



Phase 1 Solicitation Q&A

Logistical:

1. How many awards will be made in each phase?
 - In Phase 1 (application live now), there will be ~8 awards of up to \$500,000 each, for a total of no more than \$4,000,000. In Phase 2 (expected to be released winter 2023/2024), we anticipate selecting up to 4 awards for \$10-20M each.
2. Are there Excel or Word versions of the attachments in the solicitation?
 - Please send a request for interactive PDFs of the Phase 1 attachments to DOCForestBiofuelsPilot@Conservation.CA.gov.
3. Does the Permit Approval Status Form refer to permits in Phase 1, or both phases?
 - The intent of the Permit Approval Status Form is to prompt the applicant to identify all permits that may be applicable to their Phase 2 project, recognizing that they may not have a full or complete picture at this point. If an applicant is seeking funding for a Phase 1 project that includes permit requirements, their Phase 1 permits should be included and specified.
4. Are there any opportunities to connect across technologies and sectors?
 - The applicant list will be made public once the solicitation closes. Applicants interested in building connections across technologies and sectors for this solicitation are encouraged to contact industry advocacy groups such as the Bioenergy Association of California, California State Association of Counties, and the Rural County Representatives of California.
5. What departments and agencies are involved in the review process?
 - CA Department of Conservation, CA Air Resources Board, CA Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, CA Energy Commission, CA Governor's Office of Planning and Research, CA Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank, CA Public Utilities Commission – Office of the Public Advocate, and the US Forest Service.
6. Would a liquid fuel sold in ports of California be an eligible "California use"?
 - Yes, a fuel produced in California and sold in California would be considered a "California use".
7. If feedstock will be produced into liquid biofuel and/or hydrogen that can be used onsite for restoration and resiliency efforts, is that equivalent to a "California use" of the product?
 - Yes, it would be an eligible "California use." Independent sale to a third-party is not required for eligibility, however, applicants are encouraged to consider the climate impacts of whatever the next-stage use is of that output/product.
8. If an applicant is considering multiple sites, can they submit the Phase 1 application with multiple sites listed and finalize site selection during Phase 1?
 - Yes.



Sierra Nevada Location:

9. What is the geologic definition of the Sierra Nevada?
 - We are not relying on one specific interpretation of the geologic definition of the Sierra Nevada to determine project eligibility. If you would like to use the geologic definition of the Sierra Nevada, we would recommend utilizing a map from a reputable source (e.g., California Geological Survey, United States Geological Survey).
10. Is the program's definition of the Sierra Nevada location 10 miles in a straight line ("as the crow flies") from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's map boundary?
 - Yes, but limited to California.
11. If at least 60% of the biomass must come from the Sierra Nevada (as defined), can the biorefinery be built and operate outside the 10-mile radius of the Sierra Nevada and still qualify on equal footing as a project within that boundary?
 - A majority of the capital expenditures associated with an integrated project, including the processing facility and associated infrastructure, must be located within the Sierra Nevada. Project reviewers will consider infrastructure location as compared with total bone-dry tons and/or percentage of a facility's expected biomass usage that is coming from the Sierra Nevada. Project reviewers will consider all these variables when considering what "in the Sierra Nevada" includes for the cohort of applications received and will score accordingly.
12. For the purposes of determining feedstock source, will biomass feedstock from anywhere within the Sierra Nevada (as defined) be considered equally no matter how far the source material is from the facility using it? (We understand that the distance traveled may impact the LCA calculations.)
 - Yes.
13. What documentation will you require to show proof a project uses 60% or more forest biomass waste sourced from the Sierra Nevada?
 - In Phase 1 applications, we understand that applicants may not have the level of detail required to demonstrate certainty of feedstock sourcing, however, we ask you to be as specific as you're able in terms of where the applicant's intentions lie for sourcing and long-term contracting. The agency team expects to calculate feedstock sourcing percentages more formally in Phase 2, and will likely take the approach of evaluating this on an annual basis, based on total facility bone dry tons utilized.

To Be Funded Activities:

14. What level of detail is required for the "To-Be-Funded Activities"?
 - Larger numbers (e.g., aggregating smaller, but similar, task costs) will allow the program to be more efficient in managing funds; however, if there are details you would like to highlight, please feel free to break them out into line items.



15. Does FEED (FEL-3) need to be completed by Phase 2 application? If not, can Phase 2 funding be used to finalize FEED?

- In order to be eligible for Phase 2 funds, the project must be at FEL-2 or higher. Phase 2 funding may be awarded to an applicant whose project which has not yet achieved FEL-3, but the applicant will likely need to complete FEL-3 prior to accessing the DOC's Phase 2 grant award. Note that these expectations are just placeholders right now and will be finalized in greater detail with the Phase 2 application materials, which we expect to release in the middle of 2023. There will be opportunity for public comments in the development of these Phase 2 guidelines.

16. All the work for technology development, engineering, LCA can be used on future projects. Will funds only be allowed for this initial research or are they required to be tied to a specific site?

- This work is not required to be tied to a specific site at this time. Please see Question 8 in the "Logistical" section, above.

Community:

17. Are there any other communities that would also be considered disadvantaged for this project (e.g., racial minority, mental health, etc.) or is it strictly based on household income?

- Initially, the solicitation included both disadvantaged communities (as defined in [PRC Section 75005\(g\)](#)) and environmental justice communities (as defined by [CalEPA using CalEnviroScreen](#)). However, environmental justice communities were removed because there are none located in the Sierra Nevada. If an applicant chooses to use a definition of the Sierra Nevada that extends into environmental justice communities or proposes to benefit environmental justice communities, please include that information in the application.

18. Are there any examples of programs with strong community collaboration or that created real change in the community?

- The CA Energy Commission has great examples on their [Energize Innovation site](#), which houses an online database of CEC-funded research projects, and the Department of Water Resources' [Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program site](#) contains materials that local groups have created.

19. Is permitting expedited when working on tribal lands?

- Depending on which permits are required, permitting on tribal lands may streamline your process. However, as a project with state funding, CEQA compliance will still be required.

20. Who should the letters of support and intent be addressed to?

- Letters of support and intent may be addressed to Director David Shabazian.

21. Will local capacity building have to be established in a binding community benefits agreement?

- No, the recommendations and examples listed in the Solicitation Guidelines will be sufficient for Phase 1.



Engineering:

22. Can you clarify the TRL expectations and favorability scoring?

- The proposed technology is expected to be a TRL 6 or above. Technologies at a TRL 8 or above may be awarded up to 10 favorability points that do not count toward Core Scoring Criteria, but will benefit the applicant's total score.

Negative Carbon Accounting:

23. For the purpose of the preliminary life cycle analysis (LCA) required for Phase I applications, does the Department of Conservation assume that wood removed to reduce wildfire risk is already at a carbon negative score? If not, how would a participant create a carbon negative fuel?

- Removal of residues to reduce wildfire risk is not in itself a carbon negative activity. Feedstock that meets the definition of "forest biomass waste" may be considered "carbon neutral" (i.e., a waste with no associated upstream emissions) for the purpose of the preliminary LCA. Therefore, in order to achieve a negative carbon fuel, the project must involve some form of carbon storage such as carbon capture and sequestration (i.e., geologic sequestration or CCS); permanently sequester carbon in products such as biochar; or other permanent storage mechanism.

24. Will the Department of Conservation consider publishing LCAs for the feedstocks within their boundaries based on various use cases?

- The Department of Conservation will not be publishing LCAs for any particular feedstock, as the LCA work is expected to be specific to each individual project.

Financial Feasibility:

25. Please elaborate on matching funds and what is expected as a "demonstration of prior investment"?

- Due to the size and complexity of these projects, additional funding sources are expected to be necessary to complete a successful project. While match funding will not be formally tracked as a component of the grant award, the Department of Conservation does expect to see as full accounting as is possible of the investment the applicant has made thus far. Applicants should include information on complementary grants, community outreach investments, partnership building, technological investments, or other work that has built the foundation on which the application now stands. This demonstration investment tells the state that the applicant is in this for the long haul and has both the capacity and the drive to move a large, complicated project through to completion.

26. Can the funding from the Department of Conservation be stacked with funding from the USDA or EPA for carbon capture and storage?

- Additional funding sources are expected, highly encouraged, and should be included in your application. This represents an excellent demonstration of prior, and diversified, investment (see response to Question 25, above).

27. Will cost share be a factor within any of the Phase 1 scoring criteria?

- Financial feasibility is part of the Phase 1 scoring criteria. This solicitation does not have any formal match requirements, but please see the answers to Questions 25 and 26, above, for more information on the Department's expectation of demonstrating prior investment.



Execution:

28. What is the purpose of the scoring methodology utilized in the Feedstock Supply Scoring Table – Forest Treatment Types?
- The scoring methodology for Phase 2 is included to inform the applicants of what to expect for the project implementation phase, and what feedstocks (e.g., from the Sierra Nevada) will be prioritized under the program as they seek supply contracts.
29. Will the nuances of ecologically beneficial clear-cutting feedstock be considered in during scoring forest treatment types (e.g., burned lands that need to be cleared before replanting, lands with high tree mortality due to beetle infestation, etc.)?
- To the extent that the applicant includes a description of the co-benefits of forest management, those will be considered within the guidelines in Table 7 and recognizing the potential ecological impacts of clearcutting even in instances of high tree mortality. The interagency application review team includes woody biomass and forest management experts from both state and federal agencies.
30. Does a project using post-fire feedstock that contains both burned and unburned fuels still qualify?
- If it is within a recent fire footprint, but there are unburned fuels that you can justify would reduce wildfire risk or otherwise improve forest and watershed health, that would qualify.

Any non-technical and/or logistical questions may be addressed to: DOCForestBiofuelsPilot@Conservation.CA.gov