more detail on the National Reserve System of Protected Areas, see <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/land/nrs/publications/strategy-national-reserve-system>

- for areas that included a sea Country component, how the proposed area would complement [Australia's National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas](#)⁷, including:
 - increase of First Nations management of Commonwealth marine areas
 - improved representation across provincial and/or meso-scale bioregions⁸.

What strong applications did well:

- Provided a URL project location for areas that:
 - contributed millions of hectares to the National Reserve System (NRS)
 - increased Indigenous management of [Threatened Species Action Plan 2022-2032](#)⁹ priority species
 - increased representation of each Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) sub-region currently under 10% reserved¹
 - increased high connectivity environments represented in the NRS within each IBRA sub-region.

Common gaps observed:

- Proposed project location with high areas of low habitat condition.
- Less than half the total size of the proposed project location contributed hectares to the NRS.

Criterion 2 – Environmental and cultural values of the proposed IPA (25%)

When addressing the criterion, applicants demonstrated their ability to meet this criterion through:

- their understanding of environmental and cultural values and significance of the proposed IPA consultation area, and the key threats to those values
- the strategies or management actions they proposed to protect environmental and cultural values and address identified threats
- how their proposed IPA would help protect environmental and cultural values by building resilience to climate change impacts through culturally appropriate climate adaptation measures
- relevant environmental plans and research that inform their proposed plan of management
- how Indigenous knowledge and western science would be integrated into the IPA plan of management and the ongoing management of the IPA, once dedicated.

What strong applications did well:

- Included comprehensive descriptions of the cultural and natural values, and the intersection of these values; threats and predicted future pressures; and strategies or management actions, including addressing industry and cultural obligations.
- Demonstrated involvement in existing internal and external management plans and ongoing research, including plans at all levels of government and other Indigenous management

⁷ <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/>

⁸ See defined term *Provincial and mesoscale bioregions* in the Glossary under section 14 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

⁹ <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/threatened-species-action-plan-2022-2032.pdf>

plans; as well as descriptions of a high standard of current work, planning, aspirations, and partnerships to bring together First Nations knowledge and western science.

Common gaps observed:

- Provided template was not used and/or response exceeded the one page limit.
- General or broad statements were made, lacked detail on key species, habitats, and management actions.

Criterion 4 – Cultural, social and economic outcomes (10%)

When addressing the criterion, applicants demonstrated their ability to meet this criterion through:

- how the project would engage and involve Traditional Owners and the local First Nations community to deliver cultural, social and economic outcomes
- opportunities to increase employment for First Nations people, including First Nations women, that could be created or leveraged through this project

What strong applications did well:

- Demonstrated engagement through the design and facilitation of Traditional Owner-led projects, including projects being led through Registered Native Title Body Corporations.
- Provided a high level of detail on planned engagement activities, with evidence to support the likely outcomes; project consultations being accessible so that all Traditional Owners could have a say; and how the project would engage with different stakeholders.
- Included comprehensive descriptions of how the proposed projects would leverage increased employment opportunities for local First Nations people through direct employment, accredited training, fee-for-service opportunities, professional development exchanges, the utilisation of stakeholders to ensure employment outcomes are maintained and identifying employment opportunities for women.

Common gaps observed:

- Being too broad in describing employment and other economic opportunities, strong applicants provided more specific detail on how the project would help increase employment opportunities, including for First Nations women.

Criterion 5 – Stakeholder engagement (10%)

When addressing the criterion, applicants demonstrated their ability to meet this criterion through:

- stakeholders with rights and interests in the IPA consultation area
- how they would engage these stakeholders to build support for a dedicated IPA and involve them in the management of the IPA.

What strong applications did well:

- Demonstrated comprehensive stakeholder assessments through the provision of extensive stakeholder lists as well as details on how stakeholders were engaged in the planning and consultation to develop the grant application and implement the proposed IPA project.
- Included stakeholders adjacent to the IPA and their engagement in potential future expansions; specific details on how stakeholders would be engaged in the management of a dedicated IPA, including avenues for communication; letters of support from stakeholders detailing their roles and how they would be engaged to support the outcomes of the proposed IPA project; and developed project timeframes for stakeholder engagement.

Common gaps observed:

- Applications could have been strengthened by providing letters of support from stakeholders with rights and interests in the proposed project area.

Tips for Future Applications

- Start early and read the **Grant Opportunity Guidelines** carefully.
- Check eligibility and gather required evidence before drafting your application.
- Provide complete, relevant attachments and references.
- Address each assessment criterion directly and clearly.
- Explain how your proposed activities deliver outcomes and demonstrate **value for money**.
- Identify risks and outline strategies for managing them.

Next Steps

- Individual feedback will be provided upon request. To request individual feedback, follow the instructions in **section 9.1** of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

Individual feedback will be available upon request. Applicants seeking individual feedback should submit requests to ipa@dcceew.gov.au. Requests for individual feedback will only be accepted within 20 business days of receipt of the outcome of your application. Feedback will be provided within 20 business days of receipt of the request.

- If you would like to know about upcoming grants opportunities for funding, you can [register](#)¹⁰ to receive email alerts with [GrantConnect](#)¹¹ the Australian Government's grants information system.

¹⁰ <https://www.grants.gov.au/RegisteredUser/Register>

¹¹ <https://www.grants.gov.au/RegisteredUser/Login>