ABORIGINAL RANGER
PROGRAM

FUNDING GUIDELINES: ROUND 8

OPENING DATE	Monday 11 March 2024
CLOSING DATE	Monday 22 April 2024
TYPE OF OPPORTUNITY	Open competitive
FUNDING STREAM	Round 8
ENQUIRIES	aboriginalrangerprogram@dbca.wa.gov.au
WEBSITE	dbca.wa.gov.au/aboriginalrangerprogram

This funding is administered by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) under the State Government's Royalties for Regions scheme, through an agreement with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).

Contents

Checklist

Before you start an application, please make sure you have:

Read the Round 8 Guidelines and understood what this funding is for.

Checked that your organisation is eligible.

Chosen at least one category out of the three (youth, climate action or cultural tourism).

Looked at the draft funding agreement on the ARP website and understood your organisation's reporting obligations, should you be successful.

Considered the timeframe as set out in the Round 8 Guidelines – is your organisation ready to sign a funding agreement in June 2024 and ready to start your project in July 2024?

Requested and received Prescribed Body Corporate (or equivalent), or Regional Corporation or Traditional Owner support, if required.

Requested and received written permission to conduct work on the land you plan to work on, if required.

Please allow plenty of time to prepare your application as late applications may not be accepted.

Governance

DBCA received direction from the Minister for Environment for Round 8, including the three categories of youth, climate action and cultural tourism.

The ARP Reference Group met and provided input into the design of the round.

The Minister for Environment approved the Funding Guidelines for the round.

Independent Probity Auditor appointed, to confirm the processes set out in the Guidelines are followed.

Assessment Process

A representative Assessment Panel is selected.

The grant round opens.

Applicants complete the application form online and submit it.

The grant round closes.

The ARP team checks that the applications meet the eligibility criteria.

Assessment Panel are briefed on process.

Eligible applications are provided to the Assessment Panel. Each panel member undertakes an assessment on their own, including giving scores.

The Panel comes together to discuss their individual scores and reach consensus on the applications to recommend to the Minister for Environment about which applications are preferred, and how much funding to provide to each applicant.

The Minister for Environment makes a decision about which applications are successful and authorises DBCA to make a funding offer.

Successful applicants accept the funding offer, and begin negotiating a funding agreement, including a payment schedule.

The funding agreement is signed by the recipient and DBCA. The first payments can be sent to recipients and the project can begin.

1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines provide information in relation to **Round 8** of the Aboriginal Ranger Program (ARP), which is administered by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). In this round, up to $16.5 million is available for Aboriginal organisations to undertake ranger activities within at least one of the categories of **youth, climate action and/or cultural tourism.**

You must read the Round 8 Guidelines carefully before you start an application, to determine if this opportunity is the right one for your organisation at this time. This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant opportunity;
- the eligibility and assessment criteria;
- how grant applications are lodged, assessed and selected;
- how applicants are notified and receive grant payments;
- how successful projects will need to be reported on; and
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the funding opportunity.

Before commencing an application, your organisation should be aware there is a very tight timeframe for this round. **Projects will be expected to commence as soon as possible after 1 July 2024**. If successful, your organisation will need to be ready to sign a funding agreement in June 2024 and commence operations straight away. Projects are to be completed and all funds expended before 30 June 2026.

Round 8 is funded wholly by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) Royalties for Regions scheme and does not have a funding component available for activities occurring in the Perth metropolitan area.

1.1 Background

The State Government launched the ARP in 2017, with an initial $20 million of funding over five years (Phase 1), that supported Aboriginal organisations to establish and run Aboriginal ranger programs to protect the environment and leverage social and economic benefits of employment on Country. This funding was invested into 35 projects through 28 different Aboriginal organisations across the State over three competitive rounds, providing employment and training opportunities for 1236 Aboriginal people, 45% of those being women.

The State Government built on this initial success, announcing a further $50 million investment for Phase 2 in 2021. An additional $16.5 million to extend the program to June 2026 was announced in 2022, bringing the total commitment to Phase 2 to $66.5 million over five years. In 2022 and 2023,

the Phase 2 funds were allocated to 65 ranger programs and projects across 53 partners under three funding streams:

- Expansion Fund - $23 million allocated for 14 ranger programs (Round 4)
- Development Fund - $10 million allocated to 17 ranger programs (Round 5) and $13 million to 22 ranger programs (Round 7)
- Innovation Fund - $11 million allocated to 12 special ranger projects (Round 6).

This current round of funding (Round 8) is providing an additional $16.5 million to Phase 2 to bring the total investment of Phase 2 to $83 million and the total commitment to date through the ARP to $103 million.

Aboriginal knowledge and aspirations have steered the design of the ARP including input from a steering committee comprising representatives of Native Title Representative Bodies, Prescribed Bodies Corporate, Aboriginal ranger teams, industry and government. A dedicated ARP Reference Group, formed in 2021, has guided and shaped Phase 2 of the program, including this round. More information on the Reference Group's work can be found on DBCA's website at www.dbca.wa.gov.au/aboriginalrangerprogram and minutes are available on request.

The State Government's *Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021-2029* puts culture at the heart of government policy and decision-making, to contribute to better outcomes for Aboriginal people and ensure a secure foundation for life. The strategy outlines the principles for government engagement, policy making and service delivery and ways to focus reform and investment to meet commitments under the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*. Connection to Country and culture through sustainable ranger programs is a key pillar of government investment in achieving this commitment.

1.2 Overview of the ARP

The ARP funds the employment of Aboriginal people as rangers to undertake activities such as:

- land and sea management;
- biodiversity monitoring and research;
- traditional knowledge transfer;
- fire management;
- management of significant cultural lands and sites;
- feral animal and weed management;
- cultural awareness and immersion experiences for visitors;
- guided Welcome to Country tours and/or talks for visitors;

- guided Welcome to Country tours and/or talks for visitors;

- management of visitors or tourists and tourism assets;

- biodiversity conservation, including habitat and species management;

- engaging with the community to plan land sea management; and

- education programs and mentoring to protect and strengthen healthy Country.

The ARP is implemented across a range of land tenures within Western Australia.

The objectives of the ARP are:

- to work with Aboriginal communities to develop and implement a successful and sustainable Aboriginal ranger employment program to provide new jobs, protect the environment and provide social and economic benefits to Aboriginal people across the State;

- to provide training for Aboriginal people to develop their skills in conservation and land management and other relevant industries; and

- to leverage funds from other State and Commonwealth agencies, industry and philanthropic groups.

The outcomes of the ARP include the following:

- New jobs for Aboriginal people caring for Country.

- Enhanced cross-cultural engagement and exchange between Aboriginal people, the broader community and government.

- Increased capacity within the Aboriginal community to undertake land and sea management and tourism operations.

- Strengthened capacity of Aboriginal organisations to provide a range of services, enabling ongoing employment and income generation opportunities.

- Enhanced protection of cultural and biodiversity values through land and sea management activities undertaken by Aboriginal rangers.

- Empowered Aboriginal communities that can identify and address cultural and environmental priorities, leading to more resilient communities and broader health, educational and social benefits.

- Empowered Aboriginal communities that can jointly manage conservation reserves with DBCA and other partners.

2. ROUND 8 GUIDELINES

2.1 Key points about Round 8

- Up to $16.5 million is available to fund projects associated with ranger programs in regional Western Australia.

- There are three categories in this round – youth, climate action and cultural tourism. Organisations should apply in at least one category.

- Funding is available for projects that will be ready to start in July 2024.

- Funds from this round must be spent, and projects completed, by 30 June 2026.

- Only applications made by eligible Aboriginal organisations will be assessed.

- Applications will be assessed through a competitive process which means your application will be assessed against the factors described in these Guidelines and compared against other applications.

- Submitting an application is not a guarantee that funding will be awarded.

- If your organisation is successful, you will enter a legally binding funding agreement which includes requirements for regular reporting.

- Success in this round is not an indication that there will be ongoing funding.

2.2 What is the opportunity?

Round 8 funding is available for ranger activities that sit within at least one of the categories of youth, climate action or cultural tourism.

There is no maximum grant amount that can be requested, but the total of all funding awarded cannot exceed the $16.5 million available for Round 8. Value for money will be considered as part of the assessment process (Criteria 4). All expenditure should be demonstrated to be essential to the delivery of the project.

Activities must be undertaken wholly within the state of Western Australia.

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate readiness for the anticipated start date of 1 July 2024.

Projects can be up to two years, for completion no later than the end of June 2026.

2.3 What can be funded?

In all categories, costs for administration can be included, up to 10% of the total grant value.

In all categories, costs for large assets, equipment and/or vehicles can be included and can be up to a combined total value of $250,000 **provided these assets are demonstrated to be essential to the delivery of the project (at Criteria 4).**

In all categories, costs for infrastructure can be up to a combined total value of $500,000. **Secure land tenure needs to be demonstrated as well as an explanation about how the infrastructure is essential to the delivery of the program (at Criteria 4).**

More information about budgets and wages is available at section 2.6.2.

Funding will be provided to projects that support ranger activities within at least **one of the three categories** on the following pages.

If you choose to address more than one category in your application, ensure you are making genuine connections between these categories. Also think about the assets or infrastructure that may service your needs in more than one category as this may save costs or enhance your project further.

Include all aspects of the costs of your projects that you need funded including such aspects as insurance costs or wage increases.

The following pages contain prompts and ideas for projects under each category to get you started, but it is in no way an exhaustive list. Other projects based around land and sea Country management and supporting rangers on Country are welcome under each category.

Category: YOUTH

This category is aimed at groups aspiring to engage younger Aboriginal people in meaningful employment, and/or education and training intended to support ranger-based career pathways and/or to maintain and restore connections to Country and culture.

Applicants might consider where they can offer Elder-led approaches and projects that draw on the strength of communities, existing ranger programs, and existing youth programs to provide wrap-around and holistic support.

Consider projects that contribute to Closing the Gap youth related targets, in particular: "by 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67 percent" - https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/.

The types of activities that can be funded in this category could include the following, but other ideas are welcome.

- Cultural reconnection, immersion, and knowledge transfer opportunities between Elders and youth. Can you plan on Country trips to facilitate knowledge sharing and exchanges between Elders and young rangers or young people with ranger support?
- What about cultural ranger exchanges between young people?
- Funding could increase the opportunities for your ranger team to collaborate with education, mentoring and training providers (e.g. schools, TAFEs, Universities, and independent mentoring programs) to achieve on Country, educational or research outcomes. You could include incursions, excursions and camps.
- Can you plan for a holistic approach to developing youth pathways into your ranger program? Remember it is not just about formal training. What about life skills? What other support do they need?
- Have you got a person in your ranger team with a keen interest in working with youth? Do they need extra skills or knowledge to grow their capacity?
- Can you employ someone with existing skills to coordinate and link your existing youth programs in a more aligned way?
- Do you have a young person that would thrive if given the support to complete higher qualifications including university study? Can you provide holistic support to get them through a university degree through this funding?
- Can you develop a program that supports a pathway for young people to enter your existing ranger program to provide succession planning and growth for your team?

- Could you use funding to develop one or more of your young people in leadership programs to support them to step up into coordinator roles in the future?

- Do you need to conduct consultation and planning so that your organisation can identify pathways for young rangers to grow their ranger roles into long-term career pathways.

- What other ranger projects could be developed to specifically involve youth?

- Can you get funding to target the employment of more young people as rangers in your existing team?

- Could you employ and develop an entire youth ranger team to work alongside, and under guidance from your existing senior team?

- Have you considered projects that involve 'justice reinvestment' initiatives i.e. projects relating to ranger work that are designed to prevent or reduce youth contact with the justice system.

- Projects might include specific at-risk cohorts of Aboriginal youth for example those living in foster or departmental care or Aboriginal youth with disabilities.

- Are you currently working with schools and need more resources to build capacity in your team to support this work? Do you need funding to further develop existing education programs to ensure they meet the needs of the curriculum for schools?

Category: CLIMATE ACTION

This category is aimed at groups who would like to conduct projects that work to address the impact of climate change on Country.

Consider projects that contribute to State Government targets such as actions within:

- Climate Adaptation Strategy

  https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2023-07/climate_adaption_strategy_220623.pdf

- Sectoral Emissions Reduction Strategy

  https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/sectoral-emissions-reduction-strategy-western-australia

- WA Climate Policy

  https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/western-australian-climate-policy

The types of activities and ideas listed below are to enable organisations to think about ways that ranger program work can be extended into the climate action space, but other ideas are welcome.

- Planning for, or carrying out projects designed to predict, respond to, or minimise impacts from adverse climate change impacts on community and Country, such as those created through increasing bushfires, floods, cyclones, droughts, and/or heatwaves.
- Projects that address current or potential impacts on important cultural values, such as cultural food, fruit and medicinal resources, cultural heritage sites, water security and threatened species.
- Projects that position ranger programs to form partnerships, win tenders, or propose important projects that secure ongoing employment and increase community self-determination in relation to climate action.
- Professional development and training to enable Aboriginal organisations to better understand climate change.
- Capacity building of existing ranger teams to respond to more frequent and extreme events driven by climate change.
- Ranger exchanges which enable learning from other groups who are already tackling climate action on their Country.
- What resources, capacity building, infrastructure or assets would allow your ranger team to scale up to be able to move into the climate action space? Could these resources and capacity

increase the opportunity for fee for service or contracts relating to carbon credit industry and/or the emerging nature repair market?

- Do you need to better support the health and safety of your ranger team and their works programs to mitigate the impact of climate change on their health? Do they need better access to shade or water out on Country?

- Is your ranger base currently running off diesel generators? Could you benefit from installing a less polluting system that will also ultimately save your program expenses in the longer term?

- Monitoring and undertaking the management of feral and domestic animals (destocking, culling, closing water points, fencing) to reduce grazing pressure on native vegetation.

- Conduct monitoring and/or management of coastal erosion processes to record and/or protect cultural sites.

- Conduct monitoring to observe impacts of ocean warming of culturally important ocean, estuarine and riverine species.

- Conducting dune revegetation to mitigate coastal retreat or combat coastal erosion.

- Developing projects that incorporate the uncertainties associated with climate change when planning revegetation activities.

- Learning through careful observation (ie data collection to inform local decision making).

- Water quality improvement planning and implementation that may lessen impact of climate change from other pressures that can be more easily reduced.

- Conducting cultural burning to reduce impact of bushfires on climate change.

- Securing access to key cultural sites where access is changing due to the impacts from climate change.

- Supporting research projects that may assist to develop blue carbon sequestration methodologies.

- Transplanting a cultural plant species at risk of loss by climate change.

- Translocation of vulnerable species or supporting assisted migration of species (both plants and animals).

- Implementing projects that increase biological activity, soil health and plant production which could increase the capacity to store a greater amount of carbon in plant biomass and soil.

- Managing or protecting vegetation communities at risk of disappearing due to the impacts of climate change eg from sea level rise or plant communities' tolerance ranges being changed. Collecting and storing seeds of special cultural plants that may be at risk of loss due to the changing climate.

Category: CULTURAL TOURISM

This category is aimed at ranger groups aspiring to begin or expand their capacity in providing cultural tourism experiences to share their knowledge more formally about Country and culture.

Cultural tourism can include many different activities such as guided walks, campouts, cooking, art activations, music performances, star gazing and storytelling. Remember that overseas visitors in particular seek out experiences that rangers and local community take for granted like e.g. sleeping outside in a swag under the stars.

Experience has shown that ranger groups that are well established are usually able to better and more naturally support activities that extend into cultural tourism.

Also consider whether cultural tourism is a priority for your Country and community and how this has been identified.

Consider projects that explore the long-term commercial potential in local cultural tourism opportunities – have a look at the actions that form part of the *Tourism WA: Jina: WA Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2021 – 2025. https://www.tourism.wa.gov.au/About-us/Strategies-plans-reports/Pages/Jina-WA-Aboriginal-Tourism-Action-Plan-2021-2025.aspx#/*

Also consider projects that contribute to Federal Government targets such as *Closing the Gap -* Outcome 8 'Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities' - https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/.

Key components to think about include the people you need, the products you need, the infrastructure or assets you may need and the business development types activities that could support your idea.

The ideas and activities listed below are to encourage Aboriginal organisations to think about ways that ranger programs work can be extended into cultural tourism, but other ideas are welcome.

- Projects that collaborate with other tourism bodies.
- Do you have an existing person in your ranger team that is interested in cultural tourism and tourism products? Do they need specific networking support? Could you send them to a conference or a ranger exchange opportunity or link them to a mentor that would support their growth in this space? Or perhaps get the whole team on board to begin with and then see who has a flair for that side of the business.
- Training for specific cultural tourism skills such as tour guiding or more broader training that will build the confidence of rangers to perform cultural tourism duties. For example, Certificate 1 in Aboriginal Cultural Tourism or Certificate III in Guiding.

- Is there enough demand for you to develop an additional team focused on cultural tourism or perhaps just an additional individual in your team to focus on tourism.
- Would additional infrastructure or assets boost your current tourism project to the next level? Do you need a shelter or water supply out on Country or a place to securely store gear?
- Do you need to upgrade or conduct maintenance on tourism assets that you already own?
- What about signage and other smaller infrastructure that allows stories to be told on Country?
- Do you need a way to transport tourists out on Country? Sometimes the lack of a safe and reliable transport vehicle can make or break a cultural tourism experience.
- Is there a significant cultural event that is coming up that you could provide event based cultural tourism at? Or would you like to create your own cultural tourism event?
- What about products and merchandise? Would the development of specific and local products add value to an existing tourism experience that you are leading in?
- Do you need to do some business planning in cultural tourism to understand the feasibility?
- Do you need software or systems to enable you to better manage your tourism product? Will you need training to use it effectively?
- Can you create a fee for service tourism model?
- Projects that explore the long-term commercial potential in local cultural tourism opportunities.
- Do you need to better market or promote your existing tourism experiences?

2.4 What cannot be funded?

In this round, funding is **not** available for:

- international travel;

- purchase or transfer costs of land or buildings, including housing and land rates;

- permanent infrastructure where secure land tenure cannot be demonstrated;

- infrastructure on land owned by a private individual;

- permanent infrastructure with a combined total value of over $500,000;

- assets with a combined total value of over $250,000;

- expenses that are the responsibility of other organisations such as local, state or Federal government agencies; and

- funding to undertake activities on private or leasehold land where those activities are the primary responsibility of the private landholder, or where the activities are more appropriately funded by others. Examples of activities that are the responsibility of a private land or leaseholder, or that fall under other laws are regulations, including creating and maintaining fire breaks or ensuring building codes are upheld.

2.5 Eligibility Requirements

The ARP will not assess applications that do not meet the requirements set out in this section.

2.5.1 Eligible applicants

Aboriginal organisations (those comprising and controlled by an Aboriginal community) are eligible for funding under the ARP. This includes Native Title Representative Bodies, Prescribed Bodies Corporate, Regional Corporations, organisations registered under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* and other Aboriginal bodies corporate. DBCA may request applicants to demonstrate that their organisation is Aboriginal owned, to verify eligibility during assessment.

The legal entity of the Aboriginal organisation (for example, whether it is a proprietary limited company, limited company, corporation or incorporated body) does not affect the eligibility of the organisation. The Aboriginal organisation must have the legal capacity to, among other things, enter into agreements or contracts, assume obligations, incur and pay depts, and to be held responsible for its actions. DBCA may request successful applicants verify their legal entity status before entering into a funding agreement.

DBCA may request additional information to ensure organisations have the governance and financial structures in place to appropriately manage the amount of funding that they are offered.

Joint applications are admissible if both parties are eligible but are only useful in circumstances where both the applicants need to receive the funding. If only one applicant will be administering the finances of the grant, then for ease of reporting and administration, a single applicant is preferable. Joint applications only useful in circumstances where **both** the applicants need to receive the funding to undertake the project. Please note, if a joint application is made and is successful, the SmartyGrants User and applicant organisation will be considered the primary contact and will be responsible for submitting plans and reports on behalf of all joint partners. All joint applicants will be signatories to the funding agreement and any party that receives funding will need to complete an annual audited financial report.

Ineligible applicants are:

- non-Aboriginal organisations;
- government agencies and statutory bodies;
- individuals, including organisations set up as sole traders; or
- applications whose work lays partly or wholly within the Perth metropolitan area.

Ineligible applicants can partner with eligible applicants and support them with their application.

Individuals seeking employment as a ranger are encouraged to contact a ranger program in their area directly. Maps of all ARP funded organisations are available on the ARP website www.dbca.wa.gov.au/aboriginalrangerprogram under "Recipients".

2.5.2 Previous recipients of ARP funding

Groups that have previously or are currently receiving funding from the ARP are eligible and encouraged to apply in this round. Successful applicants in Round 8 who have an existing funding agreement with the ARP for any round will be required to enter a new, additional funding agreement for Round 8. Failure to meet the obligations of any existing funding agreements could influence the awarding of Round 8 funding, even if an offer of funding is made. Entering into a new funding agreement will be conditional on an assessment by DBCA on whether the existing project is being completed according to the agreed outputs and milestones of the agreement, and/or plans are in place to account for any unspent funds. Unsuccessful groups from all previous ARP rounds are eligible to apply, as well as groups that have never applied previously.

2.5.3 Evidence of support from Traditional Owners

The ARP extends across lands and waters in Western Australia, including lands with or without a native title determination, and lands where native title has been extinguished. Depending on your circumstances, a letter of support may be a requirement of eligibility. If required, it should be included with your application.

The following table sets out the requirements for letters of support from the Traditional Owners of the land the ranger program will operate on.

Status	Applicant	Letter of support
Native title has been determined and there is a Prescribed Body Corporate (or equivalent), or a settlement has been reached and there is a Regional Corporation in place	The application is from the Prescribed Body Corporate (or equivalent), or Regional Corporation.	Not required
Native title has been determined and there is a Prescribed Body Corporate (or equivalent), or a settlement has been reached and there is a Regional Corporation in place	The application is from another group other than the Prescribed Body Corporate (or equivalent), or Regional Corporation.	Required from the Prescribed Body Corporate (or equivalent), or Regional Corporation
There is no Prescribed Body Corporate or Regional Corporation in place	The application is from the Native Title claim group/s	Not required
There is no Prescribed Body Corporate or Regional Corporation in place	The application is from any other group other than the Native Title claim group/s	Required from the Native Title claim group/s
There is no Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) or Regional Corporation (RC) in place, or a Native Title claim group	Application is from the Traditional Owners	Not required
There is no Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) or Regional Corporation (RC) in place, or a Native Title claim group	Application is from any other group other than the Traditional Owners	Required from the Traditional Owners

2.5.4 Project location and evidence of support from landowner/s

Funding from ARP can be sought across various land tenures. Letters of support from all landowners and/or land managers where on Country activity is to occur are required at the time of application.

Applications over Aboriginal Lands Trust reserves or Unallocated Crown land (UCL) may require the appropriate permits/licences from the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH). Projects on UCL or unmanaged reserves may require evidence of consultation with, and support from, the relevant local government authority. In considering appropriate permits and licences, the DPLH may need to consult with other interest holders.

To assist with the identification of landowners and land managers, detailed project location information will be requested with your application. Please be as specific as possible when describing the location that your activities will occur on by listing the relevant land and waters and supplying a clearly marked map or aerial photograph. Ideally, the information should also be provided for use with GIS software (i.e. as a .shp file, including all associated files).

2.5.5 Other requirements

In addition to the eligibility requirements above, applicants must:

- Meet the conditions described in *Conditions and accountability* below;
- Submit an application to DBCA before the closing date and time;
- Complete and submit the application form in the required format using DBCA's *SmartyGrants* online portal; and
- Agree to the terms specified in the application form.

To receive funds, successful applicants must agree to a legally binding funding agreement with the State which sets out the requirements and conditions under which the funding is provided, including reporting requirements.

A payment schedule will be negotiated with recipients, and payments will be dependent on the successful completion of the reporting requirements.

Multi-year programs should anticipate the submission of an annual project plan for each year of their funding, as well as progress and annual reports, and an acquittal report at the conclusion of the funding.

A sample ARP funding agreement and examples of the reporting templates are provided at www.dbca.wa.gov.au/aboriginalrangerprogram

Annual independently audited financial statements will also be required.

2.6 Assessment Criteria

The following assessment criteria will be used to evaluate applications for funding in this round. Applicants should address each criterion separately when completing the application form. Each criterion is weighted differently. The assessment criteria are the same for all categories (youth, climate action and cultural tourism). To be assessed, projects must sit within **at least one of** these categories.

The Assessment Panel will seek to fund the best projects, regardless of which category they are in. Equal consideration will be given to applications that are outstanding in one category and applications that demonstrate outcomes in more than one category.

CRITERIA 1 – Potential to make a specific contribution in your chosen category or categories of youth, climate action and/or cultural tourism - 30% *Describe:* • *how your project will support or expand your ranger operations in your chosen category/ies of youth, climate action or cultural tourism;* • *how will your project support the progress of a cultural priority (for example has it been identified in a Healthy Country Plan, how do you know it is a community aspiration);* • *how your project will address a gap (such as expanding services your organisation could deliver, moving into a different area, or a cultural priority that is not being delivered).; and* *If your project covers more than one category, describe how it will create genuine synergies between the categories* ***(address only if applicable).***
CRITERIA 2 - Clearly articulated and measurable project deliverables that contribute to one or more of the ARP outcomes - 30% *Succinctly describe what activities you plan to undertake, what the key deliverables will be and how you can measure and monitor these to meet one or more of the outcomes below.* • *Increased capacity within the Aboriginal community to undertake land and sea management and tourism operations.* • *Strengthened capacity of Aboriginal organisations to facilitate and provide a range of services enabling ongoing employment and income generation opportunities.* • *Enhanced cross-cultural engagement and exchange between Aboriginal people, the broader community, government and industry.* • *Enhanced protection of cultural and biodiversity values through land and sea management activities undertaken by Aboriginal rangers.* • *New jobs for Aboriginal people looking after Country.*
CRITERIA 3 – Organisational capacity - 20% *Describe your organisation's capacity to administer and deliver your project.*
CRITERIA 4 – Value for money - 20% *Demonstrate that all major budget items are essential to the delivery of the project.* *If relevant describe specifically:* • *Assets – combined value and demonstrated essential to delivery of project.* • *Infrastructure - land tenure ownership and security, building times and demonstrated essential to delivery of the project.*
Total 100%

Your choice of category should be clearly reflected in your response to **CRITERIA 1 – Potential to make a specific contribution in your chosen category or categories of youth, climate action and/or cultural tourism.** If multiple categories are to be addressed, this should be indicated in response to Criteria 1.

The amount of detail and supporting evidence you provide in your application should be relative to the size, complexity and grant amount requested.

The Assessment Panel will assess all applications against each other, and rank them on their weighted, combined scores. The panel will make a recommendation on what it considers to be the most desirable projects out of all eligible applications. For more information about the assessment process, see Assessment Methodology (section 3.8).

2.6.1 Other considerations in the assessment

In this round, the ARP will also take into consideration the following in the assessment stage:

- commitment to employ Aboriginal people and organisations in all roles and services, including contractors and support services where possible;
- if a previous recipient of ARP funding, the ability to meet obligations of the previous or existing funding agreement(s);
- whether the program represents value for money in terms of public benefit and environmental, social and cultural outcomes;
- the ability to leverage funds from other sources; and
- alignment with State Government priorities and budget allocations.

2.6.2 Budgets, project timing and employment

Projects under the ARP Round 8 must be completed by 30 June 2026, therefore applications to this round should not budget beyond 30 June 2026. Start dates for projects will be from 1 July 2024. Total project length cannot exceed two years.

In preparing the application, your organisation should:

- complete the detailed budget table in the application form;
- outline the cash and in-kind contributions from your organisation; and
- outline the cash and in-kind contributions from project partners.

Applicants should ensure project budgets cover all anticipated program costs over the lifetime of the funding agreement, including increases to wages and other costs.

All figures should be GST exclusive.

Coordination or support staff (including consultants) to implement training, mentoring, safety management and works planning to support the work of Aboriginal rangers will be considered where it can be demonstrated that this is essential to achieve the specified outcomes of the program and provides Aboriginal employment outcomes.

In both categories, a portion of funds (up to 10% of total grant value) may be applied to administration where it can be demonstrated that this is essential to achieve the specified outcomes of the program

and that it will provide Aboriginal employment outcomes. Administration could include time spent organising ARP employment contracts, payroll, fee-for-service contractual agreements and payments, procurement of operational materials, vehicle and equipment management and arranging ranger insurance and workers' compensation. This amount allocated to administration costs must not be more than 10% of the requested funding, and will not be more than 10% of funding offered if an offer is made.

Funding may go towards the purchase of assets, equipment and vehicles, preferably in the first year of the project. An asset is any single item of a transferrable physical nature such as trailers, vehicles, cameras, drones or scientific equipment. The combined total cost for assets cannot exceed $250,000. **All assets need to be demonstrated to be essential to the delivery of the project (Criteria 4).**

Before including assets in your budget, ensure you understand the full cost and availability. Lead times may mean that a new vehicle cannot be reliably sought within the timing of the funding agreement. Each asset proposed to be purchased must be listed in the relevant section of the application. If the application is approved, up to three quotes may be required before making the purchase. At the end of the project, the asset will remain with the grant recipient.

In addition to assets costs may go towards the purchase or building of permanent infrastructure up to a combined total value of $500,000 but **only where secure land tenure is demonstrated and the infrastructure is essential to the delivery of the program (Criteria 4).** Permanent infrastructure cannot be built on land owned by an individual. Note that the purchase and/or building of this infrastructure needs to be completed within the two-year timeframe. Your organisation may want to consider non-permanent, removable or pre-fabricated infrastructure if available and viable and if land tenure does not have long term security or if there are concerns that construction may not occur in time. If the application is approved, up to three quotes may be required before committing to the infrastructure.

Wages for positions should be budgeted at an amount equivalent to relevant salary schedules under the WA Government Rangers (National Parks) General Agreement 2022 (available at https://www.wairc.wa.gov.au/resources/agreements/?id=RAN017). Other wages for project management if not a ranger type position should be commensurate with industry standards for similar roles.

Other costs that will be considered include:

- Funding to conduct project monitoring, reporting and promotion of outcomes of the program.
- Funding for training, networking, conferences, knowledge transfer activities or similar activities.

- Engagement of Elders and other Aboriginal people to support the program development and implementation.
- Funding for new technology, materials, assets and/or equipment directly related to the program.
- Funding for on-ground practical works can be included if they are specific to the program.
- Funding for consultants and/or contractors to deliver specific components within the program where this is essential to delivering project outcomes, with high regard for proposals that contract the services of Aboriginal people or organisations for this purpose.

2.6.3 Leverage funding, in-kind support and partnerships

Applicants are encouraged to seek other funding sources, to complement any ARP funding and expand the potential outcomes of their project ideas, but it is not essential to being awarded ARP funding in this round. Alternate funding might include other grants, funding from private enterprise or community organisation, or philanthropic support. Information about other funding sources, including in-kind contributions, will be requested as part of your application. If you have received funding from another source for a specific position or program output that duplicates a request made in your ARP application, it may impact whether you are awarded ARP funding.

Applicants are encouraged to build partnerships with other organisations, to help build the capacity of their organisations and expand the potential outcomes of their programs, but these are not essential to being awarded ARP funding in this round. Partners can help deliver project ideas, through financial support, practical assistance or in-kind support. Information about your partnerships will be requested as part of your application.

All financial information provided with an application to the ARP is treated as confidential and will not be disclosed.

2.7 What other information and approvals are required?

2.7.1 Goods and Services Tax

Most registered Aboriginal corporations have an Australian Business Number (ABN) and will be registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST). GST is therefore generally applicable to funding under the ARP but applicants should not include GST in calculating their project costs in their application. If applicants have an ABN, but are not registered for GST, then no GST applies, and the total payment will be made exclusive of GST.

2.7.2 Insurance

If successful, recipients of ARP funding are required to have appropriate insurance cover before activities can commence. **It is the recipient's responsibility to ensure they, and any subcontractors, hold appropriate insurance for any activities undertaken for the project.** Applications will be accepted from organisations that intend to take out or upgrade their insurances should they be successful. Failure to provide evidence of having the appropriate insurances in place at the time of developing the funding agreement, may result in the offer of funding being withdrawn. Appropriate insurance may include:

Public Liability

Public liability insurance covers the legal liability of the applicant and the applicant's personnel arising for an amount of not less than $20 million for any one occurrence and unlimited in the number of occurrences happening in the period of insurance.

Workers' Compensation

Workers' compensation insurance in accordance with the provisions of the State Government *Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981*, includes cover for common law liability and should cover for an amount of not less than $50 million for any one occurrence in respect of workers of the applicant. The insurance policy must be extended to cover any claims and liability that may arise with an indemnity under section 175(2) of the *Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981*.

Motor Vehicle Third Party

Compulsory third party motor vehicle insurance is required under statute relating to motor vehicles used in connection with the application for funding. Motor vehicle third party insurance covers legal liability against property damage and bodily injury to, or death of, persons (other than compulsory third party motor vehicle insurance) caused by motor vehicles used in connection with the application for funding for an amount of not less than $30 million for any one occurrence or accident.

Professional Indemnity

Professional indemnity insurance covers the legal liability of the applicant and the applicant's personnel arising out of any act, negligence, error or omission made or done by or on behalf of the applicant in connection with the applicant's project and should be for a sum of $1 million – $5 million for any one claim and in the annual aggregate, with a provision of one automatic reinstatement of the full sum insured in any one period of insurance. Professional indemnity insurance can include:

a) fraud and dishonesty;

b) defamation;

c) infringement of intellectual property rights;

d) loss of or damage to documents and data; and

e) breach of Australian Consumer Law.

DBCA reserves the right to request additional insurances are obtained if they are not already by the applicant but are relevant to the project.

2.7.3 Disclosure of Information and privacy

The Minister for Environment and DBCA have statutory obligations under section 58 of the *Financial Management Act 2006* and the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*. Accordingly, any funding application may be made available to the public on request, with the possible exemption of any confidential or personal information. Applicants are invited to identify confidential and personal information and specify the reason for its confidentiality.

Applicants should be aware that if they are successful, DBCA may publish information on its website about recipients, including but not limited to:

- the name of the entity receiving the funding;
- title and purpose for which funding awarded;
- a description of the project and expected outcomes;
- amount of funding awarded; and
- location/s where funding awarded.

By submitting an application under the ARP, the applicant consents to publication of the information by DBCA if they are awarded funding.

2.7.4 Conditions and accountability

Successful applicants will be expected to comply with a range of conditions detailed in a funding agreement between the recipient and the State. An example of an ARP funding agreement is on the ARP website. Failure to comply with the conditions of a funding agreement may influence the awarding or disbursement of any future funding. Recipients of funding under the ARP should not expect that funds will be provided automatically or on an ongoing basis.

2.8 How to apply

The closing date for applications is 5.00 pm AWST on Monday 22 April 2024. You are encouraged to submit your application in advance of this time and date, to allow time for any unexpected technical issues which may arise.

Applications can only be made by via the DBCA *SmartyGrants* online portal at https://dbca.smartygrants.com.au/. All applications will be sent an automatic email from *SmartyGrants* confirming receipt of their application.

Applications received by email or post will not be accepted.

Late applications will generally not be accepted. The ARP Coordinator may at their discretion, elect to accept a late application or applications submitted contrary to application requirements where they consider it appropriate in the circumstances where no applicant has been materially advantaged or disadvantaged.

Make sure you are ready to attach the following with your application:

- letters of support from Traditional Owners, if required;
- letters of support from all relevant landowners and land managers; and
- detailed project location information.

Please limit supporting material to what is specifically requested in the application form. The maximum upload possible on *SmartyGrants* is 25 megabytes, but the recommended size of file attachments is five megabytes. For large files (such as management plans, business plans, Healthy Country Plans, or cultural mapping documents) please just note the existence of such documents in your application. You can provide hyperlinks to the documents if they are online. The Assessment Panel may ask you to supply this supplementary material at a later date if required.

Grant Writing Tutorial

In 2022, the ARP offered a grant writing tutorial to all potential applicants. The tutorial is available to watch on our website www.dbca.wa.gov.au/aboriginalrangerprogram under the Funding Opportunities tab.

2.9 What happens next?

All applicants will be advised in writing at the conclusion of the funding application process and following approval by the Minister for Environment.

2.10 How to contact us about these Guidelines

Enquiries about Round 8 can be made by emailing aboriginalrangerprogram@dbca.wa.gov.au

DBCA officers can only offer general advice, and are unable to assist applicants in preparing their applications. Applicants should seek independent professional advice where necessary.

3. ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The assessment process and methodology for Round 8 of the ARP will be guided by the following.

3.1 Establishment and role of Assessment Panel

An Assessment Panel comprising representatives from DBCA and other relevant stakeholders, will be established prior to the closing date. The members of the panel will represent a broad range of skills and experience related to the ARP. The Assessment Panel will aim to consist of the following:

- Executive Director, Parks and Visitor Services Division (Panel Chair - Voting) – non-Aboriginal, male, DBCA staff.
- ARP Coordinator (Voting) – Aboriginal, female, DBCA staff.
- Four representatives from the Aboriginal ranger sector (Voting) – with an equitable representation of gender and Aboriginality.
- Probity Auditor (Independent, Non-voting).
- Executive Officer (Non-voting).

3.2 Procedure for assessment

The procedure for assessment is as follows:

- Funding applications closes.
- Applications are checked for eligibility against the conditions outlined in the Guidelines.
- Request for advice on relevant applications if further information is required, for example from DBCA regional staff, other government agencies or other funding bodies.
- Eligible applications and additional information collated and distributed to Assessment Panel.
- Panel members individually assess applications.
- Panel convenes to discuss applications, come to a group score which will inform recommendations.
- Panel seeks any clarification from applicants (if required).
- Recommendations provided to the Minister for Environment for consideration and approval.
- Subject to Minister for Environment's approval, successful and unsuccessful applicants notified.
- Successful applicants enter into a funding agreement with DBCA.

3.3 Referral of applications

The Assessment Panel may seek advice from within DBCA and from relevant government agencies on eligible applications. Relevant government agencies are those that may have a statutory role in

approving elements of the application; an interest in the activities or outcomes proposed in the application; or whose advice may be important in assessing the application.

Eligible applications will be referred to the Assessment Panel, relevant government agencies and DBCA staff. The ARP Coordinator is responsible for referring applications. Advice received from DBCA regional staff and relevant government agencies will be collated for the Assessment Panel to consider together with the application.

3.4 Assessment Considerations

To be recommended for funding applicants will be required to:

- meet the eligibility requirements detailed in section 2.5; and
- have appropriate insurances as detailed in section 2.7.2 or indicated a commitment to get them.

Eligible applications will be assessed against the assessment criteria as well as other considerations for assessment in section 2.6.1.

The assessment will be made in accordance with the assessment methodology identified below.

3.5 Assessment Panel may seek clarification from applicants

A successful applicant may not be offered the level of funding requested and may be asked that some elements of the project be modified.

The Assessment Panel may also contact applicants to seek clarification about their application and/or request evidence in support of any declaration made in the application.

All communication seeking clarification from applicants will be discussed with the Chair of the Assessment Panel.

3.6 Recommendation to Minister for Environment

The Assessment Panel will make a recommendation to the Minister for Environment who will make the final decision as to which applicants are successful.

3.7 Notification of applicants

All applicants will be informed in writing of the status of their application at the conclusion of the process and following approval by the Minister for Environment.

Unsuccessful applicants will be provided the opportunity to receive feedback on their application. Feedback cannot include a direct comparison to any other application because all applications are treated in confidence except where the law requires otherwise.

3.8 Assessment methodology

DBCA is using a competitive process to allocate funding under the Round 8 that allows applicants to use their own initiative to develop applications that will meet the outcomes of the program and the aspirations of Aboriginal organisations and communities.

In assessing applications, all information provided by applicants in the application form, as well as any clarifying information sought by DBCA from applicants, other government agencies or DBCA regional staff, will be taken into account. All reasonable precautions are taken to prevent the unauthorised disclosure of information when seeking verifying information from other parties.

The ARP will check the eligibility of all applications against the conditions listed in the Guidelines. Eligible applications will be provided to the Assessment Panel for detailed consideration and scoring. If the ARP team has any doubts if an application is eligible or ineligible, the Assessment Panel will make the decision as to whether it is assessed.

All eligible applications received will be assessed against each other, at the one time.

A scoring system will be used to assess the applications against each criterion. The scoring legend zero to nine is outlined as follows:

0   Does not address assessment criteria.

1   Limited understanding or capability, no confidence that assessment criteria will be met.

3   Less than satisfactory understanding or capability, limited confidence that assessment criteria will be met.

5   Satisfactory understanding or capability, reasonably confident that assessment criteria will be met.

7   Good understanding or capability, confident that assessment criteria will be met.

9   Excellent understanding or capability, complete confidence that assessment criteria will be met.

'In between' scores such as 2, 4, 6 and 8 may be used to reflect variation to these scores.

Members of the Assessment Panel will provide an individual score against each of the assessment criterion. An average score for each criterion will be determined by combining scores of each member of the Assessment Panel.

3.9 Determining the successful applicants

The aggregate of these average scores will form a total score for each applicant, which will be used in the final assessment of applications, in addition to other considerations in the assessment – section 2.6.1, to form the recommendations to the Minister for Environment.

Following the assessment and scoring by the Assessment Panel, applications are ranked according to their total score. The panel will consider which applicants to recommend to the Minister for Environment as preferred applicants by applying a principle of fairness that may consider the other considerations in the assessment – section 2.6.1 outlined in these guidelines. The amount of funding requested and the amount available will also be considered in this context.

The Assessment Panel will only make recommendations to the Minister for Environment, and will not make the final decision as to which applicants are successful. The Minister for Environment will consider the recommendations of the Assessment Panel and will determine which applicants are successful.

4. PROBITY GUIDELINES

4.1 PRINCIPLE 1 - CONFIDENTIALITY & CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The community and applicants have a right to expect public sector staff and elected officials will perform their duties in a fair and unbiased way and that the decisions they make are not affected by self-interest or personal gain. Conflicts of interest arise when public officials are influenced, or appear to be influenced, by personal interests when doing their job (ICAC Dec 1995).

4.1.1 General Security

Security of all information that becomes available and pertaining to this application process is the responsibility of all members of the Assessment Panel.

All persons must take reasonable precautions to prevent the unauthorised disclosure of confidential information.

It is the responsibility of the ARP Coordinator to ensure that reasonable precautions are taken to prevent the unauthorised disclosure of information by government agencies and regional managers of DBCA to which applications are referred.

In referring applications to government agency staff and DBCA regional managers, confidential information will be redacted. This includes financial information that is provided.

All office files will be established in accordance with the DBCA's overall policies and stored in secured cabinets. All files must be returned to the central cabinets each night where they will be locked when the office is unattended.

4.1.2 Physical Security

It is the personal responsibility of all persons privileged to confidential documents to ensure that they are securely stored and unobtainable to others not authorised by the ARP Coordinator.

Any documents, files or copies of submissions that are given to Panel members should be identified by number and signed out by the ARP Coordinator or Executive Officer.

4.1.3 Computer Security

The computer environments containing confidential ARP information at DBCA shall be secured and accessed only by authorised individuals with their own passwords. The system administrator shall ensure individuals only have access to areas of information that are appropriate to the roles assigned to them by the ARP Coordinator. The Probity Auditor shall test the environments from time to time to confirm that the systems remain secure.

4.1.4 Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Agreements

Each person having access to confidential assessment information are to provide the ARP Coordinator with a signed confidentiality statement and a declaration if they do not have any conflict of interest which may, or may be seen to, affect the impartiality of the selection process. The signed statement also carries the obligation to report any subsequent changes to that person's circumstances to the ARP Coordinator throughout the funding application process.

Individuals provided with direct access to applications in *SmartyGrants* for assessment, are to declare if they have any conflict of interest regarding each individual application as part of completing the *SmartyGrants* assessment form.

4.1.5 Process for dealing with conflict issues

Upon becoming aware of conflictual matters whether declared or otherwise, the ARP Coordinator may consult with the Assessment Panel Chair (and Probity Auditor if required) and will record the circumstances in the conflict of interest register, together with the mitigation measures and status of action taken to address the circumstances.

Any conflict that appears to directly threaten the integrity and probity of the funding application process must be immediately referred to the Executive Director of Parks and Visitor Services and the Probity Auditor for guidance on resolution.

4.2 PRINCIPLE 2 - IMPARTIALITY

Individuals and organisations involved in preparing and submitting applications for public sector funding often invest considerable time, effort and resources and in return, they are entitled to expect impartial treatment at every step of the selection process.

In probity terms, procedural fairness implies a duty to act fairly and adopt fair procedures that are appropriate to the circumstances of a particular procurement/ selection process. Good administration and proper process are to be followed.

Failing to follow an open and fair selection process may lead to a loss of public confidence and the funding application being subject to judicial review – this is inevitably costly in terms of image, time and resources.

The *Public Sector Management Act 1994* requires that all employees act impartially and with integrity including avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest.

The following principles of procedural fairness must be adhered to in the selection process.

4.2.1 Knowledge

Before commencing the selection process, the Panel Chair must be satisfied that all nominated Assessment Panel members (including advisors) have been provided with adequate material and/or instructions before participating in the evaluation to ensure that they have an understanding of:

- the contents of each application;
- the selection criteria against which applications will be rated; and
- the process by which each application will be rated.

4.2.2 Relevant circumstances

Assessment Panel members must consider all relevant considerations related to each application. This includes applicant's responses to the selection criteria, and all other information they were required to supply, additional information provided where applications have been referred for further details and "other considerations" described in these guidelines.

4.2.3 Irrelevant considerations

Generally, the selection process must not be based on irrelevant considerations, that is, anything outside the selection criteria or information requested and subsequently provided through the funding application process. Changes to the selection process should be communicated in writing before the close of funding application to all applicants.

4.2.4 Bias

The selection process must be free of bias or conflict of interest, and any perception of bias or interest. Any connections between an Assessment Panel member or adviser and an applicant must be disclosed to the Panel Chair. Only in exceptional circumstances, and approval by the Panel Chair, will an Assessment Panel member continue to be included in the selection process if there is a perceived association.

Assessment Panel members must not have contact with applicants during the selection process, other than seeking clarification. It is noted that in the normal course of business, it may be necessary for some of the Assessment Panel members to have contact with applicants through ARP Reference Group and 'business as usual' management meetings. In these instances, the representatives will comply with probity guidelines. Any possible issue of bias should be discussed with the Panel Chair as soon as it arises.

4.2.5 Probative evidence

Ratings and selections must be made on the basis of the material being presented and included in applications rather than mere speculation or suspicion.

4.2.6 Confidentiality

The contents of applications should not be disclosed to any outside party. Each application should be viewed as commercially confidential information.

4.3 PRINCIPLE 3 - TRANSPARENCY

By having transparent, open processes, organisations can help to minimise opportunities for fraud and corruption. This also gives applicants and the public confidence in the outcome. Organisations often invest considerable time, effort and resources when preparing and submitting applications. In return, they are entitled to expect impartial treatment at every stage of the process (ICAC Dec 1996).

4.3.1 Assessment Process and Methodology

An assessment process and methodology will be made available to all applicants. It should contain:

- overview of the program;
- internal administrative procedures;
- applicant enquiries protocol;
- office security;
- confidentiality;
- probity;

- establishment and role of Assessment Panel;

- procedure for assessment; and

- assessment methodology.

4.3.2 Invitation Documents

The Funding Guidelines document shall provide sufficient information to applicants to enable the preparation of relevant and considered applications. As a minimum it will contain:

- objectives of the ARP and the specific funding stream;

- eligibility for funding;

- assessment criteria;

- time and closing date for applications;

- conditions of funding;

- approvals required;

- Goods and Services tax;

- insurance;

- where to lodge applications; and

- a contact email address.

4.3.3 Records of Meetings

All agreed items discussed and actions will be recorded including:

- meeting details;

- attendance;

- decisions and recommendations made;

- actions agreed; and

- responsibility and time frame.

4.3.4 Media – Public Relations

Media releases, public presentations, and attendance at functions sponsored by applicants and similar, are occasions that have the potential to jeopardise the probity of the assessment process for the ARP. Members of the Assessment Panel, DBCA regional managers, and government agencies associated with the assessment process must be mindful of this issue and to reduce risks, the DBCA Executive Director of Parks and Visitor Services Division or ARP Coordinator is to be the only spokesperson, unless approved by the Executive Director of Parks and Visitor Services Division.

4.3.5 Taking other information into account

As a general rule, the Assessment Panel should only consider information presented by the applicants in accordance with the approved selection criteria and assessment approach.

Should the Assessment Panel become aware of other information about an applicant's capability that may be relevant to the assessment or the outcome being sought, the ARP Coordinator must bring this to the attention of the Probity Auditor. The information must be documented and referenced to the source. The Assessment Panel must do all that is necessary to confirm the accuracy of information with the applicant, although the source may remain anonymous if deemed necessary. Such communication may be in written form or by a meeting. The applicant must be given reasonable time to prepare a response and the Probity Auditor is to be involved in all communication with the applicant.

The Assessment Panel must not take that information into account until the Panel Chair is satisfied that the facts have been fully understood and the applicant has been extended procedural fairness. On that basis, the Panel Chair may then provide the Assessment Panel with a written summary of the information that can be taken into account for the purpose of assessment.

4.3.6 Dealing with enquiries

The enquiries protocol requires that all enquiries by applicants be submitted in writing to the ARP Coordinator.

All enquiries by email should be sent to aboriginalrangerprogram@dbca.wa.gov.au.

Incoming enquiries will be added to an enquiries register maintained by the Executive Officer. The enquiries register will be saved in a secure online file, and a copy placed on the relevant corporate file at completion of the process. The Executive Officer will ARP Ranger Program Coordinator. Where the enquiry is deemed by the Executive Officer to be confidential in nature, this enquiry shall be immediately referred to the ARP Coordinator for action.

All responses to applicants will be in writing, after being authorised by the ARP Coordinator or Executive Officer.

The Executive Officer will update the enquiries register with the response action. The Executive Officer will produce a written report as appropriate to the ARP Coordinator, detailing the enquiries received and action taken.

In accordance with the enquiry protocol above, each enquiry received from applicants will be reviewed by the Executive Officer to determine whether the enquiry is of a confidential or general nature. Applicants can also state whether they consider their enquiry to be confidential in nature for

example due to a commercial in confidence nature or an idea being discussed. Where there is any ambiguity, this determination is to be made in consultation with the ARP Coordinator and Probity Auditor.

At the ARP Coordinator's discretion, 'General Advice to all Registered Applicants' may be placed on the ARP website as soon as possible, if time permits before the closing date and the Probity Auditor's opinion may be sought before doing so.

Where the enquiry is determined as 'General', the applicant raising the enquiry will be advised accordingly and given the opportunity to either confirm or refute the determination made by the Executive Officer.

All 'General Advice to Registered Applicants' will be issued in numeric sequence and signed by the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator. All advice will go to the Probity Auditor prior to issue to registered applicants. A Register, summarising the details of material issued, will be maintained.

All meetings with applicants that seek to discuss or clarify matters regarding the funding application process, assessment or methodology are to have in attendance the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator or Director of Parks and Visitor Services and at least one other person. The meetings are to be based on the principle that they are for discussion purposes only and any request for information or clarification from applicants is to be addressed through written form with only written responses being binding.

Any meetings with applicants that seek to gather regional operational or logistical information for developing an application must have at least two staff in attendance. Staff involved in developing proposals with applicants will not be involved in assessing the application.

A file note is to be maintained of all meetings held.

As a general rule, DBCA staff or assessment panel members should not attend functions sponsored by applicants during the funding application process. Only the DBCA Executive Director of Parks and Visitor Services Division or the ARP Coordinator can approve attendance (details to be recorded on the project file).

DBCA officers can only offer general advice, and are unable to assist applicants in preparing their applications. Applicants should seek independent professional advice where necessary, such as for legal or financial matters.

4.4 PRINCIPLE 4 - ACCOUNTABILITY

Public sector agencies should have appropriate mechanisms in place to show that they are accountable for their practices and the decisions that are made. Accountability requirements can reduce opportunities for corruption and save time, money, resources and problems in the long term. Mechanisms can include the agency keeping detailed records throughout the process such as minutes of meetings, the reasoning behind any decisions made, who made those decisions and any departure from established procedures being approved by senior staff not directly involved in the process. Maintaining detailed records can be a way of proving that the process followed was legitimate if any questions or complaints are raised later (ICAC Dec 1996).

4.4.1 Records Maintenance

Incoming Material:

- Incoming emails will be saved in the ARP inbox, as well as printed and placed on the relevant corporate file.
- Any letters received will be stamped with date and time of receipt and the original placed on file.

Outgoing Material:

- Copies of sent emails will be saved in the ARP inbox, as well as printed and placed on the relevant corporate file.
- For any other outgoing material, a copy will be retained on file and will indicate the method of dispatch (i.e. post, courier, etc.)

4.4.2 Roles and responsibilities

DBCA has the overall responsibility for coordinating the ARP and the achievement of the program objectives and outcomes. The funding application process seeks applications from eligible Aboriginal organisations to undertake land and sea management activities across the State.

The Assessment Panel roles are outlined in section 3.1.

Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator

The ARP Coordinator will provide the ARP team with leadership and be of sufficient standing to report on the program to the Minister for Environment. Responsibilities include:

- oversee the development of an assessment process;
- ensure processes meet the Probity Guidelines;

- liaise with applicants prior to, and subsequent to, submission of applications to provide information and clarify application and assessment processes;

- manage the Assessment Panel;

- manage and contribute to the preparation of documentation;

- manage and contribute to the assessment of applications;

- ensure probity guidelines and principles are observed;

- provide advice on the resources required to complete the assessment process; and

- liaise with and manage the input of other government agencies and DBCA regional managers as required.

Executive Officer

An Executive Officer from Parks and Visitor Services Division will provide the ARP Coordinator with support during the funding application   and the assessment process. Responsibilities include:

- provide regular reports to ARP Coordinator;

- liaise with applicants prior to, and subsequent to, submission of application/proposal to provide information and clarify applications under the direction of the ARP Coordinator and Executive Director of Parks and Visitor Services Division;

- manage the preparation of the summary report;

- ensure government rules and regulations are abided by;

- provide administrative support;

- maintain filing;

- handle/record queries;

- manage the desired level of security for all proceedings and documents;

- assist with negotiations and discussions with other government agencies;

Probity Auditor

A Probity Auditor will be appointed prior to the closing date for applications. He/she will provide independent probity advisory services to the assessment process and undertake compliance audits to confirm that agreed processes are followed throughout the process. Essential tasks include, but are not limited to:

- providing reasonable assurance that the procedures adopted in the submission of applications and evaluation process are fair and equitable and that probity of the process is independently validated;

- monitoring and reporting to DBCA through the ARP Coordinator that the evaluation process and procedures have been followed and that the outcome is capable of being independently validated;

- providing assurance to all interested applicants that appropriate processes were fully adhered;

- providing guidance to the ARP Coordinator as to how unforeseen issues could be resolved;

- attending evaluation panel meetings where relevant;

- attending applicant meetings and presentations (if required);

- monitoring communication during the period between submission of applications and final decision;

- Identifying areas where efficiencies may be adopted in the process.

It is important to note that the Probity Auditor is not part of the Assessment Panel but is an external consultant acting as an independent observer of the process. The Probity Auditor will not be involved in the assessment or evaluation of any applications.

Regional Support Officers

ARP Regional Support Officers (RSOs) are located in key regions across the state to support current and prospective ARP funded ranger groups. ARP RSOs are still permitted to have their normal contact and provide support services to existing groups when it is regarding their current funded projects. During the opening of the round, RSOs should direct any queries specifically related to Round 8 as per the process outlined in section *4.3.6 Dealing with applicants*.

RSOs can only provide applicants with information about where to find the Round 8 guidelines and other published information and how to apply. The RSOs will need to be conscious of maintaining relationships and will need to explain the reasons why they cannot provide specific advice when a round is open is to ensure that the process upholds the key principles of transparency, accountability and impartiality. These key principles are the foundation for the continuation of the ARP.

4.5 PRINCIPLE 5 – VALUE FOR MONEY

Obtaining value for money is enhanced when there is open competition, and the market is tested regularly. Processes that are designed to attract responses from the marketplace (for example, Expressions of Interest, calls for proposals) may lead to poor outcomes for a project if not conducted appropriately. Impartial, open and competitive processes are an important stepping stone in achieving value for money (ICAC – Dec 1996).

Advertising

Advertising coverage should be considered appropriate when DBCA as the coordinating agency is satisfied that the reach and penetration of advertising is sufficient to ensure there is minimal opportunity for potential applicants to be unaware of the program.