



Water Efficiency Technical Assistance

REQUEST FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

Released: April 11, 2023

Applications Due: June 6, 2023, by 5:00 PM P.T.

Late applications will not be accepted.



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Background and Purpose

The California Department of Food and Agriculture is pleased to announce a competitive grant application process for the Water Efficiency Technical Assistance (WETA) program. Assembly Bill 180 (Budget Act of 2021) appropriated \$15 million from the California Emergency Relief Fund to CDFA for the WETA program which funds irrigation water efficiency and nutrient management technical assistance grants. The WETA grant program is designed to facilitate technical assistance to agricultural operations for on-farm water and energy use efficiency and nutrient management.

Funding and Duration

Through this solicitation CDFA will award up to \$14.25 million to eligible organizations.

- The grant term will be 3 years.
- The maximum award amount is \$500,000.
- CDFA reserves the right to offer an award different than the amount requested.
- Funds are distributed on a reimbursement basis following submission of quarterly invoices by the awardee.
- Grant funds may not be expended prior to execution of the grant agreements for awarded projects, or after the completion of the grant agreement term.

Estimated Program Timeline

Activity	Tentative Dates*
Application period begins	April 11, 2023
Applications due	June 6, 2023
Review of applications received	June-July 2023
Announcement of awards	August 2023
Grant term begins	November 2023

*Subject to change

Eligibility

The following entities are eligible to apply for WETA grants:

- Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs)
- University of California, California Community Colleges or California State Universities
- Non-profits
- Federally- and California-Recognized Native American Indian Tribes

Entities applying for WETA grants must have demonstrated expertise in on-farm irrigation water and energy use efficiency standards, evaluation and implementation of efficient practices and/or on-farm nutrient management. Lead applicants are encouraged to partner with groundwater sustainability agencies, irrigation districts, and/or water quality coalitions to address local concerns and utilize existing outreach networks.

Entities receiving grant award funds must be in California with a physical California business address.

CDFA encourages applications from organizations who serve small to medium-sized operations and/or socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers and farmworkers (AB 1348, Aguiar-Curry, 1017).

Past awardees to the WETA program are eligible to reapply and will be given the opportunity within the application to explain the need for additional funding and how further funding will result in a new project or enhance the existing project.

Executive Order N-6-22 – Russia Sanctions

On March 4, 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-6-22 (the EO) regarding Economic Sanctions against Russia and Russian entities and individuals. "Economic Sanctions" refers to sanctions imposed by the U.S. government in response to Russia's actions in Ukraine, as well as any sanctions imposed under state law. By submitting a bid, proposal, or application, Bidder/Applicant represents that it is not a target of Economic Sanctions. Should the State determine Bidder/Applicant is a target of Economic Sanctions or is conducting prohibited transactions with sanctioned individuals or entities, that shall be grounds for rejection of the Bidder's/Applicant's bid/proposal/application any time prior to contract/agreement execution, or, if determined after contract/agreement execution, shall be grounds for termination by the State.

Program Objectives

The WETA program has three objectives for delivering technical assistance. Applicants may apply for funding to engage in any or all these objectives:

1. Provide on-farm, one-on-one technical assistance to farmers to evaluate irrigation system efficiency (e.g., mobile irrigation lab) and provide diagnostics, reports and recommendations to growers

In addition to evaluation of irrigation systems, grant recipients may also assist farmers with irrigation water management technology (e.g., soil moisture sensors, evapotranspiration (ET) station information) calibration, data interpretation and training for proper use of technology for irrigation scheduling, monitoring and nutrient management.

2. Coordinate or provide pump efficiency testing for farmers

Grant recipients may support farmers in identifying and scheduling pump testing vendors and provide follow up consultation regarding pump efficiency improvements.

3. Provide training regarding water use efficiency and nutrient management practices and technology

Grant recipients may develop training curricula and programs related to irrigation water use efficiency and nutrient management. Training may be delivered to farmers through workshops and/or virtual settings. The development of training materials for non-English speakers is a crucial need, including the development of recorded training materials that can be accessed on demand (e.g., webinar). Grant Recipients are strongly encouraged (but not required) to provide a certificate of completion to individuals who complete the training in full.

Program Requirements and Restrictions

- Grant recipients **must not** charge fees to provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers. Outreach materials prepared by the grant recipient must indicate that the assistance is free, and no additional fees or costs will be imposed on the farmer or rancher.
- Grant recipients **must not** require farmers and ranchers to include specific proprietary products or favored contractors and other service providers.
- Grant recipients **must** declare all conflict(s) of interest including sponsorship or funding by any corporation that may profit from CDFA's WETA program.

- An eligible entity **must not** apply as the lead applicant for the WETA program on more than one application per funding cycle.
- Grant recipients **must** prioritize assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers¹ (SDFRs).

Priorities Related to the Farmer Equity Act

The Farmer Equity Act of 2017 (Assembly Bill 1348) defines a SDFR as a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A “socially disadvantaged group” means a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender discrimination. These groups include the following:

- African Americans
- American Indians
- Alaskan Natives
- Hispanics
- Asian Americans
- Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders
- Female farmers and ranchers of color

This legislation recognized that California’s farmers and ranchers are made up of a diverse group of people, and not all have historically had access to resources and information to successfully run their businesses. This group of farmers and ranchers is considered socially disadvantaged and has faced historical discrimination, some of which still exists today. To keep California agriculture thriving, there is a need to invest in the long-term prosperity of all of California’s farmers and ranchers. More information is available in the [2020 Farmer Equity Report](#).

To align with the intent of the Farmer Equity Act, CDFA aims to expend 25% of the WETA funds to benefit Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (SDFRs). See [Scoring Criteria](#).

¹ “Socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher” means a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. “Socially disadvantaged group” means a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. These groups include all of the following: (1) African Americans (2) Native American Indians (3) Alaskan Natives (4) Hispanics (5) Asian Americans (6) Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.

How to Apply

Online Application Platform

The WETA program application must be submitted online. When the application period is opened, the application materials and a link to the application portal can be found at <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/technical/weta.html>. Applicants must create a user account to submit a grant application. All applications, supporting documents and submissions are subject to public disclosure including posting on the CDFA Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation (OEFI) website.

Application Questionnaire and Budget Template

The online application process includes the following stages: 1) Opportunity Details, 2) Project information, 3) Application Forms, 4) Budget Template, 5) Submit.

CDFA requires information for all entities involved in executing the WETA grant objectives. If awarded, the WETA grant agreement will be between CDFA and the lead applicant organization. The lead organization must ensure that all required and proposed tasks are fully completed.

While completing the application forms, applicants will upload resumes of key personnel from each participating organization and contractors and indicate the role of each person whose resume is attached. Resumes must provide evidence of expertise in irrigation water use efficiency and nutrient management.

Each item entered into the budget template must support a [Program Objective](#). Applicants must clearly describe each participating organization's anticipated expenses. All costs must be directly related to and necessary for completion of project. Awarded funds will be paid to the lead organization. The lead organization is responsible for disbursement of funds to other participating organizations and contractors.

Budget Cost Categories

Personnel: Estimate the hourly cost of salary, wages and fringe benefits associated with each activity by individuals employed by the applicant organization.

Contractor: Estimate the cost of work on the project that will be performed by individuals/organizations other than the applicant (e.g., consultants, contractors, partner organizations, etc.). This amount should include all associated salary and wages, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, other, and indirect costs. List the services to be provided and the contractors that will work on the project and be paid with grant funds.

Supplies: Estimate the cost of supplies associated with each activity. Supplies are items with an acquisition cost less than \$5,000 per unit that are used exclusively for the objectives of the project. Categorize the types of supplies to be purchased. General use office supplies (paper, printer ink, pens, etc.), facilities costs (telephone, internet, etc.), and administrative costs are considered indirect and should not be included under Supplies.

Equipment: Estimate the cost of equipment associated with each activity. Equipment is nonexpendable, tangible personal property with a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$5,000. Equipment purchased with WETA funding is subject to the records retention and disposition requirements outlined in CDFA's [Grant Administration Regulations](#) (Section 324.1 and 324.2)

Travel: Estimate the cost of project-related travel associated with each activity except contractual personnel. In the description column, describe the travel that will be necessary to accomplish the objectives of the project.

Other: Estimate the cost of all other project related expenses to support each activity. Expenses typically listed under "Other" include registration fees to attend professional education or training, meeting space or equipment rentals, subscriptions, etc. List the specific types of expenses necessary to accomplish the objectives of the project.

Indirect: Indirect costs are facilities and administrative costs that cannot easily be tied directly to the activities of the grant. Examples of common indirect costs include administrative/clerical services, rent, utilities, internet and telephone service, maintenance, and general office supplies. University of California (UC) and California State Universities (CSU) may claim the established indirect cost rate with CDFA. All other eligible organizations may claim an indirect cost rate of up to 25 percent of total direct costs.

Allowable Costs

Examples of allowable costs include:

- **Personnel and/or Contractor** expenses associated with:
 - Conducting on farm water use efficiency audits with the purpose of calculating distribution uniformity (DU) and other efficiency metrics.
 - Developing, facilitating, and administering in-person and online irrigation and/or nutrient management trainings for interested parties.
 - Provision of and/or performance of pump efficiency tests to identify pumping systems' characteristics including overall pumping efficiency. Assisting and/or facilitating a pump test for a potential applicant of CDFA's State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEET) is allowable.
 - Developing and administering irrigation water management (IWM) system audits to ensure the proper use, function and understanding of technology related to IWM such as flow meters, soil moisture sensors, and/or evapotranspiration sensors.
 - Translation services to increase the impact of irrigation efficiency related activities, workshops, and/or trainings.
 - Reporting and invoicing.
 - Participating in professional development courses and training relevant to the program objectives.
- **Travel Expenses** to farms or training venues including mileage, lodging, per diem, vehicle rental and/or leasing of a vehicle.
- **Supplies and/or Equipment** needed for irrigation system or pump evaluation or training including computers, software and vehicle renting or leasing.

Unallowable Costs

Examples of unallowable costs include but are not limited to:

- Personnel or contractor hours that are not related to water efficiency and/or nutrient management evaluation, audits, training, administration, or other non-related fields.
- Completion of tasks that are outside of approved workplan and budget
- Assisting farmers or ranchers as they apply for or implement CDFA Climate Smart Agriculture grant projects (SWEET, HSP, or AMMP). Assisting and/or facilitating a pump test for a potential SWEET applicant is allowable.

- Research
- Food/drinks and entertainment
- The purchase of a vehicle

Questions and Answers (Q&A)

During the application period, CDFA will host an informational webinar to provide an overview of program guidelines and application materials. Visit the CDFA OEFI technical assistance website for more information and to register for the webinar.

General questions regarding the solicitation process may be submitted to cdfa.oefi_csa_ta@cdfa.ca.gov. Responses to all questions received by email will be posted to CDFA's Water Efficiency Technical Assistance website according to the following schedule:

Questions Received By:	Responses Provided By:
April 21, 2023	April 27, 2023
May 26, 2023	June 1, 2023

May 26, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. PT is the final deadline to submit questions for the Water Efficiency Technical Assistance grant application. To maintain the integrity of the competitive grant process, CDFA is unable to advise and/or provide individuals with any information regarding specific grant application questions during the solicitation process.

Review Process

Applications will be reviewed in a two-stage process:

Administrative Review

The purpose of the administrative review is to determine whether grant application requirements are met. During the administrative review, the following will result in the automatic disqualification of a grant application:

- Incomplete grant applications: applications with one or more unanswered questions necessary for administrative or technical review.

- Incomplete grant applications: applications with missing, blank, unreadable, corrupt, or otherwise unusable attachments.
- Applications that include activities outside the grant duration.
- Applications with unallowable costs or activities necessary to complete the project objectives.
- Requests for more than the maximum award amount.
- Applications that do not comply with Eligibility or meet Program Requirements and Restrictions

APPEAL RIGHTS: Any disqualification taken during the administrative review for the preceding reasons may be appealed to CDFA's Office of Hearings and Appeals Office within 10 days of receiving a notice of disqualification from CDFA. The appeal must be in writing and signed by the responsible party name on the grant application. It must state the grounds for the appeal and include any supporting documents and a copy of the CDFA decision being challenged. The submissions must be sent to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Office of Hearings and Appeals, 1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 or emailed to CDFA.LegalOffice@cdfa.ca.gov. If submissions are not received within the time frame provided above, the appeal will be denied.

Technical Review

Technical review will be completed by staff in CDFA's Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation and scientific staff at partner state agencies. Technical review will be based on the detailed scoring criteria outlined below. After funding recommendations are provided by the technical review team, CDFA will recommend the highest scoring applications for an award of grant funds to the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture for final selection.

Scoring Criteria

Criteria	Maximum Points
<p>Statement of Qualifications (SOQ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the SOQ clearly identify the capacity of the lead applicant organization to provide water efficiency technical assistance? 	30

Criteria	Maximum Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the applicant adequately explained how the education, work history, and/or technical expertise of key personnel makes them qualified for this role? • Will the organization need to hire, or contract lead technical assistance providers? • Are roles of key personnel from each participating organization clearly described? • Does the application clearly identify the staff person or personnel who will be involved in each task, including alternative or secondary contacts? • Does the project include partnership or regional coordination among multiple organizations? • If a partner organization is indicated, does the partnership provide technical assistance to a larger base of farmers and ranchers than would be accomplished by a single organization? • Do the resumes of individuals listed in the proposal align well with relevant expertise to provide water efficiency and nutrient management training to farmers? 	
<p>Prioritization of Assistance to SDFRs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the statement of need describe the agricultural community that will be served by the project, including the organization's relationship to SDFRs in that community? • Are 25% of the funds committed for providing assistance to SDFRs? • If the lead organization itself is not able to meet or exceed CDFA's SDFR investment goals, are they able to partner with another organization that can meet those goals? • If the organization is unable to commit 25% of the funding to support SDFRs, what percentage of funds can realistically be committed to SDFRs? • If the organization is unable to commit 25% of the funding to support SDFRS, have they provided a detailed and reasonable justification? 	10

Criteria	Maximum Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the application narrative include adequate details about how the organization will do outreach to SDFRs? • Does the application narrative clearly identify expected costs dedicated to assistance to SDFRs and how these will be tracked? • Are bilingual services offered? 	
<p>Workplan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the project proposal align closely with the three objectives of the WETA program? • Does the applicant discuss their plan for conducting outreach and identifying farmers for assistance? • Are the estimated number of farmers the applicant proposes to assist reasonable? • Does the applicant provide sufficient details of all activities proposed? • If applicable, does the application explain how the proposal will build upon existing efforts or support other projects? • Does the application include a detailed reporting and evaluation component? 	40
<p>Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposed budget outline all anticipated expenses? • Do the personnel costs directly support the three objectives of the program? • Are the activities achievable with the requested budget? • Are the costs included in the budget reasonable? • Is the Budget consistent with the Workplan? 	20
Total	100

Details on Scoring for Prioritization of SDFRs

As described in [Priorities Related to the Farmer Equity Act](#), striving to ensure that Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers have access to CDFA programs

is a department-wide priority and mandated by the Farmer Equity Act. The WETA program aims to expend at least 25% of funding to benefit SDFRs. This goal is reflected in the technical review scoring criteria. Applicants may receive the full 10 points available by thoroughly describing a) how their service area offers the opportunity to serve SDFRs, b) presenting a comprehensive plan that addresses the need through the program objectives, c) committing to expending 25% of the technical assistance funding on SDFRs and d) describing how this will be achieved and tracked. CDFA strongly recommends that applicants propose offering bilingual services in their technical assistance.

CDFA recognizes that in some areas of the state it may be difficult to expend 25% of the funding to benefit SDFRs, especially when demographics of the agricultural producers are not uniform throughout California. For this reason, WETA applicants may receive partial points for providing details on how they will attempt to fulfill the prioritization even if they are not fully able to commit 25% of the funds benefitting SDFRs directly. Five out of ten points can be available to applicants who cannot commit to utilizing 25% of the funds to support SDFRs as long as this is fully justified in context of the service area.

All WETA awardees will track the number of SDFRs served by WETA projects. All WETA awardees will also track the amount of funding utilized to support SDFRs.

Past Performance

Past performance of applicants in OEFI programs, if applicable, may be taken into consideration during selection. Past performance may include timely and satisfactory completion of funded activities and reporting requirements.

Notification and Feedback

All applicants will be notified regarding the status of their grant applications. Successful applicants will receive specific instructions regarding the award process, including information on invoicing and reporting requirements. Applicants not selected for funding will receive feedback regarding their applications within 60 days after receiving notification. CDFA will post basic information on the WETA website

(<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oeffi/technical/weta.html>) regarding the applications received at least 10 days before awarding grant funds. After projects are selected and all funds are encumbered, CDFA will post an updated list of awarded projects. Applications will be treated in accordance with Public

Records Act requirements and certain information, subject to those requirements, may be publicly disclosed.

Grant Recipient Information

Grant Agreement

Applicants selected for award of funds will receive a Grant Agreement package with specific instructions regarding award requirements including information on project implementation and payment process. Once a Grant Agreement is executed, grant recipients can begin implementation of the project. Grant recipients are responsible for the overall management of their awarded project to ensure all project activities are completed no later than the end of the grant agreement term.

Award Process Timeline

Grant Agreement Stage	Estimated Time for Stage Completion
Grant packet is completed – During this step, CDFA will work with awardees to get the information the state needs to execute the grant. The timeline for this step is dependent on how quickly information is provided to CDFA staff.	Variable
Grant Execution	Up to 120 days

Project Implementation

Once a Grant agreement is executed the grant recipient can begin implementation of the project if it is after or on the official project start date (anticipated for November 2023). During the project implementation, grant recipients must maintain frequent communication with CDFA staff about the technical assistance project.

Payment Process

CDFA will provide grant recipients with the necessary grant award and invoicing documents. Funds will be allocated on a reimbursement basis. Invoices must be submitted quarterly and include all supporting financial documentation to substantiate expenses CDFA will withhold 10 percent from the total grant award until a final report is submitted and approved to ensure grant recipients meet all

reporting requirements. Invoicing and closeout of all project expenditures must be completed no later than 60 days after the grant term ends.

Reporting

Grant recipients must submit detailed quarterly Progress Reports to CDFA identifying activities accomplished in the reporting period. CDFA will provide a customized reporting template and schedule to grant recipients. Progress Reports will include, at a minimum:

- Total number of individuals assisted.
- Information of farmers assisted.
- Number of individuals assisted who identify as SDFRs
 - WETA awardees should develop a process (e.g., survey) for farmers and ranchers to indicate if they self-identify as belonging to a socially disadvantaged group. CDFA will provide language to survey TA recipients about their SDFR status. This language must be used; however, grantees are welcome to ask for additional information.
- Costs associated with assisting SDFRs.
- Number of irrigation assessments conducted.
- Total number of irrigation water management (IWM) assessments conducted.
- Total number of pump efficiency tests conducted.
- Total attendance at in-person and online water efficiency and/or nutrient management workshops and trainings.
- Links and or files for digital training materials that have been created.
- Links to translated files or digital training materials that have been created.

For auditing purposes, recipients are required to maintain detailed technical assistance records on-site.

Farmers and growers assisted by WETA recipients may choose to share their distribution uniformity (DU) results with the Irrigation Training and Research Center (ITRC) at California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo. The ITRC maintains a database of DU results and growers are welcome to share these results with ITRC but are not required.

Critical Project Review

Grant recipients must agree to a Critical Project Review and audit during the project term to verify project progress as reported in Progress Reports submitted

to CDFA, including number of farmers assisted. If it is determined by CDFA from the Critical Project Review that at that time the grant project is not meeting and is unlikely to meet certain milestones, CDFA has the right to terminate the Grant Agreement pursuant to the Terms and Conditions of the Grant Agreement. Termination may result in forfeiture by the grantee of any funds retained. Critical Project Review may be completed through an auditing process.