Lake Macquarie City Council
Community Environment Grants
2023-2024 Round Two

Guidelines for applicants

Have you got a project idea to improve your local environment or inspire environmentally sustainable behaviour?

Not-for-profit community groups are invited to apply for Council's Community Environment Grants.

Grants of up to $5000 are available for projects in Lake Macquarie City. Applications open Monday 5 February 2024 and close 5pm Monday 18 March 2024. Applications will not be accepted after this date.

The Community Environment Grants process is competitive. To ensure your grant application has the best chance of success, please familiarise yourself with these guidelines, the application form, and s*peak with the nominated Sustainability Engagement Officer before applying*. Applicants are encouraged to attend the information session about the grants (details below). There are two rounds of Community Environment Grants each financial year.

Who can apply?

Not-for-profit community organisations can apply including community groups, school Parents and Citizens groups, community based pre-schools, service clubs, bush regeneration/conservation groups, and Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups.

- Grants are only available to **incorporated bodies**. If your group is not incorporated, you must arrange for an incorporated organisation to sponsor your group. This means they accept and administer funding on your behalf. The sponsoring body is responsible for financial expenditure, project progress, and reporting. The sponsor may charge an administration fee.

- Projects must be **located in Lake Macquarie City** and completed within 12 months from receipt of grant funds

- Applicants must demonstrate, at a minimum, **matching dollar-for-dollar investment** in the project. The applicant's contribution may include cash, donated goods and volunteer labour (calculated at $40 per hour per person). Tasks and calculations must be shown in the application.

Note: State and Commonwealth agencies are not eligible for funding.

Ineligible

Funding will **not** be provided for the following:

- activities that are considered the core business of Commonwealth, State or Local government;
- ongoing operational or administrative costs of an organisation. This includes purchase of capital equipment, for example, solar panels;
- projects that have commenced or already taken place;
- projects that include modifications to leased buildings or land where written approval from the property owner has not been provided;
- projects where half or more of grant funds pay for labour (except to engage expert presenters);
- beautification projects without an environmental outcome;
- individual projects that include planned tree removal; and
- gifts and prizes.

How to apply

Council uses SmartyGrants administration software to manage its grants program. Applications must be submitted via the Lake Macquarie City Council SmartyGrants webpage. Applications must meet the eligibility requirements and no late applications will be accepted. Hard copy applications are not accepted.

Additional documents may be uploaded to the application as required. Please include:

- current quotes to support the budget; and
- written approval from the property owner (for planned project purchases over $500) to undertake the project works (where applicable).

Other examples of supporting documents that may strengthen your application are:

- location map;
- site plan and/or photos;
- species planting list; and
- letter(s) of support from organisations your application identifies as partners in the project.

Applications need to be signed by two members of the Executive of the applicant organisation and sponsoring organisation (where applicable).

All applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application by mid June.

Funding obligations

If you are awarded funding, you will be required to sign a Grant Acceptance Form that details your obligations, including:

Risk and insurance

☐ Provide a copy of your organisation's current insurance certificate showing public liability insurance to value of $20 million.

☐ Assume all normal commercial responsibilities including public risk and/or any other appropriate insurance cover for the project.

Tax invoice

☐ Provide an invoice for the grant funds awarded.

Timing

☐ Complete project within 12 months from receipt of grant.

Publicity

☐ Acknowledge Council's support in all project media releases, print, signage and online material. We will provide you with a logo kit and wording. You must submit documents to the nominated Sustainability Engagement Officer for approval prior to finalisation or print. Please allow a minimum of one week for approval.

☐ Invite a Council representative to open day/launch days. Please send the invitation to the nominated Sustainability Engagement Officer with two weeks advance notice.

Reporting at completion of the project

☐ Submit a final report using the template provided.

☐ Submit funding acquittal (financial statement) including copies of purchase receipts.

☐ Submit copies of any project educational materials or resources, promotional publications and media coverage showing acknowledgement of Council's funding support.

☐ Photos from your grant project journey are always greatly appreciated.

Variations

☐ You must contact the nominated Sustainability Engagement Officer to seek approval before making any significant changes to your project (including scope, budget and timeframe). Following this discussion, staff will advise if you will need to submit a written request for variation.

Grant funds not expended for the purpose outlined in the application must be returned to Council, unless agreement has been reached to use these funds for other approved purposes. Failure to meet Council's funding obligations may result in the termination of funding; the applicant will be notified prior to any action being taken.

How funding is decided

All eligible grant applications will be assessed according to the criteria outlined below by an appointed assessment panel.

The assessment panel consists of up to two Councillors, up to two Council staff members, up to two community representatives, and up to one representative of the Indigenous community. The panel will assess and rank applications against the criteria listed below and then make funding recommendations to be approved by Council.

Assessment criteria

A. Eligibility criteria

Projects must meet these criteria in order to be considered by the assessment panel

- Applicant is a not-for-profit community organisation.
- Applicant organisation is incorporated or auspiced by an incorporated body, the 'sponsor'.
- Project is located in Lake Macquarie City and benefits our environment and communities.
- If the applicant has received an Environmental Sustainability Grant in the past, the project is complete and all reporting requirements have been met.
- All questions in the grant application have been answered and sufficient detail provided.
- The project has not commenced. Realistic timelines showing project to complete within 12 months of grant funds being received.
- Less than half of grant funds spent on labour (except to engage expert presenters).

B. Assessment criteria

(i) General criteria

- Clear, well-balanced and realistic budget which demonstrates matching funds including a cash contribution and in-kind contribution, if appropriate. Quotes are to be attached to support the budget. Detailed calculations showing value of volunteer labour in-kind contribution are required (showing task, people, hours x $40p/hr).
- Priority given to applicants that have not received Council funding within the last year.
- Project is outlined in an organisation level strategic or planning document (e.g. Action Plan).
- Applicant has spoken to Council's Nominated Sustainability Engagement Officer, and other relevant Council staff (if required).

(ii) Environmental sustainability criteria

- Demonstrate a clear vision and delivery of environmental outcome(s) linked to one or more of Council's environmental sustainability strategic themes:
  - *Protecting and enhancing our natural landscapes* – projects that improve local ecosystems and habitat
  - *Supporting resilient communities* – projects that improve understanding and preparing for risks from natural hazards and/or climate change
  - ***Creating a sustainable city and communities*** – projects that maximise efficient use of energy and reduce reliance on non-renewable energy sources, increase efficient use of water and/or support increase use of active transport
  - ***Responsible consumption and production*** – projects that increase correct recycling practices, decrease consumption of non-renewable resources, decrease waste sent to landfill, and/or reduce ecological footprint

  Helpful resources at **lakemac.com.au/For-residents/Sustainable-living**.

(iii) Education, engagement and awareness-raising criteria

- Clear strategy for education and/or engagement of the community, participants and/or audience
- Involvement of multiple stakeholders from the wider community
- Effective promotion of project outcomes to a wide audience, this includes recognition of Council's contribution

(iv) Project merit

- A creative, innovative or robust project

Does your project use grant funds to purchase re-useable items for distribution?

Does your proposed project use grant funds to purchase re-useable items for distribution to a target audience to assist with lowering their consumption of single use disposable items such as re-useable produce bags, re-useable coffee cups or other behaviour-change prompts? If so, this section applies to your grant application.

The grants assessment panel encourages innovative grant applications that encourage sustainable behaviour change. The panel is open to funding these types of project applications based on the merit of the individual application in consideration of the following criteria:

1. Behaviour change

☐ Does the project clearly identify a desired behaviour-change resulting in a positive, longer-term environmental outcome(s)?

2. Target audience

☐ Does the project clearly identify a target audience who are currently not aware of/ doing the desired behaviour(s), and live primarily in Lake Macquarie City?

3. Enabling object

☐ Is the re-useable item to be purchased and distributed to the target audience an 'enabling object'? An enabling object will assist the recipient by addressing a barrier, or by being a practical tool, to adopting the desired behaviour change.

4. Access to the enabling object

☐ Considering the socio-economic status of the of target audience, is it a worthwhile use of Council funds to support the target audience to have subsidised access to the enabling object?

5. Supporting education

☐ Does the project provide quality education and/or organisational policy initiatives to support the target audience to understand and adopt the desired behaviour change?

6. Intent of the project

☐ What is the overall intent of the project? Does it support the intent and purpose of the Community Environment Grants? Is there a better way to achieve the desired outcome?

The Committee is to satisfy itself that the project application meets mandatory criteria 1, 5 and 6 above, and has sufficient merit based on consideration of criteria 2, 3 and 4.

Case study

The Toronto Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group was awarded grant funds for the development of a native fire retardant garden built by the community, for the community at the Toronto Fire Station. The garden has now become a popular model native fire retardant garden for the community.

Grant funds were used to purchase materials including plants, signage and mulch.

In-kind contributions include volunteer hours, which total more than the funds awarded from Council.

Two successful open days were held at the Fire Station, with guided tours for the community ongoing.

Signage, guided tours and the garden itself provide a permanent source of information on the benefits of having an attractive and fire retardant native garden.

Application support

Council holds an information session and provides one-on-one support to potential applicants.

Before applying, Applicants are encouraged to attend the information session and speak with Council's Nominated Sustainability Engagement Officer (contact details at bottom of page).

Information session covers topics such as

- the type of projects that can be funded (including examples of past projects)
- completing the application form;
- the assessment and approval process; and
- an opportunity for you to ask questions.

Online via MS Teams
Tuesday 13 February 2024
5:30pm - 6:30pm

In person at the Landcare & Sustainable Living Centre: umali barai-ku
80 Toronto Road, Booragul, NSW, 2285
Wednesday 14 February 2024
10am - 11:30am

To reserve your spot, please RSVP online via the Eventbrite link on the Community Environment Grants page at **lakemac.com.au** or call 02 4921 0333.