PROGRAM GUIDES

RESILIENT AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE PROGRAM

NATURAL GRASSLAND ESTABLISHMENT

Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership

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Not Accepting Applications

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PROGRAM AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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View Program Online →

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

RALP funding supports the costs associated with the establishment and long-term maintenance of native perennial grasslands on marginal/lower productivity agricultural landscapes in Ontario. A grassland is dominated by grasses rather than by trees, as in a forest. Growing with the grasses are many other kinds of non-grassy herbaceous plants known by the collective name of “forbs”. On moist soils, prairie blends into marshlands dominated by sedges rather than grasses (adapted from Tallgrass Ontario).

Native grasslands result in more resilient agricultural landscapes with an increased ability to sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce soil erosion, and provide many other ecological benefits. Native grasslands are often best suited to wet, sloping, poor-soil, or otherwise marginal fields.

INTAKE DATES

INTAKE	INTAKE DATES	ELIGIBLE PROJECT START DATE (INVOICE DATE)	ELIGIBLE PROJECT COMPLETION DATE	CLAIM DEADLINE	PREVIOUS INTAKE GUIDE
1	Intake Open: October 24, 2023 Intake Close: February 2, 2024, 5pm ET	Date indicated in approval letter*	A Land Use Agreement must be entered into by the date communicated in your project approval notification. Projects must be completed by December 15, 2024	Initial Deadline – will be communicated in your project approval notification Final Deadline – December 15 of each year Note that some projects may be assigned a longer payment structure.	View
2	Intake Opens: June 3, 2024, 9:00am ET Intake Closes: March 13, 2026, 2:13pm ET	Date indicated in approval notification*	Date indicated in approval notification*	Initial Claim: Date indicated in approval notification* Additional claim deadlines may be required for larger projects.	

*The **eligible project dates** are included in the approval notification issued by OSCIA for each successful application. Eligible activities can only be initiated and paid for by the applicant on or after the **start date** specified on the approval notification. **Only one claim can be submitted per project per program year, and only one payment will be made per claim.**

COST SHARE SUMMARY

$1,000/acre for rejuvenating existing grasslands to support diverse, multi-species native perennial grassland

$3,000/acre for establishing diverse, multi-species native perennial grasslands on marginal and high-risk annual croplands

PROGRAM DETAILS

Who is Eligible to Apply?

Farm businesses that file farm business taxes in Ontario as demonstrated by:

A valid **farm business registration number (FBRN)** *For information on registering a farm business and/or a religious exemption, visit Overview (agricorp.com).* .

OR

A Religious Exemption Letter provided by the OMAFRA Appeal Tribunal (provide with application submission).

OR

A Cultural Exemption Letter provided by the First Nations Agriculture Finance Ontario (FNAFO), formerly known as the Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario to First Nations farmers, verifying the farm business operates in a First Nations community (provide with application submission).

OR

- An income exemption from the Farm Property Class Tax Rate Program (i.e., Start-up farm businesses, Business structure change, Not a normal production year, Age/Illness/Death of a spouse) (provide with application submission).

Applicants must:

- Have a verified, 4th or 5th Edition Environmental Farm Plan;
- Be willing to enter into a signed Land Use Agreement with OSCIA, committing the farm business to maintaining the proposed practice on the acres being applied for, for a set timeline as defined in the Land Use Agreement; and,
- Be in compliance with all requirements of the law and must remain in compliance for the duration of the project.

Applicants must be undertaking their project on eligible lands, including:

- Privately owned farmland, including all managed lands for agricultural production (e.g., crop land, grazing, orchards, etc.), as well as wetlands, woodlots, and yard sites associated with farming operations;
- Land rented for agricultural production from a third-party;
- Federal, Provincial, Municipal, or Territorial Crown Land, under lease for the purpose of agricultural practices; or,
- Indigenous lands being managed for the purpose of agricultural production.

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Eligible Activities

Funding is to support one of the following activities:

1. Rejuvenation of an existing native perennial grassland. Eligible applications must increase density and diversity of the grassland with a minimum of 5 native species being planted.

2. Establishment of a new native perennial grassland on marginal agricultural land where there are currently no perennial grasses. Eligible projects must establish a multi-species, diverse (greater than 10 species) perennial native grassland.

Eligible activities include:

- Planting native seed appropriate to the project's seed zone.
- Site preparation and maintenance.
- Custom planting costs.
- Purchase, rental or other use of equipment required to establish the native grassland.
- Control of invasive species to improve establishment and maintenance of the grassland, including mowing or chemical treatments adhering to conservation best management practices for grasslands. Practices must be outlined in the letter of support.
- Controlled burns in grasslands according to conservation best management practices, as recommended for the species, included in the grassland mix established and in the letter of support.
- Costs of third-party technical expertise to support detailed project planning, design, planting/establishment, and on-going consultation to maintain a healthy planting.

Establishment projects must be located on land considered marginal. Applicants must demonstrate that two or more of the following conditions are met for the field or area of field to be converted. Conditions must be documented in the letter of support (Documentation Required with the Application):

- Land Use Classification – area to be converted must be primarily (minimum 50%) Class 3 to 7.
- Flood plain – area is primarily (minimum 50%) in a flood plain.
- Slope – area has slope that makes it vulnerable to soil erosion corresponding to defined criteria.
- Concentrated flow path of surface water.
- Adjacent to a watercourse, or an expansion of an existing buffer area adjacent to a water course.

A list of native grass species can be found at http://www.ontariograsses.com/.

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Ineligible Activities

- Planting non-native or invasive species (e.g., alfalfa, clovers, crown vetch). If you are unsure of a species' status, contact OSCIA before submitting an application.
- Clearing natural habitat (e.g., forested land) in order to plant a grassland.
- Any activities relating to pasture management or grasslands intended for grazing (see Perennial Warm Season Pastures).
- Establishment of grasses and vegetation for harvest (see Perennial Biomass Crops).
- Tree or shrub plantings (see Tree and Shrub Planting).
- Restoration of licensed aggregate pits/other lands covered by regulatory rehabilitation plans.
- Activities supported by any federal, provincial, or municipal funding programs outside of the funding being applied for.
- Activities and expenditures as detailed in the section Other Ineligible Activities.

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How Much Funding is Available?

Funding is available under RALP at a per-acre rate for completing the approved resilient agricultural landscape project. Two rates are available, depending on the nature of the proposed project:

- Rate 1: $1,000/acre for rejuvenation of an existing native perennial grassland. Eligible applications must increase density and diversity of the grassland with a minimum of 5 native species being planted.
- Rate 2: $3,000/acre for establishment of a new native perennial grassland on marginal agricultural land where there are currently no perennial grasses. Eligible projects must establish a multi-species, diverse (greater than 10 species) perennial native grassland.

An initial payment of up to fifty per cent (50%) of the total approved project funding allocation, up to a maximum of $30,000 will be issued upon the applicant beginning their project and the signing of a Land Use Agreement between the applicant and OSCIA. Smaller projects will receive the balance of funding upon project completion, while larger projects may receive payments for up to four (4) years after annual confirmation of project maintenance. OSCIA will determine payment schedule at the time of application.

Applicants may submit up to two (2) active applications across all project categories at any given time in the intake. The maximum RALP funding allocation for a single project is $150,000.

Effective for applications submitted after April 1, 2024, a single applicant (farm business) may receive approval for new projects up to a maximum of $400,000 in total RALP funding for the duration of RALP (2024-2028).

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Land Use Agreements

RALP aims to provide long-term carbon sequestration through the use of Land Use Agreements. Before the first funding payment can be issued, approved RALP applicants are required to sign a Land Use Agreement with OSCIA.

In the Land Use Agreement to support eligible practices in the Natural Grassland Establishment project category, participants commit to implement and maintain the approved project for a **minimum of ten (10) years**.

The Agreement is not on title, but producers must notify OSCIA of land ownership or control changes. If the current farmer is not the landowner, a written lease agreement between the landowner and the applicant farm business indicating that the land is managed by the applicant/ the applicant has control of the lands for the term of the agreement must be included with the application. The expectation is the project will be maintained according to recommended best practices to provide long-term benefits for carbon sequestration and resilience for the farm.

Note: OSCIA reserves the right to verify practice implementation including conducting inspections before the final payment is issued and throughout the duration of the Land Use Agreement. If the practice is not maintained as outlined in the approved application and signed Land Use Agreement, applicants will be required to repay all funding received for the approved project.

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What Do I Need to Apply?

Applications are evaluated based only on the information submitted and will not be considered if they do not meet the eligibility criteria or if they are incomplete.

Be sure to carefully review the Resilient Agricultural Landscapes Program guide in entirety. Before you can apply, you will need to visit osciaportal.org and create a user account. Once you have created a user account, if the intake is open, you will be able to enrol and submit an application.

You must include all of the information listed under Documentation Required With the Application with your application submission. You will be required to provide a detailed work plan on your application form that clearly outlines your commitment to implementing the proposed, eligible practice.

You will also be required to enter into a Land Use Agreement upon approval of your application. If the required documentation is not received with the submission, the application may be considered incomplete and denied funding.

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Documentation Required with the Application

- Certificate of completion for a 4th or 5th Edition Environmental Farm Plan

  Detailed site map(s) based on a satellite image (e.g., using GoogleMaps, AgMaps) of the project site. The site map(s) must show the address or GPS coordinates and total area (acres) of the proposed project. For an example of a site map, click here.

  > **Note:** *Hand-drawn sketches will not be accepted* – If you need help accessing a satellite image of your project location, contact your local OSCIA Client Services Staff for free assistance. Click here for contact information.

- Letter of support must be provided by a qualified, arms-length third-party, who has demonstrated experience implementing natural grassland projects, such as a Conservation Authority, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Tallgrass Ontario, Grasslands Ontario, or Ontario NativeScape using the provided template.

Qualified experts who provide letters of support will receive $200 compensation for each completed letter (one letter per application). Compensation is contingent upon the completion of all requested data fields in the template.

The Natural Grassland Establishment letter of support template is available HERE.

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How Do I Submit My Application?

Applications are only accepted during the application intakes dates noted above.

The Enrolment and Application Form and all required documentation can be submitted electronically through the OSCIA Portal:
If the intake is not currently accepting applications, you may still visit osciaportal.org to create a user account and be ready for upcoming opportunities.

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Limits of the Funding

- OSCIA reserves the right to require additional documentation to support confirming a decision for all submitted funding applications.
- The eligible **start date** for your project is the date specified on the approval notification issued by OSCIA for each successful application. Projects cannot be started before that date.
- OSCIA issues an initial payment after the applicant has committed to maintaining the practice for the required period of time, as outlined in a signed Land Use Agreement and complete claim package. Final payments are issued after the approved practice has been fully implemented on the acres applied for, and all required final claim documentation has been received by OSCIA. Larger projects may be awarded extended payment timelines. The project must be paid for in full by the applicant prior to funding being issued.
- Applicants are responsible for securing all necessary approvals and permits for the proposed project before starting and complying with all applicable municipal bylaws and provincial or federal regulations. OSCIA may require copies of permits obtained for some projects before issuing payments.
- OSCIA reserves the right to require additional documentation and ultimately accept or reject a claim for funding consideration.

- Stacking of Resilient Agricultural Landscapes Program (RALP) funding from one or more businesses towards the same project is not permitted.

- RALP funding cannot be stacked with any other federal, provincial, or municipal sources of funding.

- Activities funded under RALP will not be entitled to carbon credits/greenhouse gas (GHG) offsets for the duration of the land use agreement, after which, applicants may be eligible for Federal and Provincial GHG offset systems, as applicable.

- All goods and services must be purchased from an entity that is at arm's length from the farm business. An entity is considered arm's length if they are not related, not affiliated persons or otherwise controlled by another member or members. Parent/child and siblings, through blood or marriage, or businesses owned by the same individual(s) are not considered arm's length. Refer to Section 251 of the Income Tax Act (Canada) for the additional detail on determining arm's length relationships.

- Projects that have received funding are routinely inspected. The decision to inspect may be based on project type, amount of funding, or any other criteria selected by OSCIA. Projects may also be inspected randomly. Inspections may be carried out before the final claim is paid or may also be carried out to confirm the project complies with the signed Land Use Agreement through out the term of the agreement. Biosecurity protocols are followed by all representatives of OSCIA.

- Funding is intended to cover the costs associated with successful project establishment, on-going maintenance to support the new practice for the term of the land use agreement, and to encourage long-term changes to improve resiliency of the farm and increase carbon sequestration in alignment with the goals of RALP.

- Information presented is the best available at the current time. In the event of a conflict between anything set out in this program guide and/or any other program material and the Minister's Order, the Minister's Order will prevail. Errors and Omissions excepted. Check with OSCIA for applicable updates. Material is subject to change without notice as the program evolves.

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Other Ineligible Activities

- Projects that have the sole purpose of coming into or maintaining compliance with Requirements of the Law that pertain to current business operations.
- Normal operating costs associated with conducting or expanding a business' current operations, including annual service fees of any type.
- Any cost that is eligible for a rebate, credit, or refund (e.g., a refundable portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax).
- Gifts and incentives.
- Any cost purchased from a supplier who is not at arm's length from the applicant (i.e., businesses owned the same individual(s), or by siblings or parents, through blood or marriage).
- Applicant's costs of travel, hospitality, meals, and/or accommodations.
- Permits and approvals.
- Purchase, lease, construction or sale of land, buildings or facilities, and associated taxes or fees (e.g., land transfer tax).
- Extended warranties, taxes, legal fees, financing charges, loan interest payments, bank fees.

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How Do I Submit a Claim?

If an application is approved for an allocation, written confirmation will be provided by OSCIA by email. This approval notification will include:

- Confirmation of eligible invoice dates, project completion and claim submission deadlines.
- A Land Use Agreement, which must be entered into by the applicant before the initial payment can be issued.
- Information required with the claim submission.

- Links to the necessary documents (e.g., Claim Form, Electronic Funds Transfer Form, Claim Questionnaire, etc.).

- Information on how to submit the claim.

The applicant ***must enter into a signed Land Use Agreement*** with OSCIA, committing the approved farm business to maintaining the eligible practice for a set period of time and the signed Agreement must be included with the initial claim submission.

The project must be ***complete, operational, and fully paid for before a final claim is submitted***. Each claim after the initial claim must be supported by *at least* one of the following:

- Five to six photos of the project site(s) taken after the project is complete with the date(s) the photos were taken, a geo-referenced point (i.e., identifiable landmark) and GPS coordinates.

- Written confirmation from the technical specialist, consultant or Conservation Authority that confirms project is complete and that the anticipated outcomes have been achieved.

Note: OSCIA reserves the right to verify project implementation including conducting a site inspection before the final payment is issued and throughout the duration of the land use agreement. If the project is not maintained as outlined in the approved application and signed Land Use Agreement, applicants will be required to repay all funding received for the approved project.

Payments are made by electronic funds transfer (EFT) in the name of the legal business. All funding is considered income to the business for tax purposes. OSCIA will issue a tax form (AGR-1) and report the amount paid to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA); this is why an applicant's Social Insurance Number (SIN) is collected if the applicant does not have a CRA Business Number. Only one claim can be submitted per project per program year, and only one payment will be made per claim.

If you have any questions about program requirements, project timelines or claim submission dates, contact OSCIA at:
s-cap@ontariosoilcrop.org.

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