

Great Barrier Reef Urban Technology and Innovation Fund – Wastewater Grant Program

Guidelines



Prepared by: Office of Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage, Department of the Environment, Tourism Science and Innovation (the Department).

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Program terminology

For the purpose of the Program the following definitions apply:

Commercialisation	<p>The process of taking a product or service to the market and obtaining paying customers.</p>
Functional prototype	<p>A working integrated model that demonstrates all of the core functionalities and features of the final product or service; built to test and validate the technical aspects and performance. Also referred to as proof of concept stage.</p>
Innovative wastewater treatment solution or management approach	<p>For the purpose of this grant program, eligible innovative wastewater treatment solutions or management approaches would constitute one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • treatment solutions that differ substantially from traditional engineering solutions that have only become available in the marketplace in the past five years but are not yet adopted widely • treatment solutions that differ substantially from traditional engineering solutions that have only been tested at the pilot scale a novel operational management approach for wastewater treatment systems that are well established in marketplace that improves treatment efficiency and/or reduces operating cost and complexity • a novel use of non-urban water management infrastructure or receiving water treatment system to treat/remove nutrients derived from wastewater treatment plant releases.
Minimum viable product	<p>A development stage within the commercialisation pipeline where a product or service has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progressed beyond initial proof of concept/prototype stage • fully developed core features and functionalities • undergone testing and validation, including pilot trials with potential customers • been refined to incorporate feedback from the trials and testing • reached the point of market readiness and is at the stage where customers would likely pay for it if it were available in the marketplace.

Natural Resource Management organisation	<p>Regional bodies that work with communities, land managers, and governments to protect land, water, biodiversity, and soil. Eligible NRM bodies for this grant program include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cape York NRM • Terrain NRM • North Queensland Dry Tropics (NQDT) NRM • Reef Catchments NRM • Fitzroy Basin Authority NRM • Burnett Mary Regional Group NRM
Organisational overheads	<p>The operational and administrative overhead costs attributed to a position, such as facilities and accommodation-related costs, ICT costs, and general administrative support costs. In some organisations this is calculated as a percentage of the salary costs.</p>
Reef catchments	<p>As shown in Appendix 1.</p>
Salary-related on-costs	<p>The costs directly associated with the employment of an individual, such as superannuation and payroll tax.</p>

1. About the Great Barrier Reef Urban Technology and Innovation Fund – Wastewater Grant Program

The Great Barrier Reef Urban Technology and Innovation Fund is a joint initiative of the Australian and Queensland Governments. It aims to reduce the impact of urban water pollution on the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef) by supporting innovative approaches to improving wastewater treatment within the Reef catchments that are economically sustainable both now and in the future. There are three urban water management focus areas:

- stormwater
- wastewater
- erosion sediment control.

For more information on the broader Great Barrier Reef Urban Technology and Innovation Fund, please visit the following website: [Great Barrier Reef Urban Technology and Innovation Fund | Environment, land and water | Queensland Government](#)

The *Great Barrier Reef Urban Technology and Innovation Fund – Wastewater Grant Program* (the Program) is focused on delivery for the wastewater focus area.

The Program seeks to enhance the range of affordable wastewater treatment systems in the marketplace capable of achieving leading practice end of pipe nutrient concentrations. This will be done through a combination of on-ground trials of wastewater treatment/management approaches ready for evaluation at the operational scale and amplifying the commercialisation of promising wastewater treatment technologies/management approaches. The Program ultimately seeks to help the adoption of these products at scale to hasten the Reef water quality improvement.

It will build on previous investments and existing initiatives by supporting:

- the acceleration of already piloted innovative wastewater management technologies/operational management solutions to minimum viable product stage
- relatively new to market wastewater treatment technologies – that meet leading practice criteria end of pipe nitrogen concentrations – overcome commercialisation barriers
- novel use of non-urban water management infrastructure or receiving water treatment system to treat/remove fine nutrients derived from wastewater treatment plant discharges.

What we are looking for

The Program will support projects that are focused on wastewater treatment solutions or management approaches:

- with the potential to achieve end of pipe nutrient concentrations within the range associated with **defined leading practice levels 1 to 3¹** (or are novel and affordable ways of achieving treatment

¹ Leading practice end of pipe nutrient concentrations are defined in Ramsay, I, Sudarjanto, G, Pambrun, V, and Barry, E. 2024. *Leading Practice Review of Sewage Treatment Plant Environmental Management in Queensland*. Brisbane: Department of Environment, Science and Innovation, Queensland Government. January 2024 (available [here](#)).

- levels that allow for enhanced wastewater recycling/beneficial reuse)
- that are **affordable** (relative to the cost of building or operating a traditional-engineered, advanced wastewater treatment system)² that have undergone a minimum of prototype system (pilot) testing and achieved performance outcomes at or close to those described above
- that, if trialled at operational scale and proven successful, could remain in place as legacy wastewater treatment assets.

Proposed projects in the following high priority catchments for urban land use management improvement will be viewed favourably:

- Barron River
- Ross River
- Plane Creek.

2. Available funding

The value of the wastewater component is \$8-10 million. Funding is available under two tiers:

Tier 1	Up to \$4,000,000 (excluding GST) for projects of up to three years focused on the trialing of wastewater treatment/management solutions to minimum viable product stage and parallel commercialisation advice for steps to take once this point is reached.
Tier 2	Up to \$200,000 (excluding GST) for projects of up to two years focused on assisting the commercialisation of relatively new to market ³ wastewater treatment/management solutions to help them overcome market barriers.

3. Eligibility

3.1 Applicant

To be eligible for funding, the applicant organisation must, at the time of application and for the duration of the project:

- have an ABN and be registered for GST
- be one of the following organisation types:
 - university
 - Research and Technology Organisation
 - proprietary wastewater treatment system company

² For guidance on this, refer to Table 7.2 in Ramsay, I, Sudarjanto, G, Claus, S, Clech-Goods, C & Munns, T. 2020. Great Barrier Reef Point Source Metadata Collection Project. Brisbane: Department of Environment and Science, Queensland Government. December 2020 (available [here](#)).

³ Available for sale only occurred in the past five years

- water utility company that invests in wastewater treatment research and development
- local government organisation or National Resource Management organisation within the Reef catchment **only** if auspicing for one of the above organisations.
- if applying for Tier 1, the applicant organisation must make a cash contribution to the project at least double the amount of Program funding sought
- accept the Terms and Conditions of the funding agreement (details on this in the FAQ document on website)
- not have any overdue project acquittals or any other outstanding contractual obligations for state or Commonwealth government funding
- not be subject to any legal proceedings or financial audit investigation processes.

3.2 Project

The applicant organisation will be required to confirm that:

- it has the ability to host the trial project on its own site or holds an agreement with a local government partner to host the trial project on a site **within the Reef catchment** (refer to Appendix 1) or the **receiving environment adjacent** wastewater treatment plants located in the Reef catchment)
 - or**
 - it has an established demonstration site at operational scale within the Reef catchment where support to gain market traction is required
- the proposed project is ready to commence by 1 March 2027, and complete within three years
- all actual, perceived and/or potential conflicts of interest in relation to the proposed project are declared, and a management plan regarding this is in place.

Projects that are **not eligible** for Program funding are those that:

- relate to new or replacement wastewater treatment infrastructure that is not innovative and/or relate to traditional engineered wastewater treatment systems or management solutions
- relate to wastewater treatment systems or management solutions already well established and thriving in the marketplace
- would qualify for funding through a different Queensland Government program or have already been funded by another entity or external funding source
- are likely to have an adverse environmental impact
- involve the repair, replacement, or installation of new works for private purposes or benefit
- that are not lawfully constructed.

3.3 Project costs

Project expenditure must be related to project specific operational trial and commercialisation activities as follows:

- planning and design
- obtaining approvals and permits
- construction
- trial operations
- data analysis and synthesis, including reporting
- marketing, communication and engagement required for commercialisation
- monitoring and evaluation

- administration of the project (must not exceed 15% of the grant funding allocation)

and fall within one of the following eligible cost categories:

- salary expenditure (including salary-related on-costs) for employees of the applicant organisation directly contributing to the delivery of the project
- services provided by (unrelated) external parties
- equipment, materials and consumables
- domestic travel, accommodation and subsistence for employees and contractors required specifically for the delivery of the project.

Expenditure **not eligible** for Program funding are:

- equipment or materials that are normally part of a landholder or organisation's responsibility
- motor vehicles
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application (including this application).

Only eligible expenditure incurred on or after the project commencement date can be claimed by successful applicant organisations.

4. Assessment criteria

1: The wastewater treatment solution or management approach is innovative and proven at or beyond the functional prototype stage

The application should demonstrate that:

- the wastewater treatment solution or management approach is clearly innovative, unique, and new
- the applicant organisation owns or has the rights to any intellectual property necessary to commercialise the wastewater treatment solution or management approach
- the wastewater treatment solution or management approach is at, or beyond functional prototype stage (i.e. beyond proof of concept and has been validated in a lab/testing environment) (Tier 1)
or
the wastewater treatment solution or management approach is at, or beyond minimum viable product stage (i.e. beyond prototype and has been validated at operational scale) (Tier 2)
- the wastewater treatment solution or management approach is proven to:
 - deliver end of pipe nutrient concentrations within the range associated with **defined leading practice levels 1 to 3** (or is a novel and affordable way of achieving treatment levels that allow or enhance wastewater recycling/beneficial reuse)
 - be **affordable** (relative to the cost of building or operating a traditional-engineered, advanced wastewater treatment system).

2. The project is feasible and viable

The application should demonstrate that:

- the project is well planned and achievable with key activities, outcomes, expenditure, and timeframes identified
- there is a clear pathway to gaining the permits required for the operational trials, within six

- months or less from project commencement (Tier 1 only)
- the applicant organisation has:
 - the ability to host the trial project on a site within the Reef catchment or the receiving environment adjacent wastewater treatment plants located in the Reef catchment, or
 - an established demonstration site at operational scale within the Reef catchment where support to gain market traction is required
- key project risks have been identified, and that risk mitigation strategies are in place
- the applicant organisation and any project partners have the technical and management skills and experience required to successfully deliver the project.

The documentation confirming the applicant organisation's ability to make the required cash contribution will also be considered under this assessment criterion.

3. The project will deliver benefits to the Reef catchment and Queensland

The application should demonstrate that:

- the project will deliver significant improvements to the management of wastewater within a Reef catchment
- the project will deliver other environmental, social and/or economic benefits for the Reef catchment, the region and/or Queensland.

5. Application process

Prepare

Prior to commencing the application:

- These guidelines should be read carefully to confirm that your organisation and project are eligible.
- Where relevant, trial hosting arrangements with partner organisations should be confirmed and written endorsements and/or letters of support sought.
- If more than one organisation will be involved in the project, the applicant organisation should be identified. The applicant organisation is the legal entity that will enter into a funding agreement with the Queensland Government via the Department and will be legally responsible for the proper acquittal of any funds awarded, if successful.

Apply

- Applications should be submitted online via the Program website via SmartyGrants prior to the closing date (detailed below). Late applications will not be accepted.

Assessment

- All applications will be assessed against the eligibility requirements. Only eligible submissions will be considered for funding support.
- Eligible applications will be assessed in a competitive, merit-based approach by the nominated assessment panel against the assessment criteria.

- The assessment panel will be a sub-set of the Reef Urban Innovation Fund Technical Working Group and will include members with significant wastewater treatment engineering and approvals and compliance expertise, as well as members with innovation commercialisation delivery expertise.
- The assessment panel will recommend applications to the Reef Urban Innovation Fund Program Steering Committee for their endorsement.
- The Reef Urban Innovation Fund Program Steering Committee will be comprised of representatives from relevant Queensland Government and the Australian Government.
- The Director-General of the Department is the final decision-maker for all funding allocations under the Program.
- Applicant organisations may be contacted at any stage of the assessment process to provide further information to enable a due diligence and probity assessment. There is no implicit guarantee of approval at any stage in the process.

Outcome Advice

- All applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of their application.
- Feedback will be provided to unsuccessful applicants upon request.
- The Queensland Government reserves the right to administer the Program and conduct the assessment and approval processes as it sees fit. This may include, at its discretion, considering current government priorities and the need to balance the investment to support a diversity of activities.

6. Key dates

Activity	Date
Applications close	17 August 2026

All applications must be submitted by 10.00am on the closing date.

7. Funding agreement

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a legally binding funding agreement with the Queensland Government. You should ensure you have read and accept the terms and conditions of the agreement, prior to submitting an application, as they will not be negotiable at the time a funding offer is made.

Successful applicants must execute a funding agreement with the Queensland Government within the following timeframes:

- 10 business days from the receipt of the final version of the funding agreement.

The offer may lapse if you do not sign the agreement within this time.

Successful applicants must commence projects within 40 business days of execution of the funding agreement. Failure to meet this timeframe may result in the termination of the funding agreement and the requirement to repay any grant funding received.

Payment of grants will be made in instalments based on agreed periodic project milestones. The first payment will be made upon execution of the funding agreement; subsequent payments will be made upon successful completion of project milestones activities and outcomes; and the final milestone payment will be in arrears upon the provision of documentary evidence that all project activities have been completed, including evidence that total project expenditure has been incurred and project contributions have been made by all relevant parties.

8. Promotion of supported projects

Funding recipients will be expected to actively promote their projects, and to provide information and attend media/promotion events if requested. The Queensland Government funding should be acknowledged by recipients in all relevant published material, media releases and public statements relating to the project.

9. Privacy

The Department is collecting personal information from you such as your name, address, contact details of yourself and your business (including employees and partners), resume, employment and directorship, corporate officer history, payslips, asset and financial information and other information relevant to your application or provided by you. This information is collected for the purpose of assessing and evaluating your application for funded projects, milestone reports, and otherwise the Department's function of supporting businesses and industry through innovation programs and grants.

Personal information may also be disclosed where required for purposes associated with undertaking assessment of the application, including due diligence enquiries. The email address you provide will be used to communicate with you about your application or program participation (if successful). For example, you may be contacted via email about participating in a survey, interview or focus group. Dependent upon the email service provider you have chosen, this may result in your personal information being transferred overseas.

The personal information provided may be provided to other relevant Queensland Government departments and Ministers, to publicly announce or publish as identified in the Guidelines and promote those projects that have been funded. This may include the recipient's name and the amount of funding awarded, project details, agreed outcomes, and progress.

De-identified aggregated data may also be used for the purpose of managing and evaluating the Program and inform government. Your personal information will also be used to provide the services outlined in the Guidelines, and for the purposes of research, evaluation, promotion, and monitoring of such services, and to improve and design services and programs.

Your personal information will not be otherwise used or disclosed unless authorised or required by law and will be managed in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009*. The provisions of the *Right to Information Act 2009* apply to documents in the possession of the Queensland Government.

The Queensland Government privacy policy can be found at: www.qld.gov.au/legal/privacy.

10. Further information

Web: <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/coasts-waterways/reef/reef-program/urban-technology-innovation-fund>

Email: OfficeoftheGBR@detsi.qld.gov.au

Appendix 1 - Map of Reef catchments

