PROGRAM GUIDES

SPECIES AT RISK FARM INCENTIVE PROGRAM

# HABITAT STRUCTURES AND ENHANCEMENTS

Generated on November 19, 2026

**Not Accepting Applications**

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# PROGRAM AND CONTACT INFORMATION


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View Program Online →

# PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Purchase, construction and installation of species-specific habitat structures and enhancements to natural habitat for specific Species at Risk.

# INTAKE DATES

| INTAKE | INTAKE DATES | ELIGIBLE PROJECT START DATE (INVOICE DATE) | ELIGIBLE PROJECT COMPLETION DATE | CLAIM DEADLINE | PREVIOUS INTAKE GUIDE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | April 2, 2024 9:00 am - May 2, 2024 5:00 pm | April 1, 2024 | December 15, 2024 | December 15, 2024 | View |
| 2 | May 22, 2025 9:00 am ET - August 15, 2025 6:00 pm ET | April 1, 2025 | December 15, 2025 | December 15, 2025 | |

All project costs must be incurred, invoiced, and paid for by the approved farm business within the eligible project start and completion dates for the application intake a project is approved in. Costs incurred, invoiced and/or paid for outside of these dates will not be eligible for cost-share.

# COST SHARE SUMMARY

**Indirect Benefits to SAR** – up to $15,000;
**Direct Benefits to SAR** – up to $20,000

# PROGRAM DETAILS

## Who is Eligible to Apply?

To be eligible for SARFIP, an applicant must meet the following three criteria:

1. Be actively farming or own actively farmed land in Ontario as demonstrated by:

- A valid **Farm Business Registration Number (FBRN)** *For information on registering a farm business and/or a religious exemption, visit Overview (agricorp.com).*

OR

- A Religious Exemption Letter provided by the OMAFRA Appeal Tribunal (provide with application submission)

OR

- A Cultural Exemption Letter provided by the First Nations Agriculture & Finance Ontario to First Nations farmers, verifying the farm business operates in a First Nations community (include with application submission)

OR

- Proposed project is located on 25 acres of land or more, assessed as 'Farm', as indicated by the most current Municipal Property Assessment Notice or Municipal Tax Bill, or supported by a Farm Property Tax Class Assessment (provide with application submission)

OR

- An income exemption from the Farm Property Class Tax Rate Program (i.e., Start-up farm businesses, Business structure change, Not a normal production year, Age/Illness/Death of a spouse) (provide with application submission).

2. Have a completed **Environmental Farm Plan (4th Edition)** *Information on completing an EFP is available on the OSCIA website, visit: https://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/canada-ontario-environmental-farm-plan/.* and Action Plan verified complete by OSCIA

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## Eligible Activities and Costs

Purchase, construction and installation of species-specific habitat structures and enhancements to natural habitat for specific SAR. These include, but are not limited to:

- Bat houses and/or bat roosts
- Specialized nest boxes for SAR birds only (e.g. barn owl, barn swallow, prothonotary warbler, short-eared owl)
- Winter bird roosts
- Turtle sunning platforms
- Pollinator nesting sites to support pollinators and plant species at risk

- Snake hibernacula (overwintering sites)
- Turtle nesting sites
- Pollinator planting projects using native plant species
- In-stream structures to enhance survival of fish or mussels (including in-stream brush bundles). *Copies of required permits must be submitted to OSCIA with the project claim for this activity.*

  More information and further resources on these and other habitat structures can be found on the SARFIP page of the OSCIA website.

  Some projects may require consultation with an MNRF partnership specialist, a Department of Fisheries (DFO) biologist, a Conservation Authority, biologist, or other qualified third party.

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## Ineligible Activities and Costs

Ineligible activities and costs include:

- Costs related to bird houses or other habitat that does not benefit a Species at Risk (i.e. eastern blue bird boxes)
- Tree planting for reforestation, windbreaks and buffer strips (see BMP 2.2: Native Tree Planting)
- Costs for non-native or invasive plantings

**Other Ineligible Costs and Activities**

- Normal operating costs associated with conducting or expanding a business's current operations
- Any cost that is eligible for a rebate, credit, or refund (e.g., a refundable portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax)
- Gifts and incentives
- Costs related to activities that directly influence or lobby any level of government
- Costs of basic research, ongoing activities, normal commercial expansion costs, and annual services fees of any type

- Lease of land, buildings, and facilities, or new building construction
- Costs of training and skills development that fulfill any academic requirements towards completion of a professional certificate, diploma, or degree program
- Costs of sponsorship for conferences and learning events or initiatives
- Costs of travel, hospitality, meals, and/or accommodations
- Permits and approvals
- Purchase or sale of land, buildings or facilities, and associated taxes or fees (e.g., land transfer tax)
- Mentoring or coaching services that do not support the development of a written plan
- Multi-use items (e.g., items that can reach beyond the scope of the project such as computers, printers, hand or power tools and attachments, etc.)
- Opportunity costs
- Irrigation systems
- Projects completed via the Drainage Act

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## What You Need to Know About In-Kind Contributions

Reasonable hours of labour invested by the applicant, his/her dependents, and business partner(s) may be claimed as in-kind contributions for cost-share funding. Eligible in-kind contributions will be considered equivalent to cash payments for purchased goods and services. As such, the cost-share level and maximum funding level for the project category apply to eligible in-kind contributions.

Eligible in-kind contributions are invested in the project in the form of unpaid labour and/or use of farm business equipment and may be claimed as follows:

- The maximum eligible labour rate is $25 per hour. OSCIA will make a final determination on what a reasonable number of hours claimed is based on the project and the nature of the work

performed.

- The maximum eligible in-kind equipment rate for a tractor and implement is $75 per hour of operation. Applicable in-kind operator charges may be claimed along with the in-kind equipment rate, at up to the accepted maximum hourly labour rate.
- Applicants can claim up to $7,000 in eligible in-kind contributions for all project categories except Invasive Plant Species Control, and Biodiversity Enhancement Plan.
- Applicants can claim up to $10,000 in eligible in-kind contributions for the Invasive Plant Species Control project category.
- Applicants cannot claim in-kind contributions for the Biodiversity Enhancement Plan project category. In-kind contributions are not eligible for this category.

Examples of **eligible** in-kind contributions:

- Applicant's child planting trees
- Applicant stringing wire for cross fencing project
- Applicant's tractor used for auguring post holes
- Applicant/business partner operating tractor

Examples of **ineligible** in-kind contributions:

- Staff or employee time
- Time invested for education (including the Environmental Farm Plan workshop), project planning, supervision, or administration
- On-farm materials used for project (e.g. on-farm posts, electric wire purchased outside of program year, wood for nesting boxes, trees, etc.)
- Equipment costs for use of hand power tools

If a business plans to claim in-kind contributions, accurate estimates must be reflected in the total project cost submitted with the SARFIP Application.

Claims for in-kind contributions must be supported by an In-Kind Claim Declaration Form, which details specific hours worked, who performed the work, dates the work was performed, and the hourly rate(s) charged.

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## How Much Cost-Share Funding Is Available?

**Habitat Structures and Enhancements** has a maximum cost-share amount per project of **$20,000**

SARFIP has two levels of funding:

**Indirect Benefits to SAR – 45% of eligible project costs, up to $15,000**
Farmers wishing to implement an eligible BMP activity on their farm property can access 45% of eligible project costs, up to a maximum cost-share payment of $15,000 per project.

OR

**Direct Benefits to SAR – 60% of eligible project costs, up to $20,000**
Do you have SAR on or nearby your property? Does your project focus on the specific conservation needs of a SAR (e.g. installing bat boxes, creating nesting sites for SAR turtles)? You could be eligible for 60% of eligible project costs, up to a maximum cost-share payment of $20,000 per project. To be considered, you must provide an Ontario Habitat Biodiversity Assessment Tool (HBAT) output with your application. The output provided (a PDF report called an Ontario Habitat and Biodiversity Assessment Report) must be completed for land parcel(s) which include the project location of the proposed SARFIP project. At least one Stewardship Opportunity (SO) listed in the report must logically align with the proposed SARFIP project for the project to be considered for 60% cost share.

> **Bonus: SAR Watch 15%**
> As a bonus for projects directly impacting SAR, farmers can choose to participate in SAR Watch, a monitoring program to measure the impact of SARFIP projects on-the-ground for SAR. A property assessment by a technical specialist to evaluate SAR presence and project impact is completed for participating farms and the specific information gathered will be shared with government funding partners. Participating in SAR Watch provides an additional +15% to your merit-based (60%) cost-share, up to a maximum cost-share payment of $20,000 per project.

Decisions on which cost-share level applies to submitted applications will be made by OSCIA following a thorough review of the information submitted by the applicant. If you believe your project directly benefits SAR, and you would like to be considered for the higher cost-share level, it is your responsibility to provide all the required information to OSCIA with the application.

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## Key Guidelines

- If the applicant goes ahead with the project before receiving final approval from OSCIA, they do so at the risk of forfeiting the cost-share if all terms and conditions are not satisfied.
- All applicable authorizations, permits and approvals are the responsibility of the applicant.
- Costs, including in-kind costs, for native species of cover or nurse crops to support a planting project may be eligible. Non-native species are not eligible.
- Some BMP projects, including fencing and tree planting, have financial caps that dictate the amount of cost-share that can be received for these activities. If applicable, these are noted in the Eligible Activities and Costs section above.
- OSCIA issues payments after projects have been completed and the required documentation is received. This means projects must be paid for in full by the applicant prior to cost-share being issued.
- When determining the total estimated cost of the project, obtain quotes and be accurate regarding figures for all applicable materials, services, equipment and in-kind contributions. Please be very clear in your cost descriptions. Gross over-estimates lead to program dollars being unnecessarily allocated and can limit opportunities for other applicants.

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## What Do I Need to Apply?

Applications are only accepted during application intakes, which can be found above. Be sure to carefully review the program guide in its entirety – only eligible and complete applications will be considered. Make sure the following is included with the application submission:

- Certificate of completion for a 4$^{th}$ Edition Environmental Farm Plan
- Detailed site sketch based on a satellite image (e.g., using Google Maps or AgMaps) of the project location. The site sketch must show the precise location (address or GPS coordinates) and dimensions of the project.

  **Hand drawn sketches will not be accepted** – if you need help using GoogleMaps or AgMaps,

please contact your local OSCIA Client Services Staff for assistance, click here for contact information.

- Applicants who wish to be considered for 60% cost-share (“Direct Benefits to SAR” cost-share) must provide an Ontario Habitat Biodiversity Assessment Tool (HBAT) output with their application. The output provided (a PDF report called an Ontario Habitat and Biodiversity Assessment Report) must be completed for land parcel(s) which include the project location of the proposed SARFIP project. At least one Stewardship Opportunity (SO) listed in the report must logically align with the proposed SARFIP project for the project to be considered for 60% cost share.

  The Ontario HBAT website is public and any applicant or advisor can create an account, click through the tool, and generate a PDF report which can be downloaded, and then uploaded with the SARFIP application submission.

  Providing an HBAT output also allows you the option to be considered for participation in SAR Watch (see details about SAR Watch under How Much Cost-Share Funding Is Available?).

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## Documentation Required with the Application

Some projects may require consultation with an MNRF partnership specialist, a Department of Fisheries (DFO) biologist, a Conservation Authority, biologist, or other qualified third party.

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## How Do I Submit My Application?

Applications are only accepted during the application intake dates noted above.

The Enrolment and Application Form, and all required documentation can be submitted electronically through the OSCIA Portal:
If the intake is not currently accepting applications, you may still visit osciaportal.org to create a user account and be ready for upcoming opportunities.

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## Limits of the Cost-Share Funding

1. SARFIP cost-share is available to new projects initiated on or after April 1, 2025. No cost-share will be offered for project invoices issued before this date. To receive cost-share, all projects must be complete and operational and the complete SARFIP Claim Form received in the OSCIA Guelph office by December 15, 2025. OSCIA reserves the right to perform a project inspection at a mutually agreeable time.

2. SARFIP cost-share may be utilized by eligible applicants for approved Best Management Practice projects on farm properties owned, rented, leased or otherwise under their control.

3. Cost-share opportunities offered through SARFIP are designed to encourage the adoption of new BMPs to reduce environmental risks identified in the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Action Plan and to enhance habitat for species at risk.

4. Participation in SARFIP over previous years by the farm business does not affect the allowable contribution available for the 2025-2026 program year.

5. All invoices for the approved project must comply with the eligible invoice dates. OSCIA cannot issue cost-share payments for incomplete projects (i.e. partially complete).

6. Materials or products produced on farm (e.g. trees or fence posts) or purchased outside the eligible invoice dates cannot be cost-shared.

7. Stacking of SARFIP contributions towards the same project by two or more farm businesses is not permissible.

8. Applicants are entirely responsible for securing all necessary approvals and permits for the proposed project before starting construction, and complying with all applicable municipal bylaws and provincial or federal regulations. OSCIA will require copies of permits obtained for some projects before issuing program funding.

9. Only invoices from vendors or service providers directly engaged in the business reflected in the item or service purchased in accordance with the approved SARFIP Application will be accepted with the project claim.

10. All invoices that support materials or services provided to a project must originate with companies or individuals not in any way associated through ownership with the farm business making the project claim. All eligible invoices and **proof of payment** must match the legal farm business name identified on the Enrolment Form.

11. Across all BMP categories, costs not specifically required for the execution of a project are not eligible.

12. OSCIA reserves the right to require additional documentation and ultimately accept or reject submitted project invoices and proof of payment for cost-share consideration.

13. A single project may receive cost-share from one BMP category only. Multiple categories cannot be accessed for a single activity in efforts to maximize SARFIP contributions (i.e. cost-share will only be applied once to a project cost item).

14. Eligible projects must be new to the farm business, unless otherwise indicated in the project category description.

15. The farm business shall ensure that the total cost-share assistance from all sources, including other government or non-government programs, for eligible expenses shall not exceed 100 percent of project costs. The farm business is required to confirm at the time the claim is submitted all other sources of funding for eligible project expenses.

16. Across all BMP categories, HST (Harmonized Sales Tax) is not eligible.

17. Across all BMP categories, maintenance, extended warranties, hand, and power tools and attachments are not eligible for cost-share.

18. OSCIA will not accept additional SARFIP applications once the total SARFIP funding available for the program year has been committed. The funds will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

19. All applicable information on the Enrolment Form and the SARFIP Application Form must be complete before it is submitted to OSCIA Guelph. If the OSCIA Guelph office considers an Enrolment or SARFIP Application Form to be incomplete, the form will promptly be returned in its entirety to the applicant to obtain the missing information. Only proposed projects detailed on SARFIP Applications deemed to be complete by the OSCIA Guelph office will be considered for cost-share.

20. If the applicant goes ahead with the project prior to receiving final approval to proceed from the OSCIA Guelph office, they do so at the risk of forfeiting the cost-share if all terms and conditions are not satisfied.

21. Information presented is the best available at the time of printing. Check with OSCIA for applicable updates. Material is subject to change without notice as the cost-share program evolves.

22. If a proposed project receives a SARFIP allocation, the same project is not eligible for other funding programs delivered by OSCIA. Other cost-share programs may be available from local Conservation Authorities, Ducks Unlimited Canada and other stewardship organizations. Farm businesses are encouraged to seek out these opportunities.

23. SARFIP cost-share allocation is based on the eligible project costs outlined on the approved SARFIP Application Form. Accurate estimates must be reflected in the total project cost submitted on the SARFIP Application Form. If final project costs exceed the original estimate, there is absolutely no obligation by OSCIA to extend cost-share beyond the original allocation.

24. Site preparation costs that exceed 10-times the cost of planting/seeding are not eligible.

25. An entity is considered Arm's Length if they are not related, not affiliated persons or otherwise controlled by another member or members. Refer to Section 251 of the Income Tax Act (Canada) for the detailed statutory provision for determining arm's length relationships. If you have any questions about whether a supplier meets this requirement, please contact: 1-800-265-9751.

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## How Do I Submit a Claim?

If an application is approved for a cost-share allocation, written confirmation will be provided from OSCIA by email (or by post if no email address is provided). This approval letter will confirm:

- If any additional information must be provided (e.g., in the case of a conditional approval)
- Any costs from the application that were deemed ineligible
- Eligible invoice dates and project completion and claim submission deadlines
- What is needed to provide with the claim submission
- Links to the necessary documents (e.g., Claim Form, Electronic Funds Transfer Form, etc.)
- Information on how to submit the claim

Each project must be ***complete*, and fully paid for before a claim is submitted.*** As part of an eligible project, every claimed cost must be supported by an invoice in the name of the applicant farm business. All costs being claimed must be paid for by the applicant farm business. Proof of

payment must verify who paid, who received payment, the amount of payment, and the date of payment. Proof of payment may be any one of the following: *(Note: This section was updated May 14, 2025)*

- Copy of front and back of a cancelled cheque
- Electronic image of a processed cheque
- E-Transfer confirmation, which includes the word ‘Deposited’ or ‘Autodeposited’
- Bill Payment confirmation from a banking institution
- Statement from banking institution indicating to whom the processed cheque was written, or electronic payment made, and for what amount
- Credit card or debit card receipt clearly identifying the amount and to whom the payment was made. Credit card or debit card numbers and other information, including costs that are unrelated to the project, should be blacked out.

**Cash payments for project costs are strongly discouraged,** as they may not meet requirements for proof of payment. If proof of payment by the applicant is not provided, OSCIA cannot support the cost. OSCIA may request any additional information from the applicant that OSCIA deems necessary (e.g., copies of any audit reports, plans or permits obtained by the applicant in conducting the project) to support their claim. Cost-share payments are made by electronic funds transfer (EFT) in the name of the legal farm business. All cost-share funding is considered income to the farm business for tax purposes. OSCIA will issue a tax form (AGR-1) and report the amount paid to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA); this is why an applicant’s Social Insurance Number (SIN) is collected if the applicant does not have a CRA Business Number.

** Tree planting projects that will not be completed until spring 2026 require a Tree Service Agreement, signed by the applicant and the Planting Delivery Agent (e.g. Conservation Authority).*

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