



Purpose of the Multi-year Environment Collaborative Grants

Noosa Council recognises that solving the big issues confronting our local environment needs constructive partnerships over an extended period of time. The Multi-year Environment Collaborative (MEC) Grants have been established to support the implementation of the *Noosa Environment Strategy* and the other strategies and plans that sit under it.

The MEC grants are designed to encourage collaboration between different community groups, as well as with Council. Projects will typically have multiple community stakeholders, working together towards a common goal, and delivering clear, measurable, environmental outcomes.

The ability to run grants over several years allows support of larger-scale, strategic initiatives, that provide for significant, long-term positive impacts on the Noosa environment. Grants can be available for up to 3 years.

Objective of the program

The grants program will support the implementation of the *Noosa Environment Strategy* and other environment-related strategies and plans. Successful projects will be aligned with the outcomes identified in the Strategy and/or work towards the targets identified in the Strategy. Some of the implementation actions identified within the Strategy are particularly suited to community partnerships, potentially funded through these grants.

Depending on priority and funding sources, any round of grants may focus on specific outcomes identified within the *Noosa Environment Strategy*. This will be communicated at the time applications are sought.

Who is eligible to apply?

The MEC Grants are open to not-for-profit community organisations that meet *all* of the following criteria:

- The project or event for which they are applying benefits the residents of the Noosa community;
- The application meets the specific eligibility criteria of the funding programs as set out in the *Environment Grants Policy*;
- The organisation:
 - is a legal not-for-profit entity
 - complies with all incorporation requirements of the State and Commonwealth as at the closing date for the grant program
 - be registered by an Act of Parliament
 - has an active ABN
 - Has a bank account in the name of the legal entity.

If an organisation is not eligible as per the above criteria and wishes to apply for a grant, the organisation is able to do so provided that the application is auspiced and administered by an eligible organisation that is willing and able to accept legal and financial responsibility for the grant and the project or event being delivered.

All applicants (including the auspice, if required) must have:

- appropriate insurances and adhere to sound Workplace Health and Safety practices
- no debt to Council, or has entered into scheduled payment arrangements with Council that is being adhered to
- met acquittal conditions for any previous Council grants.

Groups that are ineligible to apply include;

- commercial businesses or business trusts
- government agencies or departments of local, state and federal government
- educational, political or religious organisations, or primary health care providers, where the application is for the organisation's core business
- community groups that are not incorporated
- individuals.

An organisation found to be ineligible after approval will be required to return the grant payment.

How much can be applied for?

The total pool for projects in the 2019/20 financial year is \$250,000. Applicants should assume a similar total amount will be available in subsequent financial years, when budgeting for the three years of the project.

It is anticipated that individual projects will not generally be funded for more than \$75,000 per year unless a very strong business case is presented.

What projects and activities are eligible?

In order to be eligible for funding, projects must:

- align with the outcomes of Council's key environment strategies and plans and/or contribute towards achieving the targets outlined in the *Noosa Environment Strategy*
- be consistent with the purpose of the Environment Levy as outlined in the *Environment Levy Policy*, where the Environment Levy is the source of funding for the grant
- demonstrate value for money, and that the project is in the public interest
- have a financial or in-kind contribution to the project.

Ineligible projects or programs include, but are not restricted to:

- Projects that do not contribute towards Council's key environment strategies and plans and have a clearly identifiable benefit to the Noosa environment.
- Projects, events or programs run for commercial profit.
- Projects where most of the benefit will be outside the Noosa Shire.
- Activities that have already commenced prior to the grant application being submitted.
- Payment of debt.
- Political activities.

How to apply

- Apply through the SmartyGrants on-line portal.
- The timing for grant applications and links to the application portal will be advertised on the Noosa Council website, social media and in the *Noosa News* local newspaper.

Assessment Process and criteria

Eligible applications will be assessed against the listed criteria below by three persons;

- A member of the Noosa Council Environmental Services team.
- A Noosa Council employee independent of the environment area, but with skills in community engagement, grants, and/or project delivery.
- An independent third party who is not an employee of Council or involved with local environment community groups, but has subject matter expertise.

This outcome of this assessment will be a recommendation to Noosa Council's Ordinary Council meeting. Following adoption at a Council meeting, applicants will be notified of their success, or otherwise. The outcome of grant applications will be made publicly available through the minutes of the Council meeting.

Just because an application meets some or all of the priorities for funding does not automatically guarantee funding. There is a limited funding pool and grants will only be funded to the level of budget provided. Where appropriate, projects may be part-funded only.

Project funding is at the discretion of Noosa Council, and there is no appeal process.

Successful applications

Project commencement

Noosa Council will provide a Deed of Agreement for each project shortly after the announcement of successful applicants. The Deed is a legal document, setting out the terms and conditions that govern the funding.

Funding for the first year of the project will be provided following the signing of the Deed by both parties, and the provision of invoice to Noosa Council. Funding may be provided in stages over the term of the project, determined by timing and the achievement of milestones. No expenditure related to the project should be undertaken until the Deed has been signed by both parties. Milestones will be identified in the project application and included in the Deed of Agreement.

Monitoring and Reporting

Successful applicants will be required to provide a report to Council every six months. One will be a short, qualitative report on the project and its progress. The other will be an annual report, including tracking against milestones and an audited financial statement. The acceptance of this annual report will allow for payments of subsequent years of the project.

Related policies

Noosa Environment Strategy

Environment & Sustainable Living Policy

Environment Grants Policy

Environment Levy Policy

Grant assessment

Assessment is undertaken under three categories, each with several criteria with weighted scoring. Applications must at least pass all categories for consideration (for example, a really strong environmental outcome will not be funded for a project that represents poor value for money or has no partnerships).

1. ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES (50%)

- **To what extent does the project contribute to achieving outcomes and targets of the Noosa Environment Strategy? (25)**
 - The proponent will identify how the project will contribute to the outcomes listed at the end of each section of the *Noosa Environment Strategy*. Projects that relate to multiple outcomes, or projects with a highly significant contribution to a particular outcome, will score highly.
 - The proponent will also identify whether the project will directly support the achievement of identified targets and implementation actions identified in the Strategy.

- **To what extent does the project contribute towards other conservation outcomes (such as international agreements, threatened species management plans, etc.)? (5)**
 - The proponent will identify how the project will contribute towards the achievement of other Noosa Council environment-related plans and strategies (such as the Noosa River Plan, Pest Management Plan, Koala Conservation Action Plan) and other non-Council environment-related plans and strategies (such as international agreements, threatened species management plans, national strategies etc.).
 - The proponent will identify how the project will contribute towards the achievement of other Noosa Council non-environment strategies, such as the Social Strategy and Local Economic Plan.

- **Does the project demonstrate best practice environmental management? (10)**
 - The proponent will identify the methodology for the project and provide evidence of the why this approach was taken over other possible methodologies. Projects that show a high likelihood of success, based on the consideration of a range of possible options, will score highly.

- **Is there a clear indication of how the success of the project will be measured and evaluated, using quantitative measures where appropriate. (10)**
 - The proponent will provide a clear monitoring and evaluation methodology as part of the project that may include qualitative and quantitative measures. This will indicate clear thinking about what the success or otherwise of the project looks like.
 - It may be appropriate to link the achievement of the milestones, measured as part of this monitoring and evaluation, to annual payments for the project.

2. DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS (25%)

- **Are multiple groups involved in the delivery of the project, and to what extent are they collaborating? (18)**
 - The project application will identify all groups involved in the project and in what capacity? One of the purposes of this grant program is to encourage collaboration and projects that have meaningful contributions, through cash or in-kind contribution, by multiple groups will score highly.

- **Does the project involve community participation opportunities? (7)**
 - The project application will identify what opportunities will be available for general community involvement in the project, beyond just the membership of the applicant organisations. This may include information provision through media releases (lower scoring) to field/open days, to genuine participation opportunities (higher scoring).

3. VALUE FOR MONEY & ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY (25%)

- **The percentage of the total project costs being sought as part of the grant. (10)**
 - The proponent will identify how much cash and in-kind contributions will be made by the proponents or other parties towards to the overall cost of the project. Applicants that are able to provide a significant level of contribution will score highly.
 - Applicants may include the ability to leverage the funds with other future grant opportunities, if they can demonstrate a previous history in doing this.

- **Does the proponent have the demonstrated experience and organisational capacity to manage the delivery, finance and reporting on the project? (8)**
 - The proponent will provide evidence of their ability to manage the project with demonstrated experience in similar projects of a similar scale in the past.
 - The proponent will provide evidence of what management structures they will have in place to support and manage the project they are applying for.

- **Does the proponent have the ability to maintain the program/project at the end of the funding period? (7)**
 - The proponent will demonstrate how the project or program will be maintained or continued following the end of funding being provided by Council.