

Clean Coastal Catchments 3 North Coast Horticulture

Grant Guidelines



Published by Local Land Services
Title: CCC3- North Coast Horticulture
First published April 2023

More information

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Acknowledgments

The CCC – North Coast Horticulture project is a component of the Marine Estate Management Strategy funding provided by the NSW Government.

Reference: VF22/2296#03

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing April 2023. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser.

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Background

The Clean Coastal Catchments Project (CCC) is funded under the NSW Government's Marine Estates Management Strategy.

The Strategy's vision:

A healthy coast and sea, managed for the greatest wellbeing of the community, now and into the future.

The NSW Marine Estate Management Strategy has identified agricultural diffuse source pollution as a priority threat to water quality and the Marine Estate.

Program purpose and objectives

This project will help farmers in intensive coastal agricultural industries to:

- better manage nutrient inputs and runoff to become more productive and profitable.
- reduce their impact on water quality and the marine estate.
- improve the long term economic and environmental sustainability of intensive agricultural systems in coastal NSW.
- increase export market access and social license to operate through improved land and water stewardship.

Key dates

Program stages	Dates
Applications open	28th April 2023
Applications close	24th May 2023
Assessment process	25th May – 8th June 2023
Application outcome date	9th June 2023
Funding Deeds executed with Successful Applicants:	23rd June 2023
On ground works completed:	30th June 2024
Project completion:	30th June 2024

Program funding

Assistance is available for landholders and land managers of selected horticulture farms in the North Coast LLS region, to reduce pollution and improve water quality in coastal draining catchments.

North Coast Local Land Services (LLS) is offering Grants between \$10,000 – \$35,000 per property, with a total grant pool of \$200,000 available.

Grant applications will open on the 28th April 2023, and close on 24th May 2023. Successful applicants will be notified on 9th June 2023. Funds are to be spent within the 2023/2024 financial year.

The grant is open to both landholders and land managers to undertake works on private land. Applications are limited to one property per applicant. Multiple applications for a single property will not be considered.

All grant proponents will be required to enter a Minor Works Contract and Access Deed Agreement with North Coast LLS.

Eligibility criteria

This section details the eligibility criteria for the applicant and project activities.

Eligible applicants

Compulsory

1. The works are to be carried out within the North Coast LLS region.
2. The works are to be carried out on private lands or managed (perpetual lease) crown lands.
3. The works are located in a coastal draining catchment, close to named waterway where pollution is possible.
4. The works are on existing horticultural production areas.
5. The applicant is a commercial blueberry, blackberry, raspberry or vegetable/edible herb growers (soil and substrate systems).
6. All grant recipients will be required to enter a contracted agreement with LLS, undertake before and after monitoring, and complete a final report.
7. All grant recipients must consent to publication of the grant received, details to be published can be found under the Disclosure of grants awarded section.
8. Applications are limited to one property per landholder. Multiple applications for a single property will not be considered.
9. The funding requested must be between \$10,000 – \$35,000.
10. Funding requested for project activities should be in line with the standardised costings provided, unless a quote and justification are provided.
11. Applicants must provide an in-kind contribution equal to or greater than the total amount of funds requested.
12. The applicant is committed to providing five years of site maintenance after the completion date.
13. Funded works must be carried out and completed within the 2023/2024 financial year.
14. Applicants are to have public liability insurance to the value of at least \$10 million.
15. The works proposed are consistent with the program objectives and comprise of eligible activities.
16. The proposed activities must be consistent with local, NSW and Australian government regulations and legislation.
17. Applicants must have paid all current North Coast LLS financial obligations (e.g. rates, long term grazing permits) prior to receiving a funding agreement and any Conflict of Interest is declared with your application.

Preferred

- Landholders working in accordance with a formal erosion management plan.
- Erosion works are undertaken by engaging a suitably qualified soil conservation practitioner.
- Irrigation retrofits undertaken with a suitably qualified irrigation designer/installer.

Eligible project activities

To be eligible for grant funding, an application must meet one or more of the following requirements:

- irrigation/fertigation system retrofits/upgrades to existing production areas that reduce water use.
- wastewater capture & treatment/re-use/recycling systems
- construction of nutrient detention ponds, artificial wetlands and filter ponds
- riparian and farm perimeter re-vegetation or creating vegetated buffer zones to filter water runoff from production areas
- erosion control including structural works and re-vegetation, such as construction of diversion banks and contour banks to control run-off
- modified fertiliser use to reduce nutrient loss/run-off

Ineligible project activities

- infrastructure required to develop additional growing areas e.g new crop plantings, new roads & tracks, greenhouses, irrigation and earthworks.
- boundary fencing
- replacement of vegetation (solely for biodiversity) at sites where this change will not lead to a reduction in nutrient exports
- works that are considered the normal obligation of a landholder (e.g. weed control, repairs and maintenance, repairs to roads and tracks)
- activities related to consent conditions on pre-existing Development Applications or other Local, State or Federal Government Orders
- existing works where expenses have already been incurred
- remediation works as directed by a compliance order

Eligible project activities costs

North Coast LLS will provide grant funds to successful applicants based on a predetermined value for each item or activity. Applicants are required to provide an in-kind contribution equal to or greater than the total amount of funds requested (i.e. minimum 50:50).

The applicant's contribution will depend on the activity and the applicant's capacity and may be made by payment for materials and services (cash contribution) or the delivery of services (time contribution).

Costings do not include GST. North Coast LLS will not pay for costs incurred outside the granting period or funded by another program.

The following table provides guidance on how eligible works components will be valued and funded through the application process.

Item	Unit	Rate	Comments
Labour general	hour	\$40	Labour for tasks in the field, supervision, planning and other activities associated with your project
Use of equipment (either owned by you or borrowed)			
Tractor 25hp	day	\$344	Approximate local market rate to hire, additional fees for implements such as slasher, trencher etc
Dingo/Mini Loader	day	\$311	Approximate local market rate to hire
Post Hole Digger attachment-dingo	day	\$100	Approximate local market rate to hire
Hand held, petrol post hole digger	day	\$124	Approximate local market rate to hire
Trencher self-propelled	day	\$271	Approximate local market rate to hire
Star post driver (manual)	day	\$30	Approximate local market rate to hire
Slasher, ride on 4WD	day	\$393	Approximate local market rate to hire
Brush Cutter	day	\$146	Approximate local market rate to hire
Chainsaw	day	\$136	Approximate local market rate to hire
Actual costs	n/a	n/a	Actual cost of equipment purchase or hire
Other costs incurred			
Travel	km	55c	Cost of travel including transport of materials, travel to and from site for work that is specific to the project
Actual costs	n/a	n/a	Actual cost of purchase (eg. Equipment, supplies, installation services, software required to run irrigation monitoring & control tools.)
Tree planting	tree	\$10	Includes plant, tree guards and weed control

If you have calculated a cost to be above the predetermined value, please provide a quote and justification for the additional expense.

Assessment criteria

You must address all assessment criteria in your application. We will assess your application based on your answers. The amount of detail and supporting evidence you provide in your application should be relative to the project size, complexity and grant amount requested. You should provide evidence to support your answers. The application form displays size limits for written answers.

Important: The application must meet the applicant eligibility criteria outlined within these grant guidelines for their application be assessed.

Assessment Criteria

Criteria categories	Evidence requirements	Criteria weighting
Strategic alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project description shows planned activities will meet program objectives Mapping, which will assess proximity to named waterways to calculate risk of coastal water pollution Size of cropping area that will influence impact of management changes Slope of land for erosion management projects 	30%
Deliverability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Past experience and current capacity of the landholder. The landholder demonstrates pre-existing ability to manage project works at the site. The use of a Contractor to access specialized skills and/or equipment. 	30%
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preexisting threats to coastal water quality at the site. Methods proposed address impacts on water quality at the site. Achievability within a 12-month period. Following of best-practice guidelines. Proposed activity will do no harm to environmental assets. Proposed activities will provide long-term benefit to targeted assets. 	30%
Value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The funds requested are in alignment with the proposed activities and guidelines. Value of 'other' activities not listed in the predetermined values is appropriate. Value of in-kind contribution. 	10%

Application process

Stage one: how to apply

The Clean Coastal Catchments 3- NC Horticulture Grants will be a single stage application process. In extenuating circumstances, applications submitted after the deadline may be accepted at the sole discretion of LLS.

All applications must be completed online. The application includes a simple budget spreadsheet. Applicants will need to upload a site map and photograph. This will help inform the assessment panel of the projects ability to reduce water pollution in coastal draining catchments.

The rest of the form will include check boxes and long and short answers that will help the assessment panel score the application against the criteria. Written questions will be provided with a word limit.

There will be the opportunity to upload supporting documentation, such as quotes and other documents

On receipt of the application, confirmation will be emailed to applicants.

Stage two: assessment process

Unfortunately, not all applications will be able to be funded. Therefore, your project will be assessed against the criteria in this document. Your project will be compared with other applications.

The North Coast LLS team has developed a group of experts who will act as the assessment panel for the applications. Those applications that meet the criteria for funding will be assessed using a points-based system. Recommendations to the decision maker will then be chosen based on those which received the highest points.

Using outputs from the mapping tool and the written answers, each application will be scored. Members of the assessment panel will each assign a score to each criteria item that is not automatically generated, and a total score will be given for the application. Grants will be awarded based on which applications have the highest score.

Assessment panel

Applications will be reviewed by an assessment panel and approved by the Executive Director Operations (LLS), Department of Regional NSW.

Each application will be assessed on its merit and compared to other eligible applications before a recommendation is made in writing to the decision maker.

Applicants may be contacted during this step to clarify information provided in their application. The Department will notify applicants if additional information and supporting material is required and the timeframes in which it is required.

The assessment panel may recommend a lesser or higher amount of funding for an application or defer a recommendation pending further information.

The assessment panel may take other factors into consideration when recommending an application for funding including but not limited to the total amount of funding available, geographical distribution of projects, suitability of a project for other government funding opportunities and alignment with existing NSW Government policies and strategies. LLS, at its own discretion, may negotiate proposed costs and total project value.

Decision making

The decision maker for the grant is the Executive Director, Regional Delivery (LLS), Department of Regional NSW.

The decision maker will review the availability of grant funds and the assessment panel's recommendation before deciding which grant applications to approve. The decision maker may take other factors into account that may make an application ineligible for funding, including issues that could cause reputational or other risks to the NSW Government.

The decision maker's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of the grant;
- the grant funding amount to be awarded; and
- the terms and conditions of the grant.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

Probity advice

Independent probity advisors may provide guidance to LLS on any issues concerning integrity, fairness and accountability that may arise throughout the application, assessment, and decision-making process. This will ensure decisions are made with integrity, fairness, and accountability, while delivering value for money for NSW.

Can ineligible projects be referred to a more appropriate funding program?

Yes. Projects that are more suitable for other NSW Government programs may be referred to those programs. Applications that are referred will be subject to the full assessment criteria of the other NSW Government program to which they are referred. Applicants may need to update their application to meet the criteria of the referred program.

Successful applications

For successful applications:

- Applicants must acknowledge the grant in any communications with the following: “This project is supported by Local Land Services under the MEMS Clean Coastal Catchments Program”.
- Landholders and managers are required to make a minimum 1:1 matching contribution to the project through in-kind labour and/or cash during the project period.
- Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with North Coast LLS for the project's duration.
- The agreement will detail the landholders' responsibilities for the project including what works must be completed, completion dates and maintenance requirements.
- LLS makes no binding funding commitment to an applicant unless and until both parties sign a Funding Deed.
- Successful applicants must not make financial commitments for funded activities until Funding Deeds have been executed by both parties.
- Works must be delivered within 12 months from the funding agreement date (although it can be completed earlier).
- Successful grantees will receive funding via staged payments at the commencement and end of works.
- Applicants must submit proof of work as a final report on project completion by 30th of June 2024.
- Successful applicants may be required to submit progress reports to LLS as outlined in the Funding Deed.
- A five-year maintenance and monitoring period will apply for projects. Equipment installed as part of this project must remain on-site and functional for the life of the project.
- Tree planting activities must ensure at least 80% survival of plants. Replacement of plants required to meet this target will be counted as a landholder contribution.
- During this period, applicants must undertake before and after photographs of their works and for tree planting/bush regeneration, annual photographs of their project site.
- Individuals may be invited to participate in case studies or interviews on their project, or host a “show and tell” visit with other growers.
- Funding recipients must be willing to allow a site inspection(s) by North Coast LLS staff.
- Any unspent funds are to be returned to LLS.
- If a project extension is requested, the outcome of this extension is at the discretion of North Coast LLS.

Notification

Successful applicants will be notified in writing by letter and/or email.

Disclosure of grants awarded

Effective disclosure and publishing of grants information are essential for transparency and public accountability. Reliable and timely information on grant decisions supports public confidence in the quality and integrity of grants administration. LLS must ensure information on the decisions made in relation to grants awarded under the Grant Program are published no later than 45 calendar days after the grant agreement takes effect. The information requirements include:

- Program name and function
- Recipient name
- Recipient location
- Program delivery location
- Funding amount
- Program term
- Number of applicants
- Number of recipients
- Source agencies
- Decision-maker

Important terms and conditions

Requests for variations or changes to the project will only be considered in limited circumstances.

All awarded grants will be GST exclusive. If the applicant is registered for GST, this will be applied on top of the agreed grant value when payment is made. Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by taxation law. It is recommended applicants seek independent professional advice about taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. The NSW Government does not provide advice on individual taxation circumstances.

Any information submitted by an applicant may be used for promotional material prepared by LLS and the NSW Government.

The Department reserves the right to undertake an audit of grant funding within a period of 7 years from the signing of the Funding Deed.

Applicants must advise LLS of any changes to their legal status or of changes or delays to their project.

Unsuccessful applications

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the outcome and provided with an opportunity for feedback by LLS.

Additional information

Getting support

If you require assistance or advice with your application, please contact Julie Dart, Senior Land Services Officer (M 0427 007 501, E julie.dart@lls.nsw.gov.au)

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Applicants should be aware that information submitted in applications and all related correspondence, attachments and other documents may be made publicly available under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)*. Information deemed commercially sensitive will be withheld.

The *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)* makes government information accessible to the public by:

- Requiring government agencies to make certain sorts of information freely available;
- Encouraging government agencies to release as much other information as possible;
- Giving the public an enforceable right to make access applications for government information; and
- Restricting access to information only when there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Complaints

Any concerns about the fund or individual applications should be submitted in writing to admin.northcoast@lls.nsw.gov.au. If you do not agree with the way LLS handled the issue, you may wish to contact the NSW Ombudsman via ombo.nsw.gov.au.

Ethical conduct

Applicants must not participate in any anti-competitive conduct.

It is a condition of the grant program application process that no gifts, benefits, or hospitality are to be made to any Department/Agency employee at any time. Any inducement in contravention of this condition may result in an applicant's proposal not being considered.

Conflicts of Interest

There may be a requirement for a conflict-of-interest declaration to be submitted with all proposals or in the application form.

Where a conflict-of-interest detrimental to the assessment process is identified, mitigation measures must be put in place, or an individual may be asked not to participate in the application, assessment, or delivery stage of the process.

Confidentiality

Funding decisions and assessment outcomes must be kept confidential until announced by LLS. Successful applicants will be required to provide a confidentiality undertaking. This means they must keep the outcome of the application process confidential until the NSW Government makes a public announcement.

Upon entering a Funding Deed, details about it may be made publicly available (subject to information the Department/Agency deems commercial in confidence).

The applicant agrees not to disclose any confidential information about the grant program application or Funding Deed without the Department's written consent.

Department rights

The Department may, in its absolute discretion, and without limiting any other right which the Department may have, do all or any of the following at any time without giving notice or reasons:

- Require additional information from an applicant;
- Change any of the requirements of these guidelines;
- Alter or vary any process, procedure or timing related to the grant opportunity, including any process, procedure or timing regarding the consideration or the evaluation of any proposal or all applications;
- Suspend or terminate the grant opportunity;
- Negotiate with one or more preferred applicants without prior notice to any other applicant;
- Terminate any negotiations being conducted with any applicant;
- Readvertise for new applicants;
- Consider any non-conforming application;
- Terminate further participation in the grant opportunity by any applicant for any reason (including if the department reasonably considers an application to contain any false or misleading claims or statements);
- Not proceed with any Funding Deed; or
- Proceed with a Funding Deed in ways not contemplated in these guidelines.

Intellectual property

All intellectual property rights in these Guidelines remain the property of the Department. Applicants are permitted to use these Guidelines for the purpose of preparing an application only. Applicants must not use these Guidelines, or any information contained in these Guidelines for any other purpose.

Applications submitted in response to these Guidelines remain the property of the applicant, unless otherwise agreed between the applicant and the department. The applicant agrees that the Department may make copies and reproduce applications for any purpose related to the grant opportunity. In addition, the Department will retain (electronic and hard) copies of all applications.

No offer

These guidelines are not an offer, recommendation, or invitation by the Department in respect of any contract or commitment and, subject to a Funding Deed being fully executed by the parties to it, nothing in these guidelines will form the basis of any contract or commitment.

Addenda

The Department may, in its absolute discretion, issue an addendum to these guidelines. In each case, an addendum becomes part of these Guidelines.

Disclaimer

The Department does not guarantee or warrant and accepts no legal liability whatsoever arising from or connected to the accuracy, reliability, currency, or completeness of any material contained in this publication. Information in this publication is provided as general information only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from a qualified professional.

The Department recommends that users exercise care and use their own skill and judgment in using information from this publication and that users carefully evaluate the accuracy, currency, completeness, and relevance of such information. Users should take steps to independently verify the information in this publication and, where appropriate, seek professional advice.