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SEB Credit Guide for Landholders

Native Vegetation Council
Department for Environment and Water
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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians whose ancestral lands we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge and respect their deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people have to Country.

We also pay our respects to the cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their nations in South Australia, as well as those across Australia.

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1 Purpose of this guide

This guide outlines how South Australian landholders may generate Significant Environmental Benefit (SEB) credit and sell credit to interested parties that need to achieve a SEB (vegetation clearance offset) under the *Native Vegetation Act 1991* or *Native Vegetation Regulations 2017*, or to those who wish to voluntarily support conservation.

2 What is SEB credit?

SEB credit is generated when an area of land is managed to protect and significantly improve native vegetation condition or extent.

A points system is used. The Native Vegetation Council (NVC) has developed assessment methods that estimate the expected environmental gain for a site that is managed actively for 10 years, followed by 10 years maintenance and protected in perpetuity. The expected environmental gain is given a point score, with each point being a standard unit of "SEB credit".

Actions to achieve credit may include, for example, permanent stock exclusion to protect native vegetation from damage, controlling weeds and pest animals (beyond what is already required by the *Landscape Act 2019*) and adding diversity to degraded sites through revegetation.

To secure credit, a Management Plan must be approved by the NVC and the landholder must enter into either a Heritage Agreement or a Management Agreement with the Minister for Environment and Water. The Plan outlines what agreed actions will be undertaken in the first 10-year period (and maintenance actions thereafter). The agreement outlines how the area will be protected into the future (usually in perpetuity).

Note that SEB credit is different to the "carbon credits" which may be generated from [carbon farming](#). The site management required for SEB credit may result in carbon sequestration, but you cannot claim both types of credit for the same site. Landholders are encouraged to consider the costs, benefits and risks of both approaches to determine which might be the most favourable.

3 What is SEB credit used for?

SEB credits can be sold on the South Australian credit market. The proceeds fund the management of the credit area and, in some cases, may provide additional income to the landholder.

Users of credit are:

- people or companies who need to offset the impact of native vegetation clearance that they have been approved to undertake in South Australia, e.g. for development purposes (see Box 1) or
- those who want to support biodiversity conservation voluntarily (in this case, credit is purchased and 'retired' without any associated vegetation clearance).

4 Native vegetation (SEB) credit register

The NVC approves credit under the *Native Vegetation Act 1991* and the *Native Vegetation (Credit for Environmental Benefit) Regulations 2015*.

Once credit is approved, the details are placed on the [Native Vegetation \(SEB\) Credit Register](#), which is found on the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) website.

Those who wish to purchase credit can view the register to find credit suitable for their needs. They can contact credit holders directly or engage an accredited broker to discuss purchase of credits (refer to Box 2 for more about brokers).

The register also contains the details of *potential* credit areas. These are areas which the NVC has deemed as being suitable to generate credit, but the full credit assessment and approval process may not have been conducted yet.

5 Eligibility for SEB credit

See the NVC's [Significant Environmental Benefit Policy](#) for a full explanation of eligibility criteria.

A summary of key criteria follows.

5.1 Minimum dimensions

The SEB area must be at least 30 metres wide for 90 per cent of its length to ensure a core of well-protected vegetation.

5.2 Minimum size

The SEB area must be at least:

- 3 hectares - if it contains common vegetation types
- 1 hectare - if it contains a vegetation type that is listed as rare or threatened¹ or it provides significant habitat for threatened species.

BOX 1: USING SEB CREDIT TO OFFSET CLEARANCE

In South Australia, applicants that are approved by the NVC to undertake native vegetation clearance may be required to 'offset' the impact of the clearance by implementing works that create a significant environmental benefit elsewhere (i.e. by conserving and improving native vegetation condition/extent).

The offset site is known as a Significant Environmental Benefit Area ('SEB Area') and this can be on the applicant's own land. If the applicant does not have suitable land, another option available to them is to buy SEB credit. The clearance offset is achieved by the person/body who generated the credit.

To offset a known clearance impact, any credit purchased by the applicant must meet the following criteria:

- the credit must be generated by managing a vegetation type that is the same vegetation type as that being cleared, or of a higher conservation value ('like for like or better')
- the credit must be generated in the same region as the site of clearance impact

If there is no credit available and no other party is willing to undertake the works required on the applicant's behalf, the clearance applicant may pay into a Native Vegetation Fund held by the NVC.

¹ According to the DEW Provisional List of Threatened Ecosystems in SA; the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* or the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

5.3 Able to be improved to achieve a significant environmental gain

An SEB credit area is to be managed to significantly improve the *condition* and/or *extent* of native vegetation.

Adding to and managing vegetation which is currently in *moderate* condition is likely to give good environmental gains. These areas are the most likely to regenerate or be restored to good condition if managed appropriately, compared to areas that have little or no current native vegetation cover.

Look for areas of native vegetation that are currently degraded or declining due to any or all of the following impacts:

- past clearance of some (but not all) native plants
- grazing by stock or pests
- weed competition/shading
- soil erosion
- bike trails, vehicle tracks, rubbish dumping, camping etc.

Native vegetation in very poor condition (e.g. scattered trees over pasture) may be eligible if the landholder is willing to undertake a revegetation program to restore a diverse understorey. Extra credit points may be granted for management that strives to recreate a very high proportion of the species that would have been present in the area originally and the implementation will be carried out by persons with good experience and skills.

Areas of vegetation that are already in excellent condition with minimal threats are unlikely to be approved as SEB credit sites.

5.4 Additionality

An SEB credit area must be additional to existing conservation areas and legal management obligations. It must not already be protected for conservation purposes. The following are usually ineligible:

- land for which the landholder has an existing contractual arrangement for biodiversity conservation purposes (e.g. an existing Heritage Agreement or a funding agreement)
- national parks, conservation parks
- Crown land already dedicated to conservation
- land subject to existing State Government funding for biodiversity conservation

5.5 Long-term considerations

In order to offset permanent clearance impacts, the environmental gains achieved at an SEB credit site must be maintained over the long-term, therefore the site needs to be located where it will not be subject to inappropriate disturbance in the future.

The area remains the property and responsibility of the landholder, but it must not be used in a way that is inconsistent with a conservation dedication, including by future owners of the land.

Any road reserves, mining leases, telecommunications towers or other easements should be excluded from SEB credit sites.

Note that the SEB site and relevant agreements are noted on the property title to alert any future owners that there is a site on their land.

6 How do I apply for credit?

The Native Vegetation Branch staff of DEW or an accredited Broker can assist you with the following application options:

- Submit an [Application to Register a Potential SEB Credit Area](#) (if there is no immediate demand for credit) or
- Submit an [Application to Establish and Assign SEB Credit](#) to formalise a credit site and enable the use of credit immediately.

There is no fee to register a *potential* site and there is no obligation to manage the area beyond those actions already required by relevant laws.

The application form requires basic information about the vegetation types and their condition, photos and an indication of how the site would be managed to achieve a gain in vegetation condition².

To obtain credit, the site must be formally assessed and approved using the following procedure:

1. If the area has not been previously registered as a potential site, check the site eligibility requirements (seek advice from the Native Vegetation Branch if required)
2. Engage an NVC [Accredited Consultant](#) to undertake a vegetation assessment of the proposed credit area in accordance with the NVC's vegetation assessment methodology³
3. Draft an SEB Management Plan for the area (use the NVC template; an NVC Accredited Consultant or Third Party Provider may complete this step)
4. Fill in the 'Application to Establish and Assign SEB Credit' form and submit the form to the NVC
5. Pay the prescribed fee (see application form)
6. If credit is approved, manage the site according to the Management Plan and enter into any required agreements.

When credit is approved by the NVC, the credit information for each vegetation type within the SEB credit area, and any credit transactions, will be recorded on the Native Vegetation (SEB) Credit Register. Once approved, credit may be 'assigned' (sold) to interested parties at any time upon application to the NVC.

² Note: although not obligatory, a full vegetation assessment can be undertaken for potential sites, in which case the credit register will contain more detailed information gained from the assessment to help interested buyers understand whether the site may suit their needs.

³ An NVC Accredited Consultant has undertaken the necessary training by the Native Vegetation Branch and has been certified by the NVC.

BOX 2: WHAT DOES A BROKER DO?

Accredited Third Party Providers may play a facilitative role (Broker) and act on behalf of landholders, credit holders or those seeking to buy credit. Brokers may (for a fee):

- assist landholders to arrange assessment of the vegetation
- develop an SEB Management Plan
- submit forms to apply for credit
- submit forms to purchase/sell credit on behalf of a buyer/seller
- negotiate and develop contractual agreements between parties.

Third Party Providers who wish to broker must be registered with the NVC as a Broker on the [Accredited Third Party Provider List](#).

7 Managing the credit area

Once credit is approved, the SEB credit area must be managed in accordance with the approved Management Plan (whether credit is sold or not).

The management can be undertaken by any person with suitable skills. Note that the NVC has accredited certain qualified organisations as [Accredited Third Party Providers](#) who can take on the responsibility of managing a credit site on behalf of a landholder.

Third Party Providers are non-government organisations, environmental businesses, local councils or similar, accredited by the NVC for the purposes of managing SEB sites. These providers have proven expertise and experience in managing and restoring native vegetation and can also undertake the required monitoring and progress reporting.

A landholder can enter into a private agreement or contract with an accredited Third Party Provider to ensure the roles and responsibilities of all parties are clear.

See Figure 1 at the end of this guide for a chart of the process to establish credit. For a summary of the roles and responsibilities of NVC Accredited Consultants, Accredited Third Party Providers and Brokers see Figure 2.

8 Monitoring the credit area

Standard photo-point monitoring and annual progress reporting to the NVC are required so that the NVC can be assured the agreed management is being undertaken.

A condition of credit approval for large sites (i.e. worth >150 SEB points) is that a vegetation condition re-assessment is conducted at Years 5 and 10, to report about the changes in vegetation condition – these assessments must be carried out by an NVC Accredited Consultant.

The NVC may require that the site is visited by its delegates or Departmental staff to ensure the management is being carried out effectively.

Note: SEB Policy does not permit an Accredited Third Party Provider to undertake a vegetation assessment of any SEB Area they are managing, therefore all formal vegetation assessments must be undertaken by an NVC Accredited Consultant *independent* of such a Third Party Provider.

9 How do I sell credit?

Follow this process:

1. Ensure your site has been approved as an established SEB credit area (a Decision Notice will be supplied by the NVC)
2. Your initial application to establish credit may also contain a request to 'assign' credit to another party immediately if you already have a buyer, otherwise you or a Broker may market your credit to any parties you may think might be interested
3. Either work directly with a party that wishes to buy your credit or engage a Broker if you do not wish to be involved with negotiations or administration
4. Negotiate the price for your credits with the interested party

5. Apply to the NVC to approve the number of credits that are to be assigned to the buyer (submit an [Application to Establish and Assign SEB Credit](#) form)
6. The NVC will assess the application and provide a Decision Notification
7. Provide the NVC's Decision Notification to the buyer as proof that the transaction has been approved
8. Finalise your financial transaction with the buyer
9. The Native Vegetation Branch will deduct the points from the credit register and show the details of the transaction.

The NVC does not approve the financial transfers between parties for brokering or sale of credit. The NVC may however require proof that suitable contractual arrangements have been entered into.

10 Pricing of credit

The credit price is negotiated with the buyer by either the credit holder or a Broker. As a minimum, the price for credits should reflect the cost of site management, monitoring and reporting over the 10-year management plan period. Other costs to consider including are:

- consultant's vegetation assessment of the site
- cost of developing the management plan
- application fees
- insurance
- contingencies

It is possible to factor in additional income (profit) and any loss of land value into the price of credit, but note that if your price is very high, you risk pricing your credits out of the market. Clearance applicants may seek cheaper credits (if available) or pay into the Native Vegetation Fund (if this is a cheaper option).

A buyer may only be interested in purchasing a portion of the credits you have available; therefore your price should be calculated on a "\$/credit point" basis.

For more information on land management costs you can seek advice from contractors, NVC Accredited Consultants or the local [Landscape Board](#) office.

11 Demand for credit

The NVC cannot guarantee that credit will be purchased. Sale is dependent on:

- demand for credit
- how closely the specific impacts of clearance(s) resemble the values that are provided by the credit site
- whether the price of the credit is attractive to potential buyers.

For information about approved and pending vegetation clearance applications, see the NVC [Clearance application register](#) and [Open Consultations](#).

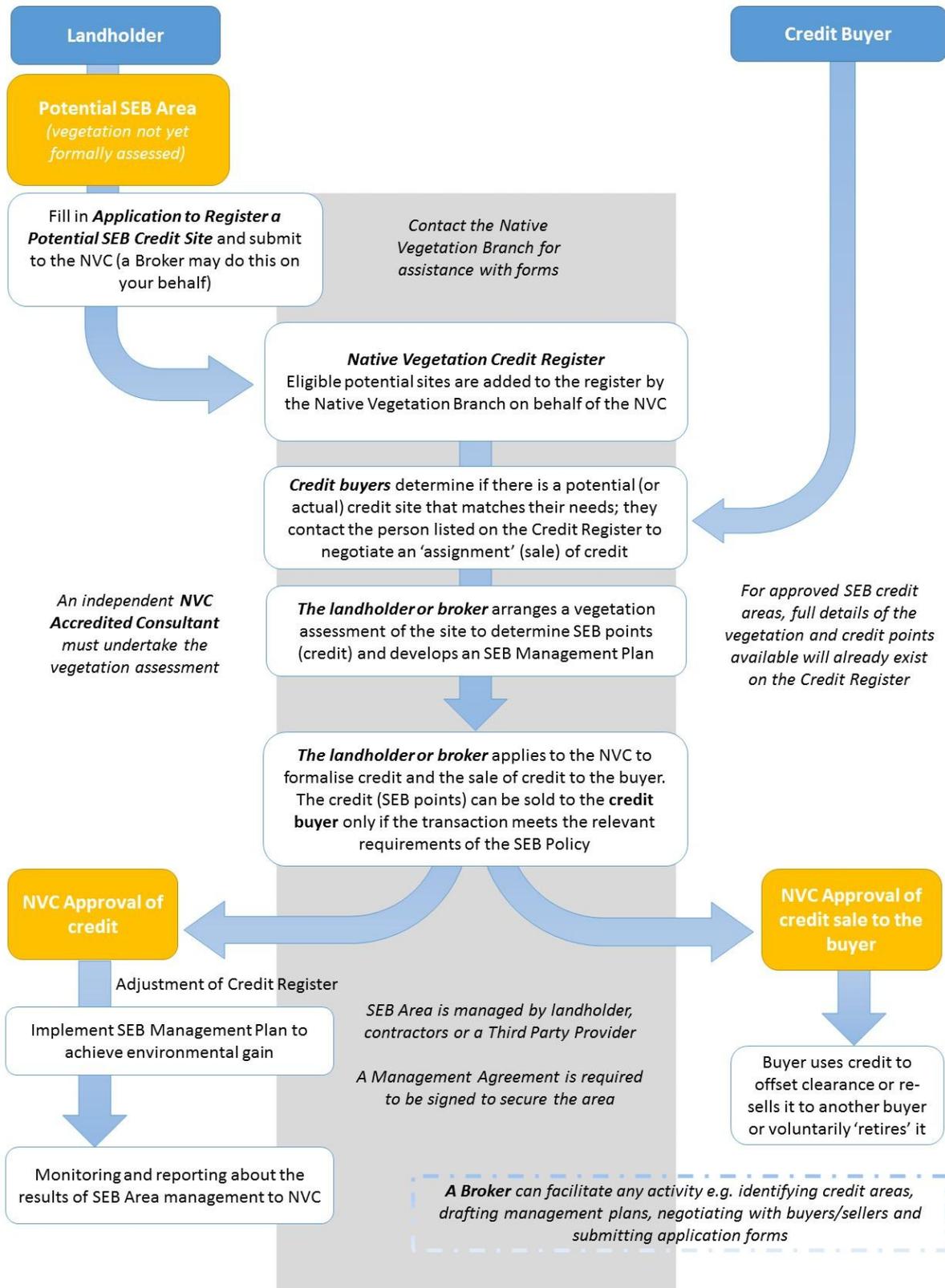


Figure 1. Overview of how SEB credit is approved and 'assigned' to a buyer

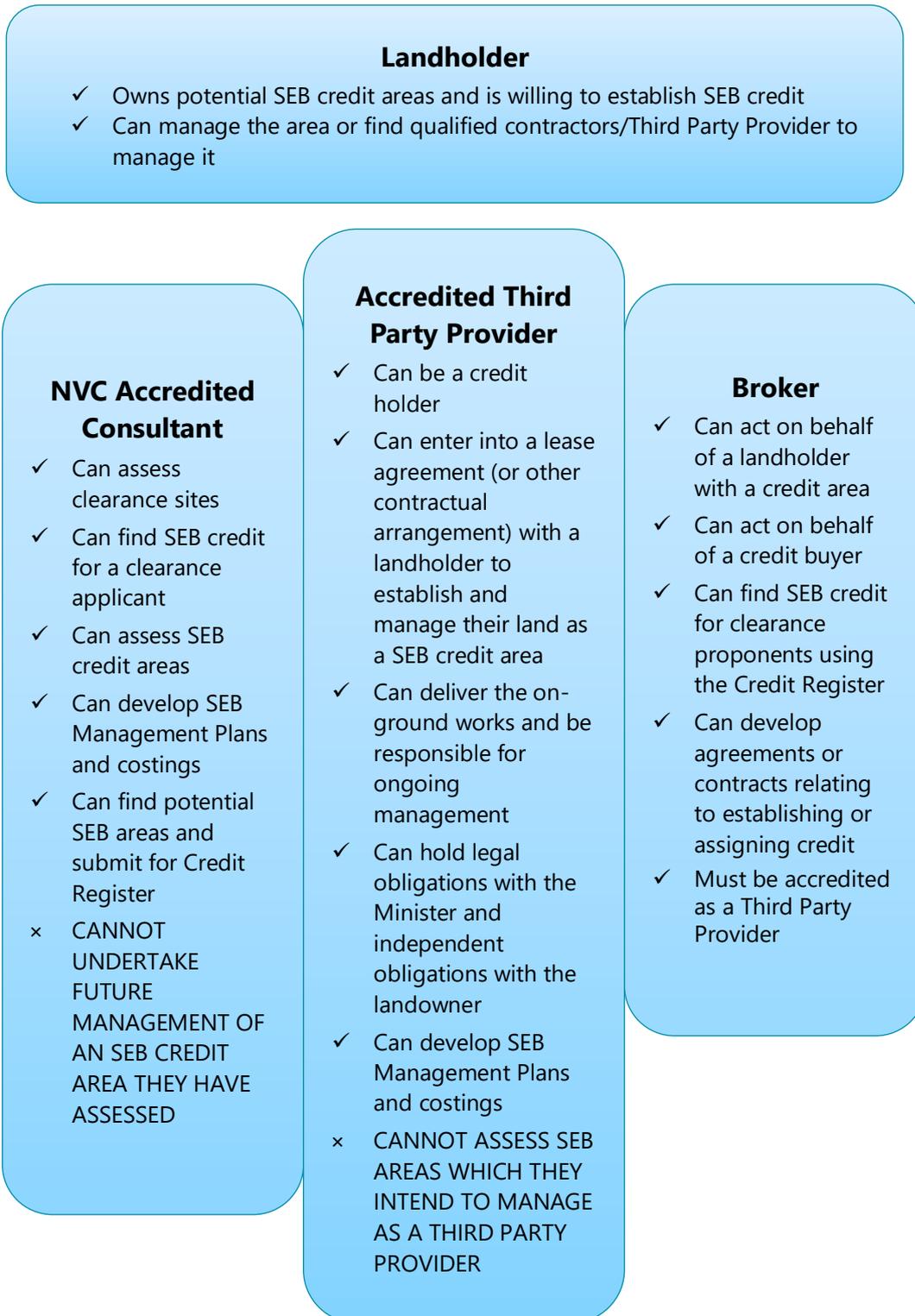


Figure 2. Overview of roles and responsibilities

For more information

Significant Environmental Benefit Program

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<https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/native-vegetation/protecting-native-vegetation>



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