

## Section 4: Agricultural Conservation Planning Grants

Planning grants provide funds to develop plans that conserve agricultural lands by designing and implementing land use policies and accompanying strategies that reduce the threat of conversion to nonagricultural uses and reduce vehicle miles traveled. Plans may also recognize and protect the othercobenefits of conserving agricultural lands. This component of SALC incentivizes local, regional and tribal governments to work closely with stakeholders to develop land use policies and plans that integrate agricultural land conservation. Funding is limited to the eligible applicants and projects discussed below.

### Projects, Eligible Applicants, and Allowable Costs

#### *Projects*

Planning grants assist the development of innovative, consensus-based plans that establish comprehensive goals, policies and objectives such as:

- Protecting the agricultural land base;
- Identifying infill development potential with complementary agricultural land conservation;
- Developing the required local planning elements set forth in Government Code section 65560;
- Supporting regional food systems, such as the processing and distribution of agricultural products;
- Avoiding greenhouse gas emissions;
- Supporting implementation of sustainable communities strategy; and
- Supporting equitable land tenure for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and California Native American tribes.
- Addressing unique regional threats to agricultural land such as groundwater availability, catastrophic wildfire,
- Connecting rural agricultural land conservation and urban planning strategies; and
- Enhancing co-benefits (e.g., habitat, groundwater recharge).

Work plans should include:

- Community consensus building activities including providing general education and outreach about agricultural land conservation; and,
- Stakeholder meetings to support proposed project.

SALC encourages grantees and stakeholders to include impacted Native American tribes in developing Planning projects.

### *Eligible Applicants*

Counties, cities, local area formation commissions (LAFCOs), councils of government, municipal planning organizations, regional transportation planning agencies, groundwater sustainability agencies, special districts with land use or transportation planning authority, 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.

Resource Conservation Districts, academic institutions, land trusts and other agricultural non-profit organizations may apply if they partner with an entity listed above and the entity has a significant role implementing the proposed project. The partners must agree to enter into a memorandum of understanding if they are awarded a grant. At a minimum, the memorandum of understanding will, demonstrate support for the project and SALC's purposes, detail the partners roles in the project and that the partners will consider adopting the plan resulting from the project.

SALC strongly encourages submission of applications that demonstrate a commitment to meaningful, actionable collaboration with stakeholders from multiple organizations (e.g., neighboring counties, cities, tribes, local area formation commissions, agricultural organizations, land trusts, open space districts, community-based organizations with a history and experience working with priority populations and historically underserved communities, community-based organizations that have trusted relationships with the agricultural community, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, 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.

### *Allowable Costs and Match Funding*

Planning Grants have a \$500,000 maximum grant award.:

Planning grants will reimburse grantees and participating stakeholders for all direct costs, including staff salaries and other direct 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. Match funds may be provided directly by the applicant or from other funding sources (e.g., other grant funds, local government contributions, or donations). Applicants cannot utilize another Department-administered program funding as match toward the grant.

### **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.

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

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

<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The proposal is from an eligible applicant or authorized partner.</li><li>2. The proposal is for a land use plan that is consistent with SALC's goals.</li><li>3. The proposal contains clearly stated and reportable objectives, measures of progress, and deliverables.</li><li>4. The proposal will avoid greenhouse gas emissions.</li><li>5. 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 Plan that includes policies and programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</li><li>6. The proposal demonstrates consistency with <a href="#">California's Planning Priorities</a>.</li></ol>

Ineligible applications will not be scored

Applications that meet all the Eligibility Criteria will then be scored using the Selection Criteria and ranked based on their score. Applications 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 SALC goals and objectives.

<b>Selection Criteria</b>	<b>Maximum Points</b>
<p><b><u>Project Need</u></b>            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>	<b>35</b>
<p><b><u>Co-Benefits</u></b>            The proposal documents economic, environmental, public health, cultural or other co-benefits.</p>	<b>25</b>
<p><b><u>Proposal Evidences Collaboration</u></b>            The proposal provides evidence of durable collaboration among stakeholders.</p>	<b>20</b>
<p><b><u>Planning Integration</u></b>            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.</p>	<b>10</b>
<p><b><u>Equity Opportunities</u></b>            The proposal benefits a priority population; beginning or Veteran farmers and ranchers, or residents of priority populations; or a Federally recognized or non-federally recognized California Native American tribe on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission and/or their members,s.</p>	<b>10</b>
<b>Total possible points</b>	<b>100</b>

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 if funding becomes available. The Strategic Growth Council may award grants that partially fulfill the applicants request.

## **Application Review and Award Process**

Applications for planning grants will be reviewed at least once per year, with the opportunity for additional cycles as funding and staff capacity allows. Additional application cycles will be announced on the Department and Strategic Growth Council's websites at least 60 days in advance of the pre-proposal deadline.

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. Pre-proposal forms are in Appendix D.

Application forms are available as Appendix F. 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 the Department's initial review of the projects in relation to the Eligibility Criteria, Selection Criteria, and Readiness Rankings, an Interagency Committee that includes Strategic Growth Council staff will review and evaluate all applications. This committee will make the final determination on which projects are recommended to the Strategic Growth Council for funding or as alternates.

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*

This section provides additional information regarding the components of the Application.

## **Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Planning Grants**

*(All components are required unless otherwise noted)*

- Grant Application Cover Sheet
- Executive Summary
- Application Questions Responses
- Work Plan
- Budget
- Supporting Documents
- Priority Population Benefits Checklist and supporting documentation (only required if applying for priority population status)