



**Australian Government**

**Department of Sustainability, Environment,  
Water, Population and Communities**



# Biodiversity Fund

**Grant application guidelines round one 2011–12**  
**Applications close 5pm AEDT 31 January 2012**

Supporting land managers to store carbon, enhance biodiversity  
and increase resilience across the Australian landscape



## **Application guidelines round one**

**Applications close 5pm AEDT 31 January 2012**

Program information, guidelines and related forms are available at:

**[www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture](http://www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture)**

If you are unable to submit your application online, you can submit a hard copy application.

Hard copies must be postmarked by **31 January 2012**.

**Electronic applications are preferred.**



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

*These Interim Grant Application Guidelines – Round One 2011–12 (Guidelines) introduce the Biodiversity Fund (the Program), which forms part of the Australian Government’s Clean Energy Future Plan. The Guidelines outline the objectives, investment priorities, selection criteria and application process for the first round of the Program.*

*These Guidelines will apply to funding in the first round of the Program only. Separate guidelines will be developed for future rounds of the Program.*

## 1.1 Clean Energy Future – supporting environmental outcomes

The Australian Government (the Government) has committed to reducing Australia’s carbon emissions by between 5 and 25 per cent from 2000 levels by 2020, depending on the scale of global action. The Government has also adopted a new long-term target of reducing Australia’s carbon emissions by 80 per cent from 2000 levels by 2050.

On 10 July 2011 the Government announced its plan for a Clean Energy Future (the **plan**). The plan has four elements: a carbon price, renewable energy, energy efficiency and action on land (the Land Sector Package). The plan also details how the Government will support Australian households, businesses and communities transition to a clean energy future. Further details on the plan can be found on the Clean Energy Future website at: [www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au](http://www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au).

The Land Sector Package is a key element of the Government’s comprehensive plan to move Australia to a clean energy future. The Land Sector Package:

- recognises that farmers and land managers have an important role to play in reducing carbon pollution along with governments, households and the wider business community
- creates new income streams for land managers.

Around \$1.7 billion will be spent over the next six years through seven specific land sector measures, creating opportunities for rural and regional Australia to participate in the carbon market.





## The Clean Energy Future plan

Under the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future plan, approximately \$1.7 billion of revenue raised by the carbon price will be reinvested in the land sector over the next six years. This funding is in addition to existing funding under the Caring for our Country initiative. The following programs are collectively referred to as the Land Sector Package:

- Carbon Farming Initiative Non-Kyoto Carbon Fund – \$250 million over six years to purchase credits that are not Kyoto-compatible.
- Regional Natural Resource Management Planning for Climate Change Fund – \$44 million over five years to improve regional planning for climate change and help to guide the location of carbon and biodiversity activities, including wildlife corridors.
- Carbon Farming Futures – \$429 million over six years, comprising \$201 million for research into abatement technologies and practices; \$20 million to convert research into estimation methodologies for use in the Carbon Farming Initiative; \$99 million for on-farm trials and demonstration of abatement practice and technology, \$44 million to provide a 15 percent Refundable Tax Offset for new eligible conservation tillage equipment installed between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2015; and \$64 million for new extension officers to help farmers benefit from carbon farming.
- Indigenous Carbon Farming Fund – \$22 million over five years to help Indigenous Australians benefit from carbon farming.
- Carbon Farming Skills – A new qualification in carbon farming and an accreditation scheme for carbon brokers.
- Biodiversity Fund – \$946.2 million over six years in funding to restore, manage and enhance biodiverse carbon stores.
- Land Sector Carbon and Biodiversity Board – Establishment of a permanent, expert board to provide advice on implementation of the measures.

**For further information please visit: [www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au](http://www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au)**



## Carbon Farming Initiative

A key part of the Government's climate change strategy is the Carbon Farming Initiative. This voluntary initiative establishes a new carbon market that allows farmers and land managers to earn carbon credits by storing carbon or reducing greenhouse gas emissions on the land. The land sector measures being implemented as part of the Clean Energy Future plan will complement the Carbon Farming Initiative. The Carbon Farming Initiative also helps the environment by encouraging sustainable farming and providing a source of funding for landscape restoration projects. It does this by creating credits for each tonne of carbon pollution which can be reduced or stored on the land. These credits can then be sold to other businesses wanting to offset their own carbon pollution. This creates a new income stream for farmers, new jobs for rural and regional Australia and provides strong incentives to identify and implement low cost methods of carbon pollution reduction.

The Carbon Farming Initiative covers projects that occur in the land sector, including agriculture, forestry and horticulture. There are two broad categories of Carbon Farming Initiative activities: emissions reduction projects and sequestration projects. Emissions reduction projects generate offsets by reducing or avoiding emissions, or by converting potent greenhouse gases such as methane into carbon dioxide which is less potent. Examples of emissions reduction projects include reducing livestock emissions, improved savanna fire management, and capturing and burning methane from manure. Sequestration projects generate offsets by storing carbon in vegetation or soils. Emissions from vehicles and industrial processes stay in the atmosphere for a long time, so in order to offset these emissions, carbon in vegetation and soils must also be stored for a long time. Sequestration projects are subject to permanence obligations to ensure Carbon Farming Initiative credits can genuinely offset emissions from vehicles and industrial processes.

Further information about the Carbon Farming Initiative can be found at [www.climatechange.gov.au/CFI](http://www.climatechange.gov.au/CFI)

## Land Sector Carbon and Biodiversity Board

The Land Sector Carbon and Biodiversity Board is an independent, permanent advisory board established under the *Climate Change Authority Act 2011* (Cth) to provide advice on implementation of the land sector measures, including the Biodiversity Fund.





## 1.2 What is the Biodiversity Fund?

### Challenges for Australia's biodiversity

Australia's native ecosystems are capable of storing significant amounts of carbon and supporting our biodiversity. Our ecosystems, however, have suffered considerable decline over many years and remain under increasing pressure from climate change. In order to adapt to climate change our environment will need to be capable of adjusting naturally – the Biodiversity Fund will assist this. The ability of our ecosystems to adapt to climate change will help maintain our biodiversity and the quality of the Australian landscape.

In recognising these challenges the Australian Government has a number of existing key national policies, initiatives and legal frameworks in place to drive the way in which we restore and manage our unique landscapes and species. These include Australia's National Biodiversity Strategy 2010–2030, Australia's Native Vegetation Framework, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) and the Caring for our Country initiative. Funding through the Biodiversity Fund will complement and is additional to Caring for our Country.

The Government also acknowledges that our landscape has become increasingly fragmented over the years, causing many of our ecosystems and species to become isolated, placing them under greater pressure. In response to this issue the Government is developing a National Wildlife Corridors Plan which will provide a national blueprint for retaining and restoring ecological connectivity and building resilience to climate change across the continent. The National Wildlife Corridors Plan will help identify areas of the landscape suitable for biodiversity activities in the longer term. Additional information about the National Wildlife Corridors Plan is available at [www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-corridors/index.htm](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-corridors/index.htm)

### About the Biodiversity Fund

An important measure within the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future Plan is the Biodiversity Fund. The Biodiversity Fund is an ongoing program which will provide \$946.2 million over its first six years to support land managers to undertake projects that establish, restore, protect or manage biodiverse carbon stores.

The Biodiversity Fund creates an unprecedented opportunity to establish and manage biodiversity throughout Australia's unique landscapes and in the process develop new market opportunities for ecosystem services.

The Biodiversity Fund will improve the resilience of Australia's unique species to the impacts of climate change, enhance the environmental outcomes of carbon farming projects, and help land managers protect carbon and biodiversity values on their land.



The Biodiversity Fund will support projects that reduce Australia's carbon pollution and improve the resilience of our ecosystems to the impacts of climate change. The Government will do this by investing in activities that establish, restore and manage biodiverse carbon stores throughout Australia.

### What are the objectives of the Biodiversity Fund?

The objectives of the Biodiversity Fund are to:

- help maintain ecosystem function and increase ecosystem resilience to climate change
- increase and improve the management of biodiverse carbon stores across the country.

The Biodiversity Fund will do this through:

- support for revegetation, including in areas of high conservation value
- management and protection of existing biodiverse carbon stores, including publicly owned native forests and land under conservation covenants or subject to land clearing restrictions
- support for actions to prevent the spread of invasive species across connected landscapes.

Through the funding of these activities, the Biodiversity Fund will support restoration and management of areas of the landscape which can store carbon while also achieving biodiversity outcomes.

The Biodiversity Fund will promote investment so that, over time, significant and strategic national biodiversity conservation gains can be made. This will include capturing opportunities provided by the Carbon Farming Initiative to establish new biodiverse plantings in order to produce both biodiversity and carbon benefits. A primary mechanism for building resilient landscapes will be undertaking projects that restore and connect ecologically important areas including those where habitats are fragmented and habitat condition is under threat.

### Who can apply?

Biodiversity Fund grants are targeted towards individual land managers, groups of land managers working in partnership or organisations working on behalf of multiple land managers.

Projects can be conducted on public or private land. For the purposes of these Guidelines, 'public land' means land owned by a government entity or government related entity except where such land is leasehold land (i.e. the subject of a 99 year lease or a pastoral lease).

Individuals and groups working across all geographic areas and land tenures are encouraged to apply. Applicants should read the eligibility criteria (Section 4) before applying to confirm whether they are eligible for funding.





## 2 INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR BIODIVERSITY FUND 2011–12

This first financial year of the Biodiversity Fund will be treated as a development phase and will provide opportunities to fund pilot projects. Feedback on these interim Guidelines, and the experience with the first round of projects, will help inform the longer term delivery arrangements for the Biodiversity Fund.

In 2011–12 the Biodiversity Fund will provide grants for activities which fall into one or more of the three themes outlined below. The three themes are not mutually exclusive and the Government anticipates that some activities may cut across multiple themes. The Government is interested in a spread of projects across the country and across the three themes. Projects can be conducted on single or multiple sites on public or private land.

Applications are invited for projects from individual land managers or collaborative projects between multiple parties to reverse the decline of ecosystems, secure carbon, and/or build resilience in the landscape to climate change.

The Clean Energy Future plan's Regional Natural Resource Management Planning for Climate Change Fund will support, from 2012–13, the updating of regional natural resource management plans to help guide the location of biosequestration activities in the landscape. Over time, these updated plans will be valuable tools to inform Biodiversity Fund projects.

Early investment in on-ground activities will be critical to achieving biodiversity and market outcomes. To strengthen the market and deliver large scale biodiversity and carbon outcomes planning, the Government is also interested in projects focusing on building capacity and removing barriers to large scale revegetation.

In addition to this open call for applications, direct funding may be provided to specific projects where a competitive approach would not be effective or feasible in delivering the desired outcomes of the Program.

Funding under the Biodiversity Fund will provide revenue for projects which may also generate carbon credits through the Carbon Farming Initiative. Where the intention is for projects to access the carbon market, applicants should:

- examine eligibility and project requirements for the Carbon Farming Initiative ([www.climatechange.gov.au/CFI](http://www.climatechange.gov.au/CFI))
- show how any additional carbon revenue likely to be received has been factored into the project budget of their Biodiversity Fund application.



## Theme 1: Biodiverse plantings

Expanding the extent of native habitats in fragmented landscapes through biodiverse plantings will help build landscape resilience and connectivity. Revegetation will also play a role in building and securing natural stores of carbon.

Funding under this theme is intended to support projects that establish and manage regionally appropriate, mixed-species plantings at different scales. Improving the condition of native ecosystems supports the transition from degraded to healthy ecosystems. This restoration effort builds resilient and better connected landscapes.

Applications are invited for action on a wide variety of Australian landscapes and across a diverse range of vegetation types. In particular, the Government is interested in project activities including, but not limited to:

- biodiverse plantings of mixed species, including direct seeding, that establish and re-connect well functioning native ecosystems
- revegetation to improve connections between remnant native vegetation across public and private lands, particularly in the fragmented rural, coastal and peri-urban landscapes of south eastern and south western Australia and Tasmania
- establishing and restoring native wetland and waterway habitats, particularly on already cleared lands or lands predominantly occupied by non-native vegetation
- building capacity of individuals and organisations to expand the extent of native habitats in fragmented landscapes
- facilitating partnerships to deliver large scale biodiverse plantings or other biodiverse carbon storage projects
- developing and establishing specific enabling technologies and systems such as the creation of reliable sources of native seed and seedling stock for large scale plantings and new technologies required for broad acre biodiverse plantings and management.

The Government will be looking for applications which best represent value for public money in the context of the objectives and outcomes of the project activity/ies.

It is recognised that good planning contributes to the success of revegetation projects. Accordingly, applicants may wish to reflect this in their project proposal.





## Theme 2: Protecting and enhancing existing native vegetation

Funding under this theme will be provided for activities that aim to protect, manage and enhance existing native vegetation that has high conservation value for its carbon and biodiversity benefits.

The Australian Government is seeking cost effective applications for habitat protection and enhancement activities in largely intact landscapes.

Projects on private land already under conservation covenants or subject to land clearing restrictions are eligible to apply for funding.

The Government invites applications for management of existing native vegetation. In particular, the Government is interested in project activities including, but not limited to:

- native habitat restoration projects in largely intact landscapes in northern Australia and/or the rangelands, as well as those in peri-urban and coastal catchments in any part of Australia
- enhancing the condition of native vegetation in areas adjacent to existing key assets, for example World Heritage Areas, Ramsar sites or protected areas in the National Reserve System
- building the capacity of individuals and organisations to protect and enhance native vegetation
- developing and establishing specific enabling technologies and systems to enhance management of existing native vegetation.

Projects under this theme will need to demonstrate that the proposed activities are in addition to management activities that:

- form part of the business as usual (environmental stewardship) practices of the land managers and/or land owners
- are required by law.

Public land managers will also need to identify the degree of financial and/or in kind contribution that they intend to provide.

The Government will be looking for applications which best represent value for public money in the context of the objectives and outcomes of the project activity/ies.





### Theme 3: Managing threats to biodiversity

Connected landscapes enable native species to move freely between systems and improve their capacity to adapt to a changing climate. However, improving landscape connectivity can also facilitate the spread of invasive species, threatening both agricultural and environmental resources.

The Biodiversity Fund is designed to support land managers to control the spread of invasive species through connected landscapes where weeds and pests represent a significant threat to native species, habitat condition and carbon values. In particular, the Government is interested in project activities including, but not limited to:

- reducing and preventing the spread of invasive species into new habitats, including those in wildlife corridors, national parks and other areas of high biodiversity and carbon value
- reducing the impacts of invasive species across connected landscapes
- developing and establishing specific enabling technologies and systems such as novel approaches to invasive species management in connected landscapes
- building capacity of individuals and organisations to manage high impact invasive species threats to biodiversity.

Projects under this theme will need to demonstrate that the proposed activities are in addition to invasive species management activities that:

- form part of the business as usual (environmental stewardship) practices of the land managers and/or land owners
- are required by law.

In particular, public land managers will need to indicate the scale and purpose of current invasive species management investments and their effectiveness. Public land managers will also need to identify the level of financial and/or in kind contribution they intend to provide.

As a fundamental element of environmental management, actions to control invasive species should form part of every restoration or revegetation application to the Biodiversity Fund, whether or not it is the core theme of the proposal.

The Government will be looking for applications which best represent value for public money in the context of the objectives and outcomes of the project activity/ies.





## 3 BUDGET AND TIMEFRAMES

Table 1 below presents key dates for the 2011–12 round of funding for the Biodiversity Fund. Subsequent rounds will be informed by guidelines to be released during 2012–13 and announced in future years. Information on these will be available on the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities' (the **department**) website and communicated via electronic bulletins.

**Table 1: Key dates for Biodiversity Fund 2011–12 grant round**

Application period commences	9 December 2011
Closing date for project applications	31 January 2012
Anticipated assessment period	February – March 2012

As Figure 1 below indicates, funding of \$946.2 million will be made available over the first six years of the Biodiversity Fund. This includes the administrative requirements of the initiative, as well as investment in land manager outcomes and actions.

**Figure 1: Biodiversity Fund investment**

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	Total
Total budget (\$millions)	36.6	34.6	249.75	250.75	199.75	174.75	946.2

Projects in the 2011–12 round may seek funding over a period of up to six years. There is no minimum or maximum funding allocation per project however to ensure a good range of applications it is anticipated that individual projects in excess of \$500,000 per year (GST inclusive) will require strong justification. Applicants intending to submit projects in excess of this annual amount are advised to discuss the proposal with the department before lodgement.

Funding agreements for projects which extend for more than three years will include an assessment of the ongoing value for money status of the project at the three year mark, and depending on the outcome of this assessment, the department will reserve the right to cease or revise the provision of funding at this point.





## 4 ELIGIBILITY AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

### 4.1 Who is eligible to apply?

Biodiversity Fund grants are targeted towards individual land managers, groups of land managers working in partnership or organisations working on behalf of multiple land managers.

To be eligible, applicants must:

- be a legal entity, for instance:
  - an individual
  - an incorporated association or cooperative society
  - a body corporate (company)
  - an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander corporation, council or incorporated association
  - a Government-related entity.
- declare that they have, or are able to obtain, the written consent of any organisation that the applicant partners with or represents on the project, including traditional owners.

### 4.2 What is an eligible project?

To be eligible, a project must:

- Not include activities that:
  - have been completed
  - are being undertaken outside Australia or its territories
  - are substantially the same as activities completely funded through other initiatives or programs.
- Involve financial and/or in-kind contribution from the public land owner if it is located on public land. For the purposes of these Guidelines, 'public land' means land owned by a government entity or government related entity except where such land is leasehold land (i.e. the subject of a 99 year lease or a pastoral lease).





- Involve activities that are in addition to activities that:
  - form part of the business as usual (environmental stewardship) practices of the land managers and/or land owners
  - are required by law.

Note that applicants participating or seeking to participate in the carbon market via the Carbon Farming Initiative will be subject to obligations and criteria as set out in the *Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011* (Cth) and the associated regulations.

### 4.3 Assessment criteria

Where an application meets all of the eligibility criteria described in Section 4.1 and Section 4.2, it will then be assessed against the following assessment criteria.

The assessment criteria are not weighted. Applications must address each of the assessment criterion. The evaluation of applications will assess the extent to which the application addresses the assessment criteria.

The following guidance under each assessment criterion is not intended to be prescriptive and applicants are not necessarily required to meet all of the items specified for each criterion. Applicants may provide additional information in support of their application.

#### Criterion 1 – Biodiversity Fund themes

- Applicants must clearly identify which investment themes described in Section 2 are addressed in the project. When addressing this criterion, applicants must demonstrate how the project:
  - will deliver against the objectives of the relevant theme as described in Section 2, including the specific location of the activity and the expected biodiversity and any carbon outcomes of the project
  - will control invasive species where relevant. Such activities are a fundamental element of environmental management and all revegetation and restoration applications must address this regardless of whether or not it is the core part of the proposal.
- Where public land managers are undertaking projects, the application must identify the scale and purpose of current invasive species management investments and their effectiveness.





- Applicants must, in their application:
  - if it relates to the establishment, restoration or management of native vegetation, include threat management activities including consideration of risks associated with pests, disease, fire, climate change and other significant events, and appropriate treatments (evidence of an adequate threat management plan will be required as part of progress reports for successful projects);
  - if it relates to the establishment or restoration of native vegetation, include a vegetation structure that is appropriate for the immediate landscape and includes planting of a minimum number of native species as specified in Table 2 below; and
  - if it relates to establishment or restoration of native vegetation, ensure that species and/or provenance choice will be made with regard to long-term sustainability under changing environmental conditions.

**Table 2. Minimum number of native species\* for eligible biodiverse plantings**

	Over storey	Mid storey	Under storey
Forests/Woodlands – shrubby	2	3	2
Forests/Woodlands – grassy	2	-	3
Shrublands	-	3	2
Grasslands	-	-	4
Wetlands and riparian vegetation	-	-	4

\* Selection of native species is to be drawn from the species found in the equivalent native vegetation type within the regional vicinity and from species suited to anticipated climate change.

- Applications should not be submitted for activities that:
  - introduce plants, animals or other biological agents at risk of being environmental or agricultural weeds or pests;
  - are the core responsibility or business of state/territory/local governments or of private land managers, including activities that are the legislative and regulatory responsibility of others, such as managing or controlling certain weeds or compliance activities;
  - are likely to have a significant adverse impact on any matter of national environmental significance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth); or
  - are required or are part of an approval under Commonwealth, State or Territory legislation, for example, the provision of an environmental offset under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth).



- The merit of the project will be assessed, including how likely it is that the project will achieve its aims. Where relevant, applicants should draw on existing conservation planning tools (for example existing government plans, natural resource management or local plans) in determining the location and level of activity for their proposal. As the existing natural resource management plans are updated over time, there will be an increasing requirement for projects to comply with these plans.

### Criterion 2 – Ongoing management and benefits

- Applicants must demonstrate the extent to which the project will have long term benefits beyond the life of the project funding, in light of changing environmental conditions.
- Where appropriate, applicants must demonstrate how they intend to manage the area following completion of the project. Favourable consideration will be given to applicants that demonstrate a commitment to management of the site for a period of ten years from the completion date of the project.
- Assessors will consider the broader environmental benefit derived from the project and take into account the extent of public and private benefits to be obtained, for example, partnerships with indigenous people, contribution to the removal of existing barriers, and contribution to local/regional development.
- Applicants should outline how they propose to measure the performance of their project, (evidence of adequate monitoring will be required as part of progress reports for successful projects).

### Criterion 3 – Value for money of the proposal

- Applications will be assessed on the basis of the extent to which a project achieves value for money. Proposals that represent the greatest benefit for every dollar invested will be considered of greater merit.
- In addressing this criterion applicants must provide information which enables the value for money of their project to be assessed in terms of the proposed outcomes of the project in light of the:
  - overall project cost
  - any contribution of funds from the applicant, third parties or consortium members
  - amount of Commonwealth funding sought for the proposal.
- Where projects are located on public land, applicants must indicate the level of financial and/or in-kind contribution to be provided from the public land owner.





- An assessment will be made of the project budget and whether it is comparable with the quality of the overall project and whether budget items are consistent with the activities and/or sites identified in the project description.
- Proposals that also intend to access the carbon market should show how this potential additional revenue has been factored into the project budget.
- Applications should not be submitted for activities that are:
  - principally business development activities
  - currently receiving, or have previously received, funding through other Australian Government, State or Territory funding initiatives or programs, where those activities are substantially the same
  - existing administrative costs (such as operational or legal costs other than those directly relating to the delivery of the project).

#### Criterion 4 – Capacity

- An assessment will be made on the applicant's capacity to deliver the project on time and within budget.
- The applicant must declare that they do not, or will not at the time of contracting, have any overdue reports or acquittals under an arrangement (whether contractual or statutory) in which they receive any funding from the Commonwealth.
- The applicant must be able to demonstrate that they have (or will have) all relevant regulatory approvals required for the project prior to commencement of the funding agreement.





## 5 FORWARD PROCESS

### 5.1 Preparation of applications

Eligible applicants are invited to submit applications for funding under the Biodiversity Fund. The application period commences on 9 December 2011 and closes at 5pm AEDT on 31 January 2012. Applicants must complete the Biodiversity Fund application form which is available at [www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture](http://www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture), and must provide all of the information that is required by the application form. Applicants will be able to submit their application in hard copy or online. Online applications are preferred.

### 5.2 Assessment of applications

#### Receipt and registration of applications

As part of the assessment process, applications will be screened to:

- confirm whether all of the eligibility criteria in Section 4 have been met
- determine whether the level of information provided in the application is sufficient to enable a fully informed assessment of the application to be made.

Those applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria may be excluded from the evaluation process. The department reserves the right to also exclude those applications that do not contain sufficient information.

Applicants will be notified of confirmation of receipt of their application.

#### Assessment of applications

Applications for funding will be reviewed by assessors comprised of staff from the Australian Government (which may include staff from Commonwealth agencies other than the department), and representatives from the community. Applications will be evaluated according to the extent to which they have met the assessment criteria.





All assessors will be required to:

- sign, and keep up to date, conflict of interest declarations, which will ensure the appropriate identification and management of any conflicts of interest
- comply with the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct.

Applications will be evaluated on the assessment criteria and compared against all other applications received. Applications that best demonstrate their merit and value for money will have a greater likelihood of being funded. Consideration will also be given to achieving a reasonable distribution of projects across the country and across themes. The Government is also seeking projects from, or that partner with, indigenous people and/or traditional owners.

The Land Sector Carbon and Biodiversity Board will provide advice to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment on the applications and the assessment approach prior to the Minister determining successful projects.

The department may contact applicants during the assessment process to seek clarification about their application, where the information provided in the application is ambiguous, requires minor clarification or when contradictory statements are made within the application. The department reserves the right to accept or disregard clarification information provided by applicants, and will not allow responses to materially improve or amend an applicant's original application.

### Selection and notification

The Australian Government Minister for the Environment will make the final decision on the applications taking into account advice from the Land Sector Carbon and Biodiversity Board. In making the final determinations, the Minister may choose to seek other sources of advice to inform his decision.

The Minister's decision on the selection of successful applicants will be final. Applicants will be given the opportunity to receive feedback on their application from the department.

Successful applicants will need to enter into a funding agreement with the Australian Government prior to any payment of funds being made for the successful applicant's project. The draft funding agreement will be made available online before the close of applications: [www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture](http://www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture). More information about funding agreements can be found in Section 7.

The department will publish on its website information on successful individual grant projects seven working days after the funding agreement for the project commences.





### **5.3 Project implementation and finalisation**

Implementation and finalisation of successful projects must be undertaken in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement with each successful applicant. Payment of funding under the Biodiversity Fund will be dependent on the successful applicant's completion of milestones as specified in the funding agreement and on the department receiving and accepting:

- regular reports on the successful applicant's progress against performance measures and milestones, with reporting intervals dependent on the size, complexity, and risk level of the project;
- acquittal of expenditure at intervals over the life of the project; and
- evidence of having met any other particular conditions of funding.

### **5.4 Monitoring of the project and evaluation of the Program**

Funding recipients will be required to actively manage the delivery of the project. The department will monitor progress against the funding agreement through assessment of progress reports (including in relation to financial management and accountability of the project) and by conducting site visits as necessary.

An evaluation by the department will determine how the funding contributed to the objectives of the Program. Funding recipients will be required to provide information to assist in this evaluation for a period of time, as stipulated in the funding agreement, after funding has been provided.





# 6 TERMS AND CONDITIONS

## 6.1 How to apply

### Application Form

All applicants must complete and submit the application form which will be available at [www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture](http://www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture), and should provide all of the information that is required by the application form.

The department may, at any time and at its absolute discretion, exclude an incomplete application form from any further consideration for funding under the Biodiversity Fund.

Applicants are advised to seek tax advice before applying and/or entering into a funding agreement. Applicants can contact the Australian Taxation Office call centre to discuss business tax issues on 13 28 66.

Applicants must use the following process to apply for funding under the Biodiversity Fund.

1. Read these Guidelines.
2. Download and complete all sections of the on-line application form when available at [www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture](http://www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture) as specified in these Guidelines, following the instructions provided in the application form.

### OR

If you **do not** have access to the internet you can request a hard copy application pack by calling the Biodiversity Fund hotline on **1800 008 678**

3. Submit the application form by 5pm AEDT 31 January 2012.

Submission of the application form on-line will be deemed to have been signed and approved by the authorising officer of the applicant. The system will not allow changes to an on-line application form once it has been submitted. An automatic receipt will be generated upon submission of the form.

**Electronic Applications are preferred.**





If you need to alter your application after it has been submitted but before the application period closes, please contact the department (see contact details at Section 10 below). If you are submitting a hard copy application it must be postmarked on or before 31 January 2012. Confirmation of receipt of the application will be forwarded to applicants by the department.

Hard copy applications are to be addressed and delivered to:

**Post your applications to:**

Biodiversity Fund  
Land Sector Taskforce  
Department of Sustainability,  
Environment, Water, Population  
and Communities  
GPO Box 787  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

**If courier delivery, send to:**

Biodiversity Fund  
Land Sector Taskforce  
Department of Sustainability,  
Environment, Water, Population  
and Communities  
Reception, John Gorton Building  
King Edward Terrace  
Parkes ACT 2600

If you are submitting more than one project proposal you must submit separate applications for each of your projects as each application form has a unique reference number to identify your application. Modified or re-used application forms will not be accepted.

The department may at its sole discretion extend the application period. Any such extension will be communicated to all registered applicants by email only and published on the department's website.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all information required in the application form is submitted by the specified closing date for the applications.

### Late applications

Any application lodged after 5pm AEDT 31 January 2012 will be considered late and will be registered separately. If the lateness is due to exceptional circumstances beyond the reasonable control of the applicant, the application may be admitted to the assessment process.

The department may consider the submission of late applications under extenuating circumstances provided an alternative timeframe has been agreed with the applicant prior to the closing date. Any requests for an extension of time to lodge an application must be made to the department prior to 5pm AEDT 31 January 2012.

The department has no obligation to accept a late application. Any decision by the department to accept or not accept a late application is at the department's absolute discretion and will be final.





## 7 FUNDING AGREEMENT REQUIREMENTS

A funding agreement is a performance-based, legally enforceable agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the successful applicant that sets out the terms and conditions governing the funding to be provided for the project under the Biodiversity Fund. All grant payments for the project are subject to the successful applicant entering into and complying with the terms and conditions of the funding agreement.

The department will only enter into a funding agreement with the successful applicant, who will be legally responsible for ensuring all of its obligations under the terms and conditions of the funding agreement are met. As such where the applicant has established a consortium or has identified third-party contributions to assist it to perform the project, the applicant will need to have contracts in place to ensure the completion of the project. The department may require successful applicants to confirm that such legal arrangements are in place, prior to the first funding release being made under the funding agreement. The department may withdraw the offer of funding to the applicant if the funding agreement is not signed by the successful applicant within the timeframe determined at the time of notification by the department of the successful project (unless the applicant has obtained prior agreement from the department for an extension to this timeframe), or if there are significant reasons why the project cannot commence.

Funding agreements for projects which extend for more than three years will include an assessment of the ongoing value for money status of the project at the three year mark, and depending on the outcome of this assessment, the department will reserve the right to cease or revise the provision of funding at this point.

The funding agreement will include provision for the Commonwealth to seek repayment of funds that are found to have not been spent in accordance with the purposes specified in the funding agreement.

Applicants should familiarise themselves with all aspects of the draft funding agreement to ensure they are able to comply with the terms and conditions of the draft funding agreement.





Key requirements of the funding agreement include that:

- the department may ask for further information and/or conduct site visits and/or arrange inspections by third parties from time to time to monitor the progress of the project and assess compliance of the project with the funding agreement requirements
- the department may also seek repayment of funds that are found to have not been spent in accordance with the purposes specified in the funding agreement
- successful applicants are responsible for ensuring that their project complies with all requirements set out in any applicable Commonwealth, state or territory legislation and regulations, and that the project is carried out to a high standard
- successful applicants will be required to acknowledge the Australian Government's support and funding for the project.





# 8 RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## 8.1 Biodiversity Fund applicants

It is the responsibility of the applicant to:

- fully and properly inform themselves of the requirements of the Biodiversity Fund, these Guidelines and the application form
- ensure that their application is complete and accurate. The department is not obliged to request additional or missing information
- identify any information contained within their application which they consider should be treated as confidential and provide reasons for the request (noting that the department will not be in breach of any confidentiality obligations where disclosure is required as outlined further in Section 8.3 below)
- keep a copy of their application and any attachments, for their own records
- inform the department of any changes to their circumstances which may affect their application or their eligibility for funding under the Biodiversity Fund.

Applicants are also required to declare in writing to the department that they do not have any existing conflicts of interest that may influence the application assessment process.

The applicant's participation in any stage of the application process, or in relation to any matter concerning the process, is at the applicant's sole risk, cost and expense. The Australian Government will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by an applicant in preparing or lodging an application or in taking part in the application process. Successful applicants will be responsible for the implementation and delivery of their projects funded under the Biodiversity Fund.





## 8.2 The Australian Government

The Australian Government reserves the right to amend these Guidelines by whatever means it may determine at its absolute discretion and will, where possible, provide reasonable notice of these amendments. The Australian Government also reserves the right to vary, suspend or terminate the assessment process at any time at its absolute discretion.

The department will ensure that all staff involved in the process declare and address any actual or perceived conflict of interest prior to providing any advice or assessment.

## 8.3 Confidentiality and privacy

The department is subject to the legislative and administrative accountability and transparency requirements of the Australian Government, including disclosures to the Parliament and its Committees. The department may disclose, or allow at any time the disclosure of, any information contained in or relating to any application:

- to its advisers, employees or internal management for purposes related to the application and assessment processes, including to evaluate or otherwise assess applications and manage any resultant funding agreement
- to the responsible Minister
- in response to a request by a House or a Committee of the Parliament of the Commonwealth
- within the department, or with another agency, where this serves the Australian Government's legitimate interests
- for information and/or promotional purposes related to the Biodiversity Fund or related initiatives, subject to any privacy and agreed confidentiality obligations
- where the information is authorised or required by law to be disclosed, noting that information submitted to the Australian Government is subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) and its requirements.

In submitting an application, applicants consent to the department using the information for the above mentioned purposes and any other incidental or related purpose. The department will store and use the personal information collected by it in compliance with its obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).





Applicants are entirely responsible for the accuracy of all information submitted in their applications. If applicants knowingly provide inadequate, false or misleading information the application may be excluded from the assessment process.

Applicants should be aware that if they are successful, Commonwealth policy requires the department to publish information on its website about the applicant, including but not limited to:

- name of the person or entity receiving the grant;
- title and purpose of the project;
- amount of funding received;
- term of the grant; and
- funding location.

By submitting an application for funding under this Program, the applicant consents to publication of the above information by the department if they are awarded funding under the Program.

Applicants may access or correct personal information by either emailing the department at: **[biodiversityfund@environment.gov.au](mailto:biodiversityfund@environment.gov.au)** or sending a letter to the postal address provided in Section 6.1.





## 9 ENQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS

All enquiries will be handled consistent with the department's Service Charter 2011–14 available from the department's website [www.environment.gov.au](http://www.environment.gov.au)

The Biodiversity Fund Hotline is the initial point of contact for all enquiries or complaints relating to the Biodiversity Fund. Applicants should direct all communications through this number **1800 008 678** or otherwise write to:

Biodiversity Fund  
Land Sector Taskforce  
Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities  
GPO Box 787, CANBERRA ACT 2601  
Email: [biodiversityfund@environment.gov.au](mailto:biodiversityfund@environment.gov.au).

*Complaints will be managed in line with the department's Complaints Management Policy. The department is committed to consistent, fair and confidential complaint handling and to resolving complaints as quickly as possible. Feedback and complaints will be handled impartially and in a confidential manner.*





## 10 CONTACT DETAILS

For more information about applying for the Biodiversity Fund:

- visit [www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture](http://www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture)
- to ask a question about your Biodiversity Fund application or project, email [biodiversityfund@environment.gov.au](mailto:biodiversityfund@environment.gov.au)
- call the information line on **1800 008 678**
- or to receive regular updates about the Land Sector Package send your details to [cleanenergyenviro@environment.gov.au](mailto:cleanenergyenviro@environment.gov.au) and we will add you to our mailing list.

For more information about the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future plan visit [www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au](http://www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au)





