What is Biodiversity On-ground Action?

Biodiversity On-ground Action is the Victorian Government’s investment program targeting improvements to Victoria’s biodiversity. It builds on the successful action funded through the Threatened Species Protection Initiative, and will focus on achieving benefits to Victoria, including:

• Protection and management of biodiversity resources, including threatened species and habitats to increase the resilience of species in the face of systemic issues such as climate change
• Increased public engagement in the protection of biodiversity
• Partnerships between agencies, organisations and the community to reduce threats to native flora and fauna
• Implementation of innovative and crowd sourced solutions to support biodiversity conservation and engagement.

This program has a strong focus on connecting community groups to scientific information to support conservation efforts. It also provides a more coordinated approach to monitoring the effectiveness of activities carried out to address threats to biodiversity.

One of the components of the program is the provision of Community & Volunteer Action Grants which fund community projects which will support activities to conserve biodiversity, threatened species and protect habitat.

What is the purpose of the 2018 Community & Volunteer Action Grants?

Community & Volunteer Action Grants funding aims to support practical community efforts to deliver conservation projects on public and private land. The 2017 Community & Volunteer Action Grants funded 110 community projects totalling $4 million.

Funding of $2 million is available for the 2018 Community & Volunteer Action Grants.

Which species does the Biodiversity On-ground Action program help?

The program targets conservation measures to improve outcomes for indigenous flora, fauna, threatened species and habitats native to Victoria.

Where can I get more information about the grants?


Or contact the Grants Information Line on 1300 366 356

When can I apply for the grants?

2018 Community & Volunteer Action Grants on-line submissions are now open and will close at midnight on Tuesday 3 April 2018.
Can I submit an application outside of the listed dates?

No, the on-line SmartyGrants system used to submit applications cannot accept late applications.

Can I write my application and post it in?

All applications must be submitted through the on-line SmartyGrants webpage. There are no hard copy options available to submit an application.

Can we apply if we received funds in previous grant programs?

Yes, applicants may apply if they meet the eligibility criteria for the grants.

Project actions must be new work and not projects or parts of projects that are already funded. However, new projects can expand upon previously funded work.

How do I get approval to work on Parks or DELWP public land?

• Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning managed land - seek advice and approval from the Program Manager, Public Land Administration in your region (call 136 186 to be directed to the relevant regional Public Land Administration staff).

• If any of your project activities will be carried out on land managed by Parks Victoria, you will require written approval by Parks Victoria prior to you submitting your grant application. Please start this process immediately as you will need to allow plenty of time to arrange approval.

  **Scenario 1**
  Your group does not require Parks Victoria as an auspicor (sponsor) and you will NOT use contractors i.e. you intend to carry out all project work with members of your group/volunteers.
  
  You require a letter of approval by your local Park Contact.

  **Scenario 2**
  Your group does not require Parks Victoria as an auspicor (sponsor) but you will use contractors to carry out some or all of the project work.
  
  You require your local Park Contact to complete a C-220 Project External Funding Form with you.

  **Scenario 3**
  Your group intends Parks Victoria to auspice (sponsor) your grant and manage all the funds for you (whether or not you intend to use contractors).
  
  You require your local Park Contact to complete a C-220 Project External Funding Form with you.

For more information contact Parks Victoria on 131 963 or contact your local Park Contact

Who can apply for the 2018 Community & Volunteer Action Grants?

2018 Community & Volunteer Action grants are open to volunteer and community-based groups and not-for-profit conservations based groups where the main focus is environmental projects such as biodiversity conservation or habitat protection and resproration projects.

Example groups include:

* urban and rural Friends of, Landcare and Coastcare groups and networks
* environmental, naturalist groups or volunteer associations
* urban environment groups
* Conservation Management Networks
* not-for-profit conservation organisations
* public land committees of management
* Traditional Owner groups and associations
* schools and educational groups
* youth and senior citizens clubs
* local service and recreational groups
* Other types of groups may also be considered if they are proposing to work with volunteers to undertake local conservation projects that support biodiversity or threatened species.

**What types of project activities are being funded? (examples only)**
- Local habitat protection and restoration projects by community groups (such as planting of indigenous flora and fencing to protect habitat from trampling by stock and people, and protection from predators).
- Volunteer and community activities such as participation and training in bird counts and monitoring of indigenous plant and animal populations for conservation and threatened species recovery programs.
- Along with on-ground activities, complementary activities that engage the community in understanding more about conservation needs and management for local biodiversity (indigenous flora and fauna) are also supported.

**Who will deliver the projects funded through the 2018 Community & Volunteer Action Grants?**
2018 Community & Volunteer Action Grants will be delivered by volunteer and community-based groups, and not-for-profit conservation based groups.

**Who is eligible to apply?**
Victorian-based community groups are eligible if they have a minimum of $10 million public liability insurance and be able to demonstrate their not-for-profit status through one of the following:
- be an incorporated association registered through Consumer Affairs Victoria or be incorporated through an umbrella group, such as Landcare Victoria Incorporated; Or
- be a member group of an incorporated association; Or
- be registered as a not-for-profit organisation with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC); Or
- be registered as an education provider such as a primary or secondary school (government or non-government) through the Victorian Registration & Qualification Authority.

Applicants who are legal entities but not one of the above, may be able to demonstrate their not-for-profit status through their organisation’s constitution.

**What is incorporation?**
Incorporation recognises a community group as a legal entity separate from its members. This provides some cover against a group’s debts and liabilities for individuals operating as office bearers.

A community group can incorporate through:
- Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012
- Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006
- Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978

Groups can also be covered as a member group of an incorporated association such as Landcare Victoria Incorporated.

**Why would I need an auspicor (sponsor)?**
If a local community group does not meet the eligibility requirements for the Community & Volunteer Action Grants, it will require an auspicing organisation to “sponsor” and manage the project. The auspicor will sign the contract, receive payment and be responsible for reporting and acquittal of the project.
To apply, a group/organisation must:

- Hold insurances to cover participant involvement including $10 million public liability. Cover through Landcare Victorian Incorporated (LVI) or through DELWP for Committees of Management arrangements is also acceptable.

AND

- Be incorporated (either directly or as a member group of an incorporated association such as through LVI) or through DELWP for Committees of Management,

OR

- Provide an auspicing organisation that is incorporated and holds the above insurances to enter into a contract with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to oversee the project for the sponsored group.

Who can be an auspicer?

The following organisations can act as an auspicer (to support community group projects)

- catchment management authorities
- water authorities
- umbrella not for profit associations and community networks
- local government and statutory authorities
- Parks Victoria
- umbrella community networks for a group in the network’s area

What is the role of an auspicer?

An auspicer must agree to be accountable for the project on behalf of a local, volunteer or community group. This includes agreeing to and signing the funding agreement, receiving payment for project work and meeting reporting and project delivery requirements. The auspicer takes on the legal responsibility for volunteers working with them, including day to day support and health and safety.

An auspicer must be able to cover all participants in the project including volunteers and have at least $10 million (ten million) in Public Liability insurance.

Are there ineligible and eligible areas of Victoria?

This is a statewide Victorian Government program.

Community groups will need to target a local Victorian site to undertake action that is providing conservation outcomes and demonstrate its value against a local or regional strategy or plan.

Project sites can be on either public or private land. However sites cannot be ‘vegetation offsets’ or be for work that is already funded under another program.

Refer to the 2018 Community & Volunteer Action grants Guidelines for further information.

How do I create a map of project sites to attach to my application?

There are two ways to create maps:

- Download Google Earth and follow the instructions to create a map; Or
- Use NatureKit to generate shapefiles of their proposed area. Refer to instructions in SmartyGrants.
  
  The process is:
  
  2. Pan and zoom the map to the appropriate area
3. On the toolbar select the "Print and Draw" tab, and then click on the "Polygon" button

4. Use the mouse to click on the map to define the corners of the polygon

5. If you make a mistake you can click the "Clear Drawings" button and start again

6. Once the area is defined correctly, click on the "Export Drawings" button. This will provide a link to download the drawings as a zipped shapefile.

7. After downloading the zip file, rename it from the default "Export.zip" to your grant application number supplied by SmartyGrants.

8. Attach the renamed zip file to your SmartyGrants application.

Notes - it is possible to draw multiple polygons, points and lines. These will all be included in the zipped download. It is important that only shapes matching a single grant application are included in each .zip file. If you are applying for multiple grants, please repeat the process described above for each application.

I'm having trouble with SmartyGrants - where do I go for help?


SmartyGrants IT support E-mail: service@smartygrants.com.au
Phone: Australia +61 3 9320 6888
The support desk operates 9:00am - 5:00pm AEST, Mon - Fri.
Do I need to have an ABN?

A group should provide its ABN if it has one. If a group does not have an ABN, then if your application is successful an Australian Tax Office form (Statement by a Supplier) will be provided to you to complete.

What is the contract that I will be required to sign if I am successful?

DELWP is using the Victorian Common Funding Agreement with grant recipients. Details of the funding agreement can be found at: http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/not-for-profit-organisations/common-funding-agreement

Why is the grant GST free?

The grant is not a taxable supply which makes it GST free. The maximum amount available for a project is $50,000 regardless of whether or not the recipient organisation is registered for GST.

For example, a group registered for GST and a group not registered for GST both applying for a $45,000 grant will receive $45,000 - the same amount regardless of their GST status. A group registered for GST cannot charge the department GST on top of the grant payment.

Do I include GST in the budget when costing my project?

A group will need to work out the costs of the project that need to be funded by the grant (to a maximum of $50,000). This may include taxable supply items such as nursery plants and materials which include a GST charge. In the budget you will need to include each item for which you are requesting grant funding and its cost (including GST). If your application is successful, the total amount you have asked for in your budget will be what you receive.

What counts as ‘Capital items & Equipment’ in the budget I need to prepare for the Community & Volunteer Action Grants submission?

Capital items & Equipment are those that have a usable lifespan beyond one year and therefore would need to be maintained on an asset register by an organisation to be depreciated over several accounting periods. This includes items such as for example tree planters and photographic, video and motion sensor cameras.

All capital items or equipment will need to become a registered asset with your organisation or an auspicor.

Please ensure that where possible, assets are hired or borrowed and shared between groups rather than purchased for one-off projects.

What sort of information should I include in the application regarding the budget?

You should include all of the costs that you need covered by the grant that are eligible to be considered and justification of its use in your project.

Please refer to the following page for an example application budget:
Below is an example application budget:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget item (select from dropdown list)</th>
<th>Item description</th>
<th>Purpose and justification of item</th>
<th>Grants funds requested ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital items &amp; Equipment</td>
<td>Back pack spray units x 3</td>
<td>Spot spraying of selected weeds for regular control by volunteers</td>
<td>$270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire</td>
<td>Direct seeding machine hire</td>
<td>To direct seed larger area to revegetate for habitat</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Herbicide</td>
<td>Initial knock down and follow up spraying of blackberry infestations choking site</td>
<td>$350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Fencing materials, bollards and wire</td>
<td>Barrier against stock and people impacting site</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>500 tube stock</td>
<td>Planting native species (not suitable for direct seeding) to revegetate for habitat</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>Project coordination, site management</td>
<td>Staff costs for coordination of activities, to increase community participation and ensure appropriate standard of work delivered</td>
<td>$550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractors</td>
<td>Weed spraying</td>
<td>Selective weed spraying in steep terrain not suitable for volunteers</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractors</td>
<td>5x Site assessments and monitoring and report</td>
<td>External ecologist to complete site assessment with volunteers and provide report to community to enable group to prioritise management actions for species X</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational signage</td>
<td>Design, print and install 3x2m sign</td>
<td>Educational site signage to prevent trampling of nest sites</td>
<td>$600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire</td>
<td>Hire of hall for community event</td>
<td>To present results of citizen-science research to community members</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: $6,170