



2021-2022 CROWN RESERVES IMPROVEMENT FUND

Information guide

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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)..... | 6 |
| Links to documents listed in additional pests and weeds criteria | 7 |
| The payments and reporting process | 8 |
| Project audits | 8 |
| Standard terms of CRIFP grants and loans | 9 |
| GST..... | 9 |
| Assistance..... | 9 |
| Authorisation to apply | 10 |
| Request for quote exemption | 11 |
| Request for cost estimate in lieu of quotes | 12 |

Overview

The Crown Reserves Improvement Fund Program (CRIF) provides financial support for the development, maintenance and protection of Crown reserves. More than \$200 million has been allocated by the NSW Government through the CRIF over the last 11 years. This funding has supported important initiatives such as the maintenance of showgrounds and community halls, the improvement of local parks, reserves and caravan parks, and eradication of pests and weeds.

The CRIF funding process is very competitive. The total funding of project applications normally exceeds available funding by four to five times. This 2021-22 funding round is back to normal funding levels with \$17m on offer to allocate to the best projects. Priority is given to those applications that best address the prescribed assessment criteria and meet 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 are eligible to apply to the CRIF. 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, 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 CRIF program are to:

1. maintain and develop recreational and tourism facilities on public reserves for community use and enjoyment, and support new tourism opportunities
2. facilitate initiatives that enhance the operational sustainability of the Crown Land Manager (via reducing ongoing costs, increasing revenue or improving governance)
3. 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
4. enhance environmental assets by supporting conservation initiatives, bushfire management and invasive species (pest and weed) control on public reserves
5. support renewable energy use, energy efficiency, water efficiency and environmentally sustainable practices that work towards net zero emissions (**new in 2021-22**)
6. support the important role that volunteers play in the ongoing management of Crown land
7. to promote greater inclusion of Aboriginal communities and interests through co-management, cultural heritage recognition and education (**new in 2021-22**)
8. to assist in building resilience and restoring community amenity following adverse events (eg public health closures, bushfire, floods, drought)
9. upgrade and renovate showground infrastructure to support regional communities, groups and associations
10. improve walking and cycling access through Crown reserves, including providing new connections between reserves (e.g. alignment to NSW Government's Greener public spaces initiative - <http://bit.ly/greenspace>).

The application process

There will be only one round for the 2021–22 CRIF program:

- Applications will be accepted from **10am on Wednesday 26th May 2021**.
- Applications will close at **5pm on Friday 25th June 2021** (there are no extensions).

Instructions for accessing the online application form are available on the department's website: <https://reservemanager.crownland.nsw.gov.au/funding/crif>

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 CRIF projects under the control of the Crown land manager (CLM) are up to date. Funding will not be provided for a reserve under the control of a CLM if the CLM has any outstanding and overdue final project reports.
- include photographs to support your application wherever possible
- note that application preparation costs are not claimable through the CRIF. 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 CRIF 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 Crown lands office or the Funding Team.

The CRIF 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.
2. The applications will be provided to the relevant Crown lands 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 value for money.
5. The regional and specialist area assessments will be combined for a final, corporate review and ranking by the CRIF Assessment Committee.
6. Applications will be ranked in descending order of relative priority, then by those that meet objective #8 and a cut-off level for recommendations for funding determined. All eligible applications with the same assessment score and that meet/don't meet objective #8 will have the same recommended outcome.
7. The recommendations of the CRIF Assessment 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 including its alignment with the CRIF objectives
- 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:

<https://reservemanager.crownland.nsw.gov.au/funding/crif>

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.**

The person **entering the online application** must be either:

- 1) an authorised person of the reserve's Crown land manager (see Table 1 below), or
- 2) an interested party of the reserve (eg: a CLM member not on the authorised list below, or a member of a user group on the reserve).

NOTE: To ensure your application is eligible the person **entering the application MUST BE** either:

- 1) an authorised person of the Reserve's Crown land manager, OR
- 2) an interested party AND submit written evidence of support signed by an authorised person from the list in Table 1.

Applications that do not comply with the above will be ineligible.

Table 1 List of authorised persons eligible 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, perpetual lease | Crown Land Director or Area Manager |

Applicants deemed to have submitted ineligible (for authorisation) applications may be given limited additional time (maximum 1 week) to submit further information to establish eligibility at the discretion of the Coordinator Funding Programs. Additional information will be accepted for administrative oversight purposes only. Applicants will not be allowed to submit information that enhances their application after the closing date - this is in order to ensure probity of process is maintained. A template that can be used by a user group to gain authorisation from a Crown land manager can be found at ANNEX A of this document.

- **The Crown land manager has no outstanding and overdue CRIF 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.
- **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(s)
 - balance sheet(s)
 - most recent bank statement(s)

Requirements for quotes/cost estimates are dependent on the value of each activity element. Quote requirements are detailed in Tables 2 and 3 below. Quotes must provide a breakdown of the GST component.

Table 2. Requirements for quotes and cost estimates for non-Council CLMs.

| 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. |

Table 3. Requirements for quotes and cost estimates for Council CLMs.

| 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–\$250,000 | At least three written quotes* subject to the procurement policy for that Council and compliance with the Local Government Act 1993. |
| \$250,001 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*.
 - An additional eligibility criteria for both pests and weeds applications is that 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). Councils that co-contribute at least 50% project funding are more likely to be successful.
- that the activity will address one or more of the CRIF objectives (see page 1 for 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 CRIF 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.

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. Area (ha) / range or population density on a map to be included
- the activity addresses objectives of the NSW Invasive Species Plan 2018-21
- the activity is compatible with the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2017-22 and/or NSW National Parks Regional Pest Management Strategies
- the activity demonstrates 'best practice' in pest management / control as recommended by DPIE or local control authorities
- the activity will lead to long-term control of identified pest animals, including a plan to implement follow up work
- the activity is collaborative and/or attracts funding from Local Land Services or other stakeholder/s

the activity outlines processes 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). Please include area (ha) or extent of the infestation, number of plants if applicable. Provision of photos and maps is recommended.
- the activity addresses objectives of the NSW Invasive Species Plan 2018-21
- the activity is compatible with the Regional Weed Management Plan, former NSW Weeds Action Program 2015–20 and NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021
- the activity demonstrates 'best practice' in weed management control as recommended by the DPI NSW Weed Control Handbook, DPIE or local control authorities
- the activity will lead to long-term control of the identified weed/s, including a plan to implement follow up work
- the activity is collaborative and/or attracts funding from Local Land Services or other stakeholder/s

- that the activity outlines processes to monitor the 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](#)
- [NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021](#)

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 Planning, Industry and Environment—Crown lands 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 Crown lands (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 CRIF 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: <https://reservemanager.crownland.nsw.gov.au/funding/crif>

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

ANNEX A

2021-22 Crown Reserve Improvement Fund Program

Authorisation to apply

This letter serves as authorisation of [APPLICANT ORGANISATION], [APPLICANT NAME], to submit an application for funding in the 2021-22 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:

| <i>Crown land manager type</i> | <i>Authorised persons</i> |
|---|--|
| 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, perpetual lease | Crown Land Area Manager or Director |

ANNEX B**2021-22 Crown Reserve 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@crownland.nsw.gov.au). You will receive an email notification of the outcome once your request is assessed.

NOTE: written approval of this exemption request is required prior to submission of your application. You will still be required to submit your online application by **5pm on Friday 25 June 2021** (there are **no extensions for submission of applications**).

| Request for quote exemption | |
|--|--|
| Reserve name | |
| Crown land manager name | |
| Application number | |
| Project description | |
| Total project cost (GST Inclusive) | |
| Amount of CRIF 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

2021-22 Crown Reserve 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@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 25 June 2021** (there are **no extensions for submission of applications**).

| 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) | |