



Council Policy

ENVIRONMENT GRANTS

Corporate Plan Reference:	Theme 1: The Noosa Environment. 20 year goal: Our environment is protected, enhanced and valued by the community
Endorsed by Council:	19 September 2019
Policy Author:	Manager Environmental Services

POLICY BACKGROUND

Noosa Council has a long history of working with and supporting the community to achieve significant environmental outcomes. The Environment Grants program aims to continue this partnership through support and collaboration to achieve significant environmental outcomes that align with Council's key environment strategies and plans.

This policy is guided by the *Noosa Environment & Sustainable Living Policy* and the *Noosa Environment Strategy*. The *Noosa Environment Strategy* clearly outlines strategies, targets and outcomes for the Noosa environment over a 10-year period. This Policy *does not* apply to sponsorship, donations, advertising, naming rights and service level agreements.

COUNCIL POLICY

The Environment Grants will support the implementation of the *Noosa Environment Strategy*, as well as Council's other key environment strategies and plans, by enabling collaboration with the community in initiatives that work towards the outcomes and targets identified in the *Noosa Environment Strategy*.

All initiatives funded by the Environment Grants program will have tangible and measurable outcomes.

Outcomes of the Environment Grants program will be:

- implementation of Council's key environment strategies and plans, and the actions within them, that are appropriately delivered through grants
- increased capacity of local groups through a collaborative approach to environmental management
- increased funding directed to environmental activities through the opportunities of community groups/organisations to leverage extra funding or resources.

Who Can Apply

The Environment 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 this Policy and the supporting grant guidelines;
- 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.

Who Cannot Apply

- 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.

Eligible Projects

In order to be eligible for funding, projects must:

- align with the strategic 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

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.

ENVIRONMENT GRANTS PROGRAM

The Environment Grants Program will consist of three main funding streams:

1. Environment Project Grants

These grants will be for projects, programs or events that align with the *Noosa Environment Strategy*, as well as Council's other key environment strategies and plans, and have a positive impact on the Noosa environment. They will typically be completed within 12 months of commencement.

The minimum grant amount from Council under the Environment Project Grants program is \$1,000 and maximum grant amount is \$30,000. There is an expectation that projects will have a cash or in-kind contribution by the applicant or other partners. In some instances, only part-funding of the amount request may be offered.

Environment Project Grants will be advertised and assessed through the same process as Council's Community Grants program, as outlined in the *Community Grants Guideline*.

2. Environment Organisation Alliance Grants

These grants will provide organisational support to community groups that are primarily focused on environment activities. Successful applicants will receive an annual grant for up to three years where:

- the primary purpose of the organisation aligns with Noosa Environment Strategy
- the services provided by the organisation are of significant benefit to the Noosa community (beyond their membership base)
- the organisation's services closely align with Council's strategic outcomes, identified in the Environment Strategy
- the organisation can demonstrate value for money for all stakeholders
- the organisation can demonstrate the need for financial assistance from Noosa Council.

Applications for Environment Organisation Alliance Grants will follow the same process as other Noosa Council alliance grants, as outlined in *Community Grants Program Guideline – Three Year Community Alliance*.

3. Multi-year Environment Collaborative Projects

Multi-year Environment Collaborative (MEC) Projects will support longer-term, larger-scale strategic initiatives that align with the *Noosa Environment Strategy* and have a significant positive impact on the Noosa environment.

These projects will have multiple community stakeholders and clear, measurable outcomes. Projects may be funded for up to three years. Recipients will be required to provide an annual progress report that includes a financial report, which demonstrates delivery of agreed outcomes.

Projects will be sought annually through an open application process or EOI. If funding has already been allocated in previous rounds (including in previous financial years), Council may choose not to seek further applications until there are sufficient funds.

Council will retain the flexibility to receive and assess MEC Project applications outside of this timeframe, but all projects will still be subject to Council approval.

A Guideline for the delivery of Multi-year Environment Collaborative Grants will be developed and annually reviewed by the Environment Levy Working Group.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Council will publicise the availability of its Environment Grants and the associated process to apply. In assessing the grants, Council will:

- ensure public monies are allocated in a fair and equitable way
- ensure best possible value for money
- check each application against eligibility criteria as set out in the appropriate Grant Guideline
- seek recommendations from an expert panel on occasion or where appropriate that can comprise Council officers, Councillors and/or community representatives.

Council will determine the total allocation of funds to the Environment Grants Program through its annual budgetary processes. The number and types of grants approved will depend on the demand for funding, the available program budget, and corporate priorities.

Council may also determine priority funding areas on a year-to-year basis. This may include:

- direction of funding towards specific themes or outcomes of the Environment Strategy for any given grant period
- nominating the proportion of funding to be directed towards each of the three grant funding streams for any given financial year.

Priority funding areas may be influenced by the source of funding available; such as the Environment Levy, General Rates, other Council levies or alternate third-party funding sources. This will be determined by Council through its annual budgetary processes.

Council officers are available to provide advice to applicants and help develop grant applications. They will also assist organisations to identify additional and alternative sources of funding relevant to their project or event.

Council officers are bound by Councils Employee Code of Conduct and are therefore responsible for acting with impartiality and integrity and recognising and declaring any actual or potential conflicts of interest. This may include but is not limited to, personal connections with the applicant. Anyone having a determined conflict of interest should not debate or be involved in any discussions on any matter relating to that application.

Council officers are required to adhere to this policy when supporting, facilitating, or delivering grants-related activities. It is the responsibility of Council officers to ensure that grants and funding provided from public monies:

- are administered transparently and accountably
- align with Council's objectives, goals and priorities
- effectively advertised and promoted to the community so that potential applicants have equal opportunity to apply for funds
- monitored for compliance against set performance measures.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Queensland Government

- *Local Government Regulation (2012)*
- *Local Government Act (2009)*
- *Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act (1982)*

Noosa Council

- *Noosa Council Corporate Plan*
- *Noosa Council Environment Strategy*
- *Noosa Council Environment Levy Policy*
- *Noosa Council Sustainability Principles*
- *Noosa Council Community Grants Policy*

DEFINITIONS

Acquittal

The process by which a recipient demonstrates in writing to the funding body that it has expended the funds in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement on completion of the activity or project. The acquittal process, when conducted correctly, demonstrates that these monies were being used efficiently, effectively or that the community is getting value for money for services.

Auspice

Auspice means that an organisation takes responsibility for ensuring the funds are used as specified in the grant allocation. An auspicating organisation will be responsible for:

- sign-off on the funding agreement
- the receipt, banking and administration of all moneys
- project monitoring and completion
- ensuring the applicant acquits the funding on time
- sign-off on the acquittal form.

Business

For the purpose of this policy, business is defined as an organisation or enterprising entity engaged in commercial, industrial or professional activities for profit. This may be in the form of a sole trader, company or partnership. (Sole trader: an individual operating as the sole person legally responsible for all aspects of the business. Company: a legal entity separate from its shareholders. Partnership: an association of people or entities running a business together, but not as a company).

Business Trust

An entity that holds property or income for the benefit of others.

Community Grant Policy

A policy outlining the parameters by which a local government may provide grant funding to community groups. For the purposes of statutory reporting, this Environment Grants Policy is a 'Community Grants Policy' under the definition of the *Local Government Regulations (2012)*.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is a conflict between an officer's or councillor's personal interests (including personal interests arising from their relationships or memberships, for example) that might lead to a decision that is contrary to the public interest.

Environment Strategy

The *Noosa Environment Strategy* is the overarching Noosa Council strategic document relating to the environment. It is divided into four Key Focus Areas, each of which have several priorities and a target. Each Key Focus Area also has a series of Strategic Outcomes that Council is seeking to achieve. The Environment Strategy sits alongside the Social Strategy and Local Economic Plan as the key strategic documents of Noosa Council.

Funding Agreement

A legal agreement entered into by the successful applicant and Council noting the obligations of both parties.

Grant

Funds provided to a recipient through a formal program for a specified purpose, directed at achieving goals and objectives consistent with Council policy, where the recipient is selected on merit against a set of criteria. Funding is subject to entering a written agreement with Council that outlines accountability requirements.

In-Kind Support

In-kind support includes paid and volunteer labour, administrative support, rent-free accommodation or donations of materials, equipment or services.

Not for profit incorporated community organisation

A community organisation that operates as a legal entity with a primary purpose of providing services to the community. An organisation is non-profit if it is not carried on for the direct or indirect profit or gain of its members, both in its operations and winding up.

Organisations

For the purposes of this Policy the term Organisations means:

- Incorporated Associations (incorporated under state legislation, commonly have 'Association' or 'Incorporated' or 'Inc.' in their legal name);
- Incorporated Cooperatives (also incorporated under state legislation, commonly have 'Cooperative' in their legal name);
- Companies (incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001 – may be proprietary company (limited by shares or by guarantee) or public companies); and
- Aboriginal Corporations (incorporated under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006)

Public Interest

For the purpose of this policy, public interest refers to 'the welfare of the general public in contrast to the interest of an individual or group'.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a contractual business arrangement under which a sponsor, for a specified term, provides a contribution in cash and/or in kind ("contra") in return for specified commercial benefits.