



AGRICULTURAL WATERSHED ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM & WATERSHED RESILIENCY AND RESTORATION PROGRAM

JOINT PROGRAMS APPROACH: 2015 GRANT APPLICATION OVERVIEW



DOCUMENT INTENT

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) and Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) established the Agricultural Watershed Enhancement Program and Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program. This document is intended to describe and provide guidance on the 'Joint Programs Approach' adopted by ARD and ESRD for the delivery of these complimentary programs. Financial support for the Agricultural Watershed Enhancement program is provided through Growing Forward 2, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

GOALS OF PROGRAMS

Improve flood and drought resiliency and enhance water quality through restoration and enhancement of Alberta's watersheds.

PROGRAM OVERVIEWS

AGRICULTURAL WATERSHED ENHANCEMENT (AWE) PROGRAM

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) established and administers the *Growing Forward 2 – Agricultural Watershed Enhancement Program*. AWE aims to increase the uptake of wetland restoration and riparian health beneficial management practices (BMPs) by producers within agricultural sectors. AWE facilitates the realization of measureable changes within high risk watershed

areas and facilitates the delivery of targeted, comprehensive extension programs, focused on addressing water quality issues. ARD will dispense AWE project funding up until the 2017 grant year depending on available funds, with all AWE projects requiring completion by March 31, 2018.

More information regarding AWE can be found on the program website at:

http://growingforward.alberta.ca/Programs/index.htm?contentId=AGRI_WTRSHED_PRG&useSecondary=true&active=no

WATERSHED RESILIENCY AND RESTORATION PROGRAM (WRRP)

Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) established and administers the Provincial Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program. WRRP aims to promote the long-term ability of watersheds to mitigate the effects of future flood and drought events. The primary objective of the program is to increase the natural capacity of the province's watersheds to reduce the intensity, magnitude, duration and affects from flooding and droughts for the benefit of Albertans and their communities. Additionally, the program aims to address impacts of past flooding and drought through the restoration of degraded priority areas within Alberta's watersheds. This will be accomplished through non-structural mitigation measures, ongoing stewardship and information to decision makers, and will complement the province's structural programs (Alberta Community Resilience Program). ESRD will dispense WRRP project funding up until the 2016 grant year depending on available funds, with all WRRP projects requiring completion by March 31, 2017.

More information regarding WRRP can be found on the program website at: <http://esrd.alberta.ca/water/programs-and-services/watershed-resiliency-and-restoration-program.aspx>

JOINT PROGRAMS APPROACH

While the AWE and WRRP programs may focus on differing sectors and outcomes, both programs have natural synergies and complement each other with a high degree of focus on best management practices, and actions that result in 'on-the-ground' changes that improve watersheds across the Province of Alberta. To ensure an effective alignment between the two programs, the Government of Alberta is moving forward with a Joint Programs Approach for the delivery of these programs that includes:

- ▶ One window access to both programs (e.g. One application form for both AWE and WRRP);
- ▶ Collaboration between ARD and ESRD on decision making and prioritization between flood/drought and water quality objectives; and,

- ▶ A consistent GOA approach to watershed restoration activities under these programs.

Under the Joint Programs Approach, the AWE program will continue to target projects within agricultural lands and sectors in the White Zones of the province, while the WRRP program will consider all project locations and sectors including urban municipalities, agricultural and non-agricultural lands, as well as Public Lands within the Green Zone of the province. ARD and ESRD will consider funding projects under both WRRP and AWE programs where the projects meet both the flood/drought and water quality objectives of the programs, and address the priority audiences for the programs within the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

The Joint Programs Approach focuses projects that will contribute to meeting the following overall program outcomes:

- ▶ Identification and ranking priority areas for wetland and riparian area restoration and conservation, including priority areas for water quality improvement;
- ▶ Advancing flood, drought and water quality resiliency in priority areas within watersheds in Alberta to enhance communities and improve environments;
- ▶ Restoring and enhancing ecological connectivity and function and water quality in critical areas;
- ▶ Increasing knowledge, awareness and participation by program participants, agricultural producers and the public in activities that restore and sustain watershed functions; and,
- ▶ Enhancing community capacity to restore and maintain critical watershed features for future generations.

FUNDING PRIORITIES UNDER THE JOINT PROGRAMS APPROACH

The Joint Programs Approach will strategically align the ARD and ESRDs consideration of AWE and WRRP projects to maximize the funding and outcomes associated with both programs. The type of projects that will be considered under the programs includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- ▶ Activities that have a clear and demonstrable benefit to the watershed's flood, drought or water quality mitigation abilities;
- ▶ Multi-year proposals, including initial project planning and development related to partnership projects for flood, drought and water quality mitigation that will be implemented over multiple years of the program; and/or,
- ▶ The undertaking of education, outreach, data collection, research or other planning activities related to long-term projects that are directly tied to watershed restoration and resiliency, water quality and on-the-ground projects.

In many cases, these projects will be focused on, but are not necessarily limited to, projects planned with Non-Governmental Organizations, First Nations and local authorities in partnership with land owners and producers which identify strategies and implement measures within watersheds to enhance the resilience of natural systems, mitigate the impacts from flooding and droughts, and increase water quality.

Priorities for short-term and long-term projects under the Joint Programs Approach include:

- ▶ High-risk/contributing areas at the watershed level;
- ▶ Floodplain or channel naturalization;
- ▶ Bank stabilization through riparian enhancements or approved bio-engineering techniques;
- ▶ Wetland restoration and creation;
- ▶ Protection of existing natural features and key areas;
- ▶ Mitigation of potential anthropogenic influences on water quality;

- ▶ Projects that provide a high benefit to flood or drought resiliency; and/or
- ▶ Review against project selection criteria and other applicable considerations.

WATERSHED RESILIENCY AND RESTORATION PROGRAM FUNDING ALLOCATION

WRRP funding will be allocated to projects on a tiered basis. The Tiers are as follows:

Tier 1: Projects requesting funding up to \$100,000 for smaller scale project(s):

- ▶ Projects limited in scope to one location or a portion of a watershed;
- ▶ Works that can be completed within one fiscal year that funding is allocated; or
- ▶ Projects that have a local benefit to watershed resiliency flood and drought mitigation.

Tier 2: Projects requesting funding over \$100,000 for larger scale projects:

- ▶ Projects that have a benefit for large portion of a watershed, sub-watershed or an entire watershed
- ▶ Projects within a watershed or sub-watershed involving multiple land owners or parcels of land in a given geographic area
- ▶ Multi-year project proposals
- ▶ Projects that demonstrate a cumulative benefit to flood or drought mitigation and collaboration amongst multiple parties
- ▶ Projects with a high degree of flood/drought mitigation or water quality benefits associated with the funding requested

AGRICULTURAL WATERSHED ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM FUNDING ALLOCATION

AWE funding allocation will not be based on the Tiered process described above. Please refer to the AWE Program Terms and Conditions for Group Proposals and the AWE Program Terms and Conditions for Landowners.

Please note that ESRD and ARD, at their discretion, may hold applications for funding to the following grant year depending on available project/watershed information or available funding.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE FUNDS UNDER THE JOINT PROGRAMS APPROACH?

Applicants must be legal entities, such as:

- ▶ Non-governmental organizations;
- ▶ Municipalities;
- ▶ First Nations;
- ▶ Incorporated watershed groups;
- ▶ Drainage/irrigation districts; and,
- ▶ Any other group registered under the provincial Societies Act.

AGRICULTURAL WATERSHED ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Group Applicants funded under AWE will be eligible for grants associated with manpower and extension for the purpose of working with landowners in the project area to implement watershed beneficial management practices. Expenses associated with on-the-ground watershed improvements will be funded through individual grants between ARD and the landowners that are identified as willing applicants by the Group Applicant. The eligible funding for Group Applicants is outlined in the Agricultural Watershed Enhancement Program Terms and Conditions for Group Proposals 2014 – 2018. The eligible funding for Landowners is outlined in the Agricultural Watershed Enhancement Program Terms and Conditions for Landowners 2014-2018.

WATERSHED RESILIENCY AND RESTORATION PROGRAM

Applicants funded under WRRP include those that are experienced or have the ability to complete projects in watershed mitigation measures such as riparian or wetland restoration, or who are completing projects in partnership with landowners.

WHAT PROJECTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING UNDER THE JOINT PROGRAMS APPROACH?

ARD and ESRD staff will review projects and project components under the Joint Programs

Approach to assess for program applicability under both AWE and WRRP. It is possible that an individual project or project components may be best suited for funding under AWE, WRRP or both. Opportunities for funding of individual project applications under both programs will be considered. Applicability and program best-fit for applications will be determined at the discretion of ARD and ESRD.

Examples of projects considered under the Joint Applications Approach include projects designed to mitigate flood/droughts or improve water quality within a watershed including, but not limited to, the following:

- ▶ Riparian enhancements (e.g. watering systems, buffers, stream crossings, riparian fencing, riparian plantings etc.);
- ▶ Wetland enhancements (e.g. wetland creation, enhancement or restoration);
- ▶ Floodplain/river improvements (e.g. channel naturalization, removal of old structures, removal of flow impediments, re-vegetation, floodplain storage capacity enhancements, winter site relocations, etc.);
- ▶ Creation/increase of absorptive capacities;
- ▶ Removal of existing drainage projects or works; and
- ▶ Onsite water retention efforts.

Applications may include projects for one individual site or multiple sites within a watershed under the same project plan. Data collection efforts for the purpose of research, evaluation and assessment and education and outreach will be considered but must be directly tied to one of the above mentioned activities as part of an overall project plan.

WHAT PROJECTS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING UNDER THE JOINT PROGRAMS APPROACH?

Examples of ineligible projects under the Joint Programs Approach include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ▶ Structural restoration or construction (e.g. dams, berms, dykes, tunnels, riprap, storm water ponds);



- ▶ Municipal infrastructure, such as stormwater ponds, etc.;
- ▶ Groyne and other in-stream structures;
- ▶ River training or realignment;
- ▶ “Hard armouring” erosion protection (e.g. non-bioengineering projects, such as riprap and other river armouring) ;
- ▶ Projects that increase the development opportunities or liabilities within flood prone areas;
- ▶ Weed control projects/programs; and,
- ▶ Dugouts and water wells.

Additionally, structural projects eligible for funding under ESRD’s Alberta Community Resilience Program are not eligible to receive funding under the WRRP.

WHAT COSTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING UNDER THE JOINT PROGRAMS APPROACH?

Eligible project costs to the applicant funded under the Joint Programs include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ▶ Salaries and benefits directly tied to staff hired for project(s);
- ▶ Reasonable travel-related expenses as outlined by ARD or ESRD;
- ▶ Cost of computer equipment together with software to be used for the eligible activities up to a maximum of \$3,000 unless otherwise approved
- ▶ Speaker fees for workshops, conference or seminars related to watershed resiliency and restoration;

- ▶ Costs for development delivery of eligible watershed education/engagement activities to support project development/delivery;
- ▶ Costs of goods and services to promote and deliver the eligible activities (including for WRRP administrative costs);
- ▶ Operating expenses related to the project;
- ▶ Equipment purchases and leases;
- ▶ Capital infrastructure directly tied to restoration or conservation projects;
- ▶ Materials and deliverables directly tied to the project;
- ▶ Technical consulting and professional services;
- ▶ Education, communication and outreach activities related to the project; and,
- ▶ Post project evaluation performed within the program term and directly linked to project deliverables.

WHAT COSTS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING UNDER JOINT PROGRAMS APPROACH?

Costs not eligible for funding under the Joint Programs include

- ▶ Salary and benefits of existing staff that are funded by other sources;
- ▶ Administrative costs for related to activities under AWE grants;
- ▶ Expenditures or costs that are not approved by ESRD or ARD;
- ▶ Expenses for the administration and coordination of activities to maintain an AWE or WRRP project in Alberta beyond the approved proposal;



- ▶ Expenses for a group proposal where implementation of projects designed to mitigate flood/drought or improve water quality is not the primary outcome;
- ▶ Goods and Services Tax (GST);
- ▶ Expenses incurred outside of the project term;
- ▶ Purchase of capital equipment not directly tied to the project;
- ▶ Purchase or construction of real property or structural works;
- ▶ Purchase of fleet (e.g. land, water, air vehicles);
- ▶ Land or wetland conservation offsets or compensation; and
- ▶ Academic research or education/outreach not tied to a specific approved WRRP or AWE project.

PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

The following outlines a list of broad criteria that will be taken into consideration during the selection of eligible projects. These criteria, as well as their relative weighting, are subject to change and should only be considered guidance to applicants. For WRRP, the following criteria are in addition to any requirements related to the project tiers.

PROJECT GOALS AND BENEFITS

PRIMARY

Flood and Drought Mitigation – WRRP

- ▶ Degree the project mitigates the negative impacts from flood or drought

Water Quality Improvements– AWE

- ▶ Degree the project reduces the potential severity of agricultural or other anthropogenic impacts on water quality

Efforts to Reduce Risk to Community Safety and Health–WRRP

- ▶ Headwaters and floodplains where individuals could be affected

SECONDARY

Biodiversity

- ▶ Protection of species at risk
- ▶ Improving biodiversity
- ▶ Improving conditions for fish and wildlife

Additional Environmental Benefits

- ▶ Water quality
- ▶ Improved habitats

COMPLIMENTARY

Data Gathering

- ▶ Data related activities will ideally relate to the watershed as a whole and be of use to future projects and decision making in the watershed

Capacity Building

- ▶ Projects or elements of projects that improve the capabilities of authorities or bodies within watersheds, such as improved land-use decision making
- ▶ Ability of organizations to deliver programs that support the watershed restoration and resiliency program outcomes

Outreach, Education and Stewardship

- ▶ Projects or elements of projects that improve the awareness and understanding of the importance and sensitivity of natural systems and riparian areas within a watershed



ANCILLARY FACTORS

COST SHARING AND LEVERAGED FUNDING AND BENEFITS

Proposed projects should include a level of cost sharing and will ideally leverage funding or benefits from other programming. This is not a requirement of the Program; however, projects that bring additional resources outside of the WRR Program will receive high priority.

COST/BENEFIT

The proposed project must provide good value for money and must justify the costs of the project in relation to the benefits that Albertan's and the watershed will receive.

CONSTRUCTION

Additional consideration will be given to proposed projects requiring limited construction activities and disturbances to natural environments.

LONGEVITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND MAINTENANCE

Proposed projects will ideally have a lasting impact on the watershed and require minimal ongoing or maintenance costs/efforts beyond the initial phase of the project

REACH/SCALE OF EFFORT

Projects that have a positive impact on the entire watershed are favoured over those affecting a single water body.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Ideally, proposed projects will involve partnerships or collaboration with multiple actors within the watershed. Additionally, the level of community support for the proposed project will be taken into consideration.

HOW TO APPLY FOR THE 2015/2016 FUNDING YEAR

Applications under the Joint Programs Approach for the WRRP and AWE 2015/2016 funding year must be submitted by 4:30pm mountain standard time on Friday January 30, 2015 to GOA.Watershed@gov.ab.ca.

The application must include a completed application form and grant application proposal.

- ▶ Completed Application Form
- ▶ Project(s) Proposal that includes:
 - ▶ Project Summary
 - Rationale as to how the activities and the overall project will improve flood or drought resiliency
 - Rationale as to why the project location is important for flood/drought/water quality mitigation
 - ▶ Map and Project Location(s)
 - ▶ Project Specifics
 - Details description on the project and benefit to program outcomes and objectives for AWE or WRRP, including methodology and process for completing the works
 - Scope of work
 - Timetable
 - Deliverables of the project
 - Detailed description of all activities associated with the project and how it ties to the deliverables
 - Demographics of the project area including:
 - Total area directly affected by projects within the watershed
 - % agriculture land base
 - % acreages
 - % recreation
 - % other industry or land use
 - ▶ Partner Information
 - Who is involved and how
 - Details on each partner including name, affiliation, role and contribution
 - ▶ Project Financial Plan
 - List of total cost for the project broken down by activity and partner contribution
 - Identify apportion of costs not funded by the WRRP or AWE programs
 - In-kind contributions
 - ▶ Multi-year projects are to give a breakdown of the above mentioned by fiscal year (April 1 to March 31).

