WIRES Research Grants Program Guidelines 2023

Guidelines and Eligibility Criteria for WIRES Research Grants Program

prepared by WIRES

WIRES Research Grants Program Guidelines 2023

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Introduction

WIRES is Australia's largest wildlife rescue organisation and has been rescuing and caring for sick, injured and orphaned native animals for over 35 years. Our ongoing mission is to actively rehabilitate and preserve Australian wildlife and inspire others to do the same.

WIRES operates a dedicated Wildlife Rescue Office assisting wildlife and the community across Australia 24-hours a day, 365 days a year, providing rescue advice and assistance for over 130,000 animals annually as well as provide full-time mobile Wildlife Emergency Responders operating across Greater Sydney, South-East Queensland and Tasmania.

WIRES has actively been providing significant national support for hundreds of projects to assist with wildlife rescue and rehabilitation across Australia, while also working nationally with major partners to support the long-term recovery of wildlife habitat and the long-term preservation of native species in the wild.

The WIRES Research Grants Program is proudly supported by the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales (RZS NSW) and aims to address the significant knowledge gaps surrounding Australian wildlife and their habitats. Recent major ecological emergencies including drought, fires, floods, as well as an ever-growing threatened species list have clearly highlighted the vulnerability of native animals and the need to find effective strategies to mitigate major threats. In addition, calls to the WIRES rescue hotline are increasing year on year, meaning more animals requiring rescue. We therefore want to ensure that we are nurturing research into evidence-based rescue and rehabilitation practices, to maximise their effectiveness for those animals coming into care.

The challenges currently faced by our wildlife and the wild places they call home are immense. At WIRES, we believe that collaboration is the key to delivering tangible project outcomes to effectively tackle these challenges. Research projects that utilise the expertise of and share knowledge between wildlife rehabilitators, researchers, conservation professionals, citizen scientists and community groups will lead to the best outcomes for our precious native species. Collectively, we can deliver the best long-term outcomes nationally for all Australian native species and their habitats.

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WIRES Research Grants Program Overview

WIRES Research Grants Program has been developed to provide ongoing support for wildlife researchers across Australia. WIRES focus is on proposals that have tangible, positive and ideally long-term outcomes for wildlife. Funding granted through this program is for projects of up to three (3) years duration. The grant will be administered through WIRES.

The overall objectives of the WIRES Research Grants Program are to;

1. Identify and address current research gaps that will result in evidence-based approaches to objectively reduce future risk to and improve the health and habitats of Australian native species.
2. Advance scientific research into key issues impacting Australian wildlife and their habitats, through strategic investment.
3. Raise awareness and implementation of proven wildlife rehabilitation and conservation methods.
4. Promote best practice emergency preparedness and response in the context of wildlife conservation.

This will be achieved by supporting robust scientific research that will lead to evidence-based practices to reduce the likelihood of wildlife requiring rescue and rehabilitation, provide scientific-based evidence for the improvement of rescue and rehabilitation methods, improve post-release outcomes for rehabilitated wildlife and aid the recovery of wild populations and their habitats, all of which can improve long-term ecological outcomes in Australia.

This is a competitive grants program. Demand is likely to outweigh available funds and therefore eligible applications will be evaluated by an assessment panel. This assessment will be based on the proposed project, funding priorities, demonstrated need, value for money, and funds available.

The primary objectives of any approved projects will be to significantly and measurably improve long-term outcomes for native wildlife and their habitats. Project outcomes should also align with the objectives of the WIRES Research Grants Program.

This may be achieved through:

- Strategic on-ground activities
- Applied research
- Technological innovation
- Citizen science that can produce scientifically relevant data

Impact of COVID-19

When preparing your application, you need to take into consideration the time frames and any constraints that may impact the delivery and participation of your activities resulting from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Projects need to be designed to ensure participants' safety and health and this needs to be consistently monitored and adjusted, as required, to remain in keeping with current health and government advice and restrictions.

Eligibility

Team Composition

Each application must name one **Lead Chief Investigator**. The Lead Chief Investigator is the researcher that will lead the project and act as the main contact for financial and administrative matters. Other **Chief Investigator(s)** and **Partner Investigator(s)** can also be named as a person or persons contributing to the project. The demonstrable experience of both the Lead and Chief Investigators listed in this project will be considered against the assessment criteria.

Chief Investigators must be a researcher or affiliate of a university and/or research institution and hold a salaried fixed-term or continuing academic appointment of at least 0.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) at the time of application. All named participants in the application must have met their obligations regarding previously funding projects, including submission of satisfactory reports.

Chief Investigators must hold or have reasonable expectation at the time of application of holding a salaried fixed-term or continuing academic appointment until the grant end date. Chief Investigators who cannot have an employment contract that spans the duration of the project must show how the project can be successfully completed if they are no longer available for the project.

Chief Investigators are expected to:

1. take significant intellectual responsibility for the conception and conduct of the project and for any strategic decisions required in its pursuit and the communication of results;
2. ensure effective supervision, support and mentoring of other research personnel for whom they are responsible; and
3. make a commitment to conducting the project and have the relevant skills and experience to contribute to the project.

Partner Investigators are expected to:

1. take significant intellectual responsibility for the planning and conduct of the project and for any strategic decisions required in its pursuit and the communication of results;
2. have the relevant skills and experience to contribute to the project;
3. make a commitment to conducting the project and/or provide effective supervision, support and mentoring of research personnel, as required; and
4. must not meet the eligibility criteria for Chief Investigators at any time the project is being conducted.

All named participants in an Application must:

1. satisfy the eligibility criteria for the role they are to perform;
2. take responsibility for the authorship and intellectual content of the Application, appropriately citing sources and acknowledging contribution from WIRES for the project; and
3. have met their obligations regarding previously funded projects, including funds from organisations other than WIRES.

A project cannot commence until all named participants meet the eligibility criteria in these grant guidelines.

General Eligibility

Applicant(s) must:

- must not concurrently hold more than one WIRES grant
- comply with all relevant laws and regulations in undertaking the project
- have the knowledge and experience required to deliver the project
- be in and conduct activities within Australia with a focus on Australian wildlife
- not have overdue progress or acquittal reports for previously funded grants
- have a demonstrated history of professional, proactive, and positive collaboration with other organisations and individuals, including WIRES
- submit the correct application form accurately and on time
- have the appropriate type and level of insurance for the activities that are the subject of this proposal
- if required, obtain approval from an Animal Ethics Committee (AEC), Wildlife Ethics Committee (WEC), and/or human ethics before research can begin. This can be done after the Application has been approved for the WIRES grant.

Project must:

- address one or more of WIRES Research Grants Program priority objectives
- identify a current need or issue and propose/provide a solution
- result in demonstrable tangible outcomes for wildlife and/or their habitats
- begin after the grant funding commencement date and not require retrospective, recurrent or ongoing funding
- meet eligibility criteria for the appropriate funding category
- be realistic in terms of deliverables, timeframe, and budget

You cannot apply if you:

- have outstanding obligations/acquittal reports for projects previously funded by WIRES or any other organisation
- cannot obtain ethical approval for your project and the research proposed cannot be ethically justifiable
- have been previously involved in an ethical breach in a workplace

Grant Conditions

Successful applicants must:

- read and sign the WIRES Grant Agreement
- provide bank details, to enable prompt grant payment
- provide additional documents as required by WIRES, including cost share with other institutions or organisations
- produce a project risk assessment, including COVID-19 protocols in keeping with current government advice
- must provide a completed budget and project plan
- spend the grant funds within the agreed period
- complete and submit reports as required
- account for grant funds by providing copies of invoices and receipts with your final reports
- submit a brief story with a high-res image related to their project for use in WIRES promotion of the grant program.
- acknowledge WIRES contribution in all publications and presentations arising from their project
- agree to *ad hoc* project audits

Funding Available

A total funding pool of up to $500,000 per year, for three (3) years, is available. Eligible applicants are invited to submit proposals that adhere to one or more of the following categories:

Category 1: <u>Risk-Reduction</u> research that will help reduce the chances of wildlife requiring rescue and rehabilitation

Category 2: <u>Rescue and Rehabilitation</u> research that will improve rescue and rehabilitation methods

Category 3: <u>Release</u> research that would improve post-release outcomes for rehabilitated wildlife

Category 4: <u>Recovery</u> research that aids the recovery of wild populations and their habitats

Use of Grant Money

The WIRES Research Grants Program supports research activities. You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure items that directly support your project and in accordance with any additional conditions in the Grant Agreement.

The funding is available to cover direct cost of the research project proposed. **Direct cost of research can include:**

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Type	Date
Consumables	Supplies and materials needed to complete the project, and usually consumed or used within the life of the project. This will not include office supplies.
Equipment	Equipment must specifically apply to the project in the application. Indirect cost of the equipment may not be permitted.
Services	Services that are required for research e.g. sequencing costs.
Travel	Travel costs for field work and visiting other research sites should have a limit of 10% of the overall budget requested.
Administration on-costs	Administration cost that is required by research institute or organisation and must be directly associated with the project. While on-costs are usually not listed in the budget, WIRES requests that you add this to your overall budget with a limit of 10% of the overall budget.
Other	Other direct costs can include: • Publication and dissemination of project research outputs (limited to AUD$2,000);

WIRES do not provide funding for items including, but not limited to:

- computer programs research aids and tools unless they are directly being used for research
- university facilities and services (including library, IT, human resources, finance, insurance and legal, security, and hazardous waste disposal)
- space and infrastructure (including laboratory and office space, major items of research equipment or specialist infrastructure)
- in-kind contributions (including salaries of continuing staff working on the project, access to specialised facilities or data, prorated use of machinery/equipment)
- completed works or current research projects funded by another institution or organisation
- ongoing operational expenses, capital improvements and fixed assets including basic electronic/office equipment (unless essential element in completing field work) or equipment already available to the research institute or organisation
- activities or programs that duplicate existing services or repeat previously funded projects
- the covering of retrospective costs
- the covering of insurance costs
- reimbursement of previous expenditure
- profit making activities
- personnel, including salaries of Chief Investigators, Partner Investigators or assistants
- entertainment costs

- prize money
- fundraising or general income-growth purposes
- internship or volunteer programmes (unless benefiting an identified conservation need)
- firearms (including dart guns, ammunition and training associated with firearms use)
- non-research activities
- accommodation which does not directly relate to the research program / or exceed 10% of the total budget
- catering
- conference/seminar fees
- cost for activities that include the introduction of plants, animals or other biological agents that are known to be, or that could become, environmental or agricultural weeds or pests
- cost for activities that include intentional harm to animals

Key Dates

Item	Date
Applications open	30th January 2023
Applications close	27th February 2023
Successful applicants notified	8th May 2023
Unsuccessful applicants notified	8th June 2023
1st year progress report	31st May 2024
2nd year progress report	30th May 2025
3rd year final report	29th May 2026

General Guidelines

- Please verify if you are eligible before you start the application
- The application must be written in English
- Please remain within word limits (see *Application Form* for more information. Applications cannot exceed the word limit on the WIRES Grant Portal)
- Please double-check your budget before sending the application. The budget should be in Australian dollars ($AUD)
- Quotes required

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How to Apply

Refer to **key dates** for opening and closing dates for the application period of the Research Grants Program. To apply for a WIRES Grant, applicants must meet eligibility criteria, accurately complete the application form and submit on time.

Please note that due to limited funding and a competitive assessment process, not every application that meets the eligibility criteria will receive a WIRES Research Grant.

Application Process

- Access the WIRES Grant Portal
- Create account and log in. Please note that you will need to tick "Yes" to receiving notifications if you wish to be sent confirmation of application submission.
- Read information on the home page
- Click on "Start application"
- Select "WIRES Research Grants Program 2023"
- If you wish to leave a partially completed application, make sure you press 'Save + close' and log out.
- You can log back in and continue to edit your application form until you are ready to submit
- To submit your application, select the 'Submit Application' button. Note: no changes can be made once this is selected.
- You will receive a confirmation email when your application has been successfully received. If you do not receive an email, please ensure you check your junk mail.

Please take the time to ensure you only apply if you meet all the conditions listed.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the email address provided on the application is checked regularly.

For questions about the application process, please email: grants@wires.org.au

The Grant Selection Process

All applications will be considered through a competitive peer-review process. WIRES will manage the assessment of applications.

WIRES will review your application against the eligibility criteria and may determine whether an application meets the eligibility requirements in these grant guidelines at any stage during assessment of the application. If an application is ineligible, the application will not progress through to the assessment process and WIRES will not recommend the application for funding.

If an application is considered incomplete, or has inaccurate or false/misleading information, WIRES, in absolute discretion, will decide to recommend that the application not be approved for a grant.

Your application will be considered on:

- Consistency with WIRES priority objectives
- How well it meets the assessment criteria and how it is ranked against other applications
- Tangible improvements in outcomes for native wildlife and their habitats
- Need of the proposal, relative to other proposals
- Project quality and achievability
- Project sustainability beyond the current funding opportunity
- Degree of collaboration
- Geographic equity, nationally
- Value for money
- Applicant experience, expertise and professionalism
- Compliance with previous funding opportunities
- Ability to raise awareness of the identified issue and its solution(s)

WIRES may request additional information during the assessment process.

Assessment of Applications

All applications will be assessed by the Technical Review Panel under the following criteria:

1. Project quality and innovation
2. Impact and relevance of project
3. Investigator(s) demonstrable experience and potential
4. Feasibility and strategic alignment
5. Value for money

Priority will also be given to applicants that:

1. Have not previously been funded by WIRES (particularly within the past 2 years)
2. Deliver a co-contribution (cash and/or in-kind)
3. Increase awareness of need and provide solution to the community
4. Facilitate long-term benefits or improvement to wildlife and their habitats
5. Propose a project that needs funding relative to other projects

Funding requests should not duplicate previously successful grants from any scheme.

Please also keep in mind that funding available **for projects per university and/or research organisation is limited**.

Following assessment, WIRES will advise you of the outcome of your application in writing. If you are successful, we will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant.

If you are unsuccessful, we will provide an opportunity to discuss the outcome with us. WIRES may not notify unsuccessful applicants until grant agreements have been executed with successful applicants.

Grant Agreement and Payment

WIRES requires successful applicants to complete and return a grant agreement, along with bank account details, evidence of relevant insurances and a project risk assessment, including COVID-19 protocols. A grant agreement must be executed before WIRES can start making any payments, where both the applicant and WIRES have signed the agreement. You will have 21 calendar days from the date of the grant offer to execute this grant agreement with WIRES. WIRES will not be responsible for any expenditure incurred until the grant agreement has been executed.

A payment schedule will be defined for each project. Funding for projects will be released in a staged process, with an initial payment paid at the commencement of the project and final payments processed upon receipt of progress reports. The staged payment milestones can be found in the grant agreement.

GST

WIRES Research Grants are exclusive of GST. WIRES recommends you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. We do not provide advice on tax.

Announcement of Grants

If successful, WIRES will announce your success to you via email. WIRES may publicise and report on grants awarded, including the following information:

1. Your name and other parties involved in your project (including organisation name)
2. The project description (title and summary descriptions)
3. The WIRES grant funding amount

You must ensure that information contained in the project title or summary descriptions will not compromise your requirements for confidentiality (i.e. protection of intellectual property). In making information of your project public, WIRES may use a project description, including title and summary descriptions, which differs from that provided in your application.

Project Monitoring

Keeping Us Informed

You must alert WIRES if anything is likely to affect your organisation or your ability to complete your project as agreed.

You must also inform us of any changes to your:

- Name
- Address or organisation
- Nominated contact details
- Project plan
- Project budget

If you become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the grant agreement, you must contact us immediately.

Reporting

You must submit reports in line with the grant agreement.

We will expect you to report on:

- Progress against agreed project milestones (annually, please see *Key Dates* for more information).
- Project expenditure, including expenditure of grant funds. You must retain receipts and invoices for the duration of the project

The amount of detail you are asked to provide in your reports will be relative to the project size, complexity, and grant amount.

We will monitor the progress of your project by assessing reports you submit and may conduct project audits to confirm details of your reports, if necessary. Occasionally, we may need to re-examine claims, seek further information, or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

You must discuss any project or milestone reporting delays with us as soon as you become aware of them.

If WIRES is not satisfied with the progress of the project, further payment of grant funds will not be made until satisfactory progress has been made on the project. If satisfactory progress is not achieved within a reasonable period, the grant will be terminated, and all outstanding grant funds will be recovered by WIRES. The final report, if not submitted or is not satisfactory, will also be considered an eligibility matter for future WIRES funding for the named participants on the project.

Project Variation Requests

We recognise that unexpected events may affect project progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your grant agreement.

If you want to propose changes to the grant agreement, you must put them in writing <u>before</u> the end of the project date. You should not assume that the changes will be successful. WIRES will consider the proposed changes based on provisions in the grant agreement and the likely impact on achieving project outcomes. <u>You cannot request an increase to the approved grant amount.</u>

Funding Acknowledgement

If you make a public statement about a project funded under the WIRES Research Grants Program, including in a journal article, report, brochure, publication, websites, promotional and advertising materials, displays and signage, public announcements and activities relating to the project funded under the program, you must acknowledge the grant by using the following:

This project received grant funding from WIRES through the WIRES Research Grants Program

For more information, go to WIRES.org.au/RGP

Logo Use

All promotional materials, print media, digital media (websites, blogs, social media etc.) used in promotion of the grant should also include the WIRES National Grants Program logo. The logo's colour, shape, form, font, or design must not be modified in any way. All instances and usage of the logo should be forwarded for approval prior to publication to marketing@wires.org.au with the subject heading "Logo Approval". WIRES will endeavour to reply and grant approval or feedback within 48 hours upon receipt. Please factor this process in any application or usage of the logo.

The logo must not be used to give the impression WIRES has published a product or endorsed another organisation without prior approval or consultation.

Social Media

Tagging WIRES on social media, where character limits allow, will help us cross-promote projects and share your stories with our wider community.

Please use the following handles and hashtags:

<u>**ACCOUNTS**</u>

Instagram: @wireswildliferescue

Facebook: @WIRES.wildlife.rescue

LinkedIn: @wireswildliferescue

Twitter: @WIRESWildlife

OFFICIAL HASHTAGS:

#WIRESRGP

#WIRESWildlifeRescue

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Frequently Asked Questions

Can I apply if I have received a WIRES grant in the past?

Yes, however priority will be given to those organisations who have not received a WIRES grant in the past two years. Applicants with outstanding acquittals from previous grants are ineligible for further funding until all reporting requirements are met.

Can we submit more than one application?

Yes, more than one application from one organisation can be accepted but please keep in mind that funding available for projects per organisation is limited.

Can I submit my application after the closing date?

No, late applications will not be considered for funding unless there are extreme extenuating circumstances.

How do I apply for a grant?

See above section "How to Apply for a Grant".

Can I send a hard copy or email application?

No, all applications must be submitted through the WIRES Grant Portal.

How will I know if my application has been received by WIRES?

If you ticked "Yes" to receiving notifications about your application, you will receive an automatically generated email when you submit your application successfully.

Please note, an issue with your email firewall might block the confirmation email. Please ensure you check your spam/junk mail folder. If you are still unsure whether your application has been submitted successfully, contact WIRES Projects & Grants Team at grants@wires.org.au.

When will I be notified if my application is successful?

Successful applicants will be notified in May 2023. WIRES may not notify unsuccessful applicants until grant agreements have been executed with successful applicants.

Please ensure that the email address provided on the application is checked regularly.

Who decides which projects get funding?

WIRES is committed to ensuring that the assessment process is fair and transparent. The process is as follows:

1. WIRES will conduct an eligibility check. Applications that are incomplete or ineligible will not progress.

2. Applications that are complete and eligible will be collated according to funding categories.

3. These collated applications will be assessed by the Technical Review Panel.

4. Successful and unsuccessful applicants notified in writing.

How will my submission be assessed?

Your application will be assessed against the WIRES Assessment Criteria and against other proposals. Applications with the highest scores and that meet our funding priorities will be successful.

If my application is successful, when will I receive my Grant Distribution?

Once we receive the signed grant agreement, required documentation and bank details, WIRES will pay the agreed amount into the nominated account and notify you of this in writing.

How do I report on my grant?

WIRES will notify you when it is time to complete your progress and final reports. Reporting is undertaken through the WIRES Grant Portal.

What do I do if my project is not completed before the final report is due?

We understand that occasionally there are delays to your project. Please contact the WIRES team at the earliest possible time to discuss any project or reporting delays.

If you still have questions or require any further information after reading our FAQs, you can email grants@wires.org.au

WE WISH YOU ALL THE BEST WITH YOUR APPLICATION & THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

More Information

For further information on the guidelines or to discuss your project or application, contact:

Email: grants@wires.org.au

Website: https://www.wires.org.au

Grants webpage: https://www.wires.org.au/research-grants-program or https://www.wires.org.au/RGP