Invitation for new Cultural Ecotourism Offerings or Experiences in Queensland's Gondwana World Heritage Area

2023 funding guidelines



Queensland Government

Prepared by: Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships, Department of Environment and Science

© State of Queensland 2023

The Department of Environment and Science acknowledges Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land. We recognise their connection to land, sea and community, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

The department is committed to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights, and our obligations under the Human Rights Act 2019.

The Queensland Government supports and encourages the dissemination and exchange of its information. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.



Under this licence you are free, without having to seek our permission, to use this publication in accordance with the licence terms. You must keep intact the copyright notice and attribute the State of Queensland as the source of the publication.

For more information on this licence, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Disclaimer

This document has been prepared with care, based on the best available information at the time of publication. The department holds no responsibility for any errors or omissions within this document. Any decisions made by other parties based on this document are solely the responsibility of those parties.

If you need to access this document in a language other than English, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450 and ask them to telephone Library Services on +61 7 3170 5470.

This publication can be made available in an alternative format (e.g. large print or audiotape) on request for people with vision impairment; phone +61 7 3170 5470 or email <library@des.qld.gov.au>.

September 2023

Contents

Introduction 1
What are the objectives of the initiative? 1
What activities can be undertaken? 1
Who can apply? 2
What funding is available? 2
What is the application process? 3
How will applications be assessed? 4
What are the assessment criteria? 5
Stage 1 5
Stage 2 5
What are the responsibilities of successful applicants? 6
Further information 6

Introduction

The Queensland Department of Environment and Science (the department) supports the promotion and recognition of First Nations peoples' connection and care for country.

The Yugambeh, Yuggera Ugarapul and Githabul peoples are acknowledged as the First Nation peoples who have rights and interests over the Queensland section of the Gondwana World Heritage Area (Gondwana). Refer to maps listed on the department's website for further detail on Queensland's Gondwana World Heritage Area protected areas.

Further information on the significance of the Queensland section of Gondwana is also available on the department's website at Gondwana Rainforests of Australia.

Gondwana and its protected areas are indivisible from their cultural significance for First National peoples. These areas provide opportunities to recognise and respect First Nations' rights and interests and share this connection with park visitors.

In addition, Gondwana's protected areas provide a focal point for the tourism industry with many tourism operators, businesses and local economies relying on business generated by visitors to Gondwana's protected areas.

High-quality First Nations ecotourism offerings are considered essential to attracting new and return visitors to Queensland and Gondwana.

This grant funding initiative seeks to bring these two aspects together by showcasing the area's rich cultural heritage and connection of First Nations people within Gondwana by developing new culturally focused ecotourism or visitor experiences, and thereby diversifying and strengthening the region's tourism credentials and First Nation involvement in the tourism industry.

This guideline outlines the process for eligible organisations and businesses to apply for funding towards achieving these outcomes.

What are the objectives of the initiative?

This initiative seeks to grow, diversify, or enrich the visitor and cultural ecotourism experiences associated with Gondwana (Queensland Section)

This grant funding provides an opportunity for First Nations organisations, First Nations operated businesses or tourism business who have or wish to partner with first nation people to establish new culturally focused ecotourism products or visitor opportunities.

Central to the initiative's objectives is the involvement of First Nations people in sharing their culture and connection with the Gondwana on terms and through delivery models that work for them.

This initiative aims to:

- promote awareness amongst visitors of Gondwana's First Nations people's strong connection and care for country
- increase First Nations business participation and/or First Nation peoples' employment and career pathways in the region's tourism industry
- expand and diversify the ecotourism experiences on offer for visitors to Gondwana by creating new culturally focused ecotourism products/offerings
- promote the protection of Gondwana's world heritage, biodiversity, cultural heritage values by drawing on First Nations peoples' knowledge about country, and
- strengthen, support and showcase stewardship of country by First Nations people.

What activities can be undertaken?

Successful applicants can use the initiative funding to:

- support First Nations owned tourism business ventures operating within Gondwana's protected areas such as commercial guide (camping, walking, cycling) tours, or conducting events/festivities/presentations
- employ First Nations tour guides to deliver culturally related tours/experiences (e.g. First Nations food guided walks/talks, cooking classes) within Gondwana

- undertake First Nation led volunteer tourism initiatives (e.g replanting and regeneration programs) within Gondwana
- develop culturally oriented interpretative material (audio visual, static displays) for use in Gondwana's visitor centres or nodes, regional tourism promotional/marketing campaigns or pre-arrival channels
- create on-park or on-site First Nations art (sculptures, displays, songline art trails, existing walking trail or park infrastructure modification) to create a new and alternate cultural dimension to established areas/visitor nodes
- develop cultural awareness training or induction packages tailored for people and businesses who operate in the Gondwana's tourism industry (e.g. existing tour guides and guest houses)
- other activities which align with the initiative's objectives of creating new culturally focused ecotourism experiences within Gondwana .

All project submissions should focus on achieving the objectives of the initiative and align with the aspirations of the Traditional Owners of Gondwana and how they wish to present and share their story and country.

Other guiding documents and inputs which may assist in formulating project submissions include:

- The Department's Gurra Gurra Framework 2020-2026
- Management plans and strategies associated with Queensland's national parks within Gondwana
- Regional Tourism Plans/Strategy of Queensland's Regional Tourism Organisations within Gondwana
- Queensland Government's *Towards Tourism 2032* Strategy
- Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan
- Queensland Tourism Industry Council's Best Practice Guide to Working with First Nations Tourism in Queensland

Who can apply?

The following organisations that operate in Queensland and meet the following requirements can apply for funding:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander not-for-profit organisations incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006, Corporations Act 2001, Associations Incorporations Act 1981* or other legislation.
- Incorporated not-for-profit organisations applying at the request of Traditional Owner groups, that can demonstrate that they have the authority of, and will work in partnership with, the Traditional Owners for areas on which the project is proposed.
- First Nations-owned tourism businesses
- Tourism businesses which have agreement and/or plan to work in collaboration with the relevant First Nations people for the area on which the project is proposed and are committed to a minimum matching contribution of funding (support must be demonstrated in writing from the relevant representative body).

To be eligible to apply for funding:

- the organisation/businesses must be based in Queensland
- the new First Nations tourism experience or product must be fully delivered in Queensland
- the organisation/business cannot have any overdue acquittals or reports in relation to any other grant funding provided by the Queensland Government.

Where an eligible organisation/business is applying as a sponsor or auspice for a Traditional Owner group, evidence of an agreement between the applicant organisation and a body representing the Traditional Owners will be required. This will be sought from applicant organisations who are short-listed for Stage 2 (see related section) and will need to address matters including governance arrangements and extent of support/benefit.

What funding is available?

A total of $275,000 is available under this initiative. Projects must be completed within 24 months from the date of commencement, or by negotiation.

Applicants can apply for any amount up to and including the available funds. Co-investment projects will be assessed more favourably; therefore, applicants should include reference to other funding contributions from non-government or industry sources for the project.

Applicants can make more than one application, however each distinct project/initiative requires a separate application.

Successful applicants will receive an overall amount comprising a staged payment plan aligned to the delivery of negotiated key milestones and any agreed work plan. A detailed budget will be negotiated with the successful applicant/s to support the timings of this payment plan.

Funded items

For successful applicants, key items funded through the budget will include:

- wages and on-costs for employment based on the following arrangements – First Nation identified persons supported by the relevant First Nation people or registered native title group.
- operational costs – any costs directly related with the delivery of the project or initiative such as materials, minor plant and equipment, vehicle operating costs, uniforms, administrative/office overheads and travel
- training – based on a documented training plan
- if an incorporated not-for-profit organisation – administration, and audit of up to 15 per cent of the wages and/or operating budget; for contract management – reporting, audit, and other administration
- assets – limited funding for priority assets may be available, to the extent that available program funding permits. Asset funding will need to have a clear link to the project delivery and experience being offered and may need to be staggered across the life of the project. Funded organisations will be encouraged to also pursue other funding or partnerships with other entities to support significant asset purchases or delivery of the project.

Period of funding

The funding is not ongoing beyond the life cycle of the project. However, applicants should consider how funding could be sought from other grant funding avenues.

What expenses will not be funded?

Funding is not available for:

- gifts
- activities, equipment or supplies that are already being supported through other sources or considered part of the organisation's current operations
- costs of preparing associated project supporting material as part of the funding application
- routine operational expenses, including communications, accommodation, office computing
- facilities, printing, stationery, postage, legal and accounting fees and bank charges
- purchase or transfer costs of land or buildings, including housing and land rates
- major construction and infrastructure work that would not be in public ownership
- expenses that are the responsibility of other organisations such as local, state and territory government agencies.

This list is not exhaustive. Other costs may be ineligible where it is determined they are do not directly support the achievement of the planed outcomes of the project or are contrary to the objective of this initiative.

Applicants must ensure they have adequate funds to meet the costs of any ineligible expenditure associated with the project.

What is the application process?

The application process for funding involves the following two stages:

1. An initial Stage 1 application – providing an overview of the project's concept, product/experience offering, intended audience and derived benefits (employment, public awareness etc), delivery timeline, funding requirements, any proposed co-contribution arrangements (financial, in-kind or other), detail on applicant's suitability including current organisational arrangements, experience in the field, management of country, First Nation support/connection).
2. For those applicants successful in being short-listed by the assessment panel, a Stage 2 application providing detailed explanation, project plans and evidence will be required.

Organisations/businesses interested in submitting a Stage 1 application should undertake the following steps:

- Read these guidelines carefully to determine eligibility.
- Consider your organisation's readiness for delivering a project of this nature. For example, does it have:
    - proven experience and capability in the field required, the necessary business readiness (planning and safety systems, insurances, permissions, registrations, human resource management systems)?
    - tourism and Traditional Owner networks and access to the relevant resources and knowledge to deliver the project?
    - the support of the relevant First Nations people?
- Talk with established partners and with other organisations that can provide financial or in-kind support. Noting co-investment project applications will be viewed more favourably.
- Go to the DES website for a link to the application form on the Smarty Grants platform (this will require you to create a log-in which enables you to save and submit an application).
- Read through the application form and consider your ability to provide the requested information.
- Complete the online application form. Make sure you provide all of the information requested and submit your application before the closing date of 4pm, 9 October 2023.
- Be aware there may be strong demand for this limited funding; only those applications assessed as the strongest against the below criteria and aligned most closely to the objectives will be short-listed for Stage 2 consideration. It is important therefore to develop your best possible application.

How will applications be assessed?

All applications from eligible organisations will be assessed by a panel using the assessment criteria outlined below. The panel will include members with skills and knowledge relevant to the fields of park management and tourism. The panel will also consist of First Nations representatives.

Persons who assist an organisation in the development of an application/s cannot be involved in the selection process or in recommending applications.

For those applicants who are short-listed for Stage 2, department officers will engage with applicants to undertake an assessment of your operational readiness. This may involve site visits and requests for additional information.

All application material provided to the panel will be treated confidentially, although the assessment panel members may contact proposed co-investors, proposed partner organisations and referees nominated by applicants.

The Department of Environment and Science (DES) Director-General will be the final decision maker for funding, informed by recommendations provided by the assessment panel.

All applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of their application. Applicants will be able to email the department via desqpwssouthern.corro@des.qld.gov.au to seek feedback on their application.

Assessment process:

1. **Initial application** – Stage 1 applications invited from all eligible organisations.
2. **Shortlisting** – Panel assesses applications and shortlists limited number of the best applications.
3. **Detailed application submission** – Stage 2 shortlisted applicants invited to submit more detailed application. Assessment of operational readiness conducted by DES.
4. **Recommendation** – Panel assesses stage 2 applications and recommends best applications against available funding for approval.
5. **Notification** – Applicants advised and grants are announced.
6. **Project start** – DES and successful applicants sign grant agreements and project delivery commences.

What are the assessment criteria?

Stage 1

All correctly submitted funding applications from eligible applicants will be assessed against the following criteria.

1. **Further empowers First Nations organisations/businesses or advances employment or career pathway opportunities for First Nation people in the tourism industry:**
    a. Clear arrangements are in place for engaging Traditional Owners in making decisions and sharing connection to country.
    b. Provides employment and/or other benefits to First Nations people on terms suitable to them.
2. **Enhances or establishes a new cultural ecotourism or visitor experience:**
    a. Elevates visitor awareness and/or tourism industry understanding of First Nations people's depth of connection with Gondwana.
    b. Anticipated audience reach, ability to drive growth or length of stay in the region's ecotourism market.
    c. Extent to which the project is new, innovative and unique towards diversifying and creating interest in the region's tourism industry's offerings.
3. **Represents value for money:**
    a. Realistically costed.
    b. Results in First Nations operated business and local economic benefit (including employment).
    c. Reliability, experience in delivering projects.
    d. Readiness, length of time before ready for market and operational.
    e. Extent of co-contribution from applicant and/or support (in-kind *or* financial) from third parties.
    f. Sustainability, or legacy benefit beyond the life of the funding envelope and period.

    Note: This criterion will have double weighting.
4. **Strong partnerships and community, environmental benefit:**
    a. Economic, social, environmental and educational benefits are derived beyond the applicant's business interests and their guests e.g. improved protection or restoration of natural values, community/public use benefits of offering.
    b. Business partnerships established between organisations and operators within the tourism/hospitality sector.
5. **Sound organisational capacity:**
    a. The applicant has a demonstrated ability to deliver and acquit government grants such as conservation and/or cultural heritage grant projects.
    b. The applicant has a sound financial position and established governance and administration arrangements (including for membership involvement, financial, workforce, and data management systems).

Stage 2

Stage 2 applications, from short-listed applicants, will be assessed against the following additional criteria:

1. **Demonstrates access to country:**
    a. There is evidence of support from the recognised Traditional Owners and from key landholders for the proposed ecotourism experience.
    b. The availability of essential resources (including knowledge) to deliver the project.

2. Represents value for money:

a. The investment in a project has the potential to deliver tourism growth (length of stay, visitor increase/interest) and First Nation employment opportunities.
b. There is evidence of ongoing financial or in-kind contributions (such as infrastructure, management oversight, equipment) from the applicant and partners that can contribute to the ongoing sustainability of the project beyond this funding initiative.
c. Broader economic, social or environmental benefits may be realised.

Note: this criterion will have double weighting.

3. Governance and sound establishment plans:

a. Established governance is in place to oversee and guide the management of the project. The applicant can demonstrate experience in delivery of related or similar projects.

What are the responsibilities of successful applicants?

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a grant agreement with the department.

The grant deed will provide details on general and specific conditions associated with the delivery of the approved project. Key features of the grant deed will include:

- the scope of the approved project
- milestone deliverables and dates
- funding amount and payment terms
- eligible and ineligible costs
- applicant's obligation to acknowledge Queensland Government support and participate in media announcements
- record-keeping requirements
- reporting requirements.

Successful applicants will work closely with DES in negotiating a budget and work plan (including establishment activities) for the period of the grant. Relevant community stakeholders may be consulted in the negotiation of the workplan, to ensure that the workplan is tailored to meet the needs of country and the local community.

To successfully administer a grant deed, a successful applicant will be expected to:

- hold appropriate public liability (for at least $20 million) and work cover insurance
- ensure that relevant industrial and Workplace Health and Safety legislative requirements are met
- report satisfactorily on progress against the grant deed and budget milestones
- not commence any work until a grant agreement has been signed
- comply with all other aspects of the grant agreement.

Further information

If you would like to access advice about the development of your idea, support is available through the Our Country Advisory, Indigenous Business Development unit within the Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport by emailing Tourism@dtis.qld.gov.au or phoning 0428 873 930.

If you have any questions about the application process or the initiative, please contact DES by emailing desqpwssouthern.corro@des.qld.gov.au.