

The ACT Environmental Grants Program

Environment Grants and
Environmental Volunteer Group Assistance Grants
2026–27 Guidelines



Acknowledgement of Country

The City and Environment Directorate acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

We respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and their continuing culture and contribution they make to the Canberra region and the life of our city.

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GPO Box 158, Canberra City 2601

act.gov.au

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About the program

ACT Environmental Grants Program

The Australian Capital Territory, while small geographically, is rich in environmental assets, values and significance. Our many reserves, parks, urban green spaces and rural lands offer protection for important local species and ecosystems. Our community plays an important role as stewards helping to conserve, enhance and promote these environmental values.

The ACT Environmental Grants Program supports and empowers the community to fulfil this stewardship role. The program gives an opportunity for the community to address environmental issues they are concerned about; to conserve and enhance natural places that are special to them; to connect more people to nature, and to engage other community members to do the same.

With 30 years' history, the ACT Environmental Grants help the community to deliver positive outcomes that align with ACT Government environmental priorities. The program builds community awareness and boosts the community's capacity to play a valuable role in caring for the environment of the ACT.

The 2026-27 program has two streams:

- Environment Grants
- Environmental Volunteer Group Assistance Grants



Bush Buds nature walks. Photo credit: Conservation Council of the ACT.

Grants coordinator

The Grants Coordinator is responsible for the coordination and administration of the ACT Environmental Grants Program. They are your first point of contact for any assistance at any step of the application process. You can contact them by phone on **02 6205 9269** or via email at **actnrm@act.gov.au**.

Additional information

Additional information about the ACT Environmental Grants Program including access to the application form on Smarty Grants can be found via the following web pages, or by contacting the Grants Coordinator:

- [Environment Grants](#)
- [Environmental Volunteer Group Assistance Grants](#)

Available funding

While subject to change depending on the applications received, the following should be seen as an indicative total amount available under each stream. If warranted, the assessment panel may also move applications between the funding streams

- Environment Grant Stream – \$360,000
- Environmental Volunteer Group Assistance Stream – \$60,000

Grant amounts

You can apply for up to:

- Environment Grant Stream – \$25,000
- Environmental Volunteer Group Assistance Stream – \$5,000

Important dates

Applications open:

9.00 am AEST on Tuesday 14 July 2026

Applications close:

11:59 pm AEST on Tuesday 25 August 2026

Successful recipients announced: Anticipated October 2026.

Project commencement date: From November 2026 to June 2027.

Project term: 1 year from the date of signing of the Deed of Grant by both parties.

Exception: *Projects that address the funding priority Enhancing ecological condition and connectivity of woodlands, grasslands and/or aquatic ecosystems can request a longer project term to align with seasonal activities in spring 2027.*

Acquittal of funds: 30 days after the project completion date.

Where project activities can be undertaken

All project activities must be undertaken within the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

Funding will not be provided

Funding will not be provided for:

- Projects undertaken outside the ACT.
- Reimbursements for previously completed activities.
- On-going running costs of an organisation, including salaries.
- Existing and on-going activities, other than where it can be demonstrated they are additional to proposed work and directly address the priorities listed in these guidelines.
- Projects funded by another grant or funding source unless it can be demonstrated they are additional to the other funded work and directly address the priorities listed in these guidelines.
- Projects proposed by a group or organisation with an overdue acquittal for projects or programs administered by the ACT Government, unless agreed in writing by the grant superintendent (the Director of ACT NRM).



St Mark's Grassland restoration project, cool burn on Country. Photo credit: Molonglo Conservation Group

Funding stream priorities

Environment grants stream

This grant stream supports community environment projects that enhance, conserve, and promote the ACT's natural environment, and help more people connect with nature and assist with the delivery of the ACT Nature Conservation Strategy and Caring for Dhawura Ngunnawal: A Natural Resource Plan for the ACT 2022–2042.

Applications under this stream need to select a **maximum of two** of the **following funding priorities for the 2026-2027 ACT Environment Grants**:

→ **Funding priority:** *Caring for Country projects led by, or in collaboration with, Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians and other First Nations people.*

→ **Funding priority:** *Enhancing ecological condition and connectivity of woodlands, grasslands and/or aquatic ecosystems by:*

- » Protecting and conserving native plants and animals.
- » Reducing threats to biodiversity, such as invasive species, erosion etc.
- » Enhancing urban wildlife corridors.
- » Establishing biodiverse plantings.
- » Controlling invasive species.

→ **Funding priority:** *Connecting more people with nature through projects focusing on:*

- » Nature based health.
- » Nature based education.
- » Improving universal access to nature.
- » Connecting a greater diversity of the community to nature, for example people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the LGBTIQ+ and disability community, and older Canberrans and carers.
- » Citizen science.

Environmental volunteer group assistance grants stream

This stream is designed to increase the capacity of environmental volunteer groups undertaking environmental stewardship activities in the ACT.

Through this stream volunteer groups can build their capacity to:

- Understand environmental issues relevant to volunteer led projects.
- Enhance recruitment of new volunteers.
- Increase volunteers' skills to more effectively carry out volunteer roles and/or volunteer led activities.
- Plan for future volunteer led projects.

Please note: Tools, equipment and infrastructure including signs will not be funded under this grant stream.

Activities that could be funded under this stream include the following:

- Developing landscape site plans to assist plans for future volunteer led projects.
- Creating promotional material or events to recruit new members.
- Running environmental workshops on issues crucial to your volunteer site.
- Participating in group training to enhance skills.



Revitalising Mount Painter's slopes project. Photo credit: Ginninderra Catchment Group.

Preparing an application

The following information will help you prepare your application for either of the ACT Environmental Grants Program funding streams.

This [short video](#) has some tips to help you put your application together.

Eligibility

An applicant must:

- Undertake project activities in the ACT.
- Be a not-for-profit organisation or not-for-profit group ([see Not-for-profits, schools and owners' corporations](#)).
- » Individuals or non-incorporated groups can apply through a sponsoring incorporated community organisation ([see Sponsorship](#)).
- Not be a government agency.
- Not be a political party registered under the Commonwealth Electoral Act (1918).
- Have an ABN and the required insurances or provide a quote for the required insurances ([see Insurance](#)). This grant cannot be used to pay for the required insurance.
- Have obtained letters of support from the land manager(s) and other approvals, authorisations or licencing prior to applying ([see Approvals, authorisations and licencing](#)).
- Be willing to enter a Deed of Grant ([see Information for successful applicants](#)).

Environmental Volunteer Group Assistance stream applicants must be a volunteer group within the ACT that undertakes environmental stewardship activities on public land.

Not-for-profits, schools and owners' corporations

Not-for-profit organisations and other groups must have an incorporated legal structure registered under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) (e.g. be an incorporated association, a company limited by guarantee, an indigenous corporation or a non-trading co-operative).

ACT Government schools must apply through their Parents and Citizens Association. Private independent schools can apply directly through their school.

Owners' corporations are eligible if they are registered and apply with their Strata title.

Sponsorship

Individuals and non-incorporated groups may also apply but are required to apply through a sponsoring incorporated community organisation.

For more information on sponsorship, or assistance finding a sponsoring organisation, please contact the Grants Coordinator.

Community benefit

As funding for the grants is sourced from public funds, all projects must demonstrate high public benefit to be successful.

- High benefit projects demonstrate benefit to the wider community with many beneficiaries.
- Low benefit projects focus more on private benefit with a smaller number of beneficiaries.

Completing your application form

Applicants must:

- Complete the online application for the 2026-27 ACT Environmental Grants Program application form in Smarty Grants, available at:
<https://actgovt.smartygrants.com.au/ACTEnvironmentalGrants2026-27>.
- Include evidence of required approvals and authorisations for project activities ([see Approvals, authorisations and licencing](#)).
- Be complete and include relevant supporting documents.
- Be received within the lodgement period ([see Important dates](#)).

Please allow at least three weeks for the approval/ authorisation processes by the relevant ACT Government agencies.

If you are unable to submit your application electronically, please contact the Grants Coordinator in advance to seek advice on submitting your application within the lodgement period.

Declaring a conflict-of-interest

It is important that applicants are transparent regarding any private interests and/or relationships that may create a conflict of interest or be perceived to create a conflict of interest.

Potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed at the time of lodging your application or immediately after a potential conflict of interest becomes apparent.

As part of your application, you will be asked to declare any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or, that to the best of your knowledge that there is no conflict of interests.

Disclosure of other government funding

It is important that applicants are transparent regarding any other ACT or Commonwealth Government funding related to their application.

As part of your application, you will be asked to confirm if have received any ACT or Commonwealth Government funding for the activities described in your application.

For projects that are also receiving funding from another grant or funding source, applicants must demonstrate that the elements of the project you are seeking grant funding for are in addition to other funded work.

Insurance

Applicants must provide evidence:

→ they have, or their sponsor has, a current public liability insurance policy with a minimum of \$20 million OR an appropriate level of current public liability cover for the risk profile of their proposed grant project.

→ if their project utilises a volunteer base, they have a current Voluntary Workers Insurance policy or Certificate of Insurance cover. Applicants who are registered ParkCare or Urban Parks and Places Volunteering groups will be able to get this from their volunteer program if the proposed grant project is part of an approved work plan

→ OR they have obtained a quote from an insurance company for that level of cover for the required insurances.

Applicants may also need additional types of insurance depending on their activities.

Applicants that submit a quote for the application process, if successful, will be required to provide evidence to the Grants Coordinator that a policy has been taken out and paid, before the ACT Government will enter a deed of grant.



Big creek line restoration project community planting day, O'Connor Ridge. Photo credit: ACT Government.

Project budgeting

Applicants need to provide a budget that shows the entire cost of the proposed project.

Claiming an administrative cost

There is a maximum claimable limit of 10% for administrative costs per grant application. Administrative costs are to cover administration of the grant in accordance with the Grant Guidelines and legal requirements outlined in the Deed of Grant. Where an individual or non-incorporated organisation uses a sponsor for the application, the 10% needs to include both the administrative costs of the individual or non-incorporated organisation and the sponsor organisation.

Applicant contributions

Applicants are encouraged to contribute towards their proposed project through cash and/or in-kind contributions. Labour cost for projects will not be funded except where specialist labour is required, for example a specialist contractor or trainer.

Volunteer in-kind

Volunteer hours can be included as an in-kind contribution, costed at \$50.40/hour.

Other funding sources

If applicants are seeking additional but separately related funds from other sources, costs need to be clearly defined and show transparent application of project funds to reflect activities (or components of projects) that have been funded through other sources.

ABN and GST registration

Funding for all project applications should be applied for as a GST exclusive amount.

Applicants registered for GST

All successful grant recipients with an Australian Business Number (ABN) and registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST) will be funded as a GST exclusive amount based on the budget submitted in the application and agreed to by the assessment panel. The ACT Government will pay grant recipients the amount applied for and the GST will be added to the funding per the invoice supplied.

Applicants not registered for GST

If the applicant or sponsor has an ABN registration but does not have GST registration please include the GST component of any goods and services in your requested budget. Grants are funded as GST exclusive amounts based on the budget submitted in the application and agreed by the assessment panel. The ACT Government add the GST component to your grant funding.

Approvals, authorisations and licencing

Your application may require approvals, authorisations, and/or licencing from ACT Government agencies.

Where your application commits a third party to an action you must provide evidence of their agreement to undertake the action. Please contact the relevant organisation/s early enough to give them adequate time to respond.

The following tables provide an indication of the most likely organisations to contact and in what circumstances but are not an exhaustive list. **It is recommended that you allow at least 3 weeks to seek any approvals and/or authorisations.** For more information or advice please contact the Grants Coordinator.

Land manager letter of support

Your project may require approvals from the relevant land manager or landowner to proceed.

Due to the timeframes involved in the application process, this should initially be a letter of support for your application.

If your application is successful, you will then need to obtain all required approvals before the ACT Government can enter a Deed of Grant with your organisation and before your project proceeds.

Table 1 – Land Manager Contact Details

Land Tenure	Land Manager/Owner	Contact Detail
Nature Reserves and National Parks	ACT Parks and Conservation Service	Please email cedparkcareact@act.gov.au referencing Environmental Grants and highlighting the specific sites and activities that you propose as part of your project.
Urban open spaces	City Services – Land Management	Please email CED.CPUrbanPrograms@act.gov.au referencing Environmental Grants and highlighting the specific sites and activities that you propose as part of your project. If you are not a registered volunteer group under the Urban Park and Places volunteer program, you will require a permit under the Public Unleased Land Act 2013 to conduct works on Urban Open Spaces: www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/use
Private land	Legal leaseholder	Written approval from the legal leaseholder, referencing Environmental Grants for the specific sites and activities that you propose as part of your project.

Authorisations and licencing

Your project may also require additional authorisations or licencing to proceed. If you are unsure, please contact the Grants Coordinator to discuss your project.

If you haven't received the required documentation in time to submit with your application, you will need to submit evidence that the process has been started. If successful you will be required to submit final documentation before your project can proceed.

Table 2 – Authorisation and Licencing Contact Details

Issue	Agency	Contact Detail
Sites of cultural or heritage significance	ACT Heritage	Please email heritage@act.gov.au referencing Environmental Grants and highlighting the specific sites and activities that you propose as part of your project. All works must be undertaken in a manner that respects cultural values and protocols and the requirements of the <i>Heritage Act 2004</i>. Please refer to the ACT Heritage website for information about registered sites. heritage approvals, timeframes and permits.
Involving native plants or animals or activities in Nature Reserves	City and Environment Directorate	If your project involves interacting with native plants and animals, and/ or activities in nature reserves, you will need to comply with the permits and licensing requirements of the <i>ACT Nature Conservation Act 2014</i>. The City and Environment Directorate is responsible for licencing these activities. For more information, go to the website; https://www.act.gov.au/environment/animals-and-plants/licensing-of-plants-and-animals or email: pcs.licensingandcompliance@act.gov.au referencing Environmental Grants and providing information about your proposed project.

References for your application

The following references may be useful when putting together your application:

- **ACTMAPI** - <https://www.actmapapi.act.gov.au> is an online mapping tool that provides access to the latest land information in the ACT including bushfire management zones and heritage areas.
- **Bushfire Operation Plans** - <https://www.act.gov.au/open/bushfire-management-plans> - includes information on fire management zones requirements.
- **City Services Municipal Infrastructure Design Standards (MIS)** - <https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/plan-and-build/standards-codes-and-guidelines/municipal-infrastructure-design-standards-mis> - includes specifications for urban open spaces, signs and plant species for urban landscape projects.

Work health and safety

Work Health and Safety legislation imposes a duty on employers to protect the health and safety of workers (including volunteers) and people exposed to risks arising from the work being carried out. Through the grant process the successful applicant has the responsibility to address all work health and safety issues arising from their activity.

As part of your application, you are required to:

- include a risk assessment,
- identify, assess, and mitigate to the extent possible any relevant issues and
- identify and document any residual risks.



ACT Bees connecting to nature through bee hotels workshops. Photo credit: Ginninderra Catchment Group.

Assessing applications

Merit criteria

If your application meets the eligibility requirements of the grants, your project proposal will be assessed by a panel based on the following merit criteria.

Table 1 – Merit Criteria

Merit Criterion	Description	Weight %
1	Alignment with funding priorities	20
2	Feasibility and effectiveness	20
3	Demonstrates sound project planning, including achievable milestones, timelines and project outcomes	20
4	Soundness of project budgeting and value for money	20
5	Level of community engagement and reach	20

The following prompts will help when writing your application:

Alignment with funding priorities

Are the project outcomes directly related to the funding priorities?

The program is looking for projects that align strongly with the funding priorities of the program stream you have applied for, as outlined in [Funding stream priorities](#). Clearly identify the linkages and describe how your outcomes will achieve these priorities, focusing on a maximum of two priorities.

Feasibility and effectiveness

Are the project outcomes achievable?

Can the project be completed in the timeframe?

Is it the most effective way to achieve your project outcomes?

The program is looking for you to clearly identify a problem and then provide a clear outline of how you will address that problem. Keep it simple, keep it clear.

Project planning

How comprehensive is the project planning? Does each step of the project appear logical? Are there clear end-of-project outcomes?

Have you considered potential project risks? How do you plan to manage or mitigate the risks?

How are you going to monitor and evaluate your project?

How will you ensure your project outcomes are maintained and how will any ongoing costs be met?

The program is looking for projects that have logical and achievable milestones that can be delivered in a 12-month timeframe. Please describe any potential risks and how you plan to manage or mitigate them.

The program is also looking for how you will monitor and evaluate your project to determine if it's successful and how your project will be maintained after its completion to ensure outcomes are maintained beyond the funded project period.

Project budgeting and value for money

Is your budget well thought out?

Are the budget item costs appropriate for what is required?

Have you thought of all potential expenses? Have you included in-kind volunteer hours?

The program is looking for comprehensive budgets that consider all potential expenses and provide value for money. Please think about true value of your project including in-kind contributions and volunteer hours.

Projects that have a large total value but only seek a small portion from the grant funding provide good value from the investment of public funds.

Community engagement and reach

How many people are involved in your project?

What are the different demographics that will be engaged?

What other community groups may be involved?

How will the project and its outcomes be communicated to a wider audience?

The program is looking for projects that engage the community and reach a range of demographics and is commensurate with the type and scale of the proposed project. Please identify the various community groups that may be involved in your project and their roles in your project. How will you communicate the outcomes you achieve to the wider community?

Risk of harm review

If your proposed project involves on-ground activities or interactions with plants and animals, your application may be reviewed to assess the level of risk of harm. This is to ensure that your proposed project is unlikely to cause harm to native flora, fauna and ecosystems.

Applicants will be informed by the Grants Coordinator if this review, and any additional information to inform the review, is required. If the review identifies a high level of risk of harm, and the project can't be adapted to mitigate this risk, applicants will be informed that the project isn't able to proceed.



Restoration project Bill Kennedy Memorial Park, Holder. Photo credit: Andrew Hamilton

Information for successful applicants

Deed of grant

Successful applicants or their sponsors will be required to enter a Deed of Grant with the ACT Government.

The Deed of Grant identifies legal obligations associated with the grant. This includes project activities, requirements concerning the use of grant funds, project evaluation and financial reporting.

The Deed of Grant for applications sponsored by an incorporated organisation will be between the sponsor and the ACT Government. The sponsor will be required to:

- Administer the funding in accordance with the Grant Guidelines and Deed of Grant.
- Submit any grant variations, reporting and financial acquittal reporting on behalf of the sponsored organisation.

Applicants may be given conditional approval for their grant if the finalisation of the deed is subject to further information or conditions being met. In this instance applicants will be advised that approval is conditional, what the further requirements are, as well as discussing any implications for timing on their project.

When are funds made available?

Funds will be available to the successful recipients as a single payment on the:

- Provision of all required documentation.
- Signing by both parties of a Deed of Grant.
- Supply of a tax invoice for grant funds.

Acquittal, evaluation and reporting

The applicant is responsible for the acquittal, evaluation and reporting of the project as agreed to in the Deed of Grant. If your application requires sponsorship, the sponsor is responsible for submitting all required documents.

Acquittal and reporting are due within 30 days from the date of completion of the grant. The acquittal and reporting form is submitted online through Smarty Grants. A link to this form in Smarty Grants will be supplied by the Grants Coordinator following signing of the deed, with a reminder sent 30 days before the reporting due date.

You are required to report the following:

→ The delivery of the outcomes associated with your project, including documentary evidence to substantiate this, for example photos, data, promotional material.

→ An evaluation of your project.

→ A financial statement, signed by an appropriate financial officer from your organisation or project sponsor that you spent project funds according to your project budget or subsequent approved variations.

Project promotion

As part of the Deed of Grant, successful applicants are required to agree to the ACT Government promoting your project to the wider community. This includes via the ACT Governments grant website and through social media. The title, location, recipient and funded amount of all successful projects are posted on the ACT Government website.

When an applicant promotes their project, they must acknowledge the ACT Government as the source of the funding. Acknowledgement wording for this will be listed in the Deed of Grant. For more information, please contact the Grants Coordinator.

Project delivery

Once you have signed your Deed of Grant and received your funds if, for any reason, you have issues or concerns related to project delivery, please contact the Grants Coordinator.

Project variations

As outlined in the Deed of Grant variation clause, prior written approval is required for any variation to the agreed grant project. This includes for budget variations and requests for an extension of time to the grant period. Requests for variations must be emailed to the Grant Coordinator at actnrm@act.gov.au by the recipient organisation or sponsoring organisation party to the Deed of Grant.