

Horticultural Netting Program – Trial Guidelines

Administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

May 2022

1. About the Program

The purpose of the Horticultural Netting Program – Trial is to provide funding to primary producers of horticultural crops for the purchase and installation of new netting or the replacement of damaged netting over land used to grow horticulture crops.

Research shows that netting delivers productivity benefits by protecting crops from extreme weather and predators, as well as increasing water use efficiency. As a result, fruit harvested is more likely to meet the high standards demanded by our markets. Use of netting also helps ensure continuity of supply and increases the climate resilience of our industry.

The scheme is funded by the Australian Government and is administered by the Agriculture, Forestry and Water Division of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas).

The scheme is open to applications from 24 May 2022.

2. Available funding

The Fund consists of \$1.94 million in grants for primary producers of horticultural crops in Tasmania and will provide a grant for up to 50 per cent of costs to purchase and install permanent protective netting and associated infrastructure such as poles (either new infrastructure that has been damaged or requires replacing) or throw-over protective netting (also known as drape netting) up to a maximum of \$150 000 (ex GST) per applicant.

An upper limit of \$150 000 for the grant program will enable growers to access meaningful funding while enabling the program funds to be shared across multiple producers.

The Program opens on 24 May 2022 and closes on 31 March 2023 or when funds are fully committed, whichever comes first. Grants are subject to the availability of funds.

If funding is still available after the closing date of 31 March 2023, a grower could submit another application to receive more grant funding, but not more than \$300 000 over the lifetime of the program.

3. Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for a grant under the scheme you must:

- be a property owner, share-farmer, or lessee undertaking a horticultural enterprise operating and located in Tasmania;
- operate as a sole trader, partnership, trust or private company;
- be registered with the Australian Taxation Office as a primary production business and have an Australian Business Number (ABN);
- earn more than 50 per cent of their total income from primary production;
- purchase and install protective netting over existing commercial horticultural produce.

4. Eligible Activities

Eligible activities must be directly linked to buying and installing permanent protective or throw-over protective netting and associated support structures to increase horticultural productivity, by reducing the impacts of adverse weather events or animal predation, and to reduce water usage.

The land on which netting is to be installed must have an established use of horticultural production prior to 14 December 2021.

All activities and goods must be supplied by an appropriately qualified third-party supplier or contractor and must be paid in full. The third-party supplier must confirm that the netting is appropriate for adverse weather protection, such as hail protection.

Examples of eligible activities are:

- buying permanent protective netting and associated infrastructure such as poles (either new infrastructure or to replace existing infrastructure that has been damaged or requires replacing);
- contracting someone to install permanent protective netting and associated infrastructure;
- contracting someone to do preparatory work necessary to install permanent protective netting (for example, removing existing netting);
- buying throw-over protected netting (drape netting). The preference for this program is for permanent netting structures, however drape netting may be considered in special circumstances (on a case-by-case basis only). If your application is for drape netting only, then you will need to discuss the suitability of your project proposal with NRE Tas before an application is submitted.

5. Ineligible Activities

The subsidy does not apply to:

- projects that have already received assistance from State or Australian Government grants to achieve the same objectives;
- projects where insurance has been claimed for damaged netting and/or associated support structures;
- purchases or work before 14 December 2021;
- feasibility studies, business cases, reports and development plans;
- costs associated with preparing applications for funding;
- operational costs by the applicant, including wages, utilities, self-installation, repairs and maintenance;
- netting purchased and/or installed for grapes used for wine-production.

6. Co-Contributions

To be eligible for funding under the Program the applicant is required to make a cash co-contribution of at least 50 per cent of the total project costs.

Financial co-contributions can include cash contributions from the applicant and other parties including individuals, financial institutions and businesses, but cannot include contributions from other Australian Government and Tasmanian grant programs.

Applicants must provide evidence of support for financial co-contributions at the time of application (for example, a letter from the co-contributor detailing the value and nature of the commitment, and any conditions relating to the co-contribution commitment). Such commitments must be confirmed in writing before execution of a Grant Deed, or become a special condition of the Grant Deed prior to any funding paid.

7. How to Apply

Applicants must complete the Tasmanian Horticultural Netting Program – Trial Application Form via NRE Tasmania SmartyGrants online application platform. <https://nre.smartygrants.com.au/>

Applications must include the following information:

- Written quote or a written estimate from an authorised netting company confirming total project specifications. Applications will need to demonstrate that the proposed netting and associated support structures are designed to ensure they meet all relevant planning and building regulations and other regulations within your area (if applicable). Relevant approvals will be required before grant funds are paid.
- Evidence of ownership structure for the land parcel proposed for this project (registered owners, share farmers or lease holders) for example, a copy of Council rates.
- Financial Statements for your primary production business for the past two financial years. If you have not completed your financial statements for the last financial year, please provide copies of your financial statements for the two prior financial years. If your business has not been operational for the past two financial years, then a balance sheet and profit and loss statement for year to date certified by the business' Accountant indicating that the management accounts fairly present the entity's financial performance and that in the Director/owner's opinion there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company/business will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable may be accepted in special circumstances only.
- Evidence of sufficient funding to fund your co-contribution e.g. Bank statements or letter from your financier. If the commitment is not confirmed in writing before execution of the Grant Deed it will become a special condition of the Grant Deed prior to any funding being paid.
- A project overview, which includes a detailed description of the project scope, project location, map demarcating the area to be netted, crops protected and area (in hectares) to be covered, project budget and an outline of the key project milestones with the relevant timeline.

The above information is mandatory and is the minimum requirement for submitting a complete application.

8. Assessment Process

Applications will be assessed strictly in the order they are received by NRE Tas. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria of the program.

NRE Tas reserves the right to request further information from the applicant, or from any business or individual engaged by the applicant, to help assess the application and to verify any information in the application. If this information is not provided, NRE Tas may refuse your application.

Should the application meet all essential criteria, they will also undergo a comprehensive due diligence process to determine the applicant's financial capability and the project's commercial feasibility.

The assessment will also consider whether a project, or elements of a project, are more appropriately considered for funding by other State, Commonwealth and/or Local Government or industry sources.

You will not be eligible to apply for funding under the Program if you have not met all the terms and conditions placed on any previous Tasmanian Government funding, grant, or concessional loan provided to you.

9. Successful Applications

If successful, applicants will be required to enter into a Grant Deed with the Government of Tasmania in order to receive assistance.

Successful applicants will be expected to meet all terms and conditions of the Grant Deed, including governance and reporting requirements. Applicants must comply with all Australian and State legislation, regulations, and codes in the delivery of the Program.

Grant payments will be made on a reimbursement basis on milestones agreed in the Grant Deed upon presentation of paid invoices for approved project expenditure, including evidence of eligible applicant contributions. Verification of milestone completion may be undertaken via physical inspections by NRE Tas Officers. Payments will be made after a milestone is accepted as completed by NRE Tas.

Final payments are made on receipt of a final report evidencing project completion to the satisfaction of NRE Tas.

The following conditions will be expected of financial assistance recipients:

- Complete the project as stated in the application.
- Meet all key milestones and obligations as defined in the Grant Deed.
- For Grants of \$100 000 or more (GST exclusive) a signed copy of the annual financial statements (together with a signed audit opinion from an approved auditor where the grant forms the principle component of the organisation's or individual's total income) or a grant income and expenditure accountability report (template supplied by the Government) signed by a suitably qualified person to the effect that the report represents the financial transactions fairly and is based on proper accounts and records and all funding and grant recipient contributions received were spent for the purposes of the grant for which they were provided.
- Acknowledge the contribution of the Australian and the Tasmanian Government on any promotional material, and provide opportunities for representatives to take part in any formal project milestones and launches.

Note: Grants may be subject to GST and income tax. Applicants should consider seeking advice on these and other tax implications from their tax advisers or the Australian Taxation Office before applying.

Applicants should understand their legal rights and obligations under this Program.

10. Appeal and review process

You may not be awarded any or all of the assistance you applied for because the assessment could not establish that you meet the eligibility criteria (for example, don't qualify as a 'primary producer' for the purpose of this program). If this is the case, you may request that the decision is reconsidered by:

- writing to the General Manager (Agriculture and Water) Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
- outlining the reasons why you believe you are eligible, or the decision should be reviewed, including any additional supporting evidence.

Payment of a declined, or partially declined, claim may be approved at the General Manager's (Agriculture and Water) discretion, if the General Manager considers that the evidence provided by you shows that you meet the eligibility criteria and there is available funding. The General Manager cannot review a decision to not provide you with the rebate if the reason for this decision was because available funding from the Australian Government has been exhausted.

11. Further Information

To apply for the Horticultural Netting Infrastructure Program, an application form will need to be completed and lodged. The application form can be obtained from the **NRE Tas** website: www.nre.tas.gov.au

Applications will be assessed in order of receipt against the eligibility criteria and must be submitted by **31 March 2023** to enable completion of works and acquittal of the project by 30 June 2025.

The completed application form and any attachments are to be forwarded to:

Horticultural Netting Infrastructure Program
FarmPoint
PO Box 46
Kings Meadows 7249
Or
farmpoint@nre.tas.gov.au

If you require further information, please contact FarmPoint at AgriGrowth Tasmania on 1300 292 292 or via email at farmpoint@nre.tas.gov.au

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