

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 that collect stormwater runoff from surfaces beyond roofs, infiltration basins, permeable pavers/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, zero remaining balance** 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

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. • 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.
Labor & Plant Specifics	<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 non-native 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.
Admin	<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 Landscape Grant program budgets. • Any submitted information (applications, designs, cost estimates, bids, permits, studies, reports, and proof of expenditures) becomes part of the public record.