



How to determine your bid for funding

Consider the following guidance when determining your bid for funding for your Nature Smart project(s). A sample bid is also provided below.

Adherence to these guidelines does not guarantee your bid will be successful: funding is allocated based on project eligibility, availability of funds, and competitiveness of applications.

1. **What are your financial needs to complete the project?** First, determine the total project cost to the best of your ability, and then consider how much funding support you require to complete the project. Ensure your bid reflects the bottom line needs of your farm.

The maximum available cost share-funding for a single project is \$40,000.00, so your bid should not go over this amount.

There is no limit on the proposed cost amount submitted with an application.

Remember that costs are eligible retroactive to April 1, 2025. Across all project categories, eligible costs to consider when calculating total project costs may include:

- In-kind time to support project implementation and maintenance (across the term of the Conservation Agreement).
- Costs for third party support (such as planning/design/engineering/obtaining a letter of support).
- Opportunity costs (i.e., potential income that may have been generated by the land had it been kept for agriculture production).

Refer to the Program Guide for all eligible activities and costs.

Finding other sources of funding, as may be available from local Conservation Authorities, Ducks Unlimited Canada and other stewardship organizations, is encouraged. NSCRP funding can be stacked with other nongovernment and/or federal, provincial or municipal sources of funding, provided that the total amount of funding, including the NSCRP payment, does not exceed 100 percent of the total eligible expenditures of a project, and provided that the stacking is permissible within the program stipulations of the other source(s) of funding. Refer to the program guide for full details.

2. **Some projects may have ongoing costs.** Be sure to consider project costs for the length of the Conservation Agreement (10 years). This could include on-going maintenance costs, re-seeding or re-planting, and long-term opportunity costs, for instance. Projects which receive funding from Nature Smart are not eligible to

access any existing or future federal or provincial offset credit programs. As such, you may also consider the potential of not accessing these programs. In doing so, consider the potential for carbon sequestration. Some projects may have a higher potential for carbon sequestration than others (see below).

3. **What cost-share percentages are typically offered?** Traditionally, cost-share programs fund anywhere from 35% to 75% of total, eligible project costs. Consider how beneficial your project is in terms of carbon sequestration and other ecological benefits. If the benefit is high, a funding bid with a cost-share percentage on the higher end of the traditional range may be justified. If the benefit is less significant (for instance, your project is small in acreage), a more conservative funding bid may be appropriate.

4. **Nature Smart is a competitive program.** Your application will be evaluated against other applications. Applications will be assessed based on their potential impact to sequester carbon and provide ecological benefits. Applications will be evaluated based on the total funding bid, but also the percentage of total project costs requested (i.e., the cost-share percentage). Projects will be selected based on providing the greatest benefit per amount of funding requested.

Assessment criteria are reflected in the application form, and based on the project's location, and projects which have the greatest potential to sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions are the most competitive. The criteria include but are not limited to: soil carbon content, predominant vegetation type, landscape connectivity, area impacted, and enhancements to increase carbon storage (e.g., fencing to exclude livestock from natural features or planting on areas with erosion risk). These features of the project, taken into account with the amount of funding being requested (the "bid"), determines relative competitiveness against other Nature Smart projects.

5. **The objective of Nature Smart is to store and capture carbon.** Therefore, projects that conserve, restore and enhance wetlands, peatlands, and grasslands in a way that prevents carbon from entering the atmosphere, and instead "sequesters" it in plant biomass or undisturbed soils, are in strong alignment with the goals of the program. Secondly, projects with additional ecological benefits of conserving, restoring and enhancing habitat for migratory birds and species at risk (SAR) on agricultural lands, further add to the value of a project.

Soils that are rich in organic matter are dark in colour and well-structured in texture. They contain lots of carbon, which is the basis of organic matter. As plants grow, their roots and residue add to the amount of carbon sequestered. Plants that are of most beneficial to increasing soil carbon levels are deep rooting and have long growing seasons. This may be achieved through a diversity of plants to ensure carbon is added to the soil across as long of a growing season as possible.

Your bid should consider the soil type you are implementing the project on, and the plant types and diversity that will be supported through the project, along with any ecological co-benefits to SAR. You may consider reaching out to a local conservation specialist to gain insight into the benefits your project could provide and how that might impact the value of your bid.

6. **You will not be funded higher than your requested bid.** OSCIA will not provide funding over and above the requested bid, nor will additional funding be provided should project costs incurred be higher than those estimated on your application. Do your research and ensure your estimated project costs are accurate to the best of your ability, and your funding bid reflects your needs to complete the project. Please be very clear in your cost descriptions.

Sample bid

Joe has proposed establishing a new grassland on 5 acres. He has estimated the total project costs will be about \$12,000.00 over the course of 10 years (the duration of the Nature Smart Conservation Agreement). These costs include consultation with a qualified third party on project planning and support, equipment rental for planting, seed purchase, and ongoing in-kind time of the farmer to support mowing and weed control. Joe is willing to absorb \$4,000.00 of this expense, recognizing the benefits the project will have for his farm; therefore, he is requesting \$8,000.00 as his funding bid. This would be considered 67% cost-share.

Joe has determined this grassland will be established on soils with a moderate level of organic matter and will select tall-grass prairie as his species of grass, which will provide habitat to ground-nesting birds. These project details will be collected on his application form. The funding bid and benefit of the project to carbon sequestration and other ecological benefits would be used to evaluate the cost-benefit of the project relative to other submitted bids. Successful applicants will have demonstrated the most potential for environmental benefits through carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas emission reduction, and other co-benefits such as preservation of habitat for Species at Risk.