Selwyn Natural Environment Fund

Fund specific information

1. Purpose of this fund
To encourage and assist landowners, individuals, community groups, and mana whenua to protect, restore, and enhance the natural environment.

2. Outcomes – what we will see through the initiatives funded by this fund
- Ecologically significant sites are protected and restored, particularly threatened sites and locations.
- Increased coverage of native vegetation and improved habitat for indigenous wildlife.
- Improved water quality, for relevant sites.
- Relationships and trust built with community and landowners to maximise initiatives that benefit the natural environment.
- Selwyn Biodiversity Strategy and Predator Free 2050 goals are contributed to.

3. Fund Activities

Annual fund amount	$225,000
Fund decision makers	Assessment Panel
Fund type	Contestable
Fund frequency	Annually, with a second round if required
Fund opening and closing dates	Round 1: Fund opens 1 August and closes 20 September Round 2: Fund opens 1 February and closes 20 March (if funds allow)
Decisions dates	Within two months of the closing date
Accountability requirements	- Funding agreement signed by both parties. - A project summary and expenditure report. - Invoices for materials purchased, and/or labour. - Photos of work completed. - Unless a prior arrangement is made, this documentation should be submitted within one year of the grant's acceptance.
Who can apply	Applicants must be residents and/or ratepayers of the Selwyn District. The funding is open to iwi, community groups, schools, landowners and individuals.
Who can't apply	Selwyn District Council and other Public Agencies, such as ECAN, DOC or LINZ, are excluded from applying to the fund.
What can be funded	On private land: - Eco-sourced native plants. - Materials for restoration planting. - Maintenance costs.

	- Fencing to protect areas of existing native vegetation (primarily only for areas identified as SNAs, and where fencing is not a legal obligation). - Weed control (Priority 1 and 2 sites only). On public land: - Weed control (Priority 1 and 2 sites only). Consideration may be given to the following: - Education and research projects that benefit biodiversity protection and restoration. - Costs associated with hosting working bees as part of funded restoration projects. - Salary or wages for a specified project, such as facilitator costs for environmental workshops or coordinator costs associated with delivering the activity or programme for which the funds are requested.
What can't be funded	*In addition to Funding Exclusions as stated in Section 6.7 and 6.8 of C213 Community Funding Policy:* - Personal gardens or beautification projects. - Purchase of exotic plants or natives that are not natural to the area (this may include native cultivars, non-eco-sourced natives or North Island plant species). - Funding will not be provided for work that is legally required or mandated by law. - Resource consent fees as a result of any activity associated with this application.
Criteria / terms and conditions	*In addition to criteria in Section 3 and Section 6 of C213 Community Funding Policy:* - All work must be within the Selwyn District. - Funding is primarily for work on private land. However, funding may be considered for weed control on public land. Any work on public land requires approval from the relevant landowner. - For long-term projects, applicants may apply for up to three years of funding. These applications will require a project plan and provide a higher level of detail in their funding application. - Council staff may request to meet with the applicant to discuss project details and if necessary, provide advice. - Financial assistance will usually be no more than 70% of a project's total costs. - The applicants share of the costs can be by way of in-kind contributions (e.g. labour), other funding or cash. **Assessment Criteria:**

	Applications will be evaluated against the following criteria, as relevant to each project: • The degree to which the work protects, benefits, or restores indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems. • The existing biodiversity values of the project area. • The long-term benefits of the work funded. • The degree of current threat to the project site e.g. from stock or invasive weeds and pests. • Evidence of the applicant's commitment to the project, including their in-kind contributions and/or co-funding. • The degree of on-going protection and maintenance for the work funded.
Priority Ranking	The maximum grant allocation will depend on the priority ranking: 1. To protect and restore sites that contain significant indigenous biodiversity and/or habitat, as defined by Significant Natural Area (SNA) criteria in the Selwyn District Plan 2. To help restore and protect sites with remnant native biodiversity. 3. To create new sites of native restoration planting on private land – where there is a waterway, wetland, or other important ecological feature. 4. To create new sites of native restoration planting on private land – other sites.

Grant Allocation

Depending on the proposed project's priority ranking, and how well it meets the assessment criteria, grants will generally range between $1,000 - $10,000 (GST inclusive)

4. Internal Guidance – Recommendation of allocation amounts

Priority Ranking			Maximum Grant Allocation[1]
➢ Priority 1	To protect and restore sites that contain significant indigenous biodiversity and/or habitat, as defined by Significant Natural Area (SNA) criteria in the District Plan.		Up to $10,000
➢ Priority 2	To help restore and protect sites with remnant native biodiversity.		Up to $7,500
➢ Priority 3	To create new sites of native restoration planting on private land – where there is a waterway, wetland, or other important ecological feature.		Up to $5,000

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[1] The Funding Committee reserve the right to use their discretion when allocating grants, and in exceptional circumstances may exceed this amount.

➢ Priority 4	To create new sites of native restoration planting on private land – other sites.	Up to $2,500

5. Process

1. **Process for receiving/reviewing applications (Biodiversity Team)**
   a. Acknowledge receipt of the application by responding to the email application (or send a new email if received in hard copy). Thank them for their application. Provide the application closing date and decision announcement date.
   b. Scan applications as they come in and save in the relevant folder in PORT.
   c. Add the application information to the *Tracking Spreadsheet* and the *SNEF database.*

2. **Once the Fund has closed (Biodiversity Team)**
   a. The Biodiversity team may meet with the applicant to discuss project details and if necessary, provide advice.
   b. Biodiversity team meets to discuss applications, and creates recommendations for Assessment Panel using the R*ecommendation Template,* basing the recommendation on:
      i. The degree to which the work protects, benefits, or restores indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems.
      ii. The existing biodiversity values of the project area.
      iii. The long-term benefits of the work funded.
      iv. The degree of current threat to the project site e.g. from stock or invasive weeds and pests.
      v. Evidence of the applicant's commitment to the project, including their in-kind contributions and/or co-funding.
      vi. The degree of on-going protection and maintenance for the work funded.

2. **Funding staff (SDC Senior Advisor Community Funding; SDC Reporting and Monitoring Coordinator) prepare documentation and send to Assessment Panel:**
   a. Agenda using the *Agenda Template*
   b. Budget, current financial statement of fund, using the *Budget Template*
   c. Recommendation for funding, using the R*ecommendation Template*

3. **Assessment Panel meeting (decision meeting)**
   a. The Council Funding Advisor will take the minutes of the meeting, using the *Minutes Template*, which include:
      i. Conflict of interests declared by the Assessment Panel members or staff present at the meeting in relation to applications being considered.
      ii. Funding Decision: approved or declined.
      iii. If approved:
         a. amount of funding approved.
         b. any requests for follow-up or information sought by funding committee members.
      iv. If declined, reason for declining.
   b. The Council Funding Advisor will then send the minutes to the Biodiversity team.

4. **After Assessment Panel meeting (decision meeting) (Biodiversity Team)**
   a. Update the *Tracking Spreadsheet* and *SNEF database* with approved/declined decision and committee comments.

b. Prepare letter for successful and unsuccessful applicants using the *Letter Template* and save them into relevant funding folders on Port.
c. Inform the applicants about the funding decision by sending a letter.

5. **Payments (Biodiversity Team)**
   d. Successful applicants will be paid the Grant on receipt of their signed funding agreement, and or on an invoice basis, this will be at the discretion of the Biodiversity Team. Applicants will have one year to collect their Grant or prove significant progress has been made towards work detailed in the funding agreement. In extenuating situations, such as drought or illness, the grant may be extended by written agreement of both parties and approval by the funding panel.
   e. If not yet claimed, send them a reminder email 3 months before the cut off to remind them that they have the grant and what is needed to make the payment.
   f. If not a creditor, request Accounts to create a creditor number. They require a completed creditor voucher along with bank account details.
   g. Raise a Purchase Order (PO) and send authorisation request to the Environmental Team Leader.
   h. Send the funding agreement and grant payment form (plus invoice if payment is being made on receipt of invoice) to accounts for payment to be made.
   i. File all relevant documents in grant recipient's folder in PORT.
   j. Monitor whether the PO has been authorised to make sure the fund will be released within the relevant accounts payment cycle (usually 10th and 20th of the month); if the authorisation has not happened follow up with the authoriser.
   k. Match invoices in MagiQ (creditor voucher).
   l. Update Tracking Spreadsheet.

6. **Reports (Biodiversity Team)**
   a. Applicant sends report to Biodiversity Staff, including the following documents:
      i. Proof of payment e.g. invoice, receipt or screenshot of the Bank account that the payment came from
      ii. Proof of the work being done (Pictures, copy of report etc.)
   b. Record invoices in database to track spending.
   c. File documents in PORT.

5. Who is on the Staff Review Panel

Function	Staff role responsible for this function
Staff Review Panel	SDC Senior Biodiversity Specialist SDC Biodiversity Specialist
Administration	Biodiversity Staff Community Grants Reporting and Monitoring Coordinator Senior Advisor Community Funding (and Events)

6. Reporting information for Council

This fund is reported annually to Council in the *Community Funding Integrated Report*:

1. **# applications, $ requested, $ funded:**
   a. # approved, total $ requested, total $ funded
   b. # declined, total $ requested, and a short summary of reasons for declines

2. **Ward comparison**
   a. Amount of $ requested by Ward
   b. Amount of $ funded by Ward
3. **Types of funded items - # funded, $ funded:**
   a. Restoration Planting – number of plants and/or area planted
   b. Weed Control – area controlled
   c. Fencing – length
   d. Other
4. **Map of funding/project locations**

7. Resources
   - Tracking Spreadsheet
   - SNEF Database (Software)
   - Agenda Template
   - Budget Template
   - Report Template
   - Minutes Template
   - Letter Template
     o Successful application
     o Unsuccessful application
   - Creditors Voucher