



# WILDFIRE MITIGATION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

## PROGRAM GUIDELINES

### LAC LA BICHE COUNTY



Lac La Biche County  
welcoming by nature.

- For additional questions, contact John Kokotilo, Regional Fire Chief, at 780-623-6820 or by email at [john.kokotilo@laclabichecounty.com](mailto:john.kokotilo@laclabichecounty.com)

#### 1. Overall Program Objective

The Wildfire Mitigation Incentive Program provides funding to property owners in Lac La Biche County to incentivize and enable them to complete projects which reduce wildfire risk and threat on their properties.

Property owners will be eligible to apply for up to \$2,500 to cover project costs, up to a maximum of 50% of total costs.

This program is part of a multi-faceted approach to *FireSmart* the County has adopted, and complements its existing *FireSmart* programming.

#### 2. Program Structure

1. Property owners will first need to undertake a *FireSmart* home assessment, or already have an assessment completed in 2022 or later. *FireSmart* home assessments are available through the County's Protective Services Department.
2. The property owner will be provided with a copy of the completed assessment.
3. The property owner may then choose to apply for funding under the program.
4. The applicant will be required to apply using the prescribed forms and provide the required attachments.
5. Applications will be evaluated by County Administration, led by the Protective Services Department.
6. Applications which meet the eligibility requirements, and which are projected to create a meaningful improvement to their property's *FireSmart* Assessment, may receive funding.
7. Upon approval, the property owners will enter into a funding agreement with the County.
8. The property owner will undertake their *FireSmart* improvements.
9. The property owner will submit photos and receipts for the work.
10. The County will review the final reporting and issue the funding.

#### 3. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants must meet the following criteria:

- The applicant must be a property owner in Lac La Biche County (this includes neighboring First Nations and Metis Settlements). Tenants or other residents of the property may assist with the preparation of an application, but the application must be signed off by the property owner, and the property owner will assume responsibility for the project.
- Property owners will normally only be approved for one application, even if they own multiple properties. Depending on program uptake and predicted disbursement of funds, Administration may consider more than one application. This will be announced if this is offered.

#### 4. Eligible Properties

Eligible properties must meet the following criteria:

- The property must be at risk of wildfire as determined by the County Protective Services Department's *FireSmart* home assessment.
- The property must have had a *FireSmart* home assessment in 2022. The assessment must be completed prior to the application being submitted.
- Vacant land is **not eligible**.

#### 5. Eligible Projects

Eligible Projects must meet the following criteria:

- The project must take place at a property in Lac La Biche County or neighbouring Metis Settlement and First Nation Reserves.
- The project must reduce the overall wildfire risk and/or threat to the property upon completion.
- The project must physically change some element of the property to reduce the overall wildfire hazard (i.e., vegetation management, implementing *FireSmart* practices, removing hazardous risks, altering the landscape, rearranging/relocating objects or structures).
- The project must be relevant to the *FireSmart* guidelines and practices.
- The project should be incremental; projects which consist of routine work that would be completed regardless of funding will **not** normally be accepted.
- Projects which are part of a larger project that was planned or initiated prior to the release of the program will **not** normally be accepted.

#### 6. Eligible Expenses

The project's expenses must be incurred after finalization of the funding agreement. Any expenses incurred prior to the finalization will not be eligible. Eligible expenses must be directly connected to the delivery of the project. Only cash expenses are eligible. The following is a list of expenses that are considered eligible:

- a. Service contracts costs for landscaping, vegetation management, etc.
- b. Service contracts for renovation, repair, or replacement to property features that reduce wildfire hazard.
- c. Raw building materials that are directly related to completion of the project.
- d. Other incidental expenses necessary for completion of the project, at the discretion of Administration.

Contracts and services which are provided by the applicant's own business or company will not be considered an eligible cost.

Contracts/Services undertaken by the applicants' relatives and/or affiliated businesses will require a greater burden of proof to demonstrate transparency and fairness.

The following expenses are ineligible:

- a. Purchase of equipment (lawnmowers, weed whackers, chainsaws, etc.).
- b. Plans, studies, assessments, etc.
- c. Ongoing maintenance or routine work that is part of the general property upkeep and would be completed regardless of funding availability.

- d. In-kind expenses.
- e. Fundraising and event costs.
- f. Debt reduction.
- g. GST.
- h. Other expenses, at the discretion of Administration.

## **7. Funding Limits**

Recipients must support at least 50% of eligible project expenses with other sources of funding.

The revenues to support the recipient's portion of the eligible project expenses must be secured at the time of the application for the project to be considered eligible.

Only eligible expenses will be considered when determining whether the 50% cost-sharing requirement is met.

## **8. Grant Term**

Projects can vary in length. A project's completion date will depend on the nature of the project.

## **9. Program Availability**

The grant term will close in Fall of 2023 unless otherwise communicated by the County.

## **10. Funding Request Requirements**

Those interested must use the application forms prescribed by the County and include the required attachments. Additional information or documentation may be requested to supplement information provided in the application.

## **11. Funding Evaluation**

Not all qualifying applications will be approved. Qualifying applications which are approved but not initially selected for funding may be considered later, depending on funding availability.

Applications may be approved in whole, in part or otherwise not approved. Applications which are not initially approved may be held by the County and considered at a later date.

This program operates with a rolling intake. Projects will be assessed continually as applications are received.

## **12. Application Submission Deadlines**

Applications can be submitted at any time while the program is active. Applications can be dropped off in person at the Fire Services building or emailed to [fireservices@laclabichedcounty.com](mailto:fireservices@laclabichedcounty.com).

## **13. Grant Funding Agreement**

If an applicant is approved for funding, they will be required to enter into a grant funding agreement with Lac La Biche County. The grant funding agreement will reflect the project requirements, in addition to any requirements that are deemed appropriate and necessary.

## **14. Payment of Grant Funding**

Approved funding will not normally be released until the final report is completed and accepted. In exceptional circumstances, an advance may be given.

## **15. Use of Grant Funds**

The recipient cannot apply County grant funding to expenses which are already supported by revenues from other sources (insurance claims, other rebate programs, etc.).

**16. Grant Reporting**

Recipients will be required to submit receipts and invoices for the eligible expenses, along with completing a final project report.

**17. Conflict of Interest**

The County expects transparency and accountability on the part of the applicant. If an applicant proposes to incur expenses from entities which are not considered “arms-length,” the County will require a higher burden of proof from the applicant to demonstrate that the cost of the proposed goods and services are based on a fair market value rate. This includes acquiring multiple third-party quotes.

**18. Inspection Before and After Project**

As a condition of funding, the County may conduct a site visit to observe the proposed work site (prior to the project initiation), or the completed work (after the project is completed).

**19. County Discretion**

The County strives to operate the program in a fair, transparent and consistent manner. The County recognizes that there may be instances and edge cases where certain parameters may not account for the unique circumstances of a project. Given this, the County may, at its sole discretion, determine whether a project receives funding on other factors not identified in the guidelines, or in other cases, provide funding to a project which doesn’t meet one or more of the parameters identified. The County reserves the right to assess the property both before and after project completion.

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