



Otago  
Regional  
Council

# ECO Fund 2026



Webinar 3 March 2026



# Welcome

This webinar will be recorded and will be made available on our website.

Please remain on mute and turn off your camera if you don't agree to be recorded.

The webinar is set to last one hour.

Feel free to ask questions through the Q&A section or at the end of this session.



# Agenda

- 1 What is ECO Fund
- 2 Funding categories
- 3 Eligibility
- 4 Tips for a successful ECO Fund application
- 5 How and where to apply for the ECO Fund
- 6 Q&As



# What is ECO Fund

ecofund  
Environment. Community. Otago.  
Te Ao Turoa. Hapori. Ōtākou.

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For projects that protect, enhance and promote Otago's environment.

Projects can be for up to three years.

One ECO Fund round per year and one application per applicant per round

Examples of activities supported: rabbit management, weed removal, native planting and revegetation, water quality improvements.



# 2026 Funding round

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Applications open: 16<sup>th</sup> March – 19<sup>th</sup> April

6 funding categories

Some tweaks to eligibility, assessment  
criteria, terms and conditions

# Funding categories

| Funding category  | Funding cap <u>per project</u> | Funding Budget Total |
|---|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Scaling up for biodiversity                                       | Between \$50,000 & \$150,000   | \$306,600            |
| General (on-ground, education and projects enabling conservation) | Up to \$50,000                 | \$306,600            |
| Sustained rabbit management                                       | Up to \$50,000                 | \$102,200            |
| Biodiversity enhancement on protected private land                | Up to \$15,000                 | \$102,200            |
| Hill country erosion management                                   | Up to \$15,000                 | \$51,100             |
| Weed removal and revegetation                                     | Up to \$15,000                 | \$51,100             |
|   | <b>TOTAL</b>                   | <b>\$919,800</b>     |

# Funding objectives

- C** Community involvement or engagement is required for this funding category

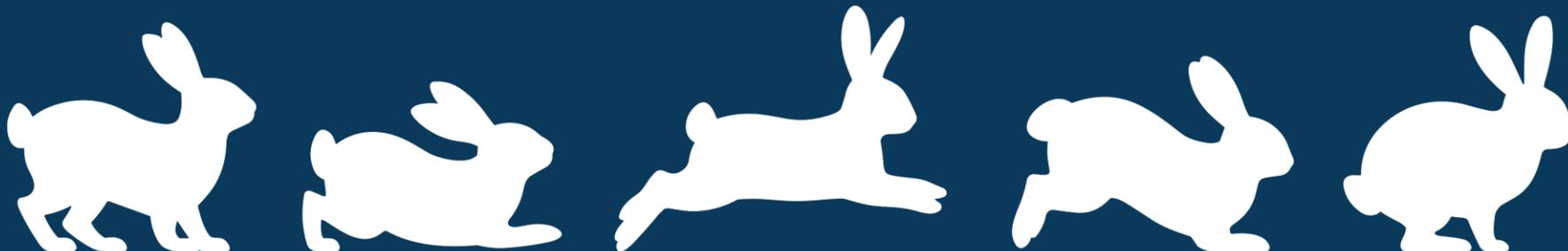
| Funding category   | Objectives  |
|--|---|
| Scaling up for biodiversity <b>C</b>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To protect and enhance native biodiversity to grow in scale and impact.</li><li>• To support community groups to obtain experience in delivery of biodiversity outcomes and to transition towards the Large Scale Environmental fund or other funding opportunities enabling long term success.</li></ul> |
| General (on-ground, education and projects enabling conservation) <b>C</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To protect and enhance Otago's environment.</li><li>• To enable community-led environmental activities.</li></ul>   |



# Funding objectives

- C** Community involvement or engagement is required for this funding category

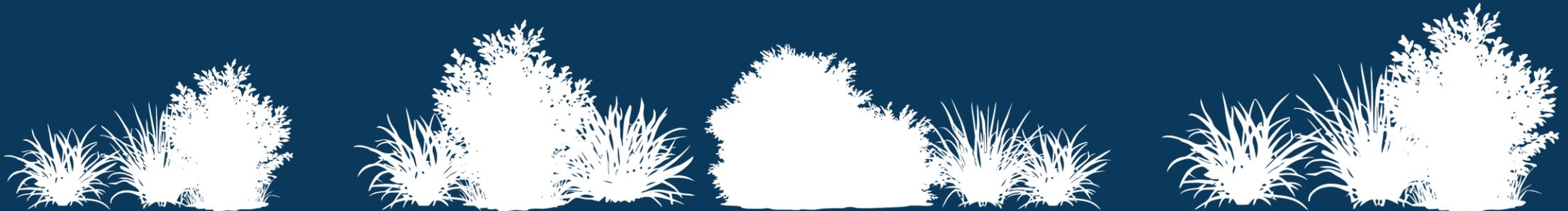
| Funding category                                   | Objectives   |
|--|--|
| Sustained rabbit management <b>C</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To manage rabbit populations in new or existing community programme areas.</li><li>• To enable landowners and community to work together to manage rabbit populations.</li></ul> |
| Biodiversity enhancement on protected private land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To enhance existing protected areas of biodiversity on private land.</li><li>• To enable private landholders to maintain existing biodiversity.</li></ul>                        |



# Funding objectives

- C** Community involvement or engagement is required for this funding category

| Funding category                | Objectives  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Hill country erosion management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To reduce sediment and soil loss through erosion control measures in high country.</li><li>• To support stock-exclusion fencing and/or tree planting for erosion control.</li></ul> |
| Weed removal and revegetation   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To improve native vegetation through removal of weeds / pest plants and rehabilitation.</li><li><b>C</b> • To increase area of native terrestrial biodiversity.</li></ul>           |



# Applicants' eligibility

| Category<br>Applicant  | Scaling up<br>for<br>biodiversity | General | Biodiversity<br>enhancement on<br>protected private<br>land | Sustained<br>rabbit<br>management | Hill country<br>erosion<br>management | Weed<br>removal and<br>revegetation |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Incorporated societies <b>[Re-register by 4 April 2026]</b>  | Y                                 | Y       | Y   | Y                                 | Y                                     | Y                                   |
| Registered charitable trusts   | Y                                 | Y       | Y   | Y                                 | Y                                     | Y                                   |
| Resident and ratepayer groups  | N                                 | Y       | N   | Y                                 | N                                     | Y                                   |
| Unincorporated groups  | N                                 | Y       | N   | Y                                 | N                                     | Y                                   |
| Educational institutions   | N                                 | Y       | N   | N                                 | Y                                     | Y                                   |
| Private / individual landholders   | N                                 | N       | Y   | N                                 | Y                                     | N                                   |
| Groups of private landholders<br>(multiple adjacent landholdings)  | N                                 | N       | Y   | Y                                 | Y                                     | N                                   |
| Private landowners of property/ies<br>with the following status:<br>* Māori customary land<br>* Māori freehold land<br>* Crown land reserved for Māori<br>* Land within the boundary of an<br>original native reserve, if that land is<br>still owned or partly owned by Māori | N                                 | N       | Y   | Y                                 | Y                                     | N                                   |
| Iwi/hapū   | Y                                 | Y       | Y   | Y                                 | Y                                     | Y                                   |



# Project's eligibility

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Project must be located in **Otago**.

Project must align with the **objectives** of the relevant funding category.

Project must be feasible, realistic and achievable.

Project cannot be funded for more than **3 years** in duration.



# Project's eligibility (cont.)

**Management agreement(s) or relevant written permission(s)** that allow the project to be completed on site must be in place **before** submitting your application.

**One quote** for expenses between \$500 and \$2,000, excl. GST

**Two quotes** when they exceed \$2,000, excl. GST

**Wages** are capped at:

- \$50,000 for the General and **Scaling up for Biodiversity** funding categories
- \$15,000 for all other funding categories (including **Sustained rabbit management**)

**Maintenance** costs for projects previously funded by ECO Fund will only be funded up to two times.



# Exclusions

Activities required by legislation, regulation, consent conditions or compliance direction

Resource consent or bylaw approval application fees

Projects for commercial or private gain

Seed capital

Non-native plants (unless assessed as appropriate for the project outcomes and for improved environmental outcomes)

Amenity purposes (e.g. cycleway., bridge, amenity planting)

Retrospective costs



# Assessment criteria

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Project objectives

Applicant capacity  
(feasibility)

Impact of the project  
scale

Biodiversity and cultural  
environmental values

Special biodiversity  
values

Level of community  
engagement

Value for money

New applicants and  
previous track record



# Advice - Scope your project

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Objectives

Timeline

Location / ownership

Activities

Outputs

Monitoring

Maintenance

Budget



# Advice - Consider early on

If you need information from third parties: resource consents and other approvals (management agreements / written permissions) or quotes. Also discuss with contractors: scope, insurance, and...

Health and safety

How you will monitor and maintain the project's benefits.

If you need to submit your final report for your previous project.



# Health & Safety

**Plan early** - Assess the activities and site risks early as these can impact your project prior to submitting your application

## **Funding agreement - H&S pre-condition**

If successful, a H&S plan will be required by and will need to be approved by the ORC H&S team for any physical activity undertaken by:

- the fund recipient,
- volunteers, and
- contractors engaged by the recipient

**Template** - ORC have developed a template to assist you with developing your H&S plan. More information on: [orc.govt.nz/ecofundtips](https://orc.govt.nz/ecofundtips)



# Safety plan content

1. A break down of the project into tasks. For each task consider the step by step actions that are needed.

2. For each step, document

**HOW** the step will be performed, e.g. equipment to be used.

**WHO** will be responsible, e.g. do they need any additional support?

**WHEN** is the best time? Will it be busy, dark, isolated?

**WHERE** will the activity take place, are there any hazards in that area, or people who may be using that area?

3. Identify any hazards, e.g. anything that could cause harm

4. Document the actions taken to stop this.

# Advice - Check our website [orc.govt.nz/ecofund](http://orc.govt.nz/ecofund)

## Enhancing and protecting

Enviroschools

### Grants and funding

#### ECO Fund

Submit your ECO Fund report

Funding categories

Eligibility

Assessment criteria

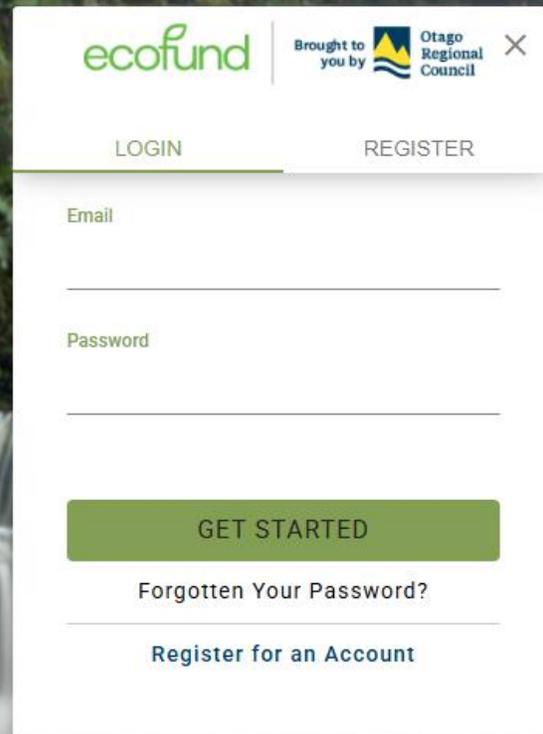
Terms & conditions

Tips for writing a good application

ECO Fund webinar

ECO Fund FAQs

# How and where to apply



The screenshot shows the ecofund website interface. At the top left is the 'ecofund' logo. To its right is the text 'Brought to you by' followed by the Otago Regional Council logo and a close button (X). Below the header are two tabs: 'LOGIN' (which is selected) and 'REGISTER'. The main content area contains an 'Email' input field, a 'Password' input field, and a green 'GET STARTED' button. Below the button are two links: 'Forgotten Your Password?' and 'Register for an Account'.

Apply online

On 16 March, a tile will appear on  
[www.orc.govt.nz/eco-fund](http://www.orc.govt.nz/eco-fund)

Register as a user

Then register your organisation as the applicant.  
For individual landowners, you will still need to  
register your organisation.

# Need funding for an environmental project?

If you've got ideas, big or small, then our ECO Fund could be for you!

Applications for the ECO Fund open on 16 March — and we want to help you turn your ideas into reality.

Landowners, iwi, community groups and environmental organisations are invited to learn more about Otago Regional Council's ECO Fund and how to submit a strong application, with two free webinars.

## Upcoming Webinars

### Learn more about ECO Fund

#### When

7pm Tuesday,  
3 March 2026

#### Where

Online via Zoom: [orc.govt.nz/ecowebinar](https://orc.govt.nz/ecowebinar)  
Meeting ID: 833 7451 0572

### Preparing a strong funding application

#### When

7pm Tuesday,  
10 March 2026

#### Where

Online via Zoom: [orc.govt.nz/ecowebinar2](https://orc.govt.nz/ecowebinar2)  
Meeting ID: 811 8332 3438 | Passcode: 961642



Find out more at [orc.govt.nz/ecofund](https://orc.govt.nz/ecofund)

## Next week



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## ECO Fund webinar: Preparing a strong funding application

- Grant-seeking best practice
- Practical grant-writing tips
- Building and maintaining strong funder relationships

# Discuss your project with ORC staff



ECO Fund team:

[www.orc.govt.nz/contactecofund](http://www.orc.govt.nz/contactecofund)

0800 474 082

[ecofund@orc.govt.nz](mailto:ecofund@orc.govt.nz)

Catchment Advisors and Community Coordinators -  
Biosecurity

Site visits can be organised



# Q&As

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Thank you for attending this webinar.

If you have further questions, contact us at:

[www.orc.govt.nz/contactecofund](http://www.orc.govt.nz/contactecofund)

0800 474 082

[ecofund@orc.govt.nz](mailto:ecofund@orc.govt.nz)