



# Environmental Levy Community Fund 2024/25

The Environment Levy Community Fund (ELCF) aims to support community-initiated projects with the principle purpose of achieving environment or sustainability outcomes.

## Program objectives

- Support environmental sustainability and on-ground projects
- Implement the community's Sustainability aspirations as outlined in Bellingen Shire Council's [Community Vision 2035](#) and [Biodiversity Strategy 2019](#)

## Funding

There is one funding round each financial year which is limited to Council's yearly budget allocation. Grants are available to a maximum value of \$10,000 excluding GST.

## Timeframes

Grant application open	April 16 – May 14, 2024
Evaluation period	May 15 – June 4, 2024
Notification of outcome	June 27, 2024
Grant period	July 1- June 30, 2025
Final Project Report due	2 months after project completion

Activities must take place before 30 June 2025 (note: events/activities that have taken place prior to an agreement being executed will not be funded retrospectively).

## Who can apply?

- Incorporated not for profit organisations
- Schools and pre-schools
- Community Groups and unincorporated associations with a nominated auspicing body (see definitions).

If you have received funding in the previous grant round, you will only be considered for repeat rounds if there are sufficient funds available and/or you can demonstrate sustainable funding source(s) that will partially fund the project.

Groups will only be funded for one project in each funding round. An organisation may act as auspice for more than one group.

## Eligible project activities

Eligible project activities include (but are not limited to):

- Energy and water saving initiatives
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives
- Waste minimisation and recycling
- Fauna and flora protection and conservation
- Environmental education and community capacity building

Some examples of previously funded projects are available on the [Council website](#).

The River and Biodiversity Officer can assist with checking eligibility of projects prior to the lodgment of applications.

## Who cannot apply?

- Individuals
- Commercial enterprises
- Organisations which have outstanding reports or acquittals for past funding programs administered by Bellingen Shire Council
- Organisations which do not have public liability insurance to cover the timeframe in which the project would be undertaken
- Organisations that are outside of the Bellingen Local Government Area

## Ineligible project activities

- Core, ongoing administrative costs of organisations, such as project ongoing maintenance, rent, phone, internet, insurance, and wages for regularly employed staff
- General operating expenses or ongoing costs
- Competitions or fundraising events
- Projects which charge attendance fees for participation, to ensure that projects funded by Council are inclusive of people on low incomes. However, nominal attendance fees for workshops etc. may be considered
- Projects which have already commenced or been completed i.e. no retrospective funding
- Projects undertaken on private land which is not readily accessible to the public

## Assessment criteria

Applications are assessed on merit against the following assessment criteria

Projects MUST (essential criteria):

- Be an eligible applicant and project
- Concentrate their activities at a local level
- Be implemented on public lands or land that is readily accessible by the public
- Have the landholders approval for the project (LOS)
- Meet environmental and/or sustainability priorities identified in Council's [Community Vision 2035](#) and [Biodiversity Strategy 2019](#)
- Demonstrate a commitment to maintenance of project outcomes beyond the funding period, if required. Applications must clearly describe how maintenance will be carried out and for what length of time. Proposals which are able to show commitment to longer periods of maintenance, when required, will be considered more favorably.

Applications will be considered favorably where (desirable criteria):

- Applicants consider seeking funding from other sources using the ELCF as matching funds or make a co-commitment to for delivery of initiatives
- Activities are actions identified in the Bellingen Shire Biodiversity Strategy 2019
- There is capacity for the project to be implemented by, or used as a model or case study for, other groups/school
- The project maintains / protects existing environmental achievements / assets
- The project builds community capacity and/or contributes towards behavioral change outcomes
- The project fosters innovative and creative solutions that meet an environmental and/or sustainability need

Council aims to support a range of projects that are geographically spread across the shire and cover a diverse range of themes.



## Clarification regarding potential allocation of funding

- No more than 10% of funding should be allocated to co-ordination costs, unless the applicant can make a case that more than 10% co-ordination costs may be appropriate. These costs must be exclusively related to the delivery of the proposed project.
- No more than 50% of funding should be allocated to workshop facilitator or contractor fees, if required. The remaining funding can be allocated to items such as materials, catering and Development Application fees, for example. Workshop facilitator fees will only be funded if the engagement of a professional facilitator is deemed essential for project delivery by the evaluation panel and Council. The sourcing of particular expertise must be fully justified, and a facilitator brief provided. Funding will only be allocated for facilitators who are not office bearers or sitting on a governing committee within the organisation applying for funding.
- Notwithstanding the previous point, up to 100% of funding can be spent on contractors for on-ground works which deliver the main objectives of the project, such as bush regeneration works including weed control and revegetation.
- No more than 5% of funding may be allocated to transport and associated costs for projects which entail travelling to and from locations more than 30km apart, if required. Transport costs can only be allocated funding if the applicant is able to demonstrate that travel to several locations across the Shire is essential for effective project delivery. Proposed travel costs are to be calculated at the standard per kilometre rate and successful applicants will need to keep a log of travel undertaken, to be submitted with the final acquittal report.

## Important things to note

- A project work plan must be completed
- The proposed budget must include full disclosure of all income and expenses relating to the proposed project. If it becomes evident that this requirement has not been met, Council has the right to withdraw funding
- Projects which require ongoing maintenance, after the funding period, must clearly identify maintenance required, how this will be addressed, and the length of time maintenance will be carried out. Commitment to longer periods of maintenance, when required, is considered favorably
- Staged projects, to be implemented over more than one year, must provide a long-term plan that encompasses the entire life of the project
- At the the discretion of Council funding may be subject to milestone payments.
- Funding is not recurrent, and priority will be given to applicants and projects that have not been funded previously.

## Support Material

It is strongly recommended that appropriate and relevant support material be submitted with your application to assist in its assessment. This might include:

- evidence of similar projects previously undertaken by your organization
- letters of support from organisations and/or the community involved in your project
- quotes from contractors or for materials or labor
- letter of support from the landowner



## Assessment process

- All applications will be assessed by a Grants Review Panel and recommendations presented to Bellingen Shire Council for approval of funding.
- Council reserves the right to award an amount less than that applied for if it is assessed that the amount requested is not justified by the information provided in the application or the full amount is not available at the time of the request.
- Applications may be assigned to another grants program as part of the assessment process if the original funding program selected by the applicant is not deemed the most appropriate for the initiative.
- Applicants will be formally notified via email.

## How to apply

- Applications must be submitted online via the [Good Grants portal](#)
- Access to the internet and an email address will be required
- The application must be submitted by the due date
- Late or incomplete applications will be not considered

## Successful applicants

Successful applicants must:

- Enter into a funding agreement with Bellingen Shire Council via the Good Grants Portal and adhere to the conditions of the agreement.
- Provide proof of appropriate public liability insurance for the activity and the period covering the activity if applicable.
- Register as a creditor to Council if not already registered via [Council website](#)
- Provide an invoice that states the Australian Business Number (ABN) (if applicable), or the organisation and the name of the organisation. Organisations registered for GST should provide an invoice inclusive of GST. Organisations not registered for GST should provide an invoice exclusive of GST.
- Acknowledge Bellingen Shire Council in promotional material (e.g., websites, social media, media releases, posters, pamphlets, programs, invitations, and advertising). Logos are available from Bellingen Shire Council.
- Provide promotional opportunities for the Mayor (or delegate) to present or speak at the event or site stall (where appropriate).
- Notify Council in writing of any changes to the project that would result in the funding being expended for activities other than those detailed on the application. Variations may not be undertaken without prior written approval from Bellingen Shire Council.
- Notify Council if you are unable to meet deliverable requirements or the project is no longer going ahead. You must notify Council and return funds within 30 days of notifying Council.

## Reporting

- Submit a "Final Project Report" to Council within two months of finishing the project. The report should include accurate records and accounts regarding each activity including receipts, proof of purchase and invoices and other documents to show how your organisation spent the grant. Photographs, copies of promotional material and media clippings must be included in the report, where available. A Final Project Report example is available on the [Council website](#).

## Completing your application

If you need assistance with the online application form or with any aspect of completing your application please contact the River and Biodiversity Officer on 6655 7300.

## Definitions

### Auspicings

An auspicings body is a legally constituted organisation that will take legal and financial responsibility for a grant if awarded. If a grant is awarded, the auspicings body must sign the funding agreement and is responsible for reporting and acquitting the grant within two months of the project being completed. All correspondence and monies will be directed to the auspicings body. It is recommended that the successful grant applicant enters into a written agreement with their nominated auspicings body that clearly outlines each party's responsibilities and liberties.

### In-kind

An "in-kind contribution" means giving something other than money to support a project or organisation. It could be goods, services, or time volunteered instead of cash. Examples include donating equipment, providing free services like legal help, or volunteering for a cause. These contributions are valuable because they help save money and show community support.

If you need assistance with calculating volunteer hours and wages, please click [here](#).



### Community Capacity Building

Community capacity building is the capacity of the people in communities to participate in actions based on community interests, both as individuals and through groups, organisations and networks. It is defined as the activities, resources and support that strengthen the skills and abilities of people and community groups to take effective action and leading roles in the development of their communities.

### Sustainability

Acting sustainably embodies a vision of achieving social, environmental and economic well-being. It aims to ensure that we have enough for all, forever.

