

ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY Community Fund

Connected, Sustainable, Creative

Bellingen Shire
COUNCIL



Grant Guidelines 2020/21

Closes midnight Monday 18 January 2021

Program Background

Bellingen Shire Council (BSC) established the Environmental Levy Fund in 2005, after gaining approval from the NSW Minister for Local Government for a special rate variation of 4% to the General Income for environmental projects.

From this, Council has approved funding to be allocated to the Environmental Levy Community Fund (ELCF) to support community initiated environmental projects. Council has been offering grants through this fund to the community on a yearly basis since 2006.

Until recently, the Bellingen Shire Council Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) assisted in the assessment of the ELCF program. The Committee consisted of Councillors, Council staff and community representatives. One of the roles of the ESAC was to review the program guidelines for each new funding round, undertake a review of projects according to these guidelines, and recommend the selected projects for adoption by Council. As the structure and form of Council's engagement activities is under review, Advisory Committees are currently not established. However the previous ESAC members may be invited to assist Council in the evaluation of projects for this round.

A limited number of grants are available to a maximum value of \$5,000 including GST per project, selected on merit. Please note Council reserves the right to part fund projects. Projects must be completed within 12 months of signing a funding agreement with Council.

Program Objectives

The aim of the ELCF is to support environmental sustainability and on-ground work projects to a maximum of \$5,000 including GST per project.

The focus is on projects which:

- Concentrate their activities at a local level, across the shire;
- Maintain / protect existing environmental achievements / assets;
- Develop programs or projects that build community capacity;
- Contribute towards behavioural change outcomes;
- Meet environmental and/or sustainability priorities identified in BSC's Community Vision 2027;
- Foster innovative and creative solutions that meet an identified environmental and/or sustainability need.

General Eligibility Criteria: Who can apply?

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

Who cannot apply?

- Individuals;
- Commercial enterprises;
- Organisations which have outstanding reports or acquittals for any past funding programs administered by Bellingen Shire Council, or which have not been formally notified that a prior grant acquittal has been accepted as satisfactory by Council.
Please note that due to Covid-19 restrictions and subsequent delays, any applications from groups with outstanding ELCF projects from 2019/20 will still be considered if they are able to demonstrate the ability to complete both projects within the 2021 calendar year;
- Organisations which do not have public liability insurance to cover the timeframe in which the project would be undertaken; and
- Organisations that are outside of the Bellingen Local Government Area.

Specific Assessment Criteria – Projects MUST:

- Concentrate their activities at a local level;
- Maintain / protect existing environmental achievements / assets;
- Develop programs or projects that build community capacity;
- Contribute towards behavioural change outcomes;
- Meet environmental and/or sustainability priorities identified in BSC's Community Vision 2027;
- Foster innovative and creative solutions that meet an environmental and/or sustainability need;
- Be implemented on public lands or land that is readily accessible by the public;
- 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 favourably.

The Sustainable Environment and Waste unit is able to assist with checking eligibility of projects and other aspects involved in completing the application form. Please contact the unit via email: sew@bellingen.nsw.gov.au

An additional selection criterion is that applicants consider seeking funding from other sources using the ELCF as matching funds. Applications by organisations which make a commitment to seeking funding from other sources for ongoing delivery of initiatives, if appropriate, will be considered favourably.

Some examples of previously funded projects are available on the Council website: <https://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au/>

Activities NOT funded

- Core, ongoing administrative costs of organisations, such as 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.

Clarification regarding potential allocation of funding to projects

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

Please note that due to Covid-19 restrictions and subsequent delays, any applications from groups with outstanding ELCF projects from 2019/20 will still be considered if they are able to demonstrate the ability to complete both projects within the 2021 calendar year.

No more than 10% of funding should be allocated to coordination costs, unless the applicant can make a case that more than 10% coordination costs may be appropriate. These costs must be exclusively related to the specific delivery of the proposed project, if required.

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 remember

- All submissions must be completed and submitted using the Bellingen Shire Council Good Grants grant management system Environmental Levy Community Fund application form - <https://bellingen.grantplatform.com/>
- Applications must be received on or by the due date. Late applications will not be accepted;
- Groups will only be funded for one project at a time in each funding round;
- A project work plan must be completed;

- Applicants must provide details of the skills and experience of project coordinators;
- 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 favourably;
- Staged projects, to be implemented over more than one year, must provide a long-term plan that encompasses the entire life of the project;
- Successful applicants must return signed documentation by the due date, or funding may be withheld;
- Funding for successful applications will not normally be available until all works are completed and inspected by Council. However, progress payments and up-front payments may be considered at Council's discretion;
- Funding is not recurrent and priority will be given to applicants and projects that have not been funded previously.

Application Assessment Process

Information for Applicants

Bellingen Council will issue external advertisements (Bellingen Courier Sun and Don Dorrigo Gazette) to inform the community of the Environmental Levy Community Fund (ELCF) opening. All potential applicants will be advised to view the grant guidelines and apply via Good Grants, Council's online grant management system.

Applications must be completed using the application form found on Good Grants and submitted by the closing date, which will be at least four weeks from when the program is advertised. See the Good Grants link to register and complete your application -

<https://bellingen.grantplatform.com/>

Should interested applicants have any further specific questions, they can be directed to Council's Sustainable Environment & Waste unit via email – sew@bellingen.nsw.gov.au

ELCF Applications - Initial Shortlist

An initial application shortlist will be completed by Council's Sustainable Environment & Waste unit. This process will be simple and will aim to ensure that the applicant's organisation meets all the basic eligibility requirements listed in the Grant Guidelines and Application Form.

Project Selection Process

Council's Manager Sustainable Environment and Waste will oversee the shortlisting of applications based on the specific assessment criteria. Suitable projects will then be presented at a BSC Councillor workshop where project assessment and 2020/21 ELCF allocations will be completed.

The previous ESAC members may be engaged to assist in assessing the applications. Should a conflict of interest be declared, the previous Committee member will not be eligible to assess that particular application.

Following this process, a recommendation of successful applications based on the outcomes of this engagement will be provided in a report to Council for adoption at a Council meeting.

Successful applicants will be formally notified via email. Successful applications will be provided with a funding agreement and will be requested to return this and a current public liability insurance certificate within fourteen days.

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 organisation and letters of support from organisations and/or the community involved in your project.

Grant Payments

If successful, you will be required to:

- Sign and return to Council a signed funding agreement;
- Provide proof of public liability insurance for the time period covering your project; and
- Provide a tax invoice for the approved amount, as follows:

Organisations registered for GST will need to forward a Tax Invoice for the grant plus 10% GST; or Organisations not registered for GST will need to forward an Invoice for the amount of the grant.

Final Grant Acquittal Report

All successful applicants must submit a project report within one month of the project's completion. A final report and acquittal template will be provided by Council.

Any photographs or media references should also be included in the report where available. Receipts for purchases, including invoices from workshop facilitators and/or contractors, made with ELCF monies must be attached to the report.

Further Information

For further information regarding the Environmental Levy Community Fund, please contact Bellingen Shire Council's Sustainable Environment and Waste unit via email sew@bellingen.nsw.gov.au

Definitions:

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.

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