

Office of Energy and Climate Change

# High Impact Partnerships grant guidelines

Round 1



Primary Industries Productivity  
and Abatement Program

December 2022







Artwork:  
Regeneration by Josie Rose

## Acknowledgement of Country


We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the First Peoples and Traditional Custodians of Australia, and the oldest continuing culture in human history.

We pay respect to Elders past and present and commit to respecting the lands we walk on, and the communities we walk with.

We celebrate the deep and enduring connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country and acknowledge their continuing custodianship of the land, seas and sky.

We acknowledge the ongoing stewardship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the important contribution they make to our communities and economies.

We reflect on the continuing impact of government policies and practices, and recognise our responsibility to work together with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families and communities, towards improved economic, social and cultural outcomes.



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**Cover image** Grazing is undertaken alongside a reforestation and afforestation carbon project on land owned by Murrin Bridge LALC by Joy M Lai

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The Primary Industries Productivity and Abatement Program

The NSW Government is committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Initiatives under the [Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030](#) will fast-track emissions reduction over the next decade.

The [Primary Industries Productivity and Abatement Program](#) (PIPAP) forms part of the Net Zero Plan. It focuses on supporting landholders, including farmers and Aboriginal and public land managers across the state to reduce their emissions, improve their carbon management, and enhance biodiversity on their land alongside production.

The NSW Government is investing \$125 million to 2030 in the decarbonisation of the State's primary industries and land sector.

PIPAP will support regional communities by providing land managers with enhanced opportunities to generate income, improve their financial resilience, and deliver environmental outcomes while reducing their emissions.

## 1.2. Purpose of these guidelines

These guidelines provide information to applicants seeking to apply for round 1 of the High Impact Partnerships (HIP) funding under PIPAP, including:

- eligibility and merit criteria
- the assessment processes
- how funding will be awarded and managed by the Office of Energy and Climate Change (the Office).

These guidelines should be read alongside the frequently asked questions published on our [website](#).

NOTE: Definitions of key terms used in these guidelines are provided in **Appendix A: Terms and definitions**.

The Office plans to deliver multiple rounds of HIPs, with the potential to focus the funding criteria differently in each round according to NSW Government priorities and market context. Additional guidelines will be developed for future rounds.

## 2. High Impact Partnerships

### 2.1. Grant objectives

High Impact Partnerships (HIPs) will be used to build a cohort of leaders to spearhead change in the sector. Partners will be organisations which are active in the primary industries or land sectors, have vision and commitment to act on climate change and are willing to co-invest with government to deliver on their commitments.

One benefit to the partnership model is that multiple partners can contribute, enabling the layering of outcomes and the leveraging of more private investment.

Partnership projects will focus on emissions reduction in agriculture or sequestration in soils or vegetation, with an emphasis on immediate implementation. All partnerships will explore ways to deliver additional benefits alongside carbon abatement and will be required to share information and build capacity within the sector.

### 2.2. Priority areas

The goal of the HIP is to build a critical mass of carbon projects in NSW, in line with government priorities, through a co-investment model. Investing in abatement projects will allow the program to:

- unlock abatement at scale across multiple land tenures
- deliver abatement with co-benefits
- pilot new practices or approaches with potential to scale
- help to decarbonise specific industry subsectors
- drive uptake of abatement at a regional level.

### 2.3. Application timeframe

The Expression of Interest (EOI) application form will open in December 2022 and will close in February 2022. We may vary or extend this timeframe at our full discretion.

### 2.4. Summary of the application phases and stages

#### 2.4.1. Expression of interest (EOI) phase

Stage	Activity
1	Applicant develops and submits EOI application
2	Program team checks application against EOI eligibility criteria
3	Program team informs EOI applicants that their application is either a) eligible, or b) ineligible



4	Assessment panel reviews eligible applications against EOI merit criteria
5	Assessment panel completes EOI recommendations report
6	Program team endorses EOI recommendations report
7	Program team informs EOI applicants that their application is either a) unsuccessful, or b) has progressed to full application phase (may need to address assessment panel feedback)

## 2.4.2. Full application (FA) phase

Stage	Activity
8	Applicant develops and submits FA
9	Assessment panel checks FA against merit criteria
10	Assessment panel completes FA recommendations report
11	Program team endorses FA recommendations report
12	Program team informs FA applicants whether their application is successful or not

## 2.5. Funding and budget

Applicants are required to provide a preliminary budget in their EOI and, if invited, a detailed project plan and budget in their full application. When assessing applications, the Office may engage external independent advisors to provide technical advice on the application if required.

Applicants invited to full application will be required to submit a proposed grant payment profile that aligns with the project's deliverables. Grant funding will be provided in stages depending on achievement of program deliverables. The Office will make an initial payment on execution of the funding agreement. Subsequent payments will be tied to the project's forecasted milestones and the associated expenditures thereof, which must be outlined in the full application.

Both the EOI and full application will be assessed for 'value-for-money'. This assessment will be based on the proposed activities, expected outcomes, project feasibility, forward abatement estimate (FAE) and amount of funding requested.

### 2.5.1. Funding availability

In round 1 of HIP, \$10 million in funding is available.

Table 1 provides the funding parameters for this round.

Total project funding	Minimum grant amount	Maximum grant amount	Maximum duration of project funding
\$10 million	\$500,000	\$2 million	3 years

Table 1: Funding available for Round 1 HIP

Applicants seeking HIP funding must contribute at least 50% of the eligible costs of the project. Higher contributions are preferred. Co-contributions can be provided by the applicant's organisation or through arrangements with partner organisations, non-profit organisations, or government groups. Applicants will be required to declare all sources of funding, including details of partners contributing to project costs.

Only projects that can confirm co-contribution funding at the time of submitting the full application (for example, through confirmation letters from funding bodies or private investors), will be considered. Further, applicants must ensure that any contractual milestones or obligations tied to those funds are aligned with their funding proposal.

In-kind contributions should be specified in the full application, but will not be considered as part of the required 50% co-contribution. In-kind contributions are nonmonetary resources used on the project where no cash has been transferred to the recipient's account(s) for the project.

An applicant is permitted to submit up to three EOIs. However, no more than one EOI from each applicant may progress to the full application phase.

### 2.5.2. Funding exclusions

This section guides what we consider ineligible project expenses from the grant funding or the applicant's co-contribution.

The program team may impose limitations or exclude expenditure or further include some ineligible expenditure listed in these guidelines in a grant agreement or otherwise by notice to you.

Examples of ineligible expenditure include:

- debt financing or investing of money in exchange for equity into start-ups
- expenditure on the acquisition of land for a project
- expenditure that does not directly support the successful completion of the project
- items that can reasonably be considered as business-as-usual operational costs, including but not limited to:
  - rent, maintenance costs and utilities
  - marketing, communications, promotional costs and website design – except for new pre-accelerators, incubators and accelerators
- business-as-usual staff costs unrelated to the project such as redundancy or retirement benefits, workers compensation payments, professional fees or memberships
- activities carried out or committed to before a grant is offered and accepted
- projects that fund devolved grants
- legal costs associated with a consortium, disputes or funding arrangements not agreed to as part of the funding agreement
- infrastructure and equipment that can reasonably be assumed to be integral for the core business of successful applicants, such as laptops
- research projects into Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) method viability or development

- salaries for positions that have already been accounted for in organisational budgets, unless the allocation of time is directly to project-related work and fully funded as part of the applicant's co-contribution.

## 2.6 Requirement to share data

Projects funded under HIP round 1 will be required to provide project outcomes and data to the Office and agree to data being shared publicly. The specific requirements for data management will form part of the funding agreement for each project.

## 3. EOI phase: Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for grant funding, an applicant must meet all eligibility criteria outlined below. While the application may represent a consortium of organisations, the Office will only enter into a funding agreement with the lead applicant assessed by the Office at the time of application.

### 3.1. Eligibility criterion 1: Insurances and financial viability

The application must demonstrate that the applicant:

- holds and complies with all relevant insurances, including:
  - professional indemnity insurance (\$5 million per claim, maintained for a period of seven years following expiry of the contract. As appropriate, if required)
  - public liability insurance (\$20 million per claim)
  - workers compensation insurance (as required by law)
  - products liability insurance (as appropriate, if required).
- has a valid ABN and is registered for GST
- is the legal beneficial owner of the land and/or will have the rights to carry out the project in agreement with the owner(s) of the land
- is not subject to any insolvency event, including the subject of an order or resolution for winding up or dissolution (other than for the purposes of reconstruction or amalgamation) or the appointment of a receiver, liquidator, administrator or similar
- has requested funding from the NSW Government to a value between \$500,000 and \$2 million, and this grant amount is no more than 50% of the total project budget.

### 3.2. Eligibility criterion 2: Eligible applicant and project delivery method

The application must show:

- The applicant is one of the following:
  - Farmer or agribusiness
  - Aboriginal landholder/manager including Traditional Owner groups, land councils or Registered Native Title Body Corporates
  - Not-for-profit organisation
  - Government entity
  - Community natural resource management/conservation organisation
  - Peak body or industry organisation



- Producer association
- Approved research institute<sup>1</sup>
- Co-operative/mutual organisation.
  - i. Note: carbon service providers operating for-profit are not eligible to be applicants.



Image 1. Photo taken for the Office of Energy and Climate Change. NSW Treasury

- The project will be delivered using one or more of the following ERF methods that meet the focus of this round of partnership funding (see **6.1. The applicant must intend to register carbon projects under an ERF method (Eligibility criterion 2)** for further guidance):
  - Reforestation by environmental or mallee plantings FullCAM method
  - Estimation of soil organic carbon sequestration using measurement and models method
  - Beef cattle herd management method
  - Tidal restoration of blue carbon ecosystems method.

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<sup>1</sup> An approved research institute (ARI) is either:

- the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
- any university, college, institute, association or organisation that has been approved

- Confirmation that abatement projects delivered through the partnership will occur only in NSW.
- Confirmation that funded project activities will not commence until after the funding agreement has been signed by all parties and will be completed within the maximum three-year project period.
- Confirmation that the applicant and partners will consult with all eligible interest holders prior to ERF project registration; apply the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent when engaging with First Nations people/organisations and will ensure Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights are upheld.
- Notification if the organisation has received funding from NSW or other jurisdiction for similar work in the last 5 years.

## 4. EOI phase: Merit assessment

**This section sets out the merit criteria that applications will be scored against including the weighting of each criterion and how applicants will be expected to respond to them. Responses under criteria 1-4 are mandatory.**

### 4.1. Merit criterion 1: Project effectiveness

*This criterion is worth 15% of the assessment score.*

The application must:

- Estimate the number of Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) that will be generated from projects registered during and the project period, including detailed assumptions and method of how the amount was calculated and a statement of accuracy of the estimate.
- Demonstrate how the project will overcome one or more barriers to abatement action in the land sector and maximise benefit to the land manager.
- Provide information, evidence and sources used to develop the application and costings.
- Clearly demonstrate a plan to monitor, report, and evaluate outcomes (in addition to any ERF monitoring, reporting and verification requirements).

### 4.2. Merit criterion 2: Technical and financial capabilities

*This criterion is worth 15% of the assessment score.*

The application must demonstrate:

- The applicant and project partners' track record and experience in successfully delivering similar projects on time and on budget.
- Capacity and capability of applicant and project partners to undertake the project, including project risk management and mitigation measures and how the applicant will manage delivery.
- Evidence of support for the project from the executive/board level of the applicant, as well as relevant supply chain partners, finance partners and any other identified participating organisations.
- That the project fits in the organisation's/applicant's overall strategic/business plan.

### 4.3. Merit criterion 3: Value for money

*This criterion is worth 15% of the assessment score.*

The application must:

- Demonstrate that the proportion of total project funding they are seeking from PIPAP is less than or equal to 50% of total project cost.
- Demonstrate that the project will include co-investment of the project cost by the applicant's organisation or through arrangements with additional partnering organisations.
- Demonstrate that the requested funding amount is appropriate for the proposed project, including an estimated cost of grant funds per ACCU directly generated by the project.
- Outline planned funding contributions from all sources, including government entities, and how these funds will be allocated.
- Demonstrate why funding from the NSW Government is essential for the project to proceed.

### 4.4. Merit criterion 4: Communication and capacity building

*This criterion is worth 15% of the assessment score.*

The application must provide a plan to share ongoing information and learnings beyond the project boundaries, including:

- An engagement strategy for target audiences such as landholders associated with related industries and/or land use types.
- Specific information delivery mechanisms, including case studies, demonstration sites, fact sheets, training days, etc.
- Consideration of different types of "lessons learnt", for example abatement, co-benefits, processes.

See sections **6.2. Communication and capacity building (Merit criterion 4)** and **6.3. Demonstration sites (Merit criterion 4)** for further guidance.



**Applications must submit a response to at least one of merit criteria 5, 6 and 7 but do not need to respond to all 3.**

**Criterion 5 contributes 20%, while Criterion 6 and 7 each contribute 10%. The total score from all 3 criteria will contribute 40% to the overall assessment score.**

## 4.5. Merit criterion 5: Deliver abatement at scale

*This criterion is worth 20% of the assessment score.*

The application demonstrates one or more of the following:

- How a large number of ACCUs will be generated as a result of projects registered during this project.
- The ways in which the applicant has the ability to influence and support action at scale.
- How the project will have a considerable impact on a particular region, subsector or land manager type.

See **6.4. Deliver abatement at scale (Merit criterion 5)** for further guidance.

## 4.6. Merit criterion 6: Innovative delivery of project

*This criterion is worth 10% of the assessment score.*

The application demonstrates new approaches to deliver carbon abatement projects and/or uptake of select underutilised methods. This could include:

- innovative financing or cost-sharing models
- novel aggregation
- using the beef cattle herd management or blue carbon ERF methods.

See **6.5. Innovative delivery (Merit criterion 6)** for further guidance.

## 4.7. Merit criterion 7: Delivery of co-benefits

*This criterion is worth 10% of the assessment score.*

The application demonstrates delivery of co-benefits and explains how they will be measured. This could include:

- environmental co-benefits
- social co-benefits
- Aboriginal cultural outcomes
- economic co-benefits.

See **6.6. Co-benefits (Merit criterion 7)** for further guidance.

## 5. Full application phase: Pass/fail assessment

All of the following criteria must be met for the full application to be accepted.

The eligibility criteria and merit criteria 1-7 are the same for the full application as for the EOI stage. Applicants will be required to provide more detail on these criteria and address any feedback from the assessment panel in the full application.

Merit criteria 8 and 9 are new in this phase of the application process: project plan and detailed budget.

### 5.1. Eligibility criterion 1: Insurances and financial viability

Criterion is same as for EOI phase Eligibility criterion 1.

### 5.2. Eligibility criterion 2: Eligible applicant and project delivery method

Criterion is same as for EOI phase Eligibility criterion 2.

### 5.3. Merit criterion 1: Project effectiveness

Criterion is same as for EOI phase Merit criterion 1. Any feedback from the assessment panel must be sufficiently addressed in the full application.

### 5.4. Merit criterion 2: Technical and financial capabilities

Criterion is same as for EOI phase Merit criterion 2. Any feedback from the assessment panel must be sufficiently addressed in the full application.

### 5.5. Merit criterion 3: Value for money

Criterion is same as for EOI phase Merit criterion 3. Any feedback from the assessment panel must be sufficiently addressed in the full application.

## 5.6. Merit criterion 4: Communication and capacity building

Full proposals must provide a plan to share ongoing information and learnings beyond the project boundaries that builds on the information provided in the EOI stage, including:

- a. providing a higher level of detail about target audiences, engagement methods and activities
- b. providing a higher level of detail about processes for reflection and continuous improvement.

See **6.2. Communication and capacity building (Merit criterion 4)** and **6.3. Demonstration sites (Merit criterion 4)** for further guidance.

**Applications must submit a response to at least one of merit criteria 5, 6 and 7 but do not need to respond to all 3.**

## 5.7. Merit criterion 5: Delivery of abatement at scale

Full proposals must demonstrate how the project will deliver abatement at scale that builds on the information provided in the EOI stage, including a higher level of detail about how the project will:

- a. deliver ACCUs at scale, and/or
- b. influence and support action at scale, and/or
- c. have a considerable impact on a particular region, subsector or land manager type.

See **6.4. Deliver abatement at scale (Merit criterion 5)** for further guidance.

## 5.8. Merit criterion 6: Innovative delivery of project

Full proposals must demonstrate how an innovative approach will be used in the project to deliver greater value to land managers. This should build on the information provided in the EOI stage, including providing a higher level of detail about how innovative project delivery mechanisms will deliver greater value to land managers.

See **6.5. Innovative delivery (Merit criterion 6)** for further guidance.

## 5.9. Merit criterion 7: Delivery of co-benefits

Full proposals must demonstrate how co-benefits will be delivered through the project that builds on the information provided in the EOI stage, including providing a higher level of detail about how co-benefits will be realised and measured.

See **6.6. Co-benefits (Merit criterion 7)** for further guidance.

## 5.10. Project plan

Full proposals must complete a detailed project plan within the online application form that includes more specific details on the implementation of the project. Any requests from the EOI phase assessment panel for more detailed project information should also be addressed. A template will be available for download from our [website](#) for reviewing purposes only – the information must be entered into the online full application form.

## 5.11. Budget

Full proposals must complete a detailed budget within the online application form. The budget table template will be included in the project plan template noted above. As per the project plan template, this table will be for reviewing purposes only – the information must be entered into the online full application form.





Image 2. Photo taken for the Office of Energy and Climate Change. NSW Treasury

## 6. Guidance on developing your application

### 6.1. The applicant must intend to register carbon projects under an ERF method (Eligibility criterion 2)

Australia's largest carbon market is the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) administered by the Australian Government's Clean Energy Regulator (CER). Under the ERF, carbon abatement projects across Australia can generate ACCUs. Each ACCU represents one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent net abatement.

**All applicants are required to include projects that will be registered with and administered under the ERF.** This will be the formal process to register emissions reduction activities. The applicant and/or their carbon project proponents will deal directly with the CER to earn ACCUs. The Office will not be involved in any aspect of the registration or ongoing management of carbon projects under that scheme. Reporting requirements for the ERF registered project and the HIP are not connected.

At the EOI stage, the applicant must commit to land managers registering their projects under an ERF method, or methods. In round 1 of the HIP, the program focuses on the following ERF methods:

- Reforestation by Environmental or Mallee Plantings FullCAM method
- Estimation of soil organic carbon sequestration using measurement and models method
- Beef cattle herd management method
- Tidal restoration of blue carbon ecosystems method (coastal wetlands).

### 6.2. Communication and capacity building (Merit criterion 4)

The NSW Government is seeking high impact partnerships to help build the capacity of farmers and other land managers to implement carbon management projects. Partners should be organisations that can influence the uptake of carbon management in the sector and have the ability to drive change in the way land is managed.

Applications must include a communication and capacity building plan to share ongoing information and learnings beyond the project boundaries. EOI applications should summarise key elements of this plan, whilst full applications must attach a detailed final version of this plan.

The communication and capacity building plan should include:

- a clearly identified target audience(s), such as those associated with related industries and/or land use types, their size and estimated potential capacity for carbon

abatement. This should include strategies to communicate with the broader local community

- an engagement strategy for target audiences outlining proposed activities, potential reach and project influence, both during the period of the funded project and beyond to at least 2030
- key messages that will be communicated to the target audience and approaches to ensure those messages create behaviour change
- timing and scale of the implementation of specific information delivery mechanisms, such as case studies, fact sheets, video stories, social media, newsletters, demonstration sites, training days, webinars, trials of innovative methods, and how they are integrated into a capacity building program
- rationale for how the capacity building plan builds on-going learning and development for participants and a description of how the project will review and develop engagement activities over time.

It is also expected that partnership projects will develop demonstration sites, with additional specific guidance provided in **6.3. Demonstration sites (Merit criterion 4)** below.

### 6.3. Demonstration sites (Merit criterion 4)

Applicants should commit to showcasing a location where a carbon project is being implemented with the aim of building awareness, knowledge, and confidence. This is called a ‘demonstration site’ and it can be used for communication, engagement, learning, and development for other land managers.

These sites will enable land managers to better understand the context, process and implications of developing a carbon project on their land. Tangible, real-time examples are an optimal way for land holders to see ‘what’s possible’, and understand some of the realities including costs, management tasks, risks, and benefits.

HIP applicants may choose to:

- enable access at varying levels, from virtual access with on-line case studies, to signage at project locations, through to on-site events\*
- demonstrate implementation of a carbon project with clear potential for wider implementation by other land managers
- share their learning and experiences through video, forums or on-line content, analysis of costs, revenue, and monitoring data and showcase innovative practice / technology
- ensure the site is physically accessible and/or has capacity to act as host sites for field days or events
- acknowledge Aboriginal custodians and support their participation to integrate ecological knowledge and practice where practical
- support local community or business participation where practical, e.g. seed collection and propagation
- seek engagement and participation from tertiary institutions/researchers if relevant
- put in place measures to allow ongoing physical/virtual access to demonstration sites beyond the period of project funding and up to 2030.

**\* Relevant site safety, insurance and accessibility issues need to be described with costs related to complying with these included in the application.**

## 6.4. Deliver abatement at scale (Merit criterion 5)

One of the strategic imperatives of PIPAP is to build a critical mass of carbon projects. Farmers and land managers need to see real examples of abatement practices in action and deliver financial benefits to help build their confidence in adopting these new practices.

HIP grants may be used to support projects that demonstrate at scale the potential for carbon abatement. These could include:

- Projects that can generate a large number of ACCUs relative to the additional financial support provided in grant funds from the NSW Government. It is expected that the equivalent of at least one ACCU will be generated for each \$10 of grant funding (i.e. 100,000 ACCUs from a project requesting \$1 million in grant funding). Clear accounting for the estimates must be provided, including reference to planned project locations, ERF method(s) proposed, and tools used to estimate ACCUs (e.g. CSIRO's LOOC-C calculator).
- Projects that demonstrate uptake of carbon projects by a large number of land managers. Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have the ability and capacity to influence and support a large number of landholders within the group being targeted by the project, describing the size of the audience and likely uptake rates.
- Projects that demonstrate considerable impact on a particular region, subsector or land manager type. Ultimately the project will lead to an outcome that can be specifically promoted as carbon neutral / positive (e.g. across all landholdings in a particular valley or local government area, a local agricultural product, or all Aboriginal managed land in a local area).

The estimated uptake of carbon projects should be clearly justified and targets measured by the number of ACCUs that will be registered under the ERF during the funded period of the project (i.e. maximum of three years).

## 6.5. Innovative delivery (Merit criterion 6)

The cost of establishing and maintaining a carbon management project can be a major barrier for many landholders. One of the strategic imperatives of PIPAP is cost effective project implementation and measurement.

HIP grants may be used to demonstrate new approaches to using standard ERF methods with potential to successfully deliver increased economic value to land managers. These could include:

- Value stacking opportunities, where income can be generated from co-benefits to improve the cost-benefit analysis of carbon abatement projects. For example, a project may be able to generate both carbon credits and biodiversity credits, which along with accounting for other co-benefits may also create enough value to convince landholders to commence a project.
- New approaches to carbon markets, such as through novel approaches to aggregating multiple carbon projects or new financing / cost-sharing models to improve the cost-effectiveness of project implementation and ongoing support.
- Developing cost-effective approaches to implementing an ERF method that has had limited uptake to date, specifically the *beef cattle herd management method* or the *tidal restoration of blue carbon ecosystems method*.

## 6.6. Co-benefits (Merit criterion 7)

This program aims to increase the broad scale commencement of land management projects that can be registered and generate carbon credits under the focus ERF methods. In addition, many activities may have co-benefits that can lead to premium carbon credits of higher value, be registered under different accreditation schemes to independently generate additional income, and/or provide direct benefits to the landholder or local community.

Biodiversity conservation has been identified as a priority co-benefit under the program, however there are a wide range of potential co-benefits such as:

- environmental co-benefits (e.g. biodiversity conservation, soil conservation, water quality, sustainable pest and weed management, drought resilience, flood resilience, marine habitat creation)
- social co-benefits (e.g. increased social capital, improved physical and mental health)
- Aboriginal cultural outcomes (e.g. Indigenous community empowerment, protection of sacred sites)
- economic co-benefits (e.g. improved productivity, reduced input costs, diversified revenue streams, investment in regional communities, creating local jobs, drought and flood resilience, tourism).

The application should describe significant co-benefits that are likely to be readily measurable and understood. There are various accreditation schemes which may be suitable to help estimate the value of co-benefits that can be created from the proposal, with new schemes also under development. Activities may also reference recognised priorities, such as a published conservation management action listed for a threatened species management site that will benefit from the proposal.

# 7. Application and assessment process

## 7.1. Application model

Application and assessment processes for HIP funding are competitive, and are comprised of 2 phases:

1. EOI phase
2. Full application phase

Figure 1 lists the steps applicants should take to apply for HIP funding under each phase.

**Figure 1. Steps to apply for HIP funding.**

### Expression of interest phase

Step 1. Confirm the proposed application is eligible.

Step 2. Review the HIP information to guide your application.

Step 3. Develop the EOI application and submit it for assessment.

Step 4. Receive the outcome of your EOI application.

### Full application phase (if EOI is successful)

Step 5. Consult with the program team and commence full application.

Step 6. Submit the full application with all required documentation attached.

Step 7. Receive the outcome of your full application.

Step 8. If successful, execute the funding agreement and commence project.

Further details on each application step have been provided below.

### 7.1.1. Expression of interest phase

#### **Step 1. Confirm the proposed application is eligible.**

The EOI includes 2 eligibility criteria that must be met.

- Eligibility criterion 1 requires applicants to demonstrate that they have appropriate insurances and financial viability to complete the proposed project.
- Eligibility criterion 2 specifies the type of organisations and ERF methods that are eligible for funding under this program, along with other associated matters.

**If any of the components of both criteria cannot be met, the EOI application will be ineligible, and you should not submit an application.**



### **Step 2. Review the HIP information to guide your application.**

This guideline explains the objectives and priority areas for this funding round, which will help you to align your project idea with the intent of the funding program. The guideline also explains the merit criteria that will need to be adequately addressed for an EOI application to be successful.

A briefing will be held to explain the program and answer questions. Questions relevant to other applicants will be answered on the FAQ list. Check the [website](#) for further information, or email your enquiry to the team: [netzero.land@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:netzero.land@environment.nsw.gov.au).

### **Step 3. Develop the EOI application and submit it for assessment.**

Complete and submit your EOI application on the [SmartyGrants](#) website prior to the closing date. Once you complete and submit the EOI application, you will receive an email notification with a reference number to confirm it has been received.

Note: if you don't receive an email notification, please contact [netzero.land@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:netzero.land@environment.nsw.gov.au).

### **Step 4. Receive the outcome of your EOI application**

We will review your eligibility against yes/no criteria. Projects that meet all eligibility requirements will be recommended for merit assessment. An assessment panel of subject-matter experts will review your application against the merit criteria and recommend highly-scored applications to progress to Phase 2. We expect this step to take 4 to 5 weeks, depending upon the total number of applications being assessed.

During this step, we may ask you for more information. You will have 5 business days from the date of our written request to provide a response.

If your application is successful, we will send you an email inviting you to begin work on the full application. Feedback from the assessment panel may also be provided.

If your application is not successful, we will notify you and include reasons why it was not approved to proceed to stage 2.

Note: the assessment panel will have the discretion to take into consideration both an application's score as well as its intended project outcomes when determining which applications to recommend for step 4. This is to ensure that grant outcomes include a diversity of project types, audiences, applicants and regions.

## **7.1.2. Full application phase**

### **Step 5. Consult with the program team and commence full application**

You must complete your full application, including project plan and budget. You will be assigned a project support team member who will provide some support if required.

The timeframe for this phase is a maximum of 8 weeks.

### **Step 6. Submit the full application with all required documentation attached**

Once completed, submit the full application via [SmartyGrants](#). During this step, we may ask you for more information. You will have 5 business days from the date of our written request to provide a response.

Once you complete and submit the application, you will receive an email notification with a reference number to confirm it has been received.

Note: if you don't receive an email notification, please contact [netzero.land@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:netzero.land@environment.nsw.gov.au).

### **Step 7. Receive the outcome of your full application**

An assessment panel will review your application against pass/fail criteria and recommend projects to the Executive Director, Climate Change and Sustainability, who will make the final determination on grants to be awarded.

We expect this step to take between 3 to 4 weeks.

If your application is successful, we will send you a written offer and the HIP funding agreement.

If your application is not successful, we will notify you and include reasons why it was not approved.

### **Step 8. If successful, execute the funding agreement and commence project.**

Once the HIP funding agreement has been awarded, we will execute the contract with you.

Following the signing of the HIP funding agreement, the project can then commence.

## **7.2. Assessment process**

Applications must be completed in full and include all the information specified. If you do not provide the specified information in the format required, we may seek supplementary information or clarification from you. If this information is not provided, your application may be assessed as unsuccessful. An assessment panel made up of government and non-government experts will be established to assess your application in both stages of the process.

Applications must be assessed as satisfying all eligibility criteria. Only eligible applicants will be assessed against the merit criteria.

The assessment panel will make recommendations regarding which applications best meet the criteria and objectives of the HIP funding.

### 7.3. PIPAP support during full application phase

During the full application drafting process, you will communicate with a designated support officer assigned to your application who will:

- review sections of your application and provide feedback on areas that require further or clearer information, or refinement
- inform you of any linkages that your project will benefit from, for example through collaboration or consultation with a third party with experience and expertise in your project type
- ensure that your project clearly outlines significant benefits to the end user
- ensure that project risks have been determined and risk mitigation is in place.

The designated support officer does not in any way guarantee a successful outcome at the assessment stage. Nor do they preclude or replace any need you may have to seek additional advice regarding your application. You acknowledge that you take full responsibility for the outcome of your application.

### 7.4. Due diligence

At any time during the assessment process, we may undertake due diligence on an application. Due diligence may include, but is not limited to:

- contacting identified project participant organisations
- disclosing information by applicants to us of any material reasonably required by us in respect to the eligibility criteria and merit criteria.

We will undertake an assessment of the applicant, including due diligence checks to confirm sound financial standing. You must comply with any request for information as part of these due diligence checks. As a result of the due diligence, we may in our discretion, require that the application provide a form of guarantee for the performance of the funding agreement (for example, a parent company guarantee).

### 7.5. Final decision

We have the discretion to reject, refuse or cease to assess an application at any time if we are of the view that an application is unlikely to be successful.

Our decision is final in all matters, including the:

- approval of applications for funding
- amount of HIP funding awarded
- terms and conditions of funding.

Resubmission of applications, or requests for re-review, will not be accepted (unless otherwise decided by the Office). We will advise you in writing about the outcomes of the assessment of your application.

Without limitation, the submission of your application to us is not, and does not represent, an agreement to negotiate an offer or guarantee of funding by us. You acknowledge that we are free to cease negotiations at any time prior to the finalisation of the funding agreement

without any liability or obligation to you or any third party (including without limitation any consortium, related bodies corporate or group member). Any actions undertaken by you or any third party arising out of or in connection with the application is at your or that third party's own risk and expense. There is no binding agreement between the parties until the funding agreement has been duly executed.

## 7.6. Additional information

For up-to-date information on this HIP funding opportunity, please visit our [website](#).

If you have any questions about this funding opportunity, please email us at [netzero.land@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:netzero.land@environment.nsw.gov.au)



Image 3. Destination NSW, Horseman on a cattle drive in the Murrumbidgee Shire

## 8. Funding agreements

### 8.1. Funding agreement and commercial principles

Successful applicants must enter into a funding agreement with us to receive HIP funding. This agreement will detail the applicant's and any other relevant parties' obligations in relation to the project.

A funding agreement template, representing terms we consider appropriate, will be available on our [website](#).

We do not encourage departures from the funding agreement template. However, where you cannot accept the terms of the funding agreement template in its current form, you may use the provided departures table in the template (provided to applicants who progress to phase 2) to clearly set out and qualify the reasons for your requested departure. We may or may not accept these departures at our discretion.

You will be given the opportunity to submit your departures table alongside your full application if you're successful in proceeding to that stage.

Where you do not submit a departures table, you will be deemed to have accepted the terms of the funding agreement template. Where you do submit a departures table, the departures table will be taken as an exhaustive list of your comments on the funding agreement template.

Applicants should be aware that we expect the terms of an executed funding agreement to reflect the applicant's careful and thorough expectations for the project's development. For example, you should ensure that there is a rigorous and realistic basis for the project milestone timing, associated payment and outcomes for the project as set out in the funding agreement.

### 8.2. Funding offers

Any payment of funds is subject to the Office making a funding offer and the execution of a funding agreement. Applicants who receive an offer to negotiate must keep the offer confidential until the execution of a funding agreement. If a project is successful in obtaining a funding offer, the applicant must seek prior consent from the Office before making any public communications as to the outcome of the funding round.



## 9. Further information

### 9.1. Commencement and authority for HIP grant guidelines

The guidelines may be amended from time to time or withdrawn. The Office has the authority to award funding and execute and amend the agreements that allow the NSW Government to provide this funding.

### 9.2. Limitations

#### 9.2.1. No representation, warranty or guarantee

The NSW Government, its Ministers, the Treasury (which includes the Office of Energy and Climate Change) and each of their officers, employees and agents (the Office parties) do not give any representation, warranty or guarantee, whether express or implied, in relation to the information contained in any materials released by the Office associated with the PIPAP funding, including their completeness, accuracy, currency or reliability or the process by which they were prepared. The Office parties will not give opinions regarding, legal, accounting, regulatory, taxation or any other matters. Without limiting the foregoing, in relation to those matters:

- nothing in the funding materials (including without limitation, these guidelines, or the funding agreement) is or should be regarded as advice
- you must satisfy yourself by undertaking your own investigations or seeking advice at your own cost.

Note: nothing contained in the funding material is, or may be relied upon, as a promise, guarantee, representation, or warranty.

The materials are not an offer, recommendation or invitation by the Office or the NSW Government in respect of any contract or commitment. The applicant must rely entirely upon its own investigations, review and analysis in relation to its assessment of whether or not to apply to and participate in this program.

#### 9.2.2. No obligation to update

The funding materials, the information contained herein and the matters to which it relates may be amended, updated or withdrawn at any time, at the Office's discretion. However, the Office parties do not accept any responsibility to update, supplement or correct the funding materials, nor to inform applicants about any matter that may affect the funding materials.

#### 9.2.3. No liability

Each Office party expressly disclaims all liability for any loss or damage incurred by any person arising from, or because of, any person's use of or reliance on any information,



statement, opinion or matter (express or implied) contained in, derived from, or omitted from the materials, except for any liability which cannot be excluded as a matter of law.

#### 9.2.4. Other limitations

The funding materials are not an offer, recommendation or invitation by any Office party in respect of any contract or commitment and (subject to a funding agreement being fully executed) nothing in the materials will form the basis of any contract or commitment. You must rely entirely upon your own investigations, review and analysis in relation to your assessment of whether to apply to and participate in the HIP funding.

### 9.3. Confidentiality and disclosure of information

Unless otherwise stated, any commercial-in-confidence information provided by you as part of, or in connection with, a registration, application or negotiation process will be treated confidentially by the Office. We may disclose commercial-in-confidence information provided by you to the following parties:

- the Minister or Minister's office
- the NSW Ombudsman and Audit Office of NSW
- Office staff, consultants and advisers
- any agency or body of the NSW Government, or any other organisation or individual considered by the Office to have a need or an entitlement to know that information (including any federal, state or territory agency or body), where the need or entitlement to know that information arises out of or in connection with the Office's assessment, verification or due diligence of any aspect of your application
- where authorised or required by law to be disclosed, to those parties.

If we disclose commercial-in-confidence information to any of the above parties, we will inform the party that the information is strictly confidential. We will otherwise only disclose commercial-in-confidence information provided by you with your consent.

### 9.4. Complaints

Complaints concerning the HIP funding should be emailed to [netzero.land@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:netzero.land@environment.nsw.gov.au). Complaints will, in the first instance, be reviewed by us. If we cannot resolve the complaint within 30 business days of receipt, we will provide details of a nominated complaints and review officer from the Complaints Team who will advise the next steps. If the complaint is still not resolved satisfactorily, the [NSW Ombudsman](#) can be reached for external review of the administrative actions of the Office.

### 9.5. Conflict of interest

Applicants must disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest as part of their application or, if successful, as they arise during project implementation. Conflicts of interest are any factors that could compromise the judgement, decisions, or actions of a person or group of people.

Such conflicts may relate to:

- engaging consultants to assist you with the application who have advised or are currently advising the Office
- procurement or employment

- direct negotiations
- sponsorships
- partnerships
- any other situations which could lead to unfavourable advantage.

You are not automatically precluded from engaging a consultant or service provider already undertaking work for the Office. Factors which will be considered when determining whether a consultant or service provider can be engaged by a grant recipients include:

- the size of the organisation, i.e., a large consultancy is more likely to be able to use separate teams on a project)
- the nature of the work being undertaken by the consultancy, i.e., similar work increases the potential for probity risks to arise
- the extent to which individuals involved had access to confidential information about the project and whether this information is to be released to the market as part of the PIPAP.

Such determination will be made in accordance with the Office delegations for expenditure.

If the engagement with the grant recipient is permitted, the Office project team will consider seeking assurance from the consultant or service provider that it will put appropriate processes in place to manage probity risks, e.g., appropriate information barriers and separation of roles.

As part of ongoing reporting requirements (e.g., project milestone report), you are required to update any conflict of interests, where applicable. You will be asked whether any conflicts of interest have arisen during the reporting period or if any are likely to arise. Updated declarations and confirmations are required from you when new personnel join the project or at the commencement of a new project or phase within a project.

NOTE: You are advised to contact us if you are unsure whether something constitutes an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

All program staff and assessment panel members will undergo a conflict of interest process as part of any application assessment.

## 9.6. Evaluation

We will evaluate HIP grants to determine how funded projects have contributed to the program's objectives. We may also interview you or ask you for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the funding was in achieving its objectives. Without limiting any specific reporting or evaluation requirements (or similar) set out in any funding agreement you execute with the Office, we may contact you up to 2 years after you finish your project for more information to assist with this evaluation. You consent to the use of your information for this purpose by:

- the Office of Energy and Climate Change
- NSW Treasury
- the Minister or Minister's office
- the NSW Ombudsman and Audit Office of NSW
- Office staff, consultants, and advisors
- any agency or body of the NSW Government, or any other organisation or individual considered by the office to have a need or an entitlement to know what information (including any federal, state, or territory agency or body), where that need or entitlement to know that information arises out of or in connection with the purpose above.

## 9.7. Grant acknowledgement

If a successful applicant makes a public statement about a funded project, they are required to acknowledge the support provided by the Office.

## 9.8. Discretion of the Office

Notwithstanding anything else in these guidelines, by applying, you acknowledge and agree the Office has the right (at its absolute discretion) to reject, refuse to consider or cease to assess an application at any time if it is of the view (at its absolute discretion) that an application is unlikely to be successful.

## 9.9. No contract or liability

Despite any part of these guidelines, or any other documentation that forms part of this process (in part or together), by applying, applicants:

- acknowledge that neither the applicant nor the Office intends to create any contract or other relationship under which the Office is obliged to conduct the process in relation to the funding in any manner or at all, and that there is in fact no such contract or other relationship in existence

- accordingly, acknowledge that neither this document, nor any submission will create any legal or other obligation upon the Office to conduct the process in any manner or at all
- release the Office from any claim it may otherwise have been able to make or bring against the Office, arising out of or in connection with the Office's conduct.

Potential applicants and interested parties should refer to [our website](#) for up-to-date information ([www.energy.nsw.gov.au](http://www.energy.nsw.gov.au)).

Any questions or clarifications can be sent in writing to [netzero.land@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:netzero.land@environment.nsw.gov.au)

## 9.10. Privacy

We use the information you supply to us for processing and assessing your application. While we do not publicly release your application as a matter of policy, we may be required to do so under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 or another lawful requirement.

The Office may also disclose information you supply to us for the purpose of evaluating and/or auditing its grant programs. If you require strict commercial and/or personal confidentiality, you should address this in your application. More information on the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 is available on the [website](#).

# Appendix

## Appendix A: Terms and definitions

The following terms are used throughout these guidelines

<b>Abatement</b>	See Carbon abatement.
<b>ABN</b>	Australian Business Number
<b>ACCU</b>	Australian Carbon Credit Unit
<b>Applicant</b>	An entity referred to in these guidelines that applies for HIP funding.
<b>Application</b>	Submission of an application form and other required documents for HIP funding.
<b>Application form</b>	Document or documents issued under HIP for applicants applying for funding.
<b>Business days</b>	A day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, public holiday or bank holiday in Sydney, New South Wales.
<b>Carbon abatement</b>	Either (a) the removal of one or more greenhouse gases from the atmosphere; or (b) the avoidance of emissions from one or more greenhouse gases.
<b>Carbon sequestration</b>	The removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by storing it in plants, dead organic matter or soil.
<b>Co-funding</b>	Financial support of a successful project provided by the Office and a private sector entity or entities.
<b>Commercial principles</b>	A set of principles made available by the Office which broadly represent how the Office expects funding arrangements to be provided and the outcomes this will achieve.

<b>Commercial-in-confidence information</b>	Any information that discloses your financing arrangements, cost structure, profit margins or full base case financial model; intellectual property for which you have an interest; any matter the disclosure of which would place you at a substantial commercial disadvantage.
<b>Conflict of interest</b>	A situation where a person decides or exercises a power in a way that may be, or may be perceived to be, influenced by either material personal interests (financial or nonfinancial) or material personal associations.
<b>Corporations Act</b>	Corporations Act 2001 (Commonwealth)
<b>Devolved Grants</b>	Projects offering grants to other organisations.
<b>Eligibility criteria</b>	Eligibility criteria set out in the section on eligibility and merit criteria.
<b>Eligible applications</b>	An application for HIP funding that the Office has determined is eligible for assessment in accordance with these guidelines.
<b>Eligible interest holder</b>	A person or organisation that has a legal interest in the land on which a project is being, or will be, conducted. Project proponents must seek consent from eligible interest holders to run a project with the CER.
<b>Expression of interest (EOI)</b>	The initial application phase containing eligibility and merit criteria assessments. In this process it is considered phase 1 of 2.
<b>Forward abatement estimate (FAE)</b>	The FAE is the total estimated number of ACCUs that your project will generate over its lifetime. The purpose of the FAE is to allow the CER to assign an audit schedule for your project.
<b>Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)</b>	A principle used in development projects worldwide and advocates for the right to self-determination for Indigenous people. It involves consent for projects to go ahead before they commence, being free from coercion, informed through accessible communication and collective consent from the Indigenous community.
<b>Full application</b>	The second application where applicants who were successful in the EOI phase are invited to submit more detailed applications. In this process it is considered phase 2 of 2.
<b>Funding agreement</b>	An agreement between the Office and a recipient under which HIP funding is provided to the recipient.



<b>Guidelines</b>	<p>Approved framework for the operation and administration of HIP funding.</p> <p>NOTE: This document will be amended and updated as needed to be current and accurate.</p>
<b>HIP</b>	High Impact Partnerships project delivered under PIPAP.
<b>Ineligible expenditure</b>	Expenditure of the kind defined as ineligible in <a href="#">2.5.2. Funding exclusions</a> of these guidelines.
<b>Merit criteria</b>	The merit criteria set out in the section on eligibility and merit criteria.
<b>Minister</b>	The Minister with responsibility for HIP funding, which at the time of publishing for these guidelines is the NSW Treasurer and Minister for Energy.
<b>Net Zero Plan</b>	NSW Government Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030
<b>NSW</b>	The State of New South Wales
<b>Office of Energy and Climate Change (the Office)</b>	The NSW Government Office, which at the time of publication, has the responsibility for the administration of this program and guidelines.
<b>PIPAP</b>	The Primary Industries Productivity and Abatement Program
<b>Project</b>	A project described in an application for funding under HIP round 1.
<b>Recipient</b>	An applicant that has been offered HIP funding and has entered into a funding agreement with the office.
<b>SmartyGrants</b>	The Office's online grant administration system provided by Our Community Pty Ltd
<b>The Office</b>	The NSW Office of Energy and Climate Change

## Appendix B: Reference list

1. Clean Energy Regulator  
<https://www.cleanenergyregulator.gov.au/>
2. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water  
<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/>
3. Emissions Reduction Fund  
<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/climate-change/emissions-reduction/emissions-reduction-fund>
4. Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)  
<https://arp.nsw.gov.au/assets/ars/attachments/IP-Management-Framework-2.0.pdf>
5. Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030  
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/climate-change/net-zero-plan>
6. Primary Industries Productivity and Abatement Program  
<https://www.energysaver.nsw.gov.au/reducing-emissions-nsw/primary-industries-productivity-and-abatement>
7. SmartyGrants  
[https://netzeronsw.smartygrants.com.au/high\\_impact\\_partnerships\\_grants](https://netzeronsw.smartygrants.com.au/high_impact_partnerships_grants)
8. The NSW Office of Energy and Climate Change [www.energy.nsw.gov.au](http://www.energy.nsw.gov.au)
9. The principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)  
<https://www.icin.org.au/resources>