

Land Management Incentive Program

Guidelines (September 2023)

1. About the program

Nillumbik Shire Council's **Land Management Incentive Program (LMIP)** offers incentive grants for sustainable land management activities that have positive environmental outcomes, threatened species conservation and/or improved and sustainable land productivity outcomes.

The program is open year round, commencing 1 July of each year, until the grant pool has been expended.

The program has a priority focus on encouraging and supporting the adoption and enhancement of best practice land management - by new and longer term residents of the Shire.

Council officer advice is available to help you assess your land management options and priorities, and to help you apply for this funding. Phone 9433 3111 or email environment@nillumbik.vic.gov.au.

Details on how to apply for a grant are provided in Section 8 of these guidelines.

2. Overarching eligibility

To be eligible, activities are required to provide:

- Positive environmental or sustainable agriculture outcomes at the project site; and
- Positive environmental, social or community outcomes that extend beyond the property boundary

The degree to which the project will achieve the above determines whether an eligible activity is assessed as being a category A, B, C or D project, and the associated amount of LMIP funding that the project may receive. Details are provided in Sections 6 and 7.

Note: Waterway projects are given low priority for funding under this program because assistance is available through [Melbourne Water's Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways Grant Program](#).

3. What we can assist you with: (Eligible project activities)

1. Weed control (of key priority species listed in the publication Nillumbik Live Local Plant Local)
 - These costs can include contractor hire, machinery hire, labour and chemical/herbicide costs; and/or fees to attend an approved Chemcert Farm Chemical User Course or recognised equivalent.
 - Costs may not include the purchase of weed control equipment or machinery. Spraying of flowering annuals is ineligible for funding.
 - Environmental weed control will only be funded within areas of native vegetation or where the weeds are causing a direct threat to an adjacent environmental asset.
 - Agricultural weed control will only be funded when in alignment with the recommendations of the Nillumbik Invasive Species Action Plan.
 - Removal of Radiata Pines will only be considered under Category C and D.
2. Revegetation (using species that are indigenous to Nillumbik and the property) and which:
 - Enhance the biodiversity of an area
 - Buffer remnant vegetation
 - Create or enhance habitat corridors, habitat stepping stones, and/or significant habitat locations
 - Establish shelterbelts
 - Prevent and/or rehabilitate soil erosion
 - Are climate resilient
 - Can be protected from pest animal browsing

These costs can include the purchase of plants and associated (non plastic) guards, mats and stakes; or other materials on a case-by-case basis. The grant recipient is responsible for ordering and purchasing plants from a local indigenous plant nursery and ongoing watering, weeding and maintenance.

3. Indigenous seed collection, propagation and planting (subject to the applicant obtaining any necessary permits)
4. Works for threatened species conservation
5. Rabbit control (across a minimum of five adjacent properties, or at least 5Ha) – refer Grant conditions, Section 11
6. Fox control (targeted to protect listed threatened species, across a minimum of five adjacent properties, or at least 5Ha) – refer Grant conditions, Section 11

7. Pasture management improvements to support control of invasive grassy weeds and reintroduction of native grasses
8. Sustainable / regenerative agriculture enhancements
 - Trials in integrated pest management for an orchard/vineyard
 - Companion planting to enhance predatory insects/reduce insecticide use
 - Software tools to monitor and manage groundcover or pasture feed budgeting
 - Drill sowing of native perennial grasses inter-row
 - Multi-species cover crop trials
 - Shelterbelt planting and associated fencing
 - Training courses or farm planning advice in sustainable practices/ processes
 - Soil testing to minimise excess fertiliser usage
9. Costs associated with organising/delivering relevant environment and/or land management education and training for Nillumbik landholders
10. Co-contributions to help support grants offered through other agencies, for very high benefit projects
11. Biodiversity or exclusion fencing to protect high biodiversity value sites from grazing and browsing by herbivores, or rubbing and thrashing by deer
 - Fencing of remnant vegetation (including paddock trees and around dams) or revegetation works
 - Exclusion fencing to protect a known or likely potential population of listed threatened flora or fauna species
 - Gates must be installed, to enable future managed grazing as required.
 - Permanent fencing must include end and corner assemblies. It may be standard rural/post and wire or permanent electric fencing. The use of barbed wire is not permitted due to the dangers posed to wildlife.
 - Fencing of waterways that are eligible for Melbourne Water Stream Frontage funding will not be funded, and boundary fencing is ineligible.
12. Non-standard projects that provide significant environmental and broad-scale community benefit (e.g. demonstration sites or trials of innovative environmental management or pest management; cultural burning; development of landscape-scale land management plans etc). Applications must detail how demonstration/ trial findings will be useful to and shared amongst the broader community.

4. Eligible applicants

- Private landowners or landholders
- Community groups including, for example: Landcare; rabbit, foxaction groups; environment groups, other community clubs and groups.

The applicant must display a commitment to ongoing good land management practices in order to be eligible for funding.

5. Eligible properties

To be eligible, your property must be:

- Located within the Shire of Nillumbik; and
- Located within the Green Wedge Zone, Rural Conservation Zone, or have an Environmental Significance Overlay
- Other locations by exception, for example at sites with cultural heritage significance

6. Available funding

There is a recurring annual LMIP grant pool of around \$60,000 per year.

A maximum grant of up to \$2,000 is available per single property, or up to \$10,000 for a community led cross-tenure or landscape-scale initiative, per financial year.

Projects will not be funded retrospectively.

Applications will be assessed and categorized as being Category A, B, C or D (refer to Section 7). The category will determine the maximum amount of funding that the project is eligible for, and associated co-contribution requirements.

Most successful applications will require a 50% co-contribution of funds, materials or in-kind labour.

- In kind labour is assessed at the rate of \$40 per hour and must be undertaken as part of upcoming (not retrospective) project works.
- In addition to physical labour, in-kind support can include, for example, the provision of materials, running workshops, project management (for complex projects) and planned monitoring activities.
- A monetary co-contribution is a requirement of all pest management projects (i.e. foxes, rabbits).

7. Assessment Process

Each application is assessed against the LMIP eligibility criteria specified in Sections 2-5 above (i.e. whether the project activity and applicant and property is eligible).

Applications that meet those eligibility criteria are then assessed to determine their level of a) environment benefit and b) community/social benefit. This determines whether the application is graded as being of Category A, B, C or D benefit, and the associated level of funding support that the grant program can provide.

Category A. High environment and very high community benefit: 100% Council LMIP contribution, up to \$2,000 (single property) or up to \$10,000 (community-scale initiative)

Category B. High environment and high community benefit: 50% Council LMIP contribution, up to \$2,000 (single property) or up to \$10,000 (community-scale initiative)

Category C. Medium environment and community benefit: 50% Council LMIP contribution, up to \$500

Category D. Low environment and community benefit: ineligible

The funding category that each eligible project will fall within is determined according to:

a) Level of environment benefit

The types of matters considered when assessing the level of environmental benefit include:

- Biodiversity or agricultural values of the property and its surrounding area
- Presence of threatened species or habitat
- Weed species and location
- Water quality outcomes
- Soil conservation outcomes
- Sustainable agricultural / improved pasture management outcomes
- The degree to which the positive project outcomes extend beyond any single property
- The likely environmental consequences of inaction

b) Level of community / social benefit

The types of matters considered when assessing the level of community benefit include:

- Possession of a valid Pensioner Concession Card or Health Care Card – If applicants with such a card (who are not able to make a co-contribution) propose works that will provide high or very high environment benefit, they can be funded under Category A.
- Community support and involvement
- Whether the community benefit matches / outweighs the private benefit

- What the community benefit is, e.g. improved amenity, reduced pest animal harbour / weed spread, community safety impacts, increased knowledge
- Whether there are likely to be any negative amenity impacts (e.g. noise, smell, safety) to neighbouring properties
- The consequences to the broader community/landscape of inaction.

8. Grant Application Procedure

Step 1 - To apply for an LMIP grant, a short Expression of Interest (EOI) form is available on the LMIP web page of Council's website. After submitting the EOI (via Smarty Grants), a council officer will contact the applicant within 10 working days to discuss the project and usually to arrange a site visit.

Step 2 - If the project appears to be eligible, an application form will be sent to the applicant to provide Council with additional information about the project, such as photos and quotes/ costings.

Step 3 – Applications are assessed monthly. The application will be assessed by Council officers against the LMIP eligibility criteria. The applicant will then be notified of whether their grant application has been successful and of any conditions.

Step 4 – Successful applicants or their contractor can then commence the project works.

Step 5 – At the completion of the project, submission of an acquittal form is required.

All grant administration and assessment processes are housed within the Smarty Grants digital platform and are undertaken in alignment with Council's grant management policy.

9. Project approval, payments and acquittals

Final approval of applications lies with Council officers, and follows Council's governance policies and the LMIP eligibility criteria and conditions.

Payment of the grant money depends on the Landholder Agreement being completed, signed and submitted, with the correct supplementary paperwork and photographs.

Payment is made after the works have been undertaken upon receipt of project invoices*.

*On occasion milestone or staged payments may be agreed to where a project involves the progressive implementation of individual elements of a Land Management Plan or similar.

Works must be completed by 30 May in the same financial year as the application. An online project acquittal will be required to be completed by this date in Smarty Grants, with receipts / invoices and before and after photographs of completed works to also be provided. Projects may be audited at an agreed time after the grant has been acquitted.

10. General conditions

1. Past recipients are eligible to apply for funding, however depending on the number of applications received, priority may be given to new applicants.
2. In general, projects are funded for a maximum of three consecutive years, and this occurs only when a multiple-year approach is required to achieve a good outcome. In exceptional circumstances where more than three years treatment is required to achieve success, and a detailed and approved Land Management Plan (or similar) has been submitted, this condition may be varied.
3. Applicants are eligible to be awarded a maximum of one LMIP grant per financial year.
4. Applicants must acquit the grant by the date stated on the Landholder LMIP Agreement.
5. Applicants must acquit previous grants prior to applying for new LMIP funding, and for multi-year projects must provide a long term plan of works which is reviewed prior to each new year of funding.
6. If other funding sources are being utilised by the landowner to undertake the proposed works (e.g. registered offset credit sites), or there is a land management plan required by a Planning decision, the project is ineligible.
7. However, applicants may apply for LMIP funding to use as a co-contribution for grants offered through agencies such as Melbourne Water.
8. LMIP grant funding will not be approved in instances where a council Compliance Notice is active at the property address.
9. In exceptional circumstances a non-standard grant that exceeds the standard maximum funding may be considered for approval. In such instances, additional information will be required to be submitted and additional governance will be applied to the assessment process. If successful, comprehensive evaluation and reporting will be required.

10. The applicant may be required to repay the grant to Council if the project is not delivered within the specified time schedule, or the completed project differs from the project detailed in the Project Agreement.
11. The use of fire-arms is an ineligible grant activity.
12. Grant funds may not be used to pay a company or contractor who has a personal interest in any property that will benefit from the grant,
13. An inspection /audit of the completed project may be undertaken by a Council officer, at a mutually agreed time.
14. Photographs associated with funded projects may be utilised in Council publications.
15. Data on the invasive species or biodiversity that are targeted via the LMIP grant may be submitted by Council officers to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas.

11. Additional rabbit and fox control conditions and eligibility

Funding for rabbit and fox control is only possible where it is demonstrated that a sustained and well-coordinated rabbit or fox control program will be adopted. This must include multiple integrated control methods.

The group must:

- Include five or more neighbouring properties or cover more than five hectares.
- Demonstrate clear justification that rabbits or foxes are a serious community and environmental problem in this area.
- Have a designated project leader / coordinator of works.