

2019–20 CROWN RESERVES IMPROVEMENT FUND

Information guide

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More information

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Contents

Overview	1
Objectives of the program	1
The application process	2
The assessment process	2
Assessment methodology	3
Criteria summary	3
Eligibility criteria	3
Assessable criteria (general, pest and weed applications).....	5
Links to documents listed in additional pests and weeds criteria	6
The payments and reporting process.....	7
Project audits	7
Standard terms of CRIFP grants and loans	8
GST	8
Assistance	8
ANNEX A	9
ANNEX B	10
ANNEX C	11

Overview

The Crown Reserves Improvement Fund Program (CRIFP) provides financial support for the development, maintenance and protection of Crown reserves. CRIFP funds are allocated each financial year to Crown land managers through a robust assessment process.

More than \$150 million has been allocated by the NSW Government through the CRIFP over the last 10 years. This funding has supported important initiatives such as the maintenance of showgrounds and community halls, the improvement of local parks and reserves, eradication of pests and weeds and the development of Crown caravan parks.

The CRIFP funding process is very competitive. In the 2018–19 CRIFP round, more than 800 applications were received, with a total value of nearly three times the available funds. Priority is given to those applications that best address the prescribed assessment criteria and meets all eligibility criteria. The *Assessment and Eligibility Criteria Checklist* is available on the department's website to assist applicants meet these requirements

Crown land managers of any NSW Crown reserve may be eligible to apply to the CRIFP. If you are not the authorised land manager you must provide signed written approval to apply from the manager—if applying for multiple reserves, every land manager must give approval.

The round will be open to all project types as follows:

- general projects—showgrounds (including freehold), caravan parks, state parks, commons, schools of arts (on Crown land only), and local parks and reserves
- pests projects—works on Crown reserves only
- weeds projects—works on Crown reserves only.

Objectives of the program

The objectives of the CRIFP are to:

- maintain and develop recreational and tourism facilities on public reserves for community use and enjoyment
- facilitate improved management of community facilities on public reserves, including community halls, showgrounds and parks
- manage and renovate infrastructure and other assets on public reserves to optimise value to the community and comply with regulatory obligations, in particular to ensure public safety and work health and safety is maintained on Crown reserves
- enhance environmental assets by supporting conservation initiatives, bushfire management and invasive species (pest and weed) control on public reserves
- support business opportunities that realise the potential of the Crown land estate, support regional economies and promote greater financial sustainability
- support the important role that volunteers play in the ongoing management of the Crown reserve system
- ensure the CRIFP is self-sustaining and managed in a contemporary and efficient manner, with appropriate planning and administrative processes.

The CRIFP application, assessment, payments and reporting processes are described in detail on the following page.

The application process

There will be only one round for the 2019–20 CRIFP:

- Applications will be accepted from 9 am on Monday 11 February 2019.
- Applications will close at 5 pm on Friday 22 March 2019 (there are no extensions).

Instructions for accessing the online application form are available on the department's website:

www.industry.nsw.gov.au/lands/reserves/funding/improvement-fund

Applicants should:

- allow adequate time to submit applications by the closing date—no extensions will be given
- provide comprehensive and accurate information in the form, answering all relevant questions
- attach all relevant documentation. Applications without the specified number of quotes or authority to apply will be ineligible for funding
- ensure final project reports for previous CRIFP projects (completed by anyone in the Crown land manager's organisation) are up to date. Applicant organisations with outstanding reports will be ineligible for funding
- include, where appropriate, photographs to support your application
- note that application preparation costs are not claimable through the CRIFP. This includes the engagement and payment of third-party grant writing organisations or consultants. The use of professional grant writers will not necessarily increase the likelihood of obtaining CRIFP funding. It is recommended that Crown land managers complete applications for the reserves they manage. If you require assistance or guidance on any aspect of the application, contact your local NSW Department of Industry—Lands & Water office or the funding team.

CRIFP primarily funds project-based activities. In general, annual operating costs are given a lesser priority through the assessment process.

The assessment process

Each application received before the closing date will be assessed as follows:

1. All applications will be reviewed by the funding team to ensure they are complete and eligible for consideration.
2. The applications will be provided to the relevant local NSW Department of Industry—Lands & Water office (for general projects) or specialist area (for pests and weeds projects) for initial assessment.
3. The regional offices will liaise with their local offices to assess and rank the applications for general projects from their respective areas.
4. Applications will be subject to specialist assessment as required:
 - Pests and weeds projects will be reviewed and ranked by multi-agency expert panels.
 - All loan applications will be further assessed to ensure the applicant has the ability to service the loan.
 - All applications totalling more than \$500,000 will be further assessed in relation to the project methodology, technical feasibility, risks and the value for money of the proposed solution.
5. The regional and specialist area assessments will be combined for a final, corporate review and ranking by the CRIFP Assessment Committee.
6. The recommendations of the committee will be considered by the minister in the form of a budget and expenditure submission.

Assessment methodology

A set of criteria (refer below) will be used throughout the assessment process to assist in determining:

- whether the application is eligible for consideration in the process
- the ability of the applicant to deliver the proposed activity and to meet the associated governance obligations
- the merits of the proposed activity
- the relative priority (ranking) of those applications deemed to have sufficient merit.

An application's final ranking will determine whether or not it can be supported from the available funds.

Criteria summary

Eligibility criteria are evaluated on a 'yes/no' basis. Failing to meet any of the criteria means the application is ineligible for funding consideration.

Assessable criteria are evaluated on a weighted score basis. The *Assessment and Eligibility Criteria Checklist* document can be used as a guide to ensure you have adequately addressed all criteria. The checklist can be found at: www.industry.nsw.gov.au/lands/reserves/funding/improvement-fund

Eligibility criteria

Note—if you fail to meet any of the eligibility criteria, your application will not be eligible for funding.

The eligibility criteria are listed below:

- The application is authorised by the official manager of a public reserve. Only those persons listed in Table 1 below can be considered official managers of a public reserve.

Table 1. List of persons authorised to apply for funding.

Crown land manager type	Authorised persons
Statutory Crown land manager board	Chair, Secretary, Treasurer or appointed Administrator
Council Crown land manager	General Manager or Director
Corporate Crown land manager	CEO, CFO or General Manager
Freehold showground	President, Secretary or Treasurer
Other e.g. Government Agency	Area Manager or Director

If you are submitting an application and are not one of the persons listed, you must provide a signed written authorisation from the official reserve manager and include this with your application. Failure to do so will result in your application being ineligible for funding. A template that can be used to gain authorisation can be found at ANNEX A of this document.

- The Crown land manager has no outstanding and overdue CRIFP final project reports. An overdue final project report for one reserve will make that Crown land manager ineligible to receive funding for any reserves it manages.
- The Crown land manager has the ability to meet all the terms of the loan (if relevant). This includes the capacity of the Crown land manager to adequately service loan repayments. Whilst interest rates are subject to change, it is anticipated that an interest rate of 3.5% p.a. will be offered for non-income generating projects, with 5% p.a. offered for income-generating projects.

- Appropriate financial information must be included in the application. All applicants are required to provide basic information on their financial position, while those seeking a loan are required to submit the following financial statements with their application:
 - profit and loss statement
 - balance sheet
 - most recent bank statements
- Requirements for quotes/cost estimates are dependent on the value of each activity element. Quote requirements are detailed in Table 2 below. Quotes must provide a breakdown of the GST component.

Table 2. Requirements for quotes and cost estimates.

Activity element amount (GST inclusive)	Quote requirements per activity element
\$0–\$30,000	At least one written quote
\$30,001–\$150,000	At least three written quotes*
\$150,001 or more	Acceptable cost estimate and a commitment (that is, a strategy) for procurement via a competitive public tender.

- * Crown land managers in remote locations may be granted an exemption in respect to the need for three quotes (at least one will be required). See ANNEX B for information that will need to be provided in order to be considered for an exemption. Please provide this information to the funding team urgently if you wish to request this exemption.
- For cost estimates to be acceptable for activity elements greater than \$150,000, they must provide a comprehensive breakdown of costs inclusive of GST.
- Cost estimates will also be accepted from councils for activity elements of \$150,000 or less where they are the reserve manager and will be undertaking the work themselves. The document provided must clearly identify the reserve manager and provide a comprehensive breakdown of costs (hours, materials etc.)
- Appropriately detailed cost estimates or budget breakdowns may be accepted from other Crown land managers in certain exceptional cases for activity elements of \$150,000 or less. Arrangements need to be made prior to application submission. See ANNEX C for information that will need to be provided in order to be considered. Please contact the funding team urgently if you wish to discuss.
- The activity is consistent with the *Crown Land Management Act 2016*. Specifically, that it is for the cost of the maintenance, improvement or development of Crown reserves.
- An additional eligibility criteria for both pests and weeds applications is the activity will occur on Crown land

Assessable criteria (general, pest and weed applications)

The assessable criteria are as follows:

- the extent to which the activity will address a work health and safety or other serious risk issue
- that the Crown land manager could not readily fund the activity from the organisation's own cash reserves or from another, more appropriate, funding source (for grant applications)
- that the activity is being supported through contributions from the Crown land manager and/or other organisations (for example, user groups, the local community, council, sponsors, other funding programs). This includes in-kind contributions (for example, volunteer labour).
- that the activity will address one or more of the CRIFP objectives
- that the Crown land manager has the ability to successfully deliver the project (for example, detailed quotes/cost estimates provided, demonstrated previous experience, planning approvals if applicable, detailed project management strategy etc.)
- the social, cultural or environmental factors and/or benefits to the community of the project.

NOTE: The CRIFP Assessment Committee agreed at its 2015 meeting that the ongoing funding of Crown land manager's long-term operating costs (the net difference between income and expenditure) was neither sustainable nor equitable. Applicants are advised that new applications for operating costs will be considered low priority and will be extremely unlikely to be funded.

The additional assessable criteria for **pest** applications are as follows:

- the severity of the pest/s and potential to spread and/or degrade agricultural land, natural vegetation, community land, etc.
- that the activity addresses objectives of the NSW Invasive Species Plan 2015-20
- that the activity is compatible with the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2017-21 and/or NSW National Parks Regional Pest Management Strategies
- that the activity demonstrates 'best practice' in pest management control as recommended by the department or local control authorities
- that the activity leads to long-term control of identified pest animals, including a plan to implement follow up work
- that the activity is collaborative and/or attracts funding from Local Land Services, agencies, trusts community groups or other parties in kind or cash
- that the activity outlines process to monitor effectiveness and achievement of the control measures.

The additional assessable criteria for **weed** applications are as follows:

- the severity of weed and potential to spread and/or degrade agricultural land, natural vegetation, community land, etc. (a site-specific weed risk assessment and/or management plan would be highly desirable)
- that the activity addresses objectives of the NSW Invasive Species Plan 2018-21
- that the activity is compatible with the Regional Weed Management Plan and NSW Weeds Action Program 2015-20
- that the activity demonstrates 'best practice' in weed management control as recommended by the department or local control authorities
- that the activity leads to long-term control of identified weeds
- that the activity is collaborative and/or attracts funding from Local Land Services, agencies, Crown land managers, community groups or other parties in kind or cash
- that the activity outlines process to monitor effectiveness and achievement of the control measures.

Links to documents listed in additional pests and weeds criteria

- [Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan](http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au) available from the Local Land Services website (www.lls.nsw.gov.au)
- [NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Regional Pest Management Strategies](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au) available from the Office of Environment & Heritage website (www.environment.nsw.gov.au)

The following documents are available from the Department of Primary Industries website (www.dpi.nsw.gov.au)

- [NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2017–2021](#)
- [Best practice pest animal management](#)
- [NSW Weeds Action Program](#)
- [Best practice weed management guides](#)
- [NSW Invasive Species Plan 2018–2021](#)

The payments and reporting process

Once assessment and approval of applications is completed, the following steps will occur:

- The minister will write to the successful applicants (Crown land managers) offering them a grant and/or loan.
- The department will write to the unsuccessful Crown land managers.
- Successful Crown land managers will have **two months** to accept the offer and the associated terms (see below), otherwise the offer will lapse.
- The department will deposit the agreed amount into the official account of the Crown land manager upon receipt of an appropriately authorised offer acceptance.
- The Crown land manager will need to complete the activity within **12 months** of the deposit of funds.
- The Crown land manager will submit the prescribed post-activity final project report, including copies of all invoices, before-and-after photographs where applicable, and return any unspent grant funds to the department within two months of the activity's completion.
- If the Crown land manager is a **local council** that is audited by the Auditor General NSW without any qualifications, a special purpose financial statement signed off by an appropriately qualified CA/CPA staff member certifying a 'true and fair' view in acquitting grant funds, to the satisfaction of NSW Department of Industry—Lands & Water assessment staff, may be acceptable.

In some cases, this report can be used in lieu of producing invoices for every payment made, however, it may be appropriate to provide supporting system/ledger reports as reasonable evidence of appropriate use of funds and/or to support amounts reported in expenditure categories of the special purpose report.

The following is an example statement in certifying the report:

'I certify that this special purpose report represents a true and fair view of how project grant funds were spent.'

Signed and dated with full printed name, position and current professional membership details.

- The Crown land manager will:
 - acknowledge the grant and/or loan in its annual report and in its financial statements submitted to the Crown Reserve Reporting System (for Crown reserves)
 - comply with the *Funding Acknowledgement Guidelines for Recipients of NSW Government Grants* as appropriate, depending on the amount of funding awarded. The guidelines are available on the NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet webpage: (communications.dpc.nsw.gov.au/branding/)

Recipients of loans will commence their repayments one year after the date of the deposit of funds.

Project audits

A representative sample of projects will be subject to audit each year. Crown land managers will receive prior notification if they are chosen.

Note that your project may be subject to an audit upon completion. This will involve a review of relevant documentation and an on-site visit in order to confirm the project:

- was delivered in accordance with the terms of the minister's offer
- was managed effectively and efficiently
- expended its budget appropriately, with any excess funds returned to the department
- delivered the benefits outlined in the original application.

Standard terms of CRIFP grants and loans

Successful applicants will be required to comply with a number of specified terms. These terms typically cover the following matters:

- the time limit for the completion of the activity and the post-activity report (and return of unspent funds)
- the conditions attached to loans e.g. interest rate and repayment schedule
- general compliance with relevant legislation and policy.

GST

Payment of funds is made GST inclusive. Grant recipients registered for GST must agree to the department issuing a Recipient Created Tax Invoice. As funds are paid inclusive of GST, please include this in your Business Activity Statement where applicable.

If you require specific GST advice please visit the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) website at (www.ato.gov.au) or contact the ATO by phone on 13 72 26.

Assistance

Instructions for accessing the online application form are available at the following webpage: www.industry.nsw.gov.au/lands/reserves/funding/improvement-fund

If you have read this document and still require assistance with the application process, please phone 1300 886 235 (option 4) or email reservefunding@crowmland.nsw.gov.au.

ANNEX A

CROWN RESERVES IMPROVEMENT FUND PROGRAM

AUTHORISATION TO APPLY

This letter serves as authorisation of [APPLICANT ORGANISATION], [APPLICANT NAME], to submit an application for funding in the 2019-20 Crown Reserve Improvement Fund on behalf of [CROWN LAND MANAGER] for [RESERVE NAME].

I acknowledge that I am an authorised person for this Crown reserve as per the table below.

I understand that, if successful, the Crown land manager will be responsible for the acceptance, delivery and reporting obligations associated with this project.

Name of authorised person:

Position:

Signature:

Authorised persons

Crown land manager type	Authorised persons
Statutory Crown land manager board	Chair, Secretary, Treasurer or appointed Administrator
Council Crown land manager	General Manager or Director
Corporate Crown land manager	CEO, CFO or General Manager
Freehold showground	President, Secretary or Treasurer
Other e.g. Government agency	Area Manager or Director

ANNEX B

CROWN RESERVES IMPROVEMENT FUND PROGRAM

REQUEST FOR QUOTE EXEMPTION

In exceptional circumstances, an exemption from providing three (3) quotes with your Crown Reserves Improvement Fund application may be given. In order to be considered for an exemption, please provide the following information to the funding team via email (reservefunding@crowland.nsw.gov.au). The Coordinator - Funding Programs will assess your request and you will receive an email notification of the outcome.

NOTE: written approval from the funding team is required prior to submission of your application and you will still be required to submit your online application by **5pm on Friday 22 March 2019** (there are **no extensions**).

REQUEST FOR QUOTE EXEMPTION	
Reserve name	
Crown land manager name	
Application number	
Project description	
Total project cost (GST Inclusive)	
Amount of CRIFP funding required (GST Inclusive)	
Reason/s for exemption from 3 quotes (including efforts to date to attain quotes)	
Cost evidence that will be provided with the application (quote or detailed cost estimate)	
Contact details (name, phone number & position)	

ANNEX C

CROWN RESERVES IMPROVEMENT FUND PROGRAM

REQUEST FOR COST ESTIMATE IN LIEU OF QUOTES

In exceptional circumstances, Crown land managers may be granted permission to include a cost estimate in lieu of quotes for activity elements less than \$150,000. This is most relevant if the Crown land manager is completing the works themselves without engaging third party contractors/organisations. In order to be considered, please provide the following information to the funding team via email (reservefunding@crowmland.nsw.gov.au).

The Coordinator - Funding Programs will assess your request and you will receive an email notification of the outcome. NOTE: written approval from the funding team is required prior to submission of your application and you will still be required to submit your online application by **5pm on Friday 22 March 2019** (there are **no extensions**).

REQUEST FOR COST ESTIMATE IN LIEU OF QUOTES	
Reserve name	
Crown land manager name	
Application number	
Project description	
Total project cost (GST Inclusive)	
Amount of CRIFP funding required (GST Inclusive)	
Reason/s for cost estimate request	
Cost evidence that will be provided with the application (quote or detailed cost estimate)	
Contact details (name, phone number & position)	