

# Trees on Farms Incubator Program

## Guidelines for Grant Funding

Round 1 - August 2025



## **Further information**

E: [plantationforestry@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:plantationforestry@deeca.vic.gov.au)

W: <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/incubator-program>

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it.

We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

DEECA is committed to genuinely partnering with Victorian Traditional Owners and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.

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# 1. What is the Trees on Farms Incubator Program?

The Trees on Farms Incubator Program (Incubator Program) supports communities of rural landowners to receive in-depth training and planning advice that will help strengthen technical knowledge and informed decision-making. The program invites applications from organisations or entities with the capacity to design and deliver a customised suite of activities that address the practical, technical, and strategic aspects—including risks and opportunities—of establishing and managing trees on farms.

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) is supporting Victorian rural landowners through the Victorian Trees on Farms Program (VToF) to establish and manage trees on their land for the multiple benefits they can provide to farm productivity, timber production, the environment and climate action.

In providing this support, the department recognises that farm planning decisions and land use trade-offs are complex and there is often a knowledge gap when it comes to technical considerations on what trees to plant, the values they can provide, and the best approach to management.

The Incubator Program provides an opportunity for landowners to navigate these concepts and test ideas among a network of peers and trusted advisors. Ultimately, landowners would develop knowledge and confidence to make long-term land use decisions around the opportunities and trade-offs of tree planting and be equipped to apply for grant funding under the VToF.

Successful applicants who receive grant funding from the Incubator Program will facilitate a peer-to-peer knowledge building journey among an established community of Victorian landowners. Incubator projects can be delivered over a 12-month period.

At project completion, the applicant will produce a delivery report that will provide an overview of the scale of tree establishment potentially available across the participants' land base and the potential landscape value this could provide. Each participant will also be supported to create a project plan that landowners may use to directly apply for funding under the VToF.

Eligible entities, businesses and organisations are invited to apply to the Incubator Program by reviewing these grant guidelines and following the application process outlined in Section 10.

Applications will be assessed at the completion of the grant round under a competitive process with \$1 million in funding made available by the state government to support the initiative.

## 2. Program objectives

The objectives of the Incubator Program are to:

- Leverage existing networks, communities, or other interest groups to promote opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and .communities of practice focussed around tree growing on farms
- Build capacity among landowners on the technical requirements of growing trees on farms to support confidence in decision making
- Develop high-quality project plans that can inform applications for Victorian Trees on Farms Program project grant funding.

### **3. Who can apply?**

**Organisations, businesses and networks that operate in agriculture, forestry, or land management may be eligible to apply for the Incubator Program.**

To be eligible for funding, applicants must:

- Have demonstrated experience or expertise in forestry or tree planting projects and / or experience in land management coordination / facilitation.
- Have identified a cohort of landowners (more than 2 individuals) based in Victoria within a common region or locality to participate in their Incubator activities.
- Commit to producing a project plan for each participating landowner (as per the requirements in the grant guidelines at Appendix B: Project Plan template).

Applicants must also:

- meet the department's due diligence requirements (Illion Report and reputational risk assessment), and
- hold the relevant policies of insurance (Including not less than \$20 million cover for public liability insurance risks, not less than \$5 million per occurrence for professional indemnity risks, and Workcover insurance (as applicable)



## 4. Who cannot apply?

Ineligible applicants include:

- Federal government bodies (including federal government business enterprises)
- State or territory government bodies (excluding Catchment Management Authorities)

## 5. What activities can be funded?

The Incubator Program is flexible to allow applicants and facilitators to think creatively about how best to engage their landowner cohort and deliver projects that are best suited to their specific community.

All activities must occur in Victoria in collaboration with Victorian landowners and must be designed to support the department to achieve the objectives of the Incubator Program.

Funding will be extended to resources, materials, and staffing required to undertake eligible coordination, education, and planning activities and to develop VToF project plans as described in this section.

Table 1 provides guidance on the types of activities that are supported.

**Table 1: Example of supported incubator project activities**

<b>Coordination activities</b>	Activities bringing together landowners or activating an existing network of landowners to participate in incubator project activities i.e.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Network meetings to initiate an incubator project or for regular check-ins</li><li>• On-site visits and discussions with groups / networks</li><li>• High level feasibility planning to estimate aggregation opportunities and potential landscape impact.</li></ul>
<b>Education activities</b>	Activities educating landowners on the multiple benefits of trees on farms or training and upskilling landowners for tree-planting activities i.e.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visits to demonstration sites</li><li>• Demonstrations and capacity building related to tree establishment and management activities</li><li>• Activities which showcase commercial opportunities for farm grown trees (i.e. visits to mill, processing facilities or other end markets).</li></ul>
<b>Planning activities</b>	Activities supporting the development of a VToF project plan* i.e.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On-site feasibility assessments</li><li>• Values assessment, financial modelling and cash flow analysis</li><li>• Development of site-specific project plans for tree establishment</li><li>• Estimation of landscape impact and articulation of aggregation efficiencies.</li></ul> <p>*A VToF project plan template is provided at Appendix B: Project plan template and available via the <a href="https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/incubator-program">https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/incubator-program</a></p>

## 6. What will not be funded?

The following are NOT eligible for funding:

- Promotional activities seeking participants into the Incubator Program (as this should have occurred prior to the application).
- Any other advertising or promotional activities
- Site preparation, seedlings, or other activities related to tree establishment (these activities are funded under the VToF).
- Any tree establishment or management activities
- Any costs not directly associated with the project, including, but not limited to:
  - purchases or expenses related to the day-to-day operations or expenses of the applicant or their business;
  - construction or repairs to infrastructure.
- Any activities that have already commenced or been delivered
- Public liability insurance
- Social media
- Fundraisers
- Such other costs as reasonably determined by the assessment panel.

The following activities are not permitted:

- Political activities
- Religious activities
- Illegal activities
- Activities which are unsafe or may present a hazard to the community
- Activities which are likely to create environmental hazards
- Activities delivered by organisations or groups which are not legal entities or which do not hold appropriate insurance.

Activities cannot commence before the grant agreement is signed by both parties.



## 7. What are the funding details?

The Incubator Program is a competitive grant program which means applications are assessed against each other to determine which applications can best demonstrate alignment with the program objectives and deliver value for money.

Up to \$1 million in total funding is being made available under Round 1.

Applicants can apply for up to \$50,000 (excl. GST) to deliver an incubator project. The grant amount will be determined by the department based on the application provided by applicants.

The incubator application will be assessed in accordance with the assessment criteria.

### Grant funding payment schedule

The duration of an incubator project is up to 12 months.

The grant is delivered across three milestones with payments made at milestone 1 and 3. Milestone 2 is non-financial (see Table 2).

Table 2: Incubator Program grant funding payment schedule

Milestone	1 Execution of grant agreement	2 Mid-project review	3 Project completion
Grant instalment	70% of grant amount		Up to 30% of grant amount
Deliverable	Execution of grant agreement	Progress report	Delivery report and VToF project plans

### Tax treatment

Applicants should note that all project costs included in the project application must be exclusive of GST. In order to claim GST with grant payments, applicants must be registered for GST collection purposes.

Applicants should consult the Australian Taxation Office or seek professional advice on any taxation implications that may arise from this grant funding.

Successful applicants without an ABN will need to provide a completed Australian Taxation Office form 'Statement by a Supplier' so that no withholding tax is required from the grant payment.

## 8. What is the application process?

Table 3: Application opening and closing dates

Applications open	31 July 2025
Applications close	17 October 2025
Notification of assessment outcome	Within 8 weeks of closing date

Applications may be submitted at any time between the opening and closing dates. Applications submitted outside of these dates will not be considered.

### Application process

Applicants are encouraged to contact the program team to ask questions and to test their incubator project proposal against the incubator program objectives by emailing [plantationforestry@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:plantationforestry@deeca.vic.gov.au).

To apply for grant funding from the Incubator Program, applicants will need to undertake the following:

#### Step 1: Prepare and submit an application

The application must detail the proposed activities, their location, and intended landowner participants of the incubator project. The application should be developed in line with the assessment criteria provided in Section 9.

In preparing an application for grant funding, the following attachments are to be included (but are not limited to):

- a detailed (itemised) budget consistent with the schedule of proposed activities outlined within the application
- copy of the relevant certificates of insurance

Applications must be submitted at <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/incubator-program> by the timing outlined in this section..

#### Attaching required documents

Supporting documents must be in an acceptable file type, such as Word, Excel, PDF, or JPEG. The maximum file size for each file is 10MB.

You will receive an application number when you submit an application online. Please quote this number in all communications with the department relating to your application.

If you have documents to submit that cannot be attached to your online application you can email them to [plantationforestry@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:plantationforestry@deeca.vic.gov.au), quoting your application number. Attach all documents to one email, zipping the files if required.

#### Step 2: Assessment process

After applications close, all submitted applications will be checked for eligibility and then assessed against the assessment criteria.

The assessment panel will make recommendations for offers of grant funding to the relevant authority for final consideration. The decision to offer grant funding is at the absolute discretion of the authority.

#### Step 3: Assessment outcome

The department will endeavour to notify applicants of the outcome of their application within 8 weeks after applications close.

All applicants will receive a letter confirming the outcome of their application. Feedback by the department may be offered to any unsuccessful applicants.

## 9. Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria are intended to assist applicants to design projects that align with the Incubator Program objectives, and ultimately, to inform the department's decision as to whether an incubator project may be funded.

**Table 4: Assessment criteria**

Assessment criterion	Weighting
<b>1 Quality of the incubator proposal</b> Assessed on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. the qualification and level of experience of the applicant proposing to facilitate the incubator project (noting that the applicant may draw on experts to deliver technical content or modules)</li><li>b. the alignment of the proposed activities with the objectives of the Incubator Program</li><li>c. the feasibility of the proposed activities being delivered on time, effectively, and as described</li><li>d. overall level of detail provided in the incubator proposal, including in the articulation of proposed activities, budget, timeline, and delivery approach.</li></ul>	20
<b>2 Feasibility to deliver trees in the ground</b> Assessed on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. the consideration given to the identification of a landowner cohort and their readiness to plant trees on their land</li><li>b. the feasibility of the Incubator project in achieving the scope and scale of land targeted and potentially available for planting</li><li>c. the extent to which farm forestry or managing trees for timber forms part of the incubator project proposal.</li><li>d. the identification of risks and mitigation strategies.</li></ul>	40
<b>3 Value for money</b> Assessed on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. the proposed grant value per landowner identified. The grant value for each landowner participant should not exceed \$5,000 for the application to be considered value for money</li><li>b. the level of information indicating confidence in the total area potentially available for planting , with consideration given to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. volume of timber able to be produced</li><li>ii. carbon sequestered</li><li>iii. co-benefits generated.</li></ul></li><li>c. the consideration given to co-investment or leveraging other revenue streams</li></ul>	40

## 10. What are the conditions of grant agreement?

**Applicants successful in applying for funding must enter into a funding agreement with DEECA to receive grant funds which come into force only at the point when the agreement has been executed by both the applicant and the department.**

The grant agreement is a legally enforceable document that defines the obligations of the grant recipient and the department. It sets out the requirements or conditions that must be met prior to payment of a grant instalment to a grant recipient and the conditions under which the grant funds can be used and agreement acquitted.

The funding agreement commits the applicant to achieving grant milestones and to report to DEECA to meet grant payment milestones. It is recommended that applicants review the terms and conditions before applying. A template funding agreement can be provided by contacting [plantationforestry@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:plantationforestry@deeca.vic.gov.au).

The department makes no representation that an application will be accepted, approved or endorsed and reserves the right to make no funds available under the Incubator Program.

All costs of preparing and lodging an application are the responsibility of the applicants and will not be recoverable from the department under any circumstances.

Offer of grant funding will not be made to applicants who have delivered activities related to the Incubator application prior to the execution of a grant recipient.

Applicants should seek independent professional advice before submitting an application or entering into a grant agreement.

The Department reserves the right to withdraw any offer of grant funding if the grant agreement has not been signed within two months of issue.

Once the grant agreement is signed, these obligations are binding requirements for all participants of the Incubator Program. Non-compliance with conditions of the grant agreement could impact future applications to the department's programs.

### Reporting requirements

**The reporting schedule below is in place to evidence the projects progress towards achieving program outcomes and the completion of milestones, which ultimately support the processing of grant payments. It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit the reports to the department. The minimum reporting requirements include:**

**A progress report** (milestone 2 in Table 2) is to be submitted to the department within 3 months after the commencement date. This is a high-level report used by the department to determine the extent to which the project is considered "on-track". Applicants may use this report to highlight any changes to the delivery approach or intended outcomes. The progress report must also include an analysis of the landowner surveys completed by landowners at the commencement of the incubator project.

**A delivery report** (milestone 3 in Table 2) is to be submitted to the department at project completion, within 12 months after the commencement date. The delivery report must be prepared and submitted using the department-provided template (Appendix A). A VToF project plan (using Appendix B) for each participating landowner must be attached to the delivery report. The delivery report must also include an analysis of the landowner surveys completed by landowners at the completion of the incubator project.

## 11. Evaluation

Applicants may be required to participate in department-led performance and monitoring activities for the Incubator Program by responding to evaluation surveys from the department during the course of the project.

## 12. Compliance and governance

### Grant guidelines

The department reserves the right to make changes to these grant guidelines as required. Any changes to these grant guidelines will not affect the eligibility of the applicants and applications made prior to the date of publication of any update.

### Information only

The content of and any discussions applicants may have with a representative of the department are for information only and do not constitute advice.

## 13. Acknowledgement

Successful applicants are expected to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support and promotional guidelines (<https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/grants>) will form part of the funding agreement. Successful applicants must liaise with the departmental program area to coordinate any public events or announcements related to the project.

## 14. Disclaimer

Although all care has been taken by DEECA in the preparation of this document, DEECA does not warrant, either expressly or impliedly, the accuracy or completeness of the information it contains. DEECA does not accept any liability or responsibility for any loss or damage incurred by an applicant and or Landholder as a result of this document and or the Program. Any person relying on this document and the information it contains does so at their own risk absolutely and should consider obtaining independent legal advice and/or professional advice.

## 15. Privacy

Any personal information about you or a third party in your application will be collected by the department for the purposes of administering your grant application and informing Members of Parliament of successful applications. Personal information may also be disclosed to external experts, such as members of assessment panels, or other Government Departments for assessment, reporting, advice, comment or for discussions regarding alternative or collaborative grant funding opportunities. If you intend to include personal information about third parties in your application, please ensure that they are aware of the contents of this privacy statement.

Any personal information about you or a third party in your correspondence will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and other applicable laws.

DEECA is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. You can find the DEECA Privacy Policy online at [www.deeca.vic.gov.au/privacy](http://www.deeca.vic.gov.au/privacy).

Requests for access to information about you held by DEECA should be sent to the Manager Privacy, P.O. Box 500 East Melbourne 8002 or contact by emailing [Foi.unit@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:Foi.unit@delwp.vic.gov.au).

## **Appendix A: Delivery Report Template**

# Trees on Farms Incubator Program Delivery Report

All fields are required unless otherwise stated.

## Incubator Details

**Facilitator**  
**Incubator delivery area**

## Project Plan Details

Please provide details of landowners for whom you have produced a project plan.

# Incubator Project Outcomes

**Provide a high-level assessment of the delivery of your incubator project.**

**Was the incubator project delivered as proposed in your application?**

If no, what elements or activities were altered?

(Up to 300 words)

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**Was the incubator project delivered as per the submitted project budget?**

If project spend was higher or lower than the grant funding value, please provide details.

Include in your response any comment on the sufficiency of the budget to meet the objectives of the program.

(Up to 100 words)

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**Was the landowner cohort you engaged consistent with that identified in your application?**

If no, why was the landowner cohort changed and how are they different from the initial cohort?

Were new participants added, or did some leave, and for what reasons?

(Up to 100 words)

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# Landowner Survey Summary

**Provide a summary of the follow-up responses to the landowner survey and how landowner behaviour and perspectives have changed.**

In your response:

- highlight any trends or patterns across the initial and follow-up responses
  - consider changes in landowner sentiments towards the species, area, spatial arrangement and management regime they intend to follow
  - assess the overall confidence of landowners before and after the incubator project, with any reflections on the most influential activities undertaken.

(Up to 500 words)

# **Landowner Community of Practice**

**Provide a reflection on landowner participation in your Incubator project.**

**Do you believe a lasting and enduring landowner community of practice was established during the delivery of your Incubator project?**

If yes, provide details on how the landowner network will support itself and its members (i.e. regular meetings or farm visits, established contact person etc).

(Up to 300 words)

**Will you have a continuing role with the network or intend to offer your services to landowners during the implementation and delivery of their project plans?**

If yes, provide details on the assistance or services you will offer (such as assistance with seedling ordering, site preparation, planting, management, grant reporting etc.).

(Up to 300 words)

**Do you anticipate landowners to engage external service providers?**

If yes, what kind of assistance do you anticipate landowners to engage? Is this consistent across the group?

If no, do you have confidence landowners choosing to implement their project themselves have the capacity to achieve success?

(Up to 300 words)

# Supporting Documentation Checklist

**Required supporting documents:**

-  Project plans for each participating landowner *(completed templates as per Appendix B of the Grant Guidelines and all required attachments)*

## Appendix B: Project plan template

### Victorian Trees on Farms Program Project Plan

All fields are required unless otherwise stated.

#### Applicant Details

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Name

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Email address

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Phone number

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Address

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ABN (if relevant)

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#### Landowner Details (if different from Applicant above)

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Name

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Email address

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Phone number

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Address

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ABN (if relevant)

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# Implementation-Readiness

**My project is implementation-ready because (please tick at least one of the following):**

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| A. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have engaged a professional service provider to co-design or assist the development of the Project Plan                      | <i>(Professional service provider to provide details below. Please attach the invoice to your application)</i> |
| B. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have participated in the Trees on Farms Incubator Program  | <i>(Please provide details below)</i>  |
| C. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have relevant experience, training, or have previously completed tree-growing activities                                     | <i>(Please provide details below and attach any supporting documents, i.e. plans or photos)</i>                |
| D. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have a previously developed farm master plan, an on-farm emissions reduction action plan, or similar tree-establishment plan | <i>(Please provide details below and attach any supporting documents, i.e. plans or photos)</i>                |

If you answered A, the professional service provider is to provide the following details:

Organisation / Business

Contact name

Email address

Phone number

**Area of expertise**

Experience of professional service provider

If you answered B, please provide details of the Incubator facilitator:

Organisation

Contact name

Email address

Phone number

**Details of your participation in Trees on Farms Incubator Program activities**

If you answered C or D, please provide details of your relevant experience or you farm master plan, on-farm emissions reduction action plan, or similar tree-establishment plan.

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# Property Details

Site Address

Local government area

Latitude (deg S) of project area

Longitude (deg E) of project area

Average rainfall (mm)

Soil type & depth

(If known / more info)

Elevation (m)

Slope class (deg)

0-15, 15-30, 30-50

Current land cover / use

Known weeds and pests

Known utilities on or adjacent  
to project planting area

*E.g. Powerlines, underground cables or pipes*

Protected areas & existing  
restrictions on project  
planting area

*E.g. Stream, native veg., Aboriginal heritage, caveats, easements etc.*

# Project Details

Does this project include areas managed for timber production?



Yes, all



Yes, partially



No

## Project objectives

*Detail the objectives of your Project and the proposed outcomes*

Total project plantable area (ha)

Hectares to be managed for farm forestry (% / ha)

## Planting type/Configuration

*E.g. Woodlot, shelterbelt, wide-spacing etc.*

No. of non-contiguous blocks across the Project

Minimum block size (ha)

Maximum block size (ha)

Minimum belt width (m)

Species names (% of each), and suitability to locality and project  
(Can also be provided as an attachment)

Detail site accessibility

# Project Preparation

Nursery for seedling purchases	Location	Species	Order date	Delivery timing

## Site Preparation

**Timing of site preparation**

**Contractor**  
(if applicable)

**Estimated cost**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
Cultivation & timing	<i>Discing, ripping, ripping &amp; mounding, nil, etc</i>

**Pre-planting weed control**      *Weed type, chemical to be used, timing, rate*

**Fencing**      *Extent of new fencing*

**Other site preparation considerations**

## Planting & Establishment

**Proposed planting completion date**

**Contractor**  
(if applicable)

**Target planting density**  
(stems per hectare)

**Distance between rows**      *Farm Forestry only*

**Distance between plants**      *Farm Forestry only*

**Fertilisation details**      *Fertiliser type, rate, application method*

**Browsing control**      *Tree guards, shooting etc*

## Post-Planting Management and Tending

Timing of management  
and tending

Contractor  
(If applicable)

Estimated cost

Activity	Description
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Infill planting

Post-plant weed control

Fire protection maintenance works

Disease and nutrient monitoring

Vermin and noxious weed control

Pruning

Inventory program  
(If applicable)

## Silviculture (Farm forestry only)

**Contractor**  
(If applicable)

**Estimated cost**

**Intended length**  Short rotation  Long rotation

**Intended products** E.g. Firewood, pulp, sawlog etc

Activity	Description	Percent material removed	Merchantable volume by product (Optional)
Form pruning			
Clearwood pruning			
First thinning			
Second thinning (Optional)			
Third thinning (Optional)			
Clearfell or proposed harvest schedule (Optional)			

## Additional Contractors or Service Providers (If applicable)

Contractor/service provider	Purpose	When will they be required?	Estimated cost

# Project Outcomes

## **Intended co-benefits of project**

## **Pathway to Market (Farm forestry only)**

## **Details of proposed pathway to market for products**

*List potential buyers/mill/markets that have been engaged and extend of those conversations*

## Carbon Sequestration

Visit [looc-c.farm](#) and view the estimates on your property:

- **Integrated environmental plantings** use the *Reforestation by environmental or mallee plantings* method
- **Farm Forestry plantings** use the *Establishing a new plantation forest* method

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**Estimated carbon sequestration  
over 25 years (tCO2-e)**

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**Estimate of annual per ha  
carbon sequestration  
(tCO2-e/ha/y)**

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**Does the project intend to  
generate carbon/biodiversity  
or other environmental credits  
(i.e. AC-CUs)?**

*If yes, please provide detail*

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**Does the project intend to  
account for carbon against other  
on-farm emissions (insetting)?**

*If yes, please provide detail*

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## Supporting Documentation Checklist

### Required supporting documents:

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 Project map and associated spatial data	<i>(.kml or .kmz shapefiles preferred of proposed Project land)</i>
 Detailed project budget	<i>(using provided-template and including details of co- investment and in-kind resources)</i>

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[agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au)