

Healthy Habitats Program Guidelines

These guidelines are to assist landholders with properties zoned Rural, Special Rural, Special Residential, Farmlet or Hills Landscape Protection to apply for funding through the Healthy Habitats program.

The Healthy Habitats program supports landholders with undertaking projects that enhance and protect natural areas on private land and helps the Shire to meet its biodiversity and conservation targets.

To participate in the program, private land needs to be more than 1 hectare in size and located within the Shire of Murray. Project proposals must address one or more of the following outcomes and ensure that they comply with all requirements outlined in these guidelines. Participating landholders will be prioritised based on the number of desired outcomes they will meet.

Outcomes:

- Protects threatened flora and fauna species
- Protects natural areas and significant habitat
- Achieves a net gain of biodiversity
- Increases urban canopy
- Rehabilitates natural areas on private land
- Controls the spread of weeds and pest animals
- Protects existing nesting hollows or creates more nesting opportunities
- Enhances ecological connectivity
- Improves vegetation condition and species diversity
- Protects and enhances riparian vegetation, natural waterways and wetlands
- Protects and restores a Threatened or Priority Ecological Community and/or their associated buffers

If you are approved to participate in the program a member of the Shire of Murray Environmental team will arrange a site visit with you to your property to discuss your project ideas and how you can deliver key outcomes with the available funding.

Program objective

To increase, enhance or protect native vegetation, wetlands, threatened ecological communities and wildlife habitat on private property, which leads to an increase in local biodiversity and canopy cover.

Minimum and maximum funding amounts

Applications for grant funding from a minimum of \$100 up to a maximum of \$1,000 are sought. Funding is only to be spent on approved materials. Funding in most circumstances cannot be spent on labour as it is expected that this will be the landowner's in-kind contribution to the project. Where labour needs to be contracted, due to the landowner not having the required skills to undertake the work, contractor costs from a registered business can be claimed.

For example, the Shire of Murray can fund the purchase of seedlings, but the landowner will be responsible for the planting labour. The purchase and installation of a habitat box can be claimed where a qualified tree climber is needed to install.

Grant application and funding process

This year's Healthy Habitats program is open all year round. Applications can be via the Shire website. If the applicant meets one or more of the criteria, then they are eligible for the program. The grants are awarded on a first come first serve basis until all funding is exhausted for the year (maximum of 10 participants per financial year if they all request \$1000). Generally, projects must be completed in less than 12 months (see table below). If you have a project proposal which may require more than 12 months, this can be discussed at the assessment stage.

How will funding be paid?

Via rebate – Landowner pays for materials upfront and then receives rebate of up to \$1000 from the Shire after completion of project once receipts are presented. Receipts must be provided to the Shire to receive the rebate. The Manager of Planning and Sustainability has the authority to give approval following the evaluation process and to release the funds.

Who can apply?

The Healthy Habitats program is open to Rural, Special Rural and Rural Residential private landholders.

Activities eligible for funding:

- Fencing and access control
- Weed and animal pest control
- Revegetation of degraded areas
- Revegetation to create linkages
- Infill revegetation of remnant bushland
- Installation of habitat boxes/tubes (where appropriate)

Activities not eligible for funding:

- Activities that have already been undertaken (retrospective funding)
- Activities that involve the planting of non-native species
- Activities that involve the planting of species for agroforestry purposes
- Activities that may potentially impact on any Matter of National Environmental Significance.
- Activities that are solely for the purpose of beautifying or improving amenity/aesthetics
- Activities that are considered the statutory responsibility of private land managers (e.g. standard boundary fencing or planting to meet an approval condition).

Assessment Criteria

All project applications will be assessed however submission of an application does not guarantee the project will be funded. Applications will be reviewed by the Shire's Environmental team and they will assess the information provided in the application against the program's intended outcomes plus the following criteria:

- Extent to which the project protects or improves the environment/natural asset
- Extent to which the project addresses threats to natural asset
- Ecological viability or long-term sustainability of the project area/site
- Value for money
- Applicant's ongoing commitment
- Applicant's capacity to deliver the project including monitoring and reporting responsibilities

Once an application is approved, the Shire's Environmental team will get in touch to organise a site visit to undertake a Property Assessment. Following this on-site assessment the Shire will provide the landowner with a Property Report detailing actions that could be undertaken to achieve the proposed project's intention.

Applying for funding

Once a landowner has received their Property Report from the Shire, they have the option to submit a Funding Application to receive supplementary funding from the Shire to a maximum of \$1,000. The application form is to be filled out in its entirety and will be assessed by the Shire's Environment team. Successful applicants will be contacted via email. The 12-month period to complete works will begin from the date the landowner is informed their funding application was successful (unless other arrangements have been made with the Shire).

Consultation and approvals

When undertaking on-ground works, approvals may be required to undertake certain activities. Please establish if your project requires any approvals before applying for funding. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that any approvals and/or permit are identified and have been sought before undertaking on-ground works. These approvals can include:

- Aboriginal sites and Heritage place search - [Aboriginal Heritage Approvals](#)
- Dial before you dig – [Home | Before You Dig Australia \(BYDA\)](#)
- Permit to interfere with the bed and banks along a watercourse - [Form 3P guide: Application to interfere with bed and banks | Western Australian Government](#)

Project monitoring and reporting

Monitoring and reporting are a requirement of all projects to assess performance and gather information that can make future projects more effective. Applicants must provide an acquittal report upon completion of their projects to receive the funding rebate. Acquittal reports are to be sent via email to mailbag@murray.wa.gov.au and include:

- Photos of the project area
- Successes and challenges throughout the year
- Copies of receipts of expenditure
- Bank details for deposit of approved funds

An acquittal report template will be provided by the Shire. The report will record project outcomes, evidence of works, learnings and feedback to the Shire. Included will be a record of expenditure for the project and must be signed by the grant recipient (or an authorised representative) confirming that the details reported are correct. The report is to be completed

once all on-ground works have been completed. A final site inspection may be undertaken by the Shire.

Funding will be paid to landowner following the completion of works, submission the acquittal report and all relevant receipts are provided to the Shire.

Minimum Standards

Fencing

- Of a sufficient standard to exclude stock and or animal pest/s from the natural area
- Permanent. Temporary fencing not eligible.
- Wildlife friendly – allowing movement of native animals into and out of natural areas. Barbed wires not allowed.
- Can include upgrades of existing fencing, where the upgrade will result in the improvement of environmental values (for example, installation of kangaroo gates, addition of rabbit-proof aprons).

Revegetation

- Site preparation, such as ripping, should be undertaken when the site is dry.
- Weeds must be managed before planting takes place and effectively controlled up until planting commences.
- All seedlings must be locally indigenous to the area and chosen from the Shire of Murray - Trees and Shrubs species, to suit soil type and local conditions
- Composition of revegetation is to be one third trees and two thirds' shrubs
- Minimum planting density of 1,000 stems per hectare (If infill planting, density can be reduced)

Site Maintenance

- Revegetation sites must be fenced to exclude stock
- Pest animals and weeds must be controlled within the project area