CPCP Caring for Country Council Grants Program 2024-26

Application Guidelines

November 2024

Figure 1. Western Sydney Wetlands – Photo by WSROC

Proudly funded by

NSW GOVERNMENT

Acknowledgement of Country

WSROC and the Department would like to acknowledge the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra, the Traditional Custodians of the Cumberland Plain region who have cared for this Country for countless millennia. We extend that respect to the Darkinjung, Wiradjuri, Guringai and Yuin people who maintain trade or other care relationships with the area and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who call Western Sydney home.

We acknowledge the deep, continuous, and unique connection that the Aboriginal people have with the land, waters, sky, air and spirit of New South Wales (NSW).

The Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP) and the Caring for Country – Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024-33 (the Strategy) recognise the importance of facilitating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people to connect to Country. We aim to empower them to manage the land through When we care for Country, Country cares for us.

Published by WSROC

Home - WSROC

CPCP Caring for Country Council Grants Program 2024-26

First published: October 2024

Copyright and disclaimer

Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd
Suite 201, Level 2, 85 Flushcombe Road
PO Box 63, Blacktown, NSW 2148
Tel (02) 9671 4333 Fax (02) 9621 7741
Email info@wsroc.com.au www.wsroc.com.au

Contents

Summary **4**

Program Background **5**

The Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 5

The Program **7**

Purpose 7

Who can apply? 7

Who can't apply? 8

How much funding is available? 8

What is the time frame? 9

What the funding can be used for 9

What is the application process? 11

What are the assessment criteria? 12

What is the reporting and completion process 12

Monitoring and Evaluation 13

What support will be provided by WSROC? 13

A note on Terminology 13

Summary

These guidelines provide an overview of the closed non-competitive NSW Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP) Caring for Country Council grants program (the Program) open to the 9 councils including Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Penrith and Wollondilly.

The Program is proudly funded by the NSW Government and the total funding available is $1,170,000. Each council can apply for an equal amount of money, up to $130,000 each.

The guidelines cover background on the CPCP and the Strategy, the activities that the grants cover, who can apply, eligibility criteria, what the money can be used for, how applications will be assessed and what is expected from the recipient once their application is approved.

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (the Department) and the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd (WSROC) are partnering to deliver the Program. WSROC will be administering the grants.

It is recommended that the applicants read these program guidelines and the Strategy fully before applying.

Opening date: 28 November 2024

Closing date for planning stage: 28 February 2025

Closing date for implementation stage: 30 June 2025

Enquiries or questions

Contact the project coordinator at WSROC**,** if you have any questions.

Sarah Carter

Telephone: 9671 4333

Email: caringforcountry@wsroc.com.au

Background

Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP)

The Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP) provides biodiversity approvals to enable new housing, jobs, and infrastructure in Western Sydney. The CPCP will offset impacts to native vegetation from new development by protecting important biodiversity through a network of private and public conservation land across Western Sydney.

One of the outcomes of the CPCP (Commitment 21) is to improve health of Country, promote Aboriginal culture and knowledge and help enable Aboriginal communities to maintain distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical, and economic relationships with land and waters in Western Sydney and support economic participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy

To achieve Commitment 21 of the CPCP, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure has co-developed the Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024-33 (the Strategy) with Western Sydney's Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians and the wider Aboriginal communities.

The Strategy forms a road map for a 10-year delivery time frame (2024-33) and the implementation of this Strategy helps deliver our goals to:

- improve the health and wellbeing of Country,
- promote Aboriginal culture and knowledge,
- help enable Darug, Dharawal, Gundungurra and other Aboriginal people maintain distinctive relationships with the land, waters, and sky in Western Sydney, including supporting ongoing and genuine access to Country,
- support economic participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Themes and Actions

The Strategy focuses on 4 themes with 18 associated actions that were prioritised during the engagements with the Aboriginal communities in Western Sydney. The Program is open to the 9 councils in the CPCP region for projects that deliver against the Strategy's actions and can be linked to benefits in the CPCP region, particularly the actions listed below:

2.3 - Support the development of opportunities for joint management of new conservation areas with Aboriginal community members under the CPCP.

2.5 - Investigate and support current or new food security initiatives that Aboriginal community members manage.

2.6 - Support opportunities for collaboration with traditional Aboriginal waterway health and restoration programs.

3.1 - Engage with Aboriginal communities to support Aboriginal local language revitalisation initiatives.

3.2 - Identify and deliver research opportunities co-led by Traditional Custodians to better understand how traditional land management practices can support conservation outcomes in Western Sydney.

3.3 - Fund projects for Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities to recognise and protect Aboriginal culture and heritage.

3.4 - Fund projects to extend existing education programs in Western Sydney, including education officers to provide cultural competency activities at schools and in the community.

What is Caring for Country

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Caring for Country is fundamental to their identity. Country embodies not only physical elements such as the land, sky, water, and all living things contained within it, but also intangible aspects such as story, language, and lore.

Aboriginal people see the land as their mother and natural entities such as plants and animals as their kin. Their deep personal, spiritual, and cultural connection to Country means they have a responsibility to care for and protect it. They believe that if you care for Country it cares for you.

For many Aboriginal communities, Caring for Country is also strongly linked to economic, social, and cultural prosperity. The benefits of Caring for Country programs to the Traditional Custodians, Aboriginal communities, the wider communities in Western Sydney and the environment can include intergenerational knowledge transfer, conservation, education and work opportunities and improved physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The Program

Purpose

The purpose of the Program is to increase the councils' capacity to engage and collaborate with the Traditional Custodians and local Aboriginal communities in their areas and deliver meaningful on-ground Caring for Country projects in partnership with them.

Local councils are key delivery partners in the implementation of the CPCP. The department has set up a Caring for County Working Group that provides a platform for collaboration between councils and other state agencies, including Local Land Services, Sydney Water and NSW National Parks and Wildlife, to exchange information, ideas and to work collaboratively to support the delivery of actions and programs related to the strategy.

The Program has been designed based on discussions and feedback held in the working group meetings and will continue to be a collaborative program. The Program is only open to the 9 local councils within the CPCP region[1] with the intention of supporting them to increase their capacity to deliver Caring for Country initiatives in partnership with local Traditional Custodians in their areas.

All grant applications should go through the Caring for Country working group representative for each council.

Who can apply?

The CPCP Caring for Country grants program is a non-competitive grants program open to the 9 local councils within the CPCP region:

- Blacktown City Council
- Blue Mountains City Council
- Camden Council
- Campbelltown City Council
- Fairfield City Council
- Hawkesbury City Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Penrith City Council
- Wollondilly Shire Council

[1] The decision to include the Blue Mountains Council is based on a number of reasons, including:

- the Nepean River which becomes the Hawkesbury River and is a significant waterway feeding into the Cumberland Plain catchment is located on the boundary of Wollondilly, Penrith and Blue Mountains Councils,
- the Blue Mountains National park extends to the border of Penrith and therefore the wildlife corridors are significant,
- the Blue Mountains Council have been active in the department's Council working group and have contributed to the development of the Strategy.
- The council is advanced in their work with the Aboriginal Nations of Darug and Gundungurra.

Who can't apply?

These grants are ONLY open to the 9 local councils listed above. Applications received from any other organisations will not be assessed.

How much funding is available?

Each council can apply for an equal amount of $130,000.

There is no competitive element to this round of funding.

As different councils may be at different stages in their engagement and collaboration with the local Aboriginal communities there are two options for funding.

Option 1: Planning funding followed by implementation funding

Option 1 is for councils that are starting their consultation with the Aboriginal communities and do not have projects that they are ready to implement.

The planning stage is designed to provide initial funding that can be used by the council for internal planning, consultation and engagement with the local Aboriginal community and cultural competency training within the council to support this engagement.

The application needs to demonstrate how the planning activities support preparation for the implementation stage and one of the outputs from the planning stage must be a project plan that can be submitted as part of the implementation application.

Planning stage – Up to $25,000 can be applied for the initial planning, consultation and engagement phase. Any underspend can be rolled into the implementation phase. If the council decides to apply for the implementation funding, they have $105,000 for the implementation phase (pending successful implementation application).

The planning stage application window opens on 28 November and closes at 5pm on 28 February 2025.

Option 2: Implementation funding only

Option 2 is for councils that already have good relationships with the local Aboriginal communities and have projects that they are ready to implement and can proceed directly to the implementation phase.

Implementation – Each council can apply for an implementation funding for up to 3 projects. Total funding available per council is $130,000.

Councils which opt to apply for implementation funding only, will be required to submit detailed background information on their proposed projects. This information will need to include how the projects were identified, selected and developed in conjunction with local Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal communities.

The implementation application window opens on the 28 November 2024 and closes at 5 pm on 30 June 2025.

What is the time frame?

Event	Date
Applications open for both planning and implementation stages	28 November 2024
Application support session	12 December 2024
Planning stage applications close	28 February 2025 at 5 pm
Implementation stage applications close	30 June 2025 at 5 pm
All funding agreements signed, and money transferred to recipients	September 2025
All council projects completed, and final reports submitted	30 September 2026
Financial acquittance report and final project report to the department	30 June 2026

The grant program is non-competitive, and each project will be assessed separately. Each council can submit the application at any time before 5pm on the application closing date for each stage. Applications will be assessed within 4 weeks of the completed application and all accompanying documents being accepted, with the funding agreement being signed within 8 weeks for successful applications.

All projects have the same completion date of 30 September 2026. Therefore, an earlier submission of an application will provide a longer implementation period.

Collaboration between councils

The department encourages collaboration between the councils and there may be councils that want to work together on cross boundary projects. In these cases, one council needs to be designated as lead council. Please contact the Grants Coordinator at caringforcountry@wsroc.com.au to discuss collaborative projects before the application is submitted.

What the funding can be used for

Planning stage

The planning stage is an initial, optional stage to provide councils with resources for (but not limited to):

- Aboriginal engagement and consultation including development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communication and engagement strategy
- Project plan development

- Land management plan development
- Capacity building including training and upskilling staff in cultural competency and traditional land management practices
- Workshops and meetings with local Aboriginal organisations and communities' members

Implementation stage

Projects can include a wide range of activities but are not limited to:

- traditional fire management
- cultural mapping
- habitat restoration
- activities to support inter-generational cultural knowledge transfer
- current or new food security initiatives that Aboriginal community members manage
- bush tucker and/or medicine initiatives
- traditional Aboriginal waterway health and restoration programs
- Aboriginal local language revitalisation initiatives
- projects that use traditional land management practices to support conservation outcomes
- projects that recognise, protect and/or restore Aboriginal culture and heritage
- projects to extend existing education programs in Western Sydney, including cultural competency activities at schools and in the community
- co-management of new conservation areas with Aboriginal community members.

Eligible costs

Planning stage

- Material and equipment costs (including stationary, printing, advertising, personal protective equipment) - not more than $1000 in total
- Staffing (Aboriginal officer preferred) costs and administration costs – not more than 40% of funding amount) and it cannot be a role already funded.
- Venue costs for meetings/workshops
- Catering for meetings/workshops
- Consultancy fees (Aboriginal business preferred[2])
- Reimbursement of Elders, Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal members (not part of a salaried role in an organisation), time and travel costs

[2] Applicants should demonstrate that Aboriginal businesses have been given first consideration, however it is acknowledged that this might not always be possible

Implementation stage

- Staffing (Aboriginal officer preferred) costs and administration costs – not more than 30% of the total funding amount[3] and it cannot be a role already funded.
- Venue costs for meetings/workshops
- Catering for meetings/workshops
- Consultancy fees (Aboriginal business preferred[2])
- Contractor costs (Aboriginal business preferred[2])
- Construction or renovation of buildings that can be used by the Aboriginal community
- On-ground land management works (Aboriginal business preferred[2])
- Reimbursement of Elders, Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal members (not part of a salaried role in an organisation) time and travel costs
- Training
- Short term lease of motor vehicles
- Up to $1000 for the cost of a financial acquittal of the project

What will not be funded

- Overseas or interstate travel
- Purchase or long-term lease of motor vehicles or large equipment
- On-going maintenance costs of buildings or infrastructure

What is the application process?

The grants will be awarded through a non-competitive assessment process. Each council has been allocated the same amount of money.

Each submission will need to fill in the application form and submitted before 5 pm on the application closing date.

There are separate forms for the planning and implementation funding, make sure that you choose the correct one when applying as the forms require different information.

Each submission will be assessed by the management committee within 4 weeks of acceptance of the completed application and all accompanying documents. A council can apply for up to 3 projects and these will be assessed on their own merit.

The management committee will be made up of staff members of the department, WSROC and an Aboriginal cultural advisor.

Once the submission has been approved, a funding agreement will be signed, and the funds will be transferred in full.

[3] If a Council is applying for more than one project then the staffing costs for the same Officer can be distributed across the projects.

For councils that are applying for option 1 (planning stage), the funds for the planning stage will be transferred before April 2025. There is no obligation to apply for the implementation stage. However, if the council wants to proceed to the implementation stage, then applications and project plans will need to be submitted by the implementation closing date of 30 June 2025.

What are the assessment criteria?

Each council's submissions will be assessed separately within 4 weeks of receipt.

All applications need to demonstrate:

- alignment with at least one of the actions in the Caring for Country Strategy and the Strategy's principles of partnership and collaboration with the Aboriginal communities within the CPCP region
- good value and transparent use of public money
- benefits to the members of the Aboriginal community within the CPCP region
- clear project governance arrangements
- capacity to deliver and a sound delivery approach
- demonstrate a collaborative approach with the Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal communities in their area
- that projects will be undertaken in a culturally safe and competent manner and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol (ICIP) is being considered throughout the project.

In-kind support or financial contributions from the council or other partner organisations is welcomed. However, it is not required and will not be included as part of the assessment.

Financial contributions are considered to be cash contribution by the applicant or project partners towards the cost of delivering a project.

In-kind contributions are a donation of goods, services, time or expertise. These includes goods, use of services, facilities, professional services or expertise in the form of staff time, provision of, or access to, equipment and/or special materials.

What is the reporting and completion process

Once a council has a submission approved and a funding agreement is signed each council will have the obligation to:

- Submit a quarterly progress report (template provided)
- Inform WSROC of any material risks to the project in a timely manner
- Inform WSROC of any material changes to the project and seek approval for the change
- Collect and record agreed data that will be used in the project and program evaluations
- Submit a final completion report and for implementation projects include monitoring data, a short evaluation and financial acquittal.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A final evaluation will be undertaken on the program after the closing date of the projects.

All councils will be asked to record and provide certain metrics that will be collated at the end of the project.

What support will be provided by WSROC?

Once the application window opens, WSROC will hold an information and support session with all of the councils. This session can be used for any questions that applicants have on filling in the template, what information is required, etc.

WSROC will hold the support session on 12 December 2024

As the grants are non-competitive councils can discuss options with each other.

If additional support is required, further support sessions for the applicant(s) can be organised.

A note on Terminology

It should be noted that the terminology used in this guideline aligns to the CPCP Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024-33. It is recommended that during early engagement with the Aboriginal people and communities that you are specifically working with you find their preferred way of being respectfully addressed and use that terminology in your documents and communications.