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Department of Planning and Environment

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2022-23 Crown Reserves Improvement Fund

# Guidelines

April 2022





# Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

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Guidelines

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## More information

[reservemanager.crownland.nsw.gov.au](http://reservemanager.crownland.nsw.gov.au)

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# 1. Overview

The Crown Reserves Improvement Fund Program (CRIF) provides financial support for the maintenance, improvement or development of Crown reserves. More than \$198 million has been allocated by the NSW Government through the CRIF 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, 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 2022-23 funding round will offer around \$17m to the highest priority projects. Priority is given to those applications that best address the assessment criteria and meet all eligibility criteria.

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 authorisation to apply from the Crown land manager – if applying for multiple reserves, every land manager must give approval.

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

- general projects – showgrounds (including freehold), caravan parks, state parks, local parks, commons and other Crown reserves
- pest projects – works on Crown reserves only
- weed projects – works on Crown reserves only

## Key dates

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Monday, 2 May 2022</b>  | Applications open 9am  |
| <b>Friday, 3 June 2022</b> | Applications close 5pm AEST sharp  |
| <b>June to November</b>    | Eligibility, assessment and approval process   |
| <b>November 2022</b>       | Announcement of successful projects  |
| <b>Dec 2022 – Feb 2023</b> | Outcome advice sent out along with funding deeds; grant acceptances and payment processing |

# 2. Objectives of the program

The objectives of the CRIF program form a subset of the **assessable criteria** as detailed in section 4.3. of this document. The objectives of the CRIF 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
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
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 Places initiative)

### 3. The application process

There will be only one round for the 2022–23 CRIF program:

- Applications will be accepted from **9am on Monday 2 May 2022**.
- Applications will close at **5pm on Friday 3 June 2022** (there are no extensions).

Instructions for accessing the online application form are available on the CRIF website.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to:

- allow adequate time to submit applications by the closing date — no extensions will be given
- provide succinct and accurate information in the form, answering all relevant questions
- attach all relevant documentation. Applications without adequate 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.
- include photographs to support your application wherever possible
- note that funds are only provided for projects that have not yet commenced
- 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 CLMs 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 that have not yet commenced. In general, annual operating costs are only funded in extenuating circumstances.

## 4. The vetting and assessment process

Each application will be assessed as follows:

- Applications will be vetted by the Funding Team to ensure they are complete and eligible.
- Applications will be provided to the regional Crown lands office (for general projects) or specialist panels for pest and weed projects.
- Regional offices will liaise with their local offices to assess and rank the applications for general projects from their respective areas.
- Applications will be subject to specialist assessment as required:
  - pest and weed projects will be reviewed and ranked by multi-agency expert panels.
  - loan applications will be assessed to ensure the applicant has the ability to service the loan.
  - applications totalling more than \$250,000, or the top 40 applications with the highest dollar value, will be further assessed in relation to the project methodology, technical feasibility, risks and value for money.
- Regional and specialist area assessments will be combined for a final review and ranking by the CRIF Assessment Committee.
- Applications will be ranked in descending order of relative priority according to assessed scores.
- The recommendations of the CRIF Assessment Committee will be considered by the Minister in the form of a budget and expenditure submission.

### 4.1 Vetting applications to determine eligibility

The Funding Team will review applications to determine eligibility. Eligibility criteria are evaluated on a 'yes/no' basis. Failing to meet any of the criteria means the application is ineligible for funding consideration. The eligibility criteria are listed below.

#### 4.1.1 Authorisation

The application must be authorised by the official manager of a Crown 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).

**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 eg. Government agency, perpetual lease | Crown Lands director or area manager                   |

Applicants that have not provided correct authorisation may be given, at the discretion of the Coordinator Funding Programs, up to one week to submit a completed Annex A - Authorisation to Apply. 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 to ensure probity of process is maintained.

#### 4.1.2 CRIF final project reports

All CRIF final project reports that are due must be submitted before the closing date for applications. An overdue final project report for one reserve will make that Crown land manager ineligible to receive funding for any reserves it manages.

#### 4.1.3 Ability to service loan repayments (if applicable)

The Crown land manager has the ability to meet all terms of the loan. This includes the capacity of the Crown land manager to adequately service loan repayments.

#### 4.1.4 Inclusion of all relevant financial information

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:

- o profit and loss statement and other comprehensive income
- o balance sheet or statement of financial position
- o most recent bank statement(s)

#### 4.1.5 Compliance with *Crown Land Management Act 2016*

All activities proposed in the application must be consistent with the *Crown Land Management Act 2016*.

#### 4.1.6 Activity will occur on Crown land

For general\*, pest and weed applications, the proposed activity must occur on Crown land. (\*Freehold showgrounds are eligible)

#### 4.1.7 Appropriate quotes or cost estimates have been provided

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 (preferred)*   |
| \$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 (preferred)*   |
| \$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.                     |

\* Due to the impacts of COVID, floods and supply chain issues, one quote will be accepted for activity elements. This quote will be assessed for quality and value for money. If the quote is poorly explained or does not represent prudent use of public funds, it will not score well or may be deemed ineligible. Applicants are encouraged to secure 3 quotes for this range as it will give comparable and credible information in the assessment of the application.

- For cost estimates to be acceptable for activity elements greater than \$150,000, a comprehensive cost breakdown inclusive of GST must be included.
- Cost estimates will be accepted from councils for activity elements of \$250,000 or less where council is the reserve manager and will be undertaking the work themselves. The estimate must clearly identify the reserve manager and provide a comprehensive cost breakdown (hours, materials etc.)
- Appropriately detailed cost estimates or budget breakdowns may be accepted from non-council CLMs in certain exceptional cases for activity elements of \$150,000 or less. Arrangements need to be made prior to application submission. Please complete and email ANNEX B to the Funding Team by no later than 5pm Friday 27 May 2022 for approval to submit a cost estimate with your application. 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 3 June 2022 (there are no extensions for submission of applications).

## 4.2 Assessment by regional offices

Regional offices will evaluate applications on a weighted score basis against the assessable criteria. The *Assessment and Eligibility Criteria Checklist* document on the [CRIF website](#) can be used as a guide to ensure the criteria has been adequately addressed. The assessable criteria will be used to determine:

- 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 score will determine whether or not it can be supported from the available funds. Applications may be assessed as not recommended for specific reasons. These may include that the activity is in conflict with:

- the reserve purpose
- Aboriginal interests (native title, ILUAs etc)
- existing community use
- the Plan of Management
- the priorities of the department
- current tenure arrangements

To ensure applications are recommended, it is strongly suggested that applicants discuss their projects with their local Crown Lands office before submitting their application.

## 4.3 Assessable criteria

| Assessable Criteria   | Assessed score               |
|---|------------------------------|
| The activity will address a WHS or risk issue   | Score out of 6               |
| The ability for the activity to be funded from other sources  | Score out of 3               |
| The activity is actively supported by cash or in-kind* contributions  | Score out of 3               |
| The extent to which the activity addresses one or more of the CRIF objectives (as per section 2)                              | Score out of 3               |
| The ability for the activity to be delivered  | Score out of 3               |
| Public Value: the social, cultural or environmental factors and/or benefits to the community that the activity will result in | Score out of 3               |
| Value for money in the use of public funds – quote/estimate assessment  | Score out of 3               |
| <b>Maximum assessed (relative priority) score</b>   | <b>Total score out of 24</b> |

\*In kind contributions should be quantified and included in the project budget. These include labour or materials or other goods or services contributed to the project by the CLM or community. Unless these contributions are clearly articulated, they cannot be considered in the assessment process.

Assessors will be provided with guidance documentation to ensure accurate and consistent assessment scores across the state.

**NOTE:** The CRIF Assessment Committee agreed at its 2015 meeting that the ongoing funding of a 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.

#### 4.4 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](http://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](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au))

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

- [NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2017–2022](#)
- [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](#)

## 5. Payment and reporting process

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

- Successful applicants (Crown land managers) will receive a funding deed 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, otherwise the offer will lapse.
- The department will deposit the agreed amount into the bank account of the Crown land manager upon receipt of an executed funding deed.
- 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 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 project 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 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 Government webpage](#).

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

## 6. 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 funding deed
- 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.

## 7. 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.

## 8. Goods and services tax

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](#) or contact the ATO by phone on 13 72 26.

## 9. Assistance

Instructions for accessing the online application form are available at the [CRIF webpage](#).

If you have read this document and still require assistance with the application process, please contact the Funding Team on 1300 886 235 (option 4) or [reservefunding@crowland.nsw.gov.au](mailto:reservefunding@crowland.nsw.gov.au).

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## 2022-23 Crown Reserve Improvement Fund Program Authorisation to apply

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This letter serves as authorisation of [APPLICANT ORGANISATION], [APPLICANT NAME], to submit an application for funding in the 2022-23 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 and that [APPLICANT ORGANISATION] holds a valid tenure (*licence or lease agreement*) for its use and occupation of the reserve.

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:

| 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 Area Manager or Director                    |

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## 2022-2023 Crown Reserves Improvement Fund Request for cost estimate in lieu of quotes for non-council Crown land managers

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In exceptional circumstances, non-council 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 non-council 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](mailto:reservefunding@crowland.nsw.gov.au)) **no later than Friday 27 May 2022**.

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 3 June 2022** (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 CRIF 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)  |  |