

# 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, create pollinator habitat, and conserve water 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 0.5 miles of a [VLAWMO priority area](#).



## Eligible Projects:

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

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

## Ineligible Projects:

- Non-native plant landscaping, fruit and vegetable gardens, 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. The VLAWMO Board of Directors may shift grant funding amounts between Landscape Grant Program budgets based on demand.

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

<b>Start &amp; Finish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Projects started prior to VLAWMO approval are not eligible.</b> A grant application must be approved for funding, and the grant agreement must be signed by the applicant and VLAWMO prior to starting work.</li><li><b>Changes to the project after grant approval may not be made without VLAWMO approval.</b></li><li>Eligible project costs are those only directly related to installing the proposed project such as plants, erosion control materials, non-dyed mulch, drainage structures, and rented equipment. Purchased tools and equipment and potting mix soil are not eligible. Eligibility of materials is subject to VLAWMO approval.</li><li>Grant awards will expire within 1 year of grant approval unless the project is extended with VLAWMO approval.</li><li>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.</li><li>Grantee must agree to maintain the project for at least <b>5 years</b>. The site may be inspected by VLAWMO staff to ensure compliance.</li></ul>
<b>Labor &amp; Plant Specifics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>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.</li><li>Erosion control activities must use natural erosion control material (i.e. non-plastic).</li><li>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 non-native 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.</li></ul>
<b>Telling the Story</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grantee must participate in VLAWMO's education efforts by:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Providing photos of project progress including before, during installation, freshly completed, and one year after project completion; OR</li><li>Providing a posed picture with completed project &amp; short quote about what was enjoyable about the project or lessons learned.</li></ul></li></ul>

## Reimbursement Steps:

- Execute grant agreement with VLAWMO.
- 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.
- 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.
- If the above steps are completed and approved by staff, VLAWMO will mail a reimbursement check per the VLAWMO TEC monthly meeting schedule.

