



Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

# Murray-Darling Basin Indigenous River Rangers Program Grant Opportunity Information

## Murray-Darling Basin Indigenous River Rangers Program

This paper provides information about the opportunity for Indigenous organisations to bid for part of the \$3.1 million funding available to establish around four Indigenous river ranger groups to work on waterway health projects that support environmental and cultural outcomes across the Murray-Darling Basin (the Basin) for one year.

The Murray-Darling Basin Indigenous River Rangers Program (Program) is part of the [Murray-Darling Communities Investment Package](#) announced by the Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia, the Hon Keith Pitt MP, on 4 September 2020. Minister Pitt and the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, [announced](#) the new Program on 8 September 2020.

The Program recognises Indigenous Australians' connection to country and the diversity of environmental and cultural practices across the Basin. The Program aims to provide Indigenous organisations an opportunity to use their knowledge and connection to country to contribute to managing and restoring waterway health in the Basin. The river ranger groups will be funded for one year commencing 1 July 2021. The Program will employ around 20 full-time equivalent Indigenous rangers as well as a number of ranger coordinators.

The Program grant opportunity guidelines are expected to be published late in the first quarter of 2021.

## Draft Program Objectives and Grant Outcomes

### Program Objective

The Program will enable Indigenous Australians, organisations and communities to contribute to managing and restoring waterway health across the breadth of the Murray-Darling Basin, while developing or improving leadership, employment and economic opportunities for Indigenous people in the water and land management sector and related fields.

### Grant Outcomes

#### Required outcome

The grant proposal will be required to identify at least one waterway health project the rangers group will be working on that supports environmental and cultural outcomes. The proposal should outline the problem/issue to be addressed, how the rangers group will address it and the outcome that will be achieved at the end of the one year period.

Examples of activities that could contribute to waterway health outcomes and case studies of recent works are included in the attachment.

#### Desired Outcomes

In addition to an environmental outcome, proposals should demonstrate how they will contribute to one or more of the following outcomes:

- Indigenous river rangers participate in learning and development training designed to develop skills and improve employment opportunities for Indigenous people in the-water and land management sector,
- Indigenous river rangers contribute to the identification, documentation, monitoring and protection of important environmental and cultural sites in the Murray-Darling Basin, and their cultural uses and values,
- Indigenous river ranger groups, communities and organisations enhance their ability to engage with water planning and management processes, in the Murray-Darling Basin,

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- Indigenous communities increase their engagement in water management and waterway health in the Murray-Darling Basin, including through knowledge sharing between Indigenous experts and water planners and managers,
  - Indigenous river rangers engage traditional owners, elders, and young people in activities that, through connections to and caring for country, improve environmental, cultural and waterway health in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Proposals may include agreements with government, business or other organisations to secure or improve access to waterways, training, reporting tools or for other purposes that assist with the delivery of the rangers' proposal.

## Next Steps

The grant funding round for the Program is expected to open late in the first quarter of 2021 and will be announced on [GrantConnect](#). Interested parties can [register](#) on GrantConnect to receive notifications for forecast and newly published grant opportunities. Interested parties will have approximately four weeks to submit a proposal after the grant opportunity is published.

Further information is available in the attached Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and information on waterway health outcomes. This information and any other provided during the process will be made available at [niaa.gov.au](http://niaa.gov.au).



## Murray-Darling Basin Indigenous River Rangers Program Details

### Funding

Funding for the Murray-Darling Basin Indigenous River Rangers Program will be determined by an open, competitive grant process. This means:

- The grant opportunity and guidelines will be published on [GrantConnect](#).
- Indigenous Organisations will need to apply for funding.
- Any Indigenous organisation meeting the eligibility criteria can apply.
- Applications will be assessed against a range of criteria and against other applications. The overall value of the proposal, whether it presents an opportunity for new Indigenous organisations to contribute to water management and the geographic range and distribution of projects throughout the Murray-Darling Basin may be taken into account.
- The criteria will be finalised and published in the grant guidelines.
- The Program funding is limited to one year.

### Significant dates

Grant opportunity guidelines are expected to be published on [GrantConnect](#) late in the first quarter 2021.

- The grant round will be open for about four weeks; organisations will have this time to develop and submit their application in response to the guidelines.
- The NIAA will negotiate with successful organisations to establish financial, reporting and outcome requirements.
- The Indigenous river rangers groups are expected to begin operating on 1 July 2021.

### Grant opportunity guidelines

The Program grant opportunity guidelines are currently being developed. These will provide further details regarding:

- eligibility requirements and assessment criteria,
- guidance on the grant application and required documents,
- roles and responsibilities of potential partner organisations,
- outcomes, reporting and Key Performance Indicators.

### Eligibility

While the grant opportunity guidelines are yet to be finalised, key eligibility criteria will likely require organisations and/or proposals to:

- Demonstrate ownership, or access to, country (lands and/or waterways) in the Murray-Darling Basin to be managed through the Murray-Darling Basin River Rangers program.

#### **AND**

- Demonstrate necessary governance structures, organisational capabilities and environmental management experience to deliver Program outcomes.

#### **OR**

- Demonstrate partnership(s) with another organisation(s) that has(ve) the appropriate ownership or access rights to the land and/or waterways to be managed. Partner organisations may also provide assistance, advice or capacity-building for other capabilities such as governance and water management.
  - Please note proposals may be required to demonstrate that funding will not be used to deliver actions or responsibilities of or funded by state and territory governments.
- Include a copy of a signed agreement with any partners to confirm willingness, capacity and types of support they will provide the applicant to deliver the project and its outcomes.

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- Please note that Indigenous ownership is not a requirement for the partner organisation. The applicant can invite Indigenous or non-Indigenous organisations, which may be government or private organisations, to assist them to deliver the grant outcomes in a number of ways.

**AND**

- Demonstrate Indigenous community support to establish an Indigenous river rangers group.
- Demonstrate the applicant has an Australian Business Number (ABN).

Please note, advice on the assessment criteria cannot be provided prior to publication of the grant guidelines.



# Murray-Darling Basin Indigenous River Rangers Program

## Stakeholder Q&A

This document is made available to all interested parties and potential applicants. It provides additional information or clarification in response to questions posed by stakeholders.

### What is the Murray-Darling Basin Indigenous River Rangers Program?

The Murray-Darling Basin Indigenous River Rangers Program (Program) will provide an opportunity for Indigenous organisations to establish around four Indigenous River Ranger groups dedicated to improving waterway health across the Murray-Darling Basin (Basin). Through the Program, around 20 full-time Indigenous rangers will be employed by Indigenous organisations to use their knowledge and connection to country to contribute to environmental, cultural and waterway health in the Basin.

[Announced](#) by the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, and Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia, the Hon Keith Pitt MP, on 8 September 2020, the Program is one of a number of initiatives recently announced in the new [Murray-Darling Communities Investment Package](#).

### Who can apply?

Any Indigenous organisation can submit an application to conduct ranger activities in the Basin.

All Indigenous organisations that lodge an application and meet basic organisational requirements will have their application considered. These requirements will be detailed in Grant Opportunity Guidelines that will be published late in the first quarter of 2021.

The release of the grant will be announced on [GrantConnect](#). Interested parties can [register](#) on GrantConnect to receive notifications for forecast and newly published grant opportunities. Interested parties will have approximately four weeks to submit a proposal after the grant opportunity is published.

### What will the application entail?

The grant application process is open and competitive. All applications will be assessed on their merits, how they address application questions, selection criteria, their project plan and a number of other factors. These will be outlined in more detail in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. The most competitive applicants will be invited to enter into funding agreements with the NIAA.

Indigenous organisations should identify a waterway health priority or priorities in their area of the Basin, how their proposed ranger group will help address it, and how this will contribute to improving waterway health in that part of the Basin. The ranger group outcomes should be achievable within the one-year funding period.

Application proposals will also be asked to demonstrate that the proposed ranger group will have sufficient access to the land and water to be rehabilitated or improved, that the rangers will have access to the resources required to deliver these outcomes and a number of other considerations.

Indigenous organisations applying will also be able to partner with other Indigenous or non-Indigenous organisations to meet certain application requirements, or improve their applications. Partner organisations, for instance, could provide, assist or improve the ranger's access to water, land, training or facilities.

### What can Murray-Darling Indigenous River Rangers do?

The Program and the funded rangers groups will enable Indigenous Australians, organisations and communities to contribute to managing and restoring waterway health across the breadth of the Basin.



Each ranger group will work on at least one waterway health project. The grant proposal should outline the problem/issue to be addressed, how the ranger group will address it and the outcome that will be achieved at the end of the one year period.

Proposals should also show how the rangers will contribute to one or more additional outcomes such as developing or improving leadership, employment and economic opportunities for Indigenous people in the water management sector and related fields in the Basin.

The ranger group, their activities and outcomes can be supported through agreements with government, business or other organisations. This may assist applicants to secure or improve access to waterways, training, reporting tools or for other purposes that assist with the delivery of the rangers' proposal.

Further details can be found in the [Information Pack](#).

### How much funding is available?

The Program's total funding of \$3.1 million is sufficient to support around four groups or a total of 20 rangers. The number of ranger groups receiving funding and Indigenous ranger positions funded will be decided following assessment of the applications. While proposals for particularly small or large groups of rangers may be considered, geographical considerations make it likely the Program will fund between three and five groups of rangers.

Individual applications should request funding appropriate to the activities the ranger group is expected to perform. Organisations should not assume that applications will receive one quarter of the total funding.

Organisations should ensure that the funding and number of rangers they seek to employ are sufficient to address the priorities identified through their application and the outcomes that they are aiming to achieve.

### Is the funding likely to be extended?

The funding for the Program forms part of the Australian Government's [Murray-Darling Communities Investment Package](#).

The funding for the Program is non-ongoing. Proposals for funding should reflect this by ensuring that all planning, expenditure, employment and outcomes can be realistically achieved within the one-year period.

### Are there other State and/or Commonwealth funding programs that might supplement the Program's funding?

Commonwealth or state/territory government agencies may have their own grant, supplementary or other funding available. This may assist your organisation by providing equipment, funding, access to buildings, vehicles or other aspects of the program.

We recommend you contact one of our [regional offices](#) in the Basin to discuss options that may be available in your area.

### What can our partner organisations contribute?

Partnerships with other organisations can potentially cover or supplement requirements of the Program. This may include access to land, water, training or governance. Partnerships could also be a way to supplement funding for the rangers.

If an application includes some form of help, commitment or relationship with a partner organisation, letters of support should be included. The letters should detail the relationship between your organisation and your partner organisation, including information relevant to the proposed ranger group, the proposed activity they will undertake and the outcomes you aim to achieve.

### How will the successes of funded projects be measured?

If a grant proposal is successful we will work with the organisation to set reporting, Key Performance Indicators and data collection requirements.

Further information will be available following the publication of the grant opportunity.



### How will applications be assessed?

Proposals will be initially assessed to ensure they meet all eligibility requirements. Proposals that meet these initial requirements are likely to be reviewed by internal grant assessment officers and regional offices of the NIAA and a panel of experts.

The NIAA intends to ensure that Indigenous Australians are well represented in the assessment process.

Applications will be assessed using a number of elements including geographic diversity, alignment with local priorities, budget (cost effectiveness), project plan and alignment with the Program objectives and outcomes.

### How can we learn what is involved in running a rangers group?

A good place to start is your local NIAA office. They may be able to advise you directly or put you in touch with organisations already delivering Indigenous Ranger programs. You can find a list of office locations [here](#).

More information can also be found on the [NIAA website](#).

## Waterway health outcomes and case studies

Examples may include:

Restoring, improving and protecting country connected to waterway health, for example:

- habitat or habitat connectivity for water-reliant wildlife (which could include threatened and migratory species),  
*or*
- habitat following, or in preparation for, extreme events (e.g. drought, fire, low-oxygen blackwater events), *or*
- vegetation in and along waterways to:
  - provide food and habitat resources for native species, *or*
  - support fish migration and breeding opportunities.

*or*

- Supporting Australian Government priorities and obligations that contribute to waterway health in the Basin, for example:
  - Murray-Darling Basin Plan objectives, *or*
  - national and international environmental and culturally-significant sites in the Basin (e.g. Ramsar or World Heritage-listed sites)

*or*

- Monitoring and mapping that contributes to waterway health in the Basin, for example:
  - environmental and culturally-significant plants, animals and places, *or*
  - river, wetland or floodplain habitat, *or*
  - water quality, *or*
  - water-related cultural practices.

*or*

- Management and maintenance that contributes to waterway health in the Basin, for example:
  - control of invasive plants and animals
  - native seed propagation and revegetation
  - earthworks
  - fencing and erosion control.

Please note these are examples only and not an exhaustive list of activities that could meet the required Program outcome.

### Case studies

Rivers, the veins of our country - Ten case studies of First Nations involvement in managing water for the environment in the *Murray-Darling Basin, 2018-19*. Available in pdf format [here](#). Some of the stories are included in the Australian River Restoration Centre's webpage at: [Rivers, the veins of our country - Australian River Restoration Centre \(arcc.com.au\)](https://arcc.com.au)

[Southern Connected Basin Environmental Water Committee Annual Reports | Murray-Darling Basin Authority \(mdba.gov.au\)](#), specifically 2017-18 pages 9, 10 and 11) and 2018-19 (pages 11 and from 13)

Please note: This list is not comprehensive. Case studies may be updated at a later date.

### Other useful resources

Commonwealth Environmental Water Office:

*Healthy Rivers, Healthy Communities. A pocket guide to water for the environment* [Healthy Rivers, Healthy Communities. A pocket guide to water for the environment | Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment](#)

*Water use in catchments* [Water use in catchments | Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment](#)



*Water Management Plan 2020-21* [Water Management Plan 2020-21 | Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment](#)

Murray-Darling Basin Authority:

Proposed and operational water resource plans [Water resource plans | Murray-Darling Basin Authority \(mdba.gov.au\)](#)

[Preliminary guide to Murray-Darling Indigenous groups by water resource plan area](#)

## Map of the Murray-Darling Basin

