8/01/2024



Clean Coastal Catchments –Horticulture North Coast Local Land Services

Program Guidelines

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Background

The Clean Coastal Catchments (CCC) Project is funded under the NSW Government's Marine Estates Management Strategy (MEMS). The strategy's vision is a healthy coast and sea, managed for the greatest wellbeing of the community, now and into the future. Commencing in 2018, the NSW Government committed over \$180 million in new funding to the MEMS in 2022 which will see projects funded until 2028.

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

The CCC project helps landholders in intensive agricultural industries implement nutrient management activities and other works that improve water quality through reduced losses of nutrient and sediment exporting from farms.

The Clean Coastal Catchments North Coast Local Land Services Guidelines provide essential information for applicants and potential Grantees interested in the program. The grant program is a targeted, competitive grant opportunity for intensive horticultural landholders on the North Coast.

Applications open from 10 April. If grant funds are not fully allocated future subsequent rounds will be advertised, however, once funding has been exhausted this program will not be readvertised until 2025.

Successful grantees will be required to enter a funding deed and complete on-ground activities in a 12-month period.

Please read all program details listed below before applying.

Program Purpose and Objectives

This project will help landholders in intensive horticultural 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

Applications open	9.00am AEDT 10 April 2024
Applications close	5.00pm AEDT 15 May 2024
Assessment process	20-24 May 2024
Application outcome date	4 June 2024
Funding Deeds executed with successful applicants:	18 June 2024
	Contracting processes will commence once an applicant has signed and returned their Letter of Conditional Offer with Confidentiality.
Project completion:	30 June 2025

Program Funding

Grant Amounts

North Coast Local Land Services (LLS) is offering up to a total of \$300,000 in grant funding to landholders. Projects are to be delivered within Coffs Harbour, Nambucca, Clarence and Bellinger LGAs. These are priority areas due to land classification use and proximity to pre-existing threats to the Marine Estate. Individual landholder grants on offer are available between \$10 000 - \$35 000.

Please note that this is a competitive grant program and project funds will be allocated based on merit. Eligible projects will be assessed against the Assessment Criteria.

Funding under the grant program is limited, which may result in some projects not being funded. The funding amounts listed are GST exclusive. Funding amounts, activities and project standards are subject to change without notice.

Table 1: Funding available under the grant program

Project Type	Minimum Funding (GST exclusive)	Maximum Funding (GST exclusive)
Clean Coastal Catchments -Horticulture North Coast Local Land Services	\$10 000	\$35 000

Co-Contributions

Applicants must provide an in-kind contribution equal to or greater than the total amount of funds requested in the form of cash or in-kind labour.

Unspent Funds

If the situation arises where a grant recipient's project is completed and there are unspent funds remaining from the grant allocation, Local Land Services will require the grant recipient to return the unspent funds. If the grant recipient requests to use the funds to extend the scope of the project, Local Land Services may assess if the request aligns to the objectives of the grant program.

Selection Criteria

Eligibility Criteria

- 1. The works are to be carried out within Coffs Harbour, Nambucca, Clarence and Bellinger LGAs.
- 2. The works are in a coastal draining catchment.
- 3. The works are to be completed on land already in use for horticultural production.
- 4. The works are to be carried out on private lands or managed (perpetual lease) crown lands.
- 5. The applicant is producing blueberry, blackberry, raspberry or vegetable/edible herbs grown in soil or substrate system- and operating under an ABN.
- 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. A landholder can only submit one application for a project per business.
- 8. Applicants have not received prior funding for the proposed works from another funding source.
- 9. Funding requested for project activities should be in line with the standardised costings provided, unless a quote and justification are provided.
- 10. Applicants must provide an in-kind contribution equal to or greater than the total amount of funds requested.
- 11. The applicant is committed to providing five years of site maintenance after the completion date.
- 12. Funded works must be carried out and completed within the 2024/2025 financial year.
- 13. Applicants are to hold or commit to having public liability insurance to the value of at least \$10 million prior to executing a Funding deed.
- 14. The works proposed are consistent with the program objectives and comprise of eligible activities.
- 15. The proposed activities must be consistent with local, NSW and Australian government regulations and legislation.
- 16. Applicants must have paid all outstanding North Coast LLS financial obligations (e.g. rates, long term grazing permits) prior to receiving a funding agreement.

Eligible Projects

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
- other activities that result in an improvement of water quality within the catchment

Eligible Project Locations

Coffs Harbour, Nambucca, Clarence and Bellinger LGAs

Eligible Project Costs

North Coast LLS will provide grant funds to successful applicants based on the predetermined values outlined in Table 2 below. For any activities or items not listed in the table, applicable supplier quotes must be provided. 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). Rates for co-contribution are also pre-determined, and are listed in Table 2. If you wish to provide an in-kind co contribution that is not listed in Table 2, please provide a justification which will be reviewed by the Assessment Panel as part of your assessment process.

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.

ltem		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	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

Table 2: Costing components for eligible works

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

Ineligible Projects

- projects that don't align with program purpose and objectives
- infrastructure required to develop additional growing areas e.g new crop plantings, new roads & tracks, greenhouses, irrigation and earthworks.
- 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

Assessment Criteria

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

You must address all assessment criteria in your application. We will assess your application based on your answers so please provide sufficient detail and supporting evidence, including quotes from suitable suppliers if applicable.

Criteria Categories	Evidence Requirements	Criteria Weighting
Strategic alignment	 Project plan demonstrates how the activities will meet program objectives 	50%
	• Mapping, which will be used to assess proximity of site to pre existing threats to coastal water quality and downstream impacts	
	• Size of cropping area that will influence the impact of management changes	
	Slope of land for erosion management projects	
	• Willingness to participate in case studies and host field walks to share learnings with other growers	
Quality & Deliverability	• Methods proposed address impacts on water quality at the site.	30%
	• Demonstrate ability to manage project works at the site or will engage the use of a Contractor to access specialized skills and/or equipment.	
	• Following of best-practice guidelines.	
	• Proposed activity will do no harm to environmental assets.	

	 Proposed activities will provide long- term benefit to targeted assets. Achievability within a 12-month period. 	
Value for money	 Proposed activities at or better than prevailing market rates Value of in-kind contribution Any additional benefits to the local community and surrounding environment 	20%

Application Process

Stage One: Applying for the grant

Applying for the CCC Horticulture North Coast Program is a single stage application process. Applicants are required to submit the application documents <u>online</u>.

The information required will include name and address and contact details of applicant, the property owners (if different), location of the project site, any ABN linked to the property or the owner. It will also require a brief description of the proposed project, budget and supporting evidence. All applicants are required to submit a conflict-of-interest declaration.

Applications cannot be reopened or amended once the closing date has passed. Acceptance of late submissions will be at the sole discretion of Department.

Visit North Coast Grants and Opportunities page and submit an application via <u>Qualtrics</u> to the Clean Coastal Catchments – Horticulture program.

What needs to be included in an application?

You can see the full list of applicant questions in Appendix A.

If you require assistance completing the application, please contact the program officer Harriet Brickhill 0467 446 222 <u>harriet.brickhill@lls.nsw.gov.au</u>.

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

Stage Two: Assessment Process

Assessment Panel and Recommendation

This is a competitive grants process, and it is possible that not all applications are able to be funded.

Applications will be reviewed by an assessment panel convened by North Coast Local Land Services to ensure consistency in assessment. 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.

The Assessment Panel will consider the relative merits of each application against the:

- outcomes of the Eligibility Assessment
- outcomes of the Merit-based Assessment(s)
- any personal, businesses and/or probity issues and risks that could cause reputational or other risk to the NSW Government.

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

The Assessment Panel will consist of:

- Team Leader, Sustainable Agriculture Team, North Coast Local Land Services
- Senior Land Services Officer, Sustainable Agriculture Team, North Coast Local Land Service
- Independent Advisor, Operations Officer, Environmental Protection Authority

The assessment panel may recommend a lesser amount of funding for an application or defer a recommendation pending further information. The assessment panel may also recommend specific funding condition(s), where appropriate.

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.

Decision making

The decision maker for the Grant is the General Manager of North Coast Local Land Services.

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 result in an application being considered unsuitable 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.

Successful Applications

Notification and Announcement

Successful applicants will be notified in writing via a letter or email with a Letter of Conditional Offer with Confidentiality.

The contracting process will commence after the signed Letter of Conditional Offer with Confidentiality is returned.

The Department is required to publish information about grants awarded on the NSW Government Grants and Funding Finder at nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding.

Funding Deed

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding deed with the NSW Government. A draft funding deed can be viewed at the North Coast Local Land Services Grants and Opportunities page.

To enter a funding deed, successful applicants will be required to confirm project information and provide a copy of all relevant and applicable insurances, project approvals (e.g. development approvals, landowner's consent) and/or other supporting documentation relevant to the project or as requested by the Department, as part of the contracting process.

The first grant payment will be made once all required documentation has been provided to, and approved by the Department, through forms provided in the online portal and the Funding Deed has been signed by both parties.

The Department 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.

Grants will be paid via milestone payments set out in the Funding Deed. Timing and requirements will vary at the Department's discretion, depending on the scope and risk of the project. Evidence of expenditure will be required to claim instalments and acquit eligible costs.

Successful applicants may be required to submit progress reports to the NSW Government as outlined in the Funding Deed.

Monitoring and reporting

North Coast Local Land Services reserves the right to inspect the project area over the duration of the agreement, to determine the degree to which intended outcomes are being achieved. Progress reports or photos may be required to demonstrate progress.

Maintenance

All funded activities will require maintenance to ensure the outcomes are maintained. All activities must be regularly maintained for at least 5 years from the date of completion of project works.

Acquittal of contracts

A final progress report will be required. This will include a site visit by the program manager to photograph works as proof of completion, which must occur within twelve months of the contract signing date.

Waivers (evidence and process)

All requests for an extension of time to complete project activities must be submitted in writing to North Coast Local Land Services outlining the revised timing requested and supporting reasons. Requests for an extension of time will be considered by North Coast Local Land Services and if deemed appropriate, will be approved through a signed contract variation.

All requests for changes to project activities other than timing or payments must be submitted in writing to North Coast Local Land Services outlining the proposed revised delivery of project activities and supporting reasons. Requests will be considered and if deemed appropriate will be approved through a contract variation.

North Coast Local Land Services will not approve requests for increased total grant funding.

Debt recovery (process)

If the project is not completed, North Coast Local Land Services will provide written notice to recover grant funds in accordance with the agreement terms and conditions. A pro-rata amount of grant funds for any incomplete project activities must be repaid within 30 days of a written request from North Coast Local Land Services, in accordance with the project agreement terms and conditions.

Important Terms and Conditions of the Grants Program

Applicants should note the following:

- Requests for variations or changes to the project will only be considered in limited circumstances.
- All awarded grants will be GST exclusive. If a successful 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.
- Successful applicants will be required to pay back unspent funds or those funds which have not been spent in accordance with the Funding Deed.
- Successful applicants will be required to participate in a program evaluation to determine the extent to which their projects have contributed to the objective of the fund. The evaluation will require applicants to provide evidence of how projects have resulted in a measurable outcomes and benefits that are consistent with the objective of the Fund.

- Any information submitted by an applicant may be used for promotional material prepared by the NSW Government, if the applicant is successful.
- The NSW Government may choose to publicly announce funding for individual applications. It may also use non-identifying information provided in the funding deed to develop case studies.
- All recipients of NSW Government funding must acknowledge this financial support as per the Funding Acknowledgement Guidelines for Recipients of NSW Government Grants available at nsw.gov.au/branding/sponsorship-and-funding-acknowledgment-guidelines.
- The Department reserves the right to undertake an audit of grant funding within a period seven (7) years from the signing of the Funding Deed.
- Applicants must advise the Department of any changes to their legal status or of changes or delays to their project.

Unsuccessful Applications

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application and will be offered a feedback information session.

Additional Information

Getting Support

If you require assistance or advice with your application, please contact Harriet Brickhill, Senior Land Services Officer, M 0467 446 222 E harriet.brickhill@lls.nsw.gov.au

Complaints

Any concerns about the fund or individual applications should be submitted in writing to <u>admin.northcoast@lls.nsw.gov.au</u>. If you do not agree with the way Local Land Services handled the issue, you may wish to contact the NSW Ombudsman via ombo.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 that is deemed to be 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
- restricting access to information only when there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

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

According to the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) a conflict of interest exists when a reasonable person might perceive that a public official's personal interest(s) could be favoured over their public duties.

There will be a requirement for a conflict-of-interest declaration to be submitted with all applications if the applicant is aware of an actual or potential conflict of interest. A conflict-of interest template can be requested from LLS, email: admin.northcoast@lls.nsw.gov.au.

As an example, an applicant conflict of interest could occur where it is known that a LLS staff member involved in the grants program was a family member or friend of an applicant. Such a relationship should be declared by both the applicant and by the LLS staff member. Where a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest is identified (by either an applicant or the LLS), LLS will establish mitigation measures. These measures may include removing a departmental official or any member of the Assessment Team from participating in the application, assessment and/or delivery stage of the process.

Confidentiality

Applicants must keep Funding decisions and assessment outcomes confidential until announced by the NSW Government or the Applicant is advised that announcement can proceed. 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 into a funding deed, details about the Funding Deed may be made publicly available (subject to information which the Department/Agency deems to be commercial in confidence)

The applicant agrees not to disclose any confidential information pertaining to the grant program application or funding deed without prior written consent of the Department.

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, and if successful, managing grant expenditure in accordance with these Guidelines. Applicants must not use these Guidelines, or any information contained in these Guidelines for any other purpose.

Applications and information submitted in response to these Guidelines may be used by the Department for promotional material if successful, 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 are subject to a funding deed being fully executed by the parties involved.

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

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 when 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.

These Guidelines are subject to change at any time at the sole discretion of the Department.

© State of New South Wales through Regional NSW 2024. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing January 2024. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Regional NSW or the user's independent adviser.

Appendix A

Application	Questions
Q1	Applicant name
Q2	Registered business
Q3	*ABN number (if applicable. If not, write "n/a")
Q4	*If you have an ABN, are you registered for GST?
Q5	Landowner name (if different to above)
Q6	*Postal address:
Q7	*Project site address (if different to above)
Q8	Lot/DP
Q9	Phone
Q10	Email*
Q11	Are you producing blueberry, blackberry, raspberry or vegetable/edible herbs grown in soil or substrate system and operating under an ABN?
Q12	What are your main crops grown?
Q13	I commit to having public liability insurance to the value of at least \$10 million prior to executing a Funding deed.
Q14	Proposed project area(ha):
Q15	Proposed date of commencement
Q16	Proposed date of completion
Q17	What activities does your project involve? (you may select more than one) erosion control, eater and nutrient management, managing run off, vegetation planting/regeneration for riparian / buffer zone management, other.
Q18	(If selected vegetation planting) Will your plantings use local native species only?
Q19	Please describe your project including what you hope to achieve and how you propose to do this. What goods and services do you need to purchase? <i>Please ensure you have quotes from suitable service providers that can be attached to your application.</i>

Application	Questions
Q20	Why is this project important to you? Explain how it will keep sediment and nutrients on farm and out of waterways?
Q21	*Have you received prior funding for the proposed works from Local Land Services, Landcare, Biodiversity Conservation Trust or other source? Or are you required to conduct similar works under an existing agreement (including on title agreements)? IF yes, please provide details of previous projects and when they occurred.
Q22	Are you willing to participate in case studies and or host field walks to share your learnings with other growers?
Q23	I give my consent for my contact details to be kept on file for the purposes of grant administration processes. I understand that if successful, details of my project will be entered into a government funded projects register. Yes/No
Q23	Please detail each of the major works or activities separately in the budget below. Grants up to \$35,000** (ex GST) are available to landholders. Projects must show a minimum 1:1 landholder contribution to LLS funds sought to be eligible for funding. For in-kind contributions, landholders can cost their labour component at \$40/hour. All works must be completed within 12 months of grant funding approval.
Q24	 I have supplied the following with this application (select all that apply): Attachment A. Map of project area (e.g. SIX Maps, hand drawn) Attachment B. At least one photo of proposed project area Attachment C. Quotes from suitable suppliers or service providers (if required) Other supporting information, please list here
Q25	 I understand and accept the following: I accept all the terms and conditions of the program guidelines including eligibility criteria. If a company or organisation, the applicant must be an authorised representative of the entity. If you are applying to undertake a project on land of which you are not the owner, the landowner must also give permission for private holdings, or the responsible entity for public land and should be included as an Attachment with your application.
Attachment A	Map of proposed project works

Application	Questions
Attachment B	Supporting photos of project site
Attachment C	Quotes from suitable suppliers (if applicable)
Attachment D	Other supporting documentation

Appendix B

Eligible LGAs are Coffs Harbour, Nambucca, Clarence and Bellinger.

