Getting grant ready

Phase 3 is currently being designed informed by discussions with current partners and stakeholders and guided by the ARP Reference Group. This process includes the development of detailed round guidelines that will contain funding parameters, assessment criteria and eligibility prerequisites.

Until these are designed and endorsed the ARP does not have specific details about what the round will look like, but there is still work organisations can do to get ready for the opening of a grant round. This document provides general guidance for the application process that organisations can consider now to get prepared for when the round opens.

In distributing State government funds, the ARP will require documentation to be included in your application that assures the assessment panel the money will be appropriately spent. Over rounds one to eight the ARP has continually tried to streamline and simplify the application form and will continue to do so informed by feedback while retaining the fields that are essential to check for eligibility and ensure a fair assessment process. A significant amount of time is still required from organisations to complete the form, and organisations should plan ahead for this.

1. Are you ready to write a grant application?

Writing a grant is often a team effort, with different specialty skills and knowledge required to give your application the best chance. It can take time for the team to gather all the information required.

The following documentation will *likely* be needed to attach to an ARP grant application.

- Maps, ideally shapefiles – to let the panel know exactly where you plan to work.
- Access permissions – if the land you are working on is not your own, you will need to give evidence you have permission from landowners and/or managers for the land you plan to work on.
- Letters of support and engagement – if you plan to work in partnership with other organisations it's a good idea to demonstrate those partnerships and what that will entail. It can take time to negotiate these partnerships so allow time for that.
- Cultural permission – if your organisation is not the current PBC, RC or RNTBC you will need to provide proof of cultural authority from these groups if they exist.

Planning now to attach the above, will save last minute pressure when a round is open.

Budget

Detailed budgets will be required for all aspects of expenditure that are part of the project. Cost estimates for all items will be required, including potential increases to costs over time (e.g. wage increases).

Costs might include things such as:

- Ranger wages including all on costs, pay increases and superannuation
- Support staff wages
- Mentor wages
- Consultation with and payments to Elders
- Insurance
- Administration and office needs
- Auditing

- Equipment and materials linked to your deliverables
- Storage for equipment
- Travel and on-Country trip costs
- Training and costs to do training
- Uniforms and personal protective equipment
- Vehicles and safety equipment for your vehicle

- Fuel and vehicle maintenance
- Trailers
- IT equipment, databases and software
- Specialist support (e.g. consultants)
- Support for staff in remote housing if needed
- Attendance and travel to ranger forums

Partnerships

Whilst not mandatory, developing partnerships early may provide opportunities to expand capacity building, investment and work opportunities. Many ranger groups partner with community groups, research institutions, philanthropic organisations landholders or land managers. You should discuss your project idea in detail with partners; don't assume they will support it. If you plan to work on land DBCA manages or partner with DBCA on any aspect of your project, it's important to talk with the local DBCA office to discuss your plans and what if any support DBCA can potentially provide if you are successful. Feedback has shown that letters of support and building partnerships are the part of a funding application that can take the longest time.

2. Are you ready to write an _awesome_ grant application?

Each round of the ARP has been very competitive, with more requests for funding than funds available. Sometimes even good projects miss out. Consider the following to take your application from good to excellent and improve the chance of success.

- Clearly define the project and **what** it will achieve. What do you expect the impact to be over the life of the project, by the end of the project and long term? Who or what will benefit from your project? Why is the project important? What is being achieved? Ensure your deliverables are linked to outcomes and to overall ARP objectives.
- A deliverable is something that is measurable and usually linked to social, cultural or environmental outcomes. For example, irradicating weeds from a specified geographic area by an agreed date. Think about how you might measure each deliverable so you can demonstrate achievement.

- Clearly explain the project and **<u>how</u>** you plan to do it. Explain the steps you will take to make it happen, from beginning to end, and set and describe goals for each year.
- Demonstrate that the project is strategic and meets community's priorities and desires. Is this project supported by a plan developed by community? Gather evidence of community support – projects that can demonstrate this and have been sought after by community are well received. How can you demonstrate this to the assessment panel?
- Demonstrate your ability to achieve what you plan to do. Gather information about your organisation's capacity to deliver what you have in mind – have you done something similar? Do you have partners that will provide support? What resources will you need? Do you have sound governance arrangements in place or will the funding allow you to grow this and how will you reflect this in your deliverables over time? Is it well planned, thought out and realistic to where your organisation is at the moment?
- Think about your team. Do you have existing on-going staff or will you need to recruit new people? What will this look like? What resources will you need? How long will this take?
- Make sure you're applying for a standalone project or one that has very clear work and financial boundaries to avoid any doubling up of funding and to make reporting easier and clearer.
- Explain how you will measure progress as you go. How will you know if it is going well? What could you put in place to prepare for it not going well?
- Think about how you will evidence your work and achievements each year – this will be important for reporting if you are successful. Think about ways you can provide proof of your work (videos, trip reports, maps, interviews). Planning for this upfront will mean you can include this in your works throughout the year.
- Build an argument for why your project is value for money. Make sure your budgets are realistic and based on sound planning, consultation and research or previous experience. Detailed budgets including all aspects of a ranger program that are not already provided elsewhere ensures the program can thrive and does not place undue burden on your organisation. Also start to think about how your budget links to what your program is committing to doing. For example, if you are saying that you will conduct weed management of cultural sites have you considered adequate training; personal protective gear; chemical and other materials; travel to site for planning and works.
- Ensure any claims you make are realistic and substantiated and provide evidence that backs up what you say. Vague statements and exaggerated claims make it difficult for the assessment panel to have confidence the funding would be a good investment.
- As soon as the application form is open, read all the questions carefully and check you understand what the assessment panel is looking for. Seek clarification early if it is needed. Try not to repeat yourself; each criterion seeks different information, so make sure you address what each asks. You can also download the application form as a pdf for ease of preparation and review.
- Your application will likely be one of many. Be clear and succinct about what you want to achieve. Having unnecessary information in your application can make it harder to assess.
- Take time to provide quality, specific, detailed and relevant information for all the questions. Remember that responses to the assessment criteria will be scored and ranked against other applicants.

- Make your application compelling. Ensure the information you supply is accurate, factual and credible and shows you've talked with all the right people.
- Before submitting an application check and double check! Consider finding someone who is not familiar with your idea to proofread your application and make sure it can be understood by someone who doesn't know anything about it, that all claims are backed with evidence and all attachments are there. Assessors can only assess what you submit and there are limitations around seeking additional information from applicants.
- Start early and submit early. Leaving a funding application to the last day may lead to a less considered application, errors and stress. Try to start as early as you can.

3. Will your organisation be ready to run a ranger program?

There is a big rush of excitement when you are successfully awarded a grant but there are many things to think about ahead of time to make sure the rush turns into reality and that your organisation can deliver what it said it would.

Sound planning should help you decide if the idea is realistic and feasible.

If you are successful you will enter a legally binding funding agreement with the State of Western Australia, in which you agree to carry out what you said you would in the grant application, by an agreed timeframe and within the budget you provided. Funding agreements are based on the *Western Australian Grants Administration Guidelines 2022* and an example of what the agreement might look like is available here.

Each year you'll be required to prepare a plan and budget for what you intend to achieve in the coming year. Over the life of the grant, you'll also need to provide progress and annual reports each year to describe how you're going meeting what's in your annual plan and how you're going with expenditure. Annual reports will need evidence of what you've achieved each year as well as an independent auditor's report demonstrating that the financial reports you provide each year are accurate. Planning and reporting will take administration resources and audit costs (one audit per year).

Running a ranger program is a big commitment in terms of staffing and coordination, which some organisations might not be ready to take on. You'll need to roll out human resource policies and procedures including job descriptions and job safety assessments, uniforms and personal protective equipment, training, career development and some staff might need some assistance getting job ready.

You may like to think about a staged approach. This will allow your organisation time to build, for example there may be a focus on planning, recruitment, human resources, training and purchasing in the first few months. Even with detailed planning, getting prepared to run a ranger team can take many months or years. All organisations and their situations are different so consider your organisation's capacity, resources and support and account for this in your timelines.

4. Do you have cultural authority to apply for a grant?

To be awarded State government funding evidence of the approval of the legally recognised PBCs, RNTBCs or RCs, if they exist, will be required. More detail will be provided in the guidelines when they are released. In the meantime, you have the opportunity to contact the relevant organisations discuss your priorities and ideas.

5. Is this the right grant for you?

When the grant guidelines are released they will contain parameters about what the money can be used for, what will be funded and what will not, what kind of projects will be considered, and what you need to provide to be eligible.

This will be an important time to check if the ARP is the right grant for your organisation. Before starting the application you should make sure your project idea aligns with the program's objectives, as outlined in the guidelines.

Consider carefully if there may be other sources of funding or ways to achieve your goals.

6. Advice from others

Our recipients have told us getting letters of support from partners, including PBCs, RNTBCs and RCs, and permission from landowners and managers is the most time-consuming part of the process.

Some recommend getting a grant writer.

7. Other

Applications for ARP funding in Phase 3 will be made through the SmartyGrants online portal. It is free to set up an account. If you haven't got an account already, consider signing up in advance of the round opening, get familiar with it and read some of their help advice and articles (SmartyGrants | Home.)

Summary

Has the community identified there is a need for a ranger program?

Does the project idea have input from and support of the Elders?

Is the project well defined? Do you know what you want to do?

Do you know how you will do it? How much will it cost?

Is it feasible? Has there been a business or other plan done? Is the organisation ready to take on this project?

Are you ready to write an outstanding grant application? Will you have all the required information by the closing date?

Is this the right grant for you?

Go for it! We can't wait to hear your ideas.