

Soil Health Grant Policy

The Soil Health Grant Program is a reimbursement program to help landowners install small-scale practices that improve water quality and soil health within the VLAWMO watershed. Applicants may apply for 75% of the project cost, up to a maximum of \$1,000. An applicant may apply for up to \$1,250 if located in or within 500 ft. of a [VLAWMO priority area](#).



Eligible Projects:

- Native plantings & pollinator gardens
- Turf grass replacement and pollinator-friendly yards (i.e. bee lawns)
- Downspout or small-scale yard raingardens
- Buffer strips
- Erosion control or stabilization

There are more living organisms in 1 Tbsp of soil than there are people on earth.

Ineligible Projects:

- Non-native plant landscaping, decorative, or recreational projects
- Retaining walls
- Chemical treatment of aquatic vegetation
- Projects that have received funding from other VLAWMO grant programs in the same year
- Maintenance of awarded grant projects



Soil Health Grant Process:

Soil Health Grant funding is available to landowners within the VLAWMO boundary. The grant program operates on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications must be submitted by the 4th Friday of the month for review and potential consideration at VLAWMO's Technical Commission (TEC) meetings.

1. Contact staff to schedule a site visit of your property and discuss your proposed project before submittal of a grant application.
2. Complete a grant application and submit to staff listed on the grant application.
3. VLAWMO will review application and confirm completeness.
4. Complete applications will be presented at the next VLAWMO TEC meeting per its meeting schedule.
5. VLAWMO will notify applicant of application status and next steps.

It takes at least 500 years to form 1" of topsoil.

Program Details: Planning for Success

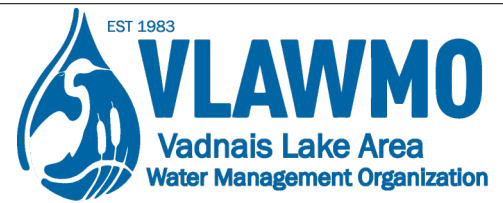
Start & Finish	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Projects started prior to VLAWMO approval are not eligible. A grant application must be approved for funding, and the grant agreement must be signed by the applicant and VLAWMO prior to starting work.• Changes to the project after grant approval may not be made without VLAWMO approval.• Eligible project costs are those only directly related to installing the proposed project such as plants, erosion control materials, mulch, drainage structures, and rented equipment. Purchased tools and equipment are not eligible. Eligibility of materials is subject to VLAWMO approval.• Grant awards will expire within 1 year of grant approval unless the project is extended with VLAWMO approval.• Landowners are limited to 1 grant application every other year unless a single project must be completed in phases (up to 3 years) and approved by VLAWMO.• Grantee must agree to maintain the project for at least 5 years. The site may be inspected by VLAWMO staff to ensure compliance.
Labor & Plant Specifics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eligible labor costs must be those associated with a landscaper/contractor subject to approval by VLAWMO staff. VLAWMO reserves the right to adjust costs submitted for reimbursement based on final paid receipts and invoices. Reimbursement will not exceed the cost of eligible materials and labor.• Erosion control activities must use natural erosion control material (i.e. non-plastic).• For all projects, only plants native to MN are eligible for reimbursement. Hybrids/cultivars of native plants are not eligible unless otherwise noted on VLAWMO's cost share plant guide. Bee lawns must use specially marked bee lawn mixes. Native trees may be considered on a case-by-case basis if beneficial to pollinators or part of a stormwater practice. A list of proposed plants must be included with the application for VLAWMO review and approval; VLAWMO will have final discretion in species selection and number of trees allowed per application.
Telling the Story	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grantee must participate in VLAWMO's education efforts by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Providing photos of project progress including before, during installation, freshly completed, and one year after project completion; OR⇒ Providing a posed picture with completed project & short quote about what was enjoyable about the project or lessons learned.

Reimbursement Steps:

1. Execute grant agreement with VLAWMO.
2. After project completion, contact VLAWMO staff to request a final inspection of the project for verification it meets the approved plans. This must occur within 1 year from the date of grant approval.
3. Submit all **paid** invoices and receipts of project expenses for VLAWMO review. Plant expenses must show species on proof of payment or via grantee's annotations or supplemental spreadsheet. Final grant award amounts will be based on the completed work and total paid project amount.
4. If the above steps are completed and approved by staff, VLAWMO will mail a reimbursement check per the VLAWMO TEC monthly meeting schedule.



Landscape Level 1 Grant Policy



The Landscape Level 1 (LL1) Grant Program is a reimbursement program to help landowners install practices that improve water quality and preserve groundwater within VLAWMO.

VLAWMO may fund 25-50% of the total cost of approved materials and contracted labor up to a maximum of \$5,000. Highly beneficial projects that significantly reduce stormwater volume and nutrients like curb cut raingardens may receive 75% of the cost of the project up to a maximum of \$7,500. VLAWMO reserves the right to adjust requested funding levels based on funding availability and estimated benefits.



LL1 Program Goals:

- Reduce stormwater rate and volume
- Stabilize and restore actively-eroded shorelines/streambanks
- Reduce nutrient loading and improve water quality
- Protect and preserve groundwater quality and quantity

Eligible Projects:

- Infiltration projects including but not limited to raingardens, infiltration basins, permeable pavers or pavement, and tree trenches
- Filtration projects including but not limited to filtration basins, swales, and green roofs
- Shoreline and streambank restorations of actively-eroding banks
- Critical erosion control and stabilization projects
- Agricultural water quality practices
- Projects that improve existing water quality projects (i.e. a new pre-treatment inlet structure)
- Stormwater reuse for irrigation or other groundwater preservation projects

Ineligible Projects:

- Landscaping and decorative projects for recreational or aesthetic purposes
- Chemical treatment of aquatic vegetation (excluding alum or spent lime)
- Vegetation restoration without stormwater treatment (see Soil Health Grant Program)
- Projects necessary to meet minimum permit requirements or VLAWMO water management standards
- Projects that have received funding from other VLAWMO grant programs in the same year
- Maintenance of awarded grant projects



Application Process:

Landscape Level 1 Grant funding is available to landowners within the VLAWMO boundary. The grant program operates on a first-come, first-served basis. All submitted applications are subject to VLAWMO scoring to determine funding eligibility and approval by the VLAWMO Technical Commission (TEC) and/or Board of Directors.

1. **Contact staff** to schedule a site visit of your property before submittal of a grant application to discuss your proposed project.
2. **Complete a grant application** and submit to staff listed on the grant application.
3. VLAWMO may require a **final design** completed by a qualified professional or engineer for complex projects.
4. VLAWMO will **review application** and confirm completeness.
5. Complete applications that meet the minimum criteria will be **presented** at the next VLAWMO TEC meeting and/or Board of Directors meeting per their [meeting schedule](#).
6. VLAWMO will **notify applicant** of application status and next steps, including execution of a grant agreement.

Grant Funding Agreement:

Each grantee must enter into a grant agreement with VLAWMO defining the obligations of the grantee and VLAWMO and expectations for project maintenance. The agreement also allows VLAWMO access to the project area for inspection and promotion of the project. The grant agreement must be signed by both parties prior to starting work on the project.



Reimbursement Steps:

1. Execute grant agreement with VLAWMO.
2. After project completion, contact VLAWMO staff to request a final inspection of the project for verification it meets the approved plans. This must occur within 1 year from the date of grant approval.
3. Submit all **paid** invoices and receipts of project expenses for VLAWMO review. Plant expenses must show species on proof of payment or via grantee's annotations or supplemental spreadsheet. Final grant award amounts will be based on the completed work and total paid project amount.
4. If the above steps are completed and approved by staff, VLAWMO will mail a reimbursement check per the VLAWMO TEC's monthly meeting schedule.

Program Details: Planning for Success

<p>Start & Finish</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects started prior to VLAWMO approval are not eligible. A grant application must be approved for funding, and the grant agreement must be signed by the applicant and VLAWMO prior to starting work. • Changes to the project after grant approval may not be made without VLAWMO approval. • Grantee is responsible for securing any and all required permits, easements, and approvals prior to the start of the project. • Grantee must complete the project and submit a reimbursement request within • 1 year from date of grant approval unless the project is extended with VLAWMO approval. • Grantee must agree to maintain the project for a minimum of 10 years. The site may be inspected by VLAWMO staff during this time period to ensure compliance.
<p>Labor & Plant Specifics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible project costs are those only directly related to installing the proposed project such as plants, erosion control materials, mulch, drainage structures, and rented equipment. Purchased tools and equipment are not eligible. Eligibility of materials is subject to VLAWMO approval. • Eligible labor costs must be those expenses associated with a qualified landscaper/contractor subject to approval by VLAWMO staff. VLAWMO reserves the right to adjust costs submitted for reimbursement based on final paid receipts and invoices. Reimbursement will not exceed the cost of eligible materials and labor. • VLAWMO may consider design costs through the Ramsey County Soil & Water Conservation Division or from another contractor as eligible grant costs, up to \$1,500. • Erosion control activities must utilize natural erosion control material (i.e. non-plastic). • For all projects, only plants native to Minnesota are eligible for grant reimbursement. Hybrids/cultivars of native plants are not eligible for reimbursement unless otherwise noted on the VLAWMO cost share plant guide. Native trees may be considered on a case-by-case basis if part of a stormwater practice. A list of proposed plants must be included with the application for VLAWMO review and approval; VLAWMO will have final discretion in species selection and number of trees allowed per application. • At least 2 bids for construction of proposed projects must be submitted with the application. VLAWMO reserves the right to reject a project design or submitted bid for any reason. • Permeable paver projects must meet Minnesota Pollution Control Agency installation guidelines and treat at least 1,500 sq. ft. of hard surface runoff.
<p>Admin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VLAWMO reserves the right to withdraw or withhold funding for any project not completed in accordance with these guidelines or the terms of its executed grant agreement. • Landowners are limited to 1 grant application every other year unless a single project must be completed in consecutive phases (up to 3 years) and approved by VLAWMO. • The VLAWMO Board of Directors may shift grant funding amounts between LL1 and LL2 program budgets. • Any submitted information (applications, designs, cost estimates, bids, permits, studies, reports, and proof of expenditures) becomes part of the public record.

Landscape Level 2 Grant Policy



The Landscape Level 2 (LL2) Grant Program is a reimbursement program to partner with communities to install practices that improve water quality, manage stormwater, and preserve groundwater within VLAWMO.

VLAWMO may fund 25-75% of the total cost of a project, or up to 90% for large-scale or highly beneficial projects that significantly improve water quality, increase flood storage, conserve groundwater, or provide regional benefits. VLAWMO reserves the right to adjust requested funding levels based on funding availability and estimated benefits.



Eligible Projects:

- Water quality treatment projects
- Stormwater rate and volume control projects
- Water reuse
- Smart irrigation controllers
- Flood storage projects
- Stormwater retrofit or reconstruction projects that exceed permit or VLAWMO water management standards

LL2 Program Goals:

- Reduce stormwater rate and volume
- Stabilize and restore actively-eroding shorelines/streambanks
- Reduce nutrient loading and improve water quality.
- Protect and preserve groundwater quality and quantity
- Increase flood storage
- Address goals and policies identified in the VLAWMO Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan
- Provide educational value and highly visible projects

Ineligible Projects:

- Landscaping and decorative projects for recreational or aesthetic purposes
- Chemical treatment of aquatic vegetation (excluding alum or spent lime)
- Projects necessary to meet minimum permit requirements or VLAWMO water management standards
- Projects that have received funding from other VLAWMO grant programs in the same year
- Maintenance of awarded grant projects

Application Process:

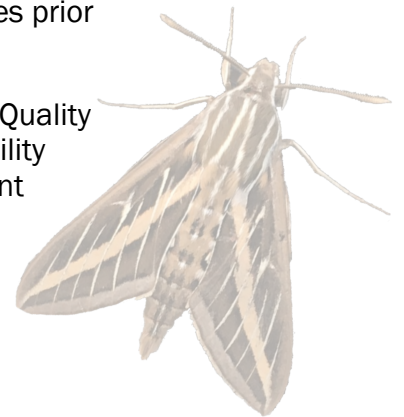
LL2 Grant funding is available to landowners including but not limited to municipalities, public agencies, private businesses, homeowner's associations, or nonprofit organizations. Projects within targeted areas listed in VLAWMO's Watershed Management Plan, Sustainable Lake Management Plans, or other feasibility reports will be prioritized. All applications are subject to VLAWMO scoring to determine funding eligibility and approval by the VLAWMO Technical Commission (TEC) and Board of Directors.

1. Contact staff to **schedule a pre-application meeting** to discuss project before submittal of a grant application.
2. **Schedule a site visit** with staff to review the proposed project area.
3. **Complete a grant application** and submit to staff listed on the grant application.
4. Applications are reviewed and scored by staff and/or consulting VLAWMO engineer if necessary.
5. Complete applications that meet the minimum criteria will be **presented** at the next VLAWMO TEC meeting and Board of Directors meeting per their meeting schedule.
6. VLAWMO will **notify applicant** of application status and next steps, including execution of a grant agreement.

Grant Funding Agreement:

Each grantee must enter into a grant agreement with VLAWMO defining the obligations of the grantee and VLAWMO, and expectations for project maintenance. The agreement also allows VLAWMO access to the project area for inspection and promotion of the project. The grant agreement must be signed by both parties prior to starting work on the project.

If the project is funded with a State of Minnesota grant, additional Technical Quality Assurance grant agreement standards may be necessary to fulfill state eligibility requirements. Where VLAWMO's policies differ from state standards, the grant agreement requirements with the state agency shall prevail.



Reimbursement Steps:

1. Execute grant agreement with VLAWMO.
2. After the project is complete, contact VLAWMO staff to request a final inspection of the project for verification it meets the approved plans. This must occur within 1.5 years from the date of grant approval.
3. Submit all **paid** invoices and receipts of project expenses for VLAWMO review. Final grant award amounts will be based on the completed work and total paid project amount.
4. If the above steps are completed and approved by staff, VLAWMO will mail a reimbursement check per the VLAWMO TEC's monthly meeting schedule.

Program Details: Planning for Success

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Start & Finish</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects started prior to VLAWMO approval are not eligible. A grant application must be approved for funding, and the grant agreement must be signed by the applicant and VLAWMO prior to starting work. • Eligible project costs are those only directly related to the proposed project, such as those associated with design and engineering, construction materials, labor, and drainage structures. Purchased tools and equipment are not eligible. Eligibility of materials is subject to VLAWMO approval. • Grantee is responsible for securing any and all required permits, easements, and approvals prior to the start of the project. • Grantees must complete their approved project and submit a grant reimbursement request within 1.5 years from date of approval unless the project is extended with VLAWMO approval. • Grantee must agree to maintain the project area for a minimum of 10 years. The site may be inspected by VLAWMO staff during this time period to ensure compliance.
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Labor & Plant Specifics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart irrigation controllers to be used on pilot/test sites are eligible project costs. • Work associated with design, installation, and labor of crucial infrastructure must be performed by an experienced professional. Final plans are subject to professional review and approval by consulting VLAWMO engineer to ensure design standards, specifications, and outcomes meet program goals. • VLAWMO may cover design costs through the Ramsey County Soil & Water Conservation Division depending on the project. • At least 2 bids for construction of proposed projects must be submitted with the application. VLAWMO reserves the right to reject a project design or submitted bid for any reason. • Erosion control projects must utilize natural erosion control material (i.e. non-plastic). • For all projects, at least a 50% plant coverage must be native to Minnesota. VLAWMO encourages all vegetation used to be native species and adopts BWSR's <i>Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines</i> by reference.
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Admin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VLAWMO reserves the right to withdraw or withhold funding for any project not completed in accordance with these guidelines or the terms of its executed grant agreement. • The VLAWMO Board of Directors may shift grant funding amounts between LL1 and LL2 program budgets. • Any submitted information (applications, designs, cost estimates, bids, permits, studies, reports, and proof of expenditures) becomes part of the public record.

Tree Guide

Native trees provide many benefits to the landscape, but only a select few are eligible for reimbursement in VLAWMO's cost share programs. VLAWMO evaluates selected species to ensure a diversity of species is promoted.

Below are eligible species for trees and large shrubs. Additional species can be found on the VLAWMO Cost Share Plant Guide and the Lawns to Legumes (L2L) Pollinator Friendly Trees and Shrubs List: vlawmo.org/cost-share-resources



Accepted Native Species:

Larger Trees

Honey Locust
Kentucky Coffeetree
Black Cherry
American Basswood
Hackberry
Quaking and Big-Tooth Aspen
American Elm

Size:

Balled and burlapped trees are not eligible for VLAWMO's cost share programs. Preference is for bare root seedlings and containerized trees.

Cost:

The cost of trees should be no more than 25% of your grant project's total budget.

Small Trees/Large Shrubs

Pin Cherry
Serviceberries
Wild Plum
Chokecherry
Pagoda Dogwood
Round-leaved Dogwood
Red-Osier Dogwood
Silky Dogwood
Gray Dogwood
Downy Hawthorn
Prairie Crabapple
Bebb's Willow
Meadow Willow
Pussy Willow
American Bladdernut
Nannyberry Viburnum
Winterberry
Elderberry

Location Considerations:

Ensure the planting area is located on private property or another approved location. Proposals to plant within City/County right-of-way may require approvals or permits. Utility locations should also be avoided to prevent impact.



Planting Specifications:

1. Follow the DNR's tree planting pocket guide for planting bareroot and containerized trees:

<https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/backyard/treecare/planting/pocket-guide.pdf>

2. Make sure the root flare is visible for correct planting depth.



3. Avoid creating "mulch volcanoes" by keeping 2-4" of mulch parallel to the ground and 3" away from the tree trunk.



Graphics: MN DNR

