2015-16 Public Reserves Management Fund Program – Fact Sheet

March 2015

Overview

The Public Reserves Management Fund Program (PRMFP) provides financial support for the development, maintenance and improvement of public reserves. PRMFP funds are allocated each financial year to reserve managers through a robust assessment process.

More than $150m has been allocated by the NSW Government from the Public Reserves Management Fund over the last 10 years. This funding has supported important initiatives such as the maintenance of showgrounds and community halls, the improvement of local parks and reserves and the development of Crown caravan parks.

As the value of applications received is typically twice that of the available funds, priority is given to those applications which best address the prescribed assessment criteria. Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be considered.

The PRMFP application, assessment, payments and reporting processes are described in detail below.

Eligibility (Applicant and Project)

Managers of any NSW Crown reserve, as well as freehold showgrounds, schools of arts and commons, may be eligible to apply to the PRMFP.

The round will be open to all project types as follows:

• General projects – showgrounds (including freehold), caravan parks, state parks, schools of arts, commons, and local parks and reserves
• Pests projects – works on Crown reserves only
• Weeds projects – works on Crown reserves only

The Application Process

There will be only one round for the 2015-16 PRMFP:

• Applications will be accepted from 9am on Monday 9 March 2015
• Applications will close at 5pm on Friday 10 April 2015 (there are no extensions)

Instructions for accessing the online application form are available on the Crown Lands website: www.crownland.nsw.gov.au.

It is in the interests of applicants to ensure that they:

• Allow adequate time to submit their application by the closing date – no extensions will be given
• Provide comprehensive and accurate information in the form, answering all relevant questions
• Attach all relevant documentation e.g. applications without the specified quotes will be ineligible
• Ensure reports for previous PRMFP projects (completed by anyone in your organisation) are up to date. Applicant organisations with outstanding reports will be ineligible

**The Assessment Process**

**Key steps in the process**

Each application received before the closing date will be assessed as follows:

1. All applications will be reviewed by the PRMFP Team to ensure they are complete and eligible for consideration

2. The applications will be provided to the relevant local Crown Lands office (for general projects) or specialist area (for pests and weeds projects) for initial assessment

3. The Crown Lands regional offices will liaise with their local offices to assess and rank the applications for general projects from their respective areas

4. Applications will be subject to specialist assessment as required:
   - Pests and weeds projects will be reviewed and ranked by multi-agency expert panels
   - All loan applications will be further assessed to ensure the applicant has the ability to service the loan
   - All applications totalling more than $0.500m will be further assessed in relation to the project methodology, technical feasibility, risks and the value for money of the proposed solution

5. The regional and specialist area assessments will be combined for a final, corporate review and ranking by the PRMFP Assessment Committee (PAC)

6. The recommendations of the PAC will be considered by the Minister in the form of a budget and expenditure submission

**Assessment methodology**

A set of assessment criteria (refer below) will be used throughout the assessment process to assist in determining:

1. Whether the application is eligible for consideration in the process e.g. is from an authorised manager of a public reserve
2. The ability of the applicant to deliver the proposed activity and to meet the associated governance obligations
3. The merits of the proposed activity e.g. the nature of the problems it will address and/or the benefits to the community it will deliver
4. The relative priority (ranking) of those applications deemed to have sufficient merit

Where two or more applications have been assessed with similar scores, allocation of their relative rank will be informed by the following:

- Activities that address public safety and/or work health and safety requirements are generally the highest priority
- Activities that benefit Crown land are preferred to those affecting freehold land
- Loans (greater than $0.100m) are preferred to grants (where the loan can be serviced)
- Applications that include matched funding

An application’s final ranking will determine whether or not it can be supported from the available funds.

**Assessment criteria overview**

All applicants and their respective applications will be assessed against the Common Criteria. Applications which are for pests or weeds activities will also be assessed against the relevant Specific Criteria.

Eligibility criteria are evaluated on a ‘yes/no’ basis, where an answer of ‘no’ to any of these will mean that the application is ineligible for funding consideration. Assessable criteria are evaluated on a weighted score basis.
Common criteria – reserve manager

The eligibility criteria are:
• The application is authorised by the official manager of a public reserve.
• The reserve manager has the capability and capacity to ensure the activity is effectively, efficiently and safely completed.
• The reserve manager has no outstanding PRMFP project reports.
• The reserve manager has the ability to meet all the terms of the loan (if relevant).
• Appropriate financial information has been included in the application. Applicants seeking between $10,000 - $50,000 are required to provide information on their financial position, while those seeking greater than $50,000 are required to submit a detailed financial summary statement, which can be downloaded during the application process.

The assessable criteria are:
• The reserve manager has a good (or bad) record in relation to the delivery of previous PRMFP supported activities.
• The reserve manager has a good (or bad) record in relation to making repayments on previous and/or current PRMFP loans.
• The reserve manager has met its governance obligations e.g. annual reporting.
• The reserve manager could not readily fund the activity from their own cash reserves or from another, more appropriate, funding source (for grants).

Common criteria – activity

The eligibility criteria are:
• At least one written quote must be provided for each activity element (distinct activity within the project) costing $30,000 or under, with at least 3 written quotes* required for elements over $30,000 up to $250,000. Quotes must provide a breakdown of the GST component. Amounts over $250,000 will require an acceptable cost estimate and a commitment (i.e. a strategy) for procurement via a competitive public tender.
  o Please note – if you do not provide the required quotes your application will be ineligible for funding.
  o Cost estimates will be accepted from Councils where they are the reserve manager and will be undertaking the work themselves. The document provided must clearly indicate this and provide a comprehensive breakdown of costs.
  o Appropriately detailed cost estimates or budget breakdowns may be accepted from other reserve managers in certain cases (by prior arrangement with Crown Lands only – written confirmation will be provided)
  o Reserve managers in remote locations may be granted an exemption in respect to the need for 3 quotes (at least 1 will be required). Please contact Crown Lands urgently if you wish to request this exemption – Crown Lands will provide written confirmation.
• The activity is consistent with the Public Reserves Management Fund Act 1987. Specifically, that it is for the cost of the:
  o purchase or acquisition of land required for public reserves
  o maintenance, improvement or development of public reserves, or the
  o remuneration (including travelling expenses) of an administrator appointed under Division 7 of Part 5 of the Crown Lands Act 1989

The assessable criteria are:
• The activity will advance the purpose of the reserve.
• The activity will enhance the financial sustainability of the reserve.
• The activity will address one or more of the PRMFP objectives.
• The activity will address one or more of the PRMFP priorities.
• The activity will fix a significant problem and/or meet a legislative or regulatory requirement.
• The activity will deliver substantial benefits to user groups and/or the broader community.
• The activity is supported by user groups, the local community, council, sponsors or other funding programs.
Specific eligibility criteria – pests and weeds

The additional eligibility criteria for both pests and weeds applications is:
- The activity will occur on Crown land

Specific assessable criteria – pests

The additional assessable criteria for pest applications are, the:
- Activity will address a problem on land managed under one of the following arrangements (from highest to lowest score)
  - Unmanaged
  - Trust
  - Council
  - Landcare group
  - Local Land Services
  - Common
- Severity of the pest/s and potential to spread and/or degrade agricultural land, natural vegetation, community land etc.
- Activity addresses objectives of the NSW Invasive Species Plan
- Activity is compatible with the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy and/or NSW National Parks Regional Pest Management Strategy
- Activity demonstrates “best practice” in pest management control as recommended by DPI or Local Control Authorities
- Activity leads to long term control of identified pest animals
- Activity is collaborative and/or attracts funding from Local Land Services
- Activity attracts contributions from agencies, trusts, community groups or other parties in kind or cash
- Activity outlines process to monitor effectiveness and achievement of the control measures
- Stakeholders are committed to implementing follow up work to provide long term control of identified pest animals

Specific assessable criteria – weeds

The additional assessable criteria for weed applications are, the:
- Activity will address a problem on land managed under one of the following arrangements (from highest to lowest score)
  - Unmanaged
  - Trust
  - Council
  - Landcare group
  - Local Land Services
  - Common
- Severity of weed and potential to spread and/or degrade agricultural land, natural vegetation, community land etc.
- Activity addresses objectives of the NSW Invasive Species Plan (NSWISP)
- Activity is compatible with the Regional Weeds Strategy and NSW Weeds Action Program
- Activity demonstrates “best practice” in weed management control as recommended by DPI or Local Control Authorities
- Activity leads to long term control of identified weeds
- Activity is collaborative and/or attracts funding from Local Land Services
- Activity attracts contributions from agencies, trusts, community groups or other parties in kind or cash
- Activity outlines process to monitor effectiveness and achievement of the control measures
- Stakeholders are committed to implementing follow up work to provide long term control of identified weeds
Objectives of the PRMFP

The objectives of the PRMFP are to:

- Maintain and develop recreational and tourism facilities on public reserves for community use and enjoyment.
- Facilitate improved management of community facilities on public reserves, including community halls, showgrounds and parks.
- Manage and renovate infrastructure and other assets on public reserves to optimise value to the community and comply with regulatory obligations, in particular to ensure public safety and work health and safety is maintained on Crown reserves.
- Enhance environmental assets by supporting conservation initiatives, bushfire management and weed and pest control on public reserves.
- Support business opportunities that realise the potential of the Crown land estate, support regional economies and promote greater financial sustainability.
- Support the important role that volunteers play in the ongoing management of the Crown reserve system, and
- Ensure the PRMFP is self-sustaining and managed in a contemporary and efficient manner, with appropriate planning and administrative processes.

Priorities for 2015-16

The following types of activities are priorities for funding in 2015-16:

- Compliance with legislative and/or regulatory obligations, in particular to ensure public safety and work health and safety is maintained on Crown reserves.
- Substantial repairs, maintenance or upgrades that preserve or broaden the reserve user base, especially where this promotes greater financial sustainability.
- Environmental management, such as for conservation, contaminated site management or remediation, bushfire management, and pest and weed control.
- Collaborative projects which address common issues across multiple reserves, particularly those which involve more than one trust.
- Projects of regional or state-wide significance, particularly where these facilitate increased regional investment and employment.
- Business support and planning, including for concept development and asset management, and
- Projects that facilitate the development of tourism and events-based activities, especially where this features investment in long-term infrastructure that benefits regional communities and multiple user groups.
The Payments and Reporting Process

Overview

Following assessment and approval of applications the following steps will occur:

- The Minister will write to the successful applicants (reserve trusts) offering them a grant and/or loan.
- Crown Lands will write to the unsuccessful reserve trusts.
- Successful reserve trusts will have two months to accept the offer and the associated terms (see below), otherwise the offer will lapse.
- Crown Lands will deposit the agreed amount into the official account of the reserve trust upon receipt of the offer acceptance.
- The reserve trust will need to complete the activity within 12 months of the deposit of funds.
- The reserve trust will submit the prescribed post-activity project report and return unspent funds to Crown Lands within 2 months of the activity’s completion.
- Recipients of loans will commence their repayments one year after the date of the deposit of funds, and
- The reserve trust will acknowledge the grant and/or loan in its annual report and in its financial statements submitted to the Crown Reserve Reporting System (for Crown reserves).

Project Audits

Note that your project may be subject to an audit upon completion. This will involve a review of relevant documentation and an on-site visit in order to confirm the project:

- Was delivered in accordance with the terms of the Minister’s offer
- Was managed effectively and efficiently
- Expended its budget appropriately, with any excess funds returned to Crown Lands
- Delivered the benefits outlined in the original application

A representative sample of projects will be subject to audit each year. Reserve managers will receive prior notification if they have been chosen.

Standard terms of PRMFP grants and loans

Successful applicants will be required to comply with a number of specified terms. These terms typically cover the following matters:

- The time limit for the completion of the activity and the post-activity report (and return of unspent funds)
- The conditions attached to loans e.g. interest rate and repayment schedule, and
- General compliance with relevant legislation and policy.

Assistance

Instructions for accessing the online application form are available at the following Crown Lands webpage: www.crownland.nsw.gov.au

If you have read these document and still require assistance with the application process, please contact Crown Lands on 1300 886 235 (option 7) or via email (cl.PRMFP@crownland.nsw.gov.au).