WAVES OF FUNDING

The NSW coast and estuaries are some of our greatest assets and they are a complex and diverse environment to manage. With increasing pressure due to population growth in these areas, it has never been more important to manage the beautiful coastline and estuaries of New South Wales.

The New South Wales Government established a new regulatory framework with the introduction of a *Coastal Management Act*. In conjunction with the coastal reform package, it will support local councils to develop a strategic and integrated coastal management program to improve the resilience of coastal communities and drive innovative climate change adaptation.

As part of the coastal reforms, a funding package of $83.6 million was announced for Coastal Management from 2016-17 to 2020-21. The Coastal and Estuary Grants Program is part of this package. $9.5 million has been allocated to assist local government with the development of plans and $63.2 million for the implementation of actions identified in those plans.

The Coastal and Estuary Grants program is administered by the Office of Environment and Heritage. There are two categories of funding under the program that are available to local government.
- Planning (Stream 1)
- Implementation
  - Stream 2 – Coastal Vulnerability area
  - Stream 3 – Coastal Wetlands and Littoral Rainforests
  - Stream 4 – Coastal Environment area
  - Stream 5 – Coastal Use area

What needs to be in a successful application

Read the Program Guidelines - they will assist in completing the application form, in understanding the process and the eligibility of the work to be undertaken. The Program Guidelines change each year.

Plan the project – before opening up the application form and typing away, it is critical to plan the project, what resources are needed, who needs to be involved, what will it cost, how long will it take, what outcomes are expected, how will the work be maintained.

Speak to OEH regional representatives about the project – they have considerable technical knowledge on delivering projects, grant requirements and project costs. Grants staff are also available for questions.

Engage with the community – If the project delivery will impact the community, engage with them from the beginning and gain support prior to applying for the work.

Keep in mind the program objectives – if the program objectives are not being met then the project is unlikely to get funding.

Develop project objectives to frame the project and to measure success. Clear objectives should be SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely.

Listing well thought through objectives in the application provides clarity and understanding of the project and what it will deliver.

Provide detail in the application form - why the project is needed, what are the current issues at the location, what will the outcomes and benefits of the projects be, what will the result be if the project is not undertaken.

Provide clear and detailed information on the project. Don't assume that people reading and assessing the application are familiar with the specifics of the project location and the approach being proposed.

Provide a map – of the location of the project, also provide photos if they will help explain the issues – a picture paints a thousand words.

Research and accurately estimate the budget - before submitting the application. Ensure the budget reflects the costs as accurately as possible and that all activities that are required are included in the project plan/budget.

Cost-effective – many issues can be addressed in a number of ways, choosing an option that is cost-effective for the outcomes it produces is essential. Grant funding will be allocated to cost-effective solutions to solve a problem, but not to deliver in excess of what is needed to address the issue.

Get high level support – projects with support from senior executives within council will generally result in the project running more smoothly, as when issues arise there is agency drive behind getting the project back on track.

Seek feedback – on your application. Another set of eyes will highlight any areas that need additional clarity or that are not well thought through.

Linkages – outline how the project links with other work being undertaken in the area. This not only shows commitment to the work, but also adds value to the individual project outcomes.

Working together – develop and secure partnerships to assist to deliver the project. Ensuring the right people/organisations are involved and working on the project builds confidence in the project concept being delivered.

What makes a good project under the Coastal and Estuary Grants Program?

Many different types of projects are funded under the Coastal and Estuary Grants program. With almost 250 grants having been awarded over the last five years, there is a wide range of activities being undertaken across the state. Some examples of projects that may attract funding are:

- Development of a Coastal Management Program
- Dune rehabilitation to its natural state
- Riparian Revegetation and bank stabilisation

- Creek and river rehabilitation where there is a significant impact on estuarine health
- Rehabilitation of wetlands
- Access management and reduction to access points
- Infrastructure installation to reduce coastal erosion
- Actions to improve natural resilience to impacts from coastal hazards
- Actions to improve water quality in estuaries where they can demonstrably show an improvement to the estuary
- Monitoring to deliver future actions to improve estuary health
- Innovative new ways to address long standing issues

What is unlikely to be funded

Each application is assessed on its merit and in line with the program guidelines and assessment criteria. Projects like the following are not likely to attract funding:

- Actions that are not identified in a certified CZMP or CMP (for Streams 2 to 5)
- Amenity projects that have no environmental benefit
- Ongoing monitoring without clear actions to improve the health of the estuary
- Projects that are expensive in relation to others that come in under the program
- Projects that are currently underway (unless they are a stage of a previously approved project and the work has not commenced on the stage being applied for)
- Small projects that can reasonably be expected to undertake without financial assistance from this program
- Maintenance of projects once complete, this includes maintenance of existing infrastructure for its design life
- Elements of projects with no direct linkage to a reduction in risk associated with coastal processes but might be located within a Coastal Vulnerability Area, such as car parking, footpaths, BBQ facilities, seating, shelters, lighting, amenity sheds, showers, toilets
- Projects that are in the freshwater environment, unless they can be shown to be a significant contributor to improved estuary health
- Projects that are not well designed or thought through
- Native vegetation clearance

Managing a successful project

As Grant Fund Managers, OEH needs to be accountable for every decision made in relation to a project or grant. If information is being requested - it's to ensure the state funding is being managed with good governance principles. Good governance and the

delivery of high quality projects is one of the best ways to be looked upon favourably for future funding.

Good project planning at the outset and tracking performance during delivery is the best way to ensure high quality project outputs.

OEH wants projects to be successful and we enjoy seeing the work councils do. The photos and videos of the project successes are interesting as are the challenges being dealt with. All this insight to projects will make us better at what we do