

Advice to Minister for Primary Industries

NSW Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative

1 Summary

- In March 2015 the Hon Troy Grant MP announced \$15 million over four years to unlock the full potential of Landcare volunteers (letter at **Attachment 1**). The Deputy Premier asked that the details of the program be finalised through consultation after the March election.
- The Minister for Primary Industries asked the Commission to facilitate a roundtable process with Landcare NSW, Local Land Services (LLS), Department of Primary Industries and Office of Environment and Heritage to collaboratively develop a model to deliver this funding.
- The proposed program includes three key program elements: a network of locally based coordinators who will work with local Landcare groups and other volunteer conservation groups; a centralised support team; and transitioning the Landcare network towards becoming financially self-sustaining.
- The Commission understands that this is a one off funding commitment, and the NSW Government's previous commitment of \$500,000 per year for the Landcare Support Program (2011-15) will cease at the end June 2015.
- The roundtable resulted in a program delivery model that is outlined in this paper. The key features of the model are:
 - the majority of funds going to community-based local coordinator positions (75 percent)
 - structures designed to strengthen partnerships between LLS and Landcare
 - joint oversight at a state scale through a Joint Management Committee
 - competitive tenders for coordinator positions at a regional scale jointly assessed by Landcare and LLS
 - resources dedicated to developing and pursuing options for future financial sustainability.
- Landcare NSW supports the model, but argue the program should be titled the 'NSW Landcare Program'. They believe the program should be more focussed on supporting the state-wide Landcare network and that government should continue to support Landcare beyond the end of the four year program, rather than requiring the network to become financially self-sustaining.
- Local Land Services support the model.
- Both LLS and Landcare recognise that work is required to improve the relationship across the state.
- It will take up to six months to establish the program. Key positions in LLS and Landcare should be created and filled as soon as possible, so that coordinators can be appointed from January 2016.

2 Process

- The Commission facilitated two roundtable meetings held on 21 May and 10 June 2015 to develop details for delivering the \$15 million commitment.
- Roundtable participants were Landcare NSW, LLS, DPI, and OEH (including Environmental Trust). The Australian Government was invited to attend.
- Landcare NSW provided comprehensive background material and proposals for the program.
- Outside of the roundtables the Commission sought advice from government and community members involved in the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program that is widely regarded as successful and has recently been re-funded by the Victorian Government (summary included as **Attachment 2**). The Commission also spoke with the Executive Officer of the National Landcare Network and representatives from the Australian Government.

3 Program outcomes and design principles

- The primary purpose of this one off \$15 million NSW Government commitment over four years is to maintain and build community capacity consistently across NSW through a network of locally based coordinators to enable groups and networks to work towards becoming self-sustaining.
- This program recognises the significant value of Landcare and other local voluntary conservation efforts to rural and regional NSW.
- The program provides integrated support services to enable Landcare and other voluntary conservation groups to build community capacity to address critical agricultural sustainability and environmental issues. The program is jointly managed by Landcare NSW and Local Land Services in a partnership of shared responsibility.
- This new program is commencing in an environment of budget constraint.
- This program should recognise that an active and capable Landcare network that can effectively partner with government is important for meeting stated goals to improve landscape health and the prosperity of communities.
- The program reinforces the NSW 2021 commitment to localism and devolution and specifically contributes to Goal 23 – increase opportunities for people to look after their own neighbourhoods and environments.
- The key elements of the program are provided in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Key design principles for the NSW Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative

Key outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Improved community capacity to deliver on-ground projects▪ Self-sustaining funding model for long term support of volunteer effort▪ Strengthened relationship between Landcare and government, including LLS
Design principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Co-design and community involvement▪ Improved geographic coverage of Landcare networks▪ More consistent partnerships across NSW▪ Accountability to the community and government▪ Recognise linkages between program components▪ Draw on research, evaluation, evidence and experience of previous and existing programs in NSW and other jurisdictions, including Victoria
Key program components	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Establishing regional and state networks of local coordinators▪ Providing central support as required to achieve program outcomes▪ Creating mechanisms for financial sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To satisfy the objectives of this program, the Commission has developed a draft delivery model for the NSW Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative in consultation with roundtable attendees. An overview of the model is provided in Figure 1.	

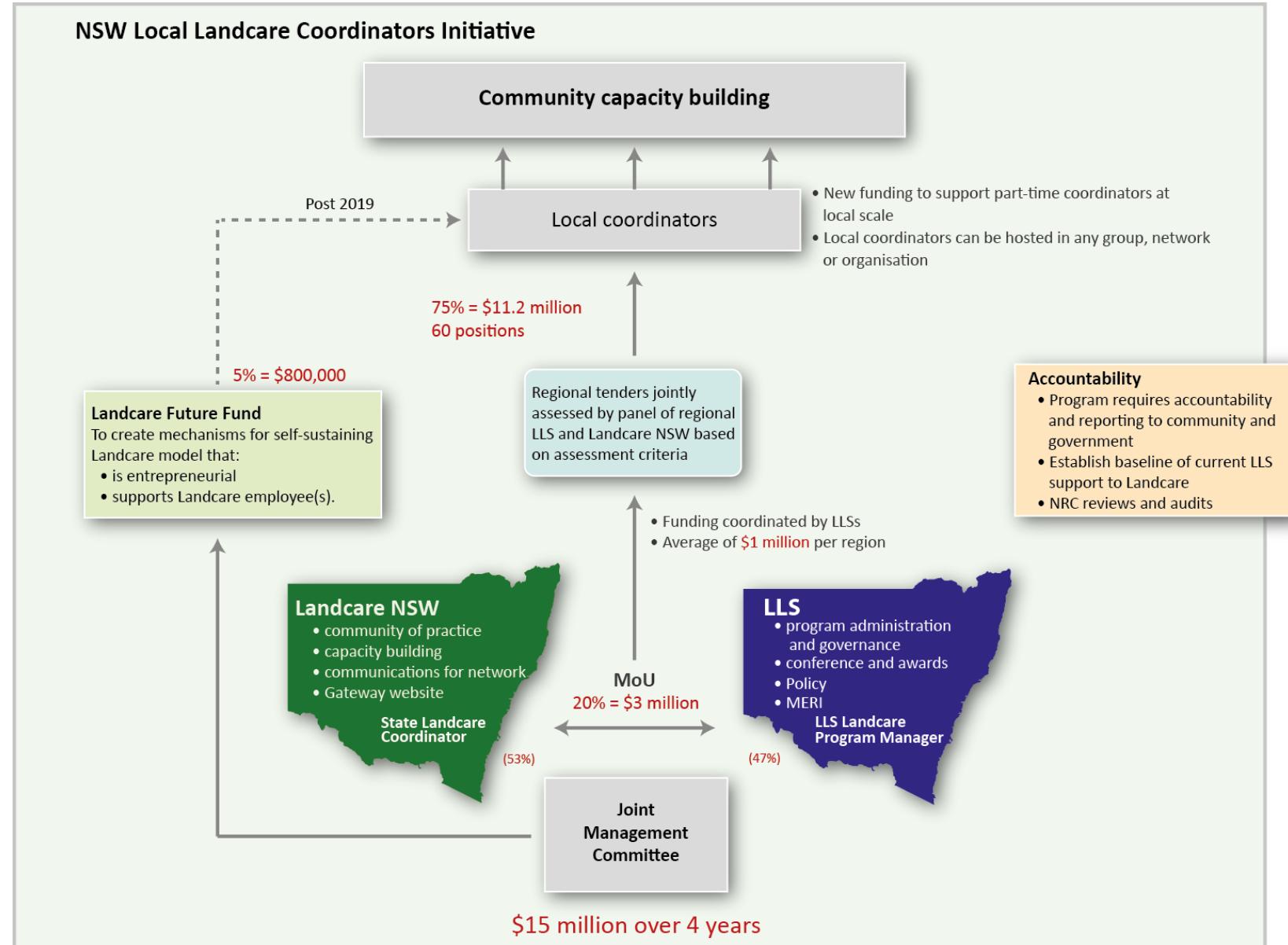


Figure 1: Proposed NSW Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative delivery model

4 Roles and responsibilities

- The main focus of the funding program should be the creation of a Local Coordinator network. The Commission proposes 75 percent of the total available funding goes to establishing approximately 60 part-time temporary positions, capped at \$50,000 each per annum.
- To help Local Coordinators build community capacity, state-wide central support will be provided through LLS and Landcare NSW, using 20 percent of the program funding (\$3 million) over four years.
- An MoU agreement between LLS and Landcare NSW will be developed to cover the specific roles and responsibilities in delivering the program. There is an MoU in progress that should be finalised and include commitments to this program.
- A number of temporary positions will also be established for the four-year program to effectively deliver the proposed model, including an LLS Landcare Program Manager and Landcare NSW State Coordinator.
- **Table 2** summarises the key functions to deliver the program. Specific details of roles and responsibilities for the program are provided in **Attachment 3**.

Table 2: Summary of functions and roles

Who	Function	Amount (\$)
Joint Management Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Joint governing body for the program▪ Reports to Minister for Primary Industries▪ Co-chaired by the Chair of Chairs of LLS and Chair of Landcare NSW▪ Other core members include one from LLS and one from Landcare NSW▪ Representatives from DPI, OEH and Local Government will be invited to participate and share knowledge	
Local Land Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Program administration, budgeting and governance▪ Policy and program management, and monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement▪ NSW Landcare Conference and Awards▪ Employment of LLS Landcare Program Manager that will provide oversight of the program and provide reports to the Joint Management Committee▪ Close collaboration with Landcare NSW State Coordinator	\$1.4 million over four years
Landcare NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Community of practice activities (for example, coordinator training and forums), capacity building, communications for network and the Gateway website▪ Employment of a Landcare NSW State Coordinator▪ Close collaboration with LLS Landcare Program Manager	\$1.6 million over four years

Local Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enable voluntary community-based groups and Landcare networks to effectively participate in natural resource management activities that address critical agricultural sustainability and environmental issues▪ Support groups with community engagement and partnerships, planning and securing project grants and assisting with monitoring, evaluation and reporting▪ Support groups to improve financial sustainability▪ Can be hosted in any group, network or organisation▪ To ensure regional ownership of the program, regional tenders for Local Coordinator positions will be assessed by a panel of regional LLS and Landcare NSW representatives	\$11.2 million over four years to fund 60 coordinators. Each position will be funded up to \$50,000 per annum, including travel and networking costs. Approximately \$1 million per LLS region.
Landcare Future Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Create mechanisms for a self-sustaining Landcare model that is entrepreneurial and supports Landcare volunteers, employees and state support functions.▪ Seek external advice and services to develop options for financial self-sustainability▪ Project specific steering committee with required expertise - may include Treasury, OEH, NRC, private sector and NGO representatives with fundraising experience	\$800,000 over four years (approx. 5 percent of the total program) Fund will be a project of the Joint Management Committee and coordinated by a part-time project officer.
Total		\$15 million

5 Risks

- The roundtable process has highlighted the eroded relationship between LLS and Landcare.
- This model requires a consistent state-wide commitment to a partnership approach and for both Landcare and LLS to see the program as the start of a new joint initiative.
- As found in Victoria, there is likely to be pressure on government to continue funding the coordinator positions when the four year funding program is due to end.
- Therefore, it is important that the allocation to the Landcare Future Fund is effectively and innovatively used to generate new sources of revenue to support the Landcare network into the future and complement government investment.

6 Implementation and transition

- The program will have an intensive start-up phase for both recruitment of the Local Coordinators and to ensure systems and supports are in place for Coordinators before they begin.
- A lesson from Victoria is that human resource management expertise is critical in the first year to support local groups that want to host a Local Coordinator. The Commission recommends that LLS employs a temporary HR support officer for the first year of the program.
- Therefore, the Commission expects that it will take six months to prepare for Coordinators to be on the ground. The program should aim to have coordinators employed by January 2016, to be in place for 3.5 years through to end June 2019.
- There will also be a transition period for some functions currently undertaken by NSW DPI that will move to either LLS or Landcare NSW. NSW DPI has indicated that they will provide some contingency to allow for a smooth transition. Transition and operation of the Gateway website will be subject to an agreement between Landcare NSW and Government.
- The Commission has considered the likely costs of the state support functions, Landcare Future Fund and funding for Local Coordinators over the four years of the program.
- **Table 3** compares the Commission's estimates of the funding profile required with the profile provided by Treasury.

Table 3: Annual budget estimates

Estimate	2015-16 (\$000)	2016-17 (\$000)	2017-18 (\$000)	2018-19 (\$000)	Transition (\$000)	Total (\$000)
NSW Treasury	1,500	2,500	5,000	6,000		15,000
Commission	2,500	4,000	3,900	3,900	700	15,000

- In its estimates the Commission has included \$700,000 for transition at the end of the four program (end June 19). This is intended for continuing support for coordinator positions only, as the arrangements transition from government funding to funding generated from the Landcare Future Fund. This would cover the positions for approximately three additional months and provide Government with time after March 2019 to make a decision about any subsequent program.
- Due to the time needed to establish the program, and therefore delay in getting Coordinators on the ground, there is merit in allowing a portion of the funds to extend the coordinator positions beyond 3.5 years in this way.
- The Commission recommends that LLS works with Treasury to amend the forward estimates.

7 Accountability

- The Minister should commission the Natural Resources Commission to audit the program, including establishing a baseline of current LLS support to voluntary conservation groups. This will be important to ensure that this new funding is not used to replace support currently being provided.
- The Commission's activities would be funded from its budget, not out of program funds.
- The outcomes in the Performance Standard for LLS would be applied to audits of the program.

Attachments

- Attachment 1 – Letter from the Hon Troy Grant MP
- Attachment 2 – Summary of Victorian Landcare Support Program
- Attachment 3 – Details of proposed roles and responsibilities

Attachment 1

Letter from the Hon. Troy Grant MP to Mr Rob Dulhunty, Chair of Landcare NSW



The Hon. Troy Grant MP

Deputy Premier
Minister for Trade and Investment
Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services
Minister for Tourism and Major Events
Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing
Minister for the Arts

16 March 2015

Mr Rob Dulhunty
Chairman
Landcare NSW
PO Box 2069
Armidale NSW 2350

Dear Rob

It was great to see you yesterday in Dubbo for the 2015 campaign launch for the NSW Nationals as we make our case for re-election.

I had the great pleasure of working closely with Landcare NSW during my three years as Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources. On many occasions I was able to view first-hand the tremendous contribution made by Landcare volunteers to rural and regional NSW. I also came to appreciate that Landcare's success has always been built on partnerships between governments and the community.

That's why it gave me immense personal pleasure to commit a re-elected Baird Government to build on the existing relationship between the NSW Liberals & Nationals and Landcare NSW. Over the next four years, our \$15 million commitment will renew this relationship and unlock the full potential of the thousands of volunteers in the network.

This funding will deliver a network of locally-based co-ordinators who will work with local Landcare groups to deliver strategically aligned programs as well as providing support and guidance.

We look forward to working with Landcare NSW to design a centralised support team that will increase the activity and effectiveness of the Landcare network through a consistent approach to building community capacity across the State.

A key aspect of this commitment by the NSW Liberals & Nationals is facilitating the transition towards financial stability of the Landcare network. Over the four years we will work to create the basis for the long-term sustainability for the network, enabling the volunteer effort to be supported well into the future.

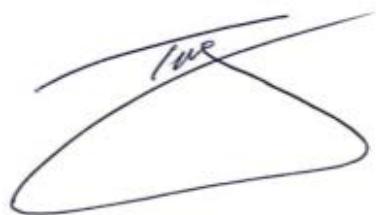
The intention of the NSW Liberals & Nationals is that volunteer land-carers will be able to get on with restoring their local sites - which is why they got involved in the movement in the first place.

While the overarching objectives and outcomes from this program have been developed after consultations with senior representatives of Landcare NSW, I believe it is appropriate that specific detail should be finalised after consultation between the relevant minister, the farming community and Landcare NSW, should we be returned to Government. As has been the case to date, I expect these negotiations would take place in the spirit of good faith,

with a view to ensuring the best possible outcome for the Landcare network and the taxpayers of NSW.

I look forward to growing our partnership as part of our commitment to rebuilding and restoring rural and regional NSW.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Troy". It is written over a large, stylized, open bracket-like shape that encompasses the name.

Troy Grant MP
Deputy Premier

Attachment 2

Victorian Landcare Support Program

- The Victorian Landcare Support Program is run centrally through the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries. The program includes services and initiatives to support Landcare and enable Landcare groups to be more effective. The program includes:
 - Victorian Landcare Grants - delivered through CMAs to provide funding towards on-ground projects, community capacity building, innovative projects, start-up for new groups and networks and Landcare promotion and membership
 - Landcare support staff - ten Regional Landcare Coordinators based in the CMAs, and one state-wide Aboriginal Landcare position
 - Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management Magazine – magazine is published three times a year and features stories of community Landcarers
 - Victorian Landcare Awards
 - Victorian Landcare Gateway.
- As part of the program, the Victorian Government developed the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitators Initiative. This provided \$12 million over four years to fund 60 Local Landcare Facilitators through fixed grants up to \$50,000 per year for each facilitator (part-time, up to 30 June 2015).
- This expanded to 68 positions over the course of the program, and the Victorian Government has recently announced \$3.2 million to continue funding these positions.
- An evaluation of this program is about to be commissioned with results expected in September-October this year.

Attachment 3

Details of proposed roles and responsibilities

The primary purpose of this one off \$15 million NSW Government commitment over four years is to maintain and build community capacity consistently across NSW through a network of locally based coordinators to enable groups and networks to become self-sustaining.

The program provides integrated support services to enable Landcare and other voluntary conservation groups to build community capacity to address critical agricultural sustainability and environmental issues. The program is jointly managed by Landcare NSW and Local Land Services in a partnership of shared responsibility.

Joint Management Committee

- Reports to Minister for Primary Industries
- Collaborative governance model
- Governing body for Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative
- Co-chaired by Chair of Chairs of LLS and Chair of Landcare NSW
Other core members include: 1 LLS and 1 Landcare representative. Representatives from DPI, OEH and Local Government will be invited to participate in the committee.
- Staff who routinely report to the Committee include:
 - LLS Landcare Program Manager
 - Landcare NSW State Coordinator responsible for managing the “community of practice” functions
 - Landcare Future Fund project officer
- Standing agenda items:
 - overall program management
 - coordinators and community of practice
 - Landcare Future Fund
 - government strategic directions, including biodiversity legislation reforms
 - program evaluation, adaptive management, audits and research
 - accountability of program against program purpose and MoU
- Responsible for ensuring LLS partnership with Landcare and community is functioning as per state and federal policy
- Approves a monitoring, evaluation and reporting plan for the program to the Minister and the community
- State support functions resourced from program up to \$3 million over four years, including the LLS Landcare Program Manager and the Landcare NSW State Coordinator roles and functions set out below

MoU/partnership agreement

- Finalise process of MoU to cover specific roles and responsibilities of the parties in delivering the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative

LLS Landcare Program Manager

- Four year temporary position located in LLS Central Executive Unit
- Senior role, appointee selected on merit with selection panel to include NSW Landcare representation
- Responsible for overall budgeting, administration of grants and selection of coordinators, development of policy and program management, monitoring and reporting in consultation with Landcare NSW State Coordinator
- Oversees central management of coordinator program and provides reports to Joint Management Committee
- Works closely with Landcare NSW on joint implementation of Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative, including coordinators
- Secretariat to Joint Management Committee
- Works with Landcare NSW State Coordinator and the Joint Management Committee to improve geographical coverage of local coordinators across LLS regions
- Coordinates the Landcare Conference and Awards in collaboration with Landcare NSW State Coordinator
- Provides support to the Landcare NSW State Coordinator in community of practice initiatives
- Provides guidance to LLS regions on Landcare partnerships, collects and shares information
- Links Regional Landcare Facilitators into Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative via regional LLS
- Liaises with other state agencies, for example, DPI and OEH
- Liaises with Local Government regarding Landcare support
- Liaises with federal government programs, for example, NLP, Green Army, Regional Landcare Facilitators
- Manages staff associated with delivery of these outcomes
- Functions and positions resourced from program (47 percent of state support budget - \$1.4 million over four years)

Landcare NSW State Coordinator

- Four year temporary position
- Senior role, appointee selected on merit with selection panel to include LLS representation
- Works with LLS Landcare Program Manager on tender and selection process for Local Coordinators
- Manages networked “community of practice” activities, for example: coordinator training, forums, Gateway website, communications with local coordinators
- Provides support to the LLS Landcare Program Manager in coordinating the State Awards and conference
- Collaborates with LLS Landcare Program Manager on community of practice initiatives
- Manages Landcare NSW state support staff positions associated with these roles, for example Communications Officer
- Functions and positions resourced from program (53 percent of state support budget - \$1.6 million over four years)

Regional tenders

- Tenders for part time four year temporary Local Coordinators will be jointly assessed by a panel of regional LLS and Landcare NSW. Final approval of recommendations rests with the LLS Landcare Program Manager.
- Criteria for the tenders will be drafted by LLS Landcare Program Manager in collaboration with the Landcare NSW State Coordinator. The final criteria will be informed by the following working criteria:
 - Positions are for NRM community capacity building and fostering greater participation
 - Planned outcomes over four years
 - Extending support to more groups and networks
 - Quality of proposals to become self-sustaining after four years
 - Alignment with regional and state LLS strategies
 - Funds are for additional support specific to the community's needs.
- Final criteria will be approved by the Joint Management Committee
- Any funds that are not likely to be spent on a local coordinator in any given financial year will be quarantined for use for other associated costs in delivering the Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative (for example, capacity building in other areas or transitional arrangements)
- Approximately \$1 million per region (will vary based on regional need)

Local Coordinators

- Part time temporary local coordinator positions with funding up to \$50,000 per annum for four years
- Primary purpose of the role is to enable the effective participation of voluntary community based conservation groups and Landcare networks, landholders and the wider community in natural resource management activities that manage and restore the natural environment, and improve the sustainability of agricultural production
- The coordinator role also retains a strong focus on building community capacity, rather than dependency, to enable groups and networks to become self-supporting.
- Key activities include:
 - Building local community capacity towards self-sustainability
 - Undertaking community engagement and building partnerships
 - Extending support to more groups, networks and landholders
 - Assisting with planning and priority setting processes
 - Supporting the development of on-ground natural resource management projects in line with LLS regional and state strategies
 - Securing project grants and other funding
 - Assisting with monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- Administrative tasks associated with the day-to-day operation of a group or network, or the management of on-ground projects, are not the primary function of the coordinator's role
- Local coordinators will have a high degree of autonomy in meeting the needs of their local communities in line with regional LLS strategies, however, for their own capacity building will participate in regional and state networks
- Local coordinators can be hosted in any group, network or organisation. It is up to each applicant organisation to put in place the employment arrangements for the coordinator that best suit their circumstances.
- Approximately 60 positions across the state. Resources for these positions up to \$11.2 million over three and half years.
- Basic operating expenses such as telephone calls, printing, and work-related travel costs come from within this funding. Coordinators are encouraged to use existing office space within community or government offices. Training costs are paid for from the state community of practice funding.

Landcare Future Fund

- Create mechanisms for achieving a self-sustaining Landcare model that is:
 - entrepreneurial
 - supports Landcare NSW volunteers, local coordinators and support functions (ie. not on ground works)
 - derives investment from diverse community, corporate, philanthropic and government sources
- Broad based committee to examine and pursue options, including cost benefit analysis, and modelling of different options
- Run as a project of Joint Management Committee
- Has dedicated part-time temporary project officer employed by Landcare NSW to assist the committee with the development of the fund and manage external contracting
- Procures a variety of short-term services (for example, sponsorship and membership expertise) to develop the fund as needed
- Resourced for these functions up to \$800,000 over four years