

**2026 Block Grants  
HSP and SWEEP**  
Question and Answer - 4/17/2026

<b>HSP or SWEEP Question</b>	<b>Question Summary</b>	<b>CDFA Response</b>
HSP	<p>a) If a farm is currently working with the NRCS under the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) for compost and mulch application, would they be disqualified from applying for these same practices under the Healthy Soils Program (HSP)?</p> <p>b) Is there a distinction in eligibility between producers currently working with the NRCS and those who have previously worked with them on these practices in the past?</p> <p>c) Does CDFA consider practices previously funded by the NRCS, but not by the HSP, to be "new to the field," or would such practices be deemed ineligible for funding?</p> <p>d) Many producers in the Inland Empire operate under month-to-month leases. Would a producer in this situation be eligible for the HSP program if they are applying for a one-time implementation practice?</p>	<p>The scenarios presented are not described completely, but such scenarios must be handled by the BGR in adherence to our application materials:</p> <p>Because there is high demand for the Program's funds, and BGRs are expected to "aim for wide disbursement of on-farm project funding," (Application Guidelines), a key principle is that "Practices should be new to the field on which they are implemented, unless there has recently been a change of ownership or management." (How to Participate in HSP), where "new to the field" does not only mean "new to HSP." Changes of lease can clearly introduce a new producer into management of a field for the program's purposes.</p> <p>BGRs will review leases as needed, as part of determining which projects are eligible. There is no set rule for them to follow in assessing leases, so that they can do so with discretion to determine whether a leaseholder's situation allows the project a high chance of success.</p>
HSP and SWEEP	Is an EIN included at the top of a Dept. of Treasury determination letter sufficient, or do applicants need to submit a separate document for the EIN?	During the block grant concept proposal the applicant is required to submit supporting documentation to substantiate eligibility. For a IRS 501c3, which this question is referring to, what is important is that we have the IRS determination letter and the EIN letter. If they are included in the same document this is allowable.
HSP and SWEEP	Are there eligible entities working in Imperial County that could apply for a Block Grant?	Please refer to the "Request for Block Grant Applications" (HSP and SWEEP Block Grants Application Guidelines), pg. 7 for a list of entities eligible that can apply for a Block Grant. It is up to those entities to decide if they would like to apply for a potential grant. For specific questions regarding the solicitation, please reach out to UC technical assistance providers that CDFA partners with at this email address: <a href="mailto:climatesmartag@ucdavis.edu">climatesmartag@ucdavis.edu</a> .
HSP and SWEEP	Regarding "CDFA will announce producer funding opportunities once Block Grant Recipients are selected and regional programs are launched." - are those producer funding opportunities in reference to the grant beneficiaries of the block grant? Will the HSP and SWEEP incentive and/or demonstration grant programs return in the future?	Selected Block Grant Recipients will be responsible for launching solicitations for grant beneficiaries. At this time, we do not yet know whether direct Incentive grants, or HSP Demonstration grants will be offered in the future. CDFA will post to the website a list of awarded block grant organizations and their service areas, once grants have been awarded.
HSP and SWEEP	<p>a) How will CDFA determine if projects provide "Meaningful and Direct" benefits to (S)DACs?</p> <p>b) How will CDFA determine if an on-farm project meets Criteria #1 (direct, tangible, substantial benefits to (S)DACs)?</p> <p>c) Can it be assumed that eligible HSP and SWEEP practices can be considered to provide direct, tangible, and substantial benefits when they are located within (S)DACs?</p> <p>d) Will BGRs be responsible for articulating how each individual on-farm project meets these criteria? Can you provide guidance on what sort of justification CDFA will require to determine this?</p>	<p>a) Please refer to and understand the definition of "meaningful and Direct" and (S)DAC, laid out in the Application Guidelines and especially in Appendix B. Keep in mind that "meaningful and direct" has four components that are listed and has clear definitions of direct, tangible, and substantial. The definitions are directly provided by the California Natural Resources Agency. Additionally, refer to the concept proposal scoring matrix in the Application Guidelines to see more on how a review will determine if a project provides meaningful and direct benefits.</p> <p>b) The technical reviewers, who are trained by CDFA, will make this assessment based off an understanding of the guidelines cited above and the scoring matrix that is provided within the Application Guidelines.</p> <p>c) The meaningful and direct benefits provided by the block grant applicant are considered at a landscape scale and not single on-farm project scale. Although individual projects might lead into the direct, tangible and substantial benefits of the whole project, the applicant should be looking at the whole project. Consideration from this "macro" perspective includes the aggregated potential benefits from supporting on-farm projects.</p> <p>d) The applicant cannot articulate how each on-farm project will meet these criteria because they will not have on-farm projects identified at the application phase.</p>
HSP and SWEEP	Is it permissible for one BGR application to have both SWEEP and HSP program funded elements?	It is not allowable for one application to have HSP and SWEEP elements funded by OARS. There would need to be separate applications to each program in order to fund elements from each program.
HSP and SWEEP	Is it possible for a qualified applicant to apply for and receive both SWEEP and HSP funding?	Yes
HSP and SWEEP	If the Board of Supervisors allows the applicants to apply and accept grants to support their Climate Action Plan does the applicant need to specifically identify that the board support the Climate Smart Ag Block Grant that they are apply for?	Yes, CDFA will require during the full proposal the governing body indicate direct support the block grant that they are applying for. A blanket support of a Climate Action Plan is insufficient to substantiate that the governing body support the specific requirements of the CDFA Block Grants.
HSP and SWEEP	Can a TA entity participate as a partner on multiple applications/grants? Can they be the lead applicant in one of the applications?	A TA entity can participate as a partner on multiple applications/grants, however entities should consider their capacity for assisting several parties. Definitions of eligible entities can be found in the Request for Grant applications, starting on pg. 6. BGRs may serve as the TAP Lead Organization if they are identified in the Canella Act: <a href="https://www.cdca.ca.gov/oars/healthsoils/docs/block_grant_application_guidelines-request_for_grant_applications.pdf">https://www.cdca.ca.gov/oars/healthsoils/docs/block_grant_application_guidelines-request_for_grant_applications.pdf</a>
HSP	For the HSP reimbursement/payment options, is that for all practices?	You can find HSP's draft practice guidelines here, that provide the reimbursement/payment details for each funded practice: <a href="https://www.cdca.ca.gov/oars/healthsoils/docs/HSP_2026_Practice_Guidelines.pdf">https://www.cdca.ca.gov/oars/healthsoils/docs/HSP_2026_Practice_Guidelines.pdf</a>

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SWEEP	Regarding the SWEEP assessment tool - will that be the only option to assess GHG emission reductions and water savings? In other words, are the Excel worksheets that were previously accepted being eliminated?	We now use the online SWEEP tool, which works similarly to the old Excel worksheets but works better for more projects. For the new round, using online tools is a requirement.
HSP and SWEEP	Can the BGR also be the TA provider?	Yes - BGRs may serve as the TAP Lead Organization if they are identified in the Canella Act. The Canella Act identifies Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), University of California Cooperative Extension, California public colleges and universities, Nonprofit organizations, Groundwater Sustainability Agencies, and Irrigation Districts as entities eligible for technical assistance funding.
HSP	Can the new rice cultivation practice be combined with other practices?	The practice guidelines will be updated in the next few months to include "non-overlapping practices" where practices will be listed where they cannot be paired together. You can find the current guidelines for the rice cultivation practice in the HSP's draft practice guidelines, pg. 21: <a href="https://www.cdca.ca.gov/oars/healthsoils/docs/HSP_2026_Practice_Guidelines.pdf">https://www.cdca.ca.gov/oars/healthsoils/docs/HSP_2026_Practice_Guidelines.pdf</a>
HSP and SWEEP	Are these grants available for cannabis and hemp farmers?	<p>Cannabis is not an agricultural product as contemplated by the Food and Agriculture Code. While it is defined as an "agricultural product" within the Business and Professions Code, the purpose of the Business and Professions Code is to regulate business operations within the State. Grant monies administered by CDFA are limited to agricultural products that CDFA regulates. For this reason, cannabis related businesses are not eligible and will not be considered for this grant.</p> <p>For both HSP and SWEEP programs regarding hemp: "Hemp cultivation fields are eligible, but medicinal and recreational cannabis cultivation fields are ineligible." References: <a href="https://www.cdca.ca.gov/oars/sweep/docs/How_to_Participate_in_the_SWEEP.pdf">https://www.cdca.ca.gov/oars/sweep/docs/How_to_Participate_in_the_SWEEP.pdf</a> and <a href="https://www.cdca.ca.gov/oars/healthsoils/docs/how_to_participate_in_hsp.pdf">https://www.cdca.ca.gov/oars/healthsoils/docs/how_to_participate_in_hsp.pdf</a></p>
HSP	Is on-site production of compost or biochar an eligible practice? Please clarify the difference between direct invoice payment and bulk purchases for biochar procurement?	<p>On-site production of compost is an eligible practice, however on-site production of biochar is not, in this initial round of biochar support from HSP.</p> <p>Direct invoice payment and bulk purchasing are two possibilities for HSP support of soil carbon amendments, such as biochar, in Appendix 2 of the Procedures Manual. As mentioned there, bulk purchase would imply that a BGR can buy materials directly, in bulk, and even store, deliver, and spread them. Meanwhile, a direct invoicing approach would imply a direct payment by the BGR of invoices that were made out to farmers, or to the BGR, for goods purchased and services rendered, so that farmers do not have to have financial involvement. In reality, there are various ways in which such systems could be implemented, and approaches that could combine elements of both "bulk purchase" and "direct invoicing." Such systems should be formalized with CDFA before implementation, but they do not have to be described in any detail in a Concept Proposal.</p>
HSP and SWEEP	For the purposes of TAP leads, do 501c5's qualify under Canella Act?	Since a 501(c)(5) organization is considered a Nonprofit, it will be an eligible TAP lead. However, to be clear, it would not be an eligible BGR, because the Prop. 4 language differs from Canella Act language. Prop 4 guidance specifies that only 501(c)(3) organizations are eligible to be block grant recipients under the Nonprofit umbrella.
HSP and SWEEP	Does OARS interpret "irrigation districts" in § 570(a)(3) to encompass California water districts that deliver irrigation water to agricultural users and possess demonstrated technical assistance capacity? Water districts and irrigation districts are both special districts formed under California law to deliver water to agricultural producers, and the operational and technical functions relevant to TAP delivery are substantially similar. A broad reading appears consistent with the statute's focus on demonstrated expertise and its underlying goal of routing technical assistance through trusted local entities with established relationships to growers.	The Canella Act defines what type of organization is eligible to provide technical assistance to the block grant recipient. The water code indicates three different types of water agencies: water districts, irrigation districts, and joint powers authorities. The Canella Act only identifies one of those agencies (irrigation district) to be eligible to provide technical assistance. OARS must adhere to the rules passed by the legislature and will not accept water districts to serve as technical assistance providers. Water districts may be eligible block grant recipients but will need to substantiate their eligibility.
HSP and SWEEP	Slide 12 of the power point presentation highlights the common objectives. Does the color coding distinguish "on-farm activities" vs "administrative activities"?	The colors are to distinguish between what is considered Technical Assistance and Administrative Common Objectives. This has to do with how they are considered to be billed. Both of these are part of the 20% administrative costs (admin and TA). The colors are not related to the on-farm projects. Yellow items are technical assistance objectives and green are administrative objectives.
HSP and SWEEP	The grant term is potentially a quick turn around for HSP funded agreements. Is there a way to extend grant length term for BG HSP funded projects to 4.5-5 years to allow BGRs the proper time to build and ramp up these programs?	<p>The grant terms are based on funding liquidation deadlines. While it may be possible for CDFA to request an extension of the liquidation deadline when it draws near, there is no guarantee that an extension will be approved through the state's budget process. If the liquidation deadline is extended, OARS may be able to offer no-cost extensions to BGRs, but at this time it is not predictable. Block grant applicants must plan to complete the project within the expected grant term.</p> <p>Accordingly, BGRs are expected to have organizational capacity and staff available to manage the grant from the first days of the grant term. Staff members already contracted are listed in the application, and additional hiring decisions should be finalized before the grant agreement term begins. BGRs should be prepared to begin work once an agreement is signed with CDFA, and their proposed workplan should reflect this.</p>
HSP and SWEEP	Does the timeline imply that contracts with CDFA will be fully executed before 2027?	The estimated award execution is January 2027 - however this is subject to change.

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HSP and SWEEP	Does technical assistance fall under on-farm practice or administrative budget categories?	Technical Assistance falls under 20% of the Administrative budget category.
HSP and SWEEP	Will one of the Block grant informational webinar recordings be available?	Yes, one of the recordings will be posted online on the OARS webpages. We will post the second webinar on April 21.
HSP and SWEEP	Can a BGR also be a TA contractor for a different BGR in a different region?	This is not an excluded activity however BGRs should be mindful of their capacity to be a meaningful, contributing partner to other grantees.
HSP and SWEEP	The quoted definition of SDFR includes gender discrimination, but there are no gender-based groups in the list of who qualifies as an SDFR. Is the race/ethnicity based list of SDFRs exhaustive, or are their additional groups that would qualify (such as those who have faced gender-based discrimination)?	The Farmer Equity Act of 2017 (AB 1348) defines an 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. Neither the USDA definition nor the Farmer Equity Act include gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation in their covered groups.
HSP and SWEEP	Can an applicant who is applying for the concept proposal fill out an application and save it as a draft?	No, the current application system does not allow for an individual to save an application and return to it. The application must be completed and submitted for it to be retained. The question in the application are listed in the Grant Application Guidelines document, as are their character limits, so an applicant can use that resource to draft questions and then submit them in bulk for a response.
HSP and SWEEP	If a technical assistance provider is paid as a subrecipient, does that count as part of the 80% that benefits on farm projects, or the 20% that goes towards admin?	Technical Assistance subrecipient will be part of 20% of the Administrative category.
SWEEP	If a project connects a previously groundwater only irrigation system to surface water, does the project also need to show water and GHG savings?	Yes, saving water and reducing GHG emissions are requirements that must be included in your proposal. Your proposal will be eligible if you propose an idea that includes water savings and GHG reduction.
HSP and SWEEP	As OARS is encouraging partnerships and collaboration, is there a way for interested folks to offer themselves as a potential technical assistance subrecipient partner organization, specifically for providing training and translations?	CDFA will not engage in the partnership and collaboration linking process and it will be up to potential applicants to identify partnerships.
HSP and SWEEP	If a farmer lives in a community that is not considered an (S)DAC, but their farm is located in an (S)DAC, does that qualify as an (S)DAC project? What about the opposite scenario, where the farmer lives in an (S)DAC but their farm is not located in the same community? Are we cross-referencing those maps with the farm location or with the location of the farmer's home?	Applicants will use the SDAC mapping tool developed by CNRA for climate bond funded projects to determine if the project is located within an SDAC. The location of the on-farm project will be the indicator of where the project is located, not the address or residence of an applicant.
SWEEP	If a farming operation is within a watershed, upstream from a DAC, can SWEEP funding be applied to those farming operations and meet the DAC % requirement? An example would be irrigation efficiency within a watershed upstream from DAC with 401C waterbodies.	The SWEEP program only funds projects that are located within the applicant's property boundaries. If the upstream area is part of your land, the project is eligible; if not, the proposal cannot be accepted. The DAC distinction is only based off the location of the on-farm project and not its impacts upstream within a watershed.
HSP and SWEEP	Is attendance at one of the two introduction block grant webinars a mandatory prerequisite to applying for a block grant?	No
HSP and SWEEP	Does an individual project need to meet the states specific goals of supporting (S)DAC or is this the goal for the whole state wide program?	The funding source requires that meaningful and direct benefits are provided to 40% DAC, SDAC, and vulnerable populations with at least 10% going to SDAC. This is a funding source goal and not an individual project requirement. However, the concept proposal will score applications based off their ability to reach the climate goals identified. Review the "Alignment with Climate Bond" instructions for the Concept Proposal scoring matrix for further details.
HSP and SWEEP	Can TAPs conduct the pre-award visits?	Yes
HSP and SWEEP	How do applicants get in touch with local community education specialists?	Email <a href="mailto:climatesmartag@ucdavis.edu">climatesmartag@ucdavis.edu</a> to connect with the UC statewide team. They also host a weekly webinar during the concept proposal. Details can be found on the HSP and SWEEP Block Grant websites.
HSP and SWEEP	Do you need a commitment letter from UCANR to act as TAP, or since they already are an official TAP, is language from the applicant to use them as TAP enough?	During the full application process, this documentation will need to be submitted since the TAP is a partner on the grant.
HSP and SWEEP	Are the admin/TA common objectives listed in the official materials?	Yes, the Common Objectives are defined in the Request for Grant Applications document - starting on pg. 8: <a href="https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oars/healthsoils/docs/block_grant_application_guidelines-request_for_grant_applications.pdf">https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oars/healthsoils/docs/block_grant_application_guidelines-request_for_grant_applications.pdf</a>
HSP and SWEEP	Are applicants required to conform with prevailing wage parameters?	OARS is looking into this and will provide an answer in the full proposal.
HSP and SWEEP	Can the Grant Project Manager and Technical Assistance Lead be the same person?	Yes, this is not an excluded option.
HSP and SWEEP	Are the review committee's allowed to utilize AI to review our concept proposals for the purposes of selection or ranking?	No, the technical reviewers are not permitted to use artificial intelligence to rank and score the applications for either the concept proposal or the full proposal. They must fill out a scoring rubric, including comments, and must be able explain their scores in meetings with other reviewers.
HSP and SWEEP	Can advanced payments also be used for BGRs and TAPs?	Yes, advance payments can be used for both categories, Administrative and approved On-Farm projects. CDFA will only have a direct agreement with the BGR so the BGR will need to administer any advanced funds to their partners accordingly.

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HSP and SWEEP	If an application service area is within one county but includes over 1M acres of farmland, will the application still be competitive?	OARS does not look at the total farm size in grant eligibility, so would not be excluded in applying to the programs. OARS does not provide guidance of if an application is competitive, the applicant should review the Application Guidelines and the scoring matrix to assess competitiveness.
HSP and SWEEP	Does the grant dollar amount requested in the concept proposal have to exactly match the final proposal?	No. The dollar amount requested in the concept proposal is only an estimate based on your current plans. The full proposal will require a detailed budget that identifies funding commitments by category and includes the required payment rates. This will include hourly staff rates, anticipated travel costs, amounts allocated to on-farm projects, indirect costs, and other relevant expenses. While the concept proposal budget is an initial estimate, the full proposal will provide an opportunity to present a complete budget breakdown with all necessary details.
HSP and SWEEP	Can any TA be contracted, or does all of it have to be performed by a Canella Act-identified entity?	TAs have to be an eligible TA based on the Canella Act eligibility language. There are options to work with the BGR to be a contractor or subrecipient and provide TA services that way.
HSP and SWEEP	Can a Technical Assistance Provider also work for an organization that acts as a vendor and supplies project required supplies/equipment?	If the TAP is personally a vendor or employee of a vendor of the needed supplies/equipment, it would be a clear conflict of interest.
HSP and SWEEP	The current administrative cut is no more than 20% of the total project cost, unless 40% or more of the projects serve SDFR. This 40% or more threshold will unlock an optional 3% extra for administrative expenses, for a total of 23%. Since SDFRs can have small operations, it might be hard to meet the 40% goal to unlock the extra 3% - can CDFA provide guidance on this?	Block Grant Recipients can unlock an extra 3% in administrative costs if they wish and if at least 40% of their selected projects (not dollars) are going to SDFRs. This 3% additional funding will come from the on-farm project percentage, so it is not added to the total award. The size of the farming operation should not impact the ability for the BGR to award 40% of the projects to SDFRs. It should be noted that awarded BGRs are required to provide CDFA with a clear and transparent on-farm project selection process report before they select projects, and that BGRs cannot provide additional points or prioritize projects for selection simply because they belong to SDFRs. However, BGRs can prioritize TA provision to SDFRs, while maintaining expected standards for all awardees during the on-farm project implementation period.
HSP and SWEEP	In terms of accessing the additional 3% for administrative budgets, is the 40% SDFR threshold based on the number of projects funded, or the dollar amount going towards SDFRs?	The 40% SDFRs is based on number of projects.
HSP and SWEEP	Will area size served affect application ranking scoring? (e.g., portion of county served vs. multiple counties)	No, please review the scoring criteria.
HSP and SWEEP	Will an application for either program under 2 million dollars be eligible?	No, the minimum award amount is 2 million dollars.
HSP and SWEEP	Can an organization act as the lead applicant on more than once concept proposal? This question is particularly relevant to UC ANR, which has multiple offices throughout the state, which in turn might have different service areas and points of focus.	OARS will consider a UC ANR program with a unique lead applicant to be a distinct applicant.