



Manitoba
Habitat
Conservancy

GROW Trust Guidelines

SPRING 2026 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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What's New for 2026

- Corrals have been added as an ineligible activity/expense to receive GROW funding.
- Landscaping projects located on landowner yard sites have been added as an ineligible activity/expense to receive GROW funding.
- Manitoba Habitat Conservancy (MHC) will be initiating a new audit process in the 2026 calendar year for projects funded under the GROW Trust grant programs. For more information about the audit process, see details on page 15.

Manitoba Habitat Conservancy (MHC) is working to embed Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) into our organization through our policies, operations, and programming. We recognize this requires intentional effort, continuous learning, and the active involvement from all members of our community.

We encourage organizations applying for funding from MHC to demonstrate a commitment to IDEA principles and practices. To build on this, we will be reviewing how to best integrate IDEA principles into the Trust Program and the grant application process for implementation in future intakes.

Manitoba Habitat Conservancy

MHC was established in 1986 as a provincial Crown Corporation by the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Act. MHC underwent a significant transformation on February 1, 2021 when it moved out of government to become a charitable organization (CRA charitable registration #126479468 RR 0001). To complete the transformation, Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation was rebranded as Manitoba Habitat Conservancy in the fall of 2023.

While the organization has evolved over the decades, its purpose – conservation, restoration and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat – has remained the same. The mission of Manitoba Habitat Conservancy is to realize enduring conservation benefits through investment in and delivery of initiatives that achieve productive natural landscapes and community well-being.

MHC seeks innovative solutions to conservation challenges that benefit landowners, wildlife, and all Manitobans.

Since its establishment, MHC has increasingly facilitated conservation partnerships and voluntary, farm-friendly conservation initiatives that promote ecosystem health and biodiversity. MHC has built on this experience, as well as the advice of many local, regional and national organizations, in the development of the grant programs for the Trusts.

About the GROW Trust

In March of 2019, Manitoba established the GROW (Growing Outcomes in Watersheds) Trust with a \$52 million endowment to The Winnipeg Foundation. Revenues from the trust are administered by MHC and will be used to support the provincial watersheds-based conservation initiative, GROW.

Eligible GROW delivery groups (Watershed Districts) may apply for funding to support activities that improve watershed health and specific activities listed in the Provincial GROW Guide within their GROW application. Applicants interested in funding to support watershed health should contact their Watershed Planner or Trusts Grant Associate for more information concerning eligibility and establishment criteria.

About the Wetlands GROW Trust

In 2020, Manitoba established the Wetlands GROW Trust with a \$50 million endowment to The Winnipeg Foundation. The Wetlands GROW Trust is primarily intended to support the protection of critical ephemeral/temporary wetlands. Eligible GROW delivery groups may apply for temporary wetlands funding within their GROW Trust application.

This funding focuses primarily on the conservation of existing ephemeral/temporary wetlands that have not been drained or filled, but may be cultivated from time to time. The [Provincial GROW Guide](#) outlines this and other conservation options in more detail. Any applications received will be reviewed against activities established in the Provincial GROW Guide.



Photo by: Lynnea Parker

WHAT IS NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE?

Natural infrastructure is an area or system that is either naturally occurring or naturalized and then intentionally managed to provide multiple benefits for the environment and human-well-being.

WHAT ARE WORKING LANDSCAPES?

Working landscapes are areas where people and significant economic activities co-exist with natural lands and water. Working Landscapes have a higher immediate risk of loss than areas without significant economic activity. Working Landscapes have generally experienced significant loss of natural areas already and the future risk of loss remains significant.

WHAT ARE ECOLOGICAL GOODS AND SERVICES?

Ecological goods and services (EG&S) are the societal benefits that come from healthy ecosystems. EG&S can include market goods produced from ecosystems (ex: commodities, food, and fiber), benefits from ecosystem processes (ex: nutrient cycling, water purifications and carbon storage, etc.) and other values such as improving recreational opportunities.



GROW Trusts Call for Proposals

Spring 2026 Timeline

All Watershed Districts may submit GROW applications and Conservation Trust applications. Watershed Districts are encouraged to focus their proposals within a GROW application. Those districts interested in applying to deliver temporary wetlands conservation activities under the Wetlands GROW Trust may apply for that activity as part of their single GROW application. Contact your Watershed Planner or Trusts Grant Associate for more information regarding temporary wetlands funding.

Watershed Districts may also apply for a maximum of \$600,000 across the six Conservation Trust funding categories listed in the Conservation Trust Guidelines, for activities not eligible under GROW.

LETTER OF INTEREST INTAKE OPENS	SEPT. 8/25
LETTER OF INTEREST INTAKE CLOSES	OCT. 3/25
LETTER OF INTEREST NOTIFICATIONS	OCT. 24/25
PROPOSAL INTAKE OPENS	NOV. 3/25
PROPOSAL INTAKE CLOSES	NOV. 28/25
GRANTING NOTIFICATIONS	APRIL 2026



Application Requirements

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Watershed Districts are the only Eligible applicants to the GROW Trusts.

Applicants are encouraged to seek knowledge from various experts in the field as well as local community leaders, and develop partnerships with other organizations. Organizations are not restricted from partnering multiple times in the same funding cycle.

Grant recipients with existing funded projects that are substantially behind their proposed work plan and deliverables may be restricted from re-applying.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Direct Project Costs

- Materials and Supplies associated with the construction, delivery, or establishment of the project
- Construction Services
- Communications (Examples include advertising, signage, outreach materials, etc)
- Consulting/professional services: includes consultants and legal fees
- Equipment Rental
- Landowner Establishment Costs include all payments to landowners working on their own land, except for annual incentive payments
- Incentive payments: direct payments to landowners to encourage them to take part in projects that are expected to result in a loss of future income-generating potential from the land affected

Delivery Costs

- Salaries and Benefits*
- Travel & Field Costs* If traveling outside of Manitoba, please consult with your Grants Associate
- Administration and Overhead associated with proposal* (board expenses, management costs, rent, phones, computer infrastructure)

**Note: Applicants could choose to capture all delivery expenses in a day rate which is entered in the Salaries and Benefits line*

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

The Trusts are project funders, and it is not the intent of the funds to provide on-going operating, maintenance, or core operating support. The following expenses are ineligible for Trust funding, however, these may be used as match. **For Ineligible Match, see page 9.**

Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Activities primarily focused on festivals and general public events
- Contributions to endowment funds
- Corrals
- Cover crop insurance
- Fence removal
- General repairs or rebuilding of existing projects (may be eligible under specific circumstances)
- Land purchases and easements
- Major capital assets such as buildings
- Major equipment purchases (> \$5000 per item)
- Mapping-only projects that are not integral to the development of a larger Trust funded project
- Organizational fundraising
- Research costs
- Routine brush control of fence lines
- Tenancy agreements/rentals
- Water quality monitoring

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The following activities are ineligible for Trust funding, however, these may be used as match. For **Ineligible Match, see page 9.**

Ineligible activities include, but are not limited to:

- Conferences, lecture series, or conventions
- Corral system projects as they are deemed to be the operating responsibility of the producer.
- Feeding or control of wildlife species
- Fish or wildlife rearing, farming, stocking, or hatcheries projects
- Forage rejuvenation including sod seeding legumes (as per the GROW Guide). Watershed Districts are not eligible to apply to the Conservation Trust for the above-described activity
- Landscaping projects on yard sites, e.g. shelterbelts or hedgerows around a house.
- Law enforcement activities
- Policy promotion and advocacy activities
- Prevention and ongoing control of alien invasive species or wildlife species
- Primary and applied research (see Glossary of Terms, page 16)
- Projects with a primary purpose of providing irrigation services to landowners are generally not eligible for funding from the Trusts. If there are significant EG&S benefits to the project, beyond water storage, a small portion of project costs may be eligible. Justification will need to be submitted to the Trusts for review and approval prior to establishment
- Rearing or rehabilitating wildlife in captivity
- Reduction of point-sources of nutrients and other contaminants: from sewage lagoons, similar waste-water treatment facilities, and water retention ponds. The Trusts focus on supporting landscape-based activities where the primary water quality issue is non-point sources of nutrients and other contaminants affecting surface waters
- Well sealing

The following activities are ineligible for Trust funding and are also ineligible match:

- Any activities that result in habitat, wildlife and/or water degradation or loss
 - Any activities that must be undertaken because of a government order or regulatory requirement (e.g. wetland restoration activities mandated by regulation)
- Construction and maintenance of drainage and other significant infrastructure (drains, machinery crossings, etc.)
- Land operating costs such as property taxes, debt servicing, etc.
 - Using multiple funders (unknown to them) to fund activities at a combined cost that exceeds accepted market rates and/or established landowner cost-shares (this activity is known as stacking. See Glossary of Terms, page 16).

MATCHING FUNDS

See Appendix A, Tips for Calculating Match

The overall objective for the Trusts is to achieve a total match ratio of 2:1 (match: trust funds). Annual incentive payments from the GROW Trust do not require match.

- Matching funds can be cash and/or in-kind goods and services
- Projects with less than a 2:1 match ratio may be considered and ranked accordingly
- No more than 50% of matching funds can be from provincial government sources
- Matching funds for activities that directly relate to the project may have been expended up to one fiscal year prior to the proposed start date, e.g. April 1st – March 31st
- Match funding that has already been applied to a Trust project cannot be applied to another Trust project.
- Funds received from the Conservation Trust cannot be used as match for the GROW Trust

Examples of Cash Matching (costs with a financial transaction paid for by the applicant)

- Project staff time paid for by the applicant
- Goods and services paid for by the applicant
- Donations with a tax receipt

Examples of In-Kind Matching (Non-financial transactions valued at generally accepted market rates and/or financial transactions that are not paid for by the applicant)

- Landowner and community time in project planning and establishment
- Community volunteer time
- Project staff time and goods and services paid for by project partners including landowners
- Goods and services provided for free (e.g. land use where no incentive payment is provided)

If you would like an example in-kind tracking form, please reach out to granting@mbhabitat.ca or your designated Grants Associate.

If you are unsure if your project is eligible or have questions about match, please contact the Trusts Grants Associates at granting@mbhabitat.ca. If you are a returning applicant, please contact your designated Grants Associate.

PROJECT TIMELINES

Groups may submit applications for up to two years for project establishment activities. Projects with Annual Incentive Payments will continue up to an additional 10-years or to the end of the longest running landowner contract, whichever occurs first.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Trust criteria are designed to encourage broad, effective partnerships that increase capacity between partners. Partners may be involved in the planning and/or project establishment. Project applicants are responsible for project deliverables and should retain all relevant project information. Trusts Grants Associates will communicate with the Project applicant. Partnership projects require additional cooperation and communication and Project applicants should budget sufficient time and resources for this. Projects demonstrating interactive partnerships will be ranked higher in the partnership engagement evaluation category. For approved projects a signed letter from the partner(s) that clearly outlines the partner roles and responsibilities may be required as part of the contribution agreement.

PROJECT ESTABLISHMENT AND MONITORING

Project Establishment

Most grants from the GROW Trusts will involve significant activities and expenses at the front end to establish projects on the ground. MHC considers this phase to be the Project Establishment Period.

Examples of project establishment activities include:

- Design and construction of a water retention project
- Design and construction of drain plugs for wetland restoration
- Installation of fences and watering systems for grazing projects
- Purchase of seed, shrubs or trees, whether purchased by the grantee or cooperating landowners
- Establishment of grass, forage, or tree plantings, whether completed by the grantee or cooperating landowners
- For most grants, the establishment would occur within a two-year period.
 - + As part of landowner establishment costs we are accepting Forage Establishment Insurance at MASC approved rates for projects that sign 10-year landowner agreements

Incentive Payments

Additional payments to landowners, often termed 'incentive payments' may also be made, especially when the income generating potential of the land is restricted by the project. This is especially true when projects alter existing land use, e.g. restoration of a drained wetland. Amounts and timing of these additional payments need to be specified in a written agreement with the landowner.

- If the conservation project includes incentive payments for existing natural areas, those lands should be of high environmental value and at a high risk of loss.
- Incentive payments should be made to landowners following the verification of successful project establishment.

GROW funding can include annual incentive payments to landowners for the duration of the project, instead of the incentive payment being made in full during the establishment period of the project. Grantees making annual incentive payments will receive funds for their upcoming annual incentive payment requirements after they submit a Monitoring Report* each year.

Incentive payments specifically requested from the Wetland GROW Trust for temporary wetland conservation are specific to the Wetland GROW Trust and any deviations from the proposal requires approval by MHC.

Restoration of temporary wetlands where the resulting wetland will be classified as a Class III (or higher) wetland as per the Steward and Kantrud Wetland classification system may continue to receive incentive payments for the agreement term length in order to ensure the efficacy of the restoration project. Once the restoration project term length has ended, no future incentive payments would be eligible.

Landowner Agreements

All activities occurring on properties not owned or controlled by the grantee will be supported by written agreements between the grantee and the landowner. Those agreements should include responsibilities of the landowner and the grantee as well as the duration of the agreement and the project area.

Longer term lengths will be prioritized by the Trusts and are encouraged in order to ensure that the intended environmental goods and services are achieved.

Landowners may elect to have incentive payments made to renters of their lands. If so, the agreement must reflect the landowner's decision to direct payments to the renter and the renter's acceptance of the conservation project provisions.

As a demonstration of due diligence, grantees are encouraged to include a question on their landowner application form that requests the landowner disclose current or future partner funders on the same project, and if the project is occurring on areas with existing Conservation Easements

Project Monitoring

Once established, Grantees are responsible to ensure all projects are monitored regularly over the life of the agreement to ensure that they continue to function effectively.

PROJECT REPORTING TIMELINES

PROJECT LENGTH	INTERIM REPORT DUE DATE	FINAL REPORT DUE DATE	ADDITIONAL REPORTS REQUIRED
One-Year Projects	N/A	April 30th, 2027	Monitoring Report*
Two-Year Projects	April 30th, 2027	April 30th, 2028	Monitoring Report*

**Annual monitoring reports are required for all projects with associated landowner contracts (those receiving and not receiving annual incentive payments) and are due April 30th.*

PROJECT AMENDMENT REQUESTS

A project amendment form can be requested from your Grants Associate who will assign the form to you in the Online Grant Portal.

Possible modifications which may require an amendment include, but are not limited to:

- Project extensions; or
- Changes to the Terms of the Agreement; or
- Changes to project activities and/or outputs (as described in the approved Application , including Output Table and Workplan); or
- Any budget category reallocations that exceed 10%, or \$35,000, in or out of a budget category.

All project amendments requests will be subject to review and approval by MHC.

If you are considering any changes to your project, please contact your Grants Associate to determine whether a Project Amendment Request is necessary.

Project Amendment Requests can be received at any time, but no later than 60 days prior to the expiration of the project term (i.e., received by the end of January for a project term ending March 31st).

Application Process

The Trust Funds use a two-stage application process. All applications and reporting will be completed entirely through the online Grant Management System.

- **Stage 1: Letter of Interest**
- **Stage 2: Project Application**

STAGE 1: Open call for Letters of Interest (LOI), using the online form. LOIs will be screened to ensure proposed projects meet the Trusts criteria.

In the event that a Trust category is significantly oversubscribed, the number of LOIs that may proceed to a full application may be restricted.

STAGE 2: If the LOI is accepted, applicants will be invited to apply for project funding. The LOI invitation to submit a full application does not imply a guarantee of funding.

Review Process

Applications will undergo a multi-tier review process:

- 1.** Applications will be screened to determine eligibility and suitability
- 2.** Applications will be forwarded to a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for technical review, evaluation and ranking. Reviewers have diversified expertise in wildlife, biodiversity, soil and water conservation, and are not employed by organizations eligible for Trust funding

Application review criteria include:

- Potential conservation benefit
- Alignment with Trust outcomes
- Technical feasibility
- Deliverables and delivery cost efficiency (cost/benefit)
- Extent of co-benefits
- Partnership engagement and matching funds
- Project sustainability
- Organizational capacity and delivery history
- Evidence to support project activities

- 3.** Recommendations from the TAC will be forwarded to MHC
- 4.** MHC makes a final determination of successful applications and funding levels, based on TAC rankings, funds available and Trust priorities. MHC's decision is final
- 5.** All applicants will be notified of decisions. With successful applicants proceeding to signing of a Contribution Agreement.

While not a part of the current review process, MHC encourages organizations applying for Trust funding to demonstrate a commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) principles and practices. We will be reviewing how to best integrate IDEA principles into the Trust grant application process for implementation in the future.

APPLICATION PROCESS FEEDBACK

MHC seeks your input to help develop the best possible process for the Trusts. A brief anonymous online survey regarding the grant application process will be distributed to applicants as part of the grant application process.

For any questions regarding the Trusts please contact granting@mbhabitat.ca or your designated Grants Associate.

Appendix A – Tips for Calculating Match

- Applicants can go back one fiscal year (April 1st – March 31st) from project start date for match (meeting and planning, feasibility, etc.)
- Utilize other non-MHC Trust funded grants associated with your project
- Include time from partners towards the project, including attending meetings, completing project work, etc.
- Include time from community volunteers or landowners completing project work on their land
- Calculate the time at the cost it would take to replace it (e.g. What would it cost if you had to hire a contractor to do the work?)
- Advisory Committee or Board member time is eligible. In the absence of any other calculated rate \$250/day may be used to estimate expenditures.

Note that for Audit purposes, the Trusts require you keep a record for both cash and in-kind match in as careful a manner as you would for Trust expenditures.

If you would like an example in-kind tracking form, please reach out to granting@mbhabitat.ca or your designated Grants Associate.



Appendix B – Calculating the Value of In-Kind Land

If land of a third party is being impacted by a project and incentive payments are not being offered, the value may be used as an in-kind contribution.

- Match should be equivalent to the opportunity cost, in this case the loss of agricultural income that occurs because of the project
 - + E.g. If land that is currently cultivated is going to be dedicated to a wetland restoration/ water retention project, then the loss of agricultural use is essentially 100%
 - + If that same property has perennial cover established, but the landowner can hay or graze, then the loss of agricultural opportunity is partial, and the in-kind calculation should reflect this (e.g. 30–60% of the agricultural value of the land)
 - + If non-arable land is impacted by a conservation project, then the impact on agricultural production is expected to be very small (10% or less)
- The area of land that is counted as match should be the footprint of the project plus a reasonable buffer zone. Tree-planting projects may include a buffer zone up to three times the planting area. Wetland and water retention projects may define a footprint up to 1.5 times the water area. For grassland projects, the footprint is the area of impact
- Land operating costs such as property taxes, debt servicing, etc. are not eligible
- Lands owned by conservation organizations and managed for conservation purposes may not be used in this manner to develop in-kind contributions to grant proposals

Match being claimed for forgone incentive payments on eligible activities must be done at rates disclosed and approved at the application stage.

Rates should be calculated using the same approach as if it was a Trust funded activity.

Glossary of Terms

AUDIT: All approved projects may be subject to an audit, while it is in progress or after it is completed. The Primary objective of a project audit is to verify reporting and ensure adherence to Contribution Agreement conditions. All recipients must keep a Books of Account for a period of 7 years after completion of the project, and permit MHC of its agent access to such Books of Account to verify the recipient's compliance with the Contribution Agreement.

CARBON SEQUESTRATION: a process that removes carbon from the atmosphere and stores it in the natural environment.

CONSERVED: where existing natural infrastructure is protected/ unchanged through an agreement.

ECOLOGICAL GOODS AND SERVICES: the positive conservation benefits that come from healthy ecosystems, including clean water and air and enhanced biodiversity. Ecological goods & services include market goods produced from ecosystems (commodities, food and fiber), improved wildlife habitat, benefits from ecosystem processes, including water purification or carbon storage and other values such as improving recreational opportunities. Ecological Goods and Services are sometimes referred to as EG&S.

ENHANCED: an activity that improves existing natural infrastructure in terms of of ecological function. i.e., a landowner implementing a new grazing system on an existing grassland.

FISH HABITAT "ABOVE THE WATERLINE": riverbank and lake shoreline enhancements that significantly contribute to fish habitat restoration. An example would be establishing bank vegetation to promote bank stability, decrease silt accumulation, reduce the degree to which rocks, boulders, gravel, etc. are embedded in silt and sand (embeddedness) and provide shade, and nutrients and insects for food.

NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE: natural infrastructure is an area or system that is either naturally occurring or naturalized and then intentionally managed to provide multiple benefits for the environment and human-wellbeing. (<https://www.iisd.org/articles/multiple-benefits-natural-infrastructure>)

OBJECTIVES: describe the specific, measurable ways a project will address the conservation issue identified. Objectives should be S.M.A.R.T. – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

OUTPUTS: result from activities that you carry out and are an indication of project effort. Outputs are measurable and can be activities that you do, people you are trying to reach, products or services you provide, e.g. in a wetland restoration the outputs are the number of acres of restored wetland, the water storage capacity (volume), wildlife benefits, etc.

OUTCOMES: are the estimated Ecological Goods & Service benefits you wish to achieve or changes or benefits that result from project activities. Outcomes measure how people and the environment are impacted by your project, e.g. in the above example of a wetland restoration the outcomes are the volume of water actually held back in a runoff event, the quantity of nutrients sequestered (phosphorus, etc.), and the amount of carbon sequestered.

PRIMARY AND APPLIED RESEARCH: research projects, including feasibility studies of new land and water conservation concepts, are not eligible for Trust funding, though these activities may be used for matching fund purposes if the research activity relates to the project proposal.

RESTORED: an activity that restores natural infrastructure that no longer exists to a semblance of its original condition. i.e., taking a drained wetland and plugging the drain.

RIPARIAN ZONES: the transition zones that are found along streams, rivers, lake shores and wetlands. These areas support unique wildlife and plant communities. Healthy riparian areas have many important functions in our watersheds (Manitoba Climate and Green Plan).

STACKING: multiple funders (typically unbeknownst to them) fund activities at a combined cost that exceeds accepted market rates and/or the established landowner cost-shares

Examples:

1. A Trust funded project is approved for incentive payments at a specific rate and later funding from an additional funder is added to increase the incentive payment above the specific rate.
2. A Trust funded project is approved with a landowner cost-share, and later funding from an additional funder is added to substitute landowner cost-share.

WORKING LANDSCAPES: areas where people and significant economic activities co-exist with natural lands and water. Working Landscapes have a higher immediate risk of loss than areas without significant economic activity. Working Landscapes have generally experienced significant loss of natural areas already and the future risk of loss remains significant.





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