Guide to the Water Smart Business Grant

Tell me about the program!

The grant provides up to $10,000 per water saving project to Okotoks businesses and institutions who want to save some money, but also do their part to conserve water through upgrading high water-using fixtures. Installing water-efficient fixtures and landscaping can save an organization money on bi-monthly water bills! Applicants can apply for multiple projects.

In your application, you will indicate what kind of upgrades you want to do, provide details about the project, estimate how much water the upgrades will save, and tell us how much the project will cost. The grant provides money towards the purchase and install of the water-saving elements of the project.

The Town will evaluate all submissions to ensure that the projects are meeting the goals of the program. If approved, the applicant can begin their project. Once the project is finished, the applicant will submit all final receipts, itemized paid invoices, and project photos before receiving the funds in the form of a cheque or EFT payment.

What is the program timeline?

Final Application Deadline: November 15 annually.

Who is eligible?

Must be a utility account holder with the Town of Okotoks; and one of the following:

- A federally or provincially registered non-profit society or charitable organization operating in Okotoks; or
- A school located in Okotoks; or
- A business located within Okotoks (in a commercially zoned building)
    - Must have the appropriate development permits and business licensing in place.

Note:

- All applications must include and indicate someone with signing authority.
- If the building is not owned by the business/organization, the building owner must be listed on the application.

How much money is available and how many grants will be given out?

This program has $40,000 in annual funding. The number of grants given out depends on the number of applicants and how much funding is being asked for by each applicant. Applicants may apply for multiple project types (i.e. Irrigation system decommissioning and water wise landscaping).

How can my organization or business apply?

Step 1: Read all available information on the Town website, including the application check list and Project Completion Checklist.

Step 2: Set up a chat with a Town of Okotoks Environment staff member to discuss the feasibility of your project prior to submitting an application. Call 403-995-6316, email Environment@okotoks.ca, or make an appointment to come in person to the Municipal Centre.

Step 3: After reading through this guide, and chatting with staff, submit your application form and all supporting documents online here to complete your application.

How much grant money can a project be awarded?

The most that a project will receive is $10,000. Smaller projects can apply too! You will be asked to provide details in the application regarding how much your project will cost. See below for eligible expenses.

Are there other eligibility requirements?

Yes. All projects need to estimate a percentage reduction in water use and fall within certain parameters.

Outdoor projects: must show a minimum calculated projection of 15-30% water savings to qualify.

Indoor projects: must show a calculated projection of a decrease in water use, based on the indicated water savings of the fixtures. Minimum 20% reduction in water used with the new fixture is required. Projects that see increased water savings may be prioritized[1].

What kind of water-saving projects would be eligible for a grant?

There are 4 specific types of upgrade projects that are eligible for the grant. Your project may include more than one.

Indoor Water Fixtures

- Project must replace high water using fixtures and appliances (e.g. faucets, toilets, commercial dishwashers, ice makers, etc.). Please contact us if you have any questions regarding a piece of high-water using equipment that you would like to replace.
- Applicant must provide proof of old fixture via specifications/photos.
- High water use fixtures/appliances are replaced with WaterSense certified fixtures. (where certification exists) or energy star appliances rated for water-efficiency
- Hot water recirculation pump(s) installation.

In condominiums where water is metered on a building basis, rather than an individual unit basis, the condo board may apply for the program in order to see collective water and dollar savings that can be passed to the residents.

Water-wise Landscaping/Xeriscape

- This type of project is for converting large (90 m^2 minimum) areas of land from non-functional turf[2] to mulch and drought-tolerant plants.
- A minimum of 40% of the landscaped area needs to be drought tolerant turf and/or perennials, shrubs, and trees.

[1] https://www.epa.gov/watersense/about-watersense

[2] Non-functional turf: mowed turf areas that see little or no active or recreational use, yet still require substantial irrigation to remain healthy

- Soil in the project area will have compost mixed in to the topsoil. This increases soil health and its ability to retain moisture.
- Any existing irrigation systems can be used to establish plants during the summer they are planted; once the growing season is over, the irrigation system must be decommissioned.
- Projects need to ensure 30 cm of loam depth throughout the xeriscaped area.
- Project must meet the landscaping requirements in the Landscape Design and Construction Specifications and the Infrastructure Design and Construction Specifications

Irrigation System Decommissioning

- Includes decommissioning an irrigation system through capping the system or through complete removal of system, and the removal of the water meter. Decommissioning must be such that it would be impossible to reattach the system.
- If the system is capped, all components that reside over 1 cm above the ground's surface must be removed.
- All work must be done by a professional irrigation company.
- Any enterprise that decommissions an irrigation system and desires to install drought tolerant turf and/or mulch and drought tolerant plants will be prioritized for grant funding for both projects (see above for water wise landscaping details).
- Non-functional turf areas will be prioritized for funding.

Rain or Storm Water Collection and/or Reuse Project

- All projects must have prior Government of Alberta approval
- Installation of an above ground rainwater harvesting system over 1000 gallons, including irrigation, in place of the potable water supply.
- A project that involves using low impact design methods to capture storm water; or
- A project that captures rain/storm water for the purpose of reusing it in place of the potable water supply.

What are considered eligible expenses for the grant program?

Project Type	Eligible Expense
All	• Labour for professional install of materials/equipment related to the project • Materials/equipment to complete project (see below)
Indoor Water Fixtures	• WaterSense labeled toilets, faucets, showerheads, and urinals • Energy Star rated appliances/mechanical systems that impact water use • Hot water recirculation pumps
Outdoor Project – Xeriscape/Water-wise Landscape	• Cost for professional services of a landscape architect • Equipment rentals (if self-landscaping) • Drought tolerant plants (Zone 1-3 perennials, shrubs, trees) as part of xeriscape projects

	• Drought tolerant turf[3] (depending on the project and only for 30% of project area) • Bark mulch • Compost • Landscaping rock/gravel mulch • Compost/soil for soil amendments (30cm loam depth) • Landscape fabric, edging, larger ornamental rocks
Irrigation System Water Efficiency Upgrades	• WaterSense labelled irrigation controllers and sprinkler bodies • Parts for installation of irrigation master valve • Rain sensors • Emitter lines (drip irrigation) • Cost of labour for professional irrigation company to cap or remove the irrigation system. • Cost for the removal of the water meter • If applicable, the cost for removing the system from the ground, including ground repairs • Cost of installing drought tolerant landscaping if desired (see above for details on Water-wise Landscaping).
Rain/Storm Water Reuse	• Rainwater harvesting tanks and stands/housing • Piping, debris traps, filters, pumps, irrigation supplies • Storm water capture/reuse materials are subject to project needs and will be assessed per project

Which expenses are NOT eligible for the grant?

- Supplies, materials, or labour not directly related to the project
- Office operating and maintenance expenses
- Retroactive funding for projects already initiated or completed
- Non-drought tolerant plantings of any variety
- Applicant organization's staff wages
- Replacement of irrigation system piping and rotors or installation of new irrigation systems
- Artificial turf and rubber mulch
- Water softeners
- Reverse osmosis systems

What type of documentation will I need to support my pre-qualification application?

The type of information and documentation needed will depend on what type of project you are proposing to do. See the list below for the information and documents required for each project type.

[3] Drought tolerant turf is defines as any turf that is less than 30% Kentucky Bluegrass or is certified by the Turf Water Conservation Alliance.

Note that all applications will need to be signed by a signing authority of the business and/or property in question and include signed terms and conditions, and (if applicable) a letter of approval from a board or building owner.

Indoor Water Fixture/Equipment Upgrades

1. Cost estimate/quotes for eligible expenses
2. Photos of current water fixtures/equipment that will be replaced
3. Proof of WaterSense certification where applicable[4]
4. Water Use Amount for Fixture/Equipment to be replaced

Outdoor Project – Xeriscape/Water-wise Landscape

1. Landscape plan sketch/area estimate – this can be a sketch of the area to be landscaped that generally indicates that will be done
2. Photo of current landscape
3. Proof of Town irrigation inspection and recommendations
4. Cost estimate from the landscaper and landscape architect
5. Ensure that the water utility number indicated on the application is the account used for any irrigation of the current landscape

Irrigation System Efficiency Upgrades

1. Cost estimate/quotes for eligible expenses
2. Photos of current system/irrigation controller(s), and any other equipment being replaced
3. Ensure that the water utility number indicated on the application is the account used for irrigation of the current landscape
4. Proof of WaterSense certification where applicable and product specs for proposed new fixtures

Rain or Storm Water Collection and/or Reuse Project

1. Proof of Government of Alberta approval of the project
2. Cost estimate for eligible expenses
3. System outline/sketch

If the grant application is successful, when can my business expect to receive funding?

Once the project is complete and the final application has been approved, a cheque or electronic funds transfer will be initiated. This can take place any time before the final project deadline of November 15.

If I want to pursue a Storm Water Reuse project, how do I get approval from the Government of Alberta?

Please visit https://www.alberta.ca/reclaimed-water.aspx to find out how to get approval for your project.

[4] https://www.epa.gov/watersense/about-watersense