



# How to Participate in the Healthy Soils Program (HSP)

Guidance for Producers Interested in HSP Funding

## Healthy Soils Program Background

Since 2017, the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Healthy Soils Program (HSP) has been incentivizing California farmers and ranchers to implement management practices that improve soil health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. HSP practice benefits include improvement of overall soil health and water infiltration, increasing habitat for pollinators and other beneficial species, and reduction of erosion and air pollutants.

HSP is administered by the Office of Agricultural Resilience and Sustainability (OARS). While OARS historically provided grants directly to producers, HSP is currently administered as a block grant program. The awarded organizations, referred to as Block Grant Recipients (BGRs), provide technical assistance and financial assistance to producers through their own independently-operated funding solicitations.

## How to Use this Resource

While each HSP Block Grant Recipient will have their own unique goals and criteria for selecting projects, this document can be used to understand whether your project may be a good fit for HSP funding and to prepare you to gather necessary plans and documentation. This document describes:

1. How much funding you can request
2. What types of practices HSP can fund
3. Who is eligible to receive funding for an HSP project
4. Where an HSP project can be funded
5. What to gather and prepare
6. What are the expectations for funded HSP projects
7. How to seek funding

## How Much Funding You Can Request

For each HSP funding cycle, an eligible entity or person may receive funding for **only one on-farm project of up to \$150,000**, with a cap of \$75,000 per practice. Producers are paid based on fixed rates *after* practices have been successfully implemented. In some cases, producers may receive partial advance payments.

## What Types of Practices HSP Can Fund

HSP currently supports 28 different practices, offering payments for practices on cropland, orchards and vineyards, and grazing land. Depending on the practice, HSP will provide funding for a one-time implementation or for three years of annual implementation. Below are some commonly-funded practices with their basic descriptions:

### 3-Year Annual Implementation

- **Compost application** (purchased or generated on-farm) - applied at set ton/acre rates and tested for carbon: nitrogen ratio.
- **Cover cropping** – both single-species and mixed species are supported. Supplemental irrigation may be required to establish.
- **Mulching** (natural materials) - offered in some areas with flexible reimbursement, must be produced off-site.
- **No-Till and Reduced-Till** (with residue management) must be carried out on land where these have not been the current practices

### 1-Time Implementation

- **Hedgerow Planting** – Pollinator-friendly species, planted at least 200 plants/acre.
- **Windbreak/Shelterbreak** - At least 200 plants/acre and meet planting size requirements.
- **Mulching** (wood chips) - Produced off-site and meets program requirements for coverage and depth.
- **Whole Orchard Recycling** – Trees must be at least 10 years old and wood chips must be incorporated into soil on site at least 6 inches deep.
- **Range Planting** - program has requirements for species and planting methods, HSP technical assistance providers can help prepare plans.

- **Biochar** – new, offered in some areas with flexible reimbursement, must be produced off-site
- **Rice Conversion** – new, may be offered in areas with soils that contain >20% organic matter.

Compost, woodchip mulching, natural materials mulching, and biochar may be supported by certain BGRs on a capped, invoice-based reimbursement basis, or with direct provision of materials and services, instead of a fixed rate payment. You are advised to inquire with your local BGR about how financial support for these practices will be handled. For the full list of practices, their payment options, and implementation requirements see [HSP 2026 Practice Guidelines](#).

## On-Farm HSP Project Requirements and Restrictions

- All practices and plantings must be implemented in soil, and soil cannot be in containers.
- Permanent plantings are to be maintained for 10 years, with irrigation if necessary.
- Each practice has standards that a producer must follow and document when implementing the practice. See the [HSP 2026 Practice Guidelines](#).
- Practices should be new to the field on which they are implemented, unless there has recently been a change of ownership or management.
- Some HSP practices are restricted by geography, topography, or are not allowed to overlap with certain others, for technical reasons. Many of these restrictions are built into the RePlan project design tool.

## Who is Eligible to Receive Funding for an HSP Project

The following agricultural land managers are eligible for one on-farm HSP project per HSP funding cycle:

- Individual farmers and ranchers that are at least 18 years of age operating as sole proprietors, single member LLCs, or lessees.
- Businesses and shared property entities engaged in agricultural production that are [registered with the California Secretary of State](#) including Trusts, Estates, Partnerships, LLCs and Corporations, including non-profit (public benefit) corporations.

- California Native American Tribes - Federally Recognized Tribes or those listed on the California Tribal Consultation List maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission

The following individuals or entities are ineligible for an HSP on-farm project:

- University farms
- Employees of the individual or entity that owns or leases the land on which the project would occur.
- Individuals that have a conflict of interest, such as:
  - Employees of the BGR or BGR's Contractor(s) or Subrecipient(s)
  - Members of the Board or of another governing body of the BGR
  - Immediate family members (parents, spouses, minor or adult children) of individuals who make award decisions, either as BGR employees delegated with that task, or as members of scoring or awarding committees.

## Where an HSP Project Can Be Located

HSP On-Farm Projects must be:

- Located completely within the boundaries of the State of California
- Located on an agricultural operation or on grazing land (e.g., grasslands, rangelands or pasture).
  - An agricultural operation is defined for the purpose of this program as row, vineyard, field and tree crops, commercial nurseries, nursery stock production and greenhouse operations producing food crops or flowers as defined in Food and Agriculture Code §77911.
- Hemp cultivation fields are eligible, but medicinal and recreational cannabis cultivation fields are ineligible.

HSP on-farm projects cannot:

- Fund the same practices on the same fields as a previously funded HSP project. Exceptions may be made in the case where there is a documented change in ownership or of lessee.

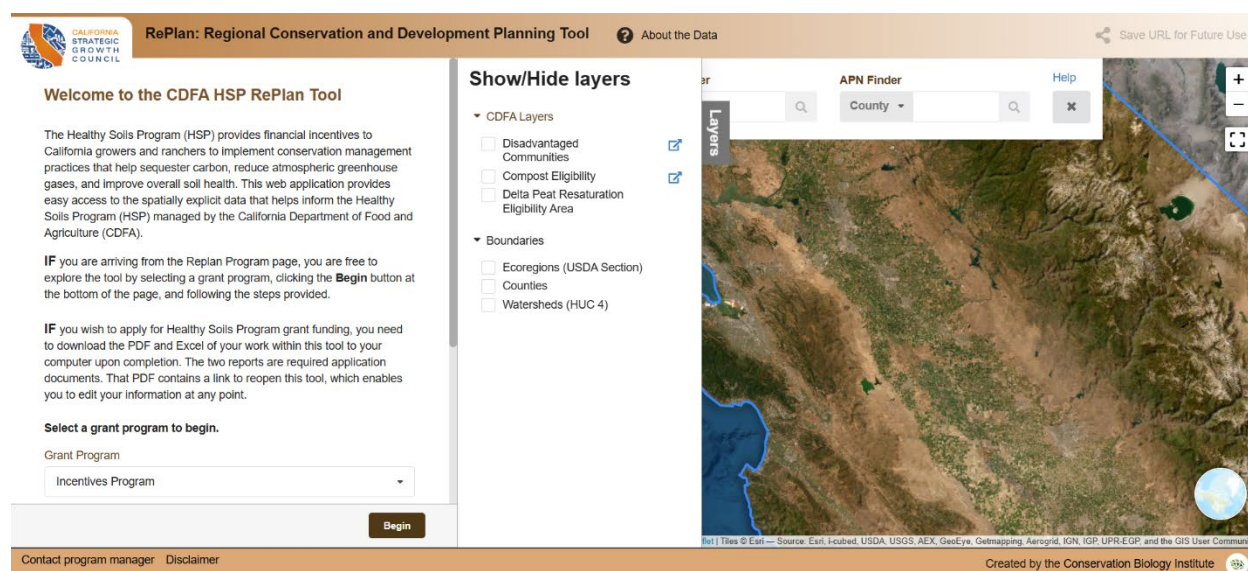
## What To Gather and Prepare

To prepare to request funding for an on-farm HSP project, we advise producers to work with a technical assistance provider to determine their goals, the appropriate practices for achieving their goals, and details of those practices,

such as species and compost source. BGRs offer **free** technical assistance to prospective applicants.

## Healthy Soils Program RePlan Tool

Producers must complete a project design using HSP's [RePlan: Regional Conservation and Development Planning Tool](#). To gain experience and get oriented to what will need to be planned out, you can try using the tool at any time. To begin, select "Incentives Program" and go through the dropdown menus, making a map of your proposed activities (see example).



The tool guides you through the process, but you may also watch this [RePlan Walkthrough Video](#), or consider these additional points:

- There are a number of practice guidelines that are not captured in the RePlan Tool, including species selection and planting rates. The HSP Practice Guidelines are a more complete reference for finalizing projects.
- For each linear planting, like hedgerows, you need to create a unique "field" which will appear as a line on the map – linear plantings do not automatically fit into another field.
- As the instructions mention, when you finish drawing a line of planting you click a second time on the last point to complete this linear "field."
- Linear plantings should be described as a "new" practice, even if there are similar plantings in the field already. However, you cannot be paid to implement them in the strip where a permanent planting already exists.

- Downloading the multiple-choice species list can help you plan outside the Tool.
- Make your best species selections, but be aware that both write-in selections and those from the multiple-choice species lists must be approved by a technical assistance provider, whom you will consult before formally applying for your project to a BGR. Still, it is possible to modify species selections after the awarding of a project, with approval.
- It is a good idea to name each field with a name you understand naturally so that you can easily communicate about separate fields with BGR staff as time goes on, and especially if you are awarded.
- Soil sampling is voluntary, and you can determine the number of soil samples with your technical assistance provider later. If you are interested, choose a representative number initially. For overlapping practices, you would generally consolidate samples, not doing a separate sampling program for each.
- In drawing fields that should be limited to a certain APN, watch to avoid clipping off small pieces from outside the APN. If other areas are registered in the polygon description, you need to "Edit" your field, dragging the corners of your polygon out of another APN, or out of a public right of way or riparian area.
- Save frequently as you progress. You can also use a button to copy the URL for your project to return to it later.

The RePlan tool will automatically estimate a project's potential carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions based on several factors including: practice implemented, county, agricultural system, and acreage. These estimates come from modeling that has been calibrated using field results. The model does not run inside the Tool. Instead, the Tool contains a database of modeling results based on the typical soil and climate of each county. GHG reduction estimates are reported to the awards' funding sources, but they are not used to rank or prefer any projects over others.

## Implementing an Awarded On-Farm HSP Project

If your project is selected for an award of funding by an HSP Block Grant Recipient, they will work with you to implement your project. BGRs will require producers to maintain and submit documentation associated with the project and to communicate regularly about the project. The BGRs will report details of



the project to CDFA. Depending on the practice, you will need to maintain and provide invoices or receipts, geotagged photos of implemented practices, farm logs, compost analyses, and lists of planted species. Detailed information on documentation of practices can be found [here](#).

## How To Seek Funding

**Identify a Block Grant Recipient.** BGRs' contact information will be posted on the [Healthy Soils webpage](#) under the header "Block Grants," starting in January 2027. Consider the counties they serve when selecting who to contact. Aside from regional BGRs, there may be BGRs covering wider areas with a focus on your type of agricultural system (such as rangeland grazing, or citrus orchards).

**Request Technical Assistance.** Block grant recipients provide technical assistance to producers to participate in HSP. Technical assistance providers may come directly from the BGR, or be contracted by the BGR, or work for organizations that are partners of the BGR. Their assistance may include:

- One-on-One project development and application support
- Pre-award farm visit
- Implementation assistance

Depending upon demand, the amount of technical assistance can be limited, although the block grant system is designed to assist most potential applicants.

**Submit your Funding Request.** When they are accepting applications, BGRs will provide a list of items to submit. OARS will assist BGRs in screening projects for eligibility. Specifically, OARS will screen for producers' or organizations' eligibility and whether the project location is eligible.

**Funding is Limited - Stay informed.** To stay up to date on future OARS funding opportunities, including HSP, visit the CDFA [Grants Webpage](#) or sign up for the [OARS Newsletter](#) to receive timely updates and announcements.

*Contact us at [cdfa.HSP\\_tech@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:cdfa.HSP_tech@cdfa.ca.gov) with any further questions!*