

HEALTHY SOILS PROGRAM

Request for Proposals: Consideration of New Management Practices for Funding through the Healthy Soils Program

Release date: June 5, 2024

Proposals Due: August 2, 2024 by 5:00 p.m. PT by email to

CDFA.HSP_tech@cdfa.ca.gov

Late submissions will not be considered.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



Healthy Soils Program is part of [California Climate Investments](#), a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment — particularly in disadvantaged communities.

California Department of Food and Agriculture
Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Background

The [Healthy Soils Program](#) (HSP) stems from the [California Healthy Soils Initiative](#), a collaboration of state agencies and departments that promotes the development of healthy soils on California's farmlands and ranchlands. The program uses three grant types to advance widespread adoption of conservation management practices throughout the state that sequester carbon, reduce atmospheric greenhouse gases (GHGs), and improve soil health. (1) The HSP Incentive Grants provide financial incentives directly to growers and ranchers to implement HSP practices; (2) The HSP Demonstration Grants fund on-farm demonstration projects that collect data, promote and showcase conservation management practices, and assess the potential of innovative practices in California; and (3) The HSP Block Grant Pilot funds on-farm implementation projects by growers and ranchers through regional block grant administrators, while building their technical assistance capacity.

As part of the program development process, CDFA has gone through two rounds of New Practices solicitations in the past and currently lists 27 conservation management practices for funding through HSP Incentive Grants, the HSP Block Grant Pilot and Type B HSP Demonstration Grants. Subsequent to each practice's approval, CDFA and the California Air Resources Board (CARB), in coordination with United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), developed implementation standards and the quantification methodologies (QMs) to calculate GHG emissions reduction achieved through implementation of these practices. CDFA has identified 11 innovative practices as eligible for funding through Type A HSP Demonstration Research Grants. These practices would improve soil health while reducing GHGs, but lack available data for developing QM and/or implementation standards. HSP Demonstration Type A projects will conduct field studies and collect data to fill the gap and for QM development. Detailed information on current practices included in the program can be found at [List of Conservation Management Practices](#).

This Request for Proposals outlines the requirements and process for consideration of new conservation management practices for the HSP. Proposed practices may be adopted for Incentive and Type B Demonstration Grants, or for Type A Demonstration Grants, or declined.

Proposal Submission Guidelines

All interested parties must submit proposals using [the provided template](#) (one practice per proposal) and adhere to the following guidelines:

- The submission must include the full name, organizational affiliation (if applicable) and contact information (phone number and email at a minimum) of the submitting individual or entity.
- Practices proposed for consideration must not be proprietary or involve the usage of exclusive, proprietary products, materials or equipment.
- Proposals must include peer-reviewed and/or publicly available research literature in support of the practice(s) being proposed, demonstrating that implementing these practices will:
 - Improve soil health – the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans; and,
 - Provide GHG benefits, including carbon sequestration, carbon dioxide emission reductions, methane emission reductions, and/or nitrous oxide emission reductions.
- Field study design and research findings submitted in support of the practice must be statistically sound and significant (e.g., randomized design with a minimum of three replicates).
- CDFA encourages submissions that include additional published peer-reviewed data, demonstrating environmental co-benefits of proposed practices, if available.
- In case of proposed practices involving soil additives and/or amendments, proposals must include a discussion of environmental impacts from their use and materials' safety, waste management and disposal procedures.
- Proposals must be submitted in PDF format, single-spaced with font size of 11 or larger, and maximum five pages, including References, but excluding supporting information such as research papers and data and the cover page.
- All proposals must be emailed no later than 5:00 p.m. PT on Friday, August 2, 2024, to cdfa.HSP_tech@cdfa.ca.gov.

Evaluation Process

There will be a multi-step evaluation process. A technical sub-committee of academic experts, state and federal agency subject matter experts will

evaluate the proposals and make recommendations. CDFA and CARB staff will evaluate the recommendations and present their evaluations to the [Environmental Farming Act – Science Advisory Panel](#) (EFA-SAP), as well as making them publicly available on the program website. CDFA will then provide an additional opportunity for public comments on the evaluations. After considering public comments, CDFA will report back to the EFA-SAP on its recommendations. With the EFA-SAP's input, the Secretary of Food and Agriculture will finalize the decision on which practices are to be included in the HSP. CDFA, CARB, and USDA-NRCS will coordinate to review the scientific literature necessary to develop a QM for each practice to be included in the HSP Incentive Grants list of eligible practices. These partners will provide updates related to the QM process at public meetings of the EFA-SAP. An approximate timeline for the overall process is seen below:

Activity	Tentative Dates (Subject to Change)
Request for Proposals released	June 2024
Proposals due	August 2024
Evaluation of Proposals by Technical Sub-Committee	September 2024 – January 2025
Agency Review	February 2025
Public Comment Period	March – April 2025
Finalize Recommendations and Initiate QM Development	May 2025