



**Macedon
Ranges**
Shire Council

**Strategic Planning
& Environment**

Environment Group Support Grants

Adopted by Council
26 July 2023

Guidelines 2023/2024



Contents

Acknowledgment of Country	2
Overview	3
1. Program aims and objectives.....	3
2. Timeline.....	3
3. How much is available?.....	4
Eligibility	4
4. Who can apply?.....	4
5. Eligibility requirements	4
Funding categories and assessment criteria.....	6
6. Category 1: Landcare, Friends Groups and Network Support Funding	6
7. Category 2: Strategic Weed Partnership Program.....	7
8. Category 3: Biolink Boost Grant.....	9
Applications.....	12
9. Legal requirements	12
a. Incorporation status.....	12
b. Child safe standards	12
c. Public liability insurance	12
10. Budget	13
a. GST	13
11. Assessment	13
a. How are applications assessed?.....	13
b. What will strengthen my application?	13
Conditions of funding.....	13
12. Project variations/extensions	13
13. Reporting/acquittals	14
14. Incomplete projects and unspent funds	14
15. Permits, insurance and authorisations	14
16. Auditing of funded projects	14
17. Privacy.....	14
Contact officers at Macedon Ranges Shire Council	15

Acknowledgment of Country

Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and waterways. Council recognises their living cultures and ongoing connection to Country and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Council also acknowledges local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents of Macedon Ranges for their ongoing contribution to the diverse culture of our community.

Overview

1. Program aims and objectives

Macedon Ranges Shire Council is proud to support the Environment Group Support Grant program in recognition of the significant contributions our community environment groups. The program aims to support groups with capacity building, weed control and biolink enhancement to benefit the community and natural environment of the Macedon Ranges Shire.

The **objective** of the program is to support projects and activities that align with the priorities of the 2018 Biodiversity Strategy, specifically:

- Protect existing biodiversity and native vegetation;
- Improve existing biodiversity and nature vegetation across public and private land;
- Extend and connect native vegetation and fauna habitat;
- Improve council and the community's understanding and connection to biodiversity;
- Enhance the capacity of community groups to undertake conservation activities.

2. Timeline

Applications open	31 July 2023 at 9am
Applications close	27 August 2023 at 5pm
Applications assessed by panel	September 2023
Recommendations to Council	25 October 2023
Grant recipients advised	27 October 2023
Category 1 and 2 - Grants acquitted	30 July 2024
Category 3 – Grant acquitted	30 September 2024

3. How much is available?

Council's Environment Group Support Grant budget for 2023/2024 is a total of \$50,000.

There are three categories of funding. Eligible groups can apply for one, two or all three funding streams.

Council and community partners, Macedon Ranges Community Enterprises Limited and Bendigo Bank have collaborated to co-fund the Category 3, Biolink Boost Grant. The Macedon Ranges Community Enterprises Limited will match council's funding to the amount of \$20,000, boosting the funding available for the Biolink Boost Grant to \$40,000.

Categories include:

Funding categories	Maximum funding/project	Council funding available	Matched funding by MRCE	Total available
Category 1				
Landcare, Friends Groups and Network Support Funding	Up to \$800	\$20,000		20,000
Category 2				
Strategic Weed Partnership Program	Up to \$1,500	\$10,000		\$10,000
Category 3				
Biolink Boost Grant	Up to \$5,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$40,000

Eligibility

4. Who can apply?

Environmental groups eligible for funding include Landcare, Friends Groups and Networks.

Landcare Group - A not-for-profit organisation with a membership with Landcare Victoria, open to all members of the public that conducts activities or promotes sustainable management of private and/or public land.

Environment Friends Group - A group that works to protect and enhance the conservation values of a specific site or area through on-ground works and community education.

Network – Comprises of three Landcare Networks and the Biolinks Alliance.

Other groups may be entitled to apply for this funding if they can demonstrate that their primary focus is nature conservation at the discretion of Council's Environment Unit.

5. Eligibility requirements

To be eligible, applicants must meet the below criteria.

- Works must be undertaken within the Shire of Macedon Ranges.
- Landcare Support Grants from previous grant funding must be acquitted.
- Groups must have their own current public liability and accident insurance.
- Groups must be incorporated. Groups that are not incorporated are welcome to apply if they are auspiced by another incorporated entity. Please note: each incorporated group may submit a maximum of two applications.
- Receipts or other documents for activities may be requested at the discretion of Council to verify submitted acquittals.
- A copy of the group's most recent AGM minutes and treasurer's report must also accompany the grant application.
- The application of herbicides must adhere to the relevant State Government legislation.

The following are ineligible to apply to the Environmental Group Support Grant:

- Individuals.
- Political organisations.
- For profit/commercial organisations.
- Government agencies/organisations.
- Groups that are in debt to Council.
- Groups that have not completed the acquittal and reporting requirements of previous Council grants.
- School/scouting/religious groups.
- Groups auspiced by Council.

Funding categories and assessment criteria

6. Category 1: Landcare, Friends Groups and Network Support Funding

The primary purpose of this funding is to cover the costs of administration such as insurance, venue hire, printing and mail. Small-scale on-ground works and events can also be funded from this grant.

Examples of projects in this category include:

- Administration - e.g. photo copying, project auditing, production of information such as brochures or videos, postage, advertising, promotion etc.
- On-ground works on private or public land - e.g. tree planting, weed control, purchase of chemicals, planting materials, fencing materials etc. Any proposed public land works will require written consent from the land managers before commencement of works.
- Training - e.g. Agricultural Chemical Users Permit course, first aid, conference attendance fees, governance training etc.
- Community education - e.g. environmental workshops and events, brochures, flyers, fact sheets, creation and maintenance of a website etc.

What will not be funded?

- Works outside the Shire of Macedon Ranges
- Weed control on Council managed land undertaken by contractors. See Category 2: Strategic Weed Partnership Program.

Weighting	Criteria	What we are looking for
25%	Evidence of need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of proposed project or activity. • Costs and receipts if required. For example, rental of post office box.
25%	Location of proposed project or activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works must be undertaken within the Macedon Ranges Shire.
25%	Landcare Victoria or environment Friends of group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of Landcare membership, or Friends group status. • Groups have their own current public liability and accident insurance. • Groups must be incorporated. Groups that are not incorporated are welcome to apply if they are auspiced by another incorporated entity.
25%	Ability to deliver project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of the most recent AGM minutes and treasurer's report. • Acquittal received from any previous funding.

Acquittal

Grant acquittal reporting is required on completion of your project and/or activity in SmartyGrants. In order to apply for future Category 1 funding, grant acquittal must be received on or before **30 July 2024**.

7. Category 2: Strategic Weed Partnership Program

The purpose of this funding is to support groups to undertake voluntary weed control on Council managed land - i.e. on roadsides and within bushland and conservation reserves - which complements Council's Annual Weed Program.

Examples of projects in this category include:

- Materials for weed control and working bees – e.g. chemicals, spray packs, catering.
- Weed related training and courses.

What will not be funded?

- Weed control undertaken by contractors. Exceptions will be made at the discretion of Council's Environment Team, including for weed control works on roadsides or within bushland and conservation reserves which Council is not actively managing.
- Weed control on private land or on land managed by state government departments or agencies.

Special Conditions

- Experience in plant identification is required.
- Blackberry must not be sprayed if plants are fruiting.
- The use of herbicide must be overseen by someone with an Agricultural Chemical Users Permit (ACUP).
- Groups must maintain appropriate records of all herbicide spraying conducted, copies of which may be requested by Council.
- All herbicide use must be undertaken in accordance with the relevant manufacturer's label, unless otherwise approved by Council.
- If working on roadsides, groups must take appropriate safety measures such as:
 - ✓ Ensuring volunteers work at least 3m from the road carriageway unless a Traffic Management Plan has been prepared and approved by Council.
 - ✓ Ensuring all volunteers wear florescent or high-vis vests or jackets.
 - ✓ Displaying a "works on roadside" sign or similar.

Request for contractor weed control on Council managed land

Council managed bushland and conservation reserves

Contractor works for bushland and conservation reserves are coordinated by Council's Bushland and Conservation Reserves Officers in collaboration with Landcare and Friends groups as a part of Council's annual works planning process. Groups can nominate site locations and target species requiring treatment through the SmartyGrants application process.

For more information, contact:

Martin Roberts, Bushland Reserves Officer

Email: mroberts@mrsc.vic.gov.au

Simon Purves, Conservation Reserves Officer

Email: spurves@mrsc.vic.gov.au

Council managed roadsides

Contractor works for roadsides are coordinated by Council's Roadside Conservation Officer as a part of Council's annual roadside weed program. Groups can nominate site locations and target species requiring treatment through the SmartyGrants application process.

For more information, contact:

Josh Gomez, Roadside Conservation Officer

Email: jgomez@mrsc.vic.gov.au

Note: Depending on the extent and cost of works requested, Council may not be able to complete all works requested in 2023/24. Council will discuss the scheduling of all works with groups as a part of the works planning process.

Assessment criteria

Weighting	Criteria	What we are looking for
25%	Evidence of need	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Description of proposed project or activity.• Costs and receipts if required. For example, materials for weed control.
25%	Location of proposed project or activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Works must be undertaken within the Macedon Ranges Shire.
25%	Special conditions met	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience in plant identification is required.• Blackberry must not be sprayed if plants are fruiting.• The use of herbicide must be overseen by someone with an Agricultural Chemical Users Permit (ACUP).• Groups must maintain appropriate records of all herbicide spraying conducted, copies of which may be requested by Council.• All herbicide use must be undertaken in accordance with the relevant manufacturer's label, unless otherwise approved by Council.
25%	Ability to deliver project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A copy of the most recent AGM minutes and treasurer's report.• Acquittal received from any previous funding.

Acquittal

Grant acquittal reporting is required on completion of your project in SmartyGrants. In order to apply for future Category 2 funding, grant acquittal must be received on or before 30 July 2024.

8. Category 3: Biolink Boost Grant

The Biolink Boost Grant aims to support revegetation activities in strategic areas across the Macedon Ranges, and to provide groups with a means to engage with landholders and increase membership.

The Biolink Boost Grant is intended to assist groups with a back to basics approach involving funding for revegetation activities, and will be supported by the provision of marketing materials from Council Environment Unit for the successful applicants' projects.

Successful projects will help achieve the landscape connectivity plan detailed in the Biodiversity Strategy 2018. All Landcare, Friends Groups and Networks will be eligible to apply for grants of up to \$5,000.

Council's community partners, Macedon Ranges Community Enterprises Limited and Bendigo Bank will provide \$20,000 to match the \$20,000 funding offered by Council. The co-funding partnership means that community environment groups have the opportunity to access a total of \$40,000.

Administration of the Biolink Boost Grant will be conducted by Council.

What we are looking for:

- Detailed description of the project.
- Site photographs and/or map of project.
- Projects that extend and connect native vegetation and fauna habitat.
- An increase in group participation or awareness.
- Engagement with the broader community.
- Location of project with site photographs and/or a map of the project area.
- On-ground projects in biolinks, nominated waterways and strategic habitat links within the Macedon Ranges Shire.

What will be funded:

- Proposed revegetation projects can occur on public or private land in our six biolinks and/or waterways area and/or strategic habitat links.
- Locally native plants in accordance with the Ecological Vegetation Classification for the project area. Native species include grasses, shrubs and trees.
- Plant guards, herbicide and weed matting are eligible for inclusion.
- Contractors for weed control and planting will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

What will not be funded:

- Fencing.

- Pest animal control such as rabbits.
- Nest boxes.

Special Conditions

- Any proposed public land works will require written consent from the land manager before commencement of works.
- Demonstrate ability to deliver project.
- Submit a budget to include proposed expenditure.
- Photo-point monitoring part of the project (GPS reference point).
- Project publicity needs to acknowledge Council and community partners, Macedon Ranges Community Enterprises Limited and Bendigo Bank. Project documents need to include logos from Council, Macedon Ranges Community Enterprises Limited and Bendigo Bank (these will be supplied).

Project support from Council and Macedon Ranges Community Enterprises Limited

Council will supply marketing materials for landholder engagement that support revegetation activities in Council's Landscape Connectivity Plan in the [Biodiversity Strategy 2018](#) – using an iconic animal or plant species as a community engagement “hook”.

Council and community partners, Macedon Ranges Community Enterprises Limited and Bendigo Bank will provide support to successful applicants to promote their projects with the wider community, for example, promotion of planting days.

Council will also support groups with native planting guidelines and GIS mapping if required.

Examples of projects to be funded in this category include:

- Habitat boxes of plants and guards supplied to landholders surrounding council reserves to extend Brush-tailed Phascogale habitat.
- Corridors for Koalas project – plants for landholders to extend koala habitat in the Cobaw Biolink.
- Waterway revegetation along Campaspe River and headwaters, Deep Creek, and Riddells-Jackson Creeks for Yarra Pygmy Perch.
- Revegetation along Five Mile Creek to support Black Gum.
- Good food for Gang-gangs – feed trees for Gang-gang Cockatoos for landholders.

Assessment criteria

Weighting	Criteria	What we are looking for
20%	Overall project description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of proposed project or activity. • Site photographs (2) and/or map of proposed project or activity.

30%	Alignment with Biodiversity Strategy 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects and activities that extend and connect native vegetation and fauna habitat. • Increase in group participation or awareness. • Engagement with broader community, eg schools, scout groups, residents.
30%	Location of proposed project or activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-ground works projects in biolinks, nominated waterways and strategic habitat links within the Macedon Ranges Shire.
20%	Ability to deliver project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquittal received from any previous funding. • Submit a budget to include proposed expenditure. • A copy of the most recent AGM minutes and treasurer's report. • Costs and receipts if required.

Acquittal

Grant acquittal reporting is required on completion of your project in SmartyGrants. In order to apply for future Category 3 funding, grant acquittal must be received by **30 September 2024**. Acquittal documentation includes:

- Description of project or activities undertaken with funding, and how it met the project objectives.
- Before and after photos (x2) of project or activity and provide copies of any communication materials about the project.
- Itemised list of good and services purchased.
- Evaluation of project or activities, including native plants in the ground, attendance figures, increase in volunteer participation or membership.
- Details of any unspent funds.

Applications

9. Legal requirements

a. Incorporation status

Applicants must be registered as an incorporated body or arrange for a legally constituted not-for-profit organisation to manage (auspice) the funds.

Council does not auspice applicants unless they are already auspiced.

For more information on auspice arrangements visit the [Not-for-profit Law Information Hub](#).

b. Child safe standards

Macedon Ranges Shire Council is committed to a zero tolerance approach to child abuse, through actively promoting child safety and ensuring compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards. Victorian organisations that provide services to children are required, under the Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005, to ensure that they implement compulsory child safe standards to protect children from harm.

As a Child Safe organisation, Council requires that all grant applicants demonstrate their compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and read/understand Council's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct, available from [Council's website](#). Within the application form, applicants will be required to identify whether their project involves direct or incidental contact with children and young people and complete either a Child Safe Statement of Commitment or submit their Child Safe Policy and a Child Safe Direct Contact Checklist. These questions are contained within the eligibility section of the application form and must be completed by all applicants.

Please note: If your organisation is being auspiced for the purpose of this grant, the auspicing organisation will also need to meet the Child Safe Standards.

More details on the Child Safe Standards can be found on the [Commission for Children and Young People website](#).

c. Public liability insurance

Public liability insurance covers incidents that occur during an activity being conducted by a group. All groups must be covered by public liability insurance and be able to provide a valid certificate of currency if they are involved in activities in public open space or using Council facilities. Other activities may also require public liability insurance.

It is the responsibility of the applicant or recipient to arrange appropriate insurance, including collecting appropriate insurance from a contractor or tradesperson. Applicants are encouraged to discuss their insurance requirements with their insurance company or a professional advisor.

Groups without public liability insurance can contact [Landcare Victoria](#) or [Local Community Insurance](#) which offers an affordable public liability scheme for not-for-profit community groups.

10. Budget

The budget you submit needs to include proposed expenditure related to the project or activity for which you are requesting funding. The application form on SmartyGrants provides applicants with guidance on the information and level of detail required in your budget.

a. GST

For groups who are registered for GST - all pricing in your budget must exclude GST. (GST will be added to the amount requested).

For groups who are not registered for GST - all pricing in your budget must include GST. (Grants will be made exclusive of GST).

For information about GST and ABNs contact the Australian Taxation Office.

11. Assessment

a. How are applications assessed?

Eligible applications are assessed by an evaluation panel of officers from within Council. The assessment is based on responses provided in the application form within each of the sections of the application using the **scoring matrix** for each category. Responses are scored and the weighting is then applied to create an overall score. Eligibility does not guarantee funding.

Funding recommendations are presented to Council for consideration at a Scheduled Council Meeting. Scheduled Council Meetings are open to the public and streamed live online.

Council decisions are final, applicants who wish to discuss the outcome of their application are encouraged to contact the Environment team for advice as soon as possible on (03) 5422 0333 or via environment@mrsc.vic.gov.au.

b. What will strengthen my application?

- Applications that support the objectives of the 2018 Biodiversity Strategy.
- Applications that have clearly addressed the criteria under each grant category.
- Applications that consider gender equity and accessibility for diverse community groups will score more highly than those that do not. Applications that advance reconciliation and/or celebrate First Nations Peoples will also be highly regarded.

Conditions of funding

12. Project variations/extensions

Funds must be spent on the project or activity described in the application. Any variation, including extensions to a project or activity, must be applied through SmartyGrants and be approved by Council. If you are encountering unexpected challenges in your project delivery, please contact the Environment team for advice as soon as possible on (03) 5422 0333 or via environment@mrsc.vic.gov.au.

13. Reporting/acquittals

Successful applicants are required to submit an acquittal report.

Category 1 and 2 grant project or activities must be completed and acquitted by 30 July 2024. Category 3 grant project or activity must be completed and acquitted by 30 September 2024. This report relating to funding from Council must include:

- confirmation that objectives for the project were achieved;
- a financial statement, detailing expenditure signed and authorised by the treasurer; and
- two photographs which may be used for promotional purposes.

Groups who do not submit an acquittal will not be eligible to apply for further funding from Council until the project or activity has been acquitted.

14. Incomplete projects and unspent funds

If a project is unable to be completed, the grant recipient must contact the Environment team for advice as soon as possible on (03) 5422 0333 or via environment@mrsc.vic.gov.au. Any unspent funds are to be returned to Council.

15. Permits, insurance and authorisations

The applicant is responsible for any regulatory and statutory requirements associated with the project, such as planning and building permits and public liability insurance.

16. Auditing of funded projects

Council reserves the right to undertake a spot financial and programmatic audit of a funded project. This may include a detailed examination of all financial records pertaining to the project.

17. Privacy

The collection and handling of personal information is in accordance with [Council's Privacy Policy](#), which is displayed on Council's website and available for inspection at, or collection from, Council's customer service centres.

Contact officers at Macedon Ranges Shire Council

Contact	Title	Phone	Email
Krista Patterson-Majoor	Coordinator, Environment	0448 156 303	kpmajoor@mrsc.vic.gov.au
Tanya Loos	Biodiversity Officer	0456 390 591	tloos@mrsc.vic.gov.au
Kimberley Cook	Environmental Programs and Engagement Officer	0436 654 301	kcook@mrsc.vic.gov.au

If you are unable to reach one of the above contacts in relation to your application, please call Customer Service on (03) 5422 0333.