

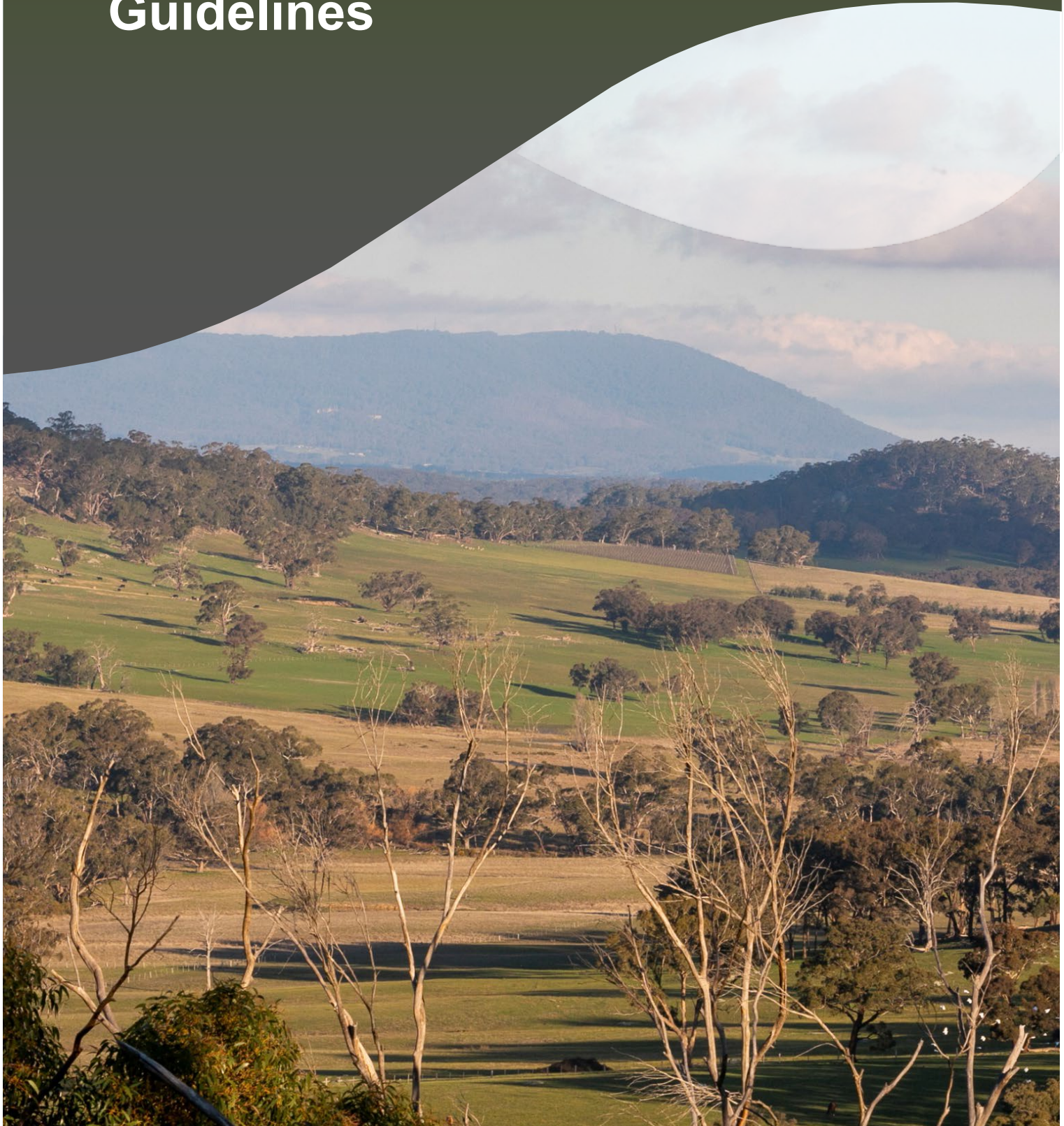
Approved at 17 December 2025 Scheduled Council Meeting



**Macedon
Ranges**
Shire Council

**Strategic Planning
& Environment**

Environment Grants Guidelines



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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, and present.

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.

Artwork by Taungurung artist Maddi Moser

"Both artworks talk about our connection, connection to Country, connection to places and connection to each other. This is signified by the whimsical circles that form the 'rivers'; that wrap around our lands and ourselves. It reminds us that we should look out for one another."



Overview

Program aims and objectives

Macedon Ranges Shire Council is proud to support the Environment Grant program in recognition of the significant contributions of 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 Environment grants program aligns with the strategic goals of Council's:

- Council Plan and Community Vision. Our Environment: Rural and natural surroundings that are cared for and protected.
- Environment Strategy.
- Biodiversity Strategy.
- Climate Emergency Plan.
- Environmental Management Plans and Master Plans for individual Council-managed reserves.

The grant program aims to support:

- Capacity building and operational support for environment groups.
- Act to restore and increase native/indigenous vegetation, land conservation and ecosystems.
- Biodiversity conservation and connectivity through biolink enhancement.

The program contributes to the following Biodiversity Strategy objectives:

- Protect existing biodiversity and native vegetation.
- Improve existing biodiversity and native vegetation across public and private land.
- Increase the extent of native vegetation cover for connectivity.
- Improve Council and the community's understanding and connection to biodiversity.
- Enhance the capacity of community groups to undertake conservation activities.
- Develop a shire-wide biodiversity monitoring program that assesses the health of the broader ecosystem.

Additionally, the program seeks to:

- Increase community education and participation.
- Support local citizen science initiatives.
- Encourage membership growth and increase involvement in environmental volunteering.

Grant categories

There are two categories of funding available:

- **Category 1:** Group Support Grant. \$30,000 available annually.
- **Category 2:** Biolink Boost Grant. \$40,000 available every second year.

Grant	Year 1	Year 2	Max. per application
Group Support Grant	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$1,000
Biolink Boost Grant	\$0	\$40,000	\$5,000
Total Council Funding	\$30,000	\$70,000	

The total amount available may increase with any co-funding agreements being in place.

Eligibility

1. Eligibility requirements

As part of the application process, applicants are encouraged to first discuss their application with the grants team. Applicants may also be advised to discuss their project with other relevant Council officers before applying.

Enquiries can be made to the Environment unit at environment@mrsc.vic.gov.au at any time.

All organisations applying for grant funding from Macedon Ranges Shire Council must include:

- Proof of incorporation;
- ABN/GST status; and
- Public liability insurance.

2. Incorporation and Auspicing

Incorporated environment groups operating in the Macedon Ranges are eligible to apply for Environmental Grants.

Applicants without a formal organisational structure (not incorporated) can apply under the auspice of an incorporated organisation. These groups will need to find an incorporated organisation willing to act as an auspice for the purpose of this grant.

3. Eligibility criteria

To be eligible, applications must meet the following criteria:

- Works must be undertaken within the Shire of Macedon Ranges.
- Quotes or other documents to support planned activities may be requested at the discretion of Council.
- A copy of the group's most recent Annual General Meeting minutes and treasurer's report must also accompany the grant application.
- Proof of current ACUP (Australian Chemical Users Permit) for any personnel undertaking chemical weed control.
- Meet special requirements outlined in the application form, including, but not limited to, providing copies of permits, maintenance and monitoring plans, landowner approval letters and meeting Child Safety Standards.
- Applications must be submitted via the SmartyGrants online portal.

4. Eligible organisations

Council has long been committed to providing ongoing support to more than 30 Landcare groups, networks, friends of groups and other community-led environment groups across the shire.

Entity	Definition
Landcare groups	A not-for-profit organisation with a membership with Landcare Victoria, open to all members of the public who conduct activities or promote sustainable management of private and/or public land.
Friends groups	Groups that work through key actions of Environment Management Plans on Council-managed land. These groups focus on protecting and improving the conservation values of the natural environment through on-ground works and/or community education.
Environment groups	Groups that focus on building community knowledge, advocacy and increasing awareness, not necessarily participating in on-ground works.
Networks	There are three Landcare Networks and the Biolinks Alliance within the Macedon Ranges Shire. The Landcare Networks consist of Upper Campaspe Landcare Network, Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network and Jacksons Eco Network.
Other	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 assessment panel.
Additional groups eligible for Biolink Boost only	
Community Groups	An incorporated not-for-profit association.
Not-for-profit organisation or agency	Neighbourhood and Community Houses, community health organisations, faith-based groups, Rotary, Scouts etc.

Unincorporated community group	An unofficial group with a common purpose and/or vision.
Schools	Public, private and catholic schools located within the shire boundary.

5. Ineligible groups

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

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

Current officers or Councillors of the Macedon Ranges Shire Council are ineligible to apply for any Council grant programs.

6. Ineligible applications

Grant applications will be automatically ineligible if they do not adhere to program guidelines or are not in alignment with Council policies, including the Community Grants Policy. These include, but are not limited to:

Policy	Eligibility Guidance
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy	Projects/applicants that involve children but are unable to satisfactorily demonstrate compliance with Child Safe legislation.
Financial policies (procurement, fraud control etc.)	Projects/applicants that do not meet documentation requirements, have a debt to Council or outstanding acquittal from previous grant funding.
Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy	Projects/activities that take place in gambling venues; applicants that accept any financial or in-kind contributions from gambling or electronic gaming machine operators; projects/activities that promote or involve gambling related activities; not provide Council financial support or provision of grants for a specific activity that also receives sponsorships from gaming venues, online betting

	companies or other gambling providers for that same activity in that financial year.
Fair Access Policy	Projects/applicants that are either a venue or club listed in the Fair Access Policy and that are not taking positive action towards the six Fair Access Principles in collaboration with Council Officers.

7. What will not be funded

Projects or activities which:

- are commercial, religious, political, discriminatory, sexist, racist or disrespectful.
- are considered fundraising/asking for donations. These activities are regarded as a request for sponsorship and therefore ineligible for this grant.
- intend to raise funds beyond what is needed to deliver the project and aim to boost general operating profits.
- are the funding responsibility of state or federal government.
- projects or initiatives that involve financial or in-kind contributions from gambling or electronic gaming machine (EGM) operators.
- activities that promote, involve, or are directly associated with gambling.
- activities that receive sponsorships from gaming venues, online betting companies or other gambling providers.
- involve capital works on private property.
- have been allocated funding through the Council budget process for the same financial year.
- Are on land owned or managed by ParksVic and/or DEECA.
- do not have appropriate support from relevant authorities – i.e. Registered Aboriginal Parties, Water Authorities, Landowners,

Funding categories and assessment criteria

Category 1: Group Support

The purpose of the group support grant is to support organisations cover basic operational costs, education, training, and other administrative costs.

1. What will be funded

Administration and Governance

- Group administration.
- Venue hire for meetings, workshops or events.
- Production of educational resources such as brochures, videos or websites.
- Group governance and planning (e.g. strategic documents).
- Public Liability insurance.
- Paid Working with Children's Checks (volunteer checks are free).

Training and capacity building

- Accredited training such as Agricultural Chemical Users Permit (ACUP), first aid (including snake bite and mental health), and governance training.
- Mentorship programs (e.g. Victorian Gorse Taskforce, Victorian Rabbit Association).
- Conference attendance.
- Traditional Owner engagement and cultural training.

On-ground works and materials

- Purchase of plants, tree guards, weed matting and other planting materials.
- Hand tools and related items for environmental weed or pest animal control.
- Engagement of contractors for weed or pest animal management.

Community education and engagement

- Environmental workshops, events and working bees (including venue hire and catering).
- Creation of educational resources and collateral to benefit the wider community.

2. What will not be funded

- Works and activities outside of Macedon Ranges Shire Council.
- Chemical purchase.
- Purchasing of assets on private land.
- Purchasing materials or supplies for personal use.
- Fencing.

3. Assessment criteria

Weighting	Criteria	What we are looking for
50%	Evidence of need and organisational capacity to deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Description of the purpose of funding.• Good project planning.• Quotes and budgets.• Volunteer hours or in-kind support.
25%	Alignment to Council priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consideration for accessibility and inclusion for gender, age and ability.• Aligns with key Council strategies and plans set out in programs aims and objectives.
25%	Environment group status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirmation of environment group status.• Impact of community benefit.

Category 2: Biolink Boost Grant

The Biolink Boost Grant supports revegetation and biodiversity connectivity projects within one of the Shire's six Biolinks or along strategic waterways across the Macedon Ranges. It is designed to help groups deliver practical conservation outcomes within distinctive biolinks and along strategic waterways of the shire.

The Biolink Boost Grant focuses on on-ground conservation projects in priority areas, while also encouraging collaboration with landholders and growing community involvement in local environmental action.

1. What will be funded

- Projects can occur on public or private land in our six biolinks, waterways or strategic habitat links.
- Locally native plants in accordance with the Ecological Vegetation Classification for the project area.
- Plant guards, weed chemical and weed matting are eligible for inclusion.
- Contractors for environmental weed control.
- Contractors for planting.
- Contractors for pest animal control.

2. What will not be funded

- Works and activities outside of Macedon Ranges Shire Council.
- Purchasing of assets on private land.
- Purchasing materials or supplies for personal use.

3. Application requirements

- Provide a detailed description of the project and ensure it's written as if the person assessing the application has no prior knowledge of the project.
- Site photographs and maps of the exact location of the project must be included.
- Any chemical use for weed control by an individual must provide a current Australian Chemical Users Permit. All proposed chemical use must be discussed with the Environment Unit.
- Demonstrate how the project will increase group participation or awareness.
- Any proposed projects on public or privately owned land will require written consent from the land manager before submitting your application.
- Projects on council land must align with the strategic direction of the Biodiversity Strategy, Reserve Master Plans and/or Environmental Management Plans of the shire.
- A land management plan must be submitted for proposed works on private land.
- A three-year maintenance plan must be included in the project application. The maintenance plan should include how the group will maintain the project site. This may include:

- watering requirements
- replacement of failed plantings
- weed control
- mulching
- maintaining plant guards or fencing
- monitoring for pest and disease damage and plant health

Council can support groups with native planting guidelines and basic GIS mapping if required.

4. Assessment criteria

Weighting	Criteria	What we are looking for
30%	Evidence of need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of proposed project. • Evidence of costs for funding. • Sound project planning. • Quotes and budget. • Detailed evidence provided of volunteer hours or in-kind support.
20%	Alignment to Council priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligns with key Council strategies and plans. • Consideration of accessibility and inclusion for gender, age and ability. •
20%	Linkage to the grant objectives and aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports program aims objectives. • How the project will increase protection or extension of habitat connectivity for flora or fauna.
30%	Ability to deliver project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project tasks in a logical order with realistic timelines • Site photos, maps and exact project location provided. • A maintenance and monitoring program. • All supporting documentation provided. • Engagement or collaboration with other community groups demonstrated. • All special conditions have been met

Contact us

Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their application with the Environment unit.

Enquiries can be made at any time, and we encourage applicants to start conversations with Council officers as early as possible.

For more information, contact the Environment unit at environment@mrsc.vic.gov.au or on (03) 5422 0333.

Assessment

Eligible applications are assessed by an assessment panel of officers from across the organisation. 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 weighting is applied to create an overall score.

Eligibility does not guarantee funding.

Panel decisions are final. Applicants who wish to discuss the outcome of their application are encouraged to contact the Environment unit for advice as soon as possible on 5422 033 or via environment@mrsc.vic.gov.au.

Funding process

Funding agreement

Successful applicants will be sent a funding agreement to be signed and returned to receive grant funding.

Activities/projects must be completed by the acquittal date.

Funds must be spent on the activity/project as described in the application.

Additional Funding Conditions

Your funding agreement may have additional requirements that are specific to your project that must be met in order for funding to be released.

Some examples of additional funding conditions may include:

- Consultation with a Council Officer/department
- Letters of support
- Complete an acquittal for previous grant funding.

Please note, if your organisation has any outstanding items across other Council departments, this may also be included as a funding condition.

If you are unsure of how to meet a funding condition, please contact the environment team via environment@mrsc.vic.gov.au or 5422 0333.

Project variations/extensions

Any variation, including extensions to an activity/project, must be applied for through SmartyGrants and be approved by Council. If you are encountering unexpected challenges in your project delivery, please contact the Environment Unit for advice as soon as possible on 5422 0333 or via environment@mrsc.vic.gov.au.

Extensions of up to 12 months may be approved if the recipient has experienced unforeseen circumstances that fundamentally delayed the project. Please note that if

you apply for an extension and receive approval via SmartyGrants you will still be eligible to apply to other grant funding while the project is being completed. However, if the project is incomplete after the 12-month extension period, then your group will be ineligible to apply for further grant funding until the project is fully acquitted.

Reporting/acquittals

Successful applicants are required to submit an acquittal report via the SmartyGrants online platform at the end of the funding term. Groups who do not submit an acquittal will not be eligible to apply for further funding from Council until the activity/project has been acquitted.

Incomplete projects and unspent funds

If a project is unable to be completed, please contact the Environment Unit for advice as soon as possible on 5422 0333 or via environment@mrsc.vic.gov.au.

Any unspent funds are to be returned to Council.

Permits and permissions

The applicant is responsible for any regulatory and statutory requirements associated with the project, such as planning and building permits and permissions from the building/landowner. If you are unsure of what permits or permissions your project may require, please discuss with the grants team or the appropriate Council Officer.

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.

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.

Legal requirements

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.

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

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.

Please note: If your organisation is auspiced for the purpose of this grant, the auspice 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](#).

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.

It is the responsibility of the applicant or recipient to arrange appropriate insurance, including collecting appropriate insurance from a contractor or tradesperson.

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

Budgets

The budget you submit needs to include all income and expenditure related to the activity/project for which you are requesting funding. It is the costing of your project plan. The application form on SmartyGrants provides applicants with guidance on the information and level of detail required in your budget. We strongly encourage you to take note of any hints provided, as these will support you to improve your project budget score.

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.

In-kind support

This covers contributions by volunteers and suppliers in terms of time, goods or professional services donated to the project and should be clearly identified in your project budget. The value of in-kind support should be reflected in both your income and expenditure.

Estimating the amount of volunteer work will help you determine the level of community contribution required and helps to demonstrate the true value of your project.

It is good practice to also supply a breakdown of estimated in-kind support to show how the figure in your budget total was reached. i.e.:

- General committee/community member contribution (e.g. planning, coordination, etc.) @ \$40 per hour.
- Specialist/expert contribution (e.g. tradesperson, professional service) @\$80/hr.

Additional funding sources

Your budget must include any other funding that you have or are seeking in relation to this project. This may include budget bids submitted to Council, other grant programs, partnerships or sponsors. It is important to consider how your project may need to be adjusted depending on the outcomes of all funding sought. Please note that if your project is successful in a Council budget bid, it will not be eligible for funding through the Environment Grants Program.