Block Grant Pilot Program

HEALTHY SOILS PROGRAM (HSP) AND STATE WATER EFFICIENCY AND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM(SWEEP)

ENVIRONMENTAL FARMING ACT SCIENCE ADVISORY PANEL

OCTOBER 20, 2022

Summary of Outreach

- Initial Scoping Discussions
  - Phone conversations with stakeholders for initial response (RCDs, irrigation districts, air district)
- EFA SAP Presentation – September 2022
- Technical Assistance Roundtable Session
  - Current TA providers
  - September 28 and September 29, 2022
  - Approximately 50 individuals at each session
- Public Listening Session October 10, 2022
  - 137 Attendees
  - Meeting materials are posted at www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi

Supporting Comments

- Several organizations with experience and capacity were excited about regional flexibility

- Relationships at regional level are stronger than those with CDFA

- Some efficiencies gained

- Support growers better since some applications were DQ'd for minor reasons

- Open and quicker communications with applicant

- Quicker turnaround time

Comments in Opposition

- Added level of administration will remove funds from on-farm projects

- Selection of on-farm projects could hurt relationships between organizations and growers

- Challenges with geographic coverage

- Conflicts of Interest/Cronyism

- Limited resources or capacity to disburse funds to farms

- Folks appreciate the programs as they are currently; its difficult when the programs keep changing

- Farmers will be disappointed not be able to apply directly

- Minimum award of $2 M will be too high

Common Themes and Questions

- Want standard application, review process across all the block grants so that the farmers have the same requirements
- Contracting process with farm operations should be standard
- What will be the administrative cap?
- How will administrative costs be differentiated from technical assistance costs?
- Need flexibility in flow of funding

Recommendations from Public and TA Providers For Block Grant

- Allow regional flexibility in program requirements
- Run the block grant solicitation at same time as a traditional format to compare
- Require a cross-review by third party for selection process for on-farm projects
- Consider hiring out the administration of funds to a single 3rd party

Other Considerations: Technical Assistance

Must work within requirements of AB 2377 (2018)

- Must make 5% of each appropriation available for TA
- $5 M cap on TA per appropriation to each program
- Technical assistance providers are defined specifically
- Up to $100,000 per year for TA
- 3-year limit on TA agreement

Technical assistance timelines in traditional framework

- Must hold stand-alone TA solicitation for each year's appropriation and allow adequate time for TA grant execution and outreach
- Since funds are appropriated in one-year increments, TA agreements are limited to cover that year

Other Considerations: CDFA Resources

Resource Limitations

- 5% historical admin cap spread across Department (OEFI, Grants, Financial Services, Information Technology, Public Affairs)
- One-time Funding
- Hiring Challenge and Lag Time

Number of grants to execute and invoices to process

- Timeline to execute grants also impact the project timeline – prompting revisions

CDFA-wide transition to AmpliFund

- Changes to application process and grant management for all

Recommendations

1

Release Draft RGAs For Block Grant Pilot & TA for Public Comment

- Extend existing TA agreements &
- Solicit new TA providers

2

Run the Block Grant & TA solicitations

- Select awardees and Execute agreements

3

Run Traditional Programs

- Allow individual Farmers and Ranchers to apply directly to CDFA programs