

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
ENVIRONMENTAL FARMING ACT SCIENCE ADVISORY PANEL**

Desert Research and Extension Center
1004 East Holton Road
Holtville, CA 92250
April 18, 2019

MEETING MINUTES

Panel Member in Attendance

Jocelyn Bridson, MSc, Rio Farms, (Chair and Member)
Don Cameron, Terranova Ranch (Member)
Emily Wimberger, PhD, CalEPA, ARB (Member)
Doug Parker, PhD, UC ANR (Subject Matter Expert)
Thomas Hedt, MSc, USDA NRCS (Subject Matter Expert)
Jeff Onsted, PhD, Resources Agency, DOC (Alternate for Member Bunn)
Scott Couch, MSc, CalEPA, State Water Resources Control Board (Member)
Jeff Dlott, PhD, Sure Harvest (Member)

State Agency Staff and Presenters

Scott Weeks, CDFA
Andrew Whitaker, PhD, CDFA
Carolyn Cook, MSc, CDFA
Geetika Joshi, PhD, CDFA
Amrith Gunasekara, PhD, Liaison to the Panel, CDFA
Jenny Lester Moffitt, Undersecretary, CDFA

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 AM by the Chair, Jocelyn Bridson. Introductions were made, and a quorum was established (minimum of six members). Dr. Jairo Diaz, Director of the Desert Research and Extension Center (DREC), welcomed the Science Panel members to the DREC. He also provided a brief history and activities associated with the DREC. Present at the meeting were all the members noted above under “Panel Members in Attendance.”

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Previous Meeting Minutes

Chair Bridson introduced the January 17, 2019 meeting minutes. Member Cameron introduced the motion to approve the minutes and Member Couch seconded the motion. The motion was moved by all members present.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP) Update

Mr. Scott Weeks of CDFA provided program updates on State Water Efficiency Enhancement Program (SWEEP). He provided a background of Prop 68, the funding source for the current round of SWEEP, which was announced on December 28, 2018 until March 8, 2019. He provided an update on the successful adoption of the new WizeHive application submission platform for SWEEP. He noted that counties within the State where technical assistance providers were located. He noted that 343 applications totaling \$27.6 million in grant requests were received by CDFA, of which 48 were in Severely Disadvantaged Communities, and 68 applicants belonged to the group of Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers as defined in the Farmer Equity Act of 2017. Mr. Weeks noted that applications were received from 36 counties within California. The applications are currently under review. Member Couch requested a clarification on definitions of Severely Disadvantaged Communities. Member Onsted requested to clarify technical reviewers for SWEEP and how the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers were scored in the review process.

Chair Bridson requested clarification on the number of projects needed to meet Prop 68 targets. She commented if the first round of SWEEP exceeded the target, it would be beneficial to consider this fact for the next solicitation of SWEEP to meet the Prop 68 requirements. Dr. Gunasekara agreed this would be a consideration for the next solicitation of SWEEP. Member Couch asked if there would be a special SWEEP solicitation for SDAC applicants if the program was undersubscribed for SDAC targets. Dr. Gunasekara noted this may not be necessary since CDFA already received a large number of SDAC applications. Member Couch asked how this compared with previous years. Dr. Gunasekara and Ms. Cook clarified that previous years employed different definitions for disadvantaged communities, although CDFA anticipated that the target for Prop 68 SDACs was likely to be met. The definitions for Prop 68 SDACs and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers was shared with the members and public upon request by Member Couch.

Member Onsted requested to clarify when the next solicitation of SWEEP would be announced. Ms. Cook noted that the date for next round will be announced after review of the first round. Member Couch asked if paper applications were accepted. Ms. Cook responded that all applications were electronic.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Healthy Soils Program (HSP) Update

Dr. Andrew Whitaker provided an update on the recently closed solicitation period for the Healthy Soils Program. This application period combines funding from both Proposition 68 and California Climate Investments. Dr. Whitaker reviewed the solicitation timeline; the application period opened on December 28, 2018 with grant applications due on March 8, 2019, and awards anticipated to be announced in June 2019. Dr. Whitaker provided a live demonstration of the Healthy Soils Program webpage and solicitation documents; 222 and 30 applications were received for HSP Incentives Program and HSP Demonstration Projects, respectively. 40 technical service providers

were provided funding to assist HSP Incentives Program applicants. Member Onsted asked to clarify how the current number of applicants compared with last year. He also requested to clarify the difference between Type A and Type B Demonstration Projects. Dr. Whitaker responded that Type A Demonstration Projects have an additional requirement to collect greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions data from field implementations.

Member Cameron asked if the funds, if unused, could be rolled over to next year. Dr. Joshi responded that due to the legislative timelines on expenditure of the allocated funds, CDFA would not be able to fund 3-year projects unless funding was re-appropriated from the Legislature. CDFA would decide to potentially pursue legislative recourse if unallocated funds remained after awards were made in 2019.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – Proposed Framework for Technical Assistance (TA) Program and RFP

Ms. Carolyn Cook presented the proposed framework for the new TA program mandated by AB 2377 (2018, Irwin). She noted that CDFA OEFI staff have prepared a draft grant solicitation (Request for Proposals, or RFP) for public comment in collaboration with previously funded technical assistance providers and the CDFA Office of Grant Administration. Background of legislative requirements for the new program were provided. Proposed framework, including funding duration, maximum grant amount, eligibility criteria and, required and desirable grant activities were presented.

Panel members asked several clarifying questions and responses were provided by OEFI staff. Member Bridson asked if a TA providers (TAP) should conduct outreach to a minimum number of applicants to be eligible in the program. Ms. Cook responded that applicants would be required to explain the number of farmers and ranchers they can assist in the work plan. Chair Bridson inquired if subcontracting for language translation services would be allowed as an allowable cost. OEFI staff clarified it is an allowable cost. Member Cameron requested to clarify if an HSP/SWEEP/AMMP applicant that did not receive Phase I assistance were eligible to receive Phase II assistance if needed. Ms. Cook and Dr. Gunasekara responded that this would be allowable. Subject Matter Expert Hedt suggested that CDFA should consider including a feedback mechanism through which HSP/SWEEP/AMMP applicants and recipients would be able to provide feedback to CDFA on the quality of technical assistance received. Member Cameron suggested that CDFA should consider non-profit Groundwater Sustainability Agencies to be eligible entities for this program, as they can provide SWEEP-related technical assistance while also assisting farmers and ranchers with Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) compliance. Member Onsted also suggested CDFA to further clarify eligibility language in RFP to eliminate confusing language. Member Wimberger suggested including TAPs' consultation with unawarded recipients to improve future competitiveness as an allowable activity. The panel discussed that unused funds in Phase 1 should be allowed to be used during Phase 2, and if funds were underutilized in years 1 or 2, they should be used in subsequent years as needed.

Panel members expressed interest in seeing an analysis of current TA grants awarded

at the next meeting. Chair Bridson requested CDFA to consider clarifying how an individual farm was defined, to comply with the legislative requirement of providing TA to farms of size 500 acres or less. Panel members discussed indirect rates allowed by CDFA and other agencies when making grant awards. Meeting was suspended for lunch following this agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM 6 - Public Comments

Chair Bridson resumed the meeting at 1:01 p.m. and announced the opportunity for the public to comment on any of the agenda items. No comments were provided by in-person attendees. The members heard public comment from remote attendees.

Mr. Brian Kolodji from Black Swan LLC asked when award decisions for the current round of SWEEP and next round SWEEP funding will be announced. OEFI staff provided a response that award announcements and next round of SWEEP funding are expected in summer and fall of 2019, respectively.

Mr. Brian Shobe of CalCAN informed the Panel that CalCAN had submitted a comment letter to CDFA on March 7, 2019. He also commented that funding for the AB 2377 TA Grant Program should be no less than 5% of total budget appropriation to CDFA for HSP, SWEEP and AMMP, and up to \$5 million.

Ms. Jo Ann Baumgartner of Wild Farm Alliance supported CalCAN Comments and noted that as a TA provider, she recommended increasing the payment rate of \$400 of a completed HSP or SWEEP application to \$600 and reducing \$200 for an individual assisted to \$100. She also suggested increasing the baseline cost of outreach activities to \$10,000 from \$5,000 and indirect rates and noted that \$13,333 a year for Phase 2 activities each year may be insufficient.

Mr. Rex Dufour of National Center for Appropriate Technology supported CalCAN comments and noted that per applicant payment structure was insufficient and indirect rate should be increased by CDFA.

Mr. Zach Bagley of California Tomato Research Institute noted that while CDFA had the choice to award up to \$5 million to TAPs, this would reduce funds available for actual farmer and rancher implementation awards and CDFA should maximize the funds it makes available to actual on-farm projects for GHG reduction.

Ms. Adria Arko of San Mateo RCD supported CalCAN comments and commented CDFA should clarify the eligibility of RCDs for the AB 2377 TA Grant Program. She noted that indirect rate was low at 10% and suggested a rate of 30%. She noted that within a region if multiple organizations were to collaborate on a TA grant, the grant amount be insufficient to support their activities.

Ms. Anya Starovoytov of Sonoma RCD supported comments by CalCAN and other RCDs to suggest indirect rate increase to 30%.

Mr. Ben Weise of Contra Costa RCD supported comments of San Mateo RCD.

Ms. Britta Baskerville of UC Cooperative Extension Ukiah commented that CDFA should consider application submission via non-online platform, and the implementation of awarded projects should begin before September of each year.

Ms. Frances Tjanstrom of Humboldt RCD suggested that CDFA should consider a more traditional grant structure instead of Phase 1 and Phase 2 and increasing payment rates for submitted applications.

Ms. Heather Podoll of Fibershed supported the new TA program and commented that Phase 1 should include project planning activities supported by a non-flat payment rate.

Ms. Jeanne Merrill of CalCAN commented that the two-phase approach did not align with intent of AB 2377, and noted that CDFA should consider a different payment system for application submission, and allow project design and planning in Phase 1. She noted that CDFA should start over and develop a new draft RFP as the proposed RFP did not align with legislative requirements.

Ms. Kristin Murphy of CARCD supported prioritizing farms 500 acres or less. She noted that it will be challenging for RCDs to work outside of their districts. She suggested a traditional grant program without the two phases and commented that baseline outreach payment of \$5,000 should be increased.

Mr. Vince Trotter of UC Cooperative Extension Marin noted that burden of statewide assistance should not be on the TAP since local knowledge is necessary for Phase 1 activities and rate of compensation seemed insufficient.

Mr. Cooper Freeman of Occidental Arts and Ecology Center supported CalCAN's comments.

Panel members discussed the comments provided by members of the public. Following discussion, the Panel moved the following motions:

- (i) In response to concerns expressed on Phase 1 funds being insufficient, Member Cameron introduced the motion to allow flexibility to move funds between Phase 1 and Phase 2 up to 25%. Motion was seconded by Member Wimberger and approved by the Panel.
- (ii) In response to the comment on increasing indirect rates from 10%, Member Cameron introduced the motion to increase rates to 15%, which is consistent with ranges accommodated by other State agencies. The motion was seconded by Chair Bridson and approved by the Panel.
- (iii) In response to discussion on clarification for eligibility of RCDs, Member Onsted introduced the motion to edit the language in the RFP under 'Eligibility and Exclusions' to remove the sentence "Technical assistance providers cannot have a defined service area such as a region or a county" and move the sentence "CDFA encourages statewide cooperation between regional entities" under optional activities. Motion was seconded by Member Cameron and approved by the Panel.

During this discussion Member Dlott also recommended CDFA to consider robust, outcome-based reporting mechanism for AB 2377 TA Grant recipients.

AGENDA ITEM 7 – Next Meeting and Location: To be announced.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:52 p.m. by Chair Bridson.

Respectfully submitted by:



Amrith Gunasekara, Ph.D.
Liaison to Science Advisory Panel

July 18, 2019
Date