

Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grants Frequently Asked Questions

Program – general

What are the Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grants?

The 2019-20 Victorian bushfires burnt more than 1.5 million hectares of land, particularly within the North East and East Gippsland regions, and to a lesser extent parts of southwest Victoria.

The Victorian Government is providing an extra \$900,000 for the Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grants to support affected communities with their bushfire recovery efforts in the North East, East Gippsland and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Areas.

The grants will fund projects that support community and biodiversity recovery through biodiversity on-ground works and capacity building activities including community education and engagement.

They will also support projects on fire-affected private land that has received previous government biodiversity investment and/or has a Trust for Nature covenant. The grants will contribute to the targets in *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037* to stop the decline of our native plants and animals and improve our natural environment.

How much funding is available?

A total of \$900,000 is available for eligible private landowners, environmental volunteer groups and networks for the Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grants across Victoria to fund projects that support community and biodiversity recovery after the 2019-20 bushfires.

Why is funding restricted to three Catchment Management Authority areas?

Due to the severity and impact of the 2019-20 bushfires, funding for this grant round will focus on bushfire affected sites in the North East, East Gippsland and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Areas.

How much funding can individual projects receive?

Successful applicants' projects can receive up to:

- \$10,000 for private landholders (Stream 1)
- \$30,000 for environmental volunteer groups (Stream 2)
- \$50,000 for environmental volunteer networks (Stream 3)

Matching funding is not required.

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How long do I have to complete the project?

Projects must be completed and reported on by 31 December 2021.

Do I need landowner consent?

Yes. For projects on public land, you need to provide evidence of land manager consent/support in your application. For projects on private land, you need to list landowner details (name and address). If your application is successful, you will be required to confirm that you can provide, upon request, evidence of landowner's consent for on-ground works to take place.

If acting on behalf of another group or network, please provide evidence of the other group's or network's support for the project, as well as consent as described above.

What if we don't have a site yet?

If you or your group do not have project sites confirmed or cannot get access to proposed sites yet, please identify where you think your site will be and work with your Regional Landcare Coordinator to ensure the site aligns with the objectives of this funding. You will still need to get consent for any proposed sites.

Can I help other groups?

Private landowners, groups and networks outside of bushfire affected areas can apply for funding to do work on behalf of impacted groups within the bushfire affected areas (with written permission).

We understand that the impact of the fires has been huge, and some groups may not have capacity to undertake projects. Help from outside the fire impacted areas may help other groups get back on their feet.

Can I apply for more than one project?

Yes, you may submit one or more projects in one or more streams. Each project submitted must be separate and clearly different. Projects will not be accepted if:

- they are dependent on another project getting funded, or
- scaled versions of the same project have been submitted, or
- the same project has been submitted across multiple streams.

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How will the current public health measures affect the grants process and successful applicants?

We recognise that fire affected communities are also dealing with the current public health measures. We also know the work of volunteer and community organisations helps keep communities connected, particularly at times of uncertainty.

In recognition of this, community capacity building projects that include virtual or on-line activities are eligible for grant funding. This may include online convening or training to maintain skills and promote information sharing regarding biodiversity rehabilitation post bushfire.

Projects must be completed by 31 December 2021.

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Application period and submission

When do applications close?

Applications close 5.00pm Monday 20 July 2020. Late applications will not be accepted.

How do I apply?

Applications are to be submitted through the online grant application system called SmartyGrants on each Catchment Management Authority website.

What if I can't apply online?

We encourage everyone to try to use the online form. However, if this presents a significant challenge, we do not want issues involving technology to prevent you from applying for this grant.

If you do not have internet or internet connectivity is an issue in your area, a hard copy application form is available. Please contact the Regional Landcare Coordinator in your Catchment Management Authority region to obtain a form.

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Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply?

The Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grants are open to:

- private landowners who have been recipients of previous government biodiversity investment in conservation projects on their land and/or have a Trust for Nature covenant on the site, and
- all environmental volunteer groups and networks, including Friends groups and Landcare groups that undertake on-ground works.

Traditional Owner groups are also eligible to apply.

The grants apply to any areas in the North East, East Gippsland and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Area that have been affected by the 2019-20 bushfires.

I am from a group/network. Does my project need to have previous government biodiversity investment?

No – previous government investment only applies to the private landholder grants (Stream 1).

Do we need an auspice?

Applicant organisations that do not have adequate insurance or are not incorporated or registered as a not-for profit, will need to partner with another organisation, known as an auspice, to act as a project sponsor organisation.

Applicant organisations will need approval from the auspice organisation before applying for a Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grant, as that organisation will be legally responsible for delivering and administering the grant on behalf of the applicant.

If your application is successful, the auspice organisation will be required to sign the funding agreement and manage the grant funding.

More details on who can be an auspice can be found in the Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grants Guidelines. The Guidelines are available on each CMA website.

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Funding Items

What can I spend the funding on?

Successful projects will deliver activities to protect or improve biodiversity and natural environment assets such as native vegetation, native fauna, waterways, wetlands and soils and will assist with community capacity building.

Eligible biodiversity on-ground works include:

- weed control
- pest and animal control (rabbits and foxes only, including ripping rabbit burrows, harbour removal, baiting and fumigation only)
- fencing remnant vegetation habitat protection
- waterway protection (using fire-proof fencing)
- revegetation, direct or hand seeding
- artificial habitat (e.g. nest box installation)
- waterway bank and soil stabilisation
- cultural heritage assessments.

Eligible community capacity building includes education and engagement activities such as:

- property planning courses
- field days
- education events
- development of property biodiversity recovery plans
- demonstration sites
- knowledge-gathering (e.g. surveys).

Are online activities eligible?

Yes. If you are unable to meet face to face due to current public health measures, online activities are eligible. This may include online convening or training to maintain skills and promote information sharing regarding biodiversity rehabilitation post bushfire.

What is not eligible for funding?

Some activities will not be funded. The Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grants Guidelines provide the full list of activities that are not eligible. The Guidelines are available on each CMA website.

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Assessment

How will the applications be assessed?

There will be a two-step assessment process:

Step 1

Grant applications will be assessed and prioritised by a Regional Assessment Panel convened by the respective CMA.

Step 2

Projects for all three CMAs will then be consolidated and a Statewide Assessment Panel will conduct a second assessment.

Applications will consider the contribution a project makes in terms of:

- protection and restoration of biodiversity values in accordance with local, regional and statewide priorities and the impact of the 2019-20 bushfires
- the extent the project contributes to protection, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity through on-ground works within a bushfire affected area
- cultural heritage protection
- community engagement and capacity-building
- demonstrated need and community benefit
- project design and group/network capacity to deliver the project
- previous government investment
- value for money.

More details are available in the Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grant Guidelines. The Guidelines are available on each CMA website.

What are the assessment criteria?

The assessment criteria will include assessing:

- The land and environmental outcome - the extent to which the project contributes to protection, enhancement and restoration of land and environment within a bushfire affected area
- Community engagement and capacity building - the extent to which the project engages and builds on the capacity of the group
- Demonstrated need and community and public benefit - the extent to which the project contributes to local and regional priorities

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- Project design and group/network capacity – is the project design suitable and does the group/network have capacity to deliver?
- Is it value for money?
- Previous investment – the extent to which the project builds on and/or reinstates previous government investment within a bushfire affected area.

Please note that different criteria will be applied depending on if you are a group/network or an individual landholder. More details are in the Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Guidelines. The Guidelines are available on each CMA website.

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Contracts and funding

If my application is successful, what do I do next?

If your organisation is successful then you will have four weeks after receiving the letter of offer, including the funding agreement, to submit your organisation's signed funding agreement, and any other documentation outlined in the letter of offer. If the documentation is not submitted within this timeframe, the funding may be reallocated to other projects.

Successful applicants will receive payment once all paperwork has been completed and submitted. If you have an auspice, they will receive the payment on your behalf.

Do I need an ABN to apply for this grant?

Applicants should consult the Australian Taxation Office or seek professional advice on any taxation implications that may arise from this grant funding.

Applicants do not need to provide an ABN to apply for this grant. If you are successful and do not have an ABN, we will send you a *Statement by a Supplier* form, which you will need to complete and return to us.

Should I include GST in my costings?

The maximum grant available for a project is \$10,000 for private landowners, \$30,000 for groups and \$50,000 for networks (GST exclusive).

A group or network registered for GST will receive GST in addition to the project grant payment. Those not registered for GST will receive only the grant amount.

What are the funding conditions?

Successful applicants and auspicings organisations (if an auspice is used) must:

- enter into a funding agreement with the CMA.
- be responsible for meeting contractual obligations to deliver the project and submit project reports by 31 December 2021.
- adhere to all relevant legislation including Occupational Health and Safety requirements.
- acknowledge the CMA and Victorian Government funding in publications and promotions.

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What are the reporting requirements?

You will need to provide a report once the project is complete. This will be done online using SmartyGrants, and the reporting template will be open during project delivery.

The report will need to include:

- how you spent the grant
- what you achieved with the funding
- for revegetation projects, how many hectares were revegetated
- data that you collected during the project using DELWP standard outputs. (Note - data may be made publicly available)
- what you learnt while completing the project
- how the project will support the group, network or partnership into the future.

Participants in funded activities are also asked to complete the [“What’s your relationship with nature?” survey](#) on Engage Victoria.

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Further information

What else is the Victorian Government doing to help Victoria's biodiversity recover from the 2019-20 bushfires?

The Victorian Government is investing \$17.5 million to address the immediate needs of Victoria's unique biodiversity following the summer bushfires. Actions already taken include:

- Searches for surviving wildlife
- Establishing mobile triage units to assess and treat injured wildlife
- Grants to volunteer wildlife carers to help cover the increased cost of caring for injured wildlife
- Temporary supplementary feeding
- Post-bushfire management of pest predators to support surviving wildlife
- Temporary extraction of threatened species from the wild to safe, temporary shelter
- Research and further planning by experts to inform further, longer term actions.

Do I need to consider Aboriginal Cultural Heritage?

We highly recommend that all applicants conduct an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage check as early in the planning stage as possible. This can be done by engaging the relevant Registered Aboriginal Party or the Aboriginal Victoria Heritage Operations Team.

Please see the Bushfire Recovery Grants Guidelines for more information. The Guidelines are available on each CMA website.

If my application is unsuccessful, can I ask for feedback?

Yes, and we encourage you to ask for feedback. The announcement letter will include contact details on who to contact for feedback.

How do I acknowledge the Victorian Government's support?

Successful applicants are expected to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support and meeting [promotional guidelines](#) will form part of the funding agreement. Successful applicants must liaise with the departmental program area to coordinate any public events or announcements related to the project.

When will I hear whether I have been successful?

We will write to you about the outcome of your application after assessments are completed. All decisions are final and are not subject to further review. However, applicants who are not granted funding are welcome to ask for feedback on their application.