

Frequently Asked Questions
Wetland Restoration for Greenhouse Gas Reduction Proposal Solicitation
December 18, 2014

Q1: Is there a minimum, maximum, or ideal grant size that California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is planning to make under this program?

A1: The Budget Act of 2014 appropriated \$25 million to CDFW for restoration or enhancement of Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) and coastal wetlands and mountain meadow habitat, and improving water use efficiency/restoring wetlands on CDFW lands. Of the \$25 million allocated to the CDFW, \$21.6 million is the total amount available for direct project funding. A funding breakdown between project types or focal areas has not been predetermined, however the CDFW is seeking to fund a diversity of projects that encompass the geographic scope of the solicitation (coastal and Delta wetlands, and mountain meadow ecosystems). A minimum grant size has not been set.

Q2: Is cost sharing a requirement? Can proposals be funded at 100% of the project costs?

A2: Cost sharing is not a requirement, however potential applicants should refer to criterion #19 “Cost Share Funds” in Table 3 to see how the inclusion/absence of a cost share is scored during the technical review process. Proposals that include a cost share will be awarded a higher score for criterion #19.

Q3: Is my proposed project location acceptable?

A3: Eligible projects involve restoration or enhancement of coastal wetlands, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta wetlands, or mountain meadow ecosystems. The geographic scope of the solicitation is as follows:

- Coastal wetlands – state-wide (includes San Francisco Bay, San Pablo Bay, and Suisun Bay),
- Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta wetlands – located within the Legal Delta boundary (California Water Code Section 12220), and
- Mountain meadow ecosystems – state-wide.

See Part V of the proposal solicitation for definitions of wetlands and mountain meadows.

Q4: Are any documents required with the application other than Appendix A?

A4: No documents are required in addition to the application form in Appendix A; however, any supporting materials that the applicant chooses to provide should be added to the end of the application (see Appendix A: Application Form with Instructions).

Q5: Must California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) be complete at the time of application?

A5: It is not required that CEQA be completed at the time of application, however proposals that have met appropriate environmental review and permitting requirements may be awarded additional points (see scoring criteria #18 “Readiness to Begin Construction” in Table 3 of the proposal solicitation). Potential applicants should also refer to the relevant criterion in Table 1, Administrative Review Evaluation Criteria.

Q6: Can my organization submit more than one proposal?

A6: Yes.

Q7: Are projects that include design phase elements eligible under this grant program? Do they need to include on-the-ground restoration elements?

A7: Projects may contain design phase elements, however projects must also include an on-the-ground restoration or enhancement element in order to be considered for funding. See the Administrative Review Evaluation Criteria in the Proposal Solicitation Notice (PSN), Table 1. Please also refer to Table 3, as several of the technical review evaluation criteria are relevant to project implementation (i.e., on-the-ground restoration or enhancement actions).

Q8: Can all federal labor be put under salary in the grant budget (even project management-related activities such as contracting)?

A8: Budgets must be broken out into separate categories: Personnel Services (Grantee Labor), Operating Expenses (subcontracted labor, travel, materials, etc.), and Indirect Costs. Any applicant employee who is directly working on the project during the grant timeframe (if it is funded) can be listed in the personnel section. All labor listed in the personnel section must occur during the timeframe of the project, not before.

Q9: What is the budget cap both yearly and for the full duration for a project?

A9: Total grant size will vary by project. Please refer to the response provided for the question regarding whether there is a minimum or maximum grant award amount associated with this PSN. There is no set maximum for how much a Grantee may expend in a particular year of the budget.

Q10: What is the suggested maximum length for each of the components of Section 5 of Appendix A Application, particularly the project description?

A10: There is no maximum limit to the length of each application component. Descriptions should be concise while thoroughly describing the project.

Q11: If technical equipment is purchased as part of the project, will the state take ownership of the equipment after the project is complete?

A11: Please refer to page A7 of the Application Form with Instructions. As stated under *Operating Expenses: Electronic and Purchased Equipment*, "The Grantee may purchase property under this Grant Agreement only if specified in the budget detail and payment provisions section. All property purchased by Grantee is property of Grantee. CDFW does not claim title to the property, but requires Grantee to maintain accountability for all property purchased with grant funds. Title to property with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more may be retained by Grantor upon end of the grant cycle; final disposition will be coordinated by CDFW's Grant Manager."

Q12: The Proposal Solicitation Notice (PSN) scoring criteria state that there is a 40% requirement for cost-share in order to be awarded the full 5 points; does a certain percentage of that 40% need to be hard cost share versus in-kind?

A12: There is no designated breakdown between hard (cash) and soft (in-kind) cost shares for the purposes of scoring technical review evaluation criterion #19 (refer to Table 3 in the PSN). Additional information regarding cost share funds is provided in Appendix A, Application Form with Instructions.

Q13: The PSN states that costs for environmental compliance can be included in the budget, but does this also extend to necessary permits for the project or do those permits have to be funded separately outside of this grant?

A13: Grant funding can be used to meet permitting requirements as long as this occurs during the term of the grant (if project is funded), or the applicant may choose to fund the necessary permits separately from the grant.

Q14: Is there a required length of time for the landowner access agreements (e.g. 5, 10 yrs, etc.)? And for the required monitoring of the project?

A14: Required lengths of time for landowner access agreements and for required monitoring have not been explicitly defined. However, the PSN notes that "Proposals must outline plans for obtaining access to land as necessary to complete projects and subsequent monitoring and oversight." Refer to Tables 1 and 3 in the PSN, as there are several Administrative and Technical Review criteria that address the presence/absence and quality of this information.

Q15: When is the expected award date for the funded projects through this grant?

A15: An exact award date has not been identified. Administrative, Technical, Selection Panel, and Director Reviews must all take place before awards can be announced; therefore we expect the award date to occur no earlier than February 2015. Grant agreements will be executed in June 2015.

Q16: My proposed project site is not located within or near a disadvantaged community; how much weight or how many points will be taken away from our grant proposal as a result?

A16: Disadvantaged Community Consideration accounts for 1.9% or 5 out of 260 points of the total possible maximum proposal score (refer to Tables 2 and 3 in the PSN, criterion #20, Disadvantaged Community Consideration).

Q17: Under the solicitation, is it appropriate to propose to work in an area where restoration is already planned and where permits are in place, but construction has not yet begun?

A17: Having restoration plans and permits in place may lead to a higher proposal score (for example, see Criterion #18 in Table 3, "Readiness to Begin Construction"). However, the proposal must simultaneously meet all other eligibility requirements. For example, the Eligibility section on Page 4 of the PSN states "No project will be considered for funding that is a required mitigation or used for mitigation under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), California Endangered Species Act (CESA), Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), California Forest Practices Act (FPA) the Clean Water Act (CWA) , the Clean Air Act (CAA), or a permit issued by any local, State, or federal agency. No project that is under an enforcement action by a regulatory agency will be considered for funding." Refer to the PSN for comprehensive information on project requirements.

Q18: Is it appropriate to propose to use sites that plan to be restored for other purposes (e.g., hydrologic function) than GHG reduction, and create, using this funding, a GHG assessment component to the existing project?

A18: As long as the proposal meets all administrative review and eligibility requirements outlined in the PSN, the project can be considered for funding.

Q19: I read in the application that project grants can go to 2020, but also heard something about 18 months. Can you clarify?

A19: Grant agreements will not be in place until June of 2015 and cannot go past March 1 of 2020 (see the Application Form with Instructions, "Timeline" section on page A4).

Q20: Can a proposal include restoration work at multiple meadow sites, and if so, how do we adapt the proposal format to include multiple sites?

A20: Yes, a proposal may include restoration or enhancement actions at multiple sites as long as each site and actions are thoroughly described in all relevant portions of the application (see above question regarding application character limits). All attributes of the proposal must meet the criteria outlined in

the PSN. Proposals will be evaluated and scored following the procedures outlined in Part IV: Scoring Procedure of the PSN. The review and score will be based on the merit of the entire Proposal as a whole versus the merit of an individual component.

Q21: Which funding mechanism will this program be using -- a “standard state agreement” or a “state grant”?

A21: Agreements funded by CDFW’s Wetlands Restoration for Greenhouse Gas Reduction Grant Program will be executed as grant agreements using the CDFW’s existing grant agreement template and general grant provisions.

Q22: Is there any flexibility with regards to the 20% overhead rate?

A22: Please see page 5 of the PSN where it states that “Indirect charges (administrative overhead) is limited to 20% of the amount requested. Any amount over 20% will not be funded but may be used as cost share”.

Q23: The following statement occurs on page 6 of the PSN: “Permits must be issued to the applicant organization for work specific to the applicant’s proposal.” In cases where an applicant submits a proposal that includes multiple projects implemented by separate organizations, will each organization carrying out the work, not the organizing applicant submitting the proposal, be responsible for obtaining relevant permits? And, if so, then how would one use the current application format to apply for multiple sites/permits?

A23: No, it is the responsibility of the applicant to comply with all applicable laws and regulations. As such, the applicant is responsible for ensuring that all permits necessary to carry out the proposed work are acquired.

Q24: For mountain meadows in federally designated Wilderness areas it is difficult/impossible to perform typical restoration projects because of the restrictions on the use of heavy equipment or wheeled devices. Therefore most “restoration” consists of resting meadows or restricting cattle access to stream banks, to allow for recovery. These rested meadows could serve as “restoration sites” and GHGs could be compared in rested (with more vegetation) to actively grazed sites to determine if resting and subsequent vegetation recovery reduced GHGs. Could these rested meadow stream sites be used for this Grant program?

A24: To be considered eligible for funding, the proposal must meet the Eligibility Criteria in Part III of the PSN and pass all of the Administrative Review evaluation criteria (refer to Table 1 and supporting text in Part IV of the PSN). It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the project contains sufficient information to pass the Administrative review.

Q25: Is it acceptable to budget by line item rather than by unit? For example, instead of breaking out each piece of equipment for grading, can we have a line item called out as “Grading?”

A25: Yes, the example provided is an acceptable means of presenting information in the budget, however, the applicant must ensure that any item in the budget is fully described and justified in the project description.

Q26: Would conversion of agricultural practices (i.e., switching crop type to rice) on a Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta island for the purpose of achieving GHG emission reductions and other co-benefits “pass” the criterion in Table 1, Administrative Review Evaluation Criteria, of the PSN that reads “Project involves restoration or enhancement of coastal or Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta wetland(s), or mountain meadow ecosystems.”?

A26: While a proposal including the above scenario could feasibly pass the specific Administrative Review evaluation criterion identified, ultimate eligibility will still rely upon the proposal's ability to meet the Eligibility Criteria in Part III of the PSN and pass all of the Administrative Review evaluation criteria (refer to Table 1 and supporting text in Part IV of the PSN).

Q27: Are UCs and CSUs eligible to apply for this grant as public agencies?

A27: Yes.

Q28: In the description of indirect charges or overhead the PSN states that it can be no more than 20% and that costs for subcontractors and purchase of equipment cannot be included in the calculation of indirect charges. (page 5 of PSN). However, in the Abbots Lagoon Restoration Budget example the 10% indirect charge is calculated based on the SUM of "personnel" costs and "operating Expense" (\$44K + \$22K = \$66K) categories which include supplies and contractor costs (for the back hoe). I would have thought that only the Personnel charges could be used to calculate indirect charges?

A28: Subcontractors and purchased equipment cannot be included in the calculation of indirect charges. In the example budget included in Appendix A: Application Form with Instructions, the subcontractor costs (i.e. "Operating Expenses: Subcontractor") were not included in the calculation of indirect charges (\$1,000 was subtracted from the total operating cost before the indirect cost was calculated). Also in the sample budget, "Electronic and Purchased Equipment" is a separate subcategory from "Other" which includes consumable materials, rented equipment, travel, etc., all of which can be included in the indirect cost calculation. Note that "Electronic and Purchased Equipment" was left empty in the sample budget; had a value been entered, it would not have affected the indirect cost total.

Q29: We would like to add additional detail to the budget in order to more accurately reflect individual salary rates and projections of those into the future; however, these additions may result in a budget format that is not consistent with the formatting guidance provided. Is this acceptable?

A29: We suggest providing as much detail as possible within the framework of the budget template provided in the Appendix A: Application Form (see criterion #16 in Table 3 of the PSN). Refer to "Section 8: Project Budget" in Appendix A: Application Form with Instructions for guidance on how to present personnel services, operating expenses, and more.

Q30: The example budget provided in Appendix A: Application Form with Instructions does not break down the project by tasks, but lumps things by Personnel, Operating Expenses, etc. Would you prefer us to use a task-oriented budget style or go with your more combined budget?

A30: We recommend using the budget template provided in Appendix A: Application Form. Project information within the budget may be further broken down by task as long as it is still consistent with the overall formatting and organization described in Appendix A: Application Form with Instructions.

Q31: The budget guidelines indicate that an applicant cannot include costs spent outside of the grant period, meaning we can't represent costs incurred by ourselves between now and the grant award period that are going towards planning and permitting – is that correct?

A31: Yes, costs incurred outside of the grant period cannot be included in the project budget.

Q32: The Appendix A: Application Form with Instructions indicates that tentative funds can be placed under soft costs. Should we mention this in the cost share budget form? It says in Appendix A, Page A17, that we "can include cost share funds that will be confirmed after February 1, 2015". My organization is applying for a grant that we expect to hear about in June to supplement this grant and other monies we have.

A32: Yes, the cost share section of the budget template is the appropriate place to mention tentative funding as long as it is clearly marked as ‘tentative’.

Q33: We have previously received two other grants towards a specific project, but need additional funds in order to have sufficient funding to implement the project. Should we represent those monies as "applicant" cost share dollars or "partner" dollars?

A33: If the outside grant money has already been awarded to the applicant, then those monies should be listed under “applicant” contributions. If a third party is funding the project directly, those monies would need to be labeled as “partner” funds.

Q34: How are “coastal wetlands” defined for the purposes of this PSN?

A34: Coastal wetlands include saltwater and freshwater wetlands located within coastal watersheds — specifically USGS 8-digit hydrologic unit watersheds which drain into the Pacific (US EPA; http://water.epa.gov/type/wetlands/cwt.cfm#what_def). Please also refer to the response to the question “Is my project location acceptable?”.

Q35: Section 7 of the PSN mentions a drought-related water plan. Is this a plan for the specific project or for the organization, and does a copy of the plan need to be submitted with the proposal?

A35: The drought-related water plan is for the organization and not the project, and does not need to be submitted with the proposal. The PSN indicates that *“Pursuant to Governor Brown’s April 2014 Executive Order, recipients of funding for future projects that impact water resources, including groundwater resources must have appropriate water conservation and efficiency programs in place in response to persistent drought conditions. Proposals must verify the Applicant’s organization has a water conservation and efficiency program in place. (emphasis added)”* A link to the Executive Order is provided on page 7 of the PSN. The Executive Order did not provide specific guidance concerning the format or content of the water efficiency and conservation plans. As such, each entity can develop a plan that is appropriate for the type and scale of their organization. At its base level, the plan needs to outline, to the extent applicable to that organization’s core function, how they will conserve water. Applicants may refer to guidance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (<http://www.epa.gov/WaterSense/pubs/guide.html>) and Alliance for Water Efficiency (http://www.allianceforwaterefficiency.org/Water_Conservation_Planning_Introduction.aspx), or similar guidance, regarding water efficiency and conservation plans.

Q36: The PSN indicates that licensed professionals and their affiliations should be identified in the proposal application. Does this include appraisers and registered professional foresters?

A36: This issue relates to meeting the requirements of the Business and Professions Code section 6700 et seq. (Professional Engineers Act) and section 7800 et seq. (Geologists and Geophysicists Act), and does not include appraisers and registered professional foresters (RPF). However, including appraisers and RPFs and their affiliations, or any other registered professionals identified in the proposal application would do no harm.

Q37: Quantifying and accounting for GHG reduction: What level of accounting detail will be needed in the proposal?

A37: Appendix A: Application Form with Instructions states that the proposal application should include an *“overview of protocols to be used in project development, implementation and measurement of net GHG reductions. Define approach to measure and quantify total net GHG reductions. Performance measures and the types of analyses that will be used to evaluate project performance must be adequately defined.”* The applicant has the option to include greater detail or various alternatives to

describe the level of detail and methodology that will quantify and account for GHG reduction related to the proposed project.

Q38: Is my project a good fit for the program?

A38: It is difficult to make eligibility determinations and/or assess the competitiveness for individual project concepts without having the full suite of project information. To be considered eligible for funding, the proposal must meet the Eligibility Criteria in Part III of the PSN and pass all of the Administrative Review evaluation criteria (refer to Table 1 and supporting text in Part IV of the PSN). It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the project contains sufficient information to pass the Administrative review.

Q39: The FAQ states that “it is the responsibility of the APPLICANT to comply with all applicable laws and regulations. As such, the APPLICANT is responsible for ensuring that all permits necessary to carry out the proposed work are acquired.” Recognizing it is the Applicant’s responsibility to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, can necessary permits be issued to members of the Applicant’s project team?

A39: Yes, while the applicant is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all permits necessary to carry out the work proposed are in place, specific permits can be issued to members of the Applicant’s project team (e.g., subcontractors).

Q40: What is expected in the ‘Protocols’ section of the application since all of the information is also requested in the ‘Detailed project description’ section?

A40: Refer to Appendix A: Application Form with Instructions. The ‘Protocols’ section is more narrowly focused on the details of how project performance, with respect to achieving GHG emission reductions and co-benefits, will be monitored and evaluated. There may be some overlap between the two sections; it is ultimately the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all requested information is covered by their responses.

Q41: I noticed that if the attachments are greater than 20 MB in size you would prefer a hard copy with a CD. Did you still want the application itself to be submitted electronically?

A41: The entire application package, including the application form and any attachments, should be submitted together in a single format (i.e., electronic submission via e-mail or as a hard copy with a complete copy on a CD). If you submit the application package as a hard copy plus CD, a separate electronic submission via e-mail is not required.

Q42: I understand that grant awards will occur no earlier than February 2015 and agreements will be executed in June 2015. However, if a project, which is selected in February initiates construction in May 2015, will costs incurred prior to agreement execution in June be eligible for funding?

A42: No. Work performed prior to an executed grant agreement cannot be reimbursed.

Q43: What is the typical timeframe between invoice submittal and payment?

A43: Grant agreements will be structured to provide payment in arrears of work being performed. Upon receipt of a complete and accurate invoice, the CDFW has 30 days to review, approve and submit the invoice to the Controllers Office for payment. Specific payment terms and frequency of invoicing are coordinated with grantees and stipulated in the grant agreement.

Q44: The review criteria (Tables 1, 2, and 3) in the PSN does not specifically line up with the Application Form Instructions. Can we improvise Form answers (which may deviate from instructions) to ensure all criteria elements are addressed?

A44: It is most important to ensure that all elements pertinent to the review criteria are addressed. Follow the instructions provided in Appendix A: Instruction Form as best as possible while fully addressing the criteria outlined in the PSN.

Q45: How many hard copies and compact discs of the proposals are required?

A45: Only one hard copy and one CD copy of the full proposal package are required.

Q46: The PSN states that the project must not be used as mitigation. If the project is awarded a grant through CDFW's Wetland Restoration Grant Program, will it be considered to be mitigation for GHG emissions?

A46: As stated in the PSN, "No project will be considered for funding that is a required mitigation or used for mitigation under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), California Endangered Species Act (CESA), Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), California Forest Practices Act (FPA), the Clean Water Act (CWA), the Clean Air Act (CAA), or a permit issued by any local, State, or federal agency."