



RCD FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Assisting Districts to Meet RCD Performance Standards

DRAFT GUIDELINES

November 15th 2016

The California Department of Conservation (Department) is asking for your input to help develop guidelines for the upcoming Resource Conservation District (RCD) Capacity Building Financial Assistance Program. The Department is seeking your input on the **draft** guidelines on matters that are the most substantive or critical where you currently have capacity building activities, or want to begin capacity building activities, to strengthen your RCD and to better manage natural resources within your district.

Please review these **draft** guidelines and consider how these funds would help strengthen your district and build your organizational capacity to meet state requirements and better serve your community and natural resource goals.

Comments should be sent in writing to the Dept. of Conservation RCD Assistance Program.

Email: RCD@conservation.ca.gov

Mailing: Dept. of Conservation
Land Resource Protection
801 K Street, MS 14-15
Sacramento, CA 95814
Attn: RCD Assistance Program

When providing comments, please include the following information:

Name
Organization
Phone
Email address
County

If you have questions, please call or email:

Jenny Di Stefano 916/804-2345 Jenny.E.DiStefano@conservation.ca.gov

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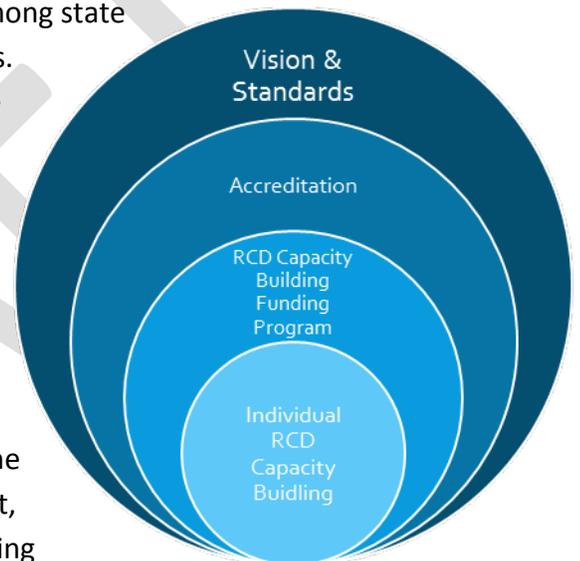
Close of Public Comment Period: December 9th 2016, 5:00pm

PURPOSE

The RCD Capacity Building Financial Assistance funding is intended to enable RCDs to improve and enhance their ability to achieve their mission and sustain themselves over time. Consistent with the California Association of RCD's vision statement¹, assistance funding will help RCDs reach the goal of becoming more relevant, excellent, and visible. RCDs with a higher capacity have the ability to better serve their community and address local resource concerns. Increasing the effectiveness of RCDs will induce additional resource conservation and management both locally and throughout the state.

BACKGROUND

Resource Conservation Districts are an important but sometimes overlooked part of the state conservation delivery system. RCDs provide a critical link among state agency programs, federal agency programs, and landowners. RCDs help implement many programs that are critical to the state's natural resources. Most RCDs receive little to no property tax funding and rely on grants and donations to operate. As a result, RCDs frequently lack the resources to focus on enhancing or expanding their capacity. In 2014, the RCDs adopted a document titled *Planning for the Future: A Statewide Pathway to Excellence in Service!* The document established a set of standards developed by over 75 people to guide RCDs in their operations. The intent of the standards was to give RCDs a roadmap to becoming relevant, excellent, and visible. Many RCDs have been diligently working towards meeting these standards. The funding available through the assistance program will be available to all RCDs who have met the Tier 1 Good Governance accreditation standards as defined by the Department regulations adopted in 2016. A smaller portion of funding will be available to RCDs as part of a "bootstrap" program for those RCDs that lack the financial resources to achieve Tier 1 accreditation. Funding will be used to help RCDs enhance or expand their ability to address local resource conservation issues; perform their duties transparently with strong, effective, and sustainable leadership; and, increase visibility of their activity through outreach activities, partnership development, and more.



PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS

¹ Planning for the Future: A Statewide Pathway to Excellence in Service!, <http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/RCD/Documents/Planning%20for%20the%20Future%20Packet.pdf>

The state can most effectively manage and achieve benefits to natural resources by working in concert with local communities and federal and local agencies. Through supporting RCDs with technical assistance and funding the Department can promote sustainability and effective resource conservation management throughout California. The state's financial assistance will be used to assist RCDs in increasing capacity with the purpose of benefitting natural resource conditions throughout California.

These funds will be used to assist RCDs: to meet state laws and regulations, to increase organizational capacity, and to develop programs and projects that both increase capacity and provide a natural resource benefit.

RCDs seeking funding for capacity building should work to form, develop, and/or enhance sustainability of the operation of the organization.

Many RCDs depend on grants/funding that are tied to specific project deliverables. This type of funding model leaves little funds to develop projects that can increase the overall capacity of the RCD. Organizations that rely on grant funding are frequently unable to fund administrative and capacity building activities that are crucial to develop a higher functioning district. This funding should be considered as an investment to develop capacity for which funding is not otherwise available.

GUIDELINES

This document represents **draft** guidelines. The department is requesting public comment through 5pm on December 9th 2016. Please see Page 1 of these guidelines for commenting instructions.

FUNDING CATEGORIES & REQUIREMENTS

The basis for defining capacity building activities are represented by performance measures in the RCD standards. Activities in the funding request work plan should fall into Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 performance measures. Each RCD will have the opportunity to choose its preferred funding category under which they will apply. An RCD can only be funded in one category.* The general funding categories are:

1. Bootstrap Category: Getting to Tier 1 Accreditation
2. Relevant, Excellent and Visible (REV) Category: Tier 1 and Beyond

* An RCD acting as a fiscal sponsor for a Bootstrap RCD is eligible to request and receive R.E.V. capacity building funding.

Bootstrap Category: “Getting to Tier 1”

- RCD does not currently qualify for Tier 1 accreditation.
- RCD must achieve Tier 1 accreditation by the end of the agreement.
- Actual cost not to exceed \$10,000 per district.
- A portion of the funds must be spent on Tier 1 eligible costs.
- If an RCD desires to work on Tier 2 activities the work plan must include phases (“Achieving Tier 1” phase and “Tier 2 Activities” phase).
- The work plan must include Tier 1 activities that will be completed before Tier 2 activities can begin. After Tier 1 activities are completed, remaining funds can be used on Tier 2 and Tier 3 activities.
- All activities must be identified in the initial work plan.
- We estimate that approximately 10% of the total funding will be awarded in this category, a total of \$250,000 statewide.

Bootstrap Fiscal Sponsor Option “Tier 1 RCDs act as Fiscal Sponsors for Bootstrap RCDs”

This is a sub-category of the bootstrap funding category. This sub-category allows for Tier 1 RCDs to apply for funding to assist Bootstrap RCDs in achieving Tier 1.

- The RCD applying as the Fiscal Sponsor must be Tier 1 accredited.
- The Bootstrap RCD does not qualify for Tier 1 accreditation.
- The Bootstrap RCD must achieve Tier 1 by the end of the agreement.
- Actual cost not to exceed \$10,000 per district.
- A portion of the funds must be spent on Tier 1 eligible costs.
- If the Bootstrap RCD would like to work on Tier 2 activities the work plan must include phases (“Achieving Tier 1” phase and “Tier 2 Activities” phase).
- The work plan must include Tier 1 activities that will be completed before Tier 2 activities can begin. After Tier 1 activities are completed remaining funds can be used on Tier 2 and Tier 3 activities.
- All activities must be identified in the initial work plan.
- In addition to the \$10,000 funding cap, the Fiscal Sponsor RCD can request up to 10% additional funds for administration.
- Fiscal Sponsor RCDs can apply to support up to five Bootstrap RCDs.
- Fiscal Sponsor RCDs are not precluded from applying for their own R.E.V. Capacity building assistance funding.

- There must be a MOU between the Fiscal Sponsor RCD and Bootstrap RCD, in which each RCD approves of the funding application and work plan. The MOU should be included in the funding request and must be signed by the RCD Board Presidents from both the fiscal sponsor and bootstrap RCDs.
- The Bootstrap RCD is responsible for ensuring work plan completion with assistance from the Fiscal Sponsor.

R.E.V. Capacity Building Category: “Increasing the performance and capacity of Tier 1 RCDs”

- RCD must be accredited as Tier 1 to be funded in this category.
- All activities must directly correlate to Tier 2 & Tier 3 deliverables as described in the *Vision and Standards* document.
- The maximum amount of funding will be calculated based on the number of awardees in this category.
- Work plan and budget should be developed in a way to accommodate the fluctuation in potential funding (i.e. scaled down dependent on final funding amount).
- The estimated minimum funding per RCD is \$35,000. The estimated maximum funding per RCD is \$90,000.
- Approximately 85% of the total funding will be awarded in this category, a total of \$2,125,000.

ELIGIBILITY

The following are eligibility requirements:

Funding requests must be from a Resource Conservation District as defined and formed pursuant to Division 9 of the California Public Resource Code.

District must have passed a resolution approving submission of application.

RCDs requesting R.E.V.'d funding must have received Good Governance accreditation from the Department of Conservation.

AUTHORIZED COSTS

No matching funds are required for this funding.

Eligible costs as outlined in the approved work plan and budget will be reimbursed up to actual incurred costs. *This is a cost-reimbursement program.*

BOOTSTRAP CATEGORY AUTHORIZED COSTS:

- Audit
- Insurance
- Facilitator/staff cost for plan or policy development.
- Sexual Harassment training for board and staff

R.E.V'D CAPACITY BUILDING CATEGORY ELIGIBLE COSTS:

This funding will provide assistance to RCDs to develop and support projects and programs that build RCD capacity to increase performance as outlined in Tier 2 and Tier 3 activities in the RCD Standards. Multiple activities can be identified in the RCD's application for funding and work plan.

Eligible activities/costs could include, but are not limited to:

Relevant Activities:

Activity that will increase capacity to achieve RCD strategic plan goals.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff costs to support completion of a goal identified in the strategic plan
- Equipment that will increase the capacity of the RCD to achieve a goal (no vehicles)..

Community outreach/ working groups to define community needs, resource issue planning.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff costs to develop community work groups, host meetings, etc.
- Outreach Costs (room rental, mailing costs, publication costs)

Volunteer recruitment, workshops, public education, and internship program.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff costs (including interns)
- Outreach Costs (room rental, mailing costs, publication costs)

Create/maintain collaborative stakeholder groups.

Eligible cost could include:

- Outreach materials
- Staff costs

CARCD conference attendance/ regional meeting attendance.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Costs
- Travel

- Registration

Host multiple RCD meeting/ workshop, develop regional/multiple RCD project/funding proposal, regional staff.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Costs
- Travel

Develop mentorship program with neighboring RCDs.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Costs
- Travel

Regional Watershed planning efforts, regional resource issues planning.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Costs

Conduct research in emerging resource issues.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Cost
- Equipment

Professional development (building leaders of staff and directors).

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Time
- Travel
- Training Attendance/Registration

Excellent Activities:

Creating a funding plan, donation/fundraising, fee for service program, grant writing.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Costs

Develop a resource library.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Costs
- Software

Develop a reporting procedure for RCD programs, quantify long-term RCD impact on resources.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Costs
- Software

Facilitation of annual self-assessment.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Costs

Develop succession plan.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Costs

Visible Activities:

Eligible Activity: Organize local legislative days, watershed tours, newsletters, publish and distribute annual report.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Costs
- Software
- Mailing Costs
- Printing Costs

Eligible Activity: Website development or maintenance.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Costs
- Software
- Domain/Subscription fees

Eligible Activity: Participation in statewide efforts.

Eligible cost could include:

- Staff Costs
- Travel

Regional/Group Activities: A regional or multiple RCD effort is an allowable arrangement, as long as the overall activity is identified as a Tier 2 or Tier 3 performance measure. RCDs must identify the regional activity in each of the participating RCD's individual work plans. If a regional or multiple RCD activity is included in the work plan, each individual RCD must apply for funding and have a separate contract (Interagency Agreement) with the state (Department).

Other allowable costs: Costs associated with consolidations and/or boundary line adjustments.

Staff Cost: Staff cost include actual salary and benefits up to 32%.

Technical staff: RCD must include a work plan that clearly shows how technical staff will help develop the capacity of the RCD to meet resource needs.

Equipment that will be used in program development:

Including:

- Equipment that will be used to create a natural resource based fee-for-service program, such as: no-till drill, chipper, etc.
- Equipment that will expand the district’s ability to meet community resource needs, such as: tools, plotters, GIS software, etc.

Non-Allowable Costs:

- Vehicles
- Furniture
- Real Estate
- Construction materials
- Heavy equipment rental
- Food and beverages

QUANTIFIABLE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The Program requires the applicant to include a comprehensive work plan for RCD capacity building. Applicants must complete a work plan form (Attachment A) and a work plan narrative. The work plan must include measurable benchmarks for the work towards performance measures identified in the RCD Vision and Standards document. The work plan narrative must be detailed to clearly ensure accountability to the state. The narrative should describe how the work accomplished will build the capacity of the RCD, detailing how this work will allow the RCD to accomplish natural resource related goals in the district. The work plan should also describe how this work will be sustained beyond the term of funding.

WORK PLAN CRITERIA

Activities included in the work plan will be evaluated on how well they respond to the requirement to support RCD capacity building. Activities or expenses that do not help build RCD capacity may be removed from the work plan at the discretion of DOC. Work plans do not have to meet all of the criteria listed below, only those that are applicable to the RCD’s planned work.

Specific criteria include:

- Evidence of measurable benefits to natural resource conditions in the district, and sustainability of the benefits achieved.

- Evidence of measurable benefits to operational functionality of the district, and sustainability of the benefits achieved.
- Evidence of measurable benefits to technical functionality of the district, and sustainability of the benefits achieved.
- Development and support of programs that support the district in its long-term mission and goals.
- Evidence of achieving Good Governance state requirements as described in the Department's Tier 1 regulations.
- Performance measurement and reporting of district current capacity and goals for improvement.
- The scope of work and work plan, including performance measures and benchmarks of effectiveness.
- Strategies to obtain additional funding to continue capacity building efforts.
- Demonstrated ability of the applicant to effectively administer funding and deliver the program.
- Proposed budget is reasonable in supporting the work plan, taking into account the amount awarded will be determined by the number of eligible applicants.

SCHEDULE

The RCD Financial Assistance Program anticipates release of the funding request solicitation early in January 2017. Release of the solicitation may be delayed due to circumstances beyond the control of the Department.

- Anticipated Agreement Term: May 2017 – June 2018
- Early January 2017 - Notice of funding availability
- Late February 2017 - Deadline for funding request
- Early April 2017 - Determination of awardees

APPENDICES

- A. Sample Work Plan Form
- B. Sample Budget Form