

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is the Traditional Owner Nature-Based Economy readiness Grant?

The Traditional Owner Nature-Based Economy Readiness Grant Program (the Grant Program) is a competitive grants program which provides \$2.5 million in grant funding to eligible Traditional Owners, to understand and develop capability to access nature-based economic opportunities that care for Country whilst also supporting strong livelihoods. Nature-based economies are ways of earning income or creating value or wealth by looking after nature and using natural resources in a sustainable way e.g. ranger programs, plant foods businesses, nature tourism, environmental monitoring, and engaging with carbon markets.

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF) has secured funding to develop a Reef Nature-Based Economy (NBE) program from 2024 to 2030. This Traditional Owner focussed grant opportunity has been designed based on lessons from previous grant rounds that were co-designed with Traditional Owners from our Technical Working Groups and Traditional Owner Advisory group, as well as the experiences and collective learnings provided by grant recipients.

## How much funding is available for Nature-Based Economy Readiness Grant projects?

One of the key design features of the NBE Readiness grants are the different entry levels that Traditional Owner groups can use to access funding. There are two funding levels being offered under this grant round.

- Funding Level 1 (up to \$50k):
  - for projects that run up to 12 months
  - to help Traditional Owner groups build ideas, explore nature-based economies, develop roadmaps or plans.
- Funding Level 2 (\$50k-\$150K):
  - for projects to run up to 18 months
  - to develop systems, processes or partnerships for, or strengthen existing nature-based economic initiatives that Traditional Owners group are involved in.

For more information see page 1-2 of the Grant Guidelines.

## What can the NBE Readiness Grant funding be used for?

The NBE Readiness grant funding can be used for projects that address any of the following objectives:

- Explore economic development ideas that are nature-based
- Access training, learning and development opportunities that will assist in strengthening sustainable economic activity
- Build business, administrative or project readiness for your Traditional Owner group
- Build governance readiness for economic development and business
- Create a simple business plan or economic roadmap.

See pages 4-5 of the Grant Guidelines for a more detailed list of the types of project activities which are eligible under this grant round, and pages 14-15 for a list of types of nature-based

economic activities that we are aware of, noting that there may be others that are relevant for your Traditional Owner group.

## Who can apply?

Reef Traditional Owner groups and their representative organisations with sea Country in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. A map showing the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area can be found on page 16 of the Grant Guidelines.

To be eligible Traditional Owner groups that apply for funding must meet all the following criteria:

1. Must be a legal entity, for instance:
  - a. an incorporated association
  - b. a body corporate
  - c. a company
  - d. a cooperative society
  - e. an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander corporation or incorporated association, or
  - f. a trust duly constituted.
2. Be a Traditional Owner group for the area the work/planning is proposed (or have culturally appropriate permission where the project may be over multiple estates).
3. Accept the conditions of the application
4. Confirm that all actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest relating to the grant project have been declared
5. Hold or be willing to hold the required insurances
6. Have a project that is ready to commence no later than 1 July 2026.

Traditional Owner groups that are not legal entities at the closing date for applications must be sponsored by a legal entity, for example a peak body or regional natural resource management organisation, who may apply on their behalf. The legal entity will be legally responsible for meeting the contractual obligations of the grant.

## Who is NOT eligible?

The following groups or organisations are not eligible to apply unless sponsoring for a Traditional Owner group:

- Regional natural resource management organisations
- Peak industry groups or umbrella bodies
- All levels of government

The following are not eligible to apply for a grant and are ALSO not eligible to auspice a project:

- Individuals, or
- organisations that have, at the application closing date, any overdue final reports or acquittals for other Foundation grant programs.

## How do I apply?

Read the grant guidelines, complete the application form and submit online at [grants@barrierreef.org](mailto:grants@barrierreef.org) by 5.00pm EAST, Wednesday 18 March 2026.

## When do applications close?

The completed application form with any of its supporting documentation must be submitted electronically by 5.00pm EAST, Wednesday 18 March 2026.

Late applications will not be accepted.

## Can Great Barrier Reef Foundation staff help me complete the application form?

No. Great Barrier Reef Foundation staff can clarify any questions you have regarding the application form, but they are not able to help you complete it.

## Can individuals apply if they have a sponsor and demonstrate community support?

No. As an individual you are not eligible to apply either with or without a sponsor.

## Can you apply for funding for projects or work already underway?

No. Applications should be submitted for new projects or further stages of an existing project. There can be no duplication of funding for activities taking place under existing projects and new applications made under this grant program.

## Is accommodation while travelling considered an eligible activity?

Yes. Funds can be used for travelling if it relates to the project. All travel must be incorporated into the proposed budget for the project.

## Can I submit more than one application form?

No. The grant Guidelines state that each Traditional Owner group can only submit one grant application per round. If your Traditional Owner group is represented by multiple organisations, please choose which one is the most appropriate to be the applicant organisation.

If your organisation represents multiple Traditional Owner groups, we can accept one from the organisation and one from individual Traditional Owner groups represented by that organisation (as long as the eligibility criteria is met). Please reach out to [grants@barrierreef.org](mailto:grants@barrierreef.org) to check your eligibility in these types of contexts.

## How much detail should I put in the budget and if I miss something can I put it in again later?

Items that were not budgeted in the original application will not be funded. Applicants must consider all aspects of their project and ensure they include all relevant costs within their application. Additional funds are not available to meet costs which may have increased after the application was submitted.

## Do I need to provide quotes?

For complex and large budget items we do encourage you to provide quotes or supporting documentation to help the assessment panel understand the costs associated with a project. Any time that you can provide evidence for your budget table you are encouraged to do so. Your application will still be assessed if you do not provide quotes - but the assessment panel may ask for follow up information at a later date.

## Do I need to provide supporting information?

Support letters or letters of endorsement from members of your Traditional Owner group with cultural authority are required (see Section 1.3 of the Application Form). Optional supplementary information (e.g. letters of support from stakeholders, partners or other community groups) are encouraged to help assist the assessment panel understand your application (see section 5.2 of the Application Form).

## How will I be notified that my application has been received?

When you submit your application to [applications@barrierreef.org](mailto:applications@barrierreef.org) you should receive an automated confirmation email that you have successfully completed the application process. If you do not, please contact [grants@barrierreef.org](mailto:grants@barrierreef.org)

## If I need to make a change to my submitted application, what do I do?

No changes are permitted once the closing of the application date (post March 18 2026). Please read your application carefully before submitting to ensure that you have completed every relevant section and that all the information is true and correct.

## What are the assessment criteria?

Applications will be assessed against the selection criteria outlined in pages 10-11 of the NBE Readiness Grant Guidelines.

## If I am successful, when can I start my project?

Successful applicants will negotiate and sign a funding deed with the Foundation. Any specified conditions of funding must be met before the initial payment for the project can be processed and the project commences. Projects should expect to start in May or June and no later than 1 July 2026.

## When will the funding be in the bank?

The initial payment will be processed only when the successful applicant has accepted the terms of the funding by signing and returning the funding deed, and has supplied copies of all required insurances and Workplace Health and Safety information (where applicable).

## How long do I have to complete the project?

Traditional Owner NBE Readiness projects must be completed by 31 December 2027. Level 1 (projects up to \$50,000) should be completed within 12 months of their start date.

## What are the reporting requirements at the completion of my project?

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation places a high priority on monitoring and reporting for all Reef Trust Partnership funded projects. The monitoring and reporting requirements are:

- Tracking of expenditure for acquittal
- Progress reporting to record project achievements
- A final report on project outcomes and financial expenditure

Successful applicants with a signed funding deed will be supplied with templates for the above reporting requirements. The processing of progress payments is dependent on the submission and approval of reporting documents.

## **Are the Torres Strait Islands within the scope for these grants?**

The Grants program is being funded partially under the Reef Trust Partnership, which requires that all projects be conducted in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Projects that would be conducted solely in the Torres Strait Islands are out of scope for these grants. The Foundation recognises the important cultural and spiritual connection for Traditional Owners of the Eastern cluster of islands in the Torres Straits extends into the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, so there may be projects that these Traditional Owner groups apply for that are relevant and in scope for these grants.

## **Can an Aboriginal Corporation nominate another organisation as a sponsor?**

Yes, an Aboriginal Corporation can nominate another organisation as their sponsor, if needed and appropriate. The intent of the auspicing arrangement must align with the intent of this grant round, to help build governance and business readiness of the Aboriginal Corporation or Traditional Owner group.

## **What percentage of grant funds can be allocated for project administration?**

A maximum of 10% of the GBRF supplied funding can be allocated for project administration.

## **Can grant funds pay for auditing fees?**

Yes, the auditing cap is \$3,000 to get auditing and acquittals done, however auditing by an external party is not a requirement for acquittal of project funding

## **Are Traditional Owner groups without sea Country eligible to apply?**

The NBE Readiness Grant opportunity is only available to Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier Reef who have sea Country within the World Heritage Area (see map below).



Source: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (2014), *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014*. Available: [https://elibrary.gbrmpa.gov.au/jspui/bitstream/11017/2856/5/InBrief\\_accessible\\_low%20res.pdf](https://elibrary.gbrmpa.gov.au/jspui/bitstream/11017/2856/5/InBrief_accessible_low%20res.pdf), accessed 11/03/2022.

## Our Aboriginal Corporation has Public Liability Insurance, and a Workcover Policy. Is this the same as Workers Compensation?

Public liability insurance and a work cover policy will include workers compensation.

## We are a Traditional Owner group; do we need to provide a letter of support from Traditional Owners?

Yes, providing one or more letters of support will help the assessors understand how the project has been developed and discussed with your Traditional Owner Group, what level of community support it has, and how it aligns with your Traditional Owner group's priorities and needs. It

should be from a governance arrangement with appropriate cultural authority, e.g., it could be from the Board of Directors of your organization, community Elders and/or leaders, and/or an established Steering Committee. It may also refer to relevant reports to show how it aligns with your group's plans and activities, for example a land and/or sea Country plan, annual/strategic plan, TUMRA documentation etc.

### **Can we apply for a Level 1 grant AND a Level 2 grant at the same time?**

No. You can only apply for one type of grant (i.e. tick only one box in the grant application). However, you can submit a Level 2 grant that combines both types of listed activities.

### **Our organization has existing workplace healthy and safety plans. Can we refer to these in the risk management plan, instead of including all the details?**

Yes, you can reference your existing WHS plan in the application (and state that it can be provided if shortlisted). Please attach the WHS cover/title page to your application as a supporting document. If there are any project specific risks not covered in the WHS plan, these should be addressed in a smaller risk management plan submitted with the application.

### **Is the cost of producing a video about our project an eligible communication cost?**

Yes, the cost of producing a video is an eligible communication cost, as long as it will be used as a tool to communicate your project results to others and assist in sharing lessons learned.

### **We are not a Traditional Owner group but are working with several Traditional Owner Groups. Could we apply for an NBE Readiness grant as a sponsoring organization working with a number of Traditional Owner groups to deliver an umbrella project?**

Auspicing arrangements are possible for both grant tiers. The funding is intended to assist Traditional Owners to build organisational structures and governance arrangements for business readiness. While partnering with an established agency can be helpful to achieving this goal, to be eligible the project needs to be demonstrably Traditional Owner led and driven.

An alternative approach may be for one of the interested Traditional Owner groups to take the lead in submitting an inclusive application, and work with you and the other Traditional Owner group as partners, or each Traditional Owner Group could apply for a smaller Level 1 grant independently and include your organization as a partner. This would provide Traditional Owners with the ownership of their outcomes and priorities.

### **Is the \$10,000 limit on the purchase of plant and equipment the total allowance for the whole project, irrespective of project focus and size?**

Yes, the \$10,000 limit on a single piece of equipment is the standard limit for all projects. The limit applies to any single piece of equipment, the total for the whole project can be more than this.

### **The guidelines specify up to 10% of funding can be allocated for administration. Does this include the cost of a project manager?**

The cost of a hiring a project manager to work specifically on your project could be funded through project funds. This would not be included in the 10% of funding allocated for

administrative and project management costs. Please see our standard budget line items in Section 3.4 of the Application Form.

### Should grant applications be submitted through email and not the GBRF website?

Yes, the grant submission should be emailed to [applications@barrierreef.org](mailto:applications@barrierreef.org).

### Do we need to provide proof of professional indemnity insurance with our application?

No, you do not. Only successful grant applicants will be required to provide certificates of insurance after they are notified that their project will be funded.

### Do we need professional indemnity insurance if we aren't providing advice?

The Foundation will assess each project for the types and levels of insurance cover that is needed to be in place before a project can be funded. At this stage, we ask applicants to check that they are capable of holding \$1m in professional indemnity insurance and \$20m in public liability.

### Is insurance an administrative cost or should it be listed as a separate budget item?

Insurance costs should be included in the administrative costs.

### Does GBRF have guidelines for calculating Elder fees?

No, the Foundation does not have guidelines for calculating Elder fees. We ask that groups consult with their elders and set the price point for Elder payments as there is variation between Traditional Owner groups.

### Who should letters of support be addressed to?

A letter of support can be addressed "To Whom It May Concern", and the letter should be submitted by the applicant with their grant application.

### What are the required insurances that a Traditional Owner Group needs to be eligible for funding?

The required insurances are listed in section 7.1 of the NBE Readiness Grant application form and include:

- Workers compensation
- Public Liability (minimum required: \$20m per occurrence)
- Professional Indemnity (minimum required: \$1m per occurrence)
- Motor vehicles and plant and equipment insurance (if applicable)
- Other relevant policies (eg volunteer insurance if applicable).

All Insurances must be in the Applicant's legal entity name. If the application is successful, copies of the insurance Certificates of Currency must be provided to the Foundation.