

Tasmanian Bushfire Mitigation Grants Program Guidelines



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department



**Tasmanian
Government**

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INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

As part of Budget 2014-15, the Commonwealth announced a National Bushfire Mitigation Program (NBMP), providing \$15M over three years to States and Territories to implement long-term bushfire mitigation strategies and improved fuel reduction activities.

\$1.5M of the overall funding has been allocated to a national Mechanical Fuel Load Reduction Trial, to be run by the Department of Agriculture in conjunction with State/Territory primary industries departments and the forestry sector.

The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department is administering \$13.5M for state-based bushfire mitigation activities.

The Commonwealth allocation of funds to Tasmania will be distributed by way of the Tasmanian Bushfire Mitigation Grants Program (TBMGP).

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The TBMGP is a competitive grants program that aims to support the implementation of the NBMP in this State.

The TBMGP will promote and enable the implementation of long term bushfire mitigations strategies and better fuel reduction programs in Tasmania, including:

- Effective land management strategies and practices that result in better fuel reduction, including the construction of fire breaks;
- Construction and maintenance of fire trails and associated accessibility measures;
- Implementation of cost-effective activities that reduce the impact of severe bushfires and promote community resilience, such as support for volunteers; or
- Generation of scientific information, including hazard mapping, to develop best-practice strategies for bushfire mitigation and mitigating the effects of bushfires on communities; or
- Improving and hardening of critical infrastructure.

ELIGIBLE ORGANISATIONS

Organisations eligible to apply for funding under the TBMGP are:

- State Government agencies'
- Local Councils
- Not-for-profit organisations
- Universities and other research institutions

Eligible organisations may apply for funding either individually or on behalf of eligible applicants, such as educational institutes. In some cases, private sector organisations may wish to undertake and fund measures under the TBMGP. Such participation is permitted but applications must be endorsed by a State Government agency.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

To be considered eligible, the proposal must adhere to TBMGP objectives (detailed on page 2) and the selection criteria (page 5). Recognition must be given to the NBMP and projects must be relevant to the State of Tasmania.

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Proposals generally considered ineligible for TBMGP funding include those that:

- Fail to meet TBMGP selection criteria;
- Do not produce a significant community benefit;
- Duplicate existing initiatives or roles and responsibilities of other organisations;
- Cannot be completed within 12 months of funding approval (except where a strong case can be made for a longer timeframe). Projects with a longer term should be staged in 12-month blocks and stages applied for annually. Staged projects will be assessed on their merit each year. Funding will only be considered if previous projects are progressing well and within the agreed timeframe;
- Represent an agency's core business (that is, the primary area or activity that an organisation is founded on or focuses its business operations on), unless the submission is to develop or pilot a new initiative;
- Seek funding for ongoing maintenance of existing works and measures;
- Seek reimbursement for works and measures already undertaken;
- Are designed to protect or provide a commercial advantage to new private developments (this is, and will remain the responsibility of the developer and should be controlled through land use planning measures);
- Are for the sole benefit of private landholders.

Funding for projects of national significance will not be granted under the TBMGP and should be applied for under the National Emergency Management Projects (NEMP) Program.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Detailed below are the criteria against which all eligible, compliant applications will be assessed. Fifty per cent of the scoring will be attributed to the Strategic Objectives of the NBMP. The remaining fifty per cent will be attributed to assessing the planned management of the project.

Selection Criteria One

- Project directly aligns with the NBMP strategic objective of implementing long term bushfire mitigation strategies and better fuel reduction programs through state-based bushfire mitigation activities.
- Project identifies, addresses and/or treats one or more of the following:
 - Effective land management strategies and practices that result in better fuel reduction, including the construction of fire breaks;
 - Construction and maintenance of fire breaks, fire trails and associated accessibility measures;
 - Implementation of cost-effective activities that reduce the impact of severe bushfires and promote community resilience;
 - Generation of scientific information (including hazard mapping) to develop best-practice strategies for bushfire mitigation and mitigating the effects of bushfires on communities; or
 - Improving and hardening of critical infrastructure.

Selection Criteria Two

Assessment against criteria two (project management) includes the following:

- Project has been well conceived and thoroughly planned;
- Milestone tasks and timeframe are realistic;
- Stated total funding required is realistic and cost-effective;
- There is capacity and commitment to make contributions of funding or other in-kind resources towards the cost of the project; and
- Evidence of ability to maintain the project outcomes.

APPLICATION ASSESSMENT PROCESS

An Assessment Panel will consider each submission against the selection criteria, taking into account the relative priorities of the proposals.

The Assessment Panel's recommendations are provided to the State Emergency Management Controller for approval. The Minister for Police and Emergency Management will announce the successful projects that will receive funding under the TBMGP. Following that announcement, Project Officers will be contacted with details of the funding process.

PAYMENT OF FUNDS

Recipient agencies/organisations will enter into funding arrangements with the State through written agreement for each approved project, relating to the implementation of projects and expenditure of TBMGP funds. The State will forward to payments to agencies/organisations, subject to their adherence to the agreements and the satisfactory achievement of agreed milestones.

Appropriate accounting, reporting and acquittal of the funds by the recipients is required.

The recipient must maintain a thorough and complete audit trail of receipt and expenditure of the grant funds. Funding approval will be automatically withdrawn for TBMGP projects that do not commence within one year of approval.

COST SHARING

These provisions apply to all eligible organisations.

As a general principle, TBMGP projects are funded on a cost-sharing basis with the application and the Australian Government, each contributing an equal share. That is, the TBMGP contributes up to fifty per cent of the cost of an approved project. Applicants are required to match this funding but may contribute more.

In-kind contributions are permitted to help meet the match. These are contributions towards the project that are paid or given in services, expertise, time, commodities or goods, instead of money. However, the value of in-kind contributions must be expressed in monetary terms in your budget. Such contributions must be substantiated on request. Costs associated with the ongoing maintenance and support of approved projects is excluded.

Where project costs exceed those detailed in the application, the applicant will be responsible for the additional funding required.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES WAIVER

In exceptional circumstances, the agency/organisation contribution may be reduced or waived by agreement between the State and the applicant. This applies for low-capacity local Councils, non-government organisations, or if exceptional circumstances apply.

Considerations that may be taken into account include issues such as local agency rate revenue and capacity to raise funds, local agency expenditure and service area, population affected, degree of risk and level of vulnerability of the affected community and anticipated level of risk protection.

BUDGET

Applicants are required to submit a budget with the application form. Details on how to fill out this section of the form can be found in the Attachments of the Application Form.

AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

In line with Treasury Instruction No 709 (9), high value grants (more than \$100,000) and grants considered high risk (as decided by the Assessment Panel) need to produce fully audited financial statements with the Final Report. Audited financial statements should include the receipt and manner of disbursement of funds together with an audit certificate. The cost of an auditor to complete the financial statements could be included in the budget plan if necessary.

As per the Grant Agreement, for all other projects recipients will need to sign the financial statement on the Final Report. If the recipient is a body corporate, an authorised officer and registered company auditor must sign. The Grant Agreement requires recipients to maintain proper books and records showing the use and expenditure of the grant. It also requires recipients to give the Auditor-General for Tasmania access to all financial statements and record about the use and expenditure of the grant if necessary.

REPORTING

Recipients are to provide project milestones with their application. TBMGP funding will be provided after milestones are met and reports received. Failure to report on completed milestones will result in withholding of funding.

Recipients are also required to complete a Quarterly Report to inform of progress. Quarterly reports are due for submission on 31 March, 30 June, 30 September and 31 December.

If there are major changes that need to be made to your project after commencement, you are required to complete and submit a Project Variation Form to obtain approval before instigating changes.

Once the project is completed, you need to fill out the Final Report within 30 business days of the completion date. Any unspent funding will be returned to the State for reallocation to other eligible TBMGP projects.

Failure to provide quarterly progress and final reports may affect eligibility for future projects.

PROJECT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Once a project has been completed you will be required to evaluate its success. This task is easier to complete if you provide a clear project outline in the application process and outputs/outcomes are measurable. Detail the information you will collect to assist in your evaluation and the methods you will use.

Evaluation methods could include:

- Self-assessment of lessons learnt and what proved to be important
- Observations by staff and volunteers
- Before and after questionnaires

PUBLICITY

Where projects receive funding through the TBMGP, appropriate acknowledgement is to be given to the contributions made by the Australian Government, the State Government and local agencies. This applies to all publications, articles, signs, posters, relevant forums, conferences and project launches.

All recipients will consult sufficiently in advance of the announcement of projects, milestones and funding approval to enable either the Commonwealth Minister for Justice or the Tasmanian Minister for Police and Emergency Management to attend.

FAILURE TO ADHERE TO THE GRANT AGREEMENT

The State Government can visit any TBMGP project upon reasonable notification to the recipient. Funding provided under the TBMGP may be terminated by the State if the recipient has refused or failed to fulfil a condition of the Grant Agreement or if the project has not been undertaken in accordance with the Grant Agreement. Upon termination, the funding recipient must refund all grant monies, less reasonable expenses, to the State.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCESS

The TBMGP Application Form can be downloaded from the TFS and SES websites.

Applications should be signed by the Chief Executive Officer or equivalent authorised representative.

Applications from all organisations can be submitted electronically by emailing your application (together with any supporting documentation such as maps, plans and letters of support) to: ses@ses.tas.gov.au or by post to GPO Box 1290, Hobart, Tasmania 7000.

TIMELINE

Opening of submission of grants: November

Closing date of grants: January 31st

Review of submissions by Assessment Panel: February – May (this period may also require requests to applicants for further information)

Inform successful applicants: Mid May

Negotiations, writing and signing of grant deeds/Financial Agreements:
May - July

Projects begin: July

NEED MORE HELP?

If you require further assistance or advice in relation to the TBMGP please contact the Projects Coordinator, SES by telephone on 6173 2958 or email ses@ses.tas.gov.au