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**Regenerative Agriculture Program (RAP)**

**Soil Cover Options Demonstration Guidelines**

**Project Background and Aims**

The Australian Government, through the National Landcare Program, has funded the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board’s Regenerative Agriculture Program (RAP). The RAP project involves rolling out a range of management activities to prevent and abate **soil acidity**, **soil erosion**, and **improve soil carbon** and **on-farm biodiversity**. The RAP is being delivered by the grower group Agricultural Innovation & Research Eyre Peninsula (AIR EP).

The RAP Soil Cover Optionsdemonstration is a project that aims to provide landholders with the opportunity to have ‘farmer’ scale larger plot demonstrations to reduce soil erosion, improve soil cover, increase soil biodiversity and soil health across a range of soil types and years.

Demonstrations must be plant based (i.e. options include trying summer crops, mixed winter pastures, and/or different perennial pastures). We have a separate program for soil amelioration demonstrations.

It is intended that the pasture and cropping options will have long term benefits to improve some aspect of soil health and increase soil cover.

**Who can apply?**

This grant is open to individual farmers as well as agriculture and farming systems groups working with farmers within the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board’s region.

Eligible applicants will need to:

* Have clearly identified what target soil constraints that will be addressed as priorities under the proposal.
* Demonstrate of HOW the treatments will be monitored and compared, and WHY.
* Have no overdue reports from previous project funding, excepting agreed extensions.
* Provide written evidence that you have landholder permission to undertake the demonstration on the site for the length of the project.
* Ensure that proposed project activities are not a component of any other funding agreement.
* Hold current Public Liability Insurance to the value of $10,000,000 for the duration of the project.
* Be willing to enter into a standard grant agreement for the life of the project.

Ineligible applicants include:

* Commonwealth or State Government bodies.
* Organisations which have grants from the EP Landscape Board that have not been acquitted.
* Applicants with a statutory obligation to undertake the work for which funding is sought.

**Is my project eligible?**

* All projects must be delivered within the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board region.
* Projects should identify how their outcomes align with the Regional NRM Plan which the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board has adopted. Details can be found at <https://landscape.sa.gov.au/ep/about-us/landcape-plan>.

**Demonstration Guidelines**

The following guidelines must be met for your application to be successful.

All demonstrations will have a marked control strip in the paddock for monitoring purposes.

All demonstrations need to be plant based

The proposal needs to describe the following:

* Aim of the demonstration - Reasons for sowing a cover crop/pasture e.g. increase organic matter, increasing surface cover particular for erosion control, improve soil health, reduce herbicide use, improve crop diversity, herbicide resistant weed control, reduce nutrient runoff/leaching.
* Species selected for demonstration – including ideal time of sowing (season), intended seed and fertiliser rates and possible pesticide applications required.
	+ Applicants should seek advice on appropriate species options from qualified consultants or advisors and indicate from whom they will seek this advice in the application.
* Site plan detailing plot size and proposed treatments:
	+ Size and location of treated plots. Plots should be ‘farmer scale’ plots located on an area which is representative of the paddock or the land management constraint that the demonstration seeks to overcome.
	+ It is suggested that the plot size for each treatment is the width of the cutting front of the machinery used to harvest the sites (i.e. 16 metres wide), with the length of the plot being at least 30 metres. If slope varies in the paddock please consider applying the intervention across a number of different zones (i.e. flat, mid slope and top of rise), then that the plot length is at least 100 m)
* A plan for community engagement with groups and or individuals for the site/s (site visits, workshops, media engagement) needs to be outlined in the application.

**Monitoring and Reporting**

If the project application is successful, it is expected that a number of monitoring activities will be undertaken on the sites, and collection of data during the project will be vital to determine the success of plant-based management options.

Required monitoring activities:

* An assessment of baseline organic carbon (Walkley-Black) levels MUST be undertaken at all sites on the unmodified/control area prior to treatments. It is suggested that sampling for organic carbon be undertaken at 0-10 and 10-30 cm depths.
* An assessment of organic carbon (Walkley-Black) levels MUST be undertaken at all treatment and control sites at the conclusion of the project to determine whether there has been any temporal change in organic carbon due to seasonal conditions on the unmodified control and to measure the effect of the intervention on organic carbon levels. It is suggested that sampling for organic carbon be undertaken at 0-10 and 10-30 cm depths.
* A compete CONTROL/DISTRICT practice plot MUST be included, this could include either a sown but not planted strip or a non-sown strip. If multi treatments are being compared, ideally this will be in between the other treatments. This ‘control’ treatment will also need to have monitoring on it.
* Document dates and details of treatments when implementing the demonstration site.
* Document post treatment management activities, including crop/pasture type, fertiliser and pesticide applications, application of desiccants (date, product and rate).
* Document rainfall and any major weather events e.g. frost, waterlogging and any unusual climate factors that might influence production or treatment responses.
* Undertaking dry matter cuts to measure biomass in spring.
* Successful applicants will need to submit a signed Final Report.
* It is possible to include grazing in the treatments, but this will require good grazing records and significant treatment-based fencing. Seek advice before including grazing in your treatments, otherwise plan on have exclusion of a portion of the area for non-grazed comparisons.

Suggested possible other monitoring/data collection tools that could be used to compare treatments vs controls over time or in combination with biomass cuts:

* Feed tests
* Tissue test or sap tests
* Canopeo App ‘Green Cover’ measurements over time comparing the treatments <https://canopeoapp.com> free to download.
* Deep N
* Other soil biology test such as Fungal measurement such as Mycorrhiza spore counts etc.
* Brix sugar levels where appropriate

A reporting spreadsheet will be provided to successful applicants.

**Project components that could be funded:**

* Machinery hire
* Purchase of seed
* Various soil tests
* Soil moisture test
* Dry matter cuts
* Monitoring
* Sampling
* Other plant tests such as tissue test or feed testing
* Monitoring equipment such as rain gauges, scales, etc

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| **Example of a crop rotation** |
| 2022 Year 12023 Year 2 | Sept/Oct/Dec April | Initial measurements taken, summer cover crop sownFinal measurements and report submission |

**Pasture Mix Suggestions** (Please note that these are only suggested plant mix options)

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| **Season** | **Crop types** |
| Examples of summer species | C4 grasses like Millet/Sorghum/TeffSunflowersSorghumCow peasForage rape |

**Types of projects that will not be funded**

The following items/projects will not be considered for funding:

* Commercial undertakings.
* Works or projects already commenced or completed by application closing date.
* Ongoing management or maintenance expenses (e.g. postage, telephone, stationery, electricity, salaries, wages and on‑costs).
* Fundraising ventures.
* Activities that are more appropriately funded by other programs.
* Where it is the legal responsibility of the landholder.
* Any proposal received that the EP Landscape Board considers is not congruent with the current Eyre Peninsula Regional NRM plan which has been adopted by the EP Landscape Board.

**Assessment**

Applications will be assessed by representatives of AIR EP and EP Landscape Board.

Grants will be offered to projects and activities that:

* Contribute to the Australian Government Regional Land Partnerships targets of the National Landcare Program.
* Encourage partnerships with other groups and organisations, to share responsibility and deliver the best possible natural resources management outcomes.
* Utilise the best available knowledge and practices in natural resources management.
* Demonstrate high value for money (in outcomes, partnerships and community engagement)

At the completion of the project a Final Report is to be submitted with a financial summary of related expenditure, site plans, promotion and publicity including flyers, programs, editorial and photos if applicable.

**Funding acknowledgement**

Successful applicants will ensure that appropriate acknowledgment will be given to the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board and the Regional Land Partnerships of the National Landcare Program as a source of funding, and also ensure that:

* All publications, articles, newsletters or literary works prepared as a part of the project acknowledge the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board and the National Landcare Program financial support. A copy of the publication is to be provided to Naomi Scholz via email eo@airep.com.au or posted to PO Box 485 WUDINNA SA 5652.
* Signs, posters or other appropriate means are used to acknowledge the EP Landscape Board and the Regional Land Partnerships National Landcare Program financial support.
* The EP Landscape Board and the Regional Land Partnerships National Landcare Program role is acknowledged at relevant field days and farm walks, discussion group activities, forums, and conferences.

**Conditions of funding**

There are a number of conditions associated with receiving grant funding. Below is an outline of the most significant requirements:

* **Budget limits**
* **A maximum of $6000 is available per project.**
* **Year 1 2022 Payment will be made in instalments:**
	+ Instalment one: 50% on signing of the contract.
* **Year 2 2023 Final report including data analysis, photos:**
	+ Instalment two: 50% on receipt of final report.
	+ will be paid when the monitoring results and project completion report is received and approved by 30 April 2023.
* **Insurance**
	+ The applicant receivinga grantis required to supply a copy of their Public Liability Insurance certificate of currency and maintain insurance cover for duration of the whole term of the project period. Necessary insurance arrangements are the responsibility of the applicant.
* **Promotions and branding**
	+ The EP Landscape Board reserves the right to promote the work you are doing through one of its communication channels such as its website, social media (Facebook or Twitter) or media releases. You will be contacted for your permission should this be the case.
	+ Funding should be acknowledged in all project promotional material and products with the following wording: *This project is supported by the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board through funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program*.
	The EP Landscape Board and National Landcare Programme ‘supported by’ logos are available on request.
	+ Social media posts relating to the project should tag the EP Landscape Board - **@EPLandscapeSA** on Facebook and Twitter.

**When Can You Apply?**

Applications for Soil Cover Options Demonstration grants are open now.

Application forms can be downloaded from the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board’s [website](https://landscape.sa.gov.au/ep/) or in electronic or hard copy by contacting the AIR EP office on 0428 540 670.

Please send the completed and **signed** application by **one** of the following methods only:

**Email:** eo@airep.com.au

**Mail:** addressed to Soil Cover Options Demo PO Box 485 WUDINNA SA 5652

For further information about the grants, please contact Josh Telfer, susag@airep.com.au 0460 000 290.