

Section 2: Agricultural Conservation Capacity and Project Development Grants

CARB encourages programs that utilize California Climate Investments dollars to provide program-specific technical assistance to potential applicants in order to assist them in developing projects and preparing and submitting applications. Additional investments are needed to help stakeholders develop and complete projects at the pace and scale required to meet the State's goal of conserving thirty percent of California's land by 2030.

Funding

Up to \$3 million dollars is available for funding agricultural conservation acquisition capacity and project development grants ("capacity grants") through this solicitation, with an additional \$3 million to be made available for the same purpose in each of the two subsequent solicitations. Funds not awarded for acquisition capacity grants may be awarded to fund acquisition or planning grants.

Capacity grants will be awarded as follows:

- Tier 1: Grants of up to \$100,000 are available to applicants to build organizational and financial capacity to develop agricultural conservation acquisition projects. These grants are available to applicants for which this would be their first capacity grant with the Department or who have 0 - 2 paid staff.
- Tier 2: Grants of up to \$250,000 are available to applicants to expand existing organizational capacity to develop agricultural conservation acquisition projects to increase the pace and scale of their agricultural land conservation efforts. These grants are available to applicants who have 3 or more paid staff or have received a capacity grant from the Department previously, and who can demonstrate the organizational and fiscal capacity to complete the work outlined in their work plan.

Tier 1 applicants may request an increase in funding up to a total grant award of \$250,000 during their grant term if they can demonstrate the organizational and fiscal capacity to administer additional funds within their remaining grant term. Award increases shall be prorated based on the remaining grant term, shall be at the discretion of the Executive Director of SGC, and may only be made if funding is available.

To demonstrate organizational capacity, Tier 2 applicants and Tier 1 grantees requesting an increase in their award must:

- Have a board and/or management structure that provides oversight over staff work

- Have access to and utilize relevant tools and resources to track projects and the expenditure of grant funds, such as grant management software or spreadsheets, financial tracking systems, geographic information systems, etc
- Have professional staff within the applicant's employ who have the knowledge and expertise to successfully develop conservation acquisition projects
- Have experience successfully developing conservation acquisition projects within the last three (3) years
- Where non-profit applicants intend to be the easement or fee title holder of the acquired property, be accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission or have adopted equivalent or greater policies regarding conflict of interest, amendments, monitoring, stewardship endowments, and enforcement, as relevant.

Tier 2 applicants and Tier 1 grantees requesting an increase in their award must provide the following to demonstrate fiscal capacity to administer a grant:

- A copy of the current annual organizational budget.
- A copy of the most recent financial audit (if an audit is not available, a copy of the organization's recent financial statements).

Grant Term

Capacity grants will be awarded for an initial term of three years.

Eligible Applicants

Cities, counties, non-profit organizations, resource conservation districts, regional park or open-space districts, regional park or open-space authorities, and federally recognized California Native American tribe or a nonfederally recognized California Native American tribe that is on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission, are eligible to apply for capacity funding.

The applicant must have the conservation of agriculture, rangeland, or farmland among their stated purposes, as is prescribed by statute, or as expressed in the entity's adopted policies.

Non-profit applicants must hold a tax exemption as defined under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code and further qualify under Internal Revenue Code Sections 170(b)(1)(A)(vi) or 170(h)(3).

Eligible Activities

SALC capacity grants will be provided to: 1) build organizational and financial capacity to develop agricultural conservation acquisition projects, 2) assist eligible applicants in developing agricultural conservation easement and fee acquisition projects in preparation for submitting such projects for acquisition funding in future rounds, and 3) provide funds to cover associated costs to help close agricultural conservation acquisition projects where the cost of the acquisition is covered by an alternate source of funding.

Agricultural conservation acquisition project(s) developed using this funding must meet the Eligibility Criteria listed in the table below to be considered for funding.

Eligible and Ineligible Costs

Direct Costs

Direct costs incurred to develop agricultural conservation acquisition projects are eligible for reimbursement.

Eligible direct costs are:

- Fully-burdened applicant staff time for:
 - landowner outreach
 - engagement with stakeholders and partners in activities directly related to the proposed project
 - title work
 - project mapping
 - acquisition negotiations
- SALC acquisition grant application preparation
- Baseline documentation
- Technical and legal consulting
- One appraisal and one appraisal update per project
- Preliminary title reports
- Escrow closing costs
- One appraisal per project where the cost of the acquisition is paid for by a funding source other than SALC
- Translation and interpretation services
- Technical or virtual meeting software, subscriptions, or applications other than basic word processing programs
- Staff time to develop and prepare organizational documents, processes, and/or tools for the efficient tracking and development of agricultural conservation acquisitions, if those documents, processes, and/or systems do not exist at the time the project is funded

Costs subject to Department review and approval are:

- Mineral remoteness evaluations
- Environmental site assessments
- Property boundary surveys
- Building envelope surveys

Any projects developed or projects for which associated costs are funded using capacity dollars must meet the eligibility requirements for SALC acquisition funding to be reimbursed

To the extent that such activities are directly related to developing and completing agricultural conservation acquisition projects, applicants are encouraged to utilize funding to:

- Collaborate and participate in knowledge sharing with partners
- Engage diverse populations, particularly members of severely disadvantaged communities, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and tribal communities, to increase awareness within those communities about specific programs and opportunities
- Implement or expand the use of multilingual and culturally appropriate materials in communications and educational strategies related to the proposal.

Indirect costs should not be included in the budgeted staff rate or salary. Indirect costs should be budgeted separately and must comply with the requirements outlined below.

Travel costs

In-state travel for grantee's staff is eligible as necessary to complete project work. Costs must meet the requirements outlined below and in the Grant Agreement:

- Accommodation-related travel costs: maximum reimbursement rates based on county as shown here: <http://www.calhr.ca.gov/employees/Pages/travel-lodging-reimbursement.aspx>, with no option for approval of an "excess lodging rate."
- Rental car costs or personal vehicle mileage for travel directly related to the grant will be reimbursed at the relevant rental car or Reimbursement Rate Per Mile for Personal Vehicle as shown here: <http://www.calhr.ca.gov/employees/Pages/travel-personal-vehicle.aspx>.

- Rental car, personal vehicle, ride share, train, or airfare costs will only be reimbursed for travel directly related to execution of the work plan, and then only if it is the typical method used to get from one location to the other. Grantees should choose the least expensive mode of transportation feasible given their travel needs.
- No other travel-related costs will be reimbursed through this grant program.

Education and training costs

Up to two percent (2%) of the grant award may be used to cover direct costs to attend trainings or meetings to improve the applicant's skill, efficiency, or expertise in agricultural land conservation in order to complete the proposed project. All education and training costs are subject to review and approval by the Department.

Indirect costs

Indirect costs are limited to the applicant's federally negotiated indirect cost rate. If no federally negotiated indirect cost rate is available, indirect costs may account for no more than twenty percent (20%) of the total grant award and may include those costs incurred by the grantee to administer the grant, such as:

- Office space
- Office supplies
- Legal or management oversight
- Prorated general liability, Workers' Compensation (may be included in payroll), and automotive insurance

Grantees may use this funding to compensate partners and stakeholders for work performed directly relating to the strategic planning process.

Ineligible associated costs are:

- Ceremonial expenses (including food and beverages)
- Expenses for publicity
- Bonus payments of any kind
- Interest expenses
- Damage judgments arising from the acquisition, construction, or equipping of a facility, whether determined by judicial process, arbitration, negotiation, or otherwise

- Services, materials, or equipment obtained under any other State program
- Real estate brokerage fees and/or expenses
- Legal defense funds

Eligibility and Selection Criteria for Acquisition Capacity Grants

The information submitted in the application will be evaluated by reviewers and should demonstrate how effectively the proposal will meet the SALC Program goals and objectives.

Projects must meet all Eligibility Criteria to be considered for funding. Projects that meet all of the Eligibility Criteria are then evaluated based on how well the proposed project meets the SALC Program’s goals and objectives, as evidenced through their Selection Criteria scores.

In determining which applications to fund, the State may also consider factors including, but not limited to, geographic distribution of funds, the urgency of the project, and the Administration’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 is withdrawn. All proposals that meet the Eligibility Criteria are evaluated relative to the pool of applications received this Round.

All proposals will be reviewed using the following Eligibility Criteria and Selection Criteria:

Agricultural Conservation Acquisition Project Development Eligibility Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant is an Eligible Applicant as defined on Page 14. • The proposal is for an eligible activity. • The proposal demonstrates that the requested funding will increase the applicant’s capacity to initiate and conduct agricultural land conservation activities.

Agricultural Conservation Acquisition Project Development Grants Selection Criteria	Points
Program Goals	
The extent to which the project(s) proposed for development meet the program's goals.	/35
Equity	
The extent to which the proposal will advance equity and opportunity by providing meaningful benefits to a priority population or increasing new,	/30

Veteran, or Native American farmer or rancher access or tribal access to State funding for agricultural conservation acquisitions.	
Sustainability	
The extent to which the application demonstrates that increased organizational capacity to develop projects will be sustained after the life of the grant.	/20
Budget	
The costs described in the applicant's budget are reasonable costs likely to be incurred in the development of one or more agricultural conservation acquisition projects.	/15
Total points received/Total points possible	/100

Capacity Grant Application Review Process

SALC Program staff are available prior to the application deadline to provide technical assistance to eligible applicants interested in submitting an application.

Application Review

All applications received by the Department will be evaluated based on the materials provided as of the application deadline, as well as a review of publically available information as reasonable to verify the provided information. Applicants interested in receiving technical assistance prior to submission of an application may contact the Department with questions. Applications will be reviewed for completeness, whether they meet the Eligibility Criteria, and 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 the Department's initial review of the projects in relation to the Eligibility Criteria and Selection Criteria, an Interagency Committee consisting of Agency, Department of Food and Agriculture, Department of Water Resources, the Council, and the Department will review and evaluate all applications. This committee will make the final determination on which projects are recommended to the Council for funding.

A summary of each project application, the California Climate Investments funding request, and priority population benefits status will be posted at least ten days before the Council makes project awards. The Council determines the final awards and will announce these awards at a public meeting. Applicants will be formally notified of the Council's decision via a decision letter following the meeting at which the awards are announced.

Capacity Applications

This section provides additional information regarding the components of the Application for Project Development grants. Applicants that intend to seek SALC Program Acquisition funding for projects developed under this component of the program are encouraged to read the General Information Regarding Agricultural Conservation Acquisition Requirements found in Section X of these Guidelines prior to preparing their Project Development application. All SALC-funded Acquisitions are subject to these Requirements. Please see the Department's website for forms and supporting material.

Project Development Application Components

All items are required unless otherwise noted:

- Grant Application Checklist
- Grant Application Cover Sheet
- Executive Summary (1/2-page maximum)
- Narrative Questions
- Applicant Resolution of Support
- Work Plan
- Budget
- Documentation of Organizational Eligibility
- Maps of proposed project boundary(ies), if available
- Priority Population Benefits Table (if applying for priority population status)
- Documentation of Organizational Capacity (Tier 2 funding applications only)

Documentation of organization eligibility is the same as for agricultural conservation acquisition grants (see Section 3). Applicants may certify that the most current versions of their eligibility documents are on file with the Department in lieu of submitting the documents themselves.