PROGRAM GUIDES

SPECIES AT RISK PARTNERSHIPS ON AGRICULTURAL LANDS

GRASSLAND RESTORATION

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Not Accepting Applications

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PROGRAM AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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View Program Online →

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Agricultural grasslands include hayfields and pasture composed of tame or native species that provide critical breeding habitat for Henslow's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark and Loggerhead Shrike. This BMP provides an opportunity to restore agricultural land to permanent grassland.

INTAKE DATES

INTAKE	INTAKE DATES	ELIGIBLE PROJECT START DATE (INVOICE DATE)	ELIGIBLE PROJECT COMPLETION DATE	CLAIM DEADLINE	PREVIOUS INTAKE GUIDE
1	Intake opens: May 14, 2024 9:00 am ET Intake closes: June 25, 2024 5:00 pm ET	April 1, 2024	December 15, 2024	December 15, 2024	View
2	Intake opens: November 26, 2024 9:00 am ET Intake closes: February 20, 2025 5:00 pm ET	April 1, 2024	March 17, 2025	March 17, 2025	
3	Intake opens: March 4, 2025, 9:00 am ET Intake closes: March 5, 2025 5:00 pm ET	April 1, 2025	December 15, 2025 *Forage Harvest Management (delayed haying) projects only*: August 15, 2025	December 15, 2025 *Forage Harvest Management (delayed haying) projects only*: August 15, 2025	View
4	Intake open date: March 10, 2026, 9:00 am ET Intake close date: March 10, 2026, 9:40 am ET	April 1, 2026	December 15, 2026 *Forage Harvest Management (delayed haying) projects only*: August 15, 2026	December 15, 2026 *Forage Harvest Management (delayed haying) projects only*: August 15, 2026	

All project costs must be incurred, invoiced, and paid for by the approved farm business within the eligible project start and completion dates for the application intake a project is approved in. Costs incurred, invoiced and/or paid for outside of these dates will not be eligible for cost-share.

COST SHARE SUMMARY

50% of Eligible Project Implementation Costs

PROGRAM DETAILS

Who is Eligible to Apply?

To be eligible for SARPAL, an applicant must meet the following two criteria:
Be actively farming or own actively farmed land 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 Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal (AFRAAT) (provide with application submission)

  OR

- A Cultural Exemption Letter provided by the First Nations Agriculture & Finance Ontario to First Nations farmers, verifying the farm business operates in a First Nations community (include with application submission)

  OR

- Proposed project is located on 25 acres of land or more, assessed as 'Farm', as indicated by the most current Municipal Property Assessment Notice or Municipal Tax Bill in the name of the farm business (include 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).

2. Have a completed Environmental Farm Plan (4th or 5th Edition) and Action Plan verified complete by OSCIA.

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Eligible Activities and Costs

Funding is to support restoration of agricultural land to permanent grassland. Grazing and haying for on-farm use is permitted after July 15, but not for off-farm sales. Priority will be given to projects that are restoring native grasslands.

Eligible activities and costs may include:

Mixed planting of native grassland species (e.g., little bluestem, Indian grass, brown-eyed Susan) or non-native grassland species (e.g., timothy, orchard grass, clover).

- Legumes cannot represent more than 40% of the speciation based on the planting rate.
- Alfalfa cannot represent more than 25% of the speciation based on the planting rate.

- Site preparation
- Rental of specialized planting equipment
- Rental of appropriate equipment for mechanical removal of encroaching trees and shrubs
- Control of encroaching invasive trees and shrubs (e.g., buckthorn and Scots pine) in pastures through mowing or other mechanical means within reason. Activities must take place **after July 15** to protect nesting grassland birds. Applicants must show encroachment pressures via the required site map.
- Custom services for removal of encroaching trees and shrubs
- Habitat enhancement for SAR including brush or rock piles, native pollinator plantings, deadwood, and snags, included as part of a larger grassland restoration project

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Ineligible Activities and Costs

Ineligible activities and costs include:

- Establishment of grasses and vegetation for harvest (e.g., biomass) or grazed before July 15
- Establishment of monocultures or biomass crops

- Maintenance and renovation of existing plantings
- Planting in rows between crops (e.g., in a vineyard)
- Planting invasive species
- Opportunity costs associated with payments for land taken out of production
- Purchase of equipment of any kind, including cultivation equipment, tractors or self-propelled equipment, mowers, and brush hogs
- Major clearing of grasslands, wetlands or forested land
- Activities primarily for landscaping or other purposes not directly related to mowing of trees and shrubs to improve grassland habitat
- Repeat claims under this BMP on the same pasture area
- Pasture clipping or other standard practices

Other Ineligible Costs and Activities

- Normal operating costs associated with conducting or expanding a business's current operations
- Any cost that is eligible for a rebate, credit, or refund (e.g., a refundable portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax)
- Gifts and incentives
- Costs related to activities that directly influence or lobby any level of government
- Costs of basic research, ongoing activities, normal commercial expansion costs, and annual services fees of any type
- Lease of land, buildings, and facilities, or new building construction
- Costs of training and skills development that fulfill any academic requirements towards completion of a professional certificate, diploma, or degree program
- Costs of sponsorship for conferences and learning events or initiatives
- Costs of travel, hospitality, meals, and/or accommodations

- Permits and approvals
- Application or administrative fees
- Purchase or sale of land, buildings or facilities, and associated taxes or fees (e.g., land transfer tax)
- Mentoring or coaching services that do not support the development of a written plan
- Multi-use items (e.g., items that can reach beyond the scope of the project such as computers, printers, hand or power tools and attachments, etc.)
- Opportunity costs
- Irrigation systems
- Diesel/fuel costs
- Letter of Support
- Any cost not set out as an Eligible Activity and Cost and not specifically required for the execution of a project

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What You Need to Know About In-Kind Contributions

Reasonable hours of labour invested by the applicant, his/her dependents, and business partner(s) may be claimed as in-kind contributions for cost-share funding. Eligible in-kind contributions will be considered equivalent to cash payments for purchased goods and services. As such, the cost-share level and maximum funding level for the project category apply to eligible in-kind contributions.

Eligible in-kind contributions are invested in the project in the form of unpaid labour and/or use of farm business equipment and may be claimed as follows:

- The maximum eligible labour rate is $25 per hour. OSCIA will make a final determination on what a reasonable number of hours claimed is based on the project and the nature of the work performed.

- The maximum eligible in-kind equipment rate for a tractor and implement is $75 per hour of operation. Applicable in-kind operator charges may be claimed along with the in-kind equipment rate, at up to the accepted maximum hourly labour rate.
- Applicants can submit up to a maximum claim of $7,000 in eligible in-kind contributions for all project categories

Examples of **eligible** in-kind contributions:

- Applicant's child planting trees
- Applicant stringing wire for cross fencing projects
- Applicant's tractor used for auguring post holes
- Applicant/business partner operating tractor

Examples of **ineligible** in-kind contributions:

- Staff or employee time
- Time invested for education (including the Environmental Farm Plan workshop), project planning, supervision, or administration
- On-farm materials used for project (e.g., on-farm posts, electric wire purchased outside of program year, wood for nesting boxes, trees, etc.)
- Equipment costs for use of hand power tools

If a business plans to claim in-kind contributions, accurate estimates to the best of the applicant's ability must be reflected in the total project cost submitted with the SARPAL Application.

Claims for in-kind contributions must be supported by an In-Kind Claim Declaration Form, which details specific hours worked, who performed the work, dates the work was performed, and the hourly rate(s) charged.

It is recommended to take photos to document In-Kind work completed. If your project proposes In-Kind contributions only, please ensure you upload photos to demonstrate the work completed on your project.

It is recommended that the applicant take photos of the project site/area before the project starts and after the project is complete.

All photos submitted must show time/date and location information.

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How Much Cost-Share Funding Is Available?

50% of Eligible Project Implementation Costs

SARPAL cost-share is up to 50% for applicants wishing to implement an eligible BMP activity on their farm property. You must enrol with OSCIA and submit a complete SARPAL Application Form and sketch, accompanied by any other required documentation for the BMP activity you are applying for.

Farm businesses can access up to $40,000 in SARPAL cost-share per program year. Past participation in previous program years does not count towards this limit.

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Conservation Agreements

An objective of the SARPAL program is to continue to assess the effectiveness of Conservation Agreements as a method of supporting species at risk recovery through habitat protection on private agricultural lands. Approved SARPAL applicants are required to sign a Conservation Agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada before funding is released. In the agreement, participants commit to maintain and monitor the funded BMPs for the duration of the agreement (or for the approved number of years for delayed haying projects).

Agreement duration is typically three years for all BMPs except for delayed haying. Agreement duration for delayed haying is typically one year.

A Conservation Agreement with information specific to your project will be provided via email after project approval decisions are released. You will be required to read, initial, and sign this document.

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What Do I Need to Apply?

Applications are only accepted during application intakes, which can be found above. Be sure to carefully review the program guide in its entirety – only eligible and complete applications will be considered. Make sure the following is included with the application submission:

- Certificate of completion for a 4^{th} or 5^{th} Edition Environmental Farm Plan
- Detailed site sketch based on a satellite image (e.g., using Google Maps or AgMaps) of the project location. The site sketch must show the precise location (address or GPS coordinates) and dimensions of the project. **Hand drawn sketches will not be accepted** – if you need help using GoogleMaps or AgMaps, please contact your local OSCIA Client Services Staff for assistance, click here for contact information.

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Documentation Required with the Application

Projects including costs for control of encroaching trees and shrubs must demonstrate encroachment pressures through photographs and/or aerial photography.

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How Do I Submit My Application?

Applications are only accepted during the intake dates noted above, and are 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 enroll you farm business so you are ready for upcoming opportunities.

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Limits of the Cost-Share Funding

1. If the applicant goes ahead with the project before receiving final approval from OSCIA, they do so at the risk of forfeiting the cost-share if all terms and conditions are not satisfied.
2. OSCIA issues payments after projects have been completed and the required documentation (including a signed Conservation Agreement) is received. This means projects must be paid for in full by the applicant prior to cost-share being issued.
3. When determining the total estimated cost of the project, obtain quotes and be accurate to the best of your ability regarding figures for all applicable materials, services, equipment and in-kind contributions. Please be very clear in your cost descriptions. Gross over-estimates lead to program dollars being unnecessarily allocated and can limit opportunities for other applicants.
4. The maximum cost-share contribution per farm business is $40,000 in the 2026-2027 SARPAL program year.
5. SARPAL cost-share is available to new projects initiated on or after April 1, 2026 to December 15, 2026. No cost-share will be offered for project invoices issued before this date. To receive cost-share, all projects must be complete and operational and the complete SARPAL Claim Form received in the OSCIA Guelph office by December 15, 2026 (or, August 15, 2026, for Forage Harvest Management (delayed haying) projects). OSCIA reserves the right to perform a project inspection at a mutually agreeable time.
6. SARPAL cost-share may be utilized by eligible applicants for approved Best Management Practices on farm properties owned, rented, leased, or otherwise under their control.
7. Stacking of SARPAL contributions towards the same project by two or more farm businesses is not permissible.
8. Applicants are entirely responsible for securing all necessary approvals and permits for the proposed project before starting construction and complying with all applicable municipal bylaws and provincial or federal regulations. OSCIA will require copies of permits obtained for some projects before issuing program funding.
9. Only invoices from vendors or service providers directly engaged in the business reflected in the item or service purchased in accordance with the approved SARPAL Application will be accepted with the project claim.
10. All invoices that support materials or services provided to a project must be completed at arm's length and originate with companies or individuals not in any way associated through ownership with the farm business making the project claim. Refer to Section 251 of The Income Tax Act for the detailed statutory provision for determining Arm's Length relationships.
11. All eligible invoices must match the farm business name identified on the Enrolment Form.
12. Materials or products produced on-farm (e.g., fence posts) or purchased outside the eligible invoice dates cannot be cost-shared.
13. OSCIA reserves the right to require additional documentation and ultimately accept or reject submitted project invoices and proof of payment for cost-share consideration.

14. A single project may receive cost-share from one BMP category only. Multiple categories cannot be accessed for a single activity in efforts to maximize SARPAL contributions (i.e., cost-share will only be applied once to a project cost item).
15. Eligible projects must be new to the farm business, unless otherwise indicated in the project category description.
16. The farm business shall ensure that the total cost-share assistance from all sources, including other government or nongovernment programs, for eligible expenses shall not exceed 100 percent of project costs. The farm business is required to confirm at the time the claim is submitted all other sources of funding for eligible project expenses.
17. Across all BMP categories, HST (Harmonized Sales Tax) is not eligible for cost-share.
18. Across all BMP categories, maintenance, extended warranties, hand and power tools and attachments are not eligible for cost-share.
19. OSCIA will not accept additional SARPAL Applications after the Application Submission Deadline.
20. All applicable information on the SARPAL Application Form must be complete before it is submitted to OSCIA. Only proposed projects detailed on SARPAL Applications deemed to be complete by the OSCIA Guelph office will be considered for cost-share.
21. In order to be eligible for a SARPAL allocation, the same project cannot be funded by any other funding programs delivered by OSCIA (e.g. OFCAF) or by the Federal government. Other cost-share programs may be available from local Conservation Authorities, Ducks Unlimited Canada and other stewardship organizations.
22. OSCIA will not accept additional SARPAL applications once the total SARPAL funding available for the program year has been committed.
23. SARPAL cost-share allocation is based on the eligible project costs outlined on the approved SARPAL Application Form. Accurate estimates must be reflected in the total project costs submitted on the SARPAL Application Form. If final project costs exceed the original estimates, there is absolutely no obligation by OSCIA to extend cost-share beyond the original allocation.
24. Information presented is the best available at the time of printing. Check with OSCIA for applicable updates. Material is subject to change without notice.
25. Site preparation costs that exceed 10-times the cost of planting/seeding are not eligible.

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How Do I Submit a Claim?

If an application is approved for a cost-share allocation, written confirmation will be provided from OSCIA by email. This approval will confirm:

- If any additional information must be provided (e.g., in the case of a conditional approval)

- Any costs from the application that were deemed ineligible
- Eligible invoice dates, project completion dates and claim submission deadlines
- Information on how to submit the claim
- Links to the necessary documents (e.g., Claim Form, Electronic Funds Transfer Form)

Each project must be ***complete*, and fully paid for before a claim is submitted.*** As part of an eligible project, every claimed cost must be supported by an invoice in the name of the applicant farm business. All costs being claimed must be paid for by the applicant farm business. Proof of payment must verify who paid, who received payment, the amount of payment, and the date of payment. Proof of payment may be any one of the following:

- Copy of front and back of a cancelled cheque
- Electronic image of a processed cheque
- E-Transfer confirmation, which includes the word ‘Deposited’ or ‘Autodeposited’
- Bill Payment confirmation from a banking institution
- Statement from banking institution indicating to whom the processed cheque was written, or electronic payment made, and for what amount
- Credit card or debit card receipt clearly identifying the amount and to whom the payment was made. Credit card or debit card numbers and other information, including costs that are unrelated to the project, should be blacked out.

Cash payments for project costs are strongly discouraged, as they may not meet requirements for proof of payment. If proof of payment by the applicant is not provided, OSCIA cannot support the cost. OSCIA may request any additional information from the applicant that OSCIA deems necessary (e.g., copies of any audit reports, plans or permits obtained by the applicant in conducting the project) to support their claim. Cost-share payments are made by electronic funds transfer (EFT) in the name of the legal farm business. All cost-share funding is considered income to the farm 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.

Photos Confirming Project Completion

It is recommended to take photos to document In-Kind work completed. If your project proposes In-Kind contributions only, please ensure you upload photos to demonstrate the work completed on your project.

It is recommended that the applicant take photos of the project site/area before the project starts and after the project is complete.

All photos submitted must show time/date and location information.

** Tree planting projects that will not be completed until spring 2027 require a Tree Service Agreement, signed by the applicant and the Planting Delivery Agent (e.g., Conservation Authority). In these cases, if an application is approved full instructions will be provided to the applicant in the written confirmation of conditional approval.*

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