

Section 3: Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Planning Grants

Introduction

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Planning grants provide funds to develop and implement plans for the protection of agricultural land at risk of conversion to non-agricultural uses. This component of the program incentivizes local and regional governments to work closely with local stakeholders to develop local and regional land use policies and implementation activities that integrate agricultural land conservation in a way that reduces or avoids greenhouse gas emissions, supports job creation, and benefits AB 1550 populations.

Funding is limited to the eligible applicants and projects discussed below.

Eligible Applicants, Costs and Projects

Who May Apply

Counties, cities, local area formation commissions, and special districts are eligible to apply. The Department strongly encourages submittal of proposals that demonstrate a commitment to meaningful, actionable collaboration with stakeholders from multiple organizations (e.g., neighboring counties, cities, local area formation committees, agricultural organizations, land trusts, open space districts, community based organizations, and others). While there is no minimum number of partners that can be included in a proposal, priority scoring will be given to those applicants that are able to demonstrate strong and diverse partnerships.

Costs that May Be Reimbursed and Match Funding

Planning grants will reimburse grantees and participating stakeholders for all direct costs, including fully-burdened staff costs, incurred during the grant performance period and related to the project. All eligible costs must be supported by appropriate documentation. Costs incurred outside of the performance period, indirect/overhead costs, travel, food or beverages, and costs for CEQA document preparation are not eligible for reimbursement.

The application must include a minimum ten percent (10%) match funding. At least five percent (5%) of the requested grant amount must be a cash match; the balance may be in-kind. Match funds may be provided directly by the applicant or from other funding sources (e.g., other grant funds, local government contributions, or donations).

Projects

Planning grants are intended to assist communities in developing consensus-based plans that support policies and projects that maintain the economic viability of the community's agricultural industry, protect the agricultural land base, and avoids greenhouse gas emissions. Applicants may propose innovative projects that establish a comprehensive set of goals, policies, and objectives to support the long-term viability and protection of agricultural land; identify and designate priority land for conservation; and/or identify and designate a set of feasible implementation measures designed to promote those goals, policies and objectives.

Work plans should include:

- Community consensus building activities to develop a mitigation strategy for agricultural land when converted to other land uses, including providing general education and outreach about agricultural land conservation.
- Stakeholder meetings to support proposed project project planning.

The Department encourages grantees and participating stakeholders to consult Native American tribes in developing and implementing Planning projects.

Ineligible proposals will not be funded under this program and include proposals that:

- Do not meet the intent of the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program.
- Are not from an Eligible Applicant.
- Do not contain adequate documentation and required application materials, including a work plan, objectives, and deliverables.
- Are not received, in full, by the application deadline.

Eligibility and Selection Criteria

The Eligibility and Selection Criteria focus on actionable policies and implementation mechanisms to conserve land locally-determined to be strategic and under threat of conversion to other land uses. Project readiness, stakeholder collaboration, and leverage of existing conservation efforts are all important considerations in the review process.

Proposals must meet all of the Eligibility Criteria to be considered for funding.

Below are the Eligibility and Selection Criteria upon which each proposal will be evaluated.

Eligibility Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The proposal is from an eligible applicant. ○ The proposal is consistent with the program's goals. ○ The proposal contains clearly stated and reportable objectives, measures of progress, and deliverables. ○ The proposal supports the implementation of an adopted or draft Sustainable Communities Strategy or, if a Sustainable Communities Strategy is not required for a region by law, a regional plan¹² that includes policies and programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Proposals that meet all of the Eligibility Criteria will then scored using the Selection Criteria and ranked based on their score. Proposals will be awarded points for each Selection Criterion on a sliding scale from zero to the number listed in the Selection Criteria table. All information submitted in the application package will be used by reviewers to evaluate the proposal and should demonstrate how effectively the proposal meets the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program goals and objectives.

Selection Criteria	Points
<p><u>Project Need</u></p> <p>The proposal documents the threat of agricultural land conversion, the need to develop a plan to address the threat, how the proposed project will address the conversion risk, and any potential barriers to implementation. Points will be awarded based on the specificity with which the proposal identifies the types of data that will be used to evaluate agricultural resources, the local policies and ordinances it seeks to align, and the methods that will be used to resolve compatibility issues between these policies and ordinances, if any.</p>	25
<p><u>Co-Benefits</u></p> <p>The proposal documents economic, environmental, public health, or other co-benefits.</p>	15
<p><u>Proposal Evidences Collaboration</u></p> <p>The proposal provides evidence of durable collaboration among stakeholders.</p>	15

<u>Planning Integration</u>	10
The project complements other efforts in the Project geographic area, including comprehensive planning efforts and agricultural land use policies. The proposal documents how the project will leverage other permanently protected lands to promote location and resource-efficient development.	
<u>Organizational capacity</u>	10
The proposal documents that the lead applicant and identified stakeholders have the capacity to successfully execute proposed work on time and within budget using recent examples from similar projects.	
<u>Priority population benefits</u>	5
The proposal qualifies for priority population status as described in Appendix B.	
Total possible points	80

Selection for funding may not be determined by a project's selection criteria score alone. In determining which projects to award grant funding, the Strategic Growth Council may also consider factors including AHSC's goals and objectives, geographic distribution of funds, the urgency of the project, and the Strategic Growth Council's priorities. Alternate projects may be identified and recommended for approval by the Strategic Growth Council in the current round of funding in the event that any of the recommended projects loses funding. The Strategic Growth Council may award grants that partially fulfill the applicants request.

Application Review and Award Process

Applicants are encouraged to submit a pre-proposal to the Department for a preliminary review of the proposed project prior to submission of a full application. Pre-proposals are reviewed and technical assistance is provided to facilitate the development of the application as needed.

Applications will be reviewed for completeness, whether they meet the Eligibility Criteria, and, if the Eligibility Criteria are met, the extent to which they meet the Selection Criteria. Incomplete applications may not be evaluated or considered for funding at the sole discretion of the State.

Following review of the Eligibility and scoring using the Selection Criteria, all eligible applications will be reviewed and evaluated by an Interagency Committee consisting of representatives from the California Natural Resources Agency, Department of Food and Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency, and the Strategic Growth Council. This committee will make the final determination on which proposals are recommended to the Strategic Growth Council for funding. The Interagency Committee's decision will be shared with Strategic Growth Council staff and presented for Strategic Growth Council approval.

A summary of each proposal, the California Climate Investments funding request, and priority population benefits status will be posted at least ten days before the Strategic Growth Council makes project awards. The Strategic Growth Council determines final project awards and will announce these awards at a public meeting. Applicants will be notified in writing of the Strategic Growth Council's decision by the Department upon award following the meeting at which the awards are announced.

Application Requirements

The application package is comprised of a Checklist, Cover Sheet, Executive Summary not to exceed 2 pages, Application Questions Responses, Priority Population Benefits Checklist (if applicable), Work Plan, Budget, and Supporting Documents. Please see the Department's website <http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/SALCP/Pages/Index.aspx> for forms and supporting material.

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Planning Grants <i>(All components are required unless otherwise noted)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Grant Application Checklist○ Grant Application Cover Sheet○ Executive Summary (1-page maximum)○ Application Questions Responses○ Work Plan○ Budget○ Supporting Documents○ Priority Population Benefits Checklist and supporting documentation (only required if applying for priority population status)