



ABORIGINAL RANGER PROGRAM

ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

ROUND 5 EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The assessment process and methodology for Round 5 Expressions of Interest (EOI) under the Aboriginal Ranger Program will be guided by this document.

1. Overview of the program

The Aboriginal Ranger Program (ARP) was launched in 2017 with \$20 million over five years. In 2021 the Government committed to build on the success of the ARP with an additional \$50 million of funding over four years. Under this expansion, support for Aboriginal ranger operations will now be focussed under three funding streams – the ARP Development Fund, the ARP Expansion Fund, and the ARP Innovation Fund.

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 to better meet the demand for ranger work.
- To leverage funds from other State and Commonwealth agencies, industry and philanthropic groups.

Under Round 5, up to \$10 million is available to support new and emerging ranger groups under the new ARP Development Fund. This fund has been created to provide targeted support to new and emerging ranger programs, to establish capacity and create new jobs. The key objectives of this funding stream are:

- To enable more Aboriginal communities across Western Australia to establish ranger programs and create jobs to look after country
- Assist the preservation of Aboriginal heritage and traditional knowledge in more places across Western Australia to enhance joint management of the State's diverse biodiversity values
- Support and empower Aboriginal organisations to help them build sound foundations for a longer-term ranger program

There is a total of \$14 million that will be made available under the Development over at least two funding rounds. In 2022, \$10 million of this fund will be allocated through Round 5, and the other \$4 million through another grant opportunity in 2023.

Funding under Round 5 is available for the planning and development of new ranger programs (small grants) and to support new and emerging ranger programs (large grants) across the State, including the Perth metropolitan area.

Expressions of Interest to the Aboriginal Ranger Program for the Development Fund will be open from 24 July 2022 until 19 August 2022. Applications can only be made online via DBCA's SmartyGrants portal.

Aboriginal Ranger Program *Expression of Interest Guidelines Round 5* (the Guidelines) will be made available for download during this time at www.dbca.wa.gov.au/aboriginalrangerprogram.

2. Internal administrative procedures

Meetings with applicants

All meetings with applicants that seek to discuss or clarify matters regarding the EOI process, assessment or methodology are to have in attendance the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator or Executive 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.

All agreed items discussed and actions arising from meetings will be recorded including:

- meeting details;
- attendance;
- decisions and recommendations made;
- actions agreed; and
- responsibility and time frame.

Any meetings with applicants that the seeks to gather operational or logistical information in relation to the specific content of an application (project details) 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.

Records Maintenance

Dealing With applicants - Correspondence (General)

Copies of all incoming and outgoing material will be held on secure online folders and/or in the nominated corporate file.

Incoming Material

- Original hardcopies received will be stamped with date and time of receipt and record of file number. The original of hardcopy material will be placed on file.
- Copies of electronic material received (email, for example) will be printed and placed on file, with date and time of receipt clearly indicated.

Outgoing Material

- Copy will be retained on file.

- The copy on file will indicate the method of dispatch (i.e. email, courier, etc.)
- All outgoing material will contain the file reference number.

3. Applicant enquiries protocol

Dealing with applicants – Enquiries

All enquiries from applicants will be required to be submitted in writing. All written enquiries will comply with the procedure regarding 'Correspondence (General)'.

The Enquiries Protocol requires that all enquiries by applicants be submitted in writing to the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator. The Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator will accept verbal enquiries but may require the person to send the enquiry in writing at his/her discretion.

The original of the applicant's enquiry will be placed in the relevant file by the Executive Officers after updating the Enquiries Register. The Executive Officers will, thereafter, prepare an initial draft response and will arrange for it to be reviewed by the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator.

All responses to the applicants will be in writing, signed (or email signature as appropriate) by the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator or Executive Officers.

The Executive Officers will update the Enquires Register with the response action.

The Executive Officers will produce a written report as appropriate to the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator, detailing the enquiries received and action taken. Where the enquiry is deemed by the Executive Officers to be confidential in nature, this enquiry shall be immediately referred to the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator for action.

Dealing with applicants - General advice

In accordance with the Enquiry Protocol above, each enquiry received from applicants will be reviewed by the Executive Officers to determine whether the enquiry is of a confidential or general nature. Where there is any ambiguity, this determination is to be made in consultation with the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator and Probity Auditor.

Where the enquiry is agreed to be of a general nature, a 'General Advice to all Registered Applicants' will be released to all applicants as soon as possible.

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 Officers.

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.

4. Office security

General

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 Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator to ensure that reasonable precautions are taken to prevent the unauthorised disclosure of information by Government agencies and regional managers of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to which applications are referred.

In referring applications to Government agency staff and DBCA regional managers, confidential information will be redacted.

All office files will be established in accordance with 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.

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 Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator.

Any documents, files or copies of applications that are given to Panel members should be identified by number and signed out by the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator or Executive Officers. Panel members are to notify in writing to the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator or Executive Officers if they print any documents from SmartyGrants and confirm in writing when such documents have been appropriately destroyed.

Computer Security

The computer environments containing confidential procurement 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.

5. Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest

Each application, including communication with applicants, is to be viewed as confidential and is not to be disclosed prior to the completion of the assessment process.

Each person having access to confidential assessment information are to provide the Aboriginal Ranger Coordinator with a signed confidentiality statement and a declaration that 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 Aboriginal Ranger Coordinator throughout the EOI process.

Individuals directly involved with the assessment of specific applications in SmartyGrants, such as the shortlisting officers, Assessment Panel, regional representatives and officers of other government agencies, will declare if they have any conflict of interest regarding individual applications through the relevant SmartyGrants form.

Register

A conflict of interest register will be established, maintained and reviewed during the EOI process, including the appropriate strategies to manage each conflict.

6. Probity

In the interests of all parties involved, a probity auditor has been appointed to determine whether the process is conducted according to the Guidelines and to provide a level of independent assurance that the process has been undertaken with due regard to legislative obligations, codes of ethics and conduct and the Guidelines.

The probity auditor addresses accepted principles of probity relating to:

- confidentiality and conflict of interest;
- impartiality
- transparency of the process;
- accountability; and
- value for money.

The probity auditor provides advice to the Assessment Panel and Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator in relation to these issues and applicants can also discuss any probity concerns they have directly with the Probity Auditor.

7. Establishment and role of Assessment Panel

An Assessment Panel comprising representatives from DBCA and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, will be established prior to the closing date. The members of the panel will represent a broad range of skills and experience related to Aboriginal rangers and are as follows:

- Executive Director, Parks and Visitor Services Division (Panel Chair - Voting)
- Coordinator, Aboriginal Ranger Program (Voting)
- Coordinator, Aboriginal Engagement and Heritage Unit (Voting)
- A representative of the DBCA Native Title Unit (Voting)

- Other (x 2), DBCA or external, technical/regional/cultural/ policy advisors (Voting)
- Probity Auditor (Independent - Non-voting)
- Executive Officers (Non-voting)

Equitable representation of Aboriginal people and women will be considered in the appointment of the Assessment Panel.

8. Procedure for assessment

The procedure for assessment is as follows:



Receipt of applications

All applications to the Aboriginal Ranger Program lodged online will be sent an automatic email confirming receipt of their application. No physical copies of applications will be accepted.

Shortlisting

Shortlisting of applicants will be based on an evaluation against the following Assessment Criteria identified in the Guidelines:

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA		WEIGHTING
1	Clear potential for positive social, cultural and environmental outcomes that supports the conservation of significant environmental and/or cultural values and/or addresses an identified conservation, land management, or community need.	30
	Reasonable and achievable project goals with sound potential to add value to the local community and/or region where the project is located. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Those applying for small grants may propose goals that are more high-level or general in nature (for example, 'to develop a feasibility plan for a ranger program', or 'to train and build organisational capacity to support a future ranger program').</i>• <i>Those applying for large grants should demonstrate more specific or targeted goals, ideally linked to under other business/cultural plans, strategies or objectives for the area, and provide specific employment, training and cultural outcomes from the project.</i>	30
4	Strong community buy-in and/or partnership support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Those applying for small grants should evidence a documented history of the aspiration to commence a ranger program, and/or evidence of strong community and Traditional Owner (TO) support for a program.</i>• <i>Those applying for large grants should demonstrate a clear plan for sourcing partnerships and opportunities for revenue generation, that will compliment the delivery and/or expansion of their program, and include any partnerships and funding already leveraged. It should also outline how it aims to integrate local community and TO involvement or support.</i>	25
6	Sound planning and ability to manage the project <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Those applying for small grants should provide a basic plan of how they will manage and deliver the project and report on expenditure.</i>• <i>Those applying for large grants should provide a sound project framework and implementation plan as well as evidence of arrangements for project oversight, governance and administration (including reporting) of the project, and demonstrate adequate capacity to deliver.</i>	15
	TOTAL	100%

In shortlisting against the Assessment Criteria, applications will be categorised according to the following, and assessed separately:

- Small or large application;
- previous recipients of ARP funding or not; and
- by each Aboriginal representative body region.

Applications will be scored against each criterion using the scoring legend zero to nine identified in Section 9 Assessment Methodology. An average score for each criterion will be determined by combining the individual scores. A total score will be determined by aggregating the average scores determined for each criterion.

The top 50 percent of each category in each Aboriginal representative body region will progress to detailed assessment by the Assessment Panel (see Assessment below). The Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator, in discussion with the Chair, may also refer other applications to the Assessment Panel for consideration if conflict of interest or other potential contentious issues were noted in the shortlisting report. The Assessment Panel will determine if these applications are to be assessed and scored in detail together with the shortlisted applications.

Comments may be provided which can be used in providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants as well as to inform evaluation by the Assessment Panel.

Shortlisting will be undertaken by two non-voting Executive Officers. The Executive Officers will identify the relevant State Government agencies to which the shortlisted applications will be referred and any confidential information not to be disclosed.

Referral of applications

The Assessment Panel will seek advice from within DBCA and from relevant Government agencies on the shortlisted 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.

Shortlisted applications will be referred to the Assessment Panel, relevant Government agencies and DBCA regional managers immediately once shortlisted. The Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator is responsible for referring applications.

Advice received from DBCA regional managers and relevant Government agencies will be referred to the Assessment Panel for consideration.

Assessment

Shortlisted applications will be assessed against the following Assessment Criteria identified in the Guidelines:

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA		WEIGHTING
1	Clear potential for positive social, cultural and environmental outcomes that supports the conservation of significant environmental and/or cultural values and/or addresses an identified conservation, land management, or community need.	30

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA		WEIGHTING
	<p>Reasonable and achievable project goals with sound potential to add value to the local community and/or region where the project is located.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Those applying for small grants may propose goals that are more high-level or general in nature (for example, ‘to develop a feasibility plan for a ranger program’, or ‘to train and build organisational capacity to support a future ranger program’).</i> • <i>Those applying for large grants should demonstrate more specific or targeted goals, ideally linked to under other business/cultural plans, strategies or objectives for the area, and provide specific employment, training and cultural outcomes from the project.</i> 	30
4	<p>Strong community buy-in and/or partnership support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Those applying for small grants should evidence a documented history of the aspiration to commence a ranger program, and/or evidence of strong community and Traditional Owner (TO) support for a program.</i> • <i>Those applying for large grants should demonstrate a clear plan for sourcing partnerships and opportunities for revenue generation, that will compliment the delivery and/or expansion of their program, and include any partnerships and funding already leveraged. It should also outline how it aims to integrate local community and TO involvement or support.</i> 	25
6	<p>Sound planning and ability to manage the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Those applying for small grants should provide a basic plan of how they will manage and deliver the project and report on expenditure.</i> • <i>Those applying for large grants should provide a sound project framework and implementation plan as well as evidence of arrangements for project oversight, governance and administration (including reporting) of the project, and demonstrate adequate capacity to deliver.</i> 	15
	TOTAL	100%

Applicants should address each criterion as part of completing the Expression of Interest application form. Failure to satisfactorily address all the criteria or demonstrate how they will be addressed prior to the allocation of funding may result in the application being considered non-compliant.

In this round, the ARP will also take into consideration during the assessment and approval process, the following:

- The commitment to employment of Aboriginal people and organisations in all roles and services;
- The potential to support the growth of women rangers;
- Projects that demonstrate integration (e.g. integrated weed and feral animal management programs); and
- If a previous recipient of ARP funding, the ability to meet its obligations of the funding agreement.

An additional principle of fairness will also be applied which will consider a geographic spread of successful applicants across the State. DBCA may also have regard to the

potential to support wider government, environmental, Aboriginal partnership and economic priorities, and value for money.

The State Government reserves the right to determine the amount of funding allocated to small grants and large grants.

Applicants will also be required to meet the eligibility requirements of the Program, including demonstrated support of the Traditional Owners for the program location; comply with the conditions in the Guidelines; and have appropriate insurances¹ in order to be recommended as suitable for funding.

The assessment will be made in accordance with the Assessment Methodology identified below (see Section 9).

The advice received from State Government agencies and DBCA regional managers and any relevant additional information available to DBCA will be considered by the Panel during the assessment.

Assessment Panel may seek clarification from applicants

The Assessment Panel may request that an applicant amend their project, including as a result of further consultation or to consolidate the project with other similar or complementary projects. 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.

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.

Notification of applicants

All applicants will be informed in writing of the status of their applications 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 applications. Feedback cannot include a direct comparison to any other application because all applications are treated in strict confidence except where the law requires otherwise.

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

9. Assessment methodology

DBCA is using a competitive process to allocate funding under the Aboriginal Ranger Program that allows for applicants to use their own initiative to develop applications that will

¹ DBCA may request additional insurances if they are not provided but are relevant to the project.

meet the outcomes of the Program and the aspirations of Aboriginal organisations and communities.

In assessing applications, all information requested in the Round 5 EOI, and any relevant additional information available to DBCA, provided by other Government agencies, or provided by applicants in response to the EOI, will be taken into account. A scoring system will be used to assess the applications, including the shortlisting process. 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.

In assessing shortlisted applications, all 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. The aggregate of these average scores will form a total score for each applicant, which will be used in the final assessment of applications to form the recommendation to the Minister.

Determining the successful applicants

Following the assessment and scoring by the Assessment Panel, applications are ranked according to their total score for each category. The panel will then consider which applicants to recommend to the Minister as preferred applicants by applying a principle of fairness that takes into account the geographic spread of successful projects across the State, as well as the other relevant considerations outlined in the EOI Guidelines.. The amount of funding requested and the amount available will also be considered in this context. Based on the total scores, at least one project will be recommended for each Aboriginal representative body region.

The Assessment Panel will only make recommendations to the Minister for Environment. The Assessment Panel 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 will be successful. The Governance for the process is as set out in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Governance for the assessment process.

